

1.

First Blood: John Brown and Richard Lemon

Neither man could ever have entertained the faintest expectation that he would make history. They were just a couple of petty criminals, one in Ireland, the other in England, who were individually apprehended, tried, and transported to New South Wales and later to Tasmania, where each absconded, eventually to join forces. But despite their unprepossessing beginnings, John Brown and Richard Lemon went on to achieve a unique place in Australian history.

They became the country's first recorded serial killers.

The full extent of their depredations more than two centuries ago and the actual number of their victims will never be certain. Although they were originally sent to New South Wales, the crimes ensuring their sanguinary place in history were committed later, in Tasmania between October 1807 and March 1808. At that time there was no newspaper in either of the island colony's two tiny settlements and official records were scantily kept, if kept at all. There is no Tasmanian convict conduct record for either man and not much readily identifiable New South Wales record. The motives for their murders are unknown but inferable, yet the day-to-day details of their brief and bloody rampage are lost in time.

John Brown's name is too common to make him easy to identify among the convicts in Sydney, the mother colony, in the early years of the nineteenth century. There were at least two Irish prisoners of that name in the Sydney area (as well as a Scottish-born John Brown who was tried and sentenced in Ireland) and two others (who might in fact have been the same men) who used *John Brown* as an alias. One John Brown was sentenced to death there in 1803 for stealing wheat, although it is uncertain whether the sentence was carried out or commuted. Another—or the same—John Brown was flogged in March 1804 for being absent from government labour for several weeks without leave.

Nevertheless, two likely candidates suggest themselves in New South Wales convict records:³

- John Brown, tried Limerick 1800, arrived per *Atlas* 1802
- John Brown, tried Londonderry 1801, arrived per *Hercules* 1801

Since it is known that the Tasmanian serial killer spoke Irish, the John Brown tried at Limerick, in Gaelic-speaking western Ireland, is more likely to have been the man who was soon to join Richard Lemon in leaving indelible bloodstains on Australian history.

Brown was not to stay in Sydney. In February 1804 the first British settlement in northern Tasmania, known as Port Dalrymple, was established in the Tamar Valley under the command of Lieutenant-Governor William Paterson. Convict labour was essential for the settlement's establishment and growth, and Brown was among those embarked in chains in the *Buffalo* at Sydney on 14 October 1804. The ship reached the Tamar about three weeks later, on 3 November. Brown was immediately assigned as a labourer to one of the settlers struggling to establish farms there.

The fact that his being sent to Port Dalrymple was only seven months after a John Brown was flogged in Sydney for absconding suggests they might have been the same man, for the new arrival absconded from the Tamar in March-April 1806, some sixteen months after arriving, with another prisoner whose name is unrecorded. In a letter to London dated 25 August 1807, Paterson wrote that 'Not less than ten prisoners have absconded with their Masters' Dogs, fire-arms, etc., and are living in the woods and Mountains ... It is but a few days since ... two ... runaways (who have been absent for sixteen Months) seized on two of the Soldiers who were collecting firewood, tied, and carried them to their Post, robbed them of everything, their arms and ammunition, and effected their escape.'⁴ John Brown was one of the ten; he

³ <http://members.pcug.org.au/~ppmay/cgi-bin/irish/irish.cgi>

⁴ *Historical Records of Australia* Series III Vol. 1, p. 671.

was probably also one of the two 'absent for sixteen months'.⁵ His precise movements during the eighteen months between his absconding and his teaming up with Lemon are unknowable. He certainly joined a group of other absconders and they kept on the move. The New South Wales Governor, William Bligh, in a letter to Hobart's Lieutenant-Governor David Collins dated 1 October 1807, specifically referred to prisoners deserting from the Tamar settlement to the Derwent settlement at Hobart, so it seems the runaways kept moving between the two settlements via the east coast. Brown would use knowledge gained that way when he joined forces with Richard Lemon.

