

Benjamin Boyd's role in 19th Century Blackbirding in the Pacific for Labour in New South Wales

Historical Analysis and Evaluation Report

Dr Mark Dunn

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Cultural Advice

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and members of the South Sea Islander community should be aware that this report contains words and descriptions written by non-Indigenous people in official reports, newspapers and letters from the period 1790–1850 that may be confronting and would be considered inappropriate today. It also contains names of deceased people and graphic descriptions of historic and violent events that may be disturbing.

1.0 Executive Summary

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) has commissioned the following report to undertake a historical analysis and evaluation of Benjamin Boyd's role in nineteenth century blackbirding in the Pacific for labour in New South Wales. It considers the legacy of these actions in colonial and in contemporary society and seeks to understand what, if any, link exists between Boyd and blackbirding activities in Queensland from the 1860s onwards. This work will support the NSW Government consideration of a potential name change of Ben Boyd National Park.

Benjamin Boyd arrived as a wealthy Scottish immigrant into Sydney in 1842. He was the second son of Edward Boyd, a Scottish shipowner who had been involved in the American and Caribbean slave trade in the 1790s and early 1800s. Boyd came with a clear purpose of building a business and pastoral empire and taking advantage of opportunities provided by his connections and his directorship of the Royal Bank of Australia, which he had established, to achieve his goals. Within four years of his arrival he had amassed a vast pastoral estate through the Riverina, Monaro, central and southwest Victoria, making him one of the largest landholders outside of the Crown at the time. He operated a number of steamships as coastal passenger and cargo traders between Sydney and southern ports and had built up a large whaling fleet. This operated from his private town, Boydtown, at Twofold Bay on the south coast of New South Wales. Ben Boyd National Park is named after him and is centred in part on the remains of Boydtown and Boyd's wider south coast holdings.

From early on in his time in New South Wales, Boyd complained about the lack of available workers for his various enterprises, particularly his pastoral stations. Boyd arrived in the years immediately after the ending of convict transportation to New South Wales in 1840 and he quickly became a vocal spokesperson for squatting interests around the labour question. During his time, he appeared as a witness at two Select Committees of the Legislative Council to argue for more workers to be sourced via either increased immigration or the recommencement of convict transportation. Boyd also argued for the use of ex-convicts and those holding tickets-of-leave in Tasmania to be allowed to relocate to New South Wales and the Port Phillip district for work. He advocated for lower wages for those free workers already in the economy or those who might arrive via any immigration schemes, and complained bitterly about what he considered entrenched ideas concerning worker's rights and wages.

In 1847 Boyd turned to a new source of labour. Twice during that year, Boyd sent ships from his fleet to the islands in what is now Vanuatu and New Caledonia to secure labourers for his pastoral

stations. Boyd brought a total of 192 men and women to New South Wales in order to work on his estates and on his ships. His schemes were controversial at the time and viewed as a form of slavery by many of his contemporary critics. His methods used in securing the labourers were considered to be coercive and the second voyage descended into extreme violence when his ships bombarded the villages, killing numerous Islanders.

The import of these men, and some women, was no secret. Contemporary newspapers reported on their arrival in shipping lists and their movement across New South Wales in articles and editorials. His methods split opinions in the colony with many large land holders, squatters and their allies supporting Boyd's approach, while city workers, former convicts and their advocates, as well as religious leaders and anti-slavery activists opposed him.

In New South Wales, the Legislative Council in response to Boyd's operations, amended the *Masters and Servants Act* (1847). The Act dictated the terms of contracts, including the provision for fines or imprisonment to workers who broke from their employers. The amendments to Section 15 of the act excluded anyone from the South Sea Islands from the provisions of the Act, essentially voiding Boyd's contracts with the Islanders. With no control over keeping the workers in contract, Boyd abandoned the scheme and the men, leaving them to make their own way home as best they could. Those already on his stations or at Boydtown abandoned their posts en masse and made their way towards Sydney or Port Phillip in attempts to get ships home, others made for Boydtown. Of the 192 total, 60 men can be confirmed as leaving Sydney in late 1847 aboard three separate ships, with others leaving in small groups or individually over the next few years. How many in total managed to leave is unknown and it is probably that some remained in Sydney and integrated into the community.

By 1848 Boyd's businesses were in collapse. He was removed as chair of the bank by the investors in England, Boydtown was struggling as an isolated outpost of his empire and his position on transportation, worker's wages and his attempts to bring in South Sea Islanders had left him with few allies. In 1849 Boyd left Sydney for the gold fields in California, after which he returned to the Pacific. Boyd was killed by Islanders at Guadalcanal in the Solomon Island group in 1851.

Boyd's colourful life and dramatic death has resulted in him remaining a well-known colonial figure in Australian history. Ben Boyd Road in Sydney's Neutral Bay was named after him in c1880, Ben Boyd National Park was gazetted in 1971/1972 and more recently Ben Boyd Dam and Ben Boyd Reservoir in the Bega Valley were both named after him in 1997.

His family connection to the slave trade and his own use of South Sea Islanders has been less well remembered. The reasons are varied. In regards the slave business, he himself never mentioned it in any known documentation and his brother Mark played it down in his memoir of the family published in the 1870s. Many English and Scottish families who were involved in the trade did the same. As for his use of South Sea Islanders, his short foray was overshadowed in Australian history by the massive uptake in this in Queensland from the 1860s. Christened as Blackbirding, this resulted in an estimated 62,000 men being brought in to work on plantations in northern New South

Wales and Queensland between 1863 and 1904.¹ Although Boyd had long left New South Wales and indeed had died by the start of the practice in Queensland, his early attempts at securing labour in the islands can be viewed as the beginnings of the idea that later developed into the blackbirding trade.

2.0 Introduction

Ben Boyd National Park, gazetted in 1971, was named after Benjamin Boyd, a colonial entrepreneur, land holder, whaling and steamship owner, who rose to prominence in colonial New South Wales in the 1840s. Boyd played a key role in the early colonial development of the Eden district, establishing Boydtown in 1843 as the first British settlement on Twofold Bay.

Boyd is also associated in the historical record with the practice of blackbirding, a term used to describe the coercion and kidnapping of South Sea and Pacific Islanders to work in Australia as labour. The term came into common usage in the 1870s to describe this practice in Queensland in particular. Boyd is recorded as having undertaken two such missions to the islands of Tanna (New Hebrides) and Lifu (Loyalty Islands) in 1847, bringing 192 individuals to New South Wales for work on his pastoral stations and ships.

This report sets out in a chronological narrative, the background to Boyd's life and career prior to his arrival in New South Wales, the growth of his business and pastoral empire and the difficulties, perceived and real, that Boyd faced in his seven years in the colony. It examines his attempts to overcome labour shortages on his stations that in turn led him to investigate the use of labourers from the South Sea Island groups of modern day Vanuatu and New Caledonia. Although he was only in New South Wales between 1842 and 1849, his vast holdings, flamboyant lifestyle and controversial approach to business has left a legacy that still resonates today.

3.0 Methodology

This historical analysis has been written using a combination of primary and secondary source material. It focuses on Boyd's procurement and use of labour from the South Sea Islands of Vanuatu and New Caledonia, and the legacy of that part of his life. It is not a full biography of Boyd nor does it cover in detail his interactions with Aboriginal peoples or his many other business ventures in New South Wales during his time in the colony.

The main biographical source that has been consulted is Marion Diamond's book *The Seahorse and the Wanderer: Ben Boyd in Australia*, published in 1988. This remains the most comprehensive overall biography of Boyd. A series of early articles published between 1907 and 1934 in the *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* on Boyd, his stations in the Riverina and his labour concerns also provided valuable information as early sources. Benjamin Boyd himself left no collection of personal papers that are known, however his manager at Boydtown, Oswald Walters Brierly did.

¹ <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/race-discrimination/publications/australian-south-sea-islanders-century-race#:~:text=Between%201863%20and%201904%2C%20an,forced%20removal%20from%20their%20homes.>

Brierly's journals and diaries are held at the State Library of New South Wales and were consulted. All sources used are listed in the Bibliography that is provided at the end of this report.

A series of community consultation meetings were also undertaken in person at the office for the National Parks and Wildlife Service in Merimbula on 27 and 28 April 2021, and via an online Teams meeting on 3 May 2021. I would like to thank B.J Cruse and Tyrone Maher of the Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council, Steven Holmes and Patricia Owen of the Thaua Country Aboriginal Corporation, Anne Cleverley from Bega Valley Shire Council and Jenny Drenkhahn from the Killer Whale Museum, Eden for attending the meetings in Merimbula and for their input into the project. I would also like to thank Emelda Davis of the Australian South Sea Islanders–Port Jackson for her time and knowledge in providing input to the project and reviewing the information presented.

4.0 Background to Blackbirding in Australia

Blackbirding is the term used to describe the forcible removal of people from Pacific Islands for work in Queensland and New South Wales. It is commonly used to describe the period from the 1860s onwards when the greatest number of people were brought into Australia for work in the sugar industry. Benjamin Boyd's use of South Sea Islanders and his methods of procuring them through indentured contracts and violence can be viewed as a forerunner to the Queensland experience. The term blackbirding was not used at the time of Boyd, but rather came into common usage from the early 1870s. The first newspaper reports to use the term appear to be c1872-1873, after which it became common.² During Boyd's era the practice was simply referred to as a labour trade.

Boyd was responsible for the arrival of at least 192 men and women from two main island groups: Vanuatu and New Caledonia. During the period 1860-1904 when the blackbirding trade was operating into Queensland, over 62,000 men and women were brought to Australia from an estimated 80 different islands throughout the Pacific. More than 13,000 are thought to have died on the voyages or once they arrived in Australia.³

As had happened during Boyd's time many critics of the practice in the 1860s argued that it was slavery by stealth with the British Anti-Slavery Society prominent in the campaign.⁴ They argued that the unmonitored operations had given encouragement to similar practises in Cuba, Brazil and Peru and strongly resembled French labour practices in Africa which had been outlawed in 1858.⁵ Of those men involved, at least one, Robert Towns had been a contemporary of Boyd and had used South Sea Islander labourers in the 1840s on his sandalwood ships.

