

# Not Rich and Not British: Philip Schaeffer, 'Failed' Colonial Farmer <sup>1</sup>

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Early small-scale farmers of New South Wales (NSW) are not usually regarded as nation-builders of the colonial era or as pioneer cultural heroes like swaggies and bushmen. They tend instead to be dismissed as 'failures' within the Enlightenment view of progress that framed both colonial development and representations of the growth of the colony. Although the names of such farmers are listed in land grants, little can be known of the details of their circumstances. An exception, however, is Philip Schaeffer, a German-born soldier who became the first free settler in NSW and whose story can be used to illuminate the experience of small-scale colonial agriculture.<sup>2</sup> This article offers a brief discussion of historical scholarship on colonial farming and a critique of the role of the Enlightenment ideal of progress in constructionist representations of early colonial small-holders, using the Bourdieuan concepts of 'habitus' and 'symbolic capital' and Giddens' social theory of 'structuration' to reconsider the significance of Schaeffer's story.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful for the suggestions of Richard Waterhouse, Grace Karskens, David Armitage, Nancy Cushing and Phillip McIntyre.

<sup>2</sup> There are several spellings of Schaeffer's name in the primary and secondary literature. The entry 'Schaffer, Philip (- 1828?)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB)*, Vol. 2, Melbourne, 1967, p. 420 indicates spellings with and without the first 'e'. The spelling used here is from a letter believed to be in Schaeffer's handwriting, written in German. Schaeffer to Nepean, 17 July 1790, Public Records Office MS CO 201/5, Australian Joint Copying Project, State Library of New South Wales (SLNSW), pp. 277-8. Schaeffer's status as the first free settler in the colony is mentioned by T. G. Coghlan, *Wealth and Progress of New South Wales 1894*, Sydney, 1895, p. 376, who wrongly placed Schaeffer on the First Fleet.

<sup>3</sup> In the constructionist approach to cultural representation described by Stuart Hall, meaning in language is made socially with linguistic concepts or signs and that meaning is interpreted and understood by members of a particular cultural group. The alternatives are that either language has inherent meaning, independent of the users of language, or that meaning comes only from author intention. These alternatives are respectively, the reflective approach and the intentional approach. S. Hall, 'The Work of Representation', in S. Hall (ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, London, 1997, pp. 25-6.

Alan Atkinson observed in 1988 that 'historians in Australia have ignored the difference between great gentlemen and smaller ones'.<sup>4</sup> Even now small-scale colonial farmers – men and women – have received little of the same 'history from below' revisionism as convicts and the working classes. This is unsurprising. Farming had a modest role in colonial development compared with primary industries such as pastoralism and gold mining. Quite simply, there have been far more woolgrowers and pastoral workers than crop farmers.<sup>5</sup> Recently, however, Geoff Raby and Angus McGillivray identified a tendency for historians to uncritically accept the colonial descriptions of early-nineteenth century agriculture in terms of 'failure', sentencing small-farmers to the role of delaying rather than promoting the advance of 'civilization' in the colony. Raby and McGillivray rejected the view that colonial farming was 'technically inert and backward compared with Britain at the time', or 'an abject failure ... slow, wasteful and slovenly'.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, without attention to early farming, a conception of the complexity of colonisation is incomplete and an understanding of the origins of Australian agriculture impossible.

Schaeffer's story encompasses two aspects of early agriculture: wine growing and mixed farming. My interest in Schaeffer's colonial experience arose from the discrepancy in depictions of him in popular histories of Australian wine compared with more general historical accounts. Popular wine histories, written to heighten wine appreciation, applaud Schaeffer's role as the first private vigneron in NSW in the early 1790s but provide little detail of his background, his viticultural and vinicultural experimentation, or his fate in the

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<sup>4</sup> A. Atkinson, *Camden: Farm and Village Life in Early New South Wales*, Melbourne, 1988, p. 68.

<sup>5</sup> J. Hirst, 'Agriculture', in G. Davison, J. Hirst, S. Macintyre (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, revised ed., Oxford, 2001, p. 19.

<sup>6</sup> G. Raby, *Making Rural Australia: An Economic History of Technical and Institutional Creativity, 1788-1860*, Melbourne, 1996, p. 5; A. McGillivray, 'From Sods to Seed-beds: Cultivating a Familiar Field at Port Jackson', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, Vol. 5, 2004, p. 2.

colony.<sup>7</sup> By contrast, the entry on Schaeffer in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (ADB) provides details of the German settler's life beyond wine growing but declares that his 'later achievements did not match his early promise', noting that Schaeffer had to sell off his land piecemeal as he got older to avoid going broke.<sup>8</sup> Schaeffer has also received mixed treatment in histories of Germans in NSW, because of his perceived 'failure'.<sup>9</sup> Such unflattering depictions are largely reliant on comments made by the Presbyterian minister and temperance activist, John Dunmore Lang. In *Australia, Willkommen*, for example, Lang reported that Schaeffer was:

said to have been a very prolific wine grower, but to have squandered his fortune, being a keen drinker himself. He later married Margaret McKinnon, who had been transported because she had burned down her neighbour's house through sheer jealousy. Schaeffer lived with her for many years near Pittwater, before he died, ruined by alcohol, in the colony's poor house.<sup>10</sup>

This is not wholly accurate. Schaeffer *did* marry former convict Margaret McKinnon but he almost certainly did *not* have a fortune and it would be overstating the possibilities of wine production in early NSW to describe Schaeffer's output as 'prolific' (see below).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See for example, J. Ilbery, 'History of Wine in Australia', in L. Evans, *Australia and New Zealand Complete Book of Wine*, Sydney, 1973, p. 14; C. Gent, *Mixed Dozen: The story of Australian winemaking since 1788*, Sydney, 2003, pp. 3-4.

