“I would sooner be a convict than a Solger”
A Wollongong Convict writes Home: Part 1

Letters from convicts in early colonial times are rare, but a lucky chance has turned up two from a man, Charles Cartwright, to his family in Bedfordshire, the first written on 8th April 1842 from the Stockade at Wollongong, Illawarra. They are quite long, too long in fact for publication in one issue, so they will be serialized. This will give an opportunity for us to see what our convict has to say about Wollongong, and inevitably he will tell us something about himself. The same will go for the second letter. The third instalment will be an exercise in finding what the official records say of Cartwright, his deeds and misdeeds.
So here beginneth the first letter. But do not believe that the letter is Charles's own work; by comparison with the second, he employed a scribe; and the first was a lot better than the second, as will be seen. Though written ostensibly to the grieving transportation widow, it is clearly meant for the whole family, and reads as follows:

Since my arrival to this Colony on the 8th August 1838, I have been anxiously expecting that a more favourable opportunity would have presented itself of my writing, thinking that I should have been assigned to private service; but in consequence of the transportation to this Colony having been abolished it has done away with the system of assigning, therefore I have been detained on Government employ since my arrival; and not being settled at one place but sent to different places it has been awkward and very difficult for me to form an idea which way to proceed so that you would be enabled to send a letter that would find me.

It is with heartfelt gratitude I embrace the present opportunity or addressing this letter to you in hopes it will arrive safe and find you and my dear sons and daughters situated and enjoying good health, as this leaves me in good health for which I return thanks to Almighty God for all these blessings. I particularly desire you will take into consideration if you have any inclination of emigrating to this Colony and come without delay. It is a country wherein you and the children might get situations and do well and would be of great service to me.

I trust you will keep up your spirits as well as (you) can under such circumstances. I assure you, separated as you and self is, it is painful in the extreme considering the present charge under which I am innocently suffering as is well known and it is very heartrending to think at. I hope in the mercy of God that the period of sentence will be mitigated.

When I arrived in this Colony I was drafted to a place called Goat Island across the harbour at Sydney. From there I was drafted down to Parramatta, 15 miles from Sydney, where I remained twelve months assisting to build a new gaol for the reception of female convicts, after which I was sent down to the place called Five Island Stockade, building a harbour or dock for steamers and other trading vessels to load and reload their cargoes. I am stone cutting. There is a steamer which comes to this place from Sydney twice every week, besides other trading vessels.

This place of Wollongong is but small, similar to a country village in England. It contains four places for divine worship, two hotels, four inns and several stores for provisions. Their manners and customs in this Colony are in accordance with those of England.

To be continued
"I WOULD SOONER BE A CONVICT THAN A SOLDIER"

There are many blacks around the neighbourhood, all of which are civilized, but farther in the country they are still wild. The blacks are an indolent race of people. They will not work. They go wandering about in the Bush and subsist upon fish which they catch in the freshwater creeks and on the borders of the sea. Likewise they will spear Kangaroos and eat them — in fact everything the Bush contains.
This country is similar to a wild forest. There is nothing else to be seen but trees, scrub, bush, mountains, rocks and creeks. Although there are a hundred thousand acres of land in cultivation yet it cannot be seen until close upon it for the density of the Bush.

This district of Illawarra is in excellent order for the production of potatoes, pumpkins, wheat, oats, barley, Indian corn, turnips, onions, cabbages and in fact every other kind of vegetable fit for home consumption.

My dear wife, I trust you will give this letter to my father and mother. I trust that they are well. Likewise, to my dear brothers and sisters with the rest of their families to whom I particularly send my love. I hope fortune will smile upon me once again that I may have the pleasure once more of their company.

I will now give you an account of the price of different commodities:— the best wheaten bread 5d for 2lb loaf, beef and mutton 4d pr lb, milk 6d pr quart, cheese 1s 0d pr lb, tea 3s 6d pr lb, coffee 2s 0d pr lb, sugar 4½d pr lb, bacon 10d pr lb, pork 8d pr lb, potatoes 4s pr 100 lb, pumpkins from 2d to 2s 0d each, fowls 4s 0d a couple, ducks 6s 6d a couple, geese 8s 6d each, turkeys from 9s 0d to 18s 0d each. The fuel made use of principally is wood.