² An online search of the Trove newspaper database maintained by the National Library of Australia found the earliest reference in the *Freemans Journal*, published in Sydney 14 December 1872, "Blackbirding in the Bud", p8.

³ Evans, R., *A History of Queensland*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2007, p. 145.

⁴ Evans, p.100.

⁵ Evans, p.100.

The blackbirding trade, as it had become known, continued unabated until the Federation of Australia in 1901. New Federal laws, most notably the Immigration Restriction Act 1901, better known as the White Australia Policy, finally bought the trade to an end, but like the 1840s this was less to do with any humanitarian impulse and more to do with race. Many of the workers were expelled from Queensland in the years between 1901 and 1904 as a result of the new laws, however protests allowed those long term residents to stay and these men and women have many descendants that still live in Australia.⁶

5.0 Discussion of Benjamin Boyd and his Activities in New South Wales

5.1 Benjamin Boyd: Background and Family History

Benjamin Boyd was born in London in c1797, the second surviving son of Scottish shipowner and landholder Edward Boyd and his wife Janet Yule. The family spent their time between London and Merton Hall the family estate at Wigtonshire, Scotland. From c1794 Edward Boyd was in partnership with Alexander Caldcleugh of London in the shipping business of Caldcleugh & Boyd, later Caldcleugh, Boyd & Reid.

Caldcleugh & Boyd were involved in the British slave trade, transporting African slaves between ports in modern Congo, Ivory Coast and Liberia to Kingston in the British colony of Jamaica and to Charleston in the United States. In the years before 1807, when the British government outlawed slave trading, including the sale, barter or transport of people for slavery from Africa (with emancipation for those still held as slaves not coming until 1834), Caldcleugh and Boyd ships undertook 14 recorded voyages and delivered over 3,500 slaves to the Caribbean and United States.⁷ At least one of these slaves returned to England and remained with the Boyd family. A young boy, known as Dick, had been brought to England after being deemed too sick for the sales in South Carolina. The ships surgeon had held him back and later delivered him to the Boyd family. In 1804 Edward was amongst ship owners and others in the slave trade who successfully managed to persuade the Duke of Clarence to give support to 'those who conscientiously and disinterestedly advocated for the cause of the West India planter and proprietor' against moves in 1804 to abolish the slave trade.⁸

By 1825 Benjamin Boyd had begun his own career as a stockbroker, becoming a member of the London Stock Exchange. His brother Mark followed him in 1827. By this time the family fortunes were in collapse after their father Edward was declared bankrupt in 1826, losing all the family assets and property. In 1832, Benjamin Boyd joined the London branch of the British Insurance Company.

⁶ Macintyre, S., *A Concise History of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 1999, p.143.

⁷ <https://slavevoyages.org/voyage/database>; Christopher, E., 'Legacies of Slave Ownership-An Illegitimate offspring: South Sea Islanders, Queensland Sugar and the Heirs of the British Slave Trade', *History Workshop Journal*, Volume 90, Autumn 2020, Oxford University Press, Oxford, United Kingdom, pp. 233-252.

⁸ Diamond, M., *The Seahorse and the Wanderer: Ben Boyd in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, 1988, p.9. The quote was taken from Benjamin Boyd's brother Mark Boyd's *Reminiscences of Fifty Years*, his memoir published in London in 1871. Also, Christopher, op cit.

With his brother Mark, the two set about restoring the family fortunes, becoming their father's creditors and trustees and regaining control over the Merton Hall estate in 1833.⁹

In 1838, Benjamin Boyd joined the directors of the Union Bank of London and soon after became involved in the St George Steam Packet Company which operated steam ships between Liverpool and Ireland.¹⁰ It was around this time that he made the decision to travel to Australia to advance his business prospects and approached the Colonial Office in London to arrange purchase of land in New South Wales.¹¹ Boyd purchased two steamships from the Company, the *Seahorse* and the *Juno* in 1839-40 with the intention of forwarding these to New South Wales as the basis of a coastal steamer operation. In anticipation of his move to New South Wales, the *Seahorse*, the *Juno* and a third steamship, the *Cornubia* were dispatched to the colony in three voyages from early to late 1841.¹² Scottish and British investment in the colony of New South Wales was strong through investment and pastoral companies, taking advantage of the large areas of New South Wales and the Port Phillip area (Victoria) that were being made available for sheep and cattle stations. Boyd's interest, may have come from his already having family connections to Australia, with his cousins Archibald Boyd and William Mitchell Boyd having taken up squatting licences around New England and another cousin, Alexander Sprott doing the same in the Port Phillip district.¹³

In February 1840, prior to his leaving for New South Wales, Boyd, with other investors, established the Royal Bank of Australia. The bank was founded in part to provide a line of credit to squatters and wool producers in Australia which was a lucrative market attracting high interest rates and large dividends for investors. Boyd and his brother Mark were both brokers for the bank, with debentures of over £300,000 being sold to institutional investors, and another 4500 to small investors at £20 each, the proceeds of which were deposited back into the bank. Boyd himself took a further 6000 debentures making him one of the largest individual shareholders. The bank's principal office was based in London, with branches to be established in Australia, New Zealand, the Cape of Good Hope colonies and East India Territories, although only the London and Sydney branches were ever truly operational. Amongst the directors were Mark Boyd, and Joseph Phelps Robinson, the only bank director other than Boyd to ever come to Australia. Although the banks funds were claimed to be over £1,000,000 in order to attract investors, the actual amount never came close.¹⁴

⁹ Diamond, p.10.

¹⁰ Diamond, p.13.

¹¹ Wellings, H.P., *Benjamin Boyd in Australia (1842-1849): Shipping Magnate: Banker Pastoralist and Station Owner: Member of the Legislative Council: Town Planer: Whaler*, 8th Ed, DS Ford, Sydney, p.3.

¹² Wellings, pp 6-7.

¹³ Diamond, p.15.

¹⁴ Watson, J.H., 'Benjamin Boyd, Merchant', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Volume II, Part V, 1907, p.131.

From the beginning the banks finances were entangled with Boyd's own ventures, with suspicion that it had been established as his private source of funds.¹⁵ He also established the Australian Wool Company, with the proceeds from issuing debentures deposited with the Royal Bank of Australia. After Boyd's arrival in Australia, the bank loaned the wool company £100,000 at 10% in return for debentures in the company, making him the largest customer of his own bank.¹⁶ As his banks and companies were being established, Boyd had also managed to join the Royal Thames Yacht Club in 1839 through which he purchased the yacht *Wanderer*, an armed schooner, and in turn gain membership of the Royal Yacht Squadron. The Royal Yacht Squadron brought with it a combination of power, patronage and privilege that Boyd could exploit for his Australian ventures. Amongst the benefits of membership was that the squadron was considered as a private arm of the British Navy. Members yachts were afforded the same rights as naval man-o-war making them exempt from port charges in British and colonial ports and allowing access without as many official checks.¹⁷ It was also through the squadron that Boyd met the maritime painter Oswald Walters Brierly who he convinced to accompany him on the *Wanderer* when it sailed for Australia in November 1841.

5.2 Benjamin Boyd's arrival in Sydney and establishment of business interests

Between June 1841 and June 1842, before Boyd himself arrived, the steamships *Seahorse*, *Juno* and *Cornubia* all sailed into Sydney Harbour as part of Boyd's ambition to establish a coastal steaming service. All three had been purchased from the St George Steam Packet Company. Joseph Phelps Robinson arrived as a passenger on the *Cornubia* and set about establishing the Sydney office for the Royal Bank of Australia prior to Boyd's own arrival.¹⁸ The *Seahorse* was put to work on the Sydney-Port Phillip-Launceston route soon after its arrival, although the *Juno* and *Cornubia* were not immediately placed into service. A fourth ship, the schooner *Velocity* had also arrived prior to Boyd and fired a salute to mark the arrival of Boyd in 1842.

Boyd sailed into Sydney on his yacht *Wanderer* on 18 July 1842. His arrival was much anticipated by the people of Sydney, with his journey having been reported on at intervals along the way. Before arriving in Sydney, Boyd had called at Port Phillip in early June and arranged for the purchase of Colac Station, the first of his grazing properties to be made. Boyd purchased this, with its flocks from owner Augustus Morris, appointing Morris to manage it. Morris established stations for Boyd along the Murray River and around Deniliquin, which became the head station for the area.¹⁹ Over the next three years, taking advantage of lower land prices due to an economic downturn in the colony in 1840-1841, Boyd amassed a vast amount of land becoming the largest landholder outside of the colonial government by the mid-1840s, with much of the land purchased by the Royal Bank of

¹⁵ Diamond, p.18.

¹⁶ Diamond, p.39.

¹⁷ Diamond, p.25.

¹⁸ Watson, p.131.

¹⁹ Wellings, H.P., 'Benjamin Boyd in the Riverina', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Volume XX, Part II, 1934, p.118; Diamond, p.34.

Australia.²⁰ By 1845 he had acquired over 1,750,000 acres (approx. 708,200 hectares) in the Riverina district, a further 500,000 (202,350 ha) in the Monaro, with other properties in central and southern Victoria and regional New South Wales.²¹

On arrival Boyd purchased the house Craignathan at Neutral Bay on Sydney's north shore and began to acquire property and grazing runs in the Monaro and Riverina districts. By December 1842 Boyd had set his sights on land at Twofold Bay on which to establish a settlement and port for his shipping interests, and to serve his properties on the Monaro. Twofold Bay was already a well-established whaling station, run by the brothers Peter, Alexander and George Imlay who had started operations there in the mid-1830s. As well as their whaling fleet, the Imlay's ran sheep and cattle in the district, exporting from there to New Zealand.²²

To establish his base at Twofold Bay, Boyd requested part of the southern shore be surveyed, which was underway by January 1843. At the same time a site for a government town was also being surveyed on the northern shore. Governor Bourke had suggested the establishment of an official town at Twofold Bay as early as 1836 to introduce an element of government control over the developing whaling and pastoral interests in the region. Although the town site was to be surveyed in lots of 2-5 acres, the southern site was surveyed in farm lots of 640 acres each. While Boyd had sought permission for his town site, there is some evidence that he had some influence over the process via the Executive Council, a group of four senior government officials who acted as advisors to the Governor. One of the members of the Executive in 1843 was the Colonial Secretary, who advised the Surveyor-Generals department that the Government was desirous to facilitate Boyd's plans at Twofold Bay which resulted in his township site being surveyed concurrently with the official town at Eden. Indeed when the surveyors Thomas S. Townsend finished his plan of Boyd's site, the Executive authorised it one week before it was actually submitted.²³

In March 1843, both Boyd's site and Eden were advertised for sale. Boyd was the only bidder at the southern site, which he had already christened as Boydtown. He purchased a single lot of 640 acres. However at the government town site across the bay, by then named Eden, twenty eight lots were purchased by a number of buyers including the Imlay's and Boyd, who purchased three town lots overlooking the boat harbour.²⁴

So by March 1843, just nine months after his arrival in Australia, Benjamin Boyd had started accumulating his pastoral estates, founded what would be his south coast base at Twofold Bay and

²⁰ Waitt, G & K Hartig, 'Grandiose Plans but Insignificant Outcomes: the development of colonial ports at Twofold Bay, New South Wales', *Australian Geographer*, Volume 28, No.2, 1997, p.208.

