Aspects of the career of Alexander Berry, 1781-1873

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Chapter 6

SHOALHAVEN UNDER CONVICT OVERSEERS

The only effective means of communication between Sydney and Shoalhaven was by sea. Berry & Wollstonecraft purchased for £250 HM's Colonial Cutter *Blanche*, an old decked vessel of fifteen tons. Berry left Sydney in the *Blanche*, on 21 June 1822 to commence settlement at Shoalhaven. With him were a small party of convicts, Hamilton Hume, David Souter: a young prospective free settler, apparently with a medical background, to superintend the farm establishment, and Toodwit: an Aborigine known to Europeans as Broughton. This young man, a Wodiwodi from the north side of the Shoalhaven, was sent to Berry by Charles Throsby of Glenfield in expectation that he could prove useful as a guide and in establishing peaceful relations with the blacks.

In the late afternoon of 23 June the *Blanche* arrived off the bar at the mouth of the Shoalhaven River. A small

For the most part in this period 1822-1836 either Berry or Wollstonecraft was in residence and controlling operations but Berry in later times always referred to this as the period of management by convict overseers.

Berry & Wollstonecraft to Col. Sec. 18/3/1822, CSIL, Letters & Petitions Received 1822-24 (NSWA 4/1760); Col. Sec. to D. Wentworth 13/5/1822, Wentworth Papers (ML A754-1), 95; 'His Majesty's Colonial Sloop Blanche with standing and running Rigging Complete and good with the undermentioned Sails and Stores' n.d. [otherwise referred to as a cutter], Appendix to Berry to Clerk of Executive Council 7/10/1861, BP.


Memorial of David J. Souter to Governor Brisbane 12/10/1824, copy, Berry to Wollstonecraft 26/5/1827 & 24/7/1827, BP.

Charles Throsby to Berry 8/4/1822, BP; Return of Blankets Issued to Aboriginal Natives at Shoal Haven on 4th June 1834, Papers re Aborigines (NSWA 4/6666.3).
boat containing five men which went to explore was upset by breakers across the bar and Thomas Davison, master of the *Blanche*, and a convict were drowned. The vessel was taken three miles south and anchored in Crookhaven. Berry set up a base camp on the isthmus dividing Crookhaven from the Shoalhaven at the narrowest point and set the men to construct a hut. In succeeding weeks he frequently examined the entrance to the Shoalhaven in fine weather without once finding it smooth enough even for a boat, concluding that while vessels had previously crossed the bar it was then impossible.

Berry did not want to allow his convicts to sit in idleness while he explored and in particular did not want to leave them time to ponder the threat posed by Aborigines. On 25 June 1822 he put spades into the hands of six or seven men and ordered them to dig a canal through the isthmus at a location pointed out by Hume where the height above water level was least. He claimed later that he had little hope of achieving more than to keep the men occupied. Nevertheless on 7 July the convicts completed a cut two hundred and nine yards long, eighteen feet wide at the surface, around four and a half feet wide at the bottom and on average three feet deep - sufficient to allow passage of a large boat.

The cut was meant to be straight but in the absence of supervision the men bent the line to take advantage of one or two depressions. These deviations threatened to frustrate the intention to float timber through the canal for loading on to a ship. Early in 1823 Berry employed

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As a boy, Davison, one of the survivors of the Boyd massacre, had been rescued by Berry from the Maoris. He entered Berry's service in England just prior to the voyage to Sydney of the *Royal George*. John Dunn, one of the convicts who survived the upsetting of the boat, had been a member of the crew of the *City of Edinburgh*: Wollstonecraft to Major Druitt 2/11/1821, BP.

Diary of expedition to Shoalhaven River, 1-9.
several men to straighten the line and increase the depth
to seven feet at high tide but the men were soon withdrawn
for other work and not returned to the project. In 1850,
when seeking concessions from the Government on account of
service to the public which digging of his canal constituted Berry claimed that he 'improved [it] at
intervals at a heavy Expense, until it became a regular
Ship Canal'. There is no other evidence of effort at his
direction. Over the years scouring by current and tides
greatly enlarged the canal. By 1853 it was seventy yards
wide at its junction with the Shoalhaven and fifty-six
yards at its narrowest point. At half tide its shallowest
section was fifteen feet deep. A small steamship or
coasting sailing vessel could then pass to and from the
river by means of the canal. In 1858 the Public Works
Department dredged the canal and lined the banks. By
modern times continued current and tidal action had widened
it to four hundred yards.

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8 Berry to Wollstonecraft 8/7/1822, 23/3/1823 &
28/6/1824, Hamilton Hume to Berry 21/6/1872, BP. See
Town and Country Journal, 27 Sep. 1873, obit. for
Berry for the estimate then current of the labour
involved in completing the canal.

9 Berry to Col.Sec. 23/10/1850 50/10,125, Berry Estate
(ML A720), No 93.

10 Enclosure to Berry to Duke of Newcastle 19/10/1853,
Berry Estate (ML A720), No 128. See also Berry to
Hedderick 30/11/1833, BP.

11 Samuel Mossman and Thomas Banister, Australia, Visited
and Revisited. A Narrative of Recent Travels and Old
Experiences in Victoria and New South Wales, 2nd edn
Sydney 1974, 276-277.

12 A.K.Weatherburn, 'Exploration of the Jervis Bay,
Shoalhaven and Illawarra Districts 1797-1812' (ML
A6998), (ii).

13 John Fairfax, Run o’Waters: Tales of Australian
Country, People and Places; The Lisp of Rivers and the
Song of Birds, Sydney n.d., 47.

14 Berry to Wollstonecraft 28/6/1824, BP.
Australia, was a source of disagreement between the partners. Wollstonecraft looked upon it as a hastily conceived, bungled job and objected to the expenditure of manpower; Berry considered it necessary for communication by sea with their establishment and that it very soon returned advantages more than repaying the labour. It was obvious to Berry that improved water communication with Sydney would encourage settlement and considerably increase the value of land along the river so the partners were eager to take their grants astride the canal in hope of being able to establish ownership and control its use.

Accompanied by Hume, Broughton and several other Aborigines Berry explored along the Shoalhaven, up the principal creek which he named after Broughton, and across country to Black Head. He recorded in his diary for 29 June that 'all my expected fine meadow[s] now turn out to be brown reedy swamps, many of them however may be drained'. For the most part he was very favourably impressed with of the soil. His expectation on arrival was that he would settle at Belong, but it proved too confined in area and the river was not navigable by a sea-going vessel. On 1 July Berry first climbed 'Cullingatty' hill (Mount Coolangatta). On 4 July he settled on a site on its south-eastern slope for the homestead headquarters of Berry & Wollstonecraft's Shoalhaven operations. Under severe censure from Wollstonecraft and with benefit of hindsight

15 Berry to W. Corben 27/1/1837, BP; Berry to Governor Belmore 16/5/1871, Berry Estate (ML A721), No 193; Monitor, 19 Mar. 1828, report of Bolt v Berry, Wollstonecraft & Wiley.

16 Berry to Wollstonecraft 28/6/1824, BP.

17 The peak of this eminence stands 992 feet above sea level: T.M.Perry, Australia's First Frontier: The Spread of Settlement in New South Wales 1788-1829, Melbourne 1963, 110 fn.

18 Diary of expedition to Shoalhaven River.
Berry came to accept that he had located the homestead too low, for which he pleaded 'supposed necessity not having the means to roll the things up the hill & being deceived from the thick forest'.

On 8 July Berry wrote to Wollstonecraft that he had chosen a tract of land about Mount Coolangatta between Broughton Creek and the sea - the Coolangatta grant - which would be 'an admirable grazing farm'. It would be necessary to keep possession of a piece of land on the south side, both for agriculture and for communication through the canal with the outside world. With location of purchased land around their core grants in the next few years Berry & Wollstonecraft picked the eyes out of the Shoalhaven. In October 1823 Berry wrote that there was not the extent of good land at Shoalhaven that some people imagined. While much of their run was no doubt good there were such large areas of impassable swamp and brush the increase in their cattle would soon leave them little reason to brag about the extent of their pasturage.

Selection and development of the Shoalhaven lands was a continuing source of strain to the Berry-Wollstonecraft partnership, resulting in periodic clashes. Wollstonecraft

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19 Berry to Wollstonecraft 28/6/1824, BP.

20 The name of the mountain and the property took a number of variant forms before 'Coolangatta' was settled on. From the early eighteen-twenties Berry and Wollstonecraft used the address 'Cullingatta' in their letters, later in the decade 'Coolloomgatta' and 'Coollongatta'. 'Coolloomgatta' appears on the title deed. The Post Office Directory for 1832, 44, refers to 'Coolloomgata'. The Commission of the Peace of 22 May 1860 (V&PLA, 1859-60, v II) describes Berry's brothers David and William as 'of Cooloomgatta'. Berry used the spelling 'Coolangatta' from at least the beginning of 1829.

21 Berry to Wollstonecraft 8/7/1822, BP.

22 Berry to Wollstonecraft 31/10/1823, BP. See also James Atkinson, An Account of the State of Agriculture & Grazing in New South Wales, London 1826, facsimile edn Sydney 1975, 8.
was not favourably impressed with Shoalhaven and the Berry-Wollstonecraft correspondence hints at disagreement from an early time. Both men wanted ultimately to make land the focus for their energies but in the short term Wollstonecraft was for continuance of mercantile activities, primary attention to paying creditors, involvement in Bass Strait sealing in hope of obtaining means to do so, and rigid economy meanwhile at Shoalhaven, which he referred to disparagingly as Berry's 'hobby'. Berry professed equal willingness to make whatever sacrifice was necessary to pay their debts but argued that perhaps no other place in the world apart from Holland, where everything was the result of immense labour, provided the natural advantages they had at Shoalhaven where they could create by far the finest establishment in the Colony. Rapid development of various primary industries would be the best way to generate income and deal with the debt problem. Even after cedar was cut out they should be able to extract £10,000 per annum from Shoalhaven if they took advantage of its capabilities. Berry was much less interested in business, believed that 'mere mercantile transactions will every day become more precarious from rapidly increasing competition and inadequate means of remittance', was willing to leave their Sydney activities to an employee and wanted to retire from general trade as soon as possible.

Berry was given to penning detailed instructions to Souter and long memoranda to communicate his ideas on development of the estate. In response Wollstonecraft was frequently ironical or sarcastic, on occasion contemptuous and even abusive about what he dismissed as 'theoretical' ramblings insufficiently regardful of practical considerations. In his view Berry clung to Shoalhaven, spending money without restraint while indulging in craven expressions of fear and whining about their financial problems instead of pulling his weight in the business side and facing up to their financial situation. Especially in

23 See especially Berry to Wollstonecraft 5/6/[1823] quoted, 28/6/1826, 14/5/1827 & 1/12/1831, BP.
1830, when money was very tight, Wollstonecraft wanted economy, with abandoning of development work and dismissal of every employee who could be dispensed with. Berry for his part saw his partner as lacking a just appreciation of the riches they had in their grasp if only they had the foresight to go on and develop their land with single-minded determination. It is not entirely without justice that Wollstonecraft's name has barely been mentioned, if at all, in historical accounts of Shoalhaven.

It was probably only the moderation of Berry's replies to Wollstonecraft's verbal assaults and his evident desire to conciliate that, together with the marriage of Berry to Elizabeth Wollstonecraft in 1827, preserved the partnership. In March 1831 Wollstonecraft, worn down by constant ill health and business worries, responded explosively to receipt of a communication from Berry:

Your letter, as I expected, contains a great many 
Excuses, without any Reasons; and is accompanied, like your Conversations, with Sneers, which seem to be mistaken for convincing Arguments.

The whole tenor of the Paper, proves to me ... that the same system of silly Wheat Culture, the same thoughtless Expenditure on Improvements, the same useless employment of People, and the same lavish outlay of Money, is intended to be persisted in at Shoal Haven.

The Circumstances of the Colony, as well as our own Embarrassments will no longer permit us to play at Gentlemen Farmers; that is, to cultivate and improve largely, for the purpose of gratifying our Pleasure or our Ostentation, without having the least consideration for the lavish expense sustained, or whether the sacrifice is likely to be repaid by the produce.

After a close Confinement, to Business in Sydney, for fifteen Months, (from which I Could never be absent for a day, without being Called back to provide for some demand ... ) it was not to be considered as surprising that I should have wished for, nay absolutely required, a change of Scene, as well as of Atmosphere.

The opportunity to do this, has been studiously, perseveringly denied me ....

As we cannot therefore agree in our views, with regard to the management of the Farm, and as the Place is perfectly lost to me as a Residence; I am forced to the adoption of one of two Courses. Either to divide

24 Wollstonecraft to Berry 9/2/1830, BP.
the whole Estate into two fair and equitable Portions, of which each Party shall take one, as may be hereafter agreed on. Or, selling the whole of the Land, Stock, Implements &c, paying our Debts therefrom, and dividing any thing which may remain.