At the time of Brown's escape, Lemon was still a convict in Sydney and so could not have absconded from the Tamar with him, as is usually claimed. Brown's escape was not only earlier than Lemon's but well before Lemon ever set foot in Tasmania.⁶

Unlike Brown, Richard Lemon can be identified with certainty. He was a labourer, born about 1789 (probably at Beckenham, Kent) and tried at Kingston, Surrey, on 21 March 1803, aged fourteen. Sentenced to transportation for life, he was incarcerated in the prison hulk *Retribution* at Woolwich on 29 April before being transferred to the convict transport *Coromandel*, which sailed in November 1803. He arrived in Sydney on 7 May 1804, aged about fifteen, and was assigned to the surgeon John Harris, who had a fourteen-hectare grant called Ultimo Farm between the church land (now the Sydney suburb of Glebe) and the land at the head of Cockle Bay that was used as a brickfield. Despite the severity of his sentence, Lemon was neither chastened nor reformed and was soon embroiled in further crimes. The *Sydney Gazette* of 27 October 1805 provides some insight into his youthful character, as well as a glimpse of the criminal milieu he inhabited. It reported

⁵ Paterson, reporting Brown's recapture in March 1808, stated that he had escaped 'two years ago', which confirms the March-April 1806 date. (*HRA Series III* Vol. 1, pp. 685-6.)

⁶ On 15 August 1807 the diary of Rev. Robert Knopwood, Hobart's first chaplain, recorded a John Brown being one of fourteen 'Prisoners which are bushrangers at this time', but according to Tipping, *Convicts Unbound*, p. 259, that was a different man, a former servant of Lieutenant James Johnson in Hobart.

a bench of magistrates assembling on 25 October to hear charges against four convicts.

Richard Lemon, a lad about 17 years of age, stood charged with various robberies perpetrated within the space of the last few months.

J. Evans, a labourer and indented servant to J. Harris, Esq. stood charged as an accomplice;

Elizabeth Lily stood charged as a receiver of stolen goods; and

Henry Harding, a fellow servant with the two male delinquents, was accused of having partaken of the property feloniously obtained by *Lemon*, well knowing in what manner it had been so obtained; and moreover with having encouraged and taken advantage of his vices, by swindling him at *cards* of the wages of his iniquity.

A quantity of wearing apparel found in the possession of *Elizabeth Lily*, was proved to be the property of I. Sutherland, a private in the N.S.W. Corps, who had been twice plundered by the same villains, as acknowledged by *Lemon* from whom the woman had received the property. This youthful miscreant declared the fact of having committed the said robbery by himself; but in his acknowledgment of the first implicated *Evans*, who not only accompanied him, but officiated as *treasurer*, and paid him his *dividend*. Another felony committed upon the property of A. Snowden, was likewise proved against the prisoners; and in aggravation of the crime itself it appeared, that the latter was a fellow workman, employed by the same Gentleman, and in daily habits of intimacy and friendly intercourse. *Lemon* acknowledged the fact; and *Evans* likewise acknowledged that he had told him of it; but gave as a reason for keeping it a secret from Snowden, that he did not like to promote dissension among friends.

Lemon, not content with practising his villainies upon his friends and acquaintances ... at length threw himself into the arms of justice by a theft *upon his Master*, which tho' trivial bespoke him infamous, and justified suspicion of his guilt in crimes of which he had been indirectly challenged

...

All the parties were remanded.

When the magistrates reconvened nine days later, Lemon was given only light punishment.

