WOMEN TRANSPORTED
LIFE IN AUSTRALIA’S CONVICT FEMALE FACTORIES
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Project Co-ordination and Development
Gay Hendriksen, Dr Carol Liston

Assistant Curator
Melissa Wills

Researchers
Judith Dunn, Leilani Edwards, Katie Goldhammer, Anne Mathews, Kristin McCabe, Beth Mathews, Joan Reese, Jan Shelley, Margot Stuart-Smith, Susan Wiblin, Rachel Wong, Ethel Zoglymyer

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Female Factory Research Group
Dr Trudy Cowley, Professor Lucy Frost, Dr Alison Alexander, Dr Dianne Snowden


Collecting Institutions

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Rebecca Pinchin, Glynis Jones

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Margo Riley

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Shirley McCarron

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Virginia Buckingham

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Glenda Browne

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PARRAMATTA HERITAGE CENTRE 346A CHURCH STREET PARRAMATTA NSW 2150
T 02 8839 3311 F 02 9683 5608 www.parracity.nsw.gov.au E discoverparramatta@parracity.nsw.gov.au


WOMEN AND FAMILY OF AUSTRALIA’S CONVICT FEMALE FACTORIES, 1850–1880, PHOTOGRAPHS (DETAILS), COURTESY OF FAMILY DESCENDENTS
CONSTANCE TRUDGETT JANIE CASTINGS MARY CARROLL
MARY ANNE SMITH EMMA (EMMILLA) MAYNER MARIA JANE CASTINGS
BRIDGET LEE ANNE DUNNE SARAH BICKLEY
MARY HUTCHINSON (MATRON) BRIDGET LEE ANN GORDON (MATRON)

FRONT COVER IMAGES (LEFT TO RIGHT FROM TOP)
BACK COVER IMAGE

WINDOW grille FROM THE PARRAMATTA FEMALE FACTORY (BUILT 1818–1821), PHOTOGRAPH (DETAIL), PARRAMATTA HERITAGE CENTRE COLLECTION
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FOREWORD

Paul Barber
Lord Mayor
Parramatta City Council

WOMEN TRANSPORTED is a landmark exhibition long overdue.

Here, finally, is the story of the women, their lives forged by suffering and dislocation, who became the mothers of our nation. They are, literally, the ancestral mothers of one in five Australians living today. This exhibition reveals their heroism, their grit, and the astonishing ability of most to bounce back and adapt to alien circumstances in a hard and foreign land. They brought to Australia a kaleidoscope of different trades – and contrary to the myth, only a handful were prostitutes. They went on to pioneer the land, raise families, conduct businesses, run farms and work in the myriad of occupations which kept the early colony alive. They indelibly defined the Australian character and it is surely time their story – our story – is told.

Their story, of course, is also the story of a city.

Parramatta was the alternative seat of the first government in this country and the location of the first successful farm. It has the oldest remaining public building, the oldest house in Australia and the oldest continuous place of worship.

Etched into the sandstone of these historic sites ... are the stories of ordinary folk who peopled this first chapter of our nation. Beyond the buildings, it is hard to peel back to the real stories of the people who made that history.

Parramatta is the right place to begin the hunt, home to the first Female Factory and the model for all others, and home over the next 180 years to so many other, often pitiful, sites of female incarceration, from female prison, to factory to orphanage and asylum.

Over the next few years Parramatta City Council will deliver an ambitious heritage tourism project to animate the stories and characters of our nation’s history. Our goal is to create themed trails of discovery linking historic sites throughout the City. We now have Federal support to begin the research – and these early stories of women will be a key starting point.

I congratulate the visionary curator Gay Hendriksen and all those at the Parramatta Heritage Centre who initiated this exhibition. Congratulations also to Associate Professor Carol Liston, historian and representative of the University of Western Sydney partnership. Visions of Australia lives up to its name by supporting the touring of this exhibition and the telling of these stories around the remarkable number of female factory sites across the country. The project drew on tireless community support and shared knowledge from across Australia.

Similarly these industrious women spread across our new nation and thus became the mothers of contemporary Australia. Here is their story.
REVEALING THE HIDDEN STORIES

Karen O'Donnell
Manager
Cultural Heritage Programs and Visitor Information

Our perceptions of self and society are built upon our understanding of the past. Parramatta and Australia as a nation have evolved through the experiences and efforts of those who lived before.

While the history books reflect the larger than life characters and famous and notorious identities, it is the hidden stories of ordinary people that we relate to. These stories are often passed down within families and are increasingly popular as an area of wider heritage research.

The WOMEN TRANSPORTED exhibition seeks to reveal these stories, to pay tribute to the memories, experiences and efforts of the many women who found themselves torn away from the lives they knew and thrown into an unfamiliar landscape. The exhibition reveals the human stories behind the historical facts and challenges the common stereotypes of the Colonial era. In particular, this exhibition reveals the significant contribution of these women to the nation.

A great debt of gratitude is owed to the diverse contributors and partners in bringing the vision of this exhibition to fruition. Of particular note are the efforts of the tireless volunteers of the Parramatta Heritage Centre who have been instrumental in developing primary research and contributing immensely to the body of knowledge around the lives of these women.

Thanks also to the many institutions, research organisations, private collectors, community groups and site managers who have contributed objects, knowledge, skills and expertise. Appreciation is also extended to the teachers and other professionals who contributed to the development of the education and public programs that bring the exhibition to life.

The exhibition is a testament to the professionalism and vision of the staff of the Parramatta Heritage Centre, and the support of Parramatta City Council. The efforts of our Curator, Local Studies, Archives, Education/Public Programs and Visitor Information Centre staff demonstrates the passion they have for the living heritage of Parramatta.

Finally, the significant involvement of the families and descendents cannot go unmentioned. This exhibition would not have been possible without their efforts in passing on the personalised stories of these women and their contribution is greatly appreciated.

The Parramatta Heritage and Visitor Information Centre is proud to present this unique reflection on an important aspect of our settlement history.
Convict women were women transported, transported from one place to another, one life to another, one world to another.
WOMEN TRANSPORTED – MYTH AND REALITY

Gay Hendriksen
Curator
Parramatta Heritage Centre

Standing here with the others, no more waves. I feel sunlight, I see stone walls, wood, people milling around. The river reminds me of home but all else is strange. It is all so unreal. It feels like Britain might not exist any more, except the soldiers are the same, attitudes are the same. I am pushed from pillar to post the same. I see mistrust in her eyes, perhaps it’s because my voice is not like hers, the matron’s. To her, my kind can’t be trusted. I stand here rejected. Some say it’s genetics, others say it’s my family, where I come from.

I see a small child with her mother and for a moment I forget where I have come. I am with my little Molly. Where is she now, who is she with? I think I will never see her again. But here now girl, pull yourself together. Get through this, perhaps here will be a new start, the chance I never had. Perhaps if I keep my head down and my mouth closed it might be different … but then that always was hard for me!

I dream, they dream, our dreaming and realities are different.

These could be the thoughts of one of the convict female factory women. Their stories range from those of machine breakers and displaced farm workers to petty thieves and family women just trying to survive. There were at least 24,960 convict women transported to Australia. An estimated 9,000 to 10,000 convict women were in one of 12 convict female factories. In the Colony of New South Wales these were: Parramatta (two factories), Newcastle, Bathurst, Port Macquarie, and Moreton Bay (two factories). In the Colony of Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania) these were Hobart Town, Cascades, Launceston, Ross and George Town.

Convict women were women transported – transported from one place to another, one life to another, one world to another.

From where we stand now the beginnings of Australia, as a colony, seems like a whirlpool of ideas and experiences. The colonial convict women coming to Australia would have been experiencing and witnessing the full effects of the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution. They may have shared some sentiments with the French. Some certainly participated in and witnessed the breaking of the looms in England’s north. The Irish in some cases would have been reacting to the hundreds of years of British colonisation. Some would have committed crimes just for survival while others were old hands at the criminal game.

For many this would have been travelling to a new world, new possibilities, and new utopias. The climate was different, the surrounding environment unfamiliar, the plants and animals and even the light seemed different – over the oceans to a land of myth, the unknown.

Why were convict women sent to Australia? From a practical perspective it was to clear the overcrowded gaols, to populate the country.

It has been customary to send, without any exception all [females] whose state of health will admit of it, and of whose age does not exceed 45 years.
The women were selected if they had good chance of survival. Whether it was an official intention or not, about two thirds of the women transported were unmarried. The ratio was one to 5.3 women to men (132,308 men were transported). The women brought over 180 trades with them so they also provided economic value to the colony.

**WHY THE CONVICT FEMALE FACTORIES?**

Why were the convict female factories developed? This is a question without a definitive answer. Some aspects of the answer lay in the intersections of history and personalities, as well as the idea of social benefit and reform. This was matched with the coloniser’s desire for economic power, as defined by the historical and political climate in which Britain existed.

Part of the answer can also be found in the practical need to solve the problem of what to do with the convict women once they arrived in the colony.

As soon as the first ship arrived with the women on board in 1788, Phillip’s solution was to put the women in tents away from the men, a solution which was totally inadequate as is demonstrated by the night of 6 February 1788. Bowes Smith described the scene as *beyond my abilities to give a just description of the scene of debauchery and riot that ensued during the night*.

The cost of supporting the female convicts, keeping them safe and stopping them from being idle was coupled with the moral concerns of Marsden and others for these *fallen women*. Some of the female and male convicts would have had spinning and weaving related skills (although there is no known evidence that women were transported for these skills).

At this time Britain was a maritime power and was at war with France. When flax was discovered in the colony, the supply of flax for maritime purposes was a consideration for Britain. Governor Phillip noted the advantages of the flax plants near the *settlement* (Sydney Cove).

After the Government House was moved to Parramatta, convicts were accommodated in huts, some of which (those of unlimed bricks) were set aside for the convict women. The first Parramatta Gaol was built in 1796, possibly in George
Street and was a log construction. This was replaced by a new combined gaol and factory used by men and women on the north side of Parramatta River (where Riverside Theatres and Prince Alfred Park now exist). There is an intriguing early map which gives the gaol as no. 30 in what exists now as George Street and Prince Alfred Park. In Prince Alfred Park there was a two storey stone building surrounded by a stone wall. Its construction had begun by 1802, and it was completed in 1804.

Governor King was looking at ways flax could be grown and woven. In March 1801 he reported that a number of women were employed in linen and woollen manufactories, producing linen and hemp rope. In May 1803 there were 95 women employed in this way. It appears that women were employed in Sydney and Parramatta picking oakum (unravelling and cleaning old rope) and spinning. The locations of this work have not been confirmed. From 1803–1807 Parramatta exceeded Sydney’s production each year, with the majority of work occurring in Parramatta from 1804. Early wool experiments were also occurring.

All of these conditions and considerations intersected at this point in time ... the answer was a factory. This factory, above the 1804 gaol, was along the lines of the manufactories in the work houses of Britain and was effectively the first convict female factory in the Colony of New South Wales.

The primary role of the first Parramatta Female Factory was to produce cloth. It became evident early on that it was inadequate for the number of women being transported or committing offences in the colony. In 1818 Governor Macquarie commissioned Francis Greenway to design a second factory for 200 women. This factory produced linen, wool, linsey-woolsey (a coarse fabric with a linen warp and a woollen weft) and twine. The women worked at wool picking, cloth scouring, spinning, carding and from the 1830s weaving. They also did laundry, stone breaking, oakum picking, needlework, straw plaiting, cleaning and other duties the factory required such as nurse, monitor and portress.

The second factory was a place where the convict women were received from the ships, and from which they could be assigned. There was also a hospital for the infirm and for women lying in (waiting to give birth). Convict men could apply for a bride there, although contrary to popular story, there needed to be agreement from the convict factory woman (the story that dropping a handkerchief was a sign of agreement is unfounded). There was also a penitentiary section.

By the 1830s this factory was inadequate and there were problems with how to best control the women. Gipps commissioned a three storey single cell structure. Three classes were developed to deal with the different requirements. First Class was for those waiting for assignment, Second Class was for small offences and Third Class was for re-offenders in the colony for crimes such as theft and murder. In the 1830s there could be between 500 and 700 women and over 100 children at the factory at any one time. In the 1840s up to 1,200 were recorded. In 1847 with the cessation of transportation the factory closed and was reused as the Parramatta Asylum.

