

# CONVICTION POLITICS

THE SPIRIT OF DEMOCRACY AND TRADE UNIONISM ARRIVED IN AUSTRALIA SHACKLED IN CHAINS



**MONASH**  
University

## Welcome to the Conviction Politics newsletter.

The second bi-monthly update of this unique ARC Linkage international research collaboration.

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### [Conviction Politics website](#)

School of Media, Film & Journalism,  
Monash Faculty of Arts in collaboration  
with SensiLab, Faculty of Information  
Technology.

### In partnership with:

Australian Catholic University, Griffith  
University, Deakin University, University of  
Tasmania, University of NSW, University  
College Dublin and University of South  
Wales.

### Partner Organisations:

Roar Film, Tasmanian, Museum & Art  
Gallery, Tasmanian Archives & Heritage  
Office, NSW Teachers Federation, National  
Museum of Australia, The Union Education  
Foundation, Australian Manufacturing  
Workers Union, Trades Union Congress,  
People's History Museum Manchester & the  
National Records of Scotland.



## Inside at a glance:

- 6 inspirational musical animations produced in lockdown
- Digital 'Roll of Dishonour' to commemorate convicts
- Creating school education resources
- New collaborating scholar
- Data visualisation progress full steam ahead
- Digital archive research update
- New publications

plus plenty more...

## Innovative Multimedia Production

Working designs by Roar Film for different parts of the online Conviction Politics transmedia Hub have been enthusiastically received and feedback from Australian Partner Organisations and academic Chief Investigators is being implemented. We are now progressing the technical set up of the Hub and purchase of cloud space with the build commencing in August.

## 6 Inspirational Musical Animations Produced in Lockdown

Roar Film secured a \$30,000 grant from a Tasmanian Government Covid-19 initiative to assist with animation based production that can occur during the period of lockdowns, border closures and social distancing. Roar will now focus on completing 6 x short animations as part of the Conviction Politics suite of micro-documentaries, revealing new stories of convict resistance and political impact that will also feature new music and re-worked traditional songs from musician and project musical director Mick Thomas along with a range of musical collaborators. Mick and Roar Creative Director Steve Thomas are currently working with singer/songwriters Ben Salter (Hobart) and Clio Renner (Melbourne). The animation topics are:

### Travelling Digital Exhibition



Scottish Martyrs handkerchief from the collections of the State Library of NSW

Discussions with Partner Organisations Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, National Museum of Australia, regarding exhibition theme ideas and scoping occurred via Zoom at the end of July. Elspeth Wishart, Senior Curator at Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery has locked in the exhibition opening in February and continuing until May 2024. Chief Investigators have already begun compiling exhibition theme ideas as well as lists of objects, images, media and music to explore. An integral part of the exhibition will be content external to the venues, with curated tours of convict and political resistance sites and landscapes such as Cockatoo Island in Sydney Harbour and Port Arthur, brought to life by projections and virtual and augmented reality via devices.

1. Roar is working up a haunting version of the Robbie Burns song *For All That (a man's a man)* which we will record and film (Covid safely) in early August. The film will use animated archival visuals from the life of Thomas Muir, radical lawyer and first political prisoner transported to Australia (for sedition in 1793) to tell the story of Muir's inspiring and tragic life as a Scottish media activist for democratic reform sentenced to 14 years exile in NSW. Muir escaped Sydney on an American vessel and crossed the Pacific, North America and the Atlantic in a tale of adventure and suffering, to be welcomed into Paris as revolutionary hero.

2. Mick and Steve are working on a treatment for a documentary based on an uprising at the Hobart Female Factory information supplied by Hamish Maxwell-Stewart and Lucy Frost. Mick has penned a short song and we will animate images over the music and incorporate interviews to intro and outro the film. A women's choir is to sing this song.