He left it to Berry to nominate the course which best suited him.25

Berry replied that he had not come up to Sydney to quarrel.

You charge me with keeping all the place to myself, but when you was last down, I am not aware that I ever intimated any desire directly or indirectly for your return - and when I was last here you cannot have forgot that I proposed to give up every thing here & to appoint an Agent, when if able to realize enough to pay our most urgent debts, that we should both go to Shoal Haven & that you should reside at Coolangatta, & that I would be quite content to Live in the hut at Lower Numba, being satisfied that we should find some difficulty in getting enough of produce from Shoal Haven to pay our debts and support our establishment here at the same time.

Wollstonecraft should make necessary arrangements and go down to Shoalhaven as soon as he pleased.26

The heat of this clash subsided but Wollstonecraft's bitter recriminations were renewed a few months later.27

Berry intended that convict carpenter Tom May, should oversee construction at Coolangatta of a brick office or perhaps store, part of which could be occupied temporarily as a dwelling.28 Work commenced in 1823 and in November of that year two rooms, a hall, kitchen and passageways under a shingled hip roof were completed.29 Finding that May was constructing a building much superior to what he had intended Berry decided to waive his objections to the site.

25 Wollstonecraft to Berry 2/3/1831, BP.
26 Berry to Wollstonecraft n.d. [Mar. 1831], BP.
27 Wollstonecraft to Berry 15/8/1831, BP.
28 Berry to Wollstonecraft 28/6/1824, BP.
29 Berry to Wollstonecraft 13/10/1823 & 18/11/1823, BP.
and turn it into a permanent dwelling.\textsuperscript{30} Work to extend Coolangatta homestead extended over many years until eventually it consisted of nineteen rooms. A verandah ran along the front of the building. A single-storied brick building was constructed adjacent to it for the estate office. Behind the residence numerous small dwellings, workshops, stores, coach houses etc were built in the course of time, the whole forming a square of some extent. The complex was served by a well sunk in 1827 and a large and exceedingly productive kitchen garden.\textsuperscript{31} Berry and Wollstonecraft looked upon the house as temporary accommodation until they could afford to erect a rural mansion - but that day never came.

Coolangatta was the hub of Berry & Wollstonecraft's Shoalhaven operations. Here was the residence of the proprietors or their surrogates, the office and workshops for blacksmiths, carpenters, tanners, shoemakers, and coopers serving the whole establishment. It was the location of the tobacco factory and the place where cattle were slaughtered and beef salted. Rations were sent out weekly from its store for distribution to servants everywhere else. On the bay in front stood a ship-building yard and in the paddocks breeding stock grazed.\textsuperscript{32}

Originally the area between the house and the river was forest containing 'some of the finest Timber in the Colony'. In order to give a view of the river Berry ordered

\textsuperscript{30} Berry to Wollstonecraft 28/6/1824, BP.


\textsuperscript{32} Berry to John Hedderick 30/11/1833, BP.
SITE PLAN OF ORIGINAL BERRY HOMESTEAD
COMMENCED IN 1823.
that clearing commence in the winter of 1827.\textsuperscript{33} By September 1828 when Wollstonecraft saw it the clearing gave a new aspect. The house was no longer in the bush and visually Coolangatta and Numba were connected. Berry had also had constructed a road to the river and a wharf to serve Coolangatta.\textsuperscript{34}

Unaccountably although the bulk of convicts were engaged in agriculture and quartered in huts at Numba nothing was done for some years to build accommodation for the agricultural overseer. He continued to live at Coolangatta, leaving the convicts unsupervised out of work hours and wasting much time commuting. Although the partners recognised that this was inefficient and objectionable in terms of discipline it was not until some time after August 1827 that a small weatherboard house and stables were completed at Numba.

From a base of ten convicts assigned in 1822\textsuperscript{35} Berry & Wollstonecraft steadily built up their work force until in April 1825 it numbered about 160,\textsuperscript{36} of whom, in July, almost 100 were convicts.\textsuperscript{37} With demand for convicts outrunning supply from 1824 Berry adopted the policy of making only 'moderate' requests in hope that reasonable applications would have a better chance of being attended to.\textsuperscript{38} Even so the firm was asking for fifteen or twenty additional men at a time.\textsuperscript{39} Men assigned in the latter half

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{33} Wollstonecraft to Berry 27/9/1828, BP.
\item\textsuperscript{34} Berry to Wollstonecraft 12/5/1825, 8/10/1826, Wollstonecraft to Berry 2/8/1827, BP.
\item\textsuperscript{35} List, not headed or dated, marked in pencil '1822', BP.
\item\textsuperscript{36} Berry & Wollstonecraft to Governor Brisbane 26/4/1825, BP.
\item\textsuperscript{37} Berry & Wollstonecraft to Brisbane 30/7/1825, CSIL, Copies of Letters Sent and Received in the Colony 1824-1827 (NSWA 4/5782).
\item\textsuperscript{38} Berry to Wollstonecraft 14/7/1824, BP.
\item\textsuperscript{39} Berry & Wollstonecraft to Col.Sec. 26/4/1825, copy, BP; Berry & Wollstonecraft to Col.Sec. 2/5/1825, CSIL,
\end{itemize}
of the decade were by comparison deficient in age, strength, character and industry.\textsuperscript{40} In 1827 there were 76 assigned men (including two on loan), exclusive of 23 who had absconded and 19 who became free, received tickets-of-leave or died during the year.\textsuperscript{41} In mid 1829 84 convicts worked under three overseers.\textsuperscript{42} By November 1833 Berry had nearly 200 men in his service, more than half convicts,\textsuperscript{43} and by the end of 1834 approximately 140 assigned servants.\textsuperscript{44}

As owners of an extensive, undeveloped estate requiring accommodation for a large number of men and a variety of buildings and water craft, blacksmithing, cooperage and other skilled work Berry & Wollstonecraft needed a variety of artisans at a time when skilled men were in short supply and a premium had to be paid for assigned tradesmen.\textsuperscript{45} Berry was suspicious of the regulations, believing the Government would test skill very loosely in order to charge. He wanted to apply for men without specification and teach skills.\textsuperscript{46} While training went on constantly Berry & Wollstonecraft found a need to keep applying for tradesmen. Throughout the eighteen twenties, when many key buildings which served the estate for decades were erected, they had generally only two carpenters. They did what they could to make the most of

\begin{align*}
1825 \text{ (NSWA 4/1786), 67.} \\
\textsuperscript{40} \text{Berry to Wollstonecraft 25 & 28/8/1826, 12/8/1827, Wollstonecraft to Berry 22/5/1829, 15/6/1829 & 15/12/1829 re-dated 19/12/1829, BP.} \\
\textsuperscript{41} \text{Berry & Wollstonecraft to Col.Sec. 30/1/1828 28/901, encl. three lists, CSIL, Berry and Wollstonecraft Papers re land 1826-39.} \\
\textsuperscript{42} \text{Wollstonecraft to Berry 29/7/1829, BP.} \\
\textsuperscript{43} \text{Berry to John Hedderick 30/11/1833, BP.} \\
\textsuperscript{44} \text{W.G.Mathews, Reminiscences, } \textit{Sun}, 15 \text{ Oct. 1938.} \\
\textsuperscript{45} \text{Col.Sec. to Berry & Wollstonecraft 24/3/1823, BP.} \\
\textsuperscript{46} \text{Berry to Wollstonecraft 15/4/1823, BP.}
\end{align*}
skilled assignees. Carpenter Thomas May, a 'lifer' assigned to them in 1823, was given a free apprentice and two young convicts to train.47

One very important convict artisan was shipwright John Blinksell who, with assistants and sometimes help from other carpenters, was employed from the earliest days in building and keeping in repair boats and punts needed to move men and animals across the Shoalhaven or up Broughton Creek to the sawing establishment.48 In March 1823 Blanche was wrecked on the coast north of the Shoalhaven entrance.49 The sails, most of the rigging and all the copper of the vessel were salvaged and a large cask of iron procured by burning the wreck.50 Blinksell was set to building a replacement vessel using the salvaged parts, while service was maintained by a hired craft.51 The twenty-five ton sloop Water Mole launched in December 1823 was the first vessel build at Shoalhaven.52 It was followed in September 1826 by the sixty-eight ton sloop-rigged barge Experiment built by Burgoyne, another convict carpenter.53 Untill mid century most coastal trade, and in particular movement of grains, was in the hands of very small locally-built craft. Water Mole was bigger than most and Experiment

47 May died in April 1827 'leaving a great many useful and requisite buildings in an unfinished state' and his pupils without instruction: Berry & Wollstonecraft to Col.Sec. 19/1/1828 Private 28/758, CSIL, Main series 1828 (NSWA 4/1964).

48 Berry to Wollstonecraft 13/10/1825, BP.

49 James Anderson (master) to Berry & Wollstonecraft 19/3/1823, Berry & Wollstonecraft to --, very rough draft, c Mar. 1823, BP.

50 Berry to Wollstonecraft 22/3/1823, BP.

51 Wollstonecraft to Berry 30/3/1823, BP.

52 Berry to Wollstonecraft 21/10/1823, 8/11/1823 & 12/12/1823, BP.

53 D.Eagan, Certificate of survey 7/9/1826 encl. in Berry & Wollstonecraft to Col.Sec. 7/9/1826 26/5539, CSIL, Main series 1826 (NSWA 4/1901).
more than three times average size.\textsuperscript{54} From 1826 until into the eighteen thirties when moving large quantities of cedar Berry & Wollstonecraft operated two ships of their own and sometimes had two others under charter.\textsuperscript{55} In slack periods they had to look for other profitable employment to avoid having to lay up one of their vessels.\textsuperscript{56}

From commencement of settlement one or other of the partners was frequently at Coolangatta. From 1826 there was one of them, more often Berry, there all the time. Because of dispersal of workers to different tasks considerable reliance had to be placed on overseers. The Berry-Wollstonecraft correspondence leaves a poor impression of these men. In 1839 Berry wrote that from the overseers he was obliged to employ he often had misgivings about whether he would still be owner when the estate eventually became valuable.\textsuperscript{57} After management fell to his brothers and particularly from 1848 when David was in charge, Berry tended to hark back to the era of convict overseers as a golden age when the estate was productive and profitable.\textsuperscript{58} The truth seems to be that it was never well managed but that it made most progress in the first decade. Berry and Wollstonecraft, tougher men than John or David Berry, attempted to exercise firmer control over and through their overseers and had the advantages of virgin or new soil, payment dependent on productivity for development work and timber-getting, and a tied convict labour force for other

\textsuperscript{54} For example \textit{Sydney General Trade List}, No. 3, 30 July 1829 lists twelve movements of coastal vessels only three of which exceeded twenty tons and none of which topped seventy tons.

\textsuperscript{55} Wollstonecraft to Berry 21/3/1827, Berry to Wollstonecraft 17/2/1829 re-dated 18/2/1829, BP.

\textsuperscript{56} Wollstonecraft to Berry 31/5/1830, 24/6/1830, 19 & 25/7/1830, BP; Account Book of M.Hindson 1827-30 (ML A151), 3.

\textsuperscript{57} Berry to John Berry 14/9/1839, BP.

\textsuperscript{58} BP, \textit{passim}. 
tasks.

David Souter was in overall charge in the absence of the partners. His particular responsibility was the cattle. He was considered a good employee until early in 1826 when he insisted on a holiday in Sydney when absence was felt to show want of attention to his employers' welfare. He shocked Berry by living extravagantly in a public house with a woman of easy virtue, usually drunk and riotous, until he had consumed a year's salary. Even so, Berry thought that 'if he pleases he would answer our purposes better than any [other] person we could get'. In October 1828 Wollstonecraft reported Souter to be 'in deserved and irremediable disgrace'. Early the following year he was dismissed for 'highly improper Conduct, combined with very strong suspicions of Fraud'. He continued diligent to the end and left the cattle in a condition which spoke well for his management. It was only after he had departed that evidence accumulated that he had been at the centre of large-scale theft of calves.

Souter's replacement was John K. Cleeve, an immigrant 'gentleman'. Berry came to believe it necessary in their current circumstances to have a man who did not demand so high a salary and was not above doing any of the work. Cleeve was very slow to acquire knowledge of the cattle, was discontented when refused a pay rise and then spent too

59 Wollstonecraft to Berry 7/4/1826, BP.
60 Berry to Wollstonecraft 20/5/1827, BP.
61 Wollstonecraft to Berry 1/10/1828, BP.
62 Wollstonecraft to Principal Superintendent of Convicts Heley 11/10/1829 29/8277, CSIL, Main series 1830 (NSWA 4/2069).
63 Berry to Wollstonecraft 17/2/1829 & 25/2/1829 re-dated 7/3/1829, BP.
64 Wollstonecraft to Heley 11/10/1829 29/8277, CSIL, Main series 1830 (NSWA 4/2069).
much time shooting birds to sell their skins. There appear to have been allegations against him late in 1830 of involvement in stock theft. He was let go at the end of the year.