<sup>8</sup> ADB, *op. cit.*, p. 420.

<sup>9</sup> Schaeffer is mentioned in I. Harmstorf and M. Cigler, *The Germans in Australia*, Blackburn (Vic), 1985, p. 5; J. Tampke and C. Doxford, *Australia, Willkommen: A History of the Germans in Australia*, Kensington (NSW), 1990, p. 12. Schaeffer is ignored in J. Vondra, *German Speaking Settlers in Australia*, Melbourne, 1981.

<sup>10</sup> Tampke and Doxford, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>11</sup> Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Registration numbers V118111286 3A/1811; V1811512 147A/1811, SLNSW. The wine growing industry in colonial NSW did not really take shape until the 1820s. J. H. Maiden, 'The Grape Vine. Notes on its Introduction into New South Wales', *Agricultural Gazette of New South Wales*, Vol. 28, 1917, p. 432 dates the beginning of a commercial wine industry to the arrival of James Busby's collection of 362 varieties of vines from Spain and France in the early 1830s. Colonial statistics for 1843 indicate more than 16,000 gallons of wine was produced in that year in the Hunter alone. W. P. Driscoll, *The Beginnings of the Wine Industry in the Hunter Valley: Newcastle History Monographs No. 5*, Newcastle, 1969, p. 23. The desire to export colonial wine to Britain received

The statement that Schaeffer died 'ruined by alcohol' merely conflates alcohol consumption with 'failure'. Schaeffer may have been a drunk but he also lived in the most dipsomaniacal period in NSW history. The combined consumption of spirits, wine and beer peaked in NSW in the 1830s so it was on the rise in the final years of Schaeffer's life.<sup>12</sup> Without being an apologist for alcoholism, it has to be said that Lang's words on Schaeffer's drunkenness should be weighed as coming from one who strongly disapproved of the over-consumption of alcohol.<sup>13</sup> Schaeffer's drinking might have been deviant within a paradigm that privileged temperance, but his behaviour was more normative than temperance activists would acknowledge within early colonial culture.

Lang's criticisms of Schaeffer were part of a contemporary perception of small farmers as culturally corrupt and backward 'failures' within the Enlightenment discourse that privileged 'progress', 'success' and 'civility'. Author and 'civilized' farmer, James Atkinson, set the tone in the 1820s when he presented a bleak view of both 'early Settlers' and poor emancipated convict farmers as incompetent, drunken and debauched.<sup>14</sup> The idea of 'success' was so deeply embedded in the consciousness of educated, progressive colonials as to be considered the natural state of affairs rather than a

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a boost with the success of samples from the Macarthurs' Camden vineyard and James King's Irrawang at the 1855 Paris Exhibition. J. McIntyre, 'Camden to London and Paris: the role of the Macarthur family in the early New South Wales wine industry', *History Compass*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2007, pp. 434-5.

12 A. E. Dingle, "'The Truly Magnificent Thirst': An Historical Survey of Australian Drinking Habits", *Historical Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 75, 1980, pp. 229-32. The history of alcohol is another emerging area of research. See D. E. Kirkby, 'Drinking "The Good Life", Australia c.1880-1980', in M. P. Holt (ed.), *Alcohol: A Social and Cultural History*, New York, 2006, pp. 203-23; F. B. Smith, 'Curing alcoholism in Australia, 1880s-1920s', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, Vol. 8, 2006, pp. 137-57; P. Lisle, 'Rum Beginnings: Towards a New Perspective of the Grose Years', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 91, Pt. 1, 2005, pp. 15-28, confirms that a high level of spirits was traded in New South Wales from the mid-1790s.

13 J. D. Lang, *An Historical and Statistical Account of New South Wales*, Fourth ed., Vol. 2, London, 1875, pp. 109-10.

14 J. Atkinson, *An Account of the State of Agriculture and Grazing in New South Wales*, Facsimile ed., Sydney, 1975 [London, 1826], pp. 29-37.

philosophical construct.<sup>15</sup> They might have diverged in opinion on other matters but those who were inspired to put pen to paper on the state of the colony shared a sense of 'the degree of success in exploiting the land'.<sup>16</sup> As in the North American colonies this success entailed advancing 'from the bracing impoverishment of savagery to the luxurious and commercial glories of modernity [where] commercial peoples were the final products of the natural development of human society'.<sup>17</sup> Colonists in NSW with access to capital surely imagined re-creating the American model of large-scale, planter-style agriculture: reliable staple crops worked by a cheap labour source.<sup>18</sup> Although pastoralism proved an earlier path to wealth in the Antipodes, considerable energy was invested to establish commercial agriculture and the Enlightenment philosophy of validation through progress was inextricably linked to this vision.<sup>19</sup> Lang, for one, knew that on the Enlightenment scale of progress, agriculture followed pastoralism. '[S]quatting', he noted, 'is evidently destined, at no distant period, to be fairly eclipsed by agriculture ... [and] the idea that an acre of vines may yet be found as profitable as a thousand sheep, is no absurdity'.<sup>20</sup>