At a bench of Magistrates convened on Monday [4 November], the following persons were examined, viz. *William Evans*, labourer, for larceny; *Henry Harding*, for gambling with Lemon, a boy, and obtaining money from him under a consciousness that he had dishonestly become possessed of it, was ordered to receive 50 lashes, and to work in irons in the gaol gang; *Richard Lemon*, charged with various petty thefts, all which he acknowledged himself guilty of, was in consideration of his voluntary information to the Magistrates, and other favorable circumstances, excused any further punishment than the gaol gang; and *Elizabeth Lily*, for receiving the property stolen by Lemon, was ordered to work three years for the Crown, to commence from the expiration of her original term of transportation.⁷

It makes Lemon sound merely immature and innocuous—a habitual thief, certainly, but nothing suggests a youth of homicidal bent. He and Brown are sometimes said to have been responsible for murders in Sydney before they were sent to Tasmania, but there is no proof and it seems unlikely. They were in Sydney at the same time only for the four or five months from May to October 1804, although it is possible they became acquainted then. Lemon was still in New South Wales when a muster was taken there on 12 August 1806. It recorded him still in the jail gang at Parramatta,⁸ confirming that he was not yet terrorising Tasmania with John Brown.

About a year after Brown disappeared into the bush, Lemon was also transported to Port Dalrymple.⁹ He was put to work labouring on a farm at Paterson's Plains (near present-day St Leonards) where he somehow became acquainted (or re-

⁷ *Sydney Gazette*, 10 November 1805.

⁸ The relevant page of the 1806 New South Wales muster can be viewed online at <http://falvey.id.au/showmedia.php?medialD=35160&medialinkID=29534>. Lemon's name is seventh from the bottom of the page.

⁹ No relevant shipping or convict record exists, but it has been persuasively argued that it was in the *Estramina* in July 1807. See <http://archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/th/read/AUS-Tasmania/2006-03/1141549635>.

A Compulsion to Kill

acquainted) with the escapee Brown, whose life in the bush had considerably more appeal for the youthful miscreant than hard physical work from dawn to dusk. Perhaps also chafing at harsh treatment from the military who policed prisoners' lives, he decided to abscond when an opportunity arose. In October 1807,



a dozen weeks after his arrival, it did. He bolted into the bush, teamed up with Brown, and set out on the violent path that would soon take each of them to a youthful grave.

They wasted no time before committing their first murder. Instead of putting as much distance as possible between themselves and their military guards, they lurked around the settlement, apparently bent on revenge against specific soldiers for unrecorded wrongs. On 25 October, at the head of the harbour in the Tamar, they shot dead Corporal John Curry. Two men in a nearby hut, a soldier and a convict named John Morey, heard the shot but were quickly bailed up by Brown and Lemon, each armed with a musket. At gunpoint the fugitives ordered Morey to bind the soldier, then bound him before forcing them outside to show them Curry's body, admitting they had killed him. After perfunctorily covering the corpse, the absconders drove their two captives back into the hut, where they waited for several hours until another soldier arrived. They trussed him then bundled up some clothing and other supplies from the hut. Finally, they set the building alight.

Forcing Morey and the two soldiers, privates Robert Grindlestone and James Daniels, to carry the bundles, Brown and Lemon marched them through the bush for about thirty kilometres. Then they stopped and shot both soldiers in cold blood. With Morey still their prisoner, they resumed their trek but soon began to doubt Grindlestone and Daniels were actually dead, so they retraced their steps to where the bodies lay. When they discovered one victim still alive, they cut his throat. No motive was ever recorded for the three killings, although it sounds as though one of them—from this later record, probably Lemon¹⁰—had scores to settle. Their patient hours-long wait in the hut for the third soldier suggests their determination to kill Grindlestone and Daniels far outweighed their need to flee after murdering Curry. Whatever their motive was, it was a notably heinous crime, worse than the Ned Kelly gang's infamous slaughter of three policemen at Stringybark Creek in 1878, for Kelly's victims were not shot in

¹⁰ This supposition is strengthened by the fact that Brown had left two soldiers unharmed after capturing and robbing them in August 1807, vide Paterson's letter to London quoted on p. 12.

cold blood.