The farming establishment at Numba was under the charge successively of Stewart (freed?) 1822 to March 1823, John A Mathews (convict) March 1823 to May 1825, William Smith (freed?) May 1825 to April 1826, John Willie (freed?) April 1826 to September/October 1828, Toosey (free) September/October 1828 to September 1830 and Paterson (convict) September 1830 to 1836.

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Wollstonecraft to Principal Superintendent Heley 11/10/1829, 29/8277, CSIL, Main series 1830 (NSWA 4/2069), Berry to Wollstonecraft 2/10/1830, BP.

Wollstonecraft to Berry 19/12/1830 & 3/6/1831, BP.

Berry had already decided that they should let Cleeve go: Berry to Wollstonecraft 2/10/1830, BP.

Charles Throsby to Berry 25/6/1822, Berry, Diary of expedition to Shoalhaven River, 15-16, 1/7/1822, Berry to Wollstonecraft 8/7/1822, 23/3/1823, 15 & 17/4/1823, Wollstonecraft to Berry 28 & 30/3/1823, BP.

[Berry to Wollstonecraft] 7/6/[1823], Berry to Wollstonecraft 1 & 8/10/1826, BP.

Berry to Wollstonecraft 10/9/1826, 8/10/1826 & c 26/6/1830, BP.


Wollstonecraft to Berry 21 & 30/6/1829, 29/7/1829, 28/8/1829, 3/1/1830 & 31/5/1830, Berry to Wollstonecraft 25/6/1829, 2/11/1829, c 26/6/1830, 2 & 14/10/1830, 16/1/1831 & 4/1/1832, BP; Wollstonecraft to Principal Superintendent of Convicts 11/10/1829 29/8277, CSIL, Main series 1830 (NSWA 4/2069).

Berry to Wollstonecraft 10/1/1829, 2/11/1829, 11/12/1829, 12 & 22/6/1830, 2/10/1830; Wollstonecraft to Berry 31/5/1830 & 2/6/1831, Berry to John Berry 14/9/1839, BP.
overseer named Johnson was appointed in mid 1827 and remained until about September when he was replaced by Toosey. Paterson, appointed October 1827 to assist Toosey, replaced him in 1828 and remained until September 1830 when he became overseer. William Smith was re-employed early in 1831. In broad terms, Berry & Wollstonecraft tended to engage agricultural overseers more in hope than expectation of satisfactory performance, to respond positively rather than otherwise to their efforts in the short term, then to become disillusioned by demonstrated incompetence as farmers or inability to control convicts, and to denounce their villainy or ineptness after departure. The difficulty of finding overseers is indicated by re-engagement of William Smith and perseverance with Toosey and Paterson long after their deficiencies had become obvious.

In mid 1824 Berry & Wollstonecraft employed James Smith, a ticket-of-leave convict and cousin to barrister Dr Robert Wardell, to oversee their timber establishment at Narara and from 1826 at Broughton Creek. He proved most useful of their overseers. He seemed to have their interests at heart, was a sound judge of timber and soon acquired unrivalled knowledge of the estate. He was, however, an outrageous character: quarrelsome, of undependable veracity and impertinent to his employers. Berry and Wollstonecraft accepted that his poor management and perverseness could not be cured and regretted that they could not sack him. He alone knew the locations of all

74 Berry to Wollstonecraft 24/7/1827, BP.
75 Wollstonecraft to Berry 17/9/1827, BP.
76 Berry to Wollstonecraft 23/12/1830 & 5/1/1831, BP.
77 Berry to Wollstonecraft 28/6/1824, including transcription of Smith to Heley 29/8/1826 re-dated 30/8/1826, Return: Narara 2/10/1824, BP.
78 Accounts with individual sawyers, etc 1823-9, BP.
79 Berry to Wollstonecraft 1 & 3/10/1826, & 3/1/1831, BP.
their sawn timber in the bush and of usable stands of cedar and knew too much about cutting on land outside their boundaries or in doubtful areas to be turned loose disgruntled to be taken up by one of their rivals. The partners had to look to his good points and as the years passed became reconciled to bearing with his quirks.

Assignment induced in both master and servant feelings akin to those produced by slavery. It was normal for there to be a constant state of tension. The master saw his interest in exploiting the convict's labour as profitably as possible for as long as he had his services. The assigned servant, seeing himself as underfed, underclothed, overworked and oppressed by threat of the lash and inadequate recompense resorted to the go-slow: the classic weapon of the powerless and exploited. Pilfering was endemic and, as Wollstonecraft discovered at Crows Nest, could be on an extensive scale. As Gwyneth Dow has pointed out there was some merit in the approach of ex-convict Samuel Terry who tolerated cheating within reason and was well served in his absence whereas Berry, Wollstonecraft and others who sought to prevent convicts from obtaining more than they were strictly entitled to earned their men's defiance, and were still robbed.

Berry & Wollstonecraft were constantly confronted by the problems of maintaining discipline amongst their

80 Berry to Wollstonecraft 1/10/1826, 25/2/1829, 3/12/1829, Wollstonecraft to Berry 7/7/1829, BP.

81 BT, Bigge Appendix, Box 1, 220, ev. John Macarthur; SG, 1 Feb. 1826 & 14 Jan 1832; George Loveless, Victims of Whiggery, [etc], London 1837, 19-20; W.Ullathorne, Horrors of Transportation briefly unfolded to the people, Dublin 1838, 26-27; Crowley, 'Working Class Conditions in Australia', 129. See also the convict song Labouring with the Hoe, printed in D.Stewart and N.Keesing, eds, Old Bush Songs and Rhymes of Colonial Times, Sydney 1957, 27.

82 Wollstonecraft to Berry 4/2/1830, BP.

convicts and obtaining work from them and of agreeing on policy. Wollstonecraft, an intense man full of passion and determination to overcome, was the source of most of the harsh treatment of convicts and target of the bulk of overt convict hostility. He could, however, show compassion for even a very troublesome prisoner and in 1832 an ex-convict wrote from Ireland telling him that he was 'the First Master and the Best Ever I had'. In the face of Wollstonecraft's example and jeers at his weakness Berry engaged in vehement denunciation of the 'blackguards' in their employ, accompanied by dire threats of punishment. Although Berry occasionally acted with severity his normal course was to find excuses and drag his feet whenever action was needed. Wollstonecraft was justified in both his frequent observations that Berry's actions did not match his rhetoric and in his complaint that whenever anything unpleasant had to be done Berry found some pretext or other for leaving it to him.

Berry had the advantage of having spent years managing difficult men in rough conditions on the City of Edinburgh. He was no less self interested but realised better than his partner that unfairness or undue harshness would not secure their ends. In the earliest years they had very little power to coerce and were always vulnerable to retaliation. His policy was to apply 'fair measures and good treatment' and not to allow the 'slightest delinquency' on the part of those who did not respond 'to pass without its proper degree of punishment'. J.B.Hirst has represented Berry as becoming embittered when convicts showed no gratitude for

84 James Flanagan to Berry and Wollstonecraft 24/4/1832, BP.
85 William Walsh to Wollstonecraft 27/3/1832, BP.
86 Wollstonecraft to Berry 8/6/1830, BP.
87 [Berry to Wollstonecraft] 7/6/[1823], Berry to Wollstonecraft 28/6/1824, Berry, 'Cursory remarks on Shoalhaven' - Shoemaking [June 1824], BP.
kind treatment.\textsuperscript{88} This is to attach too much weight to a few expressions of momentary exasperation.\textsuperscript{89} Berry believed the convicts incorrigible.\textsuperscript{90} As he did not begin with false hopes he cannot be said to have become embittered.

Berry was fond of recalling that in the earliest years there was no bench of magistrates or constable nearer than Sydney. He and Wollstonecraft had to manage their convicts 'entirely by moral influence'. At his request their sub-overseer, an ex-soldier with a ticket-of-leave, was appointed constable at Shoalhaven in February 1823 on condition that Berry & Wollstonecraft pay him and in the event they were obliged to pay a succession of constables for many years.\textsuperscript{91} During his visit in October 1823 Judge Field told Berry that the convicts were necessarily under our own entire Jurisdiction and that although it was contrary in general Law to exercise the functions of a Magistrate, over our own men, still that there was something in our situation superior to all ordinary rules of Law, and that was, necessity and therefore that it behoved us in particular cases to act in the same manner as a Captain of a Ship.

Berry declined to act on this advice or to use the lash as Field urged.\textsuperscript{92}

Wollstonecraft persisted from the outset with a disposition to return to government every troublesome assigned servant. While Berry occasionally turned men in he was opposed to his partner's policy as 'utterly childish'. The convicts had all been transported because they were criminals and it was pointless to send in one thief merely

\textsuperscript{88} J.B.Hirst, \emph{Convict society and its enemies: A history of early New South Wales}, Sydney 1983, 75.

\textsuperscript{89} See Berry to Wollstonecraft 13/10/1825, BP.

\textsuperscript{90} Berry to Wollstonecraft 24/3/1827, BP.

\textsuperscript{91} \textit{SG}, 20 Feb. 1823: Govt & General Order 19/2/1823; Mr Berry's Statement 1851, Enclosure 9 to No 116 and Berry to Belmore 16/5/1871, No 193, Berry Estate (MLA720).

\textsuperscript{92} Berry to Wollstonecraft 21/10/1823, BP.
to receive another. Returning men was 'the sure way to have constant trouble with bad servants'.

Berry continued over the years to manifest great reluctance to resort to flogging and largely because of this Berry & Wollstonecraft were not regular floggers. Sometimes in the very early years it was necessary to send an offender to Sydney and from 1826 to Wollongong to secure him a flogging, but unless there was aggravation, such as open defiance or incitement of others to indiscipline, they were reluctant to do this. Floggings were not conducive to positive relations with the work force and incited retaliation. Berry & Wollstonecraft occasionally suffered the favoured form of convict pay-back: arson of grain and hay stacks — highly flammable aggregations representing long periods of productive effort. Wollstonecraft tended to ridicule Berry for softness and in 1829 complained that his practice of leaving overseers to conduct prosecutions allowed offending convicts to escape untouched, which was 'the absolute ruin of this Establishment'.

Normally Berry & Wollstonecraft disciplined errant convicts by reduction of rations to the legal minimum and confinement. Wollstonecraft was prepared to breach regulations and go further, writing in March 1827 that he had deprived 'certain Venerial patients and one or two sham sick gentlemen' of their meat entitlement until they returned to work. In 1829 he agreed with the overseers that 'pinching their guts' was an ineffective punishment for delinquents' comrades always shared with them. By

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93 [Berry to Wollstonecraft] 7/6/[1823], quoted, Wollstonecraft's letters for this period generally, including to Berry 27/9/1828, 3 & 6/10/1828, BP.

94 Berry to Wollstonecraft 1 & 8/10/1826, Wollstonecraft to Berry 14/5//1827, BP.

95 Wollstonecraft to Berry 21/9/1829, BP.

96 Wollstonecraft to Berry 21/3/1827, BP.

97 Berry to Wollstonecraft 25/2/1827, re-dated 7/3/1829, BP.
Wollstonecraft had organised a punishment clearing gang which was served short rations, locked up at night in a log gaol, built without Berry's approval, and allowed no communication with the rest of the assigned men. Wollstonecraft had grown used to taking the law into his own hands. The military magistrate at Wollongong submitted a formal complaint about his practices.

From the beginning Berry perceived that attempting simply to drive convicts to work could not be expected to succeed. They had to be given some incentive to believe that it was in their interest to work, otherwise they 'would never do the value of their Ration'. Periodically he urged the gains in increased productivity to be expected from a small outlay to finance incentives but he could not overcome Wollstonecraft's reluctance to concede anything to convicts. In December 1831 Berry told him that the firm's System has been generally bad consisting more of punishment than reward to our people - and this has been adopted on the specious principle of a ridiculous morality - a few hundred pounds value of spirits judiciously distributed would have saved us thousands with our free men & got us hundreds in real improvements with our Govt. hands.

Berry & Wollstonecraft's principal incentive to good conduct and industry on the part of a convict was their necessary support for a ticket-of-leave application. The partners considered that both honour and self-interest demanded that they act fairly and on the evidence their recommendations accorded with their stated intention to

98 Berry to Wollstonecraft 1/12/1831, BP.
99 Wollstonecraft to Berry 12/6/1829, BP; Sydney Monitor, 12 May 1832.
100 Berry to Wollstonecraft 26/8/1829, BP.
101 Berry to Wollstonecraft c 26/6/1830, BP.
102 Wollstonecraft to Berry 24/8/1825, Berry to Wollstonecraft [-/12/1823?], 2/11/1829, 9 & 13/12/1829, 4/1/1830, BP.
103 Berry to Wollstonecraft 1/12/1831, BP.
reward good conduct and punish misbehaviour. Berry always returned 'a peremptory refusal' for any man returned to government but decided to recommend a prisoner known to have given assistance to bushrangers because a free man involved in the same incident had not been punished.