Bathurst, Port Macquarie, Newcastle and Moreton Bay were developed as factories which were adjunct to the gaols. Bathurst was developed as a part of populating the west. The others were used to deal with the most troublesome of the Parramatta Female Factory inmates such as women involved in factory riots (of which there were five), firstly Newcastle then Moreton Bay and Port Macquarie.
Similarly in Van Diemen’s Land the problem of housing and employing the convict women led to the development of factories at Hobart Town and George Town. These were followed by the Cascades Female Factory which worked on a similar line to the one at Parramatta, but with the hulk, the Anson, being used for some of the women’s work and with Brickfields used as a place for assignment. The riotous factory women were sent on to the factories at Launceston and Ross. Factory records in Van Diemen’s Land show work in the following areas: needlework (ranging from surplice, waistcoats, and trousers to stockings and slop clothing), washing, carding, picking wool, spinning, picking oakum, acting as a monitor, cooking, and weaving.

FROM SILENCE TO FREEDOM

CONVICT WOMEN, CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

The female factory phenomenon was a social and penal experiment surrounded by questions concerning society such as what constitutes the social contract, human rights, equity, state responsibility? What are our conceptions and misconceptions of women within a penal system? The questions are as relevant now as they were in the early nineteenth century.

In the early Colonial period the apparently opposite concepts of Romanticism and Classicism appear in visual art, writing, philosophical ideas and social/political ideas. These opposites seem to indicate a split personality, but if one looks behind the notions to the cause, both appear to be attempts to respond to the chaos, violence and massive upheaval present in the society of the time. As a result there was rethinking of what constitutes an ideal society and what constitutes freedom, as well as who has and should have power. As Claire Valier notes:

*Theories of crime and punishment have, from the outset, been linked to visions of ‘the good society’. Ways of understanding crime and punishment have carried within their carefully constructed arguments, and key concepts, ideas about the kind of society that it would be desirable to live in.*

Interestingly the different phenomena that resulted from these responses reflect the literally age-old dichotomy of rational and non-rational. Which is the higher order thinking? Is it the internal or the external that should govern action? Do regulations and social contracts such as in Plato’s Republic give us freedom or do we get freedom from a return to nature and release from corrupt society? Is that freedom for a group or for individuals? What is at our core as human beings?

Notions of freedom and notions of human nature inform our ideas of society and of behaviours that are considered the norm. Notions of the norm evolve and change as societies evolve and change – whether the norm is around ideas of gender, religion, race, economics or genetics. Who we imprison and why is determined by the notions of normal behaviour.

Laws change, and our agreements are changing all the time. Thou shalt not kill, however, it’s acceptable to kill if the state decides it’s necessary in order to administer justice. You can kill defending property. Thou shalt not steal unless you do it in business and own a fortune to cover your legal costs, or if you don’t get caught. These are all knotted threads that exist but are counter to any unification of ethics.
Criminality is defined by social agreement. Those who are conforming are part of society. Those who are not are criminals. Durkheim says:

*We must not say that an action shocks the conscience collective because it is criminal, but rather that it is criminal because it shocks the conscience collective. We do not condemn it because it is a crime but it is a crime because we condemn it.*

If criminality is a matter of social agreement then the first question is who is agreeing and upon whom the effects of that agreement are imposed.

Underlying punishment is the basic idea of social control, the need to make people conform to a set of norms that a particular society believes in. Working out the norms of behaviour and setting appropriate punishments is not always straightforward. To kill someone is wrong. So what makes it right when the state kills someone as punishment? Is killing acceptable if you defend yourself, your children, your property? Is stealing alright to save yourself or your family from starvation? Are civil and political dissenters to be punished or those with particular sexual preferences? Is it less unethical to rape than take large sums of money through corporate fraud? Our levels of punishment suggest so. Which does our society think more serious, more punishable? Which did eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain consider worse? Is repeat offending a sign of genetic disposition? With cultural diversity and multiple ethical codes should there be different rules for different communities (such as witnessed towards Aborigines in Colonial Australia and in the Northern Territory now with respect to alcohol curfews)? These questions were around in the 1800s, are alive and well now, and are still controversial.

Behind these questions of crime and punishment are our philosophies, ideas of ethics and freedom, and thoughts on what makes a good society. Notions of power also inform the questioning. For imprisonment, specifically the female factories, fear, freedom, power and the desire to impose conformity underlay the dynamics.

Our current society has a fear of other which has led to a preoccupation with security. In comfortable middle class Australia and other Western societies, the predominant response is the having mode. There is a fear of loss of property and opportunity and a focus on gain of property. If one has one is secure. The society needs protection from the terrorist (43 million dollars worth in the last USA annual budget!) and the criminal to the point where each person must have a secure mobile phone, secure computers, secure homes in private streets, and constant monitoring to survey our activities. With this underlying motivator of fear Australia could easily slip into prejudiced behaviour such as the early settlers showed to the convict women when they arrived at the factories.

The fear of other in Colonial New South Wales translated easily into fear of these bad girls. Governor Hunter said of the convict women:

*... to the disgrace of their sex, [they] are far worse than the men, and are generally found at the bottom of every infamous transaction committed in the colony ... they have grown disorderly beyond all suffering*.

Views of what these women were like, and what they should be, both posit a sense of exclusion. They are not trusted by certain authorities and they feel a sense of exclusion because they do not meet the moral code that has been set by a power group beyond their own typical origins in poverty.

The dilemma is expressed in the Molesworth Committee final report:
... that society had fixed the standard of the average moral excellence required of women much higher than that which it had erected for men, and that crime was regarded with less allowance when committed by a woman than if perpetrated by a man, not because the absolute amount of guilt was supposed to be greater in the one case than the other, but because the offender was deemed to have receded further from the average proprieties of her sex ... a higher degree of reformation is required in the case of a female, before society will concede to her that she has reformed at all ...”

The convict woman’s individual power and freedom was imprisoned in more ways than the physical. So what do these questions and ideas have to do with convict female factories in Australia? The factories and the women were like the centre of a vortex. The treatment and perceptions concerning convict female factory women – convict women in certain locations subject to certain experiences – were informed by the notions existing in early Colonial times, as interpreted by individuals and government bodies with the power to inform action. Their decisions determined the environments within which these women lived.

Convict women are imbued with the power of sexuality and the criminal capability of doing anything attributed to them by others, usually those in power who had the ability to record and influence. This is a closer reflection on the writers than the women. Marsden, with his fundamentalist approach, saw any variation from his views as full of vice and corruption. Although he fought for improvements to the factory, he speaks of it as a grand source of moral corruption, insubordination and disease, and spreads its pestilential influence through the most remote part of the colony. He describes the actions of the convicts, particularly the women as:

... destructive of all religion, morality and good order, and destroys at once the most distant hope of any reformation being produced in either. Nothing can be more distressing to the serious, reflecting mind, than to see the vices and miseries of these abandoned females.

Some of Marsden’s response is likely to be the intolerance of difference which was typical of a number of men from the comfortable middle class of the Colonial period. The Irish (which many of the women were) for him were dangerous rebels. It was his hand that wrote the death penalty for the men in the Vinegar Hill uprising even though the men did not kill anyone. His written opinion that women were concubines if they were not Anglican and were cohabitating reveals both his intolerance of non-Anglican religious practice as well as the choices made by the women to cohabit. There is also perhaps a sense of fear of the other, the sense of horror, fascination and danger described by Sartre in Being and Nothingness or by Claire Valier in describing Bauman’s concept of the vagabond and that there is no insurance which can protect a person from slipping into vagabondage in an uncertain world.

This attitude was not confined to the powerful middle class men. Mrs Charles Meredith said of the convict women servants that they were unfit because of:

Their inherent propensities to do evil, every shape of vice and depravity seeming as familiar to them as the air they breathe ...

In contrast to these views, Mary Lethbridge and Thomas Reid describe the convict and factory women as essentially good. Mary Lethbridge wrote to her mother Anna Josepha King about factory women in her household:

I have a very nice nurse for him, from the Factory, indeed I have been lucky in the three women, they go on very steady, they are all Irish. I cannot do without three women at present, on account of all the washing. We wash everything at home and what with the dairy, poultry, baking, making candles and so on, we find plenty to do.
Thomas Reid, while Surgeon on the ship Morley, noted that the women all appeared orderly, attentive and respectful. He commented about the convict women who were destined for the Female Factories in Hobart Town and Parramatta:

*I cannot hesitate but to declare my conviction, that if duly protected, and not exposed to more than common temptation, they will realize the most favourable expectations, and even forever set, an example of propriety to others in their situation.*

Reid didn’t see the women as inherently bad. Instead he says, *Should it be attributed to the lower class as a crime that their parents were too poor or profligate to secure for them the benefits of education?*

The life in the colony that the women were presented with elicited a range of responses. Some just couldn’t cope with life after total dislocation and the resulting sense of powerlessness. Others went on to make a life for themselves, have families and contribute to society in such a way that we have to really search to uncover their lives as convict women and female factory inmates.

One person who made a significant contribution to the prison conditions, work and punishment of convict women in Britain and the Colonies of New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land was Elizabeth Fry. She lobbied for better conditions, including aspects of the convict female factories. Fry had previously worked with the women in Newgate Prison, where through the Ladies Committee she had established The British Ladies Prison Visiting Association, and was able to ensure the provision of materials such as clothing and sewing supplies. *The Rajah Quilt* is one result of this. She also lobbied well within the British political system to effect change.

Fry liaised consistently with Samuel Marsden. Her letters to him reveal her concern for the women, and her belief in work and reform rather than isolation:

*The subject has been brought before the House of Commons ... thy copy of thy letter to the Governor of New South Wales and the information contained in it has been much spread in this country and it is quite my opinion that some beneficial alterations will in time take place ... we are deeply interested in the welfare of the poor convicts as to their situation here and their voyage and when they arrive in Botany Bay ... be kind enough to remember me to any female convicts that we have had under our care. I hope they will not forget all our desires for them.*

She also had representatives in the colonies assessing conditions in the female factories and working with the women. Charlotte Anley and Kezia Hayter were two women who fulfilled these roles in the Colonies of New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land. Kezia Hayter says very little of the women but notes in her diary:

“As thy day thy strength shall be” I have abundantly realized this today in my very arduous duties at the Factory but I come away each time with increasing encouragement and hope that I have been useful. If I have been nothing else I have been a comforter to many a sad and sorrowing heart and none can say how much more useful God will condescend to make me.

Charlotte Anley recorded a conversation between herself and a Third Class inmate of the Parramatta Female Factory which indicated Charlotte’s willingness to accept the idea of the women’s action as a result of environment rather than genetics determined by class.

*I replied that I could readily believe the act of murder to be one of awful passion, and not of premeditated crime. Here she interrupted me with an expression of deep emotion, such as I can never forget and exclaiming ‘Then you do believe that?’ ‘Yes, I replied’ ... She said more mildly ‘May God bless you for that!’*
Fry and Marsden, although from different religious backgrounds (she was a Quaker and he an Anglican), both were instrumental in changes in the factories and both saw themselves as working on the spiritual development and salvation of these *lost souls* of women. There are many aspects of Marsden’s behaviour and role in the early colony that spark debate but Marsden did lobby for better conditions in both the first and second factory in Parramatta. Fry lobbied in regard to these and factories in Van Diemen’s Land. Her philosophies and attitudes towards reform through solitary confinement and work were an important part of her approach to treatment and effecting change with the women.

**PRISON STRUCTURE AND PUNISHMENT**

Between the ideas of Marsden and Fry and the Parramatta factory women, were the factory staff members whose work it was to implement the ideas and be the eyes of the state. They are as different in experience and views as the women they were responsible for. As the Parramatta Factory spanned 43 years the different government attitudes also affected change.