²¹ Wellings, *Benjamin Boyd in Australia (1842-1849)*, p.5.

²² Pearson, M., 'Shore-Based Whaling at Twofold Bay: One Hundred Years of Enterprise', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Volume 71, Part 1, June 1985, p.7.

²³ Waitt, G & K Hartig, p.208.

²⁴ Diamond, p.99.

laid the foundations for what he hoped would be a successful coastal steaming and shipping business.

5.3 Boydtown and Twofold Bay

With the acquisition of his land at Twofold Bay, Boyd set about establishing his Boydtown settlement. Oswald Brierly was appointed as manager, with a plan to build a small village of 400 workers cottages, a church, an inn, a lighthouse, warehouses and port facilities for the whaling fleet and livestock export. The isolation of the bay meant that labourers and materials were transported from Sydney to the site, including Pymont sandstone for the erection of the lighthouse. One of the first tasks after securing his holdings was the construction of a road from Twofold Bay to the Monaro for his sheep and cattle, using convict labour.

At Twofold Bay, Boyd planned the main village of Boydtown and East Boyd to serve the whaling and shipping interests. East Boyd was also envisaged to become a stop and supply depot for international and colonial whaling ships and was advertised as such at the time. Urgency in the development of Boyd's two settlements came with the land sales for Eden and the competition that the official town would bring to bear on Boyd's ambitions. In addition he purchased an adjoining eight kilometre water front run between Boyd Bay and Nullica Bay and two further runs totalling 80,940 hectares to the south of Twofold Bay, effectively excluding any more competition for land around his holdings.²⁵

Foundations for the inn, which remains at Boydtown as the Seahorse Inn, workers houses, church and warehouses were laid in 1843 and 1844, with Brierly also erecting a cottage for himself overlooking the bay at East Boyd. A store was in operation offering supplies to settlers in the Monaro by October 1844. His lighthouse was under construction on Red Point at the entrance to the bay by mid-1846 and completed in late 1847.²⁶ Built at a high cost using Pymont sandstone, the only building at Boydtown to use this material, the four-sided tower was topped with a parapet carved with BOYD in capital letters on each of its four sides. Its prominent position was therefore intended to act as a practical working structure as well as a highly visible landmark and symbol of Boyd's ambitions. Although intended as a lighthouse, Boyd did not get official government approval for it and it was instead converted for use as a watchtower by his, and later whaling crews.²⁷ The tower, known locally as Boyd's Tower, remains standing overlooking Twofold Bay at Red Point.

Boyd's whaling fleet was also based out of Twofold Bay by mid-1843. In March 1844 Boyd had eight ships operating which included his three steamers, the yacht *Wanderer* and ship *Velocity* as well as the whaling barques *Terror*, *William* and *Fame*. By 1845 he had added the *British Sovereign*, the

²⁵ Waitt, G & K Hartig, p.209.

²⁶ Waitt & Hartig, p.209.

²⁷ Bickford A., Balir, S., and Freeman P., Ben Boyd National Park Bicentennial Project: Davidson Whaling Station, Boyd's Tower, Bittangabee Ruins, New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, 1988, pp. 55-57.

Rebecca, the *Lucy Ann*, the *Edward* and the brig *Margaret* to his fleet.²⁸ Although whaling was still a strong industry in Australian waters when Boyd was increasing his fleet, the glory days had largely passed. Easy coastal whaling had been depleted due to over fishing, while many of Boyd's whaling ships were already old when he took them on.

Boyd encouraged newly arrived British migrants as well as established settlers to the area as workers and employed local Aboriginal men. Brierly noted in his journals until he left in 1848 the Aboriginal crews that were used in whaling boats and as lookouts, and that some men were used as guides for newly arriving migrants heading inland to the Monaro. Brierly paid these men with a combination of clothes and provisions, with some of the men being given engraved breastplates as a sign of authority, a common practice throughout the colonial period in New South Wales.²⁹ Aboriginal crews were also notable in the fact that their traditional ties to the Country around Twofold Bay meant they were more likely to stay in the area between seasons and so could also be employed at other tasks, whereas European crews would leave at the end of the season, returning when the whaling restarted. The Imlay's also employed Aboriginal men as crew for their boats, making the Twofold Bay area perhaps unique in Aboriginal and British interactions in the 1840s in terms of regular employment for Aboriginal people at this time.³⁰

5.4 Benjamin Boyd's Labour Concerns

Boyd's commercial interests in New South Wales were both vast and varied. Within his first eighteen months in New South Wales Boyd had secured his land at Twofold Bay where he required construction workers, general and wharf labourers, he had established a growing fleet of ships for coastal trade, passenger services and whaling and had acquired large tracts of land for his sheep and pastoral interests. All of these enterprises required workers with different skill sets, experience and expertise.

Boyd's arrival in 1842 coincided not just with an economic downturn but also with the end of transportation of convicts to New South Wales in 1841. The pastoralists in particular had benefitted from the convict system, especially in the years after 1822 when the recommendations of the report into the colony by John Thomas Bigge had started to come into effect. Bigge, sent by the colonial office to report on the state of the colony in 1820, had amongst other things, recommended a restructure of the convict system to encourage the assignment of convict labourers to large scale grazing and pastoral estates. He hoped this would then encourage wealthy immigrants from Britain to come and take up land. Bigge argued that the system would serve to reform convicts by breaking associations with their criminal past, removing them from the temptations of the towns and put them under the eye of responsible persons, who were themselves governed by rules and regulations

²⁸ Loney, J., *Ben Boyd's Ships*, Neptune Press, Geelong, 1985.

²⁹ Pearson, M., 'Shore-Based Whaling at Twofold Bay', p.9.

³⁰ Pearson, M., 'Shore-Based Whaling at Twofold Bay', p.9.

in their treatment of the workers.³¹ The end of the system of assigning convicts to private masters, followed soon after by the end of transportation altogether came as a heavy blow to those squatters who had come to rely on the labour for their own profits. The anti-transportation campaign in Britain had been led by many of the anti-slavery campaigners, while in the colony it was supported by working classes, many themselves ex-convicts and newly arrived emigrants who saw convict labour as a threat to their own employability.

In late September 1843, Boyd fronted a Select Committee on Immigration held by the Legislative Council in New South Wales. The committee had been appointed to investigate the cost and supply of labour in the colony for different industries and to determine how to reduce costs and increase immigration. Although assisted immigration had been in place to New South Wales from Britain since 1831, by 1843 this had stopped due to a high unemployment rate in the colony and the decline in Crown Land sales that had funded the scheme.

In Boyd's evidence he noted that he had been in the colony nearly eighteen months and employed upwards of two hundred shepherds and stockmen on his properties, exclusive of those sent to Twofold Bay.³² Boyd revealed that while he had no trouble engaging workers in Sydney, getting them to his properties and keeping them there was problematic. He claimed that workers would spend the money given them to cover their expenses for the journey to his stations in the inns and hotels of Sydney or on the road before they arrived, while others were lured away by higher wages elsewhere. One solution was his own shipping fleet, by which he could transport workers direct from Sydney to Twofold Bay, removing the long overland journey. He also argued that allowing immigrants to arrive directly into Twofold Bay, as well as other regional ports would assist in attracting workers, and that by avoiding the cities like Sydney or Port Phillip it would reduce the chance of their being lured to other work prior to embarking for regional areas. It was also likely that Boyd, realising that the wages offered by him were less than colonial averages but more than in England, there was less chance of immigrants discovering this fact on their own and demanding more money if they avoided the main cities and towns.³³

On questioning, Boyd revealed a scale of wages depending on where his workers were sent and reflecting the comparative isolation. His workers in the Port Phillip district received £20 per annum with rations, those on the Lower Murray were paid £30 with rations, and those in the Monaro were offered £40. By contrast some of his shepherds received just £10 with rations, and those employed at Boydtown, including tradespeople were paid between £10 and £18 per annum with rations. Boyd reported that his ship *Velocity* and another unnamed vessel had delivered over 100 immigrants to Twofold Bay in the weeks prior to his giving evidence, amongst them being shepherds, stockmen, shearers, artisans, labourers and a few married couples, all of whom were bound for Monaro. The

³¹ Kociumbas, J, *The Oxford History of Australia: 1770-1860 Possessions*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1995, p.157.

³² *Report from the Select Committee on Immigration*, printed December 1843, New South Wales Legislative Council, Government Printer, Sydney, Evidence of Mr Benjamin Boyd, 27 September 1843, p. 41.

³³ Diamond, p.116.

men were provided rations and expected to reach the Monaro with the help of a local Aboriginal guide, 73 kilometres from Twofold Bay before the rations ran out.³⁴ It was later claimed that those who refused the £10 in wages offered were made to pay at least £5 for a passage back to Sydney effectively stranding them at Boydtown. This and other practices made Boyd so unpopular with his workers that he rarely visited his stations without the police or a local magistrate to accompany him.³⁵

Boyd considered the shepherding work to be relatively straightforward, remarking “there is no mystery in shepherding”. He had employed sailors in the job successfully, and his best shepherds were a Scottish woman and her husband. This idea would play out later in the decade with his use of South Sea Islander labourer. Boyd had also increased the size of the flocks his shepherds looked after, with up to 3000 sheep in a single flock, introducing a system of ‘camping’ for the shepherds. Unlike the more established system whereby smaller flocks were shepherded back to a temporary fold at night, Boyd expected his shepherds to follow the roaming flocks instead, camping out with them. It was lonely, monotonous work on isolated runs in the Monaro and Riverina districts. Such was the need for labour on inland estates that Boyd suggested that up to ten thousand workers per year were required.