The money wages of labour, bond or free, were purely nominal. Masters supplied little more than prescribed under the convict regulations and little if anything additional under employment agreements with free men. Everything else a worker wanted had to be purchased. In remote areas the only place to do this was at the employer's store. It was usual to specify in contracts that a part of earnings had to be taken in property. This has been appropriately referred to as the 'lending of wages' because a recipient had little or no choice but to give them back. Particularly in the later eighteen twenties when desperate for money Berry & Wollstonecraft were eager to exploit the store system to the utmost to reduce costs and avoid the need to find cash to pay workers. Berry was particularly grasping, writing at times of charging double or even four times what they paid for commodities. Exploitation of the store system allowed Wollstonecraft in July 1829 to settle for 150,000 superficial feet of timber without payment of a shilling in cash.

In a period of perennial shortage of labour the store

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104 Berry to Wollstonecraft 16/4/1826, 1/9/1827, 28/12/1829, 7/1/1830 & 12/11/1830, Wollstonecraft to Berry 8/6/1830, Berry & Wollstonecraft to Col. Sec. 5/5/1826, BP; Wollstonecraft to Col. Sec. 25/4/1827 27/4265, CSIL, Main series 1827 (NSWA 4/1931).

105 Berry to Wollstonecraft 25/9/1829, BP.

106 Berry to John Berry 19/7/1841, BP.


108 Berry to Wollstonecraft 25/2/1829 re-dated 7/3/1829 & 30/10/1829, BP.
system was a useful aid to retention of free labour. A man lacking means to settle his store bill at the end of his contract had little option but to sign a new contract more or less on the employer's terms. Berry & Wollstonecraft encouraged moderate indebtedness and to this end stocked habit-forming spirits and tobacco.

Wollstonecraft was particularly tough in negotiating with sawyers. He envisaged pressuring one sawyer with a cash balance owing to accept another's debit as an offset against his claim. At the end of 1830 he negotiated new contracts under which they would pay rates for sawing very considerably lower than those obtaining around Sydney and charge for foodstuffs at rates 'very far beyond Sydney prices'. Berry was delighted, but was unable to find additional men who would engage on such exploitive terms.

The case of James Doran appears to exemplify the extent of Wollstonecraft's ruthlessness in connection with money. Doran, a young gentleman convict with a ticket-of-leave, was employed as clerk in Berry & Wollstonecraft's Sydney office late in 1821. He became their trusted employee and even when free clerks were hired acted as chief clerk. With his employers' knowledge he did some trading on his own account. Early in 1827 Captain George Bunn complained of Doran to Wollstonecraft following some misunderstanding over settlement of an account. When Doran found that he was making little headway in attempting to give Wollstonecraft his version of the dispute he raised the grievance that while his salary had been set at £114 12s per annum he had not received any payment. Wollstonecraft flared and discharged him on the spot. On his representations Doran was arrested, had his ticket-of-

109 Wollstonecraft to Berry 7/7/1829. See also Wollstonecraft to Berry 2/7/1829, BP.

110 Wollstonecraft to Berry 1/1/1831, BP.

111 Berry to Wollstonecraft 5/1/1831, BP.

112 Berry to Wollstonecraft 23/5/1831, BP.
leave revoked and was sent to Wellington Valley. It seems very likely that, as alleged in the press, Wollstonecraft made verbal complaint to Colonial Secretary Macleay that Doran was a smuggler and lived in sin with a concubine. It appears that the smuggling charge was an old one already dealt with magisterially and that Wollstonecraft had long known about, and in effect condoned, Doran's liaison. Doran wrote twice pleading with Wollstonecraft to endeavour to have him recalled from his 'insupportable banishment', eliciting a refusal on the second occasion. Doran's predicament aroused considerable public sympathy and he received help to escape from the Colony in mid 1828. His treatment was publicised in Britain in 1832 in attacks on Darling's administration. There is on the record, public or private, no comment from Wollstonecraft in reaction to aspersions repeatedly cast against him in the press in connection with this matter. Doran's degradation and exile saved Berry & Wollstonecraft the very large sum owed him in cash for unpaid wages: a debt quite beyond the firm's current capacity to pay. In acquiescing in the acts of his partner Berry shared in the guilt.

From June to August 1825 Berry & Wollstonecraft experienced an outbreak of convict lawlessness which they estimated cost them not less than one thousand pounds. The first sign of serious trouble occurred in April when a convict was outrageously insolent to Wollstonecraft in front of all the other men. Wollstonecraft sensed a very general spirit of insubordination and that the convicts watched the act of defiance as a test of his reaction. He considered that


114 Doran to Wollstonecraft 7/1/1828, BP (refers to a letter 22/12/1827); Monitor, 11 Feb. 1828.

115 Sydney Monitor, 3 Jan. 1829, report of Rex v Kemp, John Raine and Lee, 12 Jan 1829.

116 Berry to Darling [29/4?/1826], draft, BP.
inability to do more than turn the man in to government service was productive of the excesses which followed.\textsuperscript{117} Serious trouble began with destruction by arson of two wheat stacks and a quantity of barley.\textsuperscript{118} From admissions that several men had seen the stacks on fire and done nothing to raise the alarm Berry, the man then on the spot, concluded that most of the men at Numba were accessories.\textsuperscript{119} The schooner \textit{Hunter}, owned by G. W. Robinson, an American, went ashore at Jervis Bay and by the time it was repaired some of the crew had deserted. It was believed that Robinson wished to replace them with deserters from Berry & Wollstonecraft's establishment. Four absconders were found aboard the \textit{Hunter} and Berry later learned that all the assigned men at Numba deserted but returned when told that Robinson would not take them. Two men broke into an overseer's house stole arms and ammunition and took to the bush.\textsuperscript{120} Soon ten men, previously the most useful of the agricultural workers, were in the bush.\textsuperscript{121} Most of those who remained at their posts were implicated in harbouring, feeding, providing intelligence and deriding as cowards those inclined to surrender.\textsuperscript{122}

Various thefts and outrages occurred in the weeks before all of the absconders were captured or surrendered.

\textsuperscript{117} Wollstonecraft to Col. Sec. 25/4/1827 27/4265, CSIL, Main series 1827 (NSWA 4/1931).

\textsuperscript{118} \textit{Australian}, 1 Sep. 1825.

\textsuperscript{119} Berry to Wollstonecraft 23/7/1825 & 16/8/1825 (reviewing depositions), Berry to Attorney General Bannister 10/10/1825, BP; \textit{Australian}, 1 Sep. 1825.

\textsuperscript{120} Berry to Wollstonecraft 23/7/1825 & 16/8/1825, Berry to Attorney General -/7/1825, Wollstonecraft, rough note 25/7/1825, BP.

\textsuperscript{121} \textit{Australian}, 4 Aug. 1825; Berry & Wollstonecraft to Col. Sec. 20/8/1825, CSIL, 1825 (NSWA 4/1787).

\textsuperscript{122} Wollstonecraft to Berry 1/10/1825, BP.
and a number of trials and convictions followed.\textsuperscript{123} Berry wrote to his partner that 'our people generally are a set of the greatest rogues, whom we have utterly spoilt by pampering and overindulgence'. They had been 'injuring both health & property in endeavouring to render ungrateful & irreclaimable profligates more comfortable than ever they were in their lives'.\textsuperscript{124} It is a curious comment on this that a fortnight later one of the runaways wrote from Sydney gaol pleading with Wollstonecraft for payment of money owed him and saying that 'during the four years that I lived with your Honour I never got Either Bed or Blanket from you'.\textsuperscript{125}

From 1825 a steady stream of Berry & Wollstonecraft's convicts took to the bush. This was part of a general problem - by 1828 the number of runaway convicts in the bush Colony wide was estimated at about two thousand\textsuperscript{126} - and often there is no indication of any particular cause for the departure. Shoalhaven also drew runaways from considerable distances because it was on the margin of settlement, provided with good cover, consisted mainly of one large estate with a dispersed workforce of sympathetic fellow-convicts, was poorly policed and provided the lure of the hope of seizing one of Berry & Wollstonecraft's small ships. There was more or less continuous worry about bolters in the bush using the estate as a source of supplies. As late as 1840 six bushrangers were known to be

\textsuperscript{123} Wollstonecraft to Berry 1/10/1825, 13/10/1825, Berry to Wollstonecraft 12/10/1825, 13/10/1825 & 28/12/1829; \textit{Australian}, 13 Oct. 1825; Berry & Wollstonecraft to Attorney General Bannister 30/11/1825, CSIL, Bundle 28 No 20-48 1826 (NSWA 4/1791), 325.

\textsuperscript{124} Berry to Wollstonecraft 13/10/1825, BP.

\textsuperscript{125} Britter to Wollstonecraft 31/10/1825, BP.

at large on the Berry estate.\textsuperscript{127}

Fearing an attack by an overwhelming combination of bad characters on or around their estate for the purpose of taking their ships Berry & Wollstonecraft in April 1826 asked the Government to station a military detachment or police at Shoalhaven.\textsuperscript{128} In a very tardy reply Governor Darling reminded them that the Government did not have the means to protect individual settlers and expressed his belief that security and order would be 'materially promoted' by residence of one of the partners.\textsuperscript{129} The partners received this as a command and from that time onwards it was rare for one or the other not to be at Coolangatta. A detachment of soldiers under a sergeant was, however, stationed at Shoalhaven. There, as elsewhere, trouble followed from bringing into close contact convicts and soldiers demoralised by discovery that their rations and conditions were inferior to those of the felons. Constant contact produced an imperceptible assimilation of ideas.\textsuperscript{130} As early as November 1826 Captain Bishop, Commandant of Illawarra, informed Berry that he would be obliged to withdraw the soldiers if Berry & Wollstonecraft could not put a stop to irregularities constantly occurring.\textsuperscript{131} The soldiers and crewmen on Berry & Wollstonecraft's ships conducted trade in unspecified items.

\textsuperscript{127} Col. Sec. to Rev. Mr Rigney 14/4/1840 40/87, CSOL, Letters to Clergy etc. 21 Mar. 1839 to 30 Dec 1840 (NSWA 4/3619), 291.

\textsuperscript{128} Berry & Wollstonecraft to Col. Sec. 20/4/1826, BP. This appears to be letter 26/2433, missing from CSIL.

\textsuperscript{129} Col. Sec. to Berry & Wollstonecraft 3/7/1826, BP.

\textsuperscript{130} Undated memorandum by Captain L. Cowell, Respecting the Difficulty of Maintaining discipline in the Australian Colonies GD 45/8/120 (SRO Dalhousie Muniments GD 45 (copy ML FM4/2323)); Australian, 24 Feb. 1825, 16 May 1826, 20 Apr. 1827; Darling to Bathurst 14/12/1825, HRA, v XII, 716-731, Darling to Murray 29/1/1829, ibid., v XIV, 621; Colonist, 24 Aug. 1836: LC 21/8/1839, Sir M.O'Connell.

\textsuperscript{131} Bishop to Berry 1/11/1826, BP.
purchased from servants at Broughton Creek, a constant supply of which was hawked in Sydney. A protest from Berry secured reversal of a decision in the first half of 1827 for removal of the detachment but when it was withdrawn in May 1829 its members had of late been so great a source of trouble that the proprietors were pleased to see it go.

In August 1825 Berry was informed of preparations for an attempt to take the partnership's sloop. Henceforth as a precaution whenever the convicts were restless eatables were landed from vessels immediately on arrival. On the evening of 14 December 1827 fifteen convicts succeeded with a well-laid plan for the capture of the twenty-four ton sloop Phoebe laden with cedar, pigs and produce. The reported intention was to lay off in the Phoebe and take the larger Water Mole, murder Wollstonecraft who was expected to be aboard, and use her to make for America. When the pirates did not meet up with the Water Mole they sailed the Phoebe northwards, putting men ashore at various islands to conserve dwindling supplies until the vessel was wrecked at Mioke in the

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132 Wollstonecraft to Berry 23/8/1827 & 5/5/1829, BP.
133 Berry to Wollstonecraft 3 & 6/5/1827, BP.
134 Wollstonecraft to Berry 26/5/1829 & 1/6/1829.
135 Berry to Wollstonecraft 16/8/1825, BP.
136 Berry to Wollstonecraft 23/7/1825, BP.
137 Wollstonecraft to Col. Sec. 19/12/1827, BP; SG, 31 Dec. 1827, notice from Principal Superintendent of Convicts' Office; List of Assigned Servants lately in the employ of Berry & Wollstonecraft who have been turned in to Government for misbehaviour or have absented themselves during the year 1827 28/901, CSIL, Berry and Wollstonecraft Papers re land 1826-39 (NSWA 4/1123.2).
Society Islands five months after capture. In December 1829 Wollstonecraft was told of a plot long in existence and known to all but a very few on the farm to seize the sloop Alexander Macleay. Probably only their precautions concerning provisioning saved Berry & Wollstonecraft from continuous hatching of piratical plots.