The plans developed by the authorities themselves indicate the government’s attitudes. The first Parramatta Factory focused on manufacturing rather than ideas about crime and punishment. The design was unable to house the women. Others such as Hobart Town were an afterthought with the men’s gaol adjacent. Marsden says of Parramatta:

*The number of women employed in the factory under Mr Oakes the superintendent is 150 – they have 70 children. There is not any room in the factory that can be called a bedroom for these women and children. There are only two rooms and they are both occupied as workshops, over the gaol, almost 80 feet long and 20 wide. In these rooms there are 46 women daily employed, 24 spinning wheels on the common wheel and 22 carding. There are also in them the warping machine &c belonging to the factory.*

*These rooms are crowded all day and at night such women sleep in there as confined for recent offences, amongst the wheel, wool and cards. The average number of women who sleep in the factory are about 30 in the whole. Many of these women have little bedding and some no bedding – they sleep on the floor.*

The second Parramatta Female Factory, like Cascades Female Factory, was about housing the prisoners and work. Later additions were made to both to deal with the various needs that arose over time, such as separating the women into classes, adding Third Class quarters in Parramatta, the nursery addition in Cascades and the Gipps’ single cells building in Parramatta with its counterpart in Cascades. The other factories in the Colony of New South Wales were either to populate the frontiers, like Bathurst or places for the problem women in Parramatta like Port Macquarie and especially Newcastle and Moreton Bay. Similarly in Van Diemen’s Land, George Town was used as a place away from the influences of Hobart Town. Launceston and Ross were used especially for the troublesome at Cascades. Launceston interestingly uses the panopticon approach outlined by Foucault as a cruel ingenious cage. For this the focus has moved from the manufacturing and guardian approach to higher supervision. In his words:

*Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power... the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of a central tower from which he is spied upon.*
This is quite different to the Greenway main factory building which presents as an imposing edifice of power, not unlike the Colonial Government would like to present itself and one that relies on the idea of turnkeys rather than the all-seeing eye.

Being sent to a different location was also a form of punishment. This was also a convenient solution for an authority that has difficulty handling the women, however possibly not thought through well as both Newcastle and Launceston record riotous behaviour after sending groups of women who had rioted at the larger female factories, such as the group of 19 sent to Newcastle after the 1833 riot.

Staff approaches changed over time, according to both the Government attitudes and numbers of women passing through the factories at different times.

The first intended Superintendent was a weaver brought out especially for his skills. Unfortunately he fell overboard on the journey out. George Mealmaker then became the first superintendent of the first factory at Parramatta. He was in fact a convict (with weaving skills relevant to the factory) and was sent out for writing seditious pamphlets in connection with the Scottish martyrs. These pamphlets were about freedom and a call to rebellion against the British power with lines like:

_The time has come when you must either gather round the fabric of Liberty to support it, or to your eternal infamy, let it fall to the ground, to rise no more, hurling along with it everything [that] is valuable and dear to an enlightened people ..._

_You are plunged into war by a wicked Ministry and a compliant parliament ... Thousands and tens of thousands of your fellow citizens ... are reduced to a state of poverty, misery and wretchedness._

His time as superintendent was only a few years and his demise through alcohol could well be his response to the sense of deep disillusion that comes from idealists fettered. Although the evidence is not apparent one could muse that he would have empathy for the women. Mealmaker’s appointment was directly related to intention of success for the weaving industry. He was given a home as well as a good salary for supervising the growth of the flax, as well as the spinning and weaving of the flax, wool and hemp.

Francis Oakes, although a local entrepreneur/opportunist, appeared to also have some understanding for the women. In some of his letters he talks of the negativity of certain punishments such as head shaving and calls for increases in rations. Tuckwell also showed concern for the women’s rations.

The first matron appointed was Elizabeth Fulloon (Raine). She was followed by Matron Ann Gordon who, in public sentiment reached almost mythic proportions. Her name was synonymous with the factory for a time. Over 30 descriptors for the factories include her name – to be Gordanized, Gordon’s Seminary, Gordon’s nunnery, Gordon’s school for girls. Her employment began with a riot and finished with a riot. However she maintained relative stability during her time there. She seemed to have been able to maintain some order from a committee of management perspective as well. Whether this was from authoritarian approaches or understanding the women is unclear. However, it is possible that with her firmness in the factory she also understood the women.

Extracts from letters to her daughter indicate a caring attitude:
Be comforted and consider you have a friend a home and a mother that never forgot you although length of time and circumstance and thousands of miles across a wide ocean separated us. Yet my poor child you were never forgotten by your mother. All I wish is to see both of you and your dear little boys ...

From your affectionate mother

Ann Gordon

Gordon, in fact was one of the highest paid women in the colony at that time, receiving £150 per annum. Her demise was not from her actions but her husband’s illicit activities with the factory women.

Towards the end of the Parramatta Factory period John Clapham and Julia Leach were engaged by Elizabeth Fry but with an unsuccessful outcome. A record of their arguments indicates their diametrically opposed methods and approaches.

Clapham said of Julia Leach and the factory women:

I was to be placed under the authority of an inexperienced woman, who I believe to be in every way unfit for so important a trust ... I soon saw what a lamentable state the factory was in, nothing but cursing, swearing, smoking and frequently drinking ... She (Mrs Leach) was frequently excited with drink and I am sorry to say on one occasion, I carried her from the public cabin to her own when she could not walk.

Visiting Justice Campbell said of the situation:

As regards the officers of the establishment including Mr Clapham as one of them, it must have been apparent to everyone that either Mrs Leach or Mr Clapham must go ...

At Cascades the earliest staff were Esh Lovell, superintendent, and overseer, Jesse Pullen. In 1832 John Hutchinson was superintendent and Mary Hutchinson was matron, William Cato was overseer and Elizabeth Cato Assistant Matron.

Mary Hutchinson’s father was Francis Oakes from the Parramatta Female Factory. She would have known the women at the first factory by virtue of her father’s work. She spent her working life at Cascades and Launceston Female Factories.

If we consider the management and the subjects upon which the punishments, reform and work are applied, as well as the contexts they experience, we can begin to understand the convict female factories and the women who were the focus of their construction and form.

NEITHER ANGELS NOR DEMONS

Who were the convict female factory women? Where did the women come from? 33.8% of convict women came from England, 56.3% from Ireland, 5.1% from Scotland, 1.5% from Wales, 1.4% from outside England and 1.9% unknown. The high proportion of Irish-born women convicted indicates the approach of the British Government of the time to the Irish. It also represents migration as a result of the difficult social and political conditions in Ireland. 8% of the Irish were convicted in England.

The general profile of the women transported doesn’t match the common stereotype at the time, of genetically degenerate, without hope of redemption or unskilled and illiterate. Babette Smith describes the attitude:
The descriptions of female convicts [that] have come down through the years are virtually unanimous in their picture of degraded, dissolute, worthless people. And although many people believed life in New South Wales provided opportunity for reform, the theory that ‘the criminal classes’ were a race apart, irreclaimable and perhaps genetically determined was highly regarded.

A comparison of crimes and literacy can give some insight into the reality. Of the women 65.3% had no prior convictions, 28% had one prior conviction. The remaining 7.9% had multiple convictions. This suggested that the majority were not of a crime class.

Of women convicts from England 75% had some level of literacy (could read only or read and write). English immigrants to Australia had a 78% level of literacy. This shows there was not a marked difference between convicts and the general population – not sufficient to condemn them with being an almost different genus of human.

In Ireland convict literacy was 46.6% (could read only or read and write) compared to Irish immigrants literacy of 47.4% so again there was no significant difference between the convict women and the general population.

The difference between the English and the Irish literacy statistics may reflect the levels of poverty and the banning of Catholic schools in this period:

*It was an offence against the law for a Catholic to keep a school, to act as a private tutor, or to send his children abroad to be educated.*
In terms of skills, the convict women brought over 180 trades with them which suggests that laziness was not an inherent trait as some commentators would suggest. There was not a significant difference between crime committed in the country and the city which presents the possibility that there wasn’t a crime class and shows that cities were not the main place for crime.

Of the women transported 52.8% were aged from 17 to 29 and 64.7% were aged from 17 to 34 years of age. Whether official government policy or not, the majority were of childbearing age and often came with young children (13 years or over not allowed).

Another useful set of statistics for identifying who these women were are the actual crimes that led to transportation. Crimes related directly to theft make up 91.2%, with the remaining crimes being breaking 2.5%, vagrancy 2.0%, and violent crimes 1.8%. Of theft 36.6% was of clothing, 21.3% money, 11% fabric, 10% household items, 9.3% food or animals, 8.2% jewellery and 3.7% other.

Prostitution is not included here, as it was not a crime for which women were transported. The general statistics show that the convict women seldom committed violent crime. Theft was not mainly of food, but largely related to common opportunities and items which could easily be exchanged for money. This therefore doesn’t contradict the idea of theft for basic survival.

These facts present quite a different picture to the descriptions of damned whores, degenerate women with little chance of reform.

What happened when these women came into the factories? Some information can be gleaned from records but given the incomplete nature of both the New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land records, definitive statistics are difficult to ascertain.

From 1826 to 1840 the highest annual level of transportation is recorded. This is also reflected in the rise in factory numbers recorded in Parramatta, where a zenith of 1,200 was recorded in the 1840s (in a factory built for 200). This figure doesn’t include accompanying children who usually exceeded 100 at any one time in this period.

In a sample of 195 women in Parramatta Female Factory from 1801 to 1836 the following crimes were included: 20 prostitution, 14 theft-related, two highway robbery, three abuse and assault, two murder and two police nuisance. These are common crimes in the profile of convict women generally. Also included are 45 drunk, 26 vagrancy, 15 absconding, 21 absenting, nine relating to escape (found at large), five disorderly conduct, two disobedience, two insolence, and two at large – representing the desire for freedom and escape from the situations experienced. The six given up by master and eight useless in service may indicate a desire to return to the factory which is also indicated in a number of trial comments by the women. The remainders include bigamy, complaints about rations, pregnant, one found in carnal connection, in a public house at nine o’clock, incapable of earning a living and notorious bad character.

Of 138 women recorded in newspapers as being sent to the Parramatta Female Factory, 59 of the reasons were theft-related, three forgery-related, one soliciting, one stabbing, which, like the previous sample, one might expect for convictions. The 15 absconding, 11 drunk, five disorderly conduct, four disobedience and insolent as before are possibly indicators of a desire to escape their situations.
Other single crime types range from being in the factory with mum, being a reigning sultana, tossing tobacco over the wall, being in the wrong place at the wrong time and machine breaking.

In Van Diemen’s Land in a sample of 51 punishments there were 26 absconding, 23 attempting to escape, one misconduct and one violence and breaking of spinning wheels.

Looking only at the range of crimes in these two samples there are the crimes typical of what would have occurred in Britain previously. The comparatively larger number of absconding, absenting, escaping, vagrancy and drunk certainly indicate a local response to local situations.

In addition to the individual reactions there were also a number of riots recorded at Parramatta, Cascades and Launceston. In Parramatta 5 have been recorded – 1827, 1831, 1833, 1836 and 1843. The first included around a 100 women escaping through the town. The *Sydney Gazette* newspaper described the event:

A numerous party again assailed the gates, with pick axes, axes, iron crows ... the united force of which, wielded as they were by a determined and furious mob, soon left a clear stage and the inmates were quickly poured forth, thick as bees from a hive, over Parramatta and the adjoining neighbourhood. About one hundred came into town, exclusive of numbers that took different routes. Constables were seen running in all directions. A captain, a Lietenant, two serjents; and about 40 rank and file, were seen flying in all directions with fixed bayonets, for the double purpose of securing the fugitives, and staying the mutiny; and so violent were the Amazonian banditti, that nothing less was expected but that the soldiers would be obliged to commence firing on them ... [the convict women] Went along, carrying with them their aprons loaded with bread and meat ...

The absence from common knowledge and story of these riots and the estimated 9,000 women who went through the factories is a testimony to the lack of acknowledgement of these women to date. Most convict female factory women got on with their lives despite the dislocation, dissolution of family, experiences of starvation, appalling living conditions in Britain, and the backlash of the fight against the industrial revolution and in Ireland the ongoing fight against colonisation and the power structures that developed from it.

Their stories in Britain and its colonies are mostly about struggle. In the Colonies of New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land after going through the factories their fortunes were as varied as we experience today – from highly successful to ordinary stories to tragedy. The women range from the highly successful in business, the notorious, the seditious, those who were not a part of the *norm* and those who went on to live ordinary lives in town and bush.

Of the women, who represent the range, Maria Riseley (later Lord) was one who became highly successful, although her journey was not an easy one. Jane Wilkinson (later New) was notorious and caused a scandal. Charlotte Badger, unusually became a pirate, Anne Entwistle and Mary Hindle were examples of sedition. Catherine Lowry, Molly Morgan and Mary Wilson presented stories with unusual aspects. Susannah Watson, Emmilla Mayner, Anne Dunne, Elizabeth Browning Owen and Honora McCarthy present final success despite adversity.

Maria Riseley was one of those successful in business. She was convicted in Surry of stealing and transported to Australia for seven years. She arrived on the *Experiment* in 1804 and was sent to the Parramatta Female Factory. Maria went on to have a family of seven children and marry Edward Lord in 1808.
Edward Lord became one of the richest men in Tasmania. Maria’s business acumen can be given reasonable credit for his fortune. She died in 1859.