There are many emigrants (who have) come to this Colony from England, Ireland and Scotland, and the wages in circulation are as follows: shepherds and good farm servants to go with teams and ploughing will receive from £25 to £35 a year with daily rations domestic servants from £20 to £40 pr annum with daily rations according to each man's employment; female servants from £12 to £25 a year with rations, and a good carpenter, blacksmith, wheelwright, stone-cutter of mason, tailor of shoemaker will earn from 6s to 12s a day. A good cow with calf (costs) £10, a good horse about £60.

I hope you will tell John Sweepson's wife (of Maulden, Bedfordshire) that (he is here) and he is very well and will be glad to hear from her; likewise I desire you will upon receipt of this letter send me word how you and my sons and daughters are situated and whether you have any desire of coming. I should be very glad to see you and the children if there does not appear anything that will lessen my sentence, of which you can form an idea when you write me again.

I hope you will not fail in remembering me to my dear father and mother, likewise to my dear brothers and sisters with all their dear children, at the same time not forgetting my dear wife and children and may Almighty God bless you and them and all my dear relations severally, farewell, farewell.

As it is (a) known fact that I am suffering wrongfully, which you know to be as such, and if in (that) case you were to enquire into it,
I have not the least doubt there would be something done to mitigate my sufferings. Pray look into it and strive if you cannot obtain the needful as it only wants searching into. John Sweepson sent a letter to his wife eighteen months since, and I am sorry to say that he has not received any account whether it got safe to hand or whether any of his friends are living.

I desire you will not fail answering this immediately as I shall expect to hear something in the course of ten months from the date of this letter.
“I would sooner be a Convict than a Solger”
An Illawarra Convict writes Home: Part II

The publication of the first letter from Charles Cartwright in the April Bulletin mentioned that the scribe for the first letter was better than that for the second. Just how much better will appear from the second letter. Indeed, there is no saying that Cartwright wrote even this amusing but very informative effusion. It is a family letter, partly for his wife and children, and partly for his parents, with a stern message
for his brother Thomas thrown in. This letter is dated 14th July 1844, and is presumably also from Wollongong, though not from the Stockade, because Charles was now living in some comfort, as his letter shows. It reads:

Dear wife i resevied your kind letter and was glad to hear that you was all well as it leaves me at preasent thank god i was never better but i ham verye sorye to hear that my frends Should blame you for my been hear for it was no Shuch thing for had i been ruled by you i never Should have been hear so i hope they never will blame you no more and i think it very hard of my brother thomas to bid you Go out of my father house and Lay the blame to you for my been hear for it was not such thing but you his brother Thomas are married and are lick to ave a famely by what i can hear and i wish you to have much Joy and happy throught life bouth you and your wife and god allmighty bless you and your wife but i will tell you my lad you should not bounce for you Are born but.not berred so you no not what may be fall you but i was as glad to hear from you all as if anyey body had a gave me ten pounds and I ham verye happy to hear that you was all well but i was verye sorry to hear that my Sister Susen was dead and Leaving her two poor Littel babys be hiend her for i ham shore my brother James must be in a bad way with them two poor Children god nows — — — but i new some one was dead (belonging) to me for i see a grave open (in the Church yard (when) i (dreamed)

Dear father and mother i reseived your kind letter June 14th 1844 and i was verye happey to hear that you was all well as it Leaves me at preasent thank god i was never better and i have plenty to eat more than you do i ham Shore and plenty Cloes to ware and i ham Just the same as working on a farm at home onely i git no money for it but still i ham never with ough a Shling or two so as i Can all ways git a Glass of a Sunday when i Like and that is verye offen so you no Call to make your selves no ways unesey about me for i ham as well off as ever i was in my Life in one way but i Cannot go ware i Like not with out a pass now i will tell you what me and unother gits to eat in a week we have 02 pound of good floer 18 pounds Good beef 4 ounces of tee 3 pounds of Shauger 4 ounces of tabacker and what Garding Strip we Like and we Live in a house by our sevels so that we go in when we Like and out when we Like and that more than anye of you Can git to ate i now but it was not all ways so since i have been hear i have been short a nuff i Can tell you but not this Last 4 years.