After cutting the soldier's throat, the two runaways and their prisoner forged on through the unexplored wilderness of the northeast, heading eastwards toward the coast. Little of the geography of Tasmania's interior was known then, and there was no road between the northern and the southern settlement; all communications between the two were by sea. Although the countryside was unexplored and unoccupied by Europeans, the traffic of escaped convicts between the two settlements, mentioned in Bligh's 1807 letter, must have been via the east coast. It was remote from both embryonic settlements, inhabited only by Aboriginal people, unvisited by military patrols, and provided an easy-to-follow and topographically easy-to-traverse route south. It was also a safe place to hide out, with no danger of pursuit or discovery, and it offered abundant game and fresh water. Sydney-based whalers and sealers had been working its waters since 1803;¹¹ some had camps ashore. The runaways Bligh mentioned would have known of them and perhaps had practical assistance from sympathetic crewmen. Brown and Lemon might have gone there believing they could escape Tasmania by joining or commandeering a vessel. Whatever their intentions, they were now a long way from the punitive wrath of the military and, apart from the danger of Aboriginal attack, must have felt reasonably secure.

Trouble, when it came, was from an unexpected source. In November 1807¹² Brown and Lemon were joined in the vicinity of Oyster Bay by eight runaway convicts from Hobart. Probably the extra men were welcomed at first, for there is strength in numbers, especially of men with a common purpose. But when Morey quietly warned the eight that Brown and Lemon were wanted for slaughtering three soldiers, the newcomers quickly set about distancing themselves from such gallows-bait. They overpowered the two killers, tied them up, and took their weapons and ammunition, then stole the colonial schooner *Marcia* and sailed

¹¹ Some sealers had established a base camp there as early as 1805. It was destroyed in an Aboriginal attack the same year.

¹² December 1807 according to Tipping, *Convicts Unbound*, p. 276.

away, taking Morey with them.¹³

Brown and Lemon's position now was dire. The loss of their weapons in that potentially perilous Aboriginal landscape could have been catastrophic. They would not be able to defend themselves from hostile native bands and they would be unable to hunt. That left them only two options: return to the Tamar region and risk recapture and execution, or head south to seek sanctuary on the fringes of the southern settlement where, as Brown knew, they would be succoured by other absconders and sympathetic convict kangaroo hunters. So they abandoned the Oyster Bay area and struck out unarmed on the long, hazardous trek down the east coast to the Derwent, a walk of at least 150 kilometres,¹⁴ during which they subsisted on shellfish, birds' eggs, and anything else they could forage.

Some exhausting weeks later, they reached the Derwent. The pioneering settler John Pascoe Fawkner recalled their arrival in the south that December.

Around the end of the year 1807 two men made their appearance at the out farms and joined some of our kangaroo hunters. They gave their names as Lemon and Brown, bushrangers. They were from Port Dalrymple, and were the first persons who travelled overland;¹⁵ they came round by the east and south coasts. They were two memorable men by their crimes ... Their account of evasion from York Town Heads [in the Tamar Valley] was confirmed some months after by the arrival overland by a Lieutenant Laycock and

¹³ The convicts were apparently led by David Gibson, ex-*Calcutta*, but little of the affair was recorded. It is not known how and where the eight escapees and Morey were recaptured, but on 13 February 1808 the Vice Admiralty Court in Sydney sentenced them all to death for piracy. The sentences were later commuted to life imprisonment on the petition of the vessel's owners, Kable and Co. of Sydney, because the convicts had offered no violence to the *Marcia's* master or crew. See *HRA Series III Vol. 1*, p. 397 and note 191, p. 819.

¹⁴ A very rough figure based on travel over sealed roads. In 1807 there was not so much as a track, so the actual distance they walked, with detours to search for food, circumvent topographical obstacles, and avoid Aboriginal bands, would have been considerably greater.