There is an important link between the Enlightenment ideal of progress, the search for a staple crop, Enlightenment-conceived 'civilization' and wine growing which adds another dimension to Lang's disappointment at Schaeffer's 'failure' as a vigneron. As observed by visiting French naturalist François Péron in 1801, 'in spite of the fact that Britain's consumption of wine, both at home and on her Fleets, is immense, she grows none of it herself. Australia

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<sup>15</sup> R. Dixon, *The Course of Empire: Neo-Classical Culture in New South Wales, 1788-1860*, Melbourne, 1986, pp. 1-4 establishes the influence of Scottish Enlightenment philosophy in early colonial New South Wales. On 'civility' and manners, see P. Russell, 'The Brash Colonial: Class and Comportment in Nineteenth Century Australia', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 12, 2002, pp. 431-53.

<sup>16</sup> J. Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia*, Cambridge, 2002, p. 69.

<sup>17</sup> J. Chaplin, *An Anxious Pursuit: Agricultural Innovation and Modernity in the Lower South 1730-1815*, Chapel Hill (USA), 1993, pp. 16, 33.

<sup>18</sup> R. Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid: A Social and Cultural History of Rural Australia*, Fremantle (WA), 2005, p. 18.

<sup>19</sup> Raby, *op. cit.* p. 5; McGillivray, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Lang, *op. cit.*, p. 245; Dixon, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

must therefore become the "Vineyard of Great Britain".<sup>21</sup> Wine growing trials in Britain's American colonies before Independence had failed and in the eighteenth century the key ports for purchasing wine between England and NSW included the Canary Islands, Rio de Janeiro and the Cape of Good Hope; none British.<sup>22</sup> Lang was among those colonists keenly interested in wine growing both as an antidote to intemperance and as a potential source of colonial wealth. He closely observed his brother Andrew's efforts at grape production on the Paterson River in the lower Hunter Valley in the 1830s. The production of colonial wine was hampered, however, by a lack of skill and knowledge that was even greater than for some other European crops.<sup>23</sup>

The notion that Schaeffer 'failed' both as a vigneron and a mixed farmer suggests he inadequately exploited whatever resources were available to him to elevate his economic and social status and, by association, that of colony and empire. A revision of this Enlightenment idea of 'failure' requires a post-Enlightenment conceptual framework that draws together the fragmented and sprawling details extant on Schaeffer as an historical agent within a shifting milieu. This framework can be provided by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of 'habitus' and 'symbolic capital', and by Anthony Giddens' 'structuration'. 'Habitus' defines an individual's unique set of values and tastes which shapes how they live and, in turn, binds them to cultural groups, or a 'cultural field', with whom their dominant 'habitus' intersects. The habitus, according to Bourdieu 'is the product of the work of inculcation and appropriation necessary in order for those products of collective history, the objective structures (e.g. language, economy, etc.) to succeed in reproducing themselves more or less completely, in the form of durable positions'.<sup>24</sup> That is, practices, such as methods of farming,

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<sup>21</sup> Quoted in H. E. Laffer, *The Wine Industry of Australia*, Adelaide, 1949, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> The Cape of Good Hope became a British colony in 1808.

<sup>23</sup> Lang, *op. cit.*, p. 103; D. Dunstan, *Better than Pommard!: A History of Wine in Victoria*, Melbourne, 1994, p. 3, on the ongoing discussion about the need for improved viticultural knowledge in New South Wales in the 1840s.

<sup>24</sup> P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge, 1977, p. 85. The value of Bourdieu lies in his refusal to separate subjectivist and objectivist modes of interpreting practice. Subjectivism assumes 'agents' shape their world; objectivism

are perpetuated (consciously or subconsciously) by individuals or 'agents' whose 'habitus' allows them to act in a way that is recognisable within their 'cultural fields'. The accumulated status within a 'field' has 'symbolic capital'; it is based on knowledge and recognition and 'always in the long run, guarantees "economic" profit'.<sup>25</sup> Wine growing, for example, had cultural meaning as both a commercial European crop and a beverage of the upper and middle classes in Britain. It therefore held a high level of 'symbolic capital' among white colonists in NSW and did, eventually, lead to economic profit for producers. According to Bourdieu, 'agency' is enacted in response to a 'structure' or a combination of both 'constraints' and 'possible uses' which both enable and limit the choices of the 'agent' in question. The 'agent', in turn, influences the 'structure' in which they act.<sup>26</sup> Bourdieu described this process in relation to the creation of art as culture but it is equally relevant in *agriculture*, a cumulative process of ongoing experimentation and accretion of knowledge in response to the shifting structural forces of soil fertility, weather patterns, availability of tools, plant stock, labour and capital.<sup>27</sup>

Anthony Giddens, like Bourdieu, rejected the more limiting notions of voluntarism and determinism and coined the word 'structuration' to describe the recursive interaction between 'agents' (individuals) and 'structures' (organisations, institutions, conventions of practice, conditions of production, nature). 'Structuration' assists in the observation of continuity and change in history by encouraging the view that 'structures' are not fixed (though they can 'enable' and 'constrain' human action) and that humans act intentionally and unintentionally in ways that change 'structures'. By

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assumes the world, as an objective 'structure' shapes people in it. See J. Webb, T. Schirato and G. Danaher, *Understanding Bourdieu*, Sydney, 2002, pp. 31-6. Bourdieu links voluntarist and determinist dimensions of human activity; D. Swartz, *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*, Chicago, 1997, p. 9.