Jane Wilkinson (New) was one of the notorious women. By 16 she had four convictions for stealing. In 1824 she was transported for seven years to Van Diemen’s Land where she met James New who brought her to Sydney where they married in 1826. In 1827 she was sentenced for shoplifting and sent to the Parramatta Female Factory in Second Class. James New consulted attorney Francis Stephen, brother of John Stephen. This was the beginning of what became a colonial scandal which brought down John Stephen, contributed to difficulties for Governor Darling, and resulted in a change to the law, as questions of jurisdiction between colonies arose. Jane escaped the factory and the colony never to be found. There is some conjecture that she went to the Bay of Islands in New Zealand, living with a Samuel Butler.

Another notorious woman was Charlotte Badger who was convicted for the theft of four guineas and transported for seven years in 1800. After Charlotte was assigned she became pregnant and was returned to the Parramatta Female Factory. Her daughter Anny was born, the father, an un-named soldier. Charlotte was then sent to Van Diemen’s Land on the Venus. The voyage was problematic from the beginning. Captain Chace resented the women on board. They were put ashore at Twofold Bay and left to fend for themselves for 15 days. The ship returned and they were locked below decks. Charlotte, and another convict woman Kitty, were ordered to be whipped for causing trouble (not a punishment permitted for women). The men were reluctant; Captain Chace whipped the women himself and accused the men of mutiny. Arriving in Port Dalrymple in 1806 the Captain went ashore to report the crew who then decided that rather than stay and be hung they would take the ship and sail away. Thus Charlotte through circumstance becomes a pirate. The last sighting was in Tonga.41

One of the seditious women was Anne Entwistle, whose story by circumstance is entwined with Mary Hindle’s. She, along with Mary Hindle, was sentenced to death in 1826 for machine breaking. Ann was accused of destroying shuttles with a piece of iron at Helmshore Mill in Lancashire which she did. Mary was accused of shouting encouragement to the rioters. She said that she had gone to the scene of the riot to look for her daughter. Both had their sentence commuted to life and were transported on the Harmony 1 arriving in Sydney in 1827.

Ann Entwhistle was 46 years old and a widow with three children, Catholic and illiterate. Mary Hindle was 28 years old, married with one child, literate, Protestant and a laundress. On arrival Anne was assigned but was returned to the Female Factory in 1828 into First Class, as unsuitable. Two years later Ann had married John Butcher and was granted a ticket of leave in February, followed by a conditional pardon in 1844. Her death date is not known.

Mary Hindle was assigned to John Nicholson on arrival. She received a ticket of leave in 1831. In 1838 she was reported as a runaway while being escorted to the Female Factory, Parramatta.

While in the Factory she sent a petition to the Governor:
I hear that pardons have been granted to the men involved in the crime [machine breaking] and I humbly implore your Excellency to include me in the number of those who have received the Blessing of such Clemency ... do not suffer me to languish the remains of my existence in hopeless Slavery.42
Mary was released from the Factory in 1840 and worked as a laundress for Thomas Ryan, Chief Clerk to the Principal Superintendent of Convicts. Once again she absconded and was returned to the Factory. In 1841 Mary committed suicide.

In the year 2000 the building where Mary was held in Lancaster prison, 174 years ago, has been made into a Community Centre and named the Mary Hindle Centre.

Catherine Lowry who was originally from Ireland was brought up in Manchester. She was a weaver by trade and was illiterate. When 19 years old she was transported for ten years, already having five previous convictions for receiving, felony and disorderly. She was known as being six years *On the Town* (working as a prostitute). In Van Diemen’s Land Catherine was charged more than 50 times, sometimes with disobedience but mostly with disorderly conduct and drunk. She spent time in Female Factories in Launceston and Cascades as well as Launceston Gaol. ⁴⁸

Molly Morgan’s actions after her transportation from England seem to have been driven by practical issues and the desire to reunite with her children. Mary (Molly) Morgan had a daughter Mary to William Gough. She then married William Morgan and had a son, James. She was sentenced to death for the theft of linen yarn but was transported on the *Neptune* and arrived with William Morgan (tried for the same crime) for the first time in New South Wales in 1790. He enlisted in the New South Wales Corps and both were sent to Norfolk Island.

Molly returned to Sydney and was assigned to Nicholas Nepean with whom she lived. She then absconded on the ship *Resolution* back to England, and bigamously married Thomas Meares, who accused her of burning down their house in 1803. She was then transported for arson, arriving on the *Experiment* with her children in 1804. She was sent to the Female Factory in 1806. Molly lived in Church Street, Parramatta on a land grant, until being sent to Newcastle for branding government cattle as her own. In 1819 she was sent on to Wallis Plains, near Maitland. She married Thomas Hunt and opened a wine shanty on the banks of the Hunter River, dying in 1835.

More familiar are stories like that of Susannah Watson who had four husbands and eight children. Of five children left in England, only three survived childhood. With two previous convictions, she was convicted for shop robbery and transported in 1828 for 14 years. She never saw her children who had been left in England again. Susannah arrived on the *Princess Royal* in 1829 and was sent to the Factory on arrival with her youngest son, Thomas. While on assignment she was sent to the Parramatta Female Factory, Third Class, six weeks, for insolence. Susannah then had a son Charles to Isaac Moss, born in the Factory in December 1830. Thomas was sent to the Male Orphan School and Susannah was reassigned, later returning to the female factory Third Class for two years, for shoplifting. Thomas died in the orphan school and Charles Isaac Moss Watson was also sent there, remaining until he was 11 years old. In 1833 she was sentenced to three days in the cells at the Factory for improper conduct. Susannah was then with John Clarke and had a son John Henry. Later she was with L.S. Downds, to whom she had a child Agnes.

Susannah received a *ticket of leave* but was returned to the Female Factory in 1840, Third Class, for six months for obtaining bread under false pretences. Agnes died in January 1842. Susannah married William Woollard and received her *certificate of freedom* in July 1844.
Susannah married again in March 1851 to John Jones and in 1856 they moved into the Braidwood District. Her life became more settled and she died in 1877 at Gunning.

Her letter to her daughter reveals the settled life but the yearning to be reunited with her:

*Dear Hannah, you must make your mind up at once and let me know. I should wish very much for you to come and pleading whither to come out where life is better.*

Emma (Emmilla) Mayner was transported for seven years. She could neither read nor write and her occupation was nursemaid. In Australia she married Charles Wilson and had eight children, dying at Uralla in 1886.

Mary Wilson was transported for life. She had been married to Leonard White and had a daughter Eliza Jane born about 1804. Leonard White was hung for his part in the crime for which she had been transported. Eliza Jane accompanied her mother and arrived on the *William Pitt* in Sydney in 1806. Both were sent to the Female Factory, Parramatta. She then married James Styles (Stiles) in 1811 and had three children to him. She died in 1850. Although her life was now more settled her aliases indicate a varied past – Mary Wilson had also been known as Mary White, Jane Leonard, Jane Rhodes and Ann Styles.

Anne Dunne was born in Carlow, Ireland c.1810. She was found guilty of *stealing linen*, and transported for seven years. She had one previous conviction, which carried a sentence of seven months. Anne arrived on the *Hoogley* in 1831 with a son, John. They both went directly to the Female Factory. She was assigned to Penrith, firstly to G. Wentworth, then to Mrs McHenry. Anne married James Tompkins and possibly died in 1879.

Elizabeth Browning Owen was transported, aged 29, on the *Morley* in 1820. Her offence is not described but she was a needleworker and brought with her four children – John nine years, Eliza seven, Robert five, and Elizabeth three. She was assigned to the Female Factory, Parramatta and her two daughters were sent to the Female Orphan School. On several occasions she applied for their return to her but not until her remarriage to Emanuel Marvin in 1822 was she successful. Elizabeth was granted a *ticket of leave*, and died in 1839.

Honora McCarthy was tried in County Cork on 17 March 1849 with Margaret Connell and Margaret Cronin. They were charged with *threatening to burn a house*, and were all found guilty. Honora arrived in Van Diemen’s Land in 1849. She was an orphan and an illiterate nurse girl. She married John Deacon in 1846 and had children, John, William, Sarah, Mary, Dora and Timothy. She was later *free by servitude* and died in 1889.

These profiles represent a sample of the over 9,145 convict female factory women so far identified. The majority of the female factory women were either working class or in dire poverty. No female convict was recorded as having, by Colonial definition, a professional occupation. This is still the case with women incarcerated.

As noted by Wendy Bacon:

*When we think of women prisoners, let us think of them first of all as people and as women. And just briefly consider that nearly all of the 400 or so women in prison tonight [1985], in Australia, are working class women. Many of them living below the poverty line before they went to prison...*
FACTORY LIFE WITH THE WILD, THE WOEFUL AND THE WILLING

What was life like in the female factories for these convict factory women? The different women’s stories indicate different ways, times and sentencing. The women were sent to the first factory to be assigned or if they had committed a further offence in the colony. At the time of the second factory in Parramatta a convict woman could be put in the factory if they had not been assigned at the ship docks on arrival. By the 1830s the classification system was in place, and they would be put in the First Class. If the women were assigned and absconded, were insolent to their mistresses or masters, did not do their work or were pregnant, they could be sent to the factory, Second Class. If they were lying in waiting for a birth they may be at the factory. If the crime was more serious such as theft or murder they would be sent to the Third Class, the penitentiary class. This was similar in Van Diemen’s Land.

Unlike the men, the women were not usually flogged and the death penalty was very rare. Additional punishments in the colonies included demotions of class and therefore liberty, different periods of time in the cells, solitary confinement (sometimes with bread and water only), treadmill, gagging, head shaving, and cap of disgrace, and in Van Diemen’s Land, iron collars, gagging and the treadmill. These aspects of incarceration are beyond the comprehension and experience of many of our comfortable new millennium lives in Australia.

The one punishment that was consistently hated in all the female factories was head shaving, to the point that in Parramatta it was a catalyst for one of the riots. The meaning of head shaving – cutting hair, cutting power, cutting freedom over ones own body, cutting at identity – all seemed to feature in the women’s abhorrence of it. The hair cutting was considered by them far worse than a period in the cells. A warder at Millbank (a British prison) noted convict women’s responses before transportation:

*Oh yes they would sooner lose their lives than their hair.*

Marsden recorded the beginnings of a riot in 1833 which started as a result of hair cutting:

*I told you when I was in Sydney on Tuesday that I expected the women in the Factory would excite a riot again. They began on Wednesday night to be very troublesome and this morning they struck work. This was also the day for their hair to be cut. They one and all are determined not to submit to this operation. 40 Soldiers with their officers were ordered to attend the constables to the factory. Anderson and I went before, Captain Westmacott gave directions for the soldiers – the women had collected large heaps of stones and as soon as we entered the third class they threw a shower of stones as fast as they possibly could ... I have no doubt but all the officers who saw their riotous conduct will be convinced of the necessity of keeping them under by the hand of power.*

The women seemed generally to be able to deal with the physically painful punishments and the isolation punishments but not the punishment that related to their concepts and identity as female. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 16 May 1831 notes that Bridget Radcliff was charged by her master with insubordination, and refusing to work. Bridget stated, that since her locks had been shorn at the factory, she had no heart to do anything. *One month to the third class in the factory.*

After the death of Maria Murray the inquest was reported 17 April 1834 that Mary was *heartbroken* and had been in a *desponding* way since her return from the factory and expressed to her fellow servant a few days ago, that she was *heart broke.*
A little relief came from the attempts of women outside the penal system to apply some humanity to the factory women’s lives. First there were Elizabeth Fry’s emissaries who, although perhaps driven by religious zeal, observed and tried to effect a difference in the women’s lives. In a practical way it was about assisting with materials for skills development and lobbying powers in government to work differently with the women in the system. They were followed by the Sisters of Charity whose role was less judgmental than most. Although working with the hopes of religious conversion, their humanity and sheer hard work shines through; particularly with the difficulties they experienced from the church clergy. Sister Mary Baptist de Lacy describes the change in the women while the sisters were working with them:

They must acknowledge that there is a visible reformation in the conduct of the women. I will give here an instance of it. On a late occasion when they were unjustly deprived in both quantity and quality of the rations allowed by Government, they acted with the utmost forbearance, but when the Governor Gipps went to the factory to pay his accustomed visit, they represented to him in the most respectful language their grievances and called on him to have their wrongs rectified.98

The women were often perceived as lazy, without skills and in need of redemption through work. Their range of occupations suggest the contrary, as represented in documents related to the convict women.91 In all factories the women did spinning, and in the 1830s the women were to be taught weaving to stop them from being idle. These skills have been noted in Factory papers such as the Weekly Return and Distribution of Prisoners and Children in the Female Factory, Parramatta from 27 February to 3 March 1832,94 where matron Ann Gordon records weavers’ numbers in the Third Class as 28 from Monday to Friday and 29 on a Saturday. Elizabeth Fry and others saw the factory work as the path to change for the women. Other work recorded at Parramatta includes spinning, winding, straw plaiting, nursing, needlework and being a monitress or portress. In the Parramatta Factory there was also household work of factory cooking, cleaning, baking, and laundry, and in Third Class stone breaking and oakum picking. Port Macquarie, Newcastle and Cascades female factories all had spinning.