Dear wife you say that you git a Comfortable Living but i ham a frad that his a poer Living but I know you will send me the best of it and god allmighty bless you with such a Living you say you should Lick to Come to mé but i Cannot see how i Can git you hear but i will tell you what you must do you must ask some person what takes the news paper when there his a hemagrant Ship a Coming to new South wales and weare that is a going to Start from and then you must make aplepleyction
and they will send you and be Glad of thee Chance for i wish 'you was hear for i Sould be Conted then that his all i Can do at preesent but i shall have my Liberty hin 12 month now and then i will see more about it so i give my best respet to you and all my Children but i sospose they are men and wimin now Sarah and William but you never told·my how my Little James and alizer was but i so spose they forget me now but god almighty bless you all but i shall see you all again if i Live and before Long so do not fret so you give my kind love to my father and mother and to all my brothers and sisters and to all my frends so God all mighty bless you all give my kind Love to hennery roberts and his wife and Children and to yours brothers James his wife and to James woodcraft and i ham glad he is at home again for i would sooner be a Convict then a Solger so no more at preasent from me your ever Loving husban Charles Cartwright.
"I WOULD SOONER BE A CONVICT THAN A SOLGER"

Note: When we tried to publish this series of articles in the Bulletins for April, May and June 1985, Gremlins crept in. The first convict letter became split into two parts, and in the course of publication much of the idiosyncrasy of spelling was corrected. Worst of all, however, was that your contributor failed to deliver the third part. Consequently the whole series lost its impact. Therefore it seems best to start again, after flushing out the gremlins, and hoping they stay out.

PART 1

Letters from convicts to their families in Great Britain are indeed rarities, so that two sent from Wollongong in the 1840s are to be treasured, and studied.

In Volume 40 of Publications of the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society (1940) two letters, held by the Bedfordshire County Record Office, are reproduced. They were written by one Charles Cartwright to his wife Elizabeth, living at Millbrook in that County, addressed from "Wollongong Stockade, Illawarra", which was clearly the convict stockade on Flagstaff Hill whence convicts worked to construct the first section of Wollongong Harbour ("the Pier"). The letters are long enough to require separate republication, so that this article will be divided into three parts; this, the first, will set out the first letter; the second letter, in the second part, will complete what Cartwright had to disclose of our locality and of himself; and then, in the third part, we will go through an exercise of simple historical research to find out what we can about the writer of these most interesting letters.

It will be seen later that Cartwright could read and write; but comparison with the second shows that this first letter was written on his behalf rather than by him. It is dated 8th April 1842.

"Since my arrival to this Colony on the 8th August 1838, I have been anxiously expecting that a more favourable opportunity would have presented itself of my writing, thinking that I should have been assigned to private service; but in consequence of the transportation to this Colony having been abolished it has done away with the system of assigning, therefore I have been detained on Government employ since my arrival; and not being settled at one place but sent to different places it has been awkward and very difficult for me to form an idea which way to proceed so that you would be enabled to send a letter that would find me.

"It is with heartfelt gratitude I embrace the present opportunity of addressing this letter to you in hopes it will arrive safe and find you and my dear sons and daughters situated and enjoying good health, as this leaves me in good health for which I return thanks to Almighty God for all these blessings. I particularly desire you will remember me to my dear children, and I further desire you will take into consideration if you have any inclination of emigrating to this Colony and come without delay. It is a country wherein you and the children might get situations and do well and would be of great service to me."
"I trust you will keep up your spirits as well as [you] can under such circumstances, I assure you, separated as you and self is, it is painful in the extreme considering the present charge under which I am innocently suffering as is well known and it is very heartrending to think at. I hope in the mercy of God that the period of sentence will be mitigated."

"When I arrived in this Colony I was drafted to a place called Goat Island across the harbour at Sydney. From there I was drafted down to Parramatta, 15 miles from Sydney, where I remained twelve months assisting to build a new gaol for the reception of female convicts, after which I was sent down to the place called Five Island Stockade, building a harbour or dock for steamers and other trading vessels to load and reload their cargoes. I am stone cutting. There is a steamer which comes to this place from Sydney twice every week, besides other trading vessels.

"This place of Wollongong is but small, similar to a country village in England. It contains four places for divine worship, two hotels, four inns and several stores for provisions. Their manners and customs in this Colony are in accordance with those of England.

"There are many blacks around the neighbourhood, all of which are civilized, but farther in the country they are still wild. The blacks are an indolent race of people. They will not work. They go wandering about in the Bush and subsist upon fish which they catch in the freshwater creeks and on the borders of the sea. Likewise they will spear Kangaroos and eat them — in fact everything the Bush contains.

"This country is similar to a wild forest. There is nothing else to be seen but trees, scrub, bush, mountains, rocks and creeks. Although there are a hundred thousand acres of land in cultivation yet it cannot be seen until close upon it for the density of the Bush.