National hostility between English and Irish convicts was a continuing source of disturbance and in July 1827 resulted in a general affray. The Irish complained that the English initiated bad feeling by taunting them as 'Grecians'. The Irish were given to by-passing legitimate avenues for redress of grievances and forming combinations for assaulting any non-Irish fellow-servant who offended any of them: a form of cowardice which caused Wollstonecraft to despise them. Wollstonecraft came to see the Irish as quite unmanageable. In September 1829 he wrote to Berry:

Do not - on any account - take another Irish Servant - whether from the Ship or the Barracks. They are invariably useless Scoundrels, and are the source of every trouble on the Place, and the Origin of every Robbery, Burning, or Riot which has occurred. I shall get rid of those we have, as quietly as possible, and should one come down, shall return him by the same Craft.

Berry informed the Assignment Board of Wollstonecraft's attitude without associating himself with his partner's attitude. He reminded Wollstonecraft of decent Irish

139 William A. Bayley, History of Shoalhaven, Nowra 1965, 38.
140 Wollstonecraft to Berry 16/12/1829, BP.
141 Berry to Wollstonecraft 24/7/1827, BP.
142 'Grecian' in this context probably meant 'sodomite'.
143 Wollstonecraft to Berry 24/8/1829, BP. See also Berry & Wollstonecraft to Col. Sec. 31/8/1829 29/6870, CSIL, Main series 1830 (NSWA 4/2071).
144 Wollstonecraft to Berry 15/12/1829 re-dated 19/12/1829, BP.
145 Wollstonecraft to Berry 11/9/1829, BP.
servants they had had but fresh instances of trouble with Irish convicts confirmed Wollstonecraft's objection to the Irish as a people.  

Berry & Wollstonecraft's treatment of their servants attracted press and public attention as highly discreditable to them.

In 1826 Berry & Wollstonecraft secured ten teenage boys as apprentices from the Male Orphan School. These children were accommodated indiscriminately amongst the felons and subjected to the same deprivations. As E. S. Hall said, the Church and School Corporation virtually transported them, without crime or trial, to Shoalhaven.

The partners' correspondence reveals that in the years 1830 to 1832 their establishment was in a state of more or less constant insubordination with go slows, defiance and strikes as a result of their failure to deliver entitlements, in part because of their near approach to bankruptcy and in part for reasons, such as drought, beyond their control. Required six-monthly issues of slops were many months late, some men were without shoes, some were not issued bedding and from stoppage of the issuing of soap the convicts complained that their persons and clothes were frequently filthy. The issue of maize flour in substitution for wheaten flour for part of the ration was objected to as a diminution of the food entitlement. Wollstonecraft, whose attitude was that they should concede nothing to convict discontent, wanted to move to a complete maize

146 Berry to Wollstonecraft 25/9/1829, BP.
147 Wollstonecraft to Berry 21/9/1829, BP.
149 Sydney Monitor, 12 May 1832.
150 Wollstonecraft to Berry 26/5/1829 re-dated 27/5/1829, 5/1/1830, 1/3/1830, 22/5/[1830], 31/5/1830, 24/6/1830, & 13/1/1832, Berry to Wollstonecraft 3 & 12/6/1830, BP.
ration but Berry objected that this would be an incitement to burning of their wheat. The free men, also in tatters and discontented, were less susceptible to coercion so the partners agreed to try to dispense with the services of all of them. A cooper recruited by Wollstonecraft refused to proceed to Shoalhaven when he received reports on how Berry & Wollstonecraft treated their convicts. Such was the partnership's want of cash that not even the continuing trouble with their men imparted any sense of urgency about supplying overdue entitlements.

In June 1831 eighteen assigned servants and orphan apprentices went to Wollongong to complain to Lt Sleeman of want of clothing, soap, etc. after having been refused passes to go. Sleeman ordered them to return and continue working until he had time to go to Coolangatta. The men and boys returned, but refused to work until they received their entitlements. Sleeman appeared a few days later and ordered the ring-leaders floggings fairly described as 'highly improper'. Sleeman saw his role as that of validating coercive measures against convicts, not of dispensing justice. He took no action against Berry & Wollstonecraft for their breaches of regulations and the protesters did not receive items owing until later. On other occasions Wollstonecraft had written of sending for his friend James Atkinson 'in order to punish', not 'try', convicts and Berry had expressed frustration at not

151 Wollstonecraft to Berry 8/6/1830, BP.
152 Berry to Wollstonecraft 16/6/1830, BP.
153 Berry to Wollstonecraft 13/7/1830, BP.
154 Berry to Wollstonecraft 2/10/1830, BP.
155 Sydney Monitor, 12 May 1832. This account is apparently based on testimony given in a court hearing.
156 Wollstonecraft to Berry 22/5/1829, BP.
being allowed to sit in judgment on his own servants.\textsuperscript{157}

It is small wonder that Berry and Wollstonecraft continued
to display a cavalier attitude to their obligations as
masters of convicts.

In April 1832 Wollstonecraft sent up four assigned
servants in charge of overseer Mathews to be turned in.\textsuperscript{158}
William Lahey, John McCullen, James Burnstock and Charles
Dunn appeared before police magistrate Charles Windeyer on
27 April charged with insolence, absconding from their
service and refusing to work. Testimony went to show that
Burnstock had not had a blanket for three years, the men
could not obtain clothes and they were filthy from want of
soap. Lahey, whose appearance confirmed that he was very
ill, had been reporting ill for six months but had been
refused leave to go to hospital. The men said that their
food rations were bad. Mathews could not deny the substance
of the defendants' allegations. Windeyer told the prisoners
that although they might have acted improperly he could not
punish them, given Mathew's testimony.

E.S.Hall took this case as an illustration for his
thesis that Governor Darling had created the bushranging
problem by allowing masters to deprive assigned servants of
their entitlements until the bravest of them were driven to
abscond and live by depredation. Hall made the police court
hearing of 27 April 1832 the subject of a long letter to
the Secretary of State for the Colonies\textsuperscript{159} published in the
Sydney Monitor of 2 May. He traced at some length Berry's
and Wollstonecraft's position in society and supposed
economic advantages to drew the conclusion that their rank
and wealth 'exclude the idea, that they deprive their
prisoners of the necessaries of life, through incapacity to
provide for them'. Although the assigned servants had not
been convicted of any offence they were punished by being

\textsuperscript{157} Berry to Wollstonecraft 3/1/1831, BP.
\textsuperscript{158} Wollstonecraft to Berry 15/4/1832, BP.
\textsuperscript{159} Hall to Goderich 2/5/1832, CO Miscellaneous Letters
NSW 1832 (ML A2146), 204-214.
left in rags for the Government or the next person to whom they were assigned to re-clothe them. No move had been made to compel Berry & Wollstonecraft to give them what they owed them. Magistrate Windeyer had made no comment on the masters' conduct in leaving men for years constantly to lie all night without blankets in filth after a day's hard work, ignored the masters' forstalling the complaints of the men by trumping up charges against them, and did not state that he would report the masters' conduct to the Governor as was commonly done when men of inferior rank were found maltreating assigned servants.

In a subsequent edition of the *Sydney Monitor* Hall published further particulars which materially increased the weight of Berry & Wollstonecraft's offences. Dunn had set off for Wollongong without leave because his overseer had repeatedly refused him permission to go. Wollstonecraft had immediately sent Mathews in pursuit and Dunn was brought back without reaching Wollongong and placed as an absconder in Berry & Wollstonecraft's log gaol for a fortnight before being sent up to Sydney. McCullen was also refused a pass but went anyway, reaching Sleeman and stating his grievance. Sleeman sent him back in the charge of a constable with a message to Wollstonecraft that he would hear both parties at Kiama in a few days time. Wollstonecraft circumvented this by sending the prisoners to Sydney, as he allegedly told McCullen so that his friend Mr Rossi might punish them.¹⁸⁰ Windeyer had neither sought to discover why the prisoners had been removed from Sleeman's jurisdiction nor made anything of the prisoners' testimony that Berry & Wollstonecraft regularly denied convict servants their right to go before a magistrate to complain.¹⁶⁰

Lord Goderich, considering the treatment of assigned servants of much consequence for the general well-being and peace of the Colony, ordered Governor Bourke to report on the circumstance of the cases referred to in Hall's

¹⁶⁰ *Sydney Monitor*, 12 May 1832.
What followed was pure farce. Bourke reported that nothing appeared from the depositions (plural) to fix on Berry and Wollstonecraft neglect to provide food, clothing and other articles according to the regulations. If it were possible to have substantiated a complaint of this kind there was little doubt that the convicts would have brought it up 'whereas the assertion was made solely as an excuse for their misconduct and was not considered by the Magistrates as deserving of any attention'. The only enclosure was a copy of Mathew's deposition on which the prisoners were charged Secretary of State Stanley accepted this explanation as 'perfectly satisfactory' although there was nothing at all to indicate any attempt to investigate the allegation. Berry was fortunate that the Colonial Office seemed interested only in rejecting the assertions of Hall, a thorn in its side as a constant critic of the Colony's administration.

Berry's relations with his assigned servants improved markedly from about the time of Wollstonecraft's death. The sole incident of any seriousness after 1832 was an isolated case of arson in mid 1837. The scare given by Hall's complaint to the Colonial Office, his obvious intention to continue exposing instances of dereliction or oppression, and stricter oversight of convict assignment by the Bourke and Gipps administrations were powerful pressures for improved management and treatment.

Although the Shoalhaven Aborigines were of fearsome
reputation they gave Berry no trouble during his first visit in 1822 and were of material assistance in exploring and performing various other tasks. Broughton smoothed the way with his Wodiwodi kinsmen. Aborigines of the Wandandian tribe inhabiting the country south of the Shoalhaven were conciliated by issuing to leaders brass gorgets of the kind used by Governor Macquarie to recognise head men. These were prized by the Aborigines concerned. Despite the good start the Europeans were wary. Souter was 'much afraid' and Berry anxious to obtain a convict gang to clear land on the Coolangatta side in part to build up the number of Europeans to overawe the blacks. The first signs of Aboriginal hostility occurred in November or December 1822. Berry was then pleased to have on hand six muskets with bayonets 'because the sight and knowledge of such things ensure us against hostility'.

A census on 4 June 1834 gives an Aboriginal population of 170 individuals camped at various locations on the Berry estate. Nothing indicates that there had been any significant variation in numbers since 1822. Berry and Wollstonecraft made such efforts as were practicable to inhibit sexual commerce between their men and female

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167 Berry, Diary of expedition to Shoalhaven River, 9,21; Alexander Berry's Account of the destruction of the ship "Boyd", 39; Berry to Wollstonecraft 27/8/1826, BP; Recollections of the Aborigines by Alexr Berry 1838 (NSWA 5/1161) (83); Barry Bridges, 'The Aborigines' Breast Plate Insignia: Lachlan Macquarie's Scheme for an Aboriginal Meritocracy', *Descent*, v pt 3, 1971.

168 Berry to Wollstonecraft 8/7/1822, BP.

169 Hamilton Hume to Berry 5/12/1822, BP.

170 Berry to Wollstonecraft 15/4/1823, BP.

171 Return of Aboriginal Natives taken at Shoal Haven June 4th 1834, encl. in Berry to Col.Sec. 11/7/1834 34/4446, CSIL, Papers re Aborigines (NSWA 4/6666.3).
Aborigines and to prevent development of a drink problem amongst the natives.\textsuperscript{172} It is unlikely that they were completely successful on either count but there is no indication of any problem with sexually-transmitted diseases or, at this stage, drunkenness.

A few Aborigines might accept regular labour for a short period. In October 1826 Berry reported the exertions of Broughton who had been upwards of two months standing each day in water up to his waist cutting reeds for thatch. Europeans could not have stood such work at that time of the year.\textsuperscript{173} The chief use of Aborigines was as otherwise unobtainable casual labour at peak periods of activity.\textsuperscript{174} While this labour was not always efficient Berry & Wollstonecraft would at times have been in an awkward situation without it\textsuperscript{175} and it had the attraction of being inexpensive.\textsuperscript{176}

Berry reported in August 1826 that Captain Bishop, Commandant of the Illawarra, was 'quite pleased to find all the natives here so tractable & obliging'\textsuperscript{177} but about this time Berry & Wollstonecraft began to experience serious problems.\textsuperscript{178} Wherever maize was grown there was tension often leading to violence when Aborigines plundered fields of ripened grain. Blacks from Jervis Bay took an immense

\textsuperscript{172} See e.g. Berry to David Berry 19/6/1851, BP where Berry was still attempting to keep Aborigines from public houses, even for distribution of Government blankets.

\textsuperscript{173} Berry to Wollstonecraft 8/10/1826, BP.

\textsuperscript{174} See e.g. Berry to Wollstonecraft 7/1/1830, BP.

\textsuperscript{175} Berry to Wollstonecraft 27/8/1826, BP.

\textsuperscript{176} Wollstonecraft to Berry 31/12/1830, BP.