¹⁵ They were almost certainly *not* the first, as evidenced by Bligh's 1807 letter.

party,¹⁶ who opened up a road between the Derwent and Port Dalrymple, or as now known, Launceston and Hobart Town.¹⁷

That points to the two killers¹⁸ having followed the coast southwards until they struck the mouth of the Derwent River around what is now Dunalley, then followed the shoreline inland until, somewhere between Pitt Water and Risdon or a little beyond, they encountered Fawkner's kangaroo shooters near the outlying farms on the eastern shore, the opposite side of the river from Hobart. Although they lived outside the law, these hunters were not bushrangers in the later, Ben Hall sense of the word, not career highwaymen who rode stolen thoroughbreds and sought to enrich themselves by holding up stagecoaches and relieving travellers of their valuables. Tasmania's early bushrangers were either absconded convict hunters or escaped convicts. They travelled on foot – there were very few horses in the island then – often wore makeshift clothes made of kangaroo skin, and robbed, when they could, to replenish their supplies of food, ammunition, and clothing rather than to line their pockets. Money was of little use to them in the wilderness that was early colonial Tasmania. There was nowhere they could have spent it.

After meeting up in December 1807 with the Derwent hunters, Brown and Lemon acquired weapons and supplies before heading for the safety of the Midlands, the vast inland tract between the northern and the southern settlements that was well supplied with water and game and hiding places but devoid of Europeans.

¹⁶ Laycock and his party actually traversed the island well before Lemon absconded. They left Launceston on 3 February 1807 and reached Hobart eight days later, 'the first party that have ever come from Port Dalrymple', according to Knopwood.

¹⁷ Fawkner, *Reminiscences*, p. 76.

¹⁸ The historian J.E. Calder, in a letter published in *The Mercury* on 16 May 1873, claimed Brown and Lemon were in a party of *ten* escapees who made the trek from north to south, but Fawkner recorded only the two of them. Had there been ten, the runaways in the *Marcia* would not have been able to overpower them and Fawkner would have mentioned the others.

Although their joint period at large lasted about five months¹⁹ after Lemon absconded, Fawkner's reminiscence shows it cannot have been until the beginning of 1808 that they travelled on to the Midlands and sequestered themselves there, so their period at large in that part of Tasmania was two months at most, for that was all the life Lemon had left to live.

Their Midlands operations are usually said to have been in such areas as Constitution Hill. One of their hideouts there was a bark hut on the shore of nearby Lake Tiberias, which for a period was consequently known as Lemon's Lagoon. Several other topographical features were also named after Lemon who, far from being the timid youth reported by the *Sydney Gazette* in 1805, had become the dominant partner, a fact indicated by the number of places his name was bestowed on (and confirmed by the *Sydney Gazette* three years later when it noted 'all reports agree, that of the two he was by far the most sanguinary').²⁰ About halfway between the present-day towns of Oatlands and Jericho and a little past Lemon Hill was Lemon Springs, just off today's Midland Highway. Traditionally it is said to be where Lemon used to lie in wait and ambush unwary travellers, but at that time there were neither travellers nor settlers to surprise. The European population of the Derwent colony had not yet reached 500, the Tamar colony had fewer than that, and the greater part of both populations were convicts. Only about thirty land grants had so far been made, all of them along the Derwent close to Hobart,²¹ although there were also a few other nearby acreages allotted and being worked but not yet officially granted. Laycock's route between the northern and the southern settlements was not in general use and no towns or farms had been established along it.

If Brown and Lemon actually committed any of the many robberies they are popularly supposed to have been responsible for, it could only have been during that two-month period in the

¹⁹ Calculated from <http://archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/th/read/AUS-Tasmania/2006-03/1141549635>, although because of a report in the *Sydney Gazette* it is usually claimed (wrongly) that Brown and Lemon were both at large for twenty months.

²⁰ *Sydney Gazette*, 5 June 1808.

²¹ Morgan, *Land Settlement in Early Tasmania*, pp. 165-166.

Midlands. Yet apart from their killings, the pair's only recorded crimes together were the two robberies in the south in February 1808 reported below. The topographical features named after Lemon possibly recorded places he and Brown frequented, but they were certainly not the traditional lairs from which bandits sallied forth to rob unsuspecting passers-by or stagecoaches or to loot farmhouses, for there were no passers-by or stagecoaches then and no farmhouses. At best, those eponymous places were hideouts.