Boyd was obsessed with labour costs, and reducing them across his enterprises. Most of Boyd’s attempts at savings were focused on the wages of his workers rather than managerial efficiency or in reducing transport costs. If immigration was not likely to be increased, Boyd and other squatters proffered two alternative solutions: that the colony might consider the re-introduction of convict transportation or that it could seek labour from non-European sources. Marion Diamond, in her biography of Boyd, notes that both solutions sacrificed long term social goals for short-term advantage for Boyd and other members of the squatter elite. Both ideas would lead to political trouble in New South Wales for Boyd.³⁶

Some Sydney merchants and landowners had already investigated bringing in labourers from India and China, with Robert Towns bringing Chinese labourers into Sydney in 1843, and Indian labourers with his brother-in-law William Charles Wentworth and Sydney merchant Robert Campbell in 1846.³⁷ Boyd himself had considered these options but not pursued them. These men were brought to the colony as indentured labourers, convinced or forced to sign agreements in their home countries that outlined working conditions, payments and time periods before being brought to New South Wales. It was often the case that the workers were not fully aware of the conditions and labour they were being asked to agree to or indeed that what they signed up for was not what they were then faced with on arrival. At least once Towns ended up in court defending his practices with Indian workers,

³⁴ *Report from the Select Committee on Immigration*, printed December 1843, New South Wales Legislative Council, Government Printer, Sydney, Evidence of Mr Benjamin Boyd, 27 September 1843, p. 41.

³⁵ Diamond, p.121.

³⁶ Diamond, p.122.

³⁷ Ohlsson, T., ‘Wentworth’s Coolies’, *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.104, Part 2, December 2018, p.181.

and fronted an inquest into the death of one of his Indian workers, in which his underpayment and poor treatment was revealed.³⁸ It was commonly the case that indentured labourers from China or India would be offered more than they were making in their home countries to induce them to sign on, but this was still half or less what was being paid to their white contemporaries.³⁹

For Boyd, the other obvious supply of labour were convicts and ticket-of-leave men, either coming from Britain or already in the colonies, such as those with tickets-of-leave in Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania). Recognising an issue with labour supply, the Colonial Office in London had approved the sending of 'exiles' to Port Phillip in 1844. These men had served their time in Pentonville Prison and were on a similar scheme to a ticket-of-leave, which meant that while they would receive wages they could also be directed to where they were needed for work. It was in a way an admission that the ending of transportation and the assignment system (where convicts were assigned to private masters and their estates) had been made too hastily.⁴⁰

In 1846, William Gladstone, Secretary of State for the Colonies suggested a resumption of convict transportation to New South Wales. Gladstone requested an opinion on the matter from Governor Fitzroy and the Legislative Council, leading to the establishment of a Select Committee on the Renewal of Transportation in 1846, with William Charles Wentworth as the Chair. Amongst the witnesses called were Benjamin Boyd, his cousin Alexander Sprott and Boyd's partner J.P. Robinson. The establishment of the select committee uncovered a deep schism in colonial politics and society, with many towns people and former convicts against the proposal while those with large estates, like Boyd, were in full support of the idea. Some newspapers of the day went as far to suggest that it was the landed squattocracy, of which Boyd was a prominent member, who had agitated amongst their British contacts to get Gladstone to suggest the idea in the first place. And as the Legislative Council was seen by many to only represent that classes interests, the entire process was tainted from the start.⁴¹

In Boyd's evidence he stated he was now employing over 800 people across his estates and other enterprises, up from 200 in 1843, and they were a mix of former convicts from both Sydney and Tasmania and free immigrants. He had been using ex-convicts on probation from Tasmania since mid-1845, and preferred the work ethic of these and other ticket-of-leave men to many of the immigrants he had. Boyd suggested that if convict transportation restarted, juvenile convicts should be considered, or if it was to be men on probation, then they be delivered direct to Twofold Bay or other regional ports, the same argument he had put forward in his 1843 evidence on immigration. Along with others who gave evidence, Boyd also agreed that free immigration should be continued in parallel to transportation, and that men and women should both be encouraged to migrate. However Boyd estimated that it would cost up to £200,000 per year to sponsor such a scheme, a sum the New South Wales colony could not afford, being close to one quarter of its cash reserve,

³⁸ *Morning Chronicle*, 4 April 1846, p2, 8 April 1846, p.2;

³⁹ Pickard, J., 'Shepherding in Colonial Australia', *Rural History*, Vol.19, 2008, p.72.

⁴⁰ Hirst, J., *Freedom on the Fatal Shore: Australia's First Colony*, Black Ink, Melbourne, 2008, p.199.

⁴¹ *Sydney Chronicle*, 28 October 1846, p.2.

and so it would be up to the British government to cover the costs.⁴² In a foreshadowing of his thoughts around procuring labour from sources other than Britain, Boyd said in evidence:

All admit the crying demand for labor; but as it can be procured from China, India, and the Islands of the Pacific, of a description well adapted for our purpose, at one-half the wages and expense of rations, at a rate of passage not exceeding £5 per head, and in our own ships, thus causing no export of capital, the most which in justice can be demanded from the colonists for relieving Great Britain of the overwhelming burthen of its pauperism, is that sum per head, being the price at which we can procure labour in other and nearer markets. If, therefore, we are to have an immigration of ten thousand persons — presuming with all charges of outfit, passage money, &c., the cost to be £200,000— £50,000 only of that sum should, in common justice, be borne by the colony...⁴³

The final report of the committee took the reintroduction of transportation as a *fait accompli* and argued that as convicts were still being sent to Tasmania and exiles to Port Phillip, not sending them to New South Wales would mean the colony would suffer all the disadvantages of the system without any of the advantages. It suggested, that if a probation system was introduced, these men would be sent ‘beyond the boundaries’, to the squatting districts, where work and isolation would act to reform their character, the regions that the likes of Boyd had most of their pastoral runs, and would benefit most from. The report caused outrage in Sydney and other population centres such as Maitland in the Hunter Valley. Public meetings and protests were called in towns and cities, with petitions sent into the Committee rejecting the notion of reintroducing convicts. Such was the opposition, Wentworth delayed the tabling of the report until the closing minutes of the council session, ensuring it was neither debated nor voted on.⁴⁴ Political opportunism on both sides of the debate saw old alliances broken. Charles Cowper once Boyd’s ally when he chaired the Select Committee on Crown Lands Grievances in 1844 was now a vocal critic. Boyd, recognising that any change in policy would come from England, arranged for his evidence to be published there along with the report, seeking his home contacts support for his own benefits. He quickly followed with an open letter to Sir William Denison, the Lieutenant Governor of Van Diemen’s Land on the transfer of unemployed labour to New South Wales.

Boyd’s letter to Denison reiterated much of what he had already said in his two appearances to the select committees on immigration and transportation. Responding to suggestions made by Earl Grey, head of the Colonial Office in London, that ticket-of-leave and pass-holders, of which there were an estimated 20,000 in Van Diemen’s Land could be employed in government works and building cottages for future immigrants in that colony, Boyd instead suggested their being transferred to New South Wales for work on pastoral runs and farms. Again he suggested they be directed straight to regional ports including Twofold Bay, Geelong, Hunter’s River and Moreton Bay, where they would be quickly absorbed into the required labour force. And while Boyd said he

⁴² *The Spectator*, 31 October 1846, p.2.

⁴³ *The Spectator*, 31 October 1846, p.2.

⁴⁴ Diamond, p.124.

agreed with the importation of women and children migrants in proportion to any convict or probationer coming from England, the focus as he saw it should first be on labourers who would be immediately productive. Boyd also pointed out to Denison that the lack of shearers and workers on his estates meant that he would be forced to kill and boil down his sheep for tallow rather than for the production of meat, which he estimated would be sufficient to feed half a million people for one year.⁴⁵

By the time of Boyd's letter to Denison in August 1847, he had already attempted to supplement his labour force through the import of men from Tanna (Tana), Kahamo and Lefoo (Lifu) in the New Hebrides (Vanuatu) and Loyalty Islands off the coast of New Caledonia. His reason, he said, was in part due to the boiling down of so many of his flocks, and because, like those ticket-of-leave men he was trying to convince Denison to authorise, the Islanders saw no demand for their work in their home and were very glad to give their labour in exchange for food, the lack of which had driven them to cannibalism on their home islands. This claim would be used by both sides in the coming debate as a means to either save them from their heathen ways, or exclude them from New South Wales as a danger to the citizens of the colony. Boyd believed that he had done the right thing for the islanders, bringing them to New South Wales to work, and that the lessons learned could be equally applied to the former convicts from Van Diemen's Land.⁴⁶ Boyd's self-belief in regards his own humanitarianism was in contrast to the actuality of the situation faced by the island labourers.

5.5 Benjamin Boyd's importation of South Sea Islander labourers

Until the mid-1830s, the islands visited by Boyd's ships had been largely unknown to Australian or British traders. However, the discovery of the sandalwood tree on nearby islands had quickly led to their discovery. Sandalwood was a popular trading item to China, and many Australian based ships were involved in the collection and sale of the timber. Robert Towns began trading to the islands in 1844, establishing himself on the Isle of Pines at the southern tip of New Caledonia where he used islanders on his ships and in his sandalwood work.⁴⁷

Other merchants visited Lifu on a regular basis through 1844 and 1845. At least some of these ships returned to Sydney with islanders on board as sailors. In September 1845, the *Rovers Bride* under Captain Paddon arrived in Sydney with nine South Sea Islanders on board, and again in June 1846 with another three South Sea Islanders from Aneityum in Vanuatu, followed in December by three more from Tanna (Tana) on the *Isabella Anna*. In November 1846 three South Sea Islanders, identified as Charley, Tom Bowline and John, appeared in local court in an attempt to recover their unpaid wages, owed for six months service on the *Morning Star*. This made a total of eighteen men

⁴⁵ Boyd, B., *A Letter to His Excellency Sir William Denison Lieut-Governor of Van Diemen's Land on the Expediency of Transferring the Unemployed Labour of that Colony to New South Wales*, Sydney, 28 August 1847, p.16.