<sup>25</sup> P. Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, Columbia (US), 1993, pp. 7, 75.

<sup>26</sup> P. Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, (S Emanuel trans), Cambridge, 1996, p. 235.

<sup>27</sup> For an application of Bourdieu's social theory to the adoption of sustainable farming practices see E. Phillips and I. Gray, 'Farming "Practice" as Temporally and Spatially Situated Intersections of Biography, Culture and Social Structure', *Australian Geographer*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 1995, pp. 127-32.

applying the concepts of 'habitus', 'symbolic capital' and 'structuration' to Schaeffer's story the various elements of his experience and his contribution to colonial development can be approached from a perspective that is less ideological or determinist than more nationalist, Marxist or economically-determined analyses.<sup>28</sup>

The concept of trans-nationalism is also invaluable in making sense of the fluidity and complexity in colonial development.<sup>29</sup> Rather than concentrating only on movement of people into and within national borders to explain national identity, Schaeffer and his contemporaries moved in 'a world of flow and porous borders ... [in which] we are only just beginning to understand the transformative power of such journeys ... the lines or meaning and significance they trace'.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, Schaeffer crossed several borders. His story flows from his home in pre-unification Germany to war-torn pre-Independence America, post-war Britain and eventually the NSW penal colony. Schaeffer's experiences cannot be pieced together properly without moving beyond the artificial separation of British History, Empire History, Australian History and American History.<sup>31</sup> A trans-national approach allows a more complete sense of the transformative power of Schaeffer's journeys.

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Philip Schaeffer was born in the village of Seckback in the principality of Hesse, possibly in 1750.<sup>32</sup> According to a conversation with him at his Rose Hill farm in 1791, reported by Captain Watkin Tench, Schaeffer had never been a farmer, though 'his father owned a small

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<sup>28</sup> This argument relies on J. Yates, 'Using Giddens' Structuration Theory to Inform Business History', *Business and Economic History*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 1997, pp. 159-83 on the benefits of using 'structuration' to guide historical inquiry and analysis.

<sup>29</sup> M. Lake, 'White Man's Country: The Trans-National History of a National Project', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 122, 2003, pp. 346-63.

<sup>30</sup> E. Eklund, 'Retail Co-operatives as a Transnational Phenomenon: Exploring the Composition of Australian Colonial Society and Culture', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, Vol. 9, 2007, p. 154.

<sup>31</sup> On the limiting effects of the separation of British and Imperial History, see D. Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, Cambridge, 2002, pp. 14-23.

<sup>32</sup> M. Flynn, *The Second Fleet: Britain's Grim Armada of 1790*, Sydney, 2001, p. 521.



estate on the banks of the Rhine, on which he resided, and that he had always been fond of looking at, and assisting in his labours, particularly in the vineyard'.<sup>33</sup> This indicates that Schaeffer's 'habitus' with respect to agriculture, including wine growing, was formed early, though he had no formal experience. Schaeffer actually spent most of his adult life as a soldier including several years as a so-called Hessian auxiliary rifleman hired by the British to bolster their forces during the American War of Independence.<sup>34</sup>

The Hessians' sea voyage to New York was particularly difficult and 'the majority of Hessian battalions passed the war in dull garrison duty punctuated by moments of intense action or marches in the burning sun'.<sup>35</sup> Long empty hours could have led to conversations between German and British troops. Debts of service may have been earned during battle and events which led Schaeffer to NSW suggest he formed a relationship with a British official, possibly in the colony. Key colonial figures who served in the American war who might have been linked with Schaeffer's migration to NSW include London-based colonial office under-secretary Evan Nepean, who oversaw the commissioning of the First Fleet and the first years of colonial establishment, and First Fleet voyagers John Hunter and Watkin Tench. Since Schaeffer addressed his only extant correspondence from NSW to Nepean there may have been some relationship between the two. Hunter does not really figure in Schaeffer's colonial story but Tench featured Schaeffer quite prominently in his account of agriculture at Parramatta and appears to have spoken directly to the Hessian without a language barrier. Or it may have been that in a colonial world that was surprisingly small in terms of social and military connections there was some other patron. It is significant, too, that Governor Phillip was one of

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<sup>33</sup> W. Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years: Being a Reprint of a Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay and a Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson*, Sydney, 1961, p. 254.

<sup>34</sup> D. Gapes, 'Philip Schaeffer of the Vineyard', *History: Magazine of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 13, October 1990, p. 17.

<sup>35</sup> R. Atwood, *The Hessians: Mercenaries from Hessen-Kassel in the American Revolution*, Cambridge, 1980, pp. 54-7, 234.

the few known German-speakers in the colony in Schaeffer's early years there, and Phillip had a strong bond with Nepean.<sup>36</sup>

Certainly, some connection resulted in Schaeffer being recruited, in England, in the northern summer of 1789 to work as a superintendent of convict labourers at the government farm at Rose Hill. Five superintendents, food, plants ordered by prominent botanist Joseph Banks, livestock and selected convict workers were dispatched in response to Governor Phillip's desperate plea for skilled labour and more supplies to feed his struggling colony.<sup>37</sup> Schaeffer's recruitment also implied a confidence on his part of being able to direct others in farming. Once signed up, Schaeffer sailed from England on the frigate *HMS Guardian* in September 1789.<sup>38</sup>

When Schaeffer left for NSW he was about forty years of age, retired from military service and spoke very little English. He was a widower and the father of a ten year-old daughter, Elizabeth, who may have acted as a translator for him.<sup>39</sup> Father and daughter shared a voyage that would prove much more eventful than the First Fleet journey two years earlier. After taking on livestock and fresh supplies at the Cape of Good Hope, the *Guardian* sailed too far south and struck an iceberg, just two days before Christmas in 1789.<sup>40</sup> Schaeffer wrote of the experience in his letter to Nepean. A large portion of the missive is quoted here to allow Schaeffer a certain measure of 'speaking' for himself.