But there were other, unrecorded victims of their psychopathy: Aboriginal people, members of the Oyster Bay bands whose territories encompassed much of the east coast and the Midlands and against whom they committed 'many acts of barbarity'.²² Brown would eventually confess to their having murdered one Aborigine, but James Hobbs, a free settler who had been in the colony since 1804, told the Aborigines Committee in 1830 that 'Lemon and Brown, the bush-rangers, committed every species of cruelty upon the natives; they used to stick [bayonet] them and fire at them as marks [targets] while alive'.²³

During their Midlands sojourn, Lemon and Brown were joined by another absconder from the Tamar, Richard Scanlon (sometimes called Scantling), a Gaelic-speaking Irishman. He was probably the Richard Scanlon who was given a life sentence at Cork and arrived in Sydney in 1802 in the *Atlas*,²⁴ in which case he was likely a shipmate of Brown's. Like Brown and Lemon, he was subsequently transported to Tasmania, probably in 1805-06.²⁵ Although he is often said to have been an accomplice in several of their crimes, in reality there were no such crimes, except possibly against Aboriginal people, during his brief time with them, which soon came to an abrupt and violent end. One of the earliest accounts of his death – it possibly originated with Brown when he

²² *Sydney Gazette*, 5 June 1808.

²³ *Correspondence between Lieutenant-Governor Arthur and the Secretary of State of the colonies, on the military operations lately carried on against the aboriginal inhabitants of Van Diemen's Land*. Printed for the House of Commons, 23 September, 1831, p. 49.

²⁴ <http://members.pcug.org.au/~ppmay/cgi-bin/irish/irish.cgi>

²⁵ There is no Tasmanian convict record for him.

was in custody awaiting trial and survived orally – was recorded in 1827 by the Land Commissioners as they travelled through areas the two bushrangers had formerly frequented.

Scanlan, Brown and Lemon were Bushrangers together, the two former, Irishmen, were discoursing in their native Language in the presence of Lemon, who was an Englishman, he took no notice of it at the time. Brown went out the next morning Kangarooing, Scanlan was preparing Breakfast, when Lemon putting a Pistol to the back of his Head, blew his brains out, and hung him by the heels to a Tree. Brown returning, Lemon told him that *he* had got a Boomer, and brought him to the spot where Scanlon was hanging, making this remark, 'Now, Brown, as there are only two of us, We shall understand one another better for the future.'²⁶

The area of Scanlon's murder, which must have been in January-February 1808, became known as Scantling's Plains or Murderer's Plains, until Governor Macquarie, traversing the island in 1811, declared both names to be unfitting and renamed it York Plains, although it was years before the prosaic new name caught on.

When and how the authorities at the northern settlement learnt that Brown and Lemon had slain three soldiers is unrecorded. Curry's body would have been discovered soon after his murder, but Grindlestone's and Daniels's bodies may never have been found. That they were missing would have been obvious, but the authorities probably did not learn of their fate until Morey and the other escapees in the *Marcia* were recaptured in late 1807 or early 1808.²⁷ But once the details were known, Paterson offered a reward of £50 for Brown and Lemon's capture and sent out several parties in search of them. Although some reportedly stayed afield for up to six weeks, all returned empty-handed.

Nevertheless, time was fast running out for John Brown and

²⁶ *Journal of the Land Commissioners for Van Diemen's Land 1826-28*, Hobart, University of Tasmania/Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1962, p. 55.

²⁷ Indeed, Morey is the only likely source of the details of Brown's and Lemon's actions from Curry's murder up to the departure of the *Marcia* and its piratical crew.

Richard Lemon. At the beginning of February 1808, on the outskirts of Hobart, they robbed a settler named William Parish who had a 28-hectare grant on the eastern shore of the Derwent at the head of Geilston Bay (an area then known generally as Risdon), taking even his boots.

Paterson sent a strong military detachment south to search for them. On 7 February 1808 Rev. Knopwood's diary recorded that 'a serjt and 7 men arrived here from Port Dalrymple[;] they came after some men that had absconded from the settlement [there]'. The following day he noted that the 'party of Men [under "Sergeant Broomley"]²⁸ was sent off after the Port Dalrymple Bushrangers'.