It is easy for us to say, life was better when they did come here, it’s not just a victim story and this is the case, but I wonder how many of us would respond with any level of gutsiness to these same experiences. If you were the hardened criminal, what brought you to it? How would you feel not having fed the family for days or simply just surviving for years while others make profit from your difficult situation? How did you feel as a tenant farmer with generations of stories of oppression in your head? Or what if you had come from Ireland to England looking for work? Treated as the untrustworthy migrant worker and then moved to the big city with only your skills and what you stood in? What if you were punished with the treadmill or gagging or had been breaking rocks or doing other day in day out work with no choice of your own as to where you live, what you do. What if you were unable to keep your four year old and six year old with you, having already left two behind at home and the father dead? Imagine being on assignment to a difficult master or one who used you as a prostitute to make money? Or as in Mary Hindle’s case, you just couldn’t face life without family and freedom?

Mary Hindle seemed to feel she had no choice. Many like Susannah and Emma, made the most of what was presented to them here. Considering these experiences why is it that we view these women quite differently, not as victims at all? Some of the answer can be found in the choices the women made. We see within ourselves some of these women’s strength.
The significance of convict female factory women today is somewhere in the spaces between myth and reality. At some time in all our lives, we experience journeys not chosen? We should therefore be able to identify with characters who faced the journey not chosen, as so many of these women did.

The mythic attributes of convict women’s lives in contemporary times has little to do with the misconceptions concerning them by the middle class of the early 1800s, however, some aspects of misconceptions still exist today concerning contemporary convict women. The early concept of a crime class that inherited traits has similar possibilities of prejudice as current theories that assign traits to genetics.

Are the convict women’s responses to experiences so different to ours? Was their life within the family so different to today? Blended families with a number of different husbands; parts of families left in the country of origin (as refugees in Australia experience); women alone, making their way in life; a number of children with different fathers; and nuclear families are all experiences that resonate today. The easy connections, attachments and cohabitation brought about by love or the desire for a comfortable life or of the wish for freedom to choose relationships, are not only a sign of these women’s lives, but also of contemporary life.

Perhaps what is different between now and the early 1800s is the fear that these women could contaminate the fundamentalist religious approaches and lives of the comfortable classes. Concerning these convicted women, this has died with the people who held them. There was also a significant attachment of sexuality as a negative quality of these women. The concept of damned whores cannot be sustained when considering the majority of stories uncovered. The question is why we don’t see the convict female factory women in the same way as their middle class contemporaries did.

What of our convict female factory women’s heritage? In Australian culture, how much have these women’s way of being filtered into current perceptions of Australian women? Is the sense of the victim’s victim as described in The Real Matilda® carried through? Has the sense of strong spirit and we can survive anything, do anything come from these women? What of the mateship, nose-thumbing and ability to take the mickey out of things? These are a part of the Australian character. Many of us can identify with all these aspects, but few would source the nature of the Australian character in any degree to these women.

Why are we so interested in the stories of these women? Is it a sense of impotence of our effect, our power to act in the world in a meaningful way? Is it the numbing corporatisation of our lives, with corporatised beliefs becoming the new religion? Are these women’s stories a life affirmation to counteract the existential abyss that can sometimes fill our horizons in our times? These women’s stories provide the paper on which we can mythologize and construct stories of ourselves and our lives. We can rewrite our desires to act with strength against adversity and survive with a sense of empowerment.

Women can be seen as victims. At some time we all experience a moment of being victims. However these women also acted. Some conformed, some escaped, some absconded, others rioted and many went on to have fulfilling lives.
Compared to middle Australia it was the daily experience, the *stuff* of the factory women’s lives that was different. Their journeys included the daily pain of hunger, having no safe home, and living from hand to mouth, along with a sense of hopelessness and dislocation.

What happens when a significant proportion of a society shares similar experiences? War experiences can change a whole generation of people, and also change social frameworks significantly, as witnessed by the movements in the 1920s after World War I and the 1960s after World War II. Surely colonial transportation on such a massive scale and the convict women’s experiences changed two whole generations of perception and action, and thereby changed the social structure in Australia’s formative period.

The women made a life with the opportunities they had, and *disappeared* into the fabric that is Australian society. The gutsy and the feisty could well have come from our current perceptions of how we might deal with our life experiences ingrained into us from our mother’s mothers and Australian communities in town and bush. This unnoticed filtering into generations of thought may explain why we don’t attribute aspects of Australian character to these women.

Given the impact of these women one would think that material culture and stories concerning these women would be easily accessed. This is not the case. The fact is that many of these stories are not well known or not known at all. Apart from the written documentation of the Colonial Government it is challenging to find material evidence of their lives. Even harder is finding their perspectives on their own lives. Some court records can give insights when the women’s words are taken down but apart from this there is very little.

In part, the legacy of prejudice and class has buried these stories. These women’s lives were not seen as important in their culture but rather as problematic and largely expendable. These women were not only the subject of colonial desire but also colonial fear – heavenly bodies or devil’s work by the views of those in power.

Certainly they did not have many belongings and many would not want to be seen as associated with the factory. There would have been a stigma attached to being a factory girl, one openly expressed by many. However given the numbers of women there should be some material available. Apart from colonial records and some archaeology at Ross and Cascades in Tasmania there are less than a dozen objects identified as made or used by factory women at the time they were in the factory. There has been no archaeological dig at the first and largest Greenway factory, and it is hard to locate the sites of the other factories. Who would think the Brisbane GPO has any connection with a female factory? So where is all the material now? Why have they not been identified in our national and state museum collecting policies? We can only hope that perhaps some objects are buried under statements of significance that tell a different story of particular women, or that they are still with the families waiting to be recognised as belonging to these factory women.

As we do of any unknown, we construct myths to help us understand life. We construct them with what we desire to be or what we most fear. There are pantheons of gods to illustrate this. If we don’t know or understand something it becomes a palette for our imagination to paint from as we desire.

Retelling these stories, these forgotten histories, doesn’t reduce our mythologizing, but it does return a certain power to the community. This can be found in some of the oral history responses concerning the women. Dorothy McHardy notes:
I think many of them were products of their tough times who had very little, if any, advantages. Given a chance in a new country many became good citizens who were prepared to work hard to raise a families and give them better lives and I think the Australian way of getting on with life owes a lot to our ancestors as does our habit of lacking a great deal of respect for authority.

Beth Mathews comments:

Catherine was a very courageous woman educated and intelligent. I hope we have learned much since the dark days of transportation. The Factory women’s contribution – we are courageous straight talking, home loving.

Isabel Dale Tooley says:

Courageous. She left two sons behind in Ireland. I am proud of her stamina to go through the emotions she must have experienced. I hold her in great awe. What hardships! Not all were criminals and the courage to start anew, live in a strange country. It helps me understand the new migrants. Her relevance to the Australian character is strength of purpose enduring pain and loss and all character building. Don’t be ashamed of convict ancestry, be proud.

Shirley Moore describes:

She is a part of who I am and I am proud to say I am of convict stock ... her death notice read ‘respected by all who knew her’. These women made in conjunction with others, this country what it is today despite their overwhelming hardships.

Responses to these women are a mix of desire and admiration – a melding of the myth and reality. Given an estimated one in five Australians are related to these women it is easy to mythologize about them, identify with them and connect with the thought that any one of us could be a descendent or know someone who is a descendent of one of these women. This gives an almost tangible connection by each of us with the myth, with these women. These women are you and I on the deepest level.

Crimes committed in England and Australia reflect the women and why they did what they did. Their stories do reflect the full spectrum of human motivations, behaviour and responses to commonly experienced moments.

Through our desires we imbue these women from the past with qualities we wish them to have. They are described as misunderstood, misinterpreted, stories hidden, mad, bad and dangerous, heroines, pioneers and of sterner stuff than ourselves. The fact is that as individuals they are not very different to the way we are now. There are the quiet, the feisty, the honest, the recalcitrant, the devious, the funny, the depressed, the nurturing, and the irresponsible. Reading their journeys we are taken on a mystery tour much as we encounter when reading myths and following the hero stories. We see the hope, misery, and joy, their heartlines, and many other things. We sense that they and we are connected in a mythic way. Reading their lives can put our lives in perspective. As Kate Grenville says in Joan makes History:

They planned great things, and better worlds, and went on sowing, full of hope. Centuries passed, generations of babies grew old and died, and now it is my turn ...

I thought my story was one the world had never heard before. I loved and was bored, I betrayed and was forgiven, I ran away and returned, and all these things appeared to be personal and highly significant history. Oh Joan, what bogus grandeur! There was not a single joy I could feel that countless Joans had not already felt, not a single mistake I could make that had not been made by some Joan before me... and although you may not think so to look at me, I am the entire history of the globe walking down the street ... and like them all I, Joan, have made history.
...the Factory acted merely as a temporary restraint from indiscriminate intercourse or unchecked dissipation.
CONVICT WOMEN
IN THE FEMALE FACTORIES OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Dr Carol Liston
Associate Professor in History
School of Humanities and Languages
University of Western Sydney

VIEWS ABOUT CONVICT WOMEN

Much has been written about convict women. It is a salacious topic – sex and
bondage make better copy than poverty, desperation, motherhood and housework.

Convict women were condemned in the 1837 Report of the British House of Commons
Select Committee on Transportation as excessively ferocious, profligate when assigned
and with scarcely an exception drunken and abandoned prostitutes. It is a tag that has
dominated historical accounts ever since.

Convict women were sent to New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania)
and most writings about convict women combine accounts of both settlements.
Whilst this makes for compact storytelling it is important to recognise the
significant differences in the convict experience for both men and women. These
were sequential rather than parallel experiences, so the lives of a convict generation
in New South Wales are not the same experiences as those of a later generation of
women in Van Diemen’s Land. The communities in which they committed their
criimes, the official approaches to crime and punishment and the rules and
regulations in the convict settlements varied significantly over the decades from the
arrival of the First Fleet in Sydney in 1788 to 1853 when the last convict ship sailed
to Hobart.

Convict women have been analysed in many historical studies. One of the earliest
was Annette Salt’s book, These Outcast Women: The Parramatta Female Factory 1821–
1848. Some of the most detailed research on convict women has been undertaken
by their descendents. The greater availability of indexes and increased access to
original records has allowed these women to emerge from the historical shadows
so that their lives can be seen in the fuller context not only of their crime and
transportation but of their lives in the colony. The current project seeks to add to
these understandings of convict women by looking at the place that was common to
most of their experiences – the Female Factory. The exhibition provides a tangible
space for descendents to share their stories of these women within and beyond
the Factory walls. With these new stories, another account of the female convict
experience will emerge.

The lives of convict women in New South Wales were recorded as they passed
through various official phases towards their freedom. The central records of the
Superintendent of Convicts and records of the Female Factory at Parramatta, the
main administrative repository for the women, have not survived. Their lives,
however, intersect with a maze of official correspondence scattered throughout the
colonial records. From this we can retrieve a glimpse of their experiences.
DAMNED WHORES?

Prostitution was not a crime that was punished by transportation, yet convict women have for generations been seen as women of loose morals. Yet these same women were the mothers of the nation, part of a generation that transformed a prison settlement into a democratic colony.

Given the concern of the British government while planning the First Fleet that women from the Pacific Islands should be brought to the settlement as sexual companions for the male convicts, it is inconceivable that the British government did not consider that the convict women transported on the First Fleet would be predominantly regarded as sexual companions rather than laundry women or maids. When the First Fleet arrived, Governor Phillip had separate huts built for the women convicts but practical isolation was physically impossible in the small settlement. Phillip soon asked for more female convicts to be sent, as it was impractical to bring native women from the Islands.