3. The Cypress Brig - the story of a ship hijacked by convicts bound from Hobart to Macquarie Harbour in 1829, in a mutiny that took them all the way to Japan, where they were forcibly expelled by samurai, who left records of the event only recently discovered, corroborating a legendary account that inspired a nineteenth century ballad. Ben Salter is working on music and song for this. Our plan is to use the nineteenth century colour Japanese drawings of the event as our style guide and create animations based on these.

4. Convict Tattoos - 'May the sun never set on the house of the slave nor rise on the palace of the tyrant'. The plan for this animation is make an iconic film covering a number of themes intercutting animations of political tattoos with a song by Mick and Ben Salter that features verses from like-minded singers around the world such as Billy Bragg (UK), Ron Hawkins (Canada), Shelley Short (US), Lisa O'Neill (Ireland), Clio Renner, Van Walker (Melb), (indicative list only at this stage).

## PhD Scholarships

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The *PhD Scholarship in a Multimedia Digital History Project - Investigating the impacts of convicts on Australian democracy* was awarded to Daisy Bailey. Daisy officially commenced on the project at the beginning of July, 2020. Daisy has jumped straight into her research and already begun going through history of emotions literature for methods and theories to apply to media sources as well as producing a table of legislation relating to a political crimes during the period of transportation, and exploring newspapers such as *Irish Exile and Freedom's Advocate* on Trove. We look forward to Daisy's input and collaboration.

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The Monash team has developed a practice-based interdisciplinary PhD scholarship researching new approaches in Augmented and Virtual Reality to enhance the exhibition, online and documentary interactive experiences of Conviction Politics audiences. The successful PhD applicant will be jointly supervised by scholars from the School of Media, Film and Journalism and SensiLab: Assoc Prof Tony Moore, and Professors Jon McCormack, Kim Marriott and Mark Andrejevik. The scholarship advertised can be found [here](#).

5. Kevin O'Doherty and Mary Kelly: 'Children of the Revolution' - O'Doherty was a Young Ireland activist transported to Van Diemen's Land for his role with *The Nation* newspaper in the failed 1848 Irish revolution. While his fiancé radical poet Mary Kelly (aka Eva of the Nation) kept the cause alive in Ireland. Eva became an Australian poet, and Kevin a reforming Queensland health minister, champion of Irish Australians, and opponent of the kidnapping of Torres Strait Islanders indentured as slave labour in Australian plantations. We are working up a song drawing on the poetry to tell the story of O'Doherty's convict life from Mary's perspective.

6. Tolpuddle! - we are developing a surprising treatment of the Tolpuddle Martyr's story of 6 agricultural workers transported for forming a union in 1834, with contemporary song and striking visuals.

### **Congratulations to...**

Chief Investigator Steve Thomas and Partner Organisation Roar Film for producing the documentary *Looky Looky Here Comes Cooky* exploring from an Indigenous perspective the encounter with Captain James Cook 250 years ago. The film is directed by Steven McGregor, presented by Steven Oliver, co-written by Danielle MacClean, Oliver and McGregor and features original songs by an array of Indigenous performers including Kev Carmody, Alice Skye, Alice Skye, Birdz and Mau Power. The documentary premieres at [The Melbourne International Film Festival](#) on the 16th August and broadcasts on [SBS Viceland and NITV](#) on the 20th August, 2020.

## School Education Resources

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Discussions are well underway with Partner Organisation the NSW Teachers Federation to ensure that the project provides the best educational and training resources possible. Many links between the project and educational syllabus of both primary and secondary school levels have been determined. Next steps are looking at reaching out to NSW TF members, especially teachers in the areas of history, civics and legal studies through a seminar preferably in person in Sydney once restrictions are lifted and collaborate on shaping these vital resources.

## British and Irish Partners Workshop

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On August 12th we will be holding our first UK/Ireland workshop. No longer in person as previously planned but zoom will suffice in getting everyone together virtually for a much anticipated exchange on all things Conviction Politics, including a sneak peek of the transmedia hub and discussion of the first 6 micro-documentaries currently in production.