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<sup>36</sup> Phillip was proficient in German, French and Portugese. A. Frost, 'Phillip, Arthur (1738-1814)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <[www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy2.library.usyd.edu.au/view/article/22139](http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy2.library.usyd.edu.au/view/article/22139)> (28 July 2007). The only other German known to be in the colony in this period was Augustus Alt.

<sup>37</sup> Grenville to Phillip, 24 August 1789, *Historical Records of Australia, Series 1 (HRA I)* Vol. 1, p. 129.

<sup>38</sup> *ADB, op. cit.*, p. 420.

<sup>39</sup> The suggestion that Elizabeth Schaeffer translated between German and English for her father is also made in S. Rees, *The Floating Brothel: The extraordinary story of the Lady Julian [sic] and its cargo of female convicts bound for Botany Bay*, Sydney, 2001, p. 73. On Schaeffer's marital status, see Phillip to Grenville, 5 November 1791, *HRA I*, Vol. 1, p. 279.

<sup>40</sup> Papers of *HMS Guardian* Captain Edward Riou, Bonwick Transcripts, Box 59, pp. 6, 9, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

It was very cold and my poor innocent child did not know what to do for fear of death at any moment, and you may guess how I felt to see a child in such a state. But the Almighty and Great God held his hand over us and brought us safely ashore. On 22<sup>nd</sup> February we reached the Cape of Good Hope after a voyage of nine weeks of suffering on the sea and the sadness and toil were beyond description ... [The ship's captain, Edward Riou] behaved like a savage for the whole 9 weeks he shouted and said he had nearly killed himself. He called me a fervent rascal and ill-treated me. My poor child had to stand all night in water, and had to serve the men with liquor when they rested from the pumps and do other work as well ... My chest [of belongings] ... went overboard, so that my poor child and I were left with nothing but our lives, and had to go ashore at the Cape without shoes and hats, with swollen legs and sick, and without any help from Capt. Riou. So it was that if I had not had good friends among gentlemen I could well have suffered the greatest need, for Capt. Riou did nothing for us.<sup>41</sup>

As well as describing the trauma of the shipwreck, which surely undermined his health in ways that would re-visit him in later years, this passage alluded to Schaeffer's connections, his 'good friends among gentlemen', which gave him advantages, a 'distinction' he would otherwise not have had. This set him apart from other colonists without such privileges, though any form of patronage he may have enjoyed in the early years could not guard against the realities of the colonial economy to prevent his 'failure' and the 'constraints' of advancing age.

After a month at the Cape recovering from illness, Philip and Elizabeth joined the transport *Lady Juliana* for the trip to NSW. If the alleged debauchery of the convict women on board is to be believed, the journey might have challenged Schaeffer's moral guidance of his daughter, though tales of *Lady Juliana* were given 'as colourful a slant

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<sup>41</sup> From the translation of the letter from Schaeffer to Nepean, in J. Cobley, *Sydney Cove 1789-1790*, Sydney, 1980, p. 244.

as possible' for British readers.<sup>42</sup> They finally landed at Port Jackson in June 1790, nine months after setting out from England. Schaeffer was a 'single father' more than half-way through his life, half-way round the world from his homeland, and beginning again. He wrote that 'as she is very delicate Governor Phillip took [Elizabeth] in in order to help her, and she has the honour of eating at his table until I am better settled'.<sup>43</sup> This may be more than kindness on Phillip's part and suggests, again, a level of connection that assisted Schaeffer, at least at first.

In order to become better settled, a month after landing, Schaeffer wrote his one surviving letter to Nepean. The letter was originally written in German, most likely in Schaeffer's own hand as the script is not the copperplate of a scribe, and was essentially a request for compensation for his losses in the wreck of the *Guardian*. This was how Schaeffer hoped to establish himself in the new colony; in the tone of a latter-day statutory declaration, he wrote that:

[s]ince leaving England I received only half my daughter's allowance of liquor, and left the rest in store in order to have some in Port Jackson, which Capt. Riou allowed. From the 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb. 1790 till the 28<sup>th</sup> March at the Cape of Good Hope I was sick and received no support, no provisions, nothing, and since the ship the *Lady Juliana* left the Cape, I got no liquor on the whole passage to Port Jackson although full King's allowance was allowed on the voyage which is very hard... I beg your excellency most humbly to assist me to make good my losses and the King's allowance that stands to my credit.<sup>44</sup>

Rather than read this as evidence of alcohol dependence, it is more plausible that Schaeffer aimed to trade his hoarded alcohol ration

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<sup>42</sup> A. Vickery, 'Feminine Transports and Transformations: Textual Performances of Women Convicts and Emigrants to Australia from 1788 to 1850', *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, Vol. 7, 2007, p. 74.