Convicts were transported to New South Wales from 1788 to 1840 and to Van Diemen’s Land from 1803 to 1853. During those years 24,960 convict women arrived, representing 15% of the total number of convicts. Approximately half of the convict women landed in New South Wales (12,460), most after 1825.

Convict ships sailing between 1788 and 1817 carried both male and female convicts. Under-Secretary Evan Nepean had wanted to send the women in the First Fleet on one ship but the number of women had been increased so transport arrangements followed the practice of the slave ships to the West Indies where ships carried both sexes accommodated in separate rooms. From 1815 a Surgeon-Superintendent travelled on each voyage to supervise and manage the convicts.

At sea for months it was impossible to stop connections between the male and female convicts – or between the male crew and the female convicts. Convict transports also carried detachments of soldiers and their families. On the Janus in 1820 the free wife of a corporal in the 48th Regiment slept in the same large room as the female convicts and observed the voyage. The women played cards, and were occasionally tipsy and noisy, but their behaviour was clearly not intimidating for this woman. The Janus had already had female convicts from England on board while it waited in port in Cork for three weeks before sailing to the colony. At least two of the convict women became pregnant during the voyage. The father of Lydia Esden’s child was the ship’s mate. She testified that she wasn’t forced into this relationship and he had promised to see her family and give them news of her.

As the system for transportation became standardised, the process of equipping and embarking the women followed a regular pattern. The women were provided with clothing for the voyage. Each of the 199 women convicts who sailed on the Asia from Ireland in 1830 were supplied with two bed gowns (one grey baize or brown serge and the other stripped cotton), two petticoats (one grey baize and the other of druggest); two linen shifts; two linen caps; one check apron; two pairs of black stockings, two handkerchiefs, one pair of shoes and one straw hat or bonnet. The women could bring some clothing with them. Those on the Asia brought dresses, caps, silk and muslin handkerchiefs, ribbons, collars, bodices and patchwork but very little money. The Irish convict women aboard the Elizabeth in 1828 were provided with school primers and quills for a school on board and yarn to knit stockings during the voyage.
From the beginning the convict women brought children with them. Many in the early years were babies, but as the pace of transportation quickened more women brought out children, and the children were often older. The *Elizabeth* in 1828 carried 18 children, the eldest a girl of 14, as well as 134 Irish women convicts. In Sydney, children under three stayed with their mothers; children over three went to the orphan schools while older children, aged ten or more, were put almost immediately into apprenticeships usually arranged by the orphan schools.\(^\text{76}\)

On arrival in Sydney, the women were inspected aboard ship. In the early years potential employers, such as senior public servants or wealthier citizens may have come on board to select assigned servants. By the 1820s the system was more structured to prevent illicit contact with the women.

Martin Wilson who was employed at the gaol in Sydney was reprimanded in 1827 for approaching a female convict ship moored in the harbour. He had been aboard a few days earlier mustering the female convicts when:

*an aged woman came to me in tears saying she had a daughter on board free and stated she did not know what would become of her when she was sent to the Factory and begged of me ... to enquire after a service for her with some family.*\(^\text{75}\)

Wilson found a family to employ the daughter and returned to the ship to inform the woman, thus earning a reprimand.

Some women were distributed from the ship to assignment in Sydney or sent in groups to benches of magistrates who had requested assigned convicts for their districts. From 1823 most were transferred to the Female Factory at Parramatta until assignments could be arranged. On the day of disembarkation they were dressed in their Navy Board clothing, the petticoats of which were so short as to oblige them for decency to wear their own clothes underneath.\(^\text{72}\)

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**BEFORE THE FACTORIES**

**WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THEY GOT TO NEW SOUTH WALES**

**1788–1800**

For the first few years the number of convict women arriving in Sydney was relatively small. Their numbers could be absorbed into the colonial population by providing servants, wives and housekeepers to the male population.

At Parramatta by 1790 the unmarried convict women lived in nine huts along Quaker’s Row (now Church Street).\(^\text{73}\) By May 1792 the women’s work was organised.

*The women have a more comfortable life than the men. Those who are not fortunate enough to be selected for wives (which every officer, settler, and soldier is entitled to, and few are without) are made hutkeepers; those who are not dignified with this office are set to make shirts, frocks, trousers etc for the men, at a certain number per day; occasionally to pick grass in the field and for a very slight offence are kept constantly at work the same as the men.*\(^\text{74}\)

Women were also at Toongabbie agricultural settlement where they worked as hutkeepers, allocated a hut with up to 18 men. It was their duty to keep it clean and provide food for the men. Each hut had one small iron pot to cook the meat and rice in, though rations were almost at starvation level in these years.\(^\text{78}\)
By 1796 Governor Hunter did not want more women convicts, complaining that it was hard to find employment for them; that they were worse characters than the men and those of a certain age were constantly occupied in nursing infants. Women who had served their time were anxious to support themselves and from 1797 were provided with Certificates of Expiry.78

By 1798 Governor Hunter was sufficiently concerned by the number of complaints about the refractory and disobedient conduct of the convict women to issue a Government and General Order to make them more clearly understand the nature of their situation in this country and the duties [sic] which they are liable to be called to perform. He called for closer supervision of convict women in private assignment, requiring their names to be reported to the Judge-Advocate’s Office, but did not wish to limit the number of women servants available for domestic employment.77 The following year Hunter repeated his belief that women were at the bottom of every infamous transaction committed in this colony and urged magistrates to punish those guilty of disobedience or neglect of duty – including the use of corporal punishment. A return of the population in September 1800 indicated that there were 328 convict women under sentence, with 189 at Sydney and 139 at Parramatta. There were 241 free women, some of whom would have arrived as convicts.79

PARRAMATTA FEMALE FACTORY ESTABLISHED 1800–1820

THE FIRST FACTORY ABOVE PARRAMATTA GAOL

Parramatta’s first gaol was built of timber in 1796 but it was burnt down in 1799. Its replacement, built of stone, was located on the northern bank of the river. Construction was supervised by the Reverend Samuel Marsden who was superintendent of public works at Parramatta, as well as assistant chaplain and magistrate. Both Governor King and Marsden were concerned about the convict women and the new gaol provided an opportunity for a solution.

By August 1804 the new gaol was complete with an upper floor unconnected to the lower part of the gaol. The extra storey for the first time provided a refuge and workplace for unassigned convict women and was probably intended as accommodation for newly arrived convict women to prevent them turning to prostitution in order to find shelter. It allowed a comfortable asylum for the female convicts who came by the Experiment. A wall was constructed around it and within the yard were buildings for textile manufacturing. King anticipated it could work as both a place of confinement for delinquents and a house of industry.79

Governor King in August 1806 re-iterated his concern that the women were thoroughly depraved and abandoned, particularly those from London and most of those from Ireland. The women from the English counties represented the best behaved and were usually selected by the industrious settlers to marry or cohabit with them.80 Of the 196 convict women maintained by the government, 72 incorrigible women were employed at the woollen and linen manufactories and the rest were employed in public services such as nurses in the hospital or attendants to the soldiers.81

King commented that he did not approve of locking up all the females who were not married. It was impossible to confine a thousand women. Marriage would simply become a convenience to get out, apart from which it was not practicable to keep the men from the women.
Females on arrival were put into the manufactory under the direction of the resident magistrate (the Reverend Samuel Marsden), from where the well-behaved women were selected by settlers and others to become their housekeepers or servants. The incorrigible were confined in the Factory, or sent to the coal works at Newcastle.⁴²

**MANAGING THE WOMEN IN THE OLD FACTORY**

In August 1803, Governor King appointed Scottish convict George Mealmaker to superintend a weaving establishment.⁴⁶ As this appointment pre-dated completion of the new Parramatta gaol, it seems likely that the additional floor to accommodate the women was a consequence of the decision to establish the textile manufactory.

There were nine looms at work in the factory by mid-1804 – two making fine linen, two producing duck, two making woollen fabric, one for sacking, and two for sailcloth.⁴⁷ The people employed were the women (presumably the unassigned from the *Experiment*), some invalids and some children (probably with their mothers). Settlers had received 2,116 yards of linen in payment for wheat supplied to the government. Experiments were also undertaken with hemp. King predicted that there would shortly be 20 looms at work, half with sailcloth.⁴⁸

Given the prominence of the spinning and weaving in the operation of the Female Factory, it is likely that Mealmaker was its supervisor. The Factory was partly destroyed by fire in December 1807 and as the colony descended into rebellion, Mealmaker died, destitute and drunk, three months later.⁴⁹

Benjamin Barrow was appointed by Colonel Patterson as Superintendent of the Female Factory in 1808 on a salary of £50 per year. He was attached to the Commissariat. Barrow supervised the Factory for about five years.⁵⁰

Macquarie was instructed in May 1809 to correct abuses in the treatment of the convict women. The female convicts were to be kept separate on arrival until they could be properly distributed according to industry and character. Domestic work required the women live in the homes of their masters. The British government wanted the women to be properly apprenticed and to live permanently with one family during their apprenticeship, rather than indiscriminately move from one household to another, and proposed that they should not be allowed to dissolve their apprenticeships except by marriage.⁵¹

In 1813 an inquiry was held into Dr Luttrell who was surgeon at Parramatta Hospital and attended the women at the Female Factory. Those who gave evidence included the men who supervised the Female Factory – John Cary, principal overseer at the Factory; John Watson, overseer; George Ellis, gate keeper since 1804 and John Brown, errand man. These men complained that Dr Luttrell did not attend the women promptly when sent for and that the women suffered from his lack of attention. Convict women in the Factory gave evidence. Elizabeth Duggan described the suffering of Ellen Holland who became ill after delivering her baby in the Factory. Johanna Goff complained that when she felt unwell and asked for medicine, Luttrell refused saying that she was drunk. She therefore paid for a private apothecary to help. Ann Fagan’s story was similar: she asked Dr Luttrell for help which he refused accusing her of being a drunken vagabond.⁵²
Governor Macquarie appointed Francis Oakes, Chief Constable of Parramatta and a former missionary, as Superintendent of the Female Factory in 1814. His salary of £50 per year was the same as Barrow’s. One of Oakes’ daughters, Mary, subsequently became matron of the Female Factory in Van Diemen’s Land.

In 1817 the transport Canada brought 89 Irish convict women. On board they were arranged into 16 messes of six plus children. Water was scarce and they agreed to forego their meat ration for three months in return for more water and cash when the meat was sold in Sydney. Twenty-five women with 11 children went to the Factory at Parramatta where they complained they were in a weakened state from the lack of food on the voyage. As the surplus beef had been put into the government stores in Sydney, the women requested that it be issued to them. Marsden and Hannibal Macarthur supported their petition, indicating they believed the women were entitled to the meat.

Commissioner J.T. Bigge described the system in 1819-1820. To his horror, women bringing money with them or the means to establish themselves, such as husbands already in the colony, and those with children who were able to support themselves were given tickets of leave on arrival, thus avoiding expense to the government. The other women were sent to Parramatta where they could stay in a wooden building near the Factory and leave their bedding from the ship and their belongings.

The alternative was the upper floor of the Factory, which housed the women confined for punishment and those who were pregnant. This building had no facilities for cooking – nor any security. The women were required to work in the Factory picking, spinning and carding wool each morning until 1pm. Not surprisingly, many of the women chose to find lodgings in the town, presumably paid for by work they did in the afternoon and evenings. In Bigge’s opinion, the Factory acted merely as a temporary restraint from indiscriminate intercourse or unchecked dissipation. Magistrate William Cox suggested that the women preferred working in the Factory and sleeping in the town to assigned service.
THE NEW FEMALE FACTORY AT PARRAMATTA, 1821–1840

The increased number of convicts following the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 created difficulties for Governor Macquarie as the free and freed component of the population could not absorb them as labour.

The most persistent advocate for improvements in the conditions endured by the female convicts was the Reverend Samuel Marsden. Historians have condemned him for his frequent and scathing denunciations of the women. His 1806 list described most of the women as concubines and their children illegitimate. He was unscrupulous in lobbying to bring formal attention to their situation, writing letters to the British clergy, moral campaigners, politicians and the English press. These accounts all described the women as immoral and destitute – descriptions that have survived to characterise the female convicts. He argued that as long as the Governor did nothing to improve their circumstances, he was condoning their prostitution.

Macquarie requested authority to build a new barrack to house the women but received no response. In 1817 one of Marsden’s letters to England finally jolted the British government to question Macquarie. Macquarie then asked Marsden for his plans for accommodation for the women. Marsden produced a plan of a woollen manufactory in Yorkshire and Francis Greenway adapted this design. By March 1819 public works in progress included a new factory and barrack for the female convicts at Parramatta.

