But there were some successes. The most celebrated was that of Martin Cash, Lawrence Kavanagh and George Jones. Cash, the longest lived and most celebrated of the Van Diemen's Land bushrangers, and his accomplices encountered the dogline in 1842 but decided to try a different way:

At the dusk of the evening we came in sight of Eagle Hawk Neck, when we could see the line literally swimming with constables and prisoners. I here enjoined my mates to preserve the strictest silence, observing that one false move might frustrate what we had already achieved, and pointed to the place we should cross. We took a circuitous route through the scrub until we arrived at a spot where we could scan the line for about a mile on either side. We lay here for the next three hours, and having made a fair division of the bread which remained, trusted that it would be the last we should ever eat on Tasmania's Peninsula. On finishing our temperate meal, we started on the forlorn hope, moving as silently as possible, as the slightest noise might bring half-a-dozen constables about our ears. The most perilous part of the adventure was in crossing the road, where constables might be lying in ambush in the scrub which lined the opposite side and up to the water edge.

They reached the water, then silently followed each other into the ocean:

It was then blowing fresh, and the night being very dark, I lost sight of my mates; on getting to the centre, the waves broke clean over me, at the same time carrying away my clothes, which I had fastened in a bundle on my head, and thinking it useless to try and recover it, owing to the darkness of the night, I continued my course. As I could neither hear or see my companions, the horrible idea occurred to me that they had been eaten by the sharks. A similar circumstance having previously taken place about a mile lower down the gut, I being the first who ever attempted to cross so convenient to the 'Neck.' I by-and-by touched the bottom, and remained for some time standing, expecting to hear or see my mates. I had not remained more than five minutes, however, when I could distinctly hear them conversing, and apparently coming to where I stood. Jones now said to Kavanagh, 'Martin's drowned', on hearing which I sprang on to the bank, and observed that I was worth half-a-dozen people in that situation. We were obliged to indulge in a laugh when we found that we were all situated alike with regard to clothing, as my mates as well as myself had lost theirs on the passage.

This escape around the dogline made Cash a hero among the convicts. He and his companions proved that it was possible to get free of the supposedly inescapable prison. When Port Arthur was closed in the late 1970s, so was the dogline. It would be nice to think that the dogs were then freed from their chains.

Canaries and Magpies

The traditional picture we have of convict garb is of broad arrows printed on a nondescript grey sack. The arrow was certainly used on convict uniforms but there were many variations, some of them quite odd.

At first, the lack of supplies in the colony that would become Sydney meant that convicts dressed in whatever they could find, augmented if they were quick, with a set of basic work clothes known as 'slops'. By Macquarie's term of governorship, extra trousers were distributed for those relatively few convicts attending church to appear respectable. In 1819, newly landed male convicts received 'a suit consisting of a coarse woollen jacket and waistcoat of yellow or grey cloth, a pair of Duck [canvas] or cloth trousers, a pair of worsted stockings, a pair of shoes, two cotton or linen shirts, a neck handkerchief and a woolen cap'.

The cabbage tree hat was the favoured headgear. It was quickly and cheaply made by those with the skills and was comfortable to wear, protecting heads and faces from the harsh