⁴⁶ Boyd, B., *A Letter to His Excellency Sir William Denison*, p.16.

⁴⁷ Shineberg, D., *They Came for Sandalwood: A Study of the Sandalwood Trade in the South-West Pacific 1830-1865*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2014, p.65.

coming into Sydney before Boyd's venture, although there is no confirmed record as to whether they stayed or what they were doing.⁴⁸

Boyd despatched one of his own ships to try the sandalwood trade, with Towns assuming he was attempting to muscle in on his business.⁴⁹ The *British Sovereign* sailed from Sydney via New Zealand to the New Hebrides on 8 January 1847. Amongst its crew were three Islanders, with one identified later as being from Tana. The *British Sovereign* went via the island of Tana, where it picked up twenty island men to assist in the getting of the wood before sailing on to Eromanga, Vanuatu. Seven of the Tana men were returned from here, with the rest staying on board. On 22 April the ship was wrecked off the coast of Efate. Although the crew made the boats and got to shore, once on dry land they were attacked by the islanders and all but three killed: one crewman named John Jones, a young boy named Pond who was spared by the attackers and later rescued by missionaries and a man from Tana named Tommy Weir who escaped and reported the story.⁵⁰ The ship's crew had included three Islanders, Weir being one of them, when it left Sydney, pointing to Boyd already having connections to the South Sea Islanders prior to 1847.⁵¹

By the start of 1847 Boyd's colonial schemes were beginning to founder. As the colony emerged from the worst of the economic downturn and wages rates increased, Boyd continued his quest for cheap labour. Boydtown, although described in glowing terms in William Henry Wells' *Gazetteer of the Australian Colonies* the following year (1848), was struggling with the road inland still not complete and whale numbers in decline, while his squatting runs were also not as profitable as he hoped.⁵² And so in January 1847 Boyd directed his partner J.P. Robinson to take the *Velocity* to the South Sea Islands and procure 'a cargo of South Sea Islanders' for work in the Monaro and his Murray River estates. In a letter to his brother, Robinson said in part that the reason was 'the high price of labour and the low price of wool' which would ruin the settlers if nothing was done. The *Velocity* sailed on 31 January 1847 for the South Sea Islands with Captain Kirsopp in command.⁵³

On 9 April 1847 Kirsopp and the *Velocity* sailed into Twofold Bay and direct to Boydtown with 65 men and boys from the New Hebrides and Loyalty Islands on board. In a letter to Boyd, Kirsopp reported that his cargo of Islanders ranged in age from fourteen to twenty-five, and although Boyd had instructed him "to only bring about fifty as an experiment", so many had tried to get on the

⁴⁸ See *Sydney Morning Herald* 18 September 1845, p.2, and 22 January 1847, p3; *The Sentinel*, 11 June 1846, p.2; *The Sydney Chronicle* 16 December 1846, p.3.

⁴⁹ Shineberg, p.73.

⁵⁰ Bateson, C., *Australian Shipwrecks Volume One: 1650-1850*, A.H & A.W Reed, Sydney, 1972, p.207.

⁵¹ *Sydney Chronicle*, 18 August 1847, p.2.

⁵² Diamond, p.128; Wells, W.H., *A Geographical Dictionary or Gazetteer of the Australian Colonies*, W & F Ford, Sydney, 1848, pp. 69-85.

⁵³ *The Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List*, 6 February 1847, p.390; Letters (3) from Joseph Phelps Robinson to George Robinson, 1845-1848, and letter from William Sprott Boyd to George Robinson, 29 December 1848 MLDOC 1116, State Library of New South Wales.

ship he had to ask the Chiefs of the islands to help in removing them.⁵⁴ Despite this claim, a number of Islanders were later found hiding on the ship and were bought to Boydton. Kirsopp assured Boyd that there were almost unlimited numbers of men that could be bought to New South Wales for work, with many looking to escape the overcrowding and warfare in the islands. Kirsopp saw the venture as part of a civilising crusade, removing these men from a state of “heathen ignorance to a Christian country, where they will not only have the benefit of religious instruction, but be taught all the advantages of civilisation”.⁵⁵ On arrival at Boydton Kirsopp reported the men were accosted by ‘old hands’ and bullock drivers, fearful of the introduction of outside labour but that he had solved the harassment by telling the locals the islanders still had their weapons with them and were unpredictable if provoked.⁵⁶ The use of racist tropes such as the likelihood of cannibalism or the fear of attack was common in the commentary around the islanders during the years they were in the colony, as was the concept of the men being civilised by exposure to the colonial world.

When the 65 island men landed at Twofold Bay on 9 April 1847 Brierly, as manager, went aboard the *Velocity* to check their condition. Brierly was accompanied by Captain Nagle, clerk of the local bench of magistrates, although no record of Nagle’s impressions has been found for this report. Brierly wrote in his journal for the day:

On look out, saw *Velocity* lay off my house. Kirsopp the Captain shortly after came up and told me he had 65 natives which he had bought from the islands of Leffoo, Tanna and Ananam—invited him for breakfast and then went on board accompanied by Captain Nagle, clerk of the bench here. None of the natives could speak English and they were all naked—the hair of many of them being dressed in an extraordinary manner. They all crowded round us, looking at us with utmost surprise and feel at the texture of our clothes with their fingers.⁵⁷

Kirsopp reported that he had some difficulty from keeping the men from different islands from fighting on board, with Brierly noting they seemed wild and restless. Each man had been given a contract to sign to serve Boyd in any capacity for five years, for which they would be paid 26 shillings per year (just under £2, compared to a minimum £10 for European workers), a weekly ration of 10 pounds of meat, plus two pair of trousers, two shirts and a Kilmarnock cap. Nagle and Brierly recopied the contracts and each man signed.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 April 1847, p.2.

⁵⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 April 1847, p.2.

⁵⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 April 1847, p.2.

⁵⁷ Brierly, O.W., *Diary at Twofold Bay April 1847–September 1847*, ML A540, State Library of New South Wales.

⁵⁸ McKenna, M., *Looking for Blackfella’s Point: An Australian History of Place*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2002, p.108; Brierly, *Diary at Twofold Bay April 1847–September 1847*.

The contracts, which were later produced in the Legislative Council in a campaign against Boyd's scheme, read as follows:

I [blank] native of [blank] in the Pacific Ocean, have this day agreed with [Captain of the ship] on the part of Mr Benjamin Boyd of the City of Sydney, New South Wales, to serve the said Benjamin Boyd, in the capacity of a seamen on any of his ships, or as a whaler either on board or on shore, or as a shepherd or other labourer in any part of the colony of New South Wales, and to make myself generally useful for the term of five years.⁵⁹

The contracts, used as a standard for indentured labourers from India and elsewhere, would appear to have been a ploy for the home authorities rather than any serious attempt to explain the coming conditions to the men from Tana and the other islands, particularly as Brierly himself had noted they could not speak English. As the local Justice of the Peace, Brierly was expected to countersign the contracts but refused to do so, bringing him into conflict with WS Moutry who was the manager of Boyd's non-whaling ventures at Boydtown, including the pastoral runs. Brierly told Moutry and repeated later to the Rev. Mr Walpole, the local clergyman, that as Nagle had signed he did not think it necessary he did as well. Moutry and Walpole noted his objection to sign, which Brierly did not dispute, and wrote to Boyd informing him of it, although in doing so they misrepresented his words. In his journal Brierly does not make it clear why he would not sign the contract other than the procedural matter of Nagle already witnessing it, but his refusal to do so and Moutry's letter to Boyd exacerbated tensions at Boydtown.⁶⁰

Moutry quickly arranged for the men to leave Boydtown and head inland, which they did on 14 April "as contented and happy a lot of human beings as can be imagined".⁶¹ He took 62 with him, three others returning to Sydney with Kirsopp on the *Velocity*.⁶² The claim that the men were contented and happy was undermined the very same day when Brierly noted in his journal that some of the party bolted and returned to Boydtown. A week later reports came back that the entire party had only made it a few miles from Boydtown. Not all the islanders had gone inland. On 2 May 1847 one of those left at Boydtown died and was buried in a coffin made on site, with Brierly reading the burial service.⁶³ On 28 May two men, who had been taken from Lifu and who had run from the farm they were sent to, arrived back at Boydtown wanting to be put on a ship for their home island. Brierly noted that many had bolted from Monaro.⁶⁴ By 3 June, sixteen had returned to Boydtown, some crying to go back to Lifu. Brierly described them dismissively as being "stupid and will not

⁵⁹ Diamond, p.129.

⁶⁰ Brierly, *Diary at Twofold Bay April 1847–September 1847*.

⁶¹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 April 1847, p.2.

⁶² *Sydney Chronicle*, 21 April 1847, p.2.

⁶³ Brierly, *Diary at Twofold Bay April 1847–September 1847*.

⁶⁴ Brierly, *Diary at Twofold Bay April 1847–September 1847*.

work”.⁶⁵ On 20 June Brierly noted in his journal that all the islanders at Boydtown had bolted, after having been given clothes and some flour, which they baked into bread. The same day Moutry asked for the return of all the islanders’ contracts as they had all run from the stations, and as he was now sailing to Sydney he wanted to have those contracts in case they were also heading for the city.⁶⁶

Even as the original group of islanders were bolting from the Monaro, Boyd had already instructed Kirsopp to ready the *Velocity* for a return to the islands to procure more workers. He would be accompanied by another of Boyd’s vessels, the *Portenia* under the command of Captain Lancaster. Both ships left Sydney on 18 May 1847. On board the *Velocity* were three Islanders from the first voyage, identified in a contemporary magazine *Heads of the People* as Etoisi, a Chief and brother to the King of Lifu, Panyella, a conjurer and Sabbathahoo, a conjurer’s servant. These three men are among the very few who were identified by name at the time.⁶⁷ The magazine resident artist included a full length portrait of the men, as well as a head portrait of Boyd. The portrait shows the men in a mix of European clothes, with Etoisi holding a traditional club over one shoulder. This also remains the only known illustration of any of the men and women who Boyd brought to Sydney. [See Figure 2]

The *Portenia* and the *Velocity* arrived back in Sydney from the South Sea Islands on 24 September and the 17 October respectively. The *Portenia* had 64 men, four women and two boys from the islands and the *Velocity* another with 54 men and three women, all intended for Boyd’s estates or Boydtown.⁶⁸ This made for a reported total of 192 men, women and boys brought to New South Wales by Boyd between April and October 1847. However, while they had been away, colonial society and the Legislative Council had begun to take a closer interest in Boyd’s affairs and the conditions under which Boyd was operating had changed dramatically.