Three days later, in consequence of Parish's robbery, Lieutenant-Governor Collins issued a warning to the population of Hobart about the bushrangers' presence in the Derwent region.

General Orders, Hobart Town, 11th Feby., 1808

There being at present at large in the Woods, ten Convicts, Runaways from Port Dalrymple, two of whom, Lemon and Brown, have Committed four atrocious Murders and have recently robbed Wm. Parish, a Settler, all Persons whomsoever are hereby required and directed to be ready, when called upon, to aid in the apprehension of these People; And, as it would be unsafe for any one to go into the Woods until these People, who have been outlawed, are apprehended and secured, no Boat, except those belonging to the Government, is to have any Communication with the opposite side.²⁹

It is obvious that the authorities were now aware not only of Grindlestone's and Daniels's deaths but also of Scanlon's more recent murder. How they might have learnt of the latter is unknown, but, as Knopwood noted, convicts crewing boats on the Derwent frequently carried intelligence to bushrangers hiding out across the river, hence Collins's ban on boats crossing. No doubt there was also return traffic in intelligence about bushrangers from

²⁸ Probably Brumlow, a sergeant in the NSW Corps serving in Tasmania at this time.

²⁹ *Historical Records of Australia Series III* Vol. 1, p. 562.

crewmen hoping to curry favour with the colonial authorities.

On 16 February Knopwood recorded that 'Sarjt Broomley and the party that went out after Lemon and Brown returned without seeing them', although they had searched for eight days. The following day Brumlow's party left to return to Port Dalrymple.

For most of the next fortnight there was neither news nor sight of Brown and Lemon. But about 28-29 February, at Black Brush (near present-day Brighton, a northern suburb of Hobart), the two bushrangers struck for the second and last time in the south. They robbed a settler named Michael Mansfield, a neighbour of Parish's, and detained him to serve as their guide. But he persuaded them to free him by promising to bring them supplies in exchange for some emu fat they had accumulated. It was a fatal mistake. Mansfield did subsequently return to their camp as arranged but took with him two other men, James Duff³⁰ and John Jones, intending to capture the two bushrangers for the £50 reward. It was not gained easily. A violent struggle ensued in which Lemon resisted so fiercely that Mansfield was forced to shoot him dead, after which Brown was overpowered and secured. His captors cut off Lemon's head and forced Brown to carry it into Hobart as proof of his death. '[A]t 11 [in the morning] Mich Manfield Duff and Jones came in with the Head of Lemon and brought Brown in prisoner the two Port Dalrymple Murderers,' Rev. Knopwood noted in his diary on 1 March. Mansfield, Duff, and Jones shared the reward and Lemon's head was exhibited on a stake in Hobart. He was about twenty years old when he died.

Collins immediately reported Brown's apprehension and Lemon's death to Hobart's inhabitants.

General Orders, Hobart Town, 1st March 1808

The public benefit resulting to this Settlement and that under Command of Lieut-Govr Paterson from the spirited and successful Exertions of Michael Mansfield, James Duff and John Jones in the destruction of that notorious Murderer Lemon and the apprehension of his associate Brown is desiring [sic] of the highest praise from every one. The

³⁰ Duff had been one of the fourteen bushrangers listed by Knopwood as at large in August 1807 but had surrendered in December that year under an offer of amnesty.

Lieut-Govt will immediately communicate this fortunate Event to Lieut-Govr Paterson that they may receive the Reward to which they are so justly entitled.

The Embargo which in consequence of the Danger to be apprehended from the aforesaid Lemon and Brown being in our neighbourhood was laid to prevent Boats proceeding up the River is now taken off.³¹

A relieved Paterson reported the end of the killers' career to his superior, Viscount Castlereagh, in London.