<sup>43</sup> Schaeffer to Nepean, in Cobley, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

when he arrived in the colony; a common practice among new arrivals.<sup>45</sup>

There is evidence that Schaeffer was 'enabled' within the 'structure' of colonial NSW but a potential 'constraint' soon emerged. Shortly after his arrival in the colony it became clear that Schaeffer's lack of English made it difficult for him to give orders to the convicts he was employed to oversee. Phillip thought Schaeffer 'was not calculated for the employment for which he came out, but as a settler will be a useful man', and allocated him 140 acres on the Parramatta riverfront in 1791, by far the largest of the first grants (most blocks were 20 to 60 acres).<sup>46</sup> The size of the grant may have been related to Schaeffer's status as a free settler as well as to facilitate experimental cropping.<sup>47</sup> It may also have been an effort to compensate for the Schaeffers' losses in the wreck of the *Guardian*. Either way Schaeffer quickly began the arduous task of clearing his block of trees, stumps and rocks to plant corn and wheat, wine grapes and tobacco. Tench reported it was 'to these two last articles, he mean[t] principally to direct his exertions', implying an understanding of the American plantation experience and a reconnection to the 'habitus' of observing wine growing as a child. By the early southern summer of 1791, Schaeffer had named his property The Vineyard and it boasted 'a decent house' until 'a very good brick house' then under construction was 'completed for his use, by the governor'.<sup>48</sup> Phillip's support can be seen as a significant measure of encouragement or compensation and certainly potentially enabling.

Schaeffer had only limited funds available to him, which would prove a problem in sustaining his farming enterprise, especially after the loss of his store of alcohol. Schaeffer's promised annual salary of forty pounds as a superintendent was, according to Governor Phillip,

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<sup>45</sup> See for example, J. Denne, *The Windeyer Family of Kinross, Raymond Terrace, Raymond Terrace* (NSW), 1988, p. 4. I am grateful to Nancy Cushing for suggesting this link.

<sup>46</sup> Phillip to Grenville, 5 November 1791, *HRA I*, Vol. 1, pp. 271, 279.

<sup>47</sup> A. R. McGillivray, 'Convict settlers, Seamen's Greens, and Imperial Designs at Port Jackson: A Maritime Perspective of British Settler Agriculture', *Agricultural History*, Vol. 78, No. 3, 2004, p. 261.

<sup>48</sup> Tench, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

stopped on 30 March 1791, 'the first quarter-day after he became a settler'.<sup>49</sup> Schaeffer explained to Tench that he had spent more than forty pounds in improving his land with the help of four convict labourers but that he was also entitled to another year of being supplied with food from the government stores and free medical help from the colony's doctors. From November 1793 he would have to support himself and the four convicts would be withdrawn, '[b]ut if he shall then or at any future period, declare himself able to maintain a moderate number of these people for their labour, they will be assigned to him'.<sup>50</sup> This support would be necessary in the trying conditions in which he was attempting to farm. Brian Fletcher has argued that as both consumers and employers, small-scale farmers probably suffered most from high living costs in the period up to the 1820s: '[b]y and large, conditions within the colony militated against the emergence of even a moderately well-off, let alone flourishing peasantry'.<sup>51</sup> These 'structural' limits constrained Schaeffer's enterprise but it was even more difficult for emancipist farmers who did not enjoy the few advantages Schaeffer had.

As for other 'structural' factors, such as the physical conditions for agriculture, four months after Tench's visit to Schaeffer, Governor Phillip wrote that the land granted at Parramatta was 'of a middling quality, inclining to loamy sand'.<sup>52</sup> This soil should have been reasonable for wine growing, though Schaeffer was not impressed. According to Tench, in 'walking along, he more than once shook his head, and made some mortifying observations on the soil of his present domain, compared with the banks of his native stream'. Schaeffer 'had almost despaired', Tench reported, 'but had as often been checked by recollecting, that hardly any difficulty can arise, which vigour and perseverance will not overcome'.<sup>53</sup> If this is an accurate reporting of Schaeffer's state of mind and not the imposition of a progressive ideal from Tench, then it is an indication

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<sup>49</sup> Phillip to Grenville, 5 November 1791, *HRA I*, Vol. 1, p. 271.

<sup>50</sup> Tench, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

<sup>51</sup> B. Fletcher, 'Agriculture', in G. J. Abbott and N. B. Nairn (eds), *Economic Growth of Australia 1788-1821*, Melbourne, 1969, p. 201.

<sup>52</sup> Phillip to Dundas, 17 March 1792, *HRA I*, Vol. 1, p. 341.

<sup>53</sup> Tench, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

both of the difficulties faced by Schaeffer and the fact that he had a strong work ethic and might, under more favourable circumstances, have been more 'successful'. In October 1792, the Governor reported that Schaeffer was 'doing well'.<sup>54</sup> There were further difficulties, such as when, in September 1793, a group of Irish convicts stole a boat belonging to Schaeffer.<sup>55</sup> The boat was found within the same month but its loss would have made it difficult for Schaeffer to transport supplies and items for trade.