By 1822 a large and handsome stone barrack and factory, three storeys high with wings of one storey, had been completed. Notionally accommodating 300 female convicts, there was dormitory space for 172, suggesting that women would continue to seek lodgings outside and work in the Factory. There were carding, weaving and loom rooms, workshops, stores for wool and flax; quarters for the superintendent; a large kitchen garden for the use of the female convicts and ground for bleaching the cloth. The single storey wings are still standing. The grounds, consisting of about four acres, were enclosed with a high stone wall and wet ditch.
Separation of the women within the Factory had not been considered in the design. In 1823 Governor Brisbane added a new building, also surviving, capable of holding 60 females to separate the women sentenced to punishment by the courts from the other female convicts.  

MANAGING THE NEW FACTORY

William Tuckwell (1795–1855) was clerk to the Factory in the later years of Macquarie’s government, rising to Superintendent of the Factory from 1822 until 1824, and then remaining as storekeeper until 1835 – an association with the Parramatta Female Factory for almost 20 years.

Tuckwell was colonial born of free parents. His father was in the New South Wales Corps whilst his mother was a free woman, the widow of a convict. By 1814 William Tuckwell was a servant in the household of the Reverend Samuel Marsden. Marsden, as magistrate and clergyman in Parramatta, probably became his patron as the longevity of Tuckwell’s association with the Factory suggests a man who met Marsden’s strict moral code in dealing with the women. William Tuckwell married Elizabeth Thorn, the daughter of a local police constable, in 1816. With his marriage he moved from Marsden’s employment to the government position of clerk at the Female Factory. (Tuckwell’s first born child was Elizabeth Rebecca – possibly named after Rebecca Oakes, the wife of the Superintendent of the Female Factory from 1814–1822). Tuckwell lived in the Factory.  

Elizabeth Fulloon was appointed matron of the Female Factory in England and sailed with her family for the colony in late 1823. She was matron for three and a half years and received a salary of £100 per year. Widowed on the voyage, she remarried in the colony and then as the newly widowed Mrs Elizabeth Raine established with her daughters a day and boarding school for young ladies in Sydney. In 1830 she requested eight year old Mary Ann Long as an apprentice from the Female Orphan School. The child’s mother, transported on the Janus in 1820, had died in the Female Factory. As matron she had taken care of the child from nine months of age until she was four, when she was ordered to put all children over three years of age into the orphan school.

In 1824 the different classes of Factory women were allocated identifiable clothing. Women in the First Class were to be provided with a Sunday outfit of red jacket, blue skirt, a white apron and straw bonnet and an everyday set of drab working clothes. The Second Class was dressed in blue jacket and skirt, made of lesser quality fabric whilst the Penitentiary women wore a rough woven striped jacket and skirt and a leather apron. The women were to be provided with a pair of shoes.

In August 1825 the Grand Jurors of Parramatta Quarter Sessions reported on conditions in the Factory. They found 253 women and many young children. There was no convenient supply of water, the bread was of inferior quality and they were concerned that the children lacked food and comforts, such as a nursery where the mother might have a fire to keep them warm and dry. There were still no iron bedsteads in the dormitories, and though a profitable establishment, the inmates did not have sufficient clothing, especially shoes.
THE FEMALE FACTORY BOARD OF MANAGEMENT
AND MATRON GORDON

In 1826 an inquiry into the management of the Female Factory resulted in Governor Darling establishing a Board of Management. It consisted of eight men – three government officials (McLeay, Lithgow and Dumaresh) who did not live in Parramatta; the governor’s private secretary (de la Condamine) who also did not live close to the factory; the police magistrate for Parramatta (Edward Lockyer); a local magistrate (G.T. Palmer); local magistrate and clergyman Samuel Marsden; and local doctor Mathew Anderson. Most of the routine supervision of the Factory fell to the police magistrate, the doctor and the clergyman.

Matron Ann Gordon was the longest serving matron of the Female Factory, managing the institution for nine years. She was the wife of a soldier who arrived in New South Wales with the 48th Regiment in 1817. The family remained in the colony when the regiment was transferred to India and Robert Gordon took a job as a commissariat storekeeper, later becoming storekeeper at the Factory. Ann Gordon was appointed matron of the Female Factory at Parramatta in October 1827 on a salary of £150. She left office in 1836, following a series of scandals involving her daughters and husband. A valuable public servant herself in the eyes of Governor Bourke, she had the misfortune to be surrounded by an ill conducted family.

In late 1827 there were 366 women in the Factory at Parramatta. Their composition reflected the challenges of handling the variety of circumstances in which convict women found themselves. During the preceding six months 803 women had passed through its doors. With 290 women in the Factory on 30 June 1827, another 513 arrived in the second half of the year. Of these, a small number were newly arrived women from the ships Princess Charlotte (21), Harmony (13) and Louisa (29) who had not yet been assigned. Another very small group, only 29 women, had been sent from private assignment to the Second Class as pregnant, ill or unable to work. The two largest groups were 167 women who had been returned from private service into the First Class for re-assignment and 254 women who had been sent from private service into the punishment Third Class (presumably via magisterial or other legal processes).

The turnover of the women during these six months was substantial. More than half of the women (437) had been found alternative positions, with 378 put into private service; 36 returned to their husbands; 13 married while three became free by servitude, three escaped and four died. The number of children doubled – 15 at the start, increased to 35 over the six months by births or new arrivals with their mothers.

A significant unrecognised group of women at the Factory were the free women who were convicted of offences in the colony and sentenced to the Factory in its role as a gaol and penitentiary. During the six months, 61 free women were committed to time in the Factory, with a steady presence of about 30 free women incarcerated.

The difficulty for Factory management was that the women came from two uncontrolled sources – the erratic but increasing arrival of female transport ships from England and Ireland and the local courts where the only punishment available for women guilty of misdemeanours was confinement in the Factory. As the Board of Management commented, the numbers could not be reduced except by improvement in the morals of the People generally.
By mid-1828 Darling could report that the Female Factory was in proper order. Structural alterations to the building had made management easier by separating the classes more effectively. Each class had its own kitchens, workshops and accommodation, whilst the addition of rooms at the outer gate meant that it was not necessary for the store keeper, porter and other male outsiders to enter into the inner area, which was controlled by a female portress. There had been no water supply to the Factory and this had provided an opportunity for the women to mix as they went outside. A pump and internal water system was provided in 1828. The height of the surrounding wall was increased from 11 to 16 feet. Within the Third Class Penitentiary, improvements were made by constructing separate workshops and a dining hall so that the women did not have to spin wool, eat and sleep in the same rooms as had previously been the case.108

The building housed 490 women – the refuse of the English and Irish Jails. The arrival of the Elizabeth from Ireland had created particular difficulties. It had brought 192 women, double the usual number per vessel, creating practical difficulties in absorbing so many female servants at one time. The challenge of assigning these women was made more difficult by the reputation they brought as uncontrollable. They had rioted and fought amongst themselves in Cork prison before embarking and remained fractious in the colony.109

Nevertheless, despite record numbers of nearly 500 women in the Factory, they were kept under control by a staff of only five women, assisted by two men, an economical arrangement of some pride to the governor, but an even greater tribute to the skills of those five women – the matron Mrs Gordon, three monitresses (one per class) and a portress, assisted by a clerk and a storekeeper.110

Over a thousand new female convicts arrived in the three years 1826–1827–1828. During 1827 and 1828 almost a thousand convict women per year were distributed and redistributed into private assignment from the Female Factory at Parramatta.111 It was not surprising that more than 500 remained in the Factory by early 1829 as numbers were much beyond the demand of the settlers. Darling urged the Colonial Office not to send women for a year, and in particular not to send Irish women at all, the inhabitants appearing to have a strong objection to receiving them.112 Keeping the women occupied and maintaining an economical management were challenges for the colonial administration. In 1829 Darling proposed closing the male weaving establishment (which employed 30 male convicts) and transferring its operations to the Female Factory, where presumably the women would be taught to weave as well as spin.113

Staffing at the Female Factory at Parramatta at the end of 1829 had expanded from five. Ann Gordon was matron on a salary of £150 per year with living quarters in the Factory. She was assisted by two full time assistant matrons, each paid £50 per year and two additional assistant matrons on a daily rate of 1s 6d (one shilling and sixpence) per day, all provided with quarters within the factory. Other residential staff included two portresses on 1s 6d a day and three overseers on 6d per day. The two male staff – storekeeper William Tuckwell (paid £100.7.6 per year) and clerk Joseph Turner (paid £91.5.0) – were not provided with quarters in the Factory and lived elsewhere.114
GOVERNOR BOURKE AND THE CHANGES IN THE 1830S

In November 1832 Governor Bourke wrote of his concern about new legislation enacted in Britain that significantly limited the power of the Governor to grant *tickets of leave*. Existing practice, recommended by the Factory Committee in 1828, allowed female convicts with a seven year sentence to receive a *ticket of leave* after two years’ service in a family or at the Factory or good conduct within marriage. For women with 14 year sentences, the time was three years and for those with life, the period was four years. The colonial rules meant that old and infirm women not suited to assignment could be discharged from the factory after two or three years with a *ticket of leave*. A *remission from forced labour has almost always* been allowed on their marriage. The new British legislation required four years servitude as the shortest period before a *ticket of leave*. Bourke believed this would be a serious impediment to marriage.

Bourke had hoped that transportation of women would be discontinued. By 1836 this had not happened. He therefore re-organised the Factory to reflect the reality that it was a more permanent place for convict women than had been intended. As the only place for female convicts not in private assignment, married or with a *ticket of leave*, the numbers had increased steadily for a decade. By September 1836 the weekly numbers were 590 women and 134 children.

Management of the Factory had been in the hands of a matron *aided by the occasional inspection of a committee of gentlemen* including the chaplain and surgeon. The Ladies Committee established by Darling had ceased to exist before Darling left in 1831. Bourke intended to open a school in what he now openly called a prison to educate *these outcast women*. He hoped to re-establish the Ladies Committee, believing that the influence of Mrs Fry’s writings would stimulate interest. He wrote to Bishop Broughton hoping that Mrs Broughton would lead a committee of ladies to oversee a charitable interest in the convict women.

Complaints against the family of the Matron Gordon had finally forced Bourke to act by appointing as her successors a married couple designated keeper and matron, with male and female turnkeys – an establishment more in keeping with a prison than a place of intermittent confinement. Sarah Bell was appointed matron and her husband Thomas was made keeper in 1836. Thomas Bell had brought recommendations from the Irish Government and had been Keeper of the Debtors Prison and House of Correction at the Carters Barracks in Sydney. The Bells were replaced when new staff appointed by the British Government arrived without notice. Another government position was found for Bell as Superintendent of Emigrants from 10 February to 24 August 1838. The Bells were reinstated when the British appointments proved unsatisfactory.

For women sent to the Third Class, work included heavy labour breaking stones sent from the Pennant Hills quarry to the Female Factory to metal the roads of Parramatta. This had always been one of the punishments, but its use increased.
MRS FRY'S EXPERIMENT

Mrs Elizabeth Fry had lobbied the British Government for decades to improve the conditions of convict women in Australia. Her influence was finally directly applied to New South Wales in 1837 when the British government asked her to recommend staff to be sent to superintend the Parramatta Female Factory. On her advice, the governor of the Middlesex House of Correction recommended John and Agnes Clapham as Superintendents for the Factory. Matron Julia Leach was also appointed in England and both sailed to Sydney to replace the colonial staff.

During their voyage out mutual animosity developed and this was quickly evident in the Factory management. Clapham replaced Sarah and Thomas Bell at the Parramatta Factory in February 1838, with his wife becoming the schoolmistress and Julia Leach became matron. Within six months the Claphams and Julia Leach had been dismissed. Newly arrived in a strange country, she requested three months pay as she had no home, no livelihood and no money.

Matron Sarah Bell and Thomas Bell were reinstated in August 1838 but subsequently suspended in September 1843 for corruption, together with Mrs Mary Corcoran and Mrs Edgeley, who was in charge of the laundry. In late 1843 David Lennox, Superintendent of Bridges, applied for the position as storekeeper at the Female Factory but withdrew when he was made surveyor for the District of Parramatta.