5.6 Public reaction to Boyd’s scheme

Soon after the arrival of the *Velocity* from its first voyage, interest and questions in Boyd’s schemes began. Newspapers in Sydney ran strident arguments for and against his bringing in of South Sea Islanders, with most using racist tropes to advance their message. The magazine *Heads of the People* was in favour thinking that Boyd’s experiment, boldly carried out while others squabbled about solutions to the labour problem “so far as it concerns the *real and practical effects of civilization, and the blessings of Christianity*, will do more to solve a most difficult problem in colonization, than all that the efforts of the South Sea Missionaries can possibly effect for a century to come”.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Brierly, *Diary at Twofold Bay April 1847–September 1847*.

⁶⁶ Diamond, p.130.

⁶⁷ *Heads of the People: An Illustrated Journal of Literature, Whims and Oddities*, 1 May 1847, Vol.1 No.3.

⁶⁸ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 September 1847, p.2; *Sydney Morning Herald* 18 October 1847, p.2.

⁶⁹ *Heads of the People*, 1 May 1847.

In contrast the *Sydney Chronicle* condemned Boyd's plan and those who supported it. In commenting on a debate for the establishment of an Immigration Committee in the Legislative Council, the *Chronicle* supported the idea of limited immigration from the United Kingdom, while questioning the propriety of those suggesting the South Sea Islands as a source and congratulating the majority of Council members for rejecting the idea. However their reasons were not for any particular humanitarian ideals, but rather that the money of a Christian community should not be spent imported "heathen cannibals" and further, those who wish to do so at their own expense should be taxed to cover the inevitable problems that would arise.⁷⁰ The newspaper also noted that the scheme would not be of any benefit to those Islanders, and from reports in other countries where similar schemes had been tried:

"that where such a race is introduced for the mere purposes of labour, into a country possessed by a white and civilized population, the former inevitably fall into the position of slaves to the latter, and unable as they are from their ignorance of our laws and customs, to obtain redress, they are often subjected to the most cruel treatment".⁷¹

The *Chronicle* questioned why Boyd would choose to recruit men from Islands which had little contact with Europeans, instead of those who had become accustomed to ships coming and going, and so would have more understanding of the agreements they were entering into.⁷² The *Australian* newspaper wrote in horror of the impact on the colony of thousands of supposed cannibals coming into New South Wales, while attacking those in the Legislative Council who were beginning to question the whole venture.⁷³

Meanwhile the Legislative Council had also moved to act. Under the direction of the Colonial Secretary, Edward Deas Thomson and the Attorney General, John H. Plunkett, the Council agreed to an amendment (11 Vic, No.9) to the *Masters and Servants Act* 1847 (9 Vic, No.27). Although the amendments had been in the Council since June, by August when it was passed it included a new Section 15, which read:

XV. Provided always, and be it enacted, That nothing in this or the said recited Act contained, shall be deemed or construed to apply to any native of any savage or uncivilized tribe, inhabiting any Island or Country in the Pacific Ocean, or elsewhere, anything therein or herein to the contrary notwithstanding.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ *Sydney Chronicle*, 22 May 1847, p.2.

⁷¹ *Sydney Chronicle*, 22 May 1847, p.2.

⁷² Diamond, p.130.

⁷³ Diamond, p.131.

⁷⁴ An Act to amend an Act intituled "*An Act to amend and consolidate the Laws between Masters and Servants in New South Wales.*" [16th August, 1847.] 9 Vic, No.27
http://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/num_act/masa1847n9262/

Essentially the change meant that the *Masters and Servants Act*, which regulated contracts between employers and employees, including provisions for fines and imprisonment for employees who broke from their employer, was useless for keeping any of Boyd's islanders at their places of employment. As it was passed prior to the arrival of the *Velocity* and the *Portenia* in late 1847, the contracts they had been made to sign were invalid. The result for the new arrivals was that they were thrown into limbo, under no authority but also no one's responsibility, as Boyd, once denied their labour essentially abandoned them. Boyd ordered the *Velocity* to stand off Sydney Heads after its arrival while he determined what to do, thinking he would instead forward it direct to Twofold Bay. In the end the ship entered the harbour, dropping anchor in Watsons Bay, before finally moving to Boyd's wharf at Darling Harbour.⁷⁵

Meanwhile in the Legislative Council, Robert Lowe and Charles Cooper, former associates of Boyd, called for an investigation to see if Boyd's scheme contravened British law. Although Lowe left his speech in the Council until the last day of sitting, restricting any real debate and drawing criticism as to its opportunism, he made a comparison between Boyd's plan and slavery, only recently abandoned in Britain. He said, like slavery, the trade was between a superior and inferior people, and that the islanders could have no idea what they were signing up for. He argued that their recruitment had been accompanied by gifts to Chiefs, who in turn may have seen this as an incentive to attack neighbours so as to provide prisoners to Boyd. And further Lowe argued that Boyd saw the men as property, referring to them as a cargo of labour, as he would a cargo of tea or sugar. Lowe stated that Boyd "had bought these people out as slaves, to traffic in and profit by".⁷⁶

5.7 What was the South Sea Islanders' fate after Boyd?

With the passing of the amendment to the *Masters and Servants Act*, Boyd's labourers now found themselves in an increasingly uncertain position. This applied both to those recently arrived in Sydney, as well as the men on Boyd's Monaro and Riverina estates and at Boydtown. Newspapers soon began to report the movement of South Sea Islander men from the Monaro and Riverina towards Sydney, Boydtown and Port Phillip. On 13 October 1847, 25 men from Tana arrived in Albury, on the road from the Ulupanna Station, eighty miles (129km) down the Murray. The men, heading for Sydney were clothed in tattered red shirts, with no food or provisions. Newspapers reported that a dead pig was butchered for them and eaten, after which they begged in small groups at the homes of the town and were supplied with joints of beef and mutton. The newspaper reported that this generosity caused "envious feelings to arise in the bosoms of the aboriginals, thirty to forty of whom continually resort here, who wondered that so much should be given to strangers, when they, as old acquaintances, had so often been denied, notwithstanding their importunity, especially when hungry".⁷⁷ This report is one of the rare instances where any interaction between the Islander men and Aboriginal people was noted. The men moved on from

⁷⁵ *Sydney Chronicle*, 19 October 1847, p.2.

⁷⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 October 1847, p.2.

⁷⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 October 1847, p.2.

the town after four days and in late October were reported as passing through Yass.⁷⁸ Another group passed through Goulburn at the same time, coming from Boyd's Woolshed estate on the Edwards River.⁷⁹

Others headed south. On 1 November 1847, twelve of Boyd's islanders were reported to have decamped from their station at the Edward River and embarked on a ship at Melbourne for Twofold Bay, under the direction of Boyd's agent, Mr R Fennell.⁸⁰ At Twofold Bay they waited for Boyd's steamer *Juno* to arrive in the hope of being returned to Sydney and from there back to their homes. At the time the *Juno* was in Adelaide having completed her first coastal run from Sydney. It was reported *Juno* arrived in South Australia with 15 South Sea Islanders on board, thought to be headed for a pastoral run inland from Adelaide. The fifteen men were from a group of twenty taken from Sydney in late October, five of which had presumably been dropped at Twofold Bay when *Juno* stopped there.⁸¹

For those who had arrived from the Islands in September and October, most appear to have stayed in the Sydney area. A group of 35 were taken by steamer to Parramatta where they were then marched to Boyd's farm at Bungarribee, near Blacktown and housed in the property's former convict barracks.⁸² Most of this group escaped the property and returned to Parramatta in an attempt to get a steamer back to Sydney. At Parramatta the group was prevented from boarding and so they camped the night near the Parramatta Barracks before heading by foot towards Sydney. A steam ferry later picked fourteen up near Five Dock, with the remainder making their way to Sydney overland.⁸³

Others left Sydney to return to the island groups they had been taken from, although whether they returned to the exact islands is unknown. Sydney newspapers reported many South Sea Islanders leaving in the later months of 1847 and into 1848. Mostly identified only as South Sea Islanders it is not clear if these are the same men the Boyd brought in, but as few other Sydney merchants were engaged in the South Seas at the time, some of them are highly likely to have been. The most to leave in one group in 1847 were five on the *Champion* in November, heading to the South Sea Islands via Moreton Bay (Brisbane) and four on the *Castlereagh* in December. Those on board the *Champion* were identified by name as Poki, Ker Volti, Tor Pollol, Markow and Wygons.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 October 1847, p.3.

⁷⁹ *Sydney Chronicle*, 28 October, 1847, p.2.

⁸⁰ *Port Phillip Gazette and Settler's Journal*, 1 November 1847, p.2; *Melbourne Argus*, 2 November 1847, p.2.

⁸¹ *Adelaide Observer*, 6 November 1847, p.5; *Sydney Chronicle*, 23 October 184, p.2.

⁸² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 October 1847, p.2; Bungarribee Homestead Complex-Archaeological Site <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?ID=5051257>

⁸³ *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River Advertiser*, 16 October 1847, p.2.

⁸⁴ *Sydney Chronicle* 6 November 1847, p.2 and 16 December 1847, p.2; *Moreton Bay Courier*, 20 November 1847, p.2.