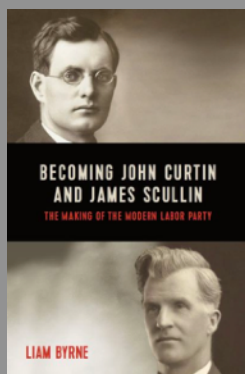
## Archive Research Update:

*As we are still amidst Covid-19 restrictions to varying degrees, academic chief investigators are continuing online research of catalogues and digitised online accessible archives and mastering database entry protocols.*

*Detailed next:*

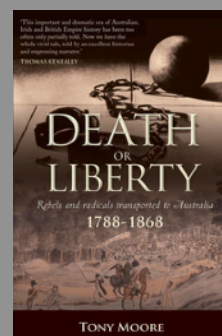
- June and July saw the first two monthly meetings of the project's Political Prisoner team in which division of research, database collaboration and input and digital archive collections were reviewed. Plus a lexicon of political crimes was created with a view to build upon terms and the extent of political prisoners transported as research progresses.
- Associate Professor Nick Carter from the Australian Catholic University held a zoom meeting with Professor Chris Evans from Partner Organisation the University of South Wales to discuss exhibition plans to date as well as student involvement with the project via placement with Gwent archives. They also came up with the idea of cross events involving USW students and Conviction Politics researchers in Australia, and also joint school projects to be undertaken by Welsh schools matched with schools in NSW and Tasmania. This is something that our Partner Organisations the NSW Teachers Federation and Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office can assist with. Plans are being developed in preparation for the next semester after the UK summer break.
- Dr Mike Davis from Griffith University, has been busy putting together dossiers using newspaper sources of political criminals in the 1790s. He explains that this will give us the names of those people in Britain who were convicted of political crimes and some of those were transported and will be directly relevant to this project. Dr Davis is also working on an article on the outdoor meetings of the London Corresponding Society and the fear of convocation and collective action of the 1790s which overlaps with some of the themes of Conviction Politics also.

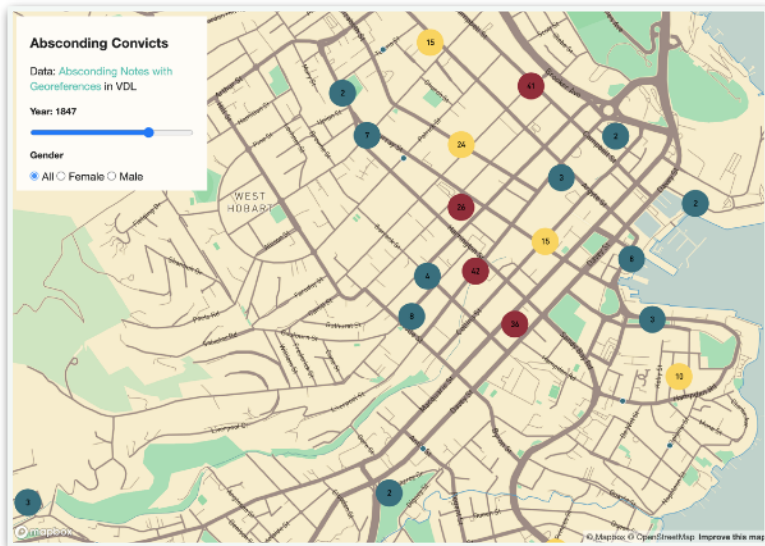
## Publications



Congratulations to Dr Liam Byrne, ACTU Historian on the successful launch earlier this month of the new biography [Becoming John Curtin and James Scullin: Their early political careers and the making of the modern Labor Party](#). The monograph reveals new insights into the youthful activism of both future Prime Ministers and their part in the events and ideas that shaped the modern Labor Party. Liam is a representative of Partner Organisation The Union Education Foundation.

Copies of Tony Moore's book *Death or Liberty: rebels and radicals transported to Australia*, published by Murdoch Books/Allen & Unwin can be found [here](#) and the documentary film adaptation directed by Steve Thomas and Keith Farrell and produced by Roar Film can be found [here](#).