"This district of Illawarra is in excellent order for the production of potatoes, pumpkins, wheat, oats, barley, Indian corn, turnips, onions, cabbages and in fact every other kind of vegetable fit for home consumption.

"My dear wife, I trust you will give this letter to my father and mother I trust that they are well. Likewise, to my dear brothers and sisters with the rest of their families to whom I particularly send my love. I hope fortune will smile upon me once again that I may have the pleasure once more of their company.

"I will now give you an account of the price of different commodities: — the best wheaten bread 5d for 2lb loaf; beef and mutton 4d pr lb, milk 6d pr quart, cheese 1s 0d pr lb, tea 3s 6d pr lb, coffee 2s 0d pr lb, sugar 4½d pr lb, bacon 10d pr lb, pork 8d pr lb, potatoes 4s pr 100lb, pumpkins from 2d to 2s 0d each, fowls 4s 0d a couple, ducks 6s 6d a couple, geese 8s 6d each, turkeys from 9s 0d to 18s 0d each. The fuel made use of principally is wood.

"There are many emigrants [who have] come to this Colony from England, Ireland and Scotland, and the wages in circulation are as follows: shepherds and good farm servants to go with teams and ploughing will receive from £25 to £35 a year with daily rations; domestic servants from £20 to £40 pr annum with daily rations according to each man's employment; female servants from £12 to £25 a year with rations, and a good carpenter, blacksmith, wheelwright, stone-cutter or mason, tailor or shoemaker will earn from 6s to 12s a day. A good cow with calf [costs] £10, a good horse about £60.

"I hope you will tell John Sweepson's wife [of Maulden, Bedfordshire] that [he is here] and he is very well and will be glad to hear from her; likewise I desire you will upon receipt of this letter send me word how you and my sons and daughters are situated and whether you have any desire of coming. I should be very
glad to see you and the children if there does not appear anything that will lessen my sentence, of which you can form an idea when you write me again.

"I hope you will not fail in remembering me to my dear father and mother, likewise to my dear brothers and sisters with all their dear children, at the same time not forgetting my dear wife and children, and, may Almighty God bless you and them and all my dear relations severally, farewell, farewell.

"As it is [a] known fact that I am suffering wrongfully, which you know to be as such, and if in [that] case you were to enquire into it, I have not the least doubt there would be something done to mitigate my sufferings. Pray look into it and strive if you cannot obtain the needful as it only wants searching into. John Sweepson sent a letter to his wife eighteen months since, and I am sorry to say that he has not received any account whether it got safe to hand or whether any of his friends are living.

"I desire you will not fail answering this immediately as I shall expect to hear something in the course of ten months from the date of this letter."

Two comments are called for. First, although Cartwright was correct about the suspension of transportation and interruption of the system of assignment of convicts, his reasons for not having written home during nearly four years from his arrival in Sydney are specious; it is not to be thought that he was unable to communicate earlier with his family had he wished to do so. Second, his protestation of innocence in the face of his conviction will fall for analysis in the third part of this article.
PART II

The second letter of Cartwright the convict, 'written in an illiterate hand with phonetic spelling', is not like the first, dated from the stockade on Flagstaff Hill. Instead, he seems to have been living in a house. The point made by this letter is that, subject to good conduct, convicts did not have such a bad time of it at all; whilst something akin to the horrors depicted in such novels as For the Term of his Natural Life did exist, those were for the really bad ones; for many convicts it was difficult to tell the bond from the free. Cartwright makes it quite clear that life for him was easily tolerable. This letter is dated 14th July 1844. It may be assumed that, as distinct from the first, this was his own work; he was no scholar, but he could communicate effectively enough, allowing for a little confusion when in a letter to his wife he sometimes addressed himself to his brother Tom and to his parents also:

"Dear wife i receivied your kind letter and was glad to hear that you was all well as it leaves me at present thank god i was never better but i ham very sorry to hear that my friends Should blame you for my been hear for it was no Shuch thing for had i been ruled by you i never Should have been hear so i hope they never will blame you no more and i think it very hard of my brother thomas to bid you Go out of my father house and Lay the blame to you for my been hear for it was not such thing but you are married and are lick to Ave a famely by what i can hear and i wish you to have much Joy and happy through life both you and your wife and god allmighty bless you and your wife but i will tell you my lad you should not bounce for you Are born but not berred so you no not what may be fall you but i was as glad to hear from you all as if any body had a gave me ten pounds and i ham very happy to hear that you was all well but i was very sorry to hear that my Sister Susen was dead and Leaving her two poor Littel babys be hiend her for i ham shore my brother James must be in a bad way with them two poor Children god knows -- but i new some one was dead [belonging] to me for i see a grave open [in the] Church yard [when] i [dreamed]"