\textsuperscript{177} Berry to Wollstonecraft 27/8/1826, BP.

\textsuperscript{178} There had been problems in March-April 1824 with the natives pifering equipment and stealing large quantities of produce: D.Souter to Berry & Wollstonecraft 20/3/1824 & 13/4/1824, BP.
quantity from Berry & Wollstonecraft's crop and made sad havoc amongst their pigs with spearings.

While Berry felt something for Aborigines as a dispossessed people he saw them as congenitally inferior. Berry informed his partner that it was public policy that

we must not resist any aggression of these innocent children of nature, these cherished & adopted favourites of the Attorney General [Saxe Bannister] & who may under the shadow of his silken gown murder the white people with impunity - such innocents in his estimation being incapable of doing wrong only obeying the genuine impulses of nature. These people every day kill one another on the slightest quarrels, & slay their wives without remorse, yet in the case of every murder perpetrated by them upon the whites, the latter are invariably considered as necessarily the aggressors.

Bannister was no doubt a good and well-meaning man, but 'a perverted system of Ethics founded upon feeling mawkish & one eyed pretensions to humanity have worse political consequences than crime itself'.

In winter 1827 the farm was repeatedly plundered. Berry could see no remedy whilst cultivated areas were interspersed with areas of bush and swamp providing cover for marauders. Late in April it was necessary to call out the soldiers at Shoalhaven to turn back an attack by several hundred Aborigines. This incident caused Berry to plead with the Government not to remove the detachment. Shortly afterwards Berry, called on Wollstonecraft to drive all Aborigines away without killing anyone - to which

179 Berry to Wollstonecraft 26/8/1826, BP.
180 Berry to Wollstonecraft 30/8/1826, BP.
181 Recollections of the Aborigines by Alexr Berry; Berry to Wollstonecraft 17/2/1829, BP.
182 Berry to Wollstonecraft 30/8/1826, BP.
183 Berry to Wollstonecraft 14/5/1827, BP.
184 Berry & Wollstonecraft to Col.Sec. 2/5/1827 27/4223, CSIL, Main series, 1827 (NSWA 4/1930).
185 Berry to Wollstonecraft 3 & 6/5/1827, BP.
his partner responded with the reasonable query: 'Pray how is that to be done?'\(^{186}\)

Aboriginal depredation backed by force is not mentioned in the Berry-Wollstonecraft correspondence after 1827. It only took one or two skirmishes with soldiers for Aborigines to accept their powerlessness. Late in 1829 when the Aborigines' dogs began killing young pigs Berry was able to deal effectively with the problem by giving a pound of sugar for every dog killed by his servants.\(^{187}\) Everywhere resistance ended when Aborigines became dependent to any appreciable extent on settlers for food or drugs of addiction. Hunting skills then rapidly atrophied, reinforcing dependence.\(^{188}\) Berry & Wollstonecraft, and later Berry's brothers, allowed Aborigines to live for the most part in idleness without want. Probably nowhere else in New South Wales did the Aboriginal population keep up so well or in such good condition through the nineteenth century.\(^{189}\)

Berry and Wollstonecraft held their hand to some extent in responding to Aboriginal depredation not from philosophical inclination to forbearance but from realistic appraisal of practical possibilities given the Colonial Office's insistence on protection of Aborigines and the Attorney General's personal commitment to that policy. As with convict servants, James Black and Jemmett Browne, Berry's attitude to Aborigines went through a one hundred and eighty degree turn when they were no longer a threat to his interest and he could afford to exude paternal tolerance.

\(^{186}\) Wollstonecraft to Berry 10/5/1827, BP.

\(^{187}\) J.Cleeve to Wollstonecraft 3/12/1829, BP.

\(^{188}\) Two of my earlier theses concern Aboriginal-European relations in this era. These conclusions are drawn from reading for them.

\(^{189}\) Many Salmon, 'In the Shoalhaven District. An Aboriginal Settlement', Evening News, 8 July 1905 (ML Newspaper Cuttings, v4, 79); Bayley, op.cit., 103.
Berry's long-term intention on settling Shoalhaven was to produce grain commercially, at first for the local market and subsequently for export. Other farming activities, whether for local consumption or in hope of profit, were to be subsidiary.\textsuperscript{190} The partners' immediate concern was to 'produce the best return & not what would merely pay'.\textsuperscript{191} They soon settled on timber-getting, especially of cedar, as best meeting this requirement and because food was the principal part of the reward for labour it became their short-term goal to produce enough grain and meat to ration their work force at Shoalhaven and next at their other establishments.\textsuperscript{192} The self-sufficiency objective required diversification of production but following current mercantile practice Berry was also concerned from the start to produce a variety of commodities to spread risk and increase the chance of finding what would give the best financial return.

There was considerable scope for profitable expansion of farming and grazing in New South Wales. In 1820 47,131 bushels of wheat and over 300,000 lbs of salt meat were imported.\textsuperscript{193} This was, however, in part a consequence of problems posed by the uncertainties and irregularities of a market where the Commissariat department was the only substantial purchaser.\textsuperscript{194}

Farmers suffered from being required from 1823 to sell wheat by tender to the Commissariat, and from price manipulations by the few millers and bakers who constituted


\textsuperscript{191} [Berry to Wollstonecraft] 7/6/[1823], BP.

\textsuperscript{192} Berry, 'Cursory remarks on Shoal Haven' [June 1824], BP.


\textsuperscript{194} Atkinson, \textit{op.cit.}, 52.
purchasers on the open market. It was often cheaper to import wheat from Van Diemen's Land, the risks were greater than in some other forms of land use, Imperial land-pricing policies favoured pastoralism over agriculture and there was a labour shortage after the early years of the decade. Wheat farming then became largely the preserve of the 'dungaree' or small farmer who stuck to it from the want of capital to get into something more profitable. Pastoralism provided a better return on capital, required less labour and was not subject to the problem of transporting the product to market - but continued expansion without an adequate growth in the domestic market kept the price of meat very low for many years.195

The grants at Numba, part of the alluvial flats of the delta between the Shoalhaven and Crookhaven Rivers, were selected exclusively for agriculture although at the time they consisted for the most part of lagoons and swamps. The earliest efforts were concentrated on Wollstonecraft's grant. For some years farming was confined to patches of land or long, narrow strips between lagoons.

Soon after settling Berry began to tackle the problem of swamps both at Numba196 and Coolangatta by digging an extensive system of drainage canals which, with later extensions and improvements are still to be seen. Cattle were turned onto freshly drained land to firm it by treading.197 By 1829 both partners were satisfied with the drains on the Coolangatta side.198 Berry reported that the large drain had rendered the biggest swamp of more value than many two thousand acre grants although it had not been reckoned in the acreage of their grant on account of its

196 Berry to Wollstonecraft 22/3/1823, 2 & 15/4/1823, BP.
197 Berry to Wollstonecraft 16/10/1824 & 12/8/1827, BP.
198 Berry to Wollstonecraft 21/8/1829, BP.
uselessness. A fence of some kind had been needed and the cost of the main drain was less than a four rail fence. After 1829 drainage work was concentrated at Numba where for some years progress was slight as work could be carried on only in the warmest and driest weather, and even then was liable to interruptions from an excess of water. Nevertheless as early as April 1827 drains were keeping the cultivated land dry and Wollstonecraft thought 'we have nothing to apprehend for the future from surface water'. By mid 1828 about four miles of main drain and a much larger extent of cross drains had been dug at great cost and immense difficulty from having to contend with trees and a considerable depth of water. Berry, ever conscious of the need to prevent erosion of river banks, used hollow tree trunks as pipes to avoid carrying the ditch through the last few yards to the river. In times of poor rainfall the drains proved useful when ends were blocked and they were used to conserve water. On the other hand when river and creek levels rose water could not drain away and flooding occurred. A flood in June 1830 revealed that the system of drains was far from complete either in width or depth.

There was an element of experiment in much of the drainage work. Many ditches dug to drain Numba swamp proved

199 Berry to Wollstonecraft 30/10/1829, BP.
200 Berry to Wollstonecraft 20/5/1827, BP.
201 Berry & Wollstonecraft to Col.Sec. 28/6/1828 28/5121, CSIL, Berry and Wollstonecraft Papers re land 1826-39 (NSWA 4/1123.2).
202 Wollstonecraft to Berry 21/4/[1827], BP.
203 Berry & Wollstonecraft to Col.Sec. 28/6/1828, CSIL, Berry and Wollstonecraft Papers re land 1826-39; Berry to John Berry 31/5/1841, BP.
204 Berry to Wollstonecraft 26/6/1830, BP.
205 Berry to Wollstonecraft 30/10/1829, BP.
206 Berry to Wollstonecraft [18-19]/6/1830, BP.
useless and when swamps were first drained the land sank considerably, necessitating deepening of all drains.207 The draining program was continued through Berry's lifetime but only a fraction of the work needed to put Shoalhaven into its present form was accomplished, the bulk of it occurring in the eighteen nineties.208 The impression from the sources is that most basic work was done in the eighteen twenties and that later in Berry's time there was some failure to keep drains fully operational.

Land under cultivation increased from about 50 acres in 1823209 to 300 acres early in 1824210 to 650 acres in 1828.211 In the period when new soil was being cropped grain yields in New South Wales were, despite often poor farming methods, greater than at any subsequent time.212 At Numba in its earliest years the wheat yield was high, maize returned as much as a hundred bushels per acre and potatoes fourteen or fifteen tons.213 In 1829 a comparison of wheat growing on previously uncropped Friday's farm with that at Numba revealed that even the richest of the land needed a rest from exhausting grain crops.214 The acreage sown in 1829 fell back to 390.215 Another indicator of the rate of

207 Berry to David Berry 4/3/1871 & 22/11/1831, BP.
209 Berry to Wollstonecraft 23 & 24/3/1823, BP.
210 Wollstonecraft to Elizabeth Wollstonecraft 17/4/1824, BP.
211 General Census of New South Wales November 1828, v I, no. 1079, Berry, Alexr.
213 Shoalhaven Estate, Sydney 1892, [43].
214 Wollstonecraft to Berry 31/7/1829, BP.
215 Alexander Berry, Estimate of the Crops in the Shoalhaven District in October 1829, BP.
progress was the increase in the number of ploughs in use: two in 1823,\textsuperscript{216} six in 1824,\textsuperscript{217} nine at the beginning of 1829,\textsuperscript{218} thirteen or fourteen in 1830\textsuperscript{219} and twenty in 1831.\textsuperscript{220} There were also a scarifier, a rake and harrows from 1829.\textsuperscript{221} The increase in these bullock-drawn agricultural implements was at times limited by rates of construction, training of more bullocks or acquisition of ploughmen.\textsuperscript{222} At first all ploughmen required ‘drivers’ to lead their bullocks. Various incentives were offered to encourage men to learn to use reins\textsuperscript{223} and getting men who could became a prime consideration in recruitment.\textsuperscript{224}

In 1823 enough wheat was produced to provide the Shoalhaven establishment with flour for six months.\textsuperscript{225} By 1827 production met all requirements at Shoalhaven and Berry & Wollstonecraft began then to supply their ships.\textsuperscript{226} In the summer of 1828-1829 an estimated seven thousand bushels were reaped\textsuperscript{227} when the rest of the Colony was drought-stricken. During 1829 the farm supplied its own

\textsuperscript{216} Berry to Wollstonecraft 23 & 24/3/1823, BP.
\textsuperscript{217} Berry to D.Souter 16/8/1824, BP.
\textsuperscript{218} Berry to Wollstonecraft 25/2/1829 re-dated 7/3/1829, BP.
\textsuperscript{219} Berry to Wollstonecraft 22/2/1830, BP.
\textsuperscript{220} Berry to John Berry 14/3/1831, BP.
\textsuperscript{221} Berry to Wollstonecraft 25/2/1829 re-dated 7/3/1829, Wollstonecraft to Berry 12/6/1829, BP.
\textsuperscript{222} SG & Australian, 29 Aug. 1827, advert. for ploughmen; Berry to Wollstonecraft 25/2/1829, 22/2/1830, Wollstonecraft to Berry 12/6/1829, BP.
\textsuperscript{223} Berry to D.Souter 16/8/1824, Berry to Wollstonecraft 27/8/1826, BP.
\textsuperscript{224} Berry to Wollstonecraft 12/8/1827, BP.
\textsuperscript{225} Berry to Wollstonecraft 8/6/1824, BP.
\textsuperscript{226} Wollstonecraft to Berry 10/5/1827, BP.
\textsuperscript{227} Berry to Wollstonecraft 19/2/1829, BP.
needs, perhaps £500 worth of flour to the timber establishment at Crows Nest, with grain left to put into the market. All of this had been achieved while the farm was 'still in embryo'. By 1831 fifty bushels of wheat, with maize in addition, was being consumed weekly at Shoalhaven or about 2,500 bushels annually.