In April 1848 a large number, who were identified as being from Boyd's scheme, left in separate ships for the South Sea Islands. Their removal from Sydney caused a minor sensation, with Boyd claiming they had been kidnapped from him. Few saw the irony of his claims at the time. Sixty of Boyd's men left on three ships: the French missionary ship *Arche d' Alliance* took thirty, the *Lynher* took eighteen and the *Statesman* took twelve. For those Sydney commentators who had supported Boyd, particularly the editors of *The Australian*, the removal by the French was an outrage, made worse still by the fact that they were Jesuit Missionaries. Boyd was reported to have asked Bishop Polding, the head of the Catholic Church in New South Wales to intervene, and when he did not, Boyd and his partner Robinson asked the water police to stop the vessel leaving. Although *The Australian* claimed the *Arche d' Alliance* had slipped out of Sydney Harbour before the police could act, shipping notices in the newspapers the week before it left alerting readers to it readying to sail undermined these claims.⁸⁵ It was later reported that the *Arche d' Alliance* had landed all thirty men at the island of Weir in what was known as the Royalty Islands, now New Caledonia, not the islands they had been taken from originally.⁸⁶ Reports of South Sea Islanders leaving Sydney in ones and twos, and occasionally larger groups on a variety of ships continued to be made in the shipping columns of local papers throughout 1848, 1849 and into 1850. How many of these were men that Boyd had brought to Sydney and how many were individuals coming and going on whaling ships and other vessels is not known. Nor was it recorded where these men went, except for the generic term South Seas.

Many others appear to have remained in Sydney. Boyd himself reported that he was employing some on ships, and others had also found employment in Sydney.⁸⁷ Again it is via newspaper reports that some of these men can be traced. Some of them assisted in rescues or body recovery in the harbour, where their superior swimming skills were taken advantage of. In December 1847 ten assisted by diving for the body of Joseph Perrers, a woodman who drowned when his boat sank off Balmain. In January 1848 a group saved six men who had fallen out of a capsized boat in over ten metres of water in the harbour.⁸⁸ In February 1848 others were reportedly trying to help the recovery of another drowned man, but were forced to dance for the entertainment of a ship's crew at the scene instead. In April 1848 one recovered the body of Catherine Hutchinson from Walsh Bay.⁸⁹ A few were still reported as being in Sydney into the 1850s, long after Boyd himself had left. In December 1851 a man described as the "late Mr Boyd's black", won the gig and dingy race at the Balmain Regatta. The race provided great amusement to the onlookers, as the object was for the bowman in the gig to capture the sailor in the dinghy, which was one of the Islander men Boyd had brought to Sydney. As the gig closed on his dinghy, the Islander leapt overboard swimming and diving for the twenty minute time frame of the race, winning when he could not be caught. In 1854

⁸⁵ *The Australian*, 28 April 1848, p.2.

⁸⁶ *Geelong Advertiser*, 4 November 1848, p.1.

⁸⁷ *Diamond*, p.138.

⁸⁸ *The Australian*, 28 January 1848, p.2.

⁸⁹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 December 1847, p.2; *Australian* 4 February 1848, p.2; *Bells Life*, 1 April 1848, p.2.

another of Boyd's South Sea Islander men, known as Joe from the Kingsmill Group (Islands) was charged with stabbing a man after drinking in a tavern.⁹⁰

Not all survived to leave or work. In May 1847 the first man reported to have died was buried by Brierly at Boydtown, with two others reported to have been buried at the Woolshed Run on the Edwards River. An unknown number are also thought to have died of exposure, cold and disease on the isolated stations and on the road trying to get back to Sydney.⁹¹

In October 1847 an inquest was held in Sydney on the body of drowned man believed to be one of Boyd's workers. Found on the rocks near Fort Macquarie, the site of the Sydney Opera House, the man was reported to have swum across the harbour from Boyd's Neutral Bay to get aboard the *Portenia*, Boyd's ship that had previously transported the islanders to Sydney. The water police told the coroner that the man was thought to have swum two and a half miles to the ship, and when refused access, had started back but drowned on the way. Others had swum with him on the way over, although no report of what happened to them was made. Although the coroner did not return any verdict as to whether it was Boyd's man or otherwise, the jury believed him to be and they included a rider with their own verdict condemning Boyd or his representatives from not showing up noting his poor treatment of the men since he had brought them to Sydney earlier that year. Boyd denied it was one of his men but noted that:

"I should not consider myself in any degree responsible even if the unfortunate man alluded to had been one of the persons introduced by me, inasmuch as the wisdom of the late law, passed after they were engaged, placed them beyond my control of protection".⁹²

In a sign of the curiosity and the disrespect of the times, one of the islanders brought to Sydney by Boyd ended up in the collection of the Australian Museum. In January 1852, it was reported that the curator, Mr William Wall had set up the skeleton of one of Boyd's islanders for study, not exhibition. The man had stood over six feet tall before his death. How he died and how his body found its way to the museum is unknown.⁹³ Enquiries are ongoing with the staff of the Australian Museum to determine what became of the remains of this man.

5.8 Benjamin Boyd's financial collapse, retreat from Sydney and death

In October 1849 Boyd slipped out of Sydney Harbour aboard the *Wanderer*, the same yacht he had arrived in. He was bound for San Francisco where the recent discovery of gold was drawing people from around the world. By this time his colonial empire was crumbling. His labour schemes had come to nothing, his estates were struggling with poor management and isolation, even his former friend Brierly had left in 1848, feeling disillusioned. Boyd's South Sea Island schemes had raised the suspicions of the Colonial Office in London as well. They had been contacted by members of the

⁹⁰ *Maitland Mercury*, 6 December 1851, p.4 and 11 November 1854, p.2.

⁹¹ Diamond, p.138.

⁹² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 November 1847, p.3, 4 November 1847, p.2.

⁹³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 January 1852, p.3.

missionary organisation the Aborigines Protection Society and through reports in the society's journal, *The Colonial Intelligencer and Aborigines Friend* that Boyd's second venture with the *Velocity* and the *Portenia* had resulted in multiple deaths in the islands. The society refuted Boyd's claim of contracts being used, rather describing it as kidnapping and slavery. The ships crews had forcibly taken men and when resisted had shot and killed some, including a village chief.⁹⁴ The violence had been enough that a British warship, HMS *Dido* had been dispatched by Governor Grey in New Zealand to investigate in December 1847.⁹⁵

Boyd's Royal Australia Bank was also collapsing. His investors in England, tiring of the extravagant spending in New South Wales and the lack of returns, had sent out Boyd's cousin William Sprout Boyd in late 1847 to take charge. By this time his steamship business was also sinking. The *Seahorse* had run aground in the Tamar River in June 1843 and was damaged beyond repair. His claims for insurance had been lost when the insurance company challenged the claim. His other steamers, the *Juno* and the *Cornubia*, although successful in their coastal and trans-Tasman trade, were both sold in 1848.⁹⁶ Boydtown too was all but abandoned by 1849. Poorly managed and too isolated, the increasing competition of the government town of Eden and Boyd's decreasing interest had worn the town down.

Boyd arrived in California in early 1850, with reports that he had made out for the gold fields with seven or eight South Sea Islanders, who were crew on the *Wanderer*.⁹⁷ In June 1851 the *Wanderer* sailed from San Francisco, via Hawaii to the Solomon Islands. On 14 October, at Guadalcanal, Boyd went ashore with one of his Islander crew members to go hunting. Several shots were heard fired after Boyd had landed, with many local islanders seen in and around the beach. After Boyd had not returned for breakfast, despite a gong being sounded from the ship, a landing party was readied to investigate. At the same time, canoes of warriors were approaching from all sides, and with the crew believing they were under attack, firing broke out from the ship. The ships guns were levelled on a village and firing continued until it was completely abandoned. On shore the landing party found signs of a struggle and a belt belonging to Boyd, but neither his body nor that of his crewmate was recovered. Over the next four days, the crew searched the bays and inlets for Boyd, while also turning their guns on villages they came upon. The crew later estimated they had killed 25, burnt 50 houses and destroyed 15 canoes.⁹⁸ On its return to New South Wales, while coming to enter Port Macquarie, the *Wanderer*, Boyd's pride and joy, hit a reef at the harbour entrance and was wrecked.

⁹⁴ *The Colonial Intelligencer and Aborigines Friend*, 1849-1850, Volume II, Messrs Ward and Partridge, London, 1851.

⁹⁵ Dwight, A., 'South Sea Islanders in New South Wales', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.68, Part 4, March 1983, p.277.

⁹⁶ Loney, J., *Ben Boyd's Ships*, Neptune Press, Geelong, 1985, pp. 6-7.

⁹⁷ Watson, J.H., 'Benjamin Boyd, Merchant Part II', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. II, Part VII, 1907, p.138.

⁹⁸ Watson, J.H., 'Benjamin Boyd, Merchant Part II', pp. 141-149.

Boyd's death was reported widely in Australian and British newspapers, with a series of expeditions arranged through the 1850s in an attempt to discover what had truly happened. Although rumours circulated that he had survived and was living on the islands, no evidence of this was ever presented, nor was his body ever found.⁹⁹

5.9 Benjamin Boyd's Legacy

Benjamin Boyd's legacy, like many nineteenth century colonists and settlers, is layered and complex. Even during his time in New South Wales, which lasted just seven years, he was a controversial figure. His business activities, large scale and rapid accumulation of land attracted critics and admirers' in politics and public circles, with active campaigns against his attempts to overcome his apparent labour issues. While many of his squatter class contemporaries supported his push for the re-introduction of transportation or the use of former convicts from Van Diemen's Land, this was equally resisted by city workers and the many former convicts gainfully employed in regions like the Hunter Valley. They saw Boyd's attempts to promote cheap convict labour as a means to undercut their own wages and conditions.

His scheme to bring workers from South Sea Islands further exacerbated the tensions, with a new racist element introduced. As well as seeing Boyd's venture with Island labour as seriously undercutting wages for shepherds, labourers, whalers and seamen, the claims of heathenism and cannibalism amongst these men turned many against Boyd. This was despite there already being close and ongoing contact with the islands, and with South Sea Islander men working in small numbers on trading and whaling ships. His mode of acquiring the workers, using contracts to indenture them was also called out as akin to slavery at a time when the United Kingdom had only recently abolished and outlawed slavery and the owning of slaves.