"Dear father and mother i receivied your kind letter June 14th 1844 and i was very happy to hear that you was all well as it Leaves me at present thank god i was never better and i have plenty to eat more than you do i ham Shore and plenty Cloes to ware and i ham Just the same as working on a farm at home onely i git no money for it but still i ham never with ought a Shling or two so as i Can all ways git a Glass of a Sunday when i Like and that is very often so you no Call to make your selves no ways unesey about me for i ham as well off as ever i was in my Life
in one way but i Cannot go ware i Like not with out a pass now i will tell you what me and unothe r gits to eat in a week we have 20 pound of good flour 18 pounds Good beef 4 ounces of tee 3 pounds of Shouger 4 ounces of tobacker and what Garding Strip we Like and we Live in a house by our sevels so that we go in when we Like and out when we Like and that more than any of you Can git to ate i now but it was not all ways so since i have been hear i have been short a nuff i Can tell you but not this Last 4 years.

"Dear wife you say that you git a Comfortable Living but i ham a frad that his a poer Living but I know you will send me the best of it and god allmighty bless you with such a Living you say you should Lick to Come to me but i Cannot see how i Can git you hear but i will tell you what you must do you must ask some person what takes the news paper when there his a hemagrant Ship a Coming to new South wales and weare that is a going to Start from and then you must make aplepleyction and they will send you and be Glad of thee Chance for i wish you was hear for i Should be Conted then that his all i Can do at preesent but i shall have my Liberty hin 12 month now and then i will see more about it so i give my best respet to you and all my Children but i sospose they are men and wimin now Sarah and William but you never told me how my Little James and alizer was but i so spose they forget me now but god almighty bless you all but i shall see you all again if i Live and before L'ong so do not fret so you give my kind love to my father and mother and to all my brothers and sisters and to all my frends so God allmighty bless you all give my kind Love to hennery roberts and his wife and Children and to yours brothers James his wife and to James woodcraft and i ham glad he is at home again for i would sooner be a Convict then a Solger so no more at preasent from me your ever Loving husban Charles Cartwright."

(End of Part II)

(To be continued ...)

- Edgar Beale
"I WOULD SOONER BE A CONVICT THAN A SOLGER"
PART III

What of the man who wrote these two fascinating letters? Let us now find out what we can of him.

Enquiry of the Bedfordshire County Record Office shows that Charles Cartwright was no angel; few convicts were, despite sentimental views widely held to the contrary. Starting life in youthful innocence when born at Millbrook on 16th January 1805, he was baptised on 31st March 1805. His life of crime began in 1826 when, aged only about eleven, he maliciously damaged Millbrook Church, thereby earning three months in the House of Correction; he got another three months in May 1829 for burning and destroying five wheelbarows; in February 1833 he received four months for breaches of the game laws and assault; in April 1835 he received fourteen days of hard labour for damaging a tree, and in the following May fifteen months for rioting. So when on 15th July 1837 at the Summer Assizes in Bedfordshire he was found guilty of what, for the moment, we will simply call a serious crime, he could expect a heavy penalty; in his case the death sentence was pronounced, but was later commuted to transportation for life.