Meanwhile, the impact of the 'structural' issue of colonial policy on land and trade must not be discounted. As Lionel Frost notes:

Australian agriculture experienced failures and disappointments [and] acceptance of this point implies that a redirection of historians' attention is in order, away from the concept of government as villain and toward studies of the process by which individual farmers, as agents in a world economic system, reacted to problems and chose from an immense range of possibilities.<sup>56</sup>

Moving away from the 'government as villain' does not mean ignoring the effect of government policy as a 'structural' force which limited the 'range of possibilities' for Schaeffer. The departure of Governor Phillip led to a dramatic change in circumstances. Phillip's policy of settling peasant farmers was dismantled by the acting governors who succeeded him. Francis Grose and William Paterson gave larger-sized grants to military personnel and allocated the colony's labour supply of convicts to work those farms, which were ultimately more fruitful.<sup>57</sup> In addition to dominating the means of

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<sup>54</sup> Phillip to Dundas, 2 October 1792, *HRA I*, Vol. 1, p. 375.

<sup>55</sup> D. Collins, *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales*, Adelaide, 1971, pp. 310-13.

<sup>56</sup> L. Frost, 'Australian Agricultural Historiography: A Survey', *Agricultural History*, Vol. 71, No. 4, 1997, p. 490.

<sup>57</sup> B. Fitzpatrick, *British Imperialism and Australia 1783-1833: An Economic History of Australasia*, Sydney, 1971, pp. 92-6. Despite criticism of Fitzpatrick's broader economic conclusions his argument about policies on small holdings has been affirmed in A. Atkinson, *The Europeans in Australia, A History: Volume One, The*

production the NSW Corps, under Grose, controlled the colony's enormously profitable trade in imported commodities such as rum and barrelled beef. Schaeffer was locked out of the economy where colonial 'fortunes' were first being made.

By 1795 Schaeffer's vines were bearing, and Paterson advised Banks that Schaeffer had made 'ninety Gallons of wine in about two years now' from his small vineyard.<sup>58</sup> There is no reliable record of the quality of the wine but the equipment required gives an indication of the conditions of production; a 'structural' factor. Schaeffer would have needed, at the very least, several containers such as old wine, water or food barrels for crushing grapes, fermenting the resulting 'must' and storing the wine after fermentation. These barrels could have been obtained from government stores, but the odour of previous contents would have permeated wine stored in them. Also, wine can spoil quickly when it is not 'fined' carefully with ingredients such as egg whites to remove residual plant matter and when equipment is not sterilised with large quantities of boiling water or sulphur smoke. Given the demands of wine production and the problem of blight of the vines at the government farm,<sup>59</sup> which likely also affected Schaeffer's vineyard, it is not surprising that the enterprise did not last. In 1797, after being granted a lease of land in Sydney and sixty acres at the Field of Mars, Schaeffer sold The Vineyard to Captain Henry Waterhouse for 140 pounds.<sup>60</sup>

Schaeffer may have 'failed' to grow wine grapes but he was not alone nor entirely to blame. Paterson, again, reported to Banks that by 1800 'the cultivation of the Vine has been totally neglected ... there are not so many more as there was in the year 1796'.<sup>61</sup> A year later, Governor King reported that:

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*Beginning*, Melbourne, 1997, p. xviii. For a recent account of this debate see McGillivray, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-29.

58 Paterson to Banks, 17 March 1795, Banks Papers, Correspondence, MS Q158, Dixon Library, Sydney.

59 King to Portland, 1 March 1802, *HRA I*, Vol. 1, pp. 405-6.

60 Flynn, *op. cit.*, p. 522.

61 Paterson to Banks, 20 February 1800, Banks Papers, Botanical and Horticultural 1789-1796, MS A82, Mitchell Library, Sydney.



the cultivation of the grape has by no means been attended to for other purpose than eating as fruit, except by one or two individuals, who have been deterred from persevering by their vines failing, evidently from not knowing their management. All the vines growing in the colony would not cover two acres of ground.<sup>62</sup>

This infers that Schaeffer did not understand vine management. This possibility is also implied in Alan Frost's defence of botanist Joseph Banks' claim that '*if worked in the usual European ways, New South Wales in the latitude of Botany Bay was sufficiently fertile to become a neo-Europe and support a large European population*'.<sup>63</sup> Schaeffer could not be called a 'vinedresser' or experienced vineyard worker like the vinedressers whom the Macarthurs and other wine growers imported from the late 1830s.<sup>64</sup> What King and Frost fail to take account of, however, is the extent to which Schaeffer's 'habitus' was not enough for him to single-handedly pioneer an entire industry and that 'structural' limits outweighed any advantages for Schaeffer, even if he had known more about growing grapes.

What of the plant material available to Schaeffer in his efforts at wine growing? Grapes for wine and table are not native to Australia and had for some time been cultivated only in gardens in Britain. The first few vines planted at Sydney Cove were clones of European cultivars collected by Phillip at the Cape of Good Hope in 1787 and the first sizeable planting of vines at the government farm at Rose Hill must have been from the same collection.<sup>65</sup> Schaeffer likely sourced cuttings direct from Phillip's collection or from the government vineyard but these vines were by no means acclimatised to NSW and their quality could have been poor. Cuttings were often damaged on sea voyages and, as it takes three years for vines to bear fruit, experiments with different varieties and planting locations could not occur as rapidly as for annual grain crops. The first official

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<sup>62</sup> King to Portland, 10 March 1801, *HRA I*, Vol. 3, p. 6.

<sup>63</sup> A. Frost, *Botany Bay Mirages: Illusions of Australia's Convict Beginnings*, Melbourne, 1994, p. 97 (emphasis in original).