Boyd's own ambition and self-promotion also went some way to ensuring he was remembered long after his death. Other than his rapid rise to prominence and enormous wealth in a colony struggling out of economic depression, it was perhaps his building of his own town on the south coast that kept him in the public imagination longer than some of his contemporaries. The fading ruin of Boydtown, including his self-named tower kept his memory alive in the local history of the area. Despite Boyd rarely visiting Boydtown himself, as the ruins added a certain romantic notion to the folly of his schemes as the buildings were reclaimed by the surrounding bush. The revival of the former Seahorse Inn in the 1980s as an accommodation hotel and holiday destination added to this mystic. Boyd's appointment of Oswald Brierly also contributed to the lasting memory and romanticism. Brierly, an accomplished maritime artist when he joined with Boyd, captured the whaling station in a series of dramatic paintings including whale fishing and landscape scenes of the area which have remained prominent in public collections. Poems, books and regular newspaper features since his death have also contributed to his being remembered.

In Sydney Boyd was remembered with the naming of Ben Boyd Road at Neutral Bay in c1880. In 1973 the Ben Boyd National Park at Twofold Bay was also gazetted. In 1976 the park was extended to take in Boyd's Tower, which had already been reserved by the Department of Lands for the

⁹⁹ Watson, J.H., 'Benjamin Boyd, Merchant Part II', pp.148-149.

preservation of Historic Sites and Buildings in 1970, and has been extended with four separate additions between 1999 and 2004.¹⁰⁰ More recently Ben Boyd Dam and Ben Boyd Reservoir, both in the Bega Valley were gazetted with the Geographical Names Board as official place names in 1997.¹⁰¹

All of the examples above kept Boyd's memory either in or just below the public consciousness. However his use of South Sea labourers and the debates over how he procured these men had largely faded from the historical memory of Australia's colonial past. There had been published works on Boyd's involvement however, with the Royal Australian Historical Society Journal publishing the article 'Ben Boyd's Labour Supplies' by HP Wellings in 1933 that addressed the scheme, although did not question the ethics of it too hard. Thomas Dunbabin's book *Slavers of the South Seas* published in 1935 was much more direct in its condemnation of Boyd. Dunbabin concluded:

The evil wrought by Benjamin Boyd lived after him. He himself did comparatively little harm by the blackbirding that he set on foot. His plans for using the natives of the islands soon came to an end. But he was followed by others who bettered his instruction and wrought tremendous harm to the people of the islands. No light ever burned in the lighthouse that Boyd built on the southern point of Twofold Bay. But his importation of kanakas into Australia lighted a beacon that later piloted many a blackbirder about his evil task of kidnapping kanakas for the sugar fields.¹⁰²

Although the term blackbirding post-dates Boyd, as Dubabin makes clear, he was one of the early merchants to engage in the taking of indentured islanders for his estates. Boyd's contemporary, Robert Towns, continued and expanded the trade for cotton and sugar after Boyd's death into the 1860s. Blackbirding by then was well established and continued through into the first years of the twentieth century in Queensland.

Boyd's family links to the slave trade have also been argued as an underlying factor in his approach to his labour issues and his use of South Sea Islanders in New South Wales. Boyd never spoke publically of his father's background, or of his having grown up with the African child known only as Dick, who had been taken to England by a slave ship doctor. But the "ideas of slavery as a mechanism through which lesser peoples of the world would be raised up to civilisation" were fundamental to the way Boyd and his supporters tried to justify his actions.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Bickford A., Blair, S., and Freeman P. Ben Boyd National Park Bicentennial Project, pp.8-9; Quotation Brief for Historical Analysis & Evaluation Report of Benjamin Boyd's role in 19th Century Blackbirding in the Pacific for labour in NSW December 2020.

¹⁰¹ <https://proposals.gnb.nsw.gov.au/public/geonames/1aed86ee-7b9f-4f2f-8373-2c13ff0f8006>;
<https://proposals.gnb.nsw.gov.au/public/geonames/ebbaee69-1652-4599-b0b7-9df1823183e9>

¹⁰² Dunbabin, T., *Slavers of the South Seas*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1935, pp. 148-149.

¹⁰³ Christopher, E., Legacies of Slave Ownership, *History Workshop Journal*, Volume 90, pp. 233-252.

Boyd was in New South Wales for only a short period, and was already publically talking of the use of Islanders to solve the labour crisis after only a short while in the colony, suggesting his view of labour and race was a reflection not just of the conditions of the time but of his family background as well. The certainty amongst British settlers that Pacific Islanders, and other non-British peoples, including Aboriginal people, were inferior was unquestioned. That they could be taken from their homes, paid less and treated poorly was taken for granted as part of what Boyd and others justified as a Christian civilising process.¹⁰⁴

6.0 Conclusion

Benjamin Boyd's experiment with importing labour from the islands of Vanuatu and New Caledonia was ultimately a failure. In his search for cheaper labour for his colonial pursuits, Boyd turned to the exploitation of Island communities who were only just coming into sustained contact with European colonial forces in maritime and the sandalwood trades. Although when viewed in isolation Boyd appears to be a distinct experience, his operations marked the beginnings of a labour trade that would later become known as blackbirding when it resurfaced as a source of labour for Queensland sugar and cotton plantations from the 1860s until the turn of twentieth century.¹⁰⁵ The use of coercion and violence by his ships captains in taking the men, coupled with his own disregard for their welfare or safe return passage illustrate the colonial indifference to communities outside the boundaries of what European colonists regarded as being civilised, and reflect Boyd's own family experience of slave trading in the late eighteenth century. The men were viewed as a commodity and a means to an end, with their own personal experiences largely ignored at the time and until recently, forgotten in the historical narrative of Boyd and his time in New South Wales.

¹⁰⁴ Christopher, E., Legacies of Slave Ownership, *History Workshop Journal*, Volume 90, pp. 233-252.

¹⁰⁵ Mar, T.B, Boyd's Blacks: Labour and the making of Settler Lands in Australia and the Pacific, in Stead, V. & Altman, J., *Labour Lines and Colonial Power: Indigenous and Pacific islander Mobility in Australia*, ANU Press, Canberra, 2019, p.68.



Figure 1: Benjamin Boyd 1847 (Source: *Heads of the People*)

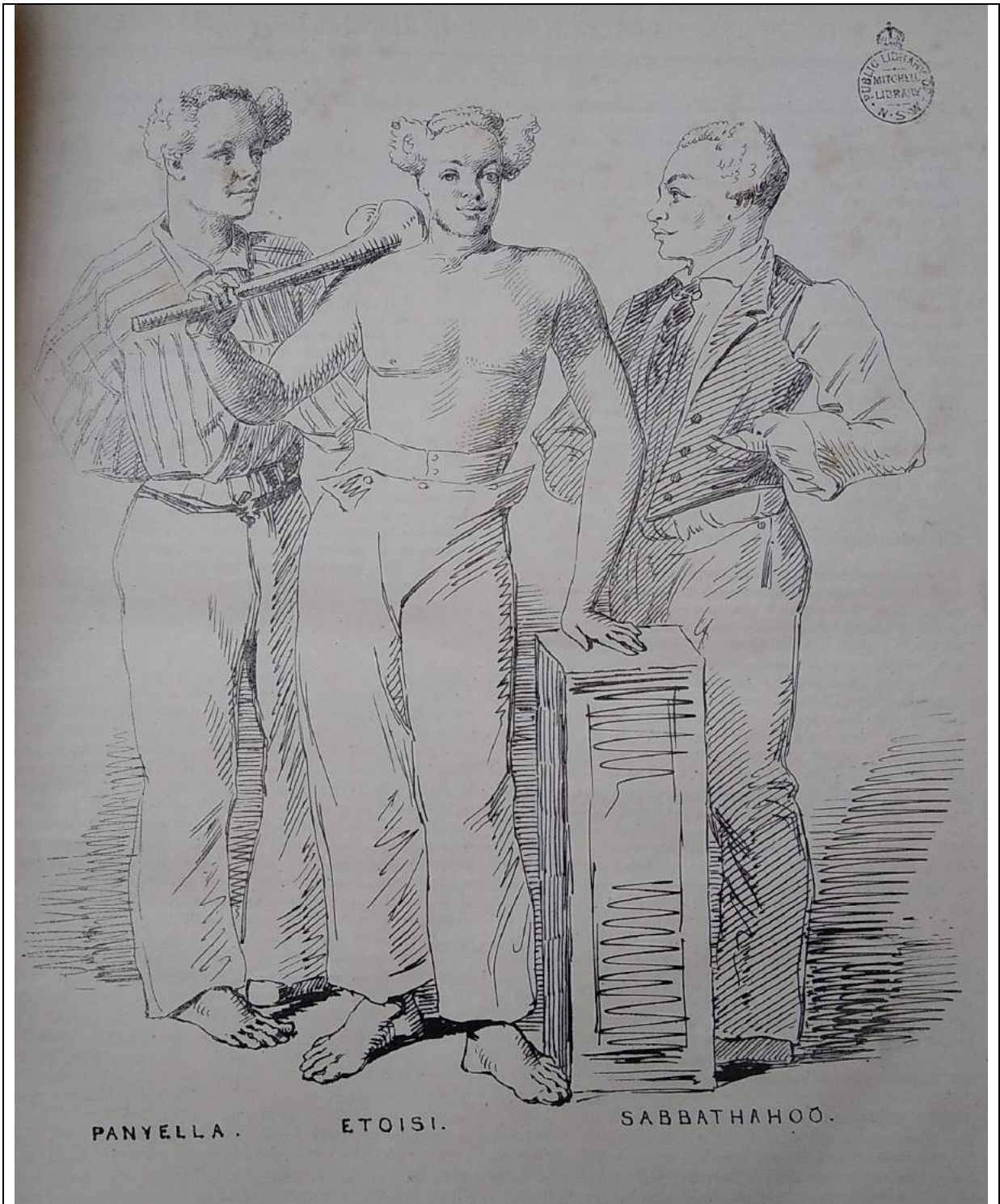


Figure 2: The only known illustration of any of the islanders Boyd brought to New South Wales. These three men, Panyella, Etoisi and Sabbathahoo came in on the *Velocity* in April and then accompanied it again on the second voyage in August 1847 (Source: *Heads of the People*)



Figure 3: Boydtown at Twofold Bay c1847. This painting by Boyd's onsite manager Oswald Walters Breirly shows Boydtown at the time when the each of the groups of South Sea Islander workers arrived. (Source: National Library of Australia)

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