The varying descriptions of his crime are typical, illustrating a strange feature in convict records generally whereby offences were often understated. In Cartwright's case one reason may have been a failure of the clerk of the court to comprehend the technical features of the offence, which he accordingly described in general terms. Other reasons noted by historians for this sort of understatement are fellow-sympathy and a degree of laziness; if one offence is enough to secure transportation or death, why bother about entering more than one? Cartwright's crime is variously noted as poaching and highway robbery, this latter crime being at this time not a Dick Turpin exercise so much as what we would now call mugging; Mayhew's famous researches show this. The official record must stand, however; Cartwright feloniously assaulted one Daniel Tingay putting him in bodily fear and danger of his life, and robbing him of half a sovereign and two half-crown pieces. This took place in the early hours of the morning; Tingay was a game-keeper who encountered Cartwright and another man (who escaped capture) as they were using a path through the woods the keeper was guarding. It is strange that this man was carrying on his person what for those days was a large sum of money - perhaps a week's pay, or more - and that Cartwright and friend as mere trespassers knew of it. In this regard Cartwright's protestation of innocence in the first letter will be recalled; but in the second he admits that if he had heeded his wife, he would have kept out of trouble, which surely is an admission. It is hard, overall, to conceive any miscarriage of justice. Charlie Cartwright's previous record does not help him now any more than it did then.
Be this as it may, it was Botany Bay for him. The Bedfordshire records end with a note that he went to Australia on the ship Ganymede, but search shows that there was no such convict ship at the time. However, Cartwright’s recollection of the day of his arrival in Sydney (8th August 1838, as stated in the first letter) happens to be correct; on that day, according to Bateson’s Convict Ships, the Lord Lyndoch arrived; and, surely enough, there in the Indent Roll (Archives Office, Sydney, Reel 908) is our man Charles Cartwright. We can now see him in person; he is a married man with two sons and two daughters; he reads and writes (in a sort of a way, as his letters reveal), is a Protestant, is aged 32, and had been a farm labourer. The record lists only one of his five previous convictions. In person he was 5’8½” in height, with dark sallow and freckled complexion, brown hair, and hazel grey eyes. He was marked by a scar on the right side of his forehead, moles on his left cheek near the nose and two on the left side of his upper lip; he was further scarred on the back of his right wrist with two others on his left knee. Both hands were a little crooked, a fact which, in a man of only about thirty-three years of age, speaks of a life of hard manual labour.

It was the practice to note on the Indent details of any further offences committed in the colony; Cartwright’s record, however, is clear. His letters give his movements on arrival: at Goat Island and so on, and thence to a happier life in Wollongong. Even though he was a lifer, he could expect a remission. In his second letter of 1844 he says he expected his liberty in about a year, and he was not far out. On Reel 957 in the Archives Office, under date 14th October 1845, we find the butt of his Ticket of Leave, which came to him because his colonial record was still unblemished. The only condition of his ticket of leave (it was not a remission of sentence or conditional pardon) is that he should remain where he then was, namely at Parramatta, though in January 1849 the place was changed to Bathurst.

The only probable search likely to complete Cartwright’s life story in its rather sad inconsequence was to trace his death. The search was successful; it is shown as having taken place on 11th July 1866 at what was called Campbell’s River; the undertaker came from Bathurst, and the body was buried at Charlton. Cartwright died without any doctor at the end of a three-weeks bout of influenza, still a labourer working for a tenant farmer. In the intervening nineteen years since earning his ticket of leave he had been unable to return home; nor, apparently, had his wife or family been able to join him in the colony. These facts appear from the death certificate, in which details of marriage and issue are comprehensively but negatively covered: “Particulars unknown”.

So there you have the potted biography of a convict, a life which could well be typical of many thousands. By his own admission, and by his criminal record poor Cartwright deserved the death sentence according to the harsh laws of his time; and he was lucky to have had his sentence commuted to transportation for life. But, once in the colony, he seems to have given no trouble, even if the long delays in contacting his family show him to have been no ideal husband, and not much of a son or brother either. Instead, he seems to have adapted himself to colonial life, which suggests a measure of contentment. True, in the early days at Wollongong he would have been locked up at night in one of the portable “boxes” in which a dozen or so of convicts slept and which, in a small cluster with a guard’s hut, made up the stockade. Daily he would be taken down to the harbour-works where one may fairly envisage him with others deepening the
waterway or cutting huge blocks of rock to face the "pier" as we see it today, his gnarled hands wielding sledge-hammer, wedge and a pointed iron spike known as a gad, after which the block would have to be squared by pick, and then hauled and levered into place. Not much of a life, of course, even if Wollongong convicts at the time did not work in chains; but, on Cartwright's own say-so, the life was better than a soldier's, anyway!

Certainly, he does not seem to have made any effort to return to native Bedfordshire. Far from it; he made his way to remote farmlands in the upper reaches of the Macquarie River, well out of Bathurst. Very probably the life there was better than he could expect if he had gone "home" to his family, and equally probably Australia had taken that firm grip upon him as it did with so many. And here he remained until influenza claimed him at the age of fifty-six. There is nothing to indicate that in his quiet way he had not completely lived down his early life of crime and taken his place in the anonymous workforce of the colony.

"The short and simple annals of the poor"? Indeed!

Edgar Beale