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"Return to Eden: Van Diemen's Land and the Early British Settlement of Australia"

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Boyce, James. "Return to Eden: Van Diemen's Land and the Early British Settlement of Australia." *Environment and History* 14, no. 2, "Australia Revisited" special issue (May, 2008): 289–307. doi:10.3197/096734008X303773 . Tasmania (formerly known as Van Diemen's Land) received approximately 72,000 convicts, mainly from the British Isles and Ireland, between 1803 and 1853, and convicts and their descendants formed the large majority of the population of the island colony throughout this time. This article focuses on the environmental experience of this unusual settler population especially in the first decades of settlement. It argues that, contrary to the dominant paradigm of Australian history, the new land was not experienced as a hostile or forbidding place, but a comparatively benign refuge from the brutality of servitude. The argument is put that Australian environmental history has been distorted by a failure to recognise that the rigorous attempts to reproduce English society - social and environmental - were largely undertaken by a relatively small group of free settlers. The dramatically different experience of convict settlers demonstrates the importance of considering the extent to which socio-economic background shaped the environmental encounter. All rights reserved. © 2008 The White Horse Press

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