## SensiLab Data Visualisations

Research Assistant, Dr Monika Schwarz from SensiLab, has made valuable progress creating visualisations from various convict datasets shared by University of Tasmania. These include charts on the overall number of convicts in Australia separated by gender, arrival destination and origin as well as political background. Dr Schwarz has also been working on geocoding locations and spatial representations of absconding events. Along with SensiLab team members Professor Kim Marriott and Professor Jon McCormack they have also begun work on timelines for some individual convicts for the whole period of transportation, detailing life course events like their trial, transportation, colonial offences and pardons. These will be able to be brought together by different searches such as arrival ships, conduct registers or employers to demonstrate patterns of collective resistance and political impact and networks. Work on such example timelines is a key part of the ideation process (the creative workflow used to decide on the elements to be implemented) about visualisations on convicts, political and otherwise.

## UTAS Data Analysis Team

Professor Hamish Maxwell-Stewart and Dr Trudy Cowley (the Conviction Politics Research Assistant and Founders and Survivors database administrator) at the University of Tasmania have made a strong start on linking together all of the employer locations for assigned convicts, which is important information that will assist in geolocating convict work gangs, and patterns of resistance in conduct registers, including absconding, refusal to work, and court action by convicts against masters.

Professor Michael Quinlan (University of NSW) has completed the mammoth task of going through all the bench books in Tasmania. He reports that we are now getting towards 6500 instances of convict collective action which we can now begin to chart, we'll soon be able to locate every instance of collective action and map it digitally.

## New Collaborating Scholar

We also welcomed to the project as a collaborating researcher Dr Richard Tuffin, Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of New England in NSW. With a special interest in archeology Dr Tuffin's recent projects include [Convict labour landscapes, Port Arthur 1830 - 1877](#), a collaborative project with the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority. Although currently on hiatus due to Covid-19 restrictions, a team of archaeologists will uncover evidence of the multi-phase convict-period workshops that had been situated in the area of the Tasman Peninsula (Tasmania, Australia), in particular the former penal settlement of Port Arthur (1830-77). The workshops were integral to the operation of the Port Arthur penal station (1830-77), a large and important centre of convict incarceration in Van Diemen's Land, Tasmania. The mapping and offence data compiled by Dr Tuffin will feed into the Founders and Survivors convict database giving us that locational data and ability to geo tag and locate convicts and activities that the Conviction politics project is uncovering.

# Interactive Cenotaph to the Convicts who built Australia's Foundations

The creation of a 'Roll of Dishonour' that names every convict transported to Australia is a central aim of Conviction Politics. We envisage that our roll will be digitally rendered in order to resemble a conventional roll of honour — a long list of names ordered by date and ship of arrival. The difference will be that many of the names will have further information attached to them. We are particularly keen to do this for the men and women transported for politically motivated offences. We also intend to identify those that were involved in collective or other acts of resistance in the Australian colonies.

The idea is that when a user clicks on these names, they will be able to access a life course line. As well as plotting key points in a convict's life this would have a couple of additional novel features. Some events, such as the date a convict refused to work, will also be clickable revealing the parallel lives of those charged with participating in the same event. We will also map many locations, in effect combining the 'Roll of Dishonour' with the attributes of a convict atlas. This will enable users to identify the locations in which convicts were deployed as well as to see the geographical scale of convict resistance.

A 'Roll of Dishonour' can become a multipurpose tool, linking users to digital images of original records held in libraries and archives, as well as relevant museum objects. It could also become an important tool for branding and organising convict heritage experiences (we are currently in talks with Tasmanian State Government about the huge potential for this). We also think that there is potential for unions, other organisations and individuals to add their own acknowledgments to this virtual cenotaph. Such a memorial to the “knotted hands that set us high” would be unique. It would be an honour board where the dishonour of the past could be erased, and each act remembrance would leave its own indelible global imprint. It would be a fitting way to remember those that “left their country for their countries good” to form a new democracy on the other side of the world.