I have to inform your Lordship that two prisoners, John Brown and Richard Lemon found means, two years³² since [ago], to escape from the farms on which they were working, and have since that period subsisted in the woods, committing from time to time, the most violent depredations and having horribly murdered four men, viz., Corporal John Curry, Private D. Grindlestone and Private Daniels, of the New South Wales Corps, also R. Scandon [sic], a prisoner. By these atrocities they became so universally a dread to the settlement ... that I offered a reward from the Government of £50 for their apprehension and I was gratified that shortly afterwards they were taken.³³

But killing Lemon and capturing Brown made Mansfield a marked man with local felons. In a letter written nearly two decades later, in 1827, he described the repercussions.

In consequence of taking an active part in the apprehension of these men, I suffered severely by the loss of a great quantity of sheep and other depredations committed on my property by persons unknown but supposed to be friends of Lemon & Brown, and was consequently obliged to give up my farm at Risdon [in 1812] after being put to considerable expense, being in fear of my life, and removed to a farm at New Town.³⁴

³¹ Minchin, *Stand!*, p. 66.

³² Paterson was mistakenly conflating Lemon's period at large with Brown's. Lemon, as shown, was at large less than five months.

³³ *Historical Records of Australia Series III Vol. 1*, pp. 685-6.

³⁴ <http://www.heavenandhelltogether.com/index.php?q=node/72>

According to one report, while in custody in Hobart Brown confessed that as well as murdering four Europeans, he and Lemon had killed two Aboriginal males and one Aboriginal female, that Lemon had tortured and killed two Aboriginal females, and that they had shot and wounded four other Aboriginal females.³⁵ However, the accuracy of the numbers in the report has been disputed, and in its account of Brown's trial the *Sydney Gazette* reported his confessing only to 'many acts of barbarity against the straggling natives, one of which he said had been killed by them'.³⁶ So in total the pair killed five people, according to Brown's admission: three soldiers, one convict, and one Aborigine.

Because Tasmania at that time had no court to try capital crimes, Collins quickly put in train the long process of transporting Brown to Sydney for trial. On 4 March Knopwood's diary recorded that 'at 12 Lt. Breedon of the R.M.F. went to Pt. Dalrymple and a party with Brown the murderer to be delivered up to Govnr Patterson [sic]'. Breedon and two privates escorted Brown to Yorktown, in the Tamar Valley, to await a ship to take him to Sydney. 'During his confinement in Yorktown he ... in the moments of compunction recited various acts of enormity committed by himself and Lemon,' the *Sydney Gazette* reported; 'he ... repeatedly acknowledged himself privy to the crimes for which he was shortly to atone ...'³⁷

After a long wait for a ship, Brown was finally taken to Sydney aboard the *Porpoise*, which arrived in the mother colony on 26 May. Four days later he appeared before a Court of Criminal Jurisdiction, arraigned 'on various charges of murder, committed by him, assisted by Richard Lemon, in the neighbourhood of Port Dalrymple'.³⁸ He was found guilty and sentenced to be hanged and dissected, his body parts to be hung in chains.

The sentence was carried out next day, 31 May 1808. 'On Tuesday he was taken to the place of execution,' the *Sydney*

³⁵ The researcher Marie Fels reported seeing those figures in a newspaper cutting but subsequently could not identify the newspaper concerned.

³⁶ *Sydney Gazette*, 5 June 1808.

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ *ibid.*

Gazette reported, 'where a Gentleman of the Missionary Society attended him. Here he appeared to be most terribly impressed with the horrors of his situation; he frequently looked upwards in a supplicating posture; and when given over to the executioner he repeatedly requested the spectators to beseech the Divine Mercy in his behalf; but did not deny the justice of his sentence; the latter part of which was carried into execution on Wednesday, by the body being hung in chains on a small island near the cove.'³⁹

It was to be more than fourteen years before the next serial killings were recorded in the fledgling colony. They too were carried out by a murderous duo, although this pair were not compelled to kill, as Brown and Lemon were, by revenge or pique or sadism. Their motive was hunger.

³⁹ *ibid.*