From the time that Wollstonecraft entered on his last long illness in 1832 until after arrival of Berry's brothers in 1836 there is nothing in the Berry papers from which to chart the course of agricultural progress. There is an indication of stagnation in a remark by Berry that during the nine years, 1827 to 1836, that Paterson was in charge of agriculture at Numba he doubted whether on average he sold a thousand bushels of wheat per annum.

Berry and Wollstonecraft were vulnerable to economic annihilation through loss of wheat by accidental fire or arson. In July 1829 farm buildings were lost to fire and on the 26th of that month every exertion was required from Wollstonecraft and the men at Numba to prevent another fire consuming the wheat stacks. Such a loss at that time would have bankrupted the partnership. As early as 1824 Berry had advised planting cabbages around a timber barn and after this narrow escape planted maize all around the stack yard to interpose a green crop as a fire break.

The greatest discouragement was the problem of marketing. Stocks of wheat in the Colony were such at the onset of drought that prices did not rise above 6s a bushel.

228 Berry to Wollstonecraft 30/10/1829, BP.
229 Wollstonecraft to Berry 2/6/1831, BP.
230 Berry to John Berry 14/9/1839, BP.
231 Australian, 24 July 1829.
232 Wollstonecraft to Berry 28 & 29/7/1829, BP.
233 Berry to Wollstonecraft 8/6/1824, BP.
234 Berry to Wollstonecraft 26/2/1830, BP.
until July 1828. Confronted then by shortage Governor Darling facilitated importation by suspending the *ad valorem* duty and wharfage. Berry arranged to sell wheat to miller Thomas Barker for 10s a bushel but by the time of delivery Barker had so much cheap foreign grain that he was reluctant to complete the purchase. The following season financial pressure on Berry & Wollstonecraft made it a matter of such importance to bring wheat to market to take advantage of expected high prices that Wollstonecraft urged sacking of all free workers they could do without to cut their domestic consumption. In May 1830 Wollstonecraft declined 8s a bushel from Barker for wheat badly fouled and with hardly a grain free from weevil damage. In mid July, when there were 20,000 bushels of Van Diemen's Land wheat unsaleable in Sydney, Wollstonecraft was glad to accept 6s per bushel for a single load as a favour from Barker who would not take more. When Wollstonecraft showed Barker a sample of early wheat from the firm's 1830-1831 crop he declined to take any, leaving Wollstonecraft to sell to another buyer for only 4s 9d sterling. Both partners were bitterly disappointed by the quantity and price of this harvest, Berry writing 'I care not if I never see Shoal Haven after I leave it' - although he pointed out that in all his reproaches Wollstonecraft overlooked the farm's role in supporting their Sydney and North Shore establishments.

235 Coghlan, *op.cit.*, v 1, 279.
236 Darling to Murray 29/12/1828, *HRA*, v XIV, 560.
237 Berry to Wollstonecraft 30/6/1829, BP.
238 Berry to Wollstonecraft 30/10/1829, BP.
239 Wollstonecraft to Berry 23/1/1830, BP.
240 Wollstonecraft to Berry 22/5/[1830], BP.
241 Wollstonecraft to Berry 19/7/1830, BP.
242 Wollstonecraft to Berry 31/12/1830, BP.
243 Berry to Wollstonecraft 16/1/1831, BP.
Berry planned to combat the millers' price manipulation by storing grain for several months until wheat became scarcer and they could expect better prices and by erecting a mill at Shoalhaven which would enable them to consume their second quality grain and send only first quality grain to Sydney to compete with the not-very-well-ground product of Sydney millers.244

The climate of coastal New South Wales was more suited to maize than to any other grain crop. Although this cereal had long been the principal food of the labouring populations of southern Europe and the United States in New South Wales it was normally used for human consumption only by small farmers or in seasons of scarcity and was otherwise used to feed pigs and horses. Berry, a strong advocate for consumption of maize, deplored this situation as 'the cause of many evils to this Colony - freqt. apparent poverty of vegetable food - and great & increasing poverty from the importation of foreign wheat'.245 Such was the prejudice against this grain that in 1829 the overseer turned harvesting over to Aborigines and merely carted into the barn what they picked. The blacks left plenty for themselves to take later, occasioning a waste of product and expenditure in producing it which Wollstonecraft was determined would not be repeated.246 In seasons when maize failed elsewhere Shoalhaven tended to escape dry conditions and with scarcity forcing up prices Berry & Wollstonecraft were able to obtain a bonus.247

Barley grew at Shoalhaven at all seasons, was less susceptible to pilfering than maize and in Berry's view much more profitable. He wanted to increase cultivation of

244 Berry to Wollstonecraft 31/12/1830 & 5/1/1831, BP.
245 Berry to [Wollstonecraft c -/1/1830], BP.
246 Wollstonecraft to Berry 22/5/[1830], BP.
247 Berry to Wollstonecraft 4/1/1832, BP.
this grain and rye for use in distillation. However, there was not much demand for grains other than wheat and maize.

Because of persistent strong demand for tobacco, profitability of Berry & Wollstonecraft's imports from Brazil and high yield per acre a start was made soon after settling to grow tobacco in the hope that in the short term the proceeds of this product and cedar in the Sydney market would be enough to pay the firm's expenses. Berry wanted to grow enough later to export. In the first few years he did a great deal of reading and reflecting on growing and curing tobacco and observed whenever possible. A first crop of about two tons was harvested in April 1823, land was cleared as rapidly as possible and a sixty foot drying shed erected to permit increased production. Want of competent hands was a major problem.

In 1825 a Hobart merchant told the partners that 'the Tobacco of your own growing is considered better than any other Colonial Tobacco imported here'. However Brazil tobacco was in plentiful supply and selling below Berry & Wollstonecraft's prime cost.

248 Messrs Berry & Wollstonecraft Land & Stock 1824, 'Cursory remarks on Shoal Haven', June 1824, BP.


250 Berry, Memo. on Tobacco 4/6/[1823], Berry to Wollstonecraft 28/6/1824, BP.

251 Berry to Wollstonecraft 2 & 15/4/1823, 7/6/[1823], 3/12/1823 & 28/6/1824, Berry to D.Souter 16/8/1824, Berry, 'cursory remarks on Shoal Haven', [June 1824], Messrs Berry & Wollstonecraft Land & Stock 1824, BP.

252 W.Wilson to Berry & Wollstonecraft -/8/1825, BP. See Australian, 27 Feb. 1827: a reduction in the tariff on tobacco had exposed the local product to low-priced competition and reduced production.
By mid 1829 Berry & Wollstonecraft's curer, a convict was the only person on the property who could make leaf into figs. He was about to secure his ticket of leave and there was little expectation of obtaining a fit replacement. There was not a sufficient demand for leaf to permit dispensing with the manufacturing process. Sheds and other arrangements for tobacco growing were such that an increase in cultivation could be undertaken with advantage\textsuperscript{253} yet only five to six acres were sown to this crop\textsuperscript{254} and, despite the encouragement of a restored protective duty, only about an acre more in 1831.\textsuperscript{255} At the beginning of that year Berry wrote 'Tobacco will now never answer to any extent'.\textsuperscript{256} In the early years the farm grew the tobacco needed by the establishment and a surplus for the market whereas by the eighteen forties it was not supplying the establishment's needs.\textsuperscript{257}

In a constant search for agricultural produce which would pay well Berry & Wollstonecraft tried a number of other crops. In the first two years much effort was put into the labour-consuming task of growing potatoes but this went without reward when only twenty-two tons were produced in the first season at a cost in freight alone of £100.\textsuperscript{258} In the mid eighteen twenties turnips, millet, flax and hemp were being cultivated.\textsuperscript{259} For many years after first settlement cattle could graze only around the edges of swamps and were at times left destitute of feed by annual

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{253}Wollstonecraft to Berry 12/6/1829. See also Berry to Wollstonecraft 22/2/1830, BP.
\item \textsuperscript{254}Berry to Wollstonecraft 17/12/1829, BP.
\item \textsuperscript{255}Wollstonecraft to Berry 26/11/1831, BP.
\item \textsuperscript{256}Berry to Wollstonecraft 16/1/1831, BP.
\item \textsuperscript{257}Berry to John Berry 21/8/1842, BP.
\item \textsuperscript{258}Wollstonecraft to Berry 28/3/1823, Berry to Wollstonecraft 15/4/1823 & 7/6/[1823], BP.
\item \textsuperscript{259}Wollstonecraft to Elizabeth Wollstonecraft 17/4/1824, Berry to Wollstonecraft 8/10/1826 & 14/5/1827, BP.
\end{itemize}
destruction of dry grass by fire. Mangel wurzel, a large kind of beet used as cattle food, was being grown very successfully in 1831. Madder and rhubarb were other plants at least considered for crop cultivation.

By September 1822 seeds had began to sprout in a garden at Numba which also contained vines and strawberry plants. By 1824 eleven acres were in use behind the workshops at Coolangatta for a kitchen garden and orchard and in 1829 about ten acres more were cleared there for a new garden. In these gardens a wide variety of vegetables and fruits were cultivated extending even to such subtropical plants as bananas.

Despite the difficulty of obtaining good seed in New South Wales Berry & Wollstonecraft were pasture improvers from an early date. James Atkinson gloomily predicted that Berry & Wollstonecraft would never have any but tufty grass very inferior to that of the County of Argyle but by mid 1829 he was acknowledging surprise at the improvement achieved on both sides of the river.

While agriculture in New South Wales was for the most part 'rude and miserable in the extreme' Berry and Wollstonecraft aspired from the beginning to practise scientific farming. They were keen readers of farming magazines and allied works. There was soon at Coolangatta a good library on agriculture and mechanics from which the

260 Berry to John Berry 14/9/1839, BP. The origin of the fires is not stated but they were probably lit here, as elsewhere, by Aborigines.

261 Wollstonecraft to Berry 26/11/1831, BP.

262 D.Souter to Berry & Wollstonecraft 25/9/1822, BP.

263 Messrs Berry & Wollstonecraft Land & Stock 1824, Berry to D.Souter 16/8/1824 and Wollstonecraft to Berry 28/8/1829, James King to Berry n.d. (postmarked 17/9/1835), BP.

264 Wollstonecraft to Berry 12/6/1829, BP.

owners sometimes lent books to overseers and others in their employ, although discouraged by careless handling.266

Thanks to Berry's interest the partnership used machinery where possible to permit efficient use of scarce labour.267 Berry was always looking for new and better machinery and tools and bought when opportunity offered.268 Occasionally machinery was specially imported, as in the case of a threshing machine brought from Scotland and installed in a new barn in 1831.269 One of the assigned servants, Charles Pulham, had an interest and ability in the construction of machines and worked virtually full time fabricating, mending or experimenting with machinery.270 He constructed a seed drill for planting maize two rows at a time which Berry considered 'by far the most complete system of planting maize not only in this colony but in any other country'.271 Machinery often broke down, probably because of rough treatment by convicts. Early in 1827 Berry was amazed to find both winnowing machines unserviceable although in Scotland such machines always lasted twenty and often fifty years.272

The need to provide animal food and working bullocks meant that Berry & Wollstonecraft had immediately to become involved in cattle breeding. Early in July 1822 at Shoalhaven Berry ordered construction of a stockyard and sent Hume and a party of Aborigines to cut a path across

266 BP, passim, espec. Berry to Wollstonecraft 7/4/1827 & 8/12/1830, Wollstonecraft to Berry 19/12/1830, BP.
267 Berry to Wollstonecraft 10/9/1826, BP.
268 Berry to Wollstonecraft 3/5/1827, BP.
269 Berry to John Berry 14/3/1831, BP.
270 D.J.Souter to Berry & Wollstonecraft 25/7/1826, Berry to Wollstonecraft 27 & 29/8/1826, BP.
271 Berry to Wollstonecraft 29/8/1826 quoted & 24/10/1826, BP.
272 Berry to Wollstonecraft 24/3/1827, BP.
the mountains to allow cattle to be brought in. Early in August 1822 Berry began careful selection of breeding stock from the herds of John Blaxland, John Oxley and Charles Throsby so that from the earliest days the 'B & W' brand was synonymous with quality cattle. By the end of 1822 Hume had delivered drafts totalling 240 beasts to Shoalhaven. Further drafts were purchased in 1823 and 1824 and in that year E.S. Hall surrendered 120 head to Berry in part payment of a judgment debt. In April 1824 the partners were grazing five hundred head, rising in November 1828 to twelve hundred.

Berry & Wollstonecraft became involved in the cattle industry at an opportune time. Their purchases anticipated a live cattle boom from 1825 to 1828 when asking prices were higher. The supply of meat then outgrew local demand, keeping prices very low. Berry & Wollstonecraft's cattle enabled them to feed cheaply a large establishment of on-the-spot consumers producing marketable commodities. At the beginning of 1828 Berry & Wollstonecraft were listed

273 Berry, Diary of expedition to Shoalhaven River, 20, 21 & 23, 7, 9 & 14/7/1822.
275 Wollstonecraft to Berry 28/3/1823, BP.
276 Berry to Wollstonecraft 14/7/1824, BP.
277 James Norton to Wollstonecraft 5/4/1824, BP.
278 Wollstonecraft to Elizabeth Wollstonecraft 17/4/1824, BP.
279 General Census of New South Wales November 1828, v I, no 1079, Berry, Alexr.
amongst the twelve largest stockholders in the 'New Country' but were still unable, partly for the want of grass through drought, to feed their men without for several years slaughtering underweight bullocks, culling old cows and purchasing from neighbours.