<sup>64</sup> G. Nadel, 'Letters from German Immigrants in New South Wales', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 39, No. 5, 1953, pp. 253-66.

<sup>65</sup> P. Norrie, *The Vineyard of Sydney*, Sydney, 1990, pp. 19, 25.

description of wine grape varieties in the colony was made in 1803 when Schaeffer had sold his vineyard and was relying on mixed farming. The list of varieties that had produced fruit in NSW were White Muscardine, Tokay, Red Frontinac (likely from British garden stocks) and Constantia (from the Cape). Others were planted but the informant in this case had not seen the fruit and, anyway, 'the whole [were] subject to Desperate blights'.<sup>66</sup> A point of comparison to emphasise the difficulties of planting wine grapes in NSW: a lack of understanding of soil and climate proved to be an enormous barrier in the introduction of wine grape varieties in North America and the first European vines had been planted there two hundred years earlier than in NSW.<sup>67</sup> Later colonial growers were able to overcome problems of soil, climate and plantstock through the accumulation of knowledge and the recursive process of 'structuration' in which 'agents' enact 'structural' change in response to 'structural limits', something Schaeffer could not benefit from in his early experimentation.<sup>68</sup>

Five years after Schaeffer sold The Vineyard, the muster of settlers in NSW for the year 1800 showed he owned four pigs, had fourteen acres of wheat sown, and eight acres of corn to be planted. He was not supported by the government stores but had one convict labourer 'on stores'. The 1802 muster recorded Schaeffer farmed thirty acres of cleared land and ran twenty pigs. He had some wheat and corn seed stored, and supported one woman and two convicts. It is not clear whether the woman was his daughter Elizabeth or his future wife Margaret but was probably the latter, as Elizabeth had by this stage disappeared from the historical record. Apart from the considerations of his emotional relationship with his female companion, it is important for assessing the potential of Schaeffer's productivity as a farmer that he worked with a woman who would have carried out domestic tasks such as cooking and washing as well

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<sup>66</sup> 'List of Plants in the Colony of New South Wales that are not Indigenous', 20 March 1803, Banks Papers, Braebourne Collection, MS A78-6, p. 161, Mitchell Library, Sydney. The list was signed by Governor King.

<sup>67</sup> K. A. Ryerson, 'Plant Introductions', *Agricultural History*, Vol. 50, No. 1, 1976, p. 251.

<sup>68</sup> Dunstan, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-29.

as, potentially, crop sowing, harvesting and animal husbandry. But Schaeffer was not a young man when he married on 4 October 1811 at St John's Church of England, Parramatta. His ability to continue to work physically was yearly undermined and heavy drinking would have taxed his physical and economic resources. An enclosure on debts to the Crown from Governor Macquarie, in 1812, showed 'P. Schaffer' owed one pound, seventeen shillings and ten pence, the second lowest amount on the list.<sup>69</sup> This was nowhere near the highest debt, which was close to 450 pounds but a small debt suggests negligence of administrative details or lack of access to the necessary funds.

After their marriage, the Schaeffers expanded their land holdings with further grants in 1816 and 1825 but the extra land was not enough of an 'enablement' at this point. By the time of this final grant Schaeffer was probably in his mid-seventies, which would have made it difficult for him to continue farm work. In a petition to Governor Ralph Darling in November 1825 for a hundred acres of rocky land adjoining their property, Margaret stated the couple were

poor and infirm and upwards of seventy years of age, that they live on a small grant of land near Broken Bay but being past labour they are forced to live on the produce of a small herd of cattle which their grant is too limited to support [this] would enable them to wear out the small remains of their lives in tolerable comfort [relieving] their forlorn and destitute condition.<sup>70</sup>

Another 'constraint' on Schaeffer and his wife was the lack of descendants; no younger generation to provide labour or other support. Schaeffer died, probably at the Benevolent Society home for paupers in Sydney, in 1828. Society records show that 'William Chaffey' died on 29 February of that year.<sup>71</sup> Margaret was working

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<sup>69</sup> R. Fitz, 'Account of Debts Said to be Due to the Crown from Individuals', 18 June 1812, *HRA I*, Vol. 7, p. 629.

<sup>70</sup> Flynn, *op. cit.*, p. 522.

<sup>71</sup> Minutes of the (Asylum) House Committee, January 1824-September 1829, Papers of the Benevolent Society of New South Wales, MS Z7182. Mitchell Library, Sydney.

at the time for a 'protestant landholder', Robert McIntosh, at Pittwater in Sydney.<sup>72</sup> It is not known where Schaeffer was buried.

In conclusion, although the 'constraints' on Schaeffer ultimately outweighed the 'enabling' factors, he did manage to live as a farmer to a late age in perhaps the most difficult period in colonial agriculture in NSW. His principal legacy is that he made wine out of his first planting of grapes and was the first private vigneron in Australia to do so, an achievement with increased historical significance since wine has become one of Australia's largest agricultural exports.<sup>73</sup> Finally, while Schaeffer's work in raising crops and livestock was undistinguished it plays an important role in illuminating the otherwise obscured toils of small-scale colonial farmers up to the late 1820s.

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<sup>72</sup> M. R. Sainty and K. A. Johnson (eds), *Census of New South Wales: November 1828*, Sydney, 1980, pp. 251, 331.

<sup>73</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Wine and Grape Industry*, Adelaide, 2004, p. 11.