Soon cattle operations were concentrated on Meroo, Wollstonecraft's four thousand acre purchase of Crown land, and from 1828 on a grazing lease of 5,120 acres of an adjoining Crown reserve. By 1829 pastures were being constantly improved. There was such unused capacity that wherever cattle went they made little impression on the grass beyond trampling it down. Berry favoured purchasing more cattle but they could not afford to do so.

For many years Berry & Wollstonecraft's cattle establishment suffered severely from inability to chance upon suitable staff. There is a good deal of evidence, supported by local folk lore, that theft of cattle from Meroo and other parts of the estate was more or less continuous at a significant level throughout Berry's life and that at times, especially in the convict era, those entrusted with care of the cattle participated in the depredations. The extent of theft and the difficulty of countering it goes far to explain the partners' paranoia about neighbours.

Berry and Wollstonecraft were eager to improve the quality of their herd but for some years were hampered by

281 Australian, 23 Jan. 1828. Berry & Wollstonecraft appeared eleventh on the list but horses and sheep were taken into account as well as cattle.

282 Wollstonecraft to Berry 27/9/1828, 20/5/1829 & 19/7/1830, BP.

283 Berry & Wollstonecraft to Col. Sec. 15/8/1828 28/6440, minutes thereon, CSIL, Berry and Wollstonecraft Papers re land 1826-39.

284 Berry to Wollstonecraft 25/2/1829 re-dated 7/3/1829 & 10/3/1829, BP.

285 Berry & Wollstonecraft to Col.Sec. 6/7/1829 29/5388, CSIL, Main series 1829 (NSWA 4/2037).
the undeveloped state of the property preventing effective segregation.286 It was not until 1829 that they could organise a general muster, culling, division into categories and introduction of controlled breeding.287 As early as August 1824 a high quality imported Ayrshire sire known as the Shipley bull had been sent down as the focus for the breeding program.288 By early 1829 he had produced so many young bulls that one was exchanged for several bullocks,289 marking the beginning of the estate's long and distinguished service as supplier of breeding stock for other settlers' herds. The partners clashed sharply late in 1829 over Wollstonecraft's desire not only to castrate freely but also to spay inferior heifers, coarse animals bringing very little in the market, and Berry's resistance to this following his usual practice of 'acquiring a mere numerical increase without caring two straws for their improvement'.290 This battle was won by Wollstoncraft. During the early eighteen thirties a herd of about a thousand breeding cows was kept at Coolangatta, producing eight hundred to a thousand calves annually.291 In mid 1835 the total number of cattle exceeded three thousand.292

Working bullocks were in great demand for ploughing and for drawing timber and by mid 1829 no fewer than eighty-two had been trained on the property.293 The putting up of salt beef in casks, for twenty years a major production of the estate, began some time in the early

286 Berry to Wollstonecraft 16/10/1824, BP.
287 Wollstonecraft to Berry 2/10/1829, BP.
288 Berry to David Souter 16/8/1824, James King to Berry 16/10/1833, BP. The bull was apparently named after the vessel on which he was imported.
289 Berry to Wollstonecraft 17/2/1829, BP.
290 Wollstonecraft to Berry 7/10/1829, BP.
291 Berry to David Berry 29/11/1849, BP.
292 Berry to John Berry 9/6/1835, BP.
293 Wollstonecraft to Berry 19/6/1829, BP.
eighteen thirties. In November 1834 Berry wrote that casks made at Shoalhaven from native timbers were used and his salt beef was 'esteemed equal to Irish'.

Berry was eager to establish a dairy in the expectation that it would supply the house and produce a surplus of £200 to £300 yearly even at the outset and fund purchase of all necessary tea and sugar. By an agreement with their storekeeper John Macguire a dairy was established around August 1824 in charge of his wife and daughters. The hope that sawyers would provide a local market for cheese was disappointed. Butter sent for sale failed for a long period of years to give satisfaction, Berry writing on one occasion that it 'resembles in appearance dirty fat - smells strong & tastes rancid'. The modest return of cash from dairy produce financed certain expenses which Berry & Wollstonecraft were unable otherwise to provide for, so during the drought of 1828 cows were drained and calves left undernourished to produce a mere twenty pounds of butter per trip by their vessel. That such a wretched practice was persisted in was a measure of the partners' desperation at that time. By 1830 the dairy was accepted as a failure, and the contract with Macguire was not renewed.

294 Berry to John Berry 22/11/1834, BP.
295 [Berry to Wollstonecraft] 5/6/[1823], BP.
296 Berry, 'Cursory remarks on Shoalhaven', June 1824, BP.
297 Berry to D. Souter 16/8/1824, Berry to Wollstonecraft 8/12/1829 & 26/2/1830, BP.
298 Berry to Wollstonecraft 29/8/1826, BP.
299 Berry to Wollstonecraft 29/8/1826, 24/3/1827 & 20/5/1827 quoted, Wollstonecraft to Berry 7/7/1829, 26/2/1830 & 14/10/1830, BP.
300 Berry to Wollstonecraft 22/6/1829, BP.
301 Wollstonecraft to Berry 1/10/1828, BP.
302 Berry to Wollstonecraft 26/2/1830, 16/6/1830 & n.d. [Mar. 1831], BP.
Pig raising was an almost inevitable adjunct to dairying where there was no other use for skimmed milk and Berry also believed that it would be 'a profitable & useful object of agriculture' to grow potatoes to feed pigs. Berry 'set no small store by the pigs as we may at little or no expense rear any number'. Styes were being erected in October 1822 and by April 1823 Berry was referring to pigs doing well on land to the south of Mount Coolangatta. In April 1824 the number was about two hundred and at the census of 1828 about the same. In July 1829 the curing of pork for sale began. Berry wished to turn their store into a smoke house and produce bacon and to issue the pork to their free workers because the market was low but Wollstonecraft, who considered any return at that time a god-send, vehemently rejected both proposals. Against Berry's wishes, Wollstonecraft sacrificed numbers for a marked improvement in the stock by spaying the coarser sows as well as cutting males.

In general the Shoalhaven district was too swampy for

303 [Berry to Wollstonecraft] 7/6/1823, BP.
304 Berry to Wollstonecraft 15/4/1823, BP.
305 D.Souter to Berry & Wollstonecraft 17/10/1822, BP.
306 Berry to Wollstonecraft 15/4/1823, BP.
307 Wollstonecraft to Elizabeth Wollstonecraft 17/4/1824, BP.
308 General Census of New South Wales November 1828, v I, No. 1079, Berry, Alexr.
309 Wollstonecraft to Berry 28/7/1829, BP.
310 Wollstonecraft to Berry 11 & 27/8/1829, BP.
311 Wollstonecraft to Berry 26/8/1829 & 7/10/1829, BP.
sheep\textsuperscript{312} and was infested with ticks.\textsuperscript{313} However, as large-scale agriculturists Berry & Wollstonecraft needed sheep for fertilizing cultivated land. Mutton served as well as beef to feed the work-force and the value of a sheep's wool was not be be despised.\textsuperscript{314} In June 1829 Wollstonecraft agreed to purchasing a few sheep, so long as they were 'large sized - low conditioned and cheap'\textsuperscript{315} Two months later Berry purchased a flock of 220, in low condition and some with scab.\textsuperscript{316} The sheep were found to do as well on drained land as they did elsewhere in New South Wales\textsuperscript{317} convincing Berry that they would prove 'one of the most valuable description of stock which we can possess'.\textsuperscript{318} The number reached about a thousand by the early eighteen thirties and stabilised at that figure.\textsuperscript{319} The first mention of shearing occurs in 1834.\textsuperscript{320}

In April 1824 there were twelve horses\textsuperscript{321} and in November 1828 forty-eight.\textsuperscript{322} In 1829 there were about twenty mares of varying ages to be served by Selim, a young stallion rated by surveyor Knapp 'the best Steeltrap Colt

\textsuperscript{312} Berry to W.Corben 27/1/1837, BP.
\textsuperscript{313} James Backhouse, \textit{A Narrative of a Visit to the Australian Colonies}, London 1843, 430.
\textsuperscript{314} Berry to Wollstonecraft 13/9/1829 & 7/1/1830, BP.
\textsuperscript{315} Wollstonecraft to Berry 12/6/1829, BP.
\textsuperscript{316} Wollstonecraft to Berry 21/8/1829, BP.
\textsuperscript{317} Berry to John Hedderick 30/11/1833, BP.
\textsuperscript{318} Berry to Wollstonecraft 7/1/1830, BP.
\textsuperscript{319} Berry to Hedderick 30/11/1833, Berry to John Berry 9/6/1835, BP.
\textsuperscript{320} Bayley, \textit{op.cit.}, 38.
\textsuperscript{321} Wollstonecraft to Elizabeth Wollstonecraft 17/4/1824, BP.
\textsuperscript{322} \textit{General Census of New South Wales November 1828}, v I, no. 1079, Berry, Alexr.
in the Colony'. 323 At the end of 1833 the estate ran upwards of a hundred horses. 324 Less attention was being given to horses than to any other aspect of the estate’s animal production. 325 The first sale of horses bred on the property occurred at the beginning of 1832. 326 In 1835 Berry was proud that one of his horses was considered the best in the Colony and that his new owner refused £60 for him although a gelding. 327

Inspired by contemplation of the salt works of the Blaxland brothers, pioneers of salt production in Australia from 1807, 328 Berry placed considerable emphasis for some years on expected advantages, financial and industrial, from engaging in manufacture of salt in evaporation pans to be created by shutting up some shoal bays of Crookhaven. 329 In October 1830 Berry informed his partner that he had sited the salt pan at the wharf [in Berry's Bay, Coolangatta] and had commenced in a temporary manner by boiling seawater. 330 The Berry papers give no indication of when or why Berry abandoned his plans for salt pans. By the eighteen forties large quantities of salt had to be purchased in Sydney for use on the estate.

It did not take long for Berry's selection of marshy land near the sea to be vindicated. In 1825-1826 a drought of gradually increasing severity set in across the Colony,

323 Wollstonecraft to Berry 28/8/1829 & 31/8/1829, quoting Knapp, Berry to Wollstonecraft 25/11/1830, BP.

324 Berry to Hedderick 30/11/1833, BP.

325 Berry to John Berry 9/6/1835, BP.

326 Berry to Wollstonecraft 4/1/1832, BP.

327 Berry to John Berry 9/6/1835, BP.

328 Walsh, 'Manufacturing', 255.

329 Berry, 'Cursory remarks on Shoal Haven', June 1824, BP.

330 Berry to Wollstonecraft 20/5/1827, BP.
lasting in general until Christmas 1829. It was not until the winter of 1829 that Shoalhaven became so dry that stock losses threatened and the drought broke there in September in time to rescue the wheat crop. In September 1825, when Numba was not paying its expenses, Berry received an expression of interest in taking it over in 1826 as it was, maintaining the establishment and paying £1,500 a year in rent. In 1829, a year in which the farm gave a great return Berry exulted that 'this place is an inexhaustible source of wealth which merely requires to be dug out' and that 'with all our troubles there is no such farm as ours in the Colony & but few in the world'.

After a visit in mid 1829 James Atkinson, the self-appointed authority on farming in New South Wales, told Berry that he thought the agricultural operations were conducted in a manner 'anything but Farmerlike', but

The improvements you have effected in clearing, inclosing and especially draining, are extremely judicious, and reflect infinite credit equally on your judgement and spirit .... I have never seen anything at all approaching to them in this Colony, and they are highly worthy of imitation. The improvements are in fact such in magnitude and character that I could hardly recognise the place as it is now six years since I was there last.

Berry came to enjoy telling friends and acquaintances back in Britain of the thriving estate he had developed at immense expense and with great pains and labour from a difficult natural state. In 1833, in the first such letter on record, he told boyhood friend John Hedderick of Cupar that his Shoalhaven estate of upwards of 30,000 acres was 'one of the largest & most valuable in the Country' with three agricultural and one dairy farm on the alluvial south bank with varied crops, stock of every kind thriving and

331 Berry to Wollstonecraft 12/10/1830, BP.
332 Berry to Wollstonecraft 5/9/1825, BP.
333 Berry to Wollstonecraft 30/10/1829, BP.
334 James Atkinson to Berry 4/6/1829, BP.
the beginnings of an extensive salt manufactory. In 1835 he wrote to his brother John that although many 'highly respectable people of superior rank' were then immigrating none of them could ever rear up an establishment equal to his own.

335 Berry to J. Hedderick 30/11/1833, BP.
336 Berry to John Berry 9/6/1835, BP.