William Edward Rogers, who worked in the office of the Principal Superintendent of Convicts, was instructed to take over following the dismissal of the Bells. Mrs Rheinart was appointed as sub-matron. Rogers was subsequently Storekeeper with his wife as Matron until replacements were appointed. George and Lucy Knight Smyth were matron and storekeeper from 1844 to 1846. During this period the staff included an overseer of lunatics, suggesting that the Female Factory was already evolving into a place for women broken by their transportation experience. Elizabeth and Edwyn Statham were the final staff at the Female Factory. They were appointed in 1847, and their positions were abolished in January 1848.
LIFE IN THE FACTORY

WHY A ‘FACTORY’ – THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MANUFACTURING TEXTILES

One of the reasons that historians have put forward for the choice of New South Wales as the site of a penal colony was the attraction of the New Zealand flax plant as a possible source of naval supplies of rope and sail. The importance of textiles is frequently noted in the pre-Botany Bay discussions, but historians make little mention of it following settlement.

The prospect of growing flax recurs throughout the convict period in discussions of the work at the Female Factory. Weavers were at work by the late 1790s. Weaving was usually a task undertaken by male convicts, whilst women spun the yarn used in weaving. In 1799 at Parramatta three men – a weaver and two assistants – were employed in weaving cloth and teaching the women to spin. With construction of the manufactory level of the Parramatta gaol, by 1804 there were seven looms at work for linen and woollen manufacture. The variety of textiles included duck, sacking, sail cloth, rough wool and linen blends. Rope and twine was also made there by 1805.

Marsden and Macarthur both benefited from the presence of spinning and weaving skills at the Factory as they were able to provide wool to be spun into yarn and woven into cloth to test the improvement in their sheep flocks.

Clothing the convicts was a major expense. Consignments of clothing or textiles from Britain were irregular and the work of the women at the Factory was a significant component in the supply chain. In some years the convict women were paid to increase production to cover the shortfall.

As late as 1824 the British government was still encouraging experimentation with flax to replace imports from the Baltic, Netherlands and Ireland. Bathurst shipped 369 barrels of Riga linseed for experiments in manufacturing canvas, and proposed that young convicts and female convicts be employed to dress and prepare it. The flax plant when pulled required labour-intensive work in soaking the fibres before separating for spinning. This flax seed had spoiled, but other attempts were made to source flax for the women to spin.
In 1828 there were 26 tailors employed at Hyde Park Barracks making up clothing from cloth manufactured at the Female Factory. In the Female Factory there were from 100 to 150 women spinning coarse wool. This was made into cloth on 11 to 15 looms constantly at work, producing about 30,000 yards annually.136 The weaving was not done at the Factory but was undertaken elsewhere by about 30 men, but in 1829 a weaving shop had been built within the Factory at a cost of £146.3.5.136 By 1832 tenders were called for businesses interested in employing the women to spin wool into yarn at the Factory.137

In 1838 Governor Gipps had the women processing New Zealand flax. Starting with 100 pounds of flax, four women working six hours a day for 18 days produced 50 pounds of fine harl and almost six pounds of coarse harl. These strands of flax could be mixed with lime to bind building mortars. They also produced 15 pounds of tow (short flax fibres) and used this to produce three sorts of twine or yarn.138

In 1839 the government advertised that needlework could be sent to the Factory. Fabric already cut out could be left at Hyde Park Barracks and completed work picked up from there. The sewing included shirts, shifts, babies’ clothes, pinafores, pantaloons, waistcoats and jackets. A tailor was kept at the Factory who could cut work from measurements or patterns for the women to sew. Washing would also be done at the Factory in the summer.139

**MEDICAL SERVICES FOR THE WOMEN**

The Board of Management in 1829 noted that with the exception of a ward for females in Sydney, the Factory treated *all females in the colony who require medical aid*. The surgeon saw the sick outside the Factory hospital and requested a verandah to provide shade.140

In 1829 the surgeon at the Factory reported his concern that in the previous months there had been 24 births but 22 children had died. He feared that some of these deaths were caused by the mothers, frustrated at the regulations that kept them in the Factory until their child was three years old. He recommended a nursery be established to take the children as soon as they were weaned, at about nine months, so that the mother could leave the Factory.141

Dr Patrick Hill, colonial surgeon, was concerned at the absence of qualified midwives in the colony. He proposed that training for intending midwives could be provided by attendance at the Female Factory, Parramatta where they could acquire knowledge of how to conduct a natural labour, *fortunately by far the most frequent*. They would be taught to avoid the evils of unnecessary interference and would know when to call an accoucheur.142

The number of pregnant women at the Factory meant that women were employed as midwives. Mary Jackman per *Diana* received a gratuity of 8d (eight pence) per day as midwife at the Factory in 1833.143 Margaret Murphy was midwife until October 1835. Her successor, Mrs Mary Ann Neale, a free emigrant, was employed on £50 per year plus rations. She formally complained to the Factory Committee in mid-1836 about the indecent conduct of Mr Gordon, the matron’s husband, triggering the removal of the Gordons.144 Her successor was Mary Mumford. Mary Gordon, the matron’s daughter established herself as a midwife in Maitland in 1843, stating that she had trained under Dr Anderson at Parramatta and had delivered more than 900 babies in eight years.145
Incidents of riot and major disturbance have been frequently cited as continuing proof of the uncontrolable nature of the women and of the poor treatment that they received. Punishment records within the Factory for a number of years survive. Stealing food, quarrelling in the workroom or the dormitories, breaking spinning wheels and bad language were the most common offences, and were punished by transferring women from First Class to Third Class or to a period in the cells.

Judge Roger Therry wrote that the women frequently destroyed the furniture in their cells, broke plates and dishes and threw anything they had over the prison walls. He blamed the behaviour on over-crowding. Their behaviour intimidated the soldiers sent to quell their disturbances, as they knew that the soldiers were not allowed to fire on them, and the authorities were not allowed to manacle them.146

In October 1827 the women of the Female Factory rioted, broke out from the Factory, and stormed Parramatta. Filling their aprons with food, they returned to the Factory escorted by the military a few hours later. This disturbance has been interpreted as a traditional food riot, common in Britain.147 The incident occurred during the change from one matron to another, and was a reaction to the reduction in rations of luxury items of tea and sugar. It may also have been a statement of independence by the women for the benefit of the new matron.

Further unrest occurred in the early 1830s. A riot in March 1833 was caused by the women resisting the routine practice of cutting their hair. The local constables, supported by 40 soldiers, followed the elderly Reverend Samuel Marsden and Dr Anderson into the Third Class yard to face a shower of stones thrown by the women. The women were subdued, their hair was cut and they were sent to gaol or to the cells or to bed on bread and water.148 Mary Ann Jarvis, per Competitor, who was in the Third Class at the Factory for two months for improper conduct, cut the hair of the refractory females when the paid monitors refused. Her sentence was remitted in recognition that her actions had been at considerable personal risk.149

The Female Factory initially had eight cells for punishment by solitary confinement. They were intended as additional punishment for women who misbehaved while in the Factory but by 1830 were also being used by the Sydney Police magistrates as a specified punishment for female convicts brought before the courts. Authorities, frustrated by the indifference of women sentenced to the Third Class of the Factory, sought a more effective punishment in solitary confinement for periods of a week or a month, at the end of which the woman was usually returned to her mistress. In October 1830 there were 12 women sentenced to solitary confinement at the Factory by different benches of magistrates, resulting in the Factory staff sending their own misbehaving women from the Factory to the gaol. As Dr Anderson commented when more than one is put in a cell the object and end of solitary confinement is defeated.150

The Sydney Bench gave sentences for periods from 14 days to six months in the Factory for offences such as insolence, drunkenness or absence without leave. These short sentences required a regular transfer of women between the Sydney Gaol and the Parramatta Factory.151

A three storey building, with dark cells on the ground floor and solitary cells with window in the floors above was built in 1838. It breached British penitentiary rules by keeping the women in solitary in the dark, and Governor Gipps was ordered to add windows.152
Nevertheless, throughout 1840 and much of 1841, there were 72 women regularly in the cells. In January 1841 there were more than 600 women at the Factory under punishment.\textsuperscript{153}

Increased free immigration, an economic depression and the end of transportation and assignment meant that convict women had fewer employment options in the early 1840s. Numbers in the Factory increased, reaching an unimaginable 1203 women and 263 children in the winter of 1842. In October 1842 the women, with \textit{an air of determination}, petitioned the Governor, arguing that that they had been sentenced to transportation not imprisonment. An inquiry supported the women, urging better food, more indulgences and measures to reduce the overcrowding. However, in February 1843 women from the Third Class broke out of their quarters. Yelling and throwing stones, about a hundred women broke into the outer yard where the military and police restrained them and returned them to their rooms.\textsuperscript{154}

\textbf{GETTING OUT OF THE FACTORY}

\textbf{ASSIGNMENT}

Following the Bigge Report, the superintendent at the Factory was responsible for matching masters with women available for assignment. Darling’s Board of Management became responsible for assignments from 1826, often sitting out of doors in the Factory yard to allocate servants.\textsuperscript{155} When the Police Office at Bathurst reported in mid-1833 that there were no women available in Bathurst to fill 14 applications for servants, the Parramatta Female Factory Committee was requested to recommend \textit{a good batch from the assignable classes} and forward them by van to Bathurst.\textsuperscript{156}

The authorities were concerned that masters properly supervised their assigned servants. Mary Garvey arrived on the \textit{Elizabeth} and in early 1831 was assigned to Catherine MacElowen (McIlhonne) who ran a small business in Sydney. Mary turned up at the Factory gate at the end of 1831, unaccompanied but with a note from the barely literate Catherine indicating that she had no fault with Mary but was returning her as she was not capable of doing the work.\textsuperscript{157}

Lieutenant Clements of Minto was the father of a large number of children and relied on female convicts to maintain his household. He protested against a decision that he should no longer have female servants because he had sent one unaccompanied to the hospital at Parramatta. He had no other servant he could send with her and had personally taken her to the doctor at Liverpool, who recommended she be sent to hospital at Parramatta. The woman, who had complained of a sore knee, walked 12 miles to Parramatta where she was found to be in good health.\textsuperscript{158}

In 1836 the police magistrate at Bong Bong sent a woman to the Factory \textit{to be identified} because he believed she was illegally at large. Margaret Johnstone had arrived on the \textit{Mariner} with a seven year sentence in 1825. A year or two later she had married in the colony and had received her certificate of freedom in 1831. But she lost her certificate and also lost the sight in her right eye after she became free. Margaret had reported the change in her appearance to the office of the Superintendent of Convicts, but still found herself detained in the Factory until her identity as a free woman could be confirmed.\textsuperscript{159}
With the end of transportation in 1840, assignment of women in Sydney ceased in April 1841 and throughout the colony by the end of the year. Those in assignment feared return to the Factory as there were few prospects of release until eligible for a ticket of leave. Under the superintendence of Gordon Elliott, Police Magistrate at Parramatta, a hiring scheme was introduced in 1843 where the women would be paid for their work. Between February and March 1843 he placed 94 of the best behaved women as cooks, laundresses, needlewomen housemaids and general servants to households in the County of Cumberland and beyond. The government paid their travel costs to rural areas to take up work on tickets of leave.\textsuperscript{160}

MARRIAGE AND THE FACTORY

Convict women and marriage has been the subject of a number of studies.\textsuperscript{161} Governor Darling found that The disposal of the women in an eligible manner, though most desirable is extremely perplexing and embarrassing.\textsuperscript{162} Strategies were adopted to encourage marriage.

\textit{I have ... held out encouragement to the Mechanics in the employ of Government and others to marry by granting the married people greater indulgences than the single men. ... The mechanics of good character are generally allowed to sleep out of Barracks as they can afford to hire lodgings; and those who are married are permitted to work on their own account on Fridays and Saturdays. ... The unmarried mechanics are allowed only one day in the week to themselves, and this has always encouraged marriages.}\textsuperscript{163}

A formal announcement in the \textit{New South Wales Government Gazette} in 1832 indicated that applications could be made to marry women in the Factory. Marsden, Dr Anderson and Police Magistrate Wright encouraged applications in favour of marriage from persons in circumstances to maintain them honestly.\textsuperscript{164}

Judge Therry described how ticket of leave men were given passes to go to the Female Factory to chose a wife. There was little formal courtship beyond bare inspection and the whole process took little more than three days – one day to travel to the Factory to make the choice, a second for courtship and the ceremony and a third to return home with their bride.\textsuperscript{165} In practice, these three days were unlikely to be sequential, as bride and groom had to apply for permission to marry and this was likely to take some weeks.

In a list of marriage banns approved at St John’s Church, Parramatta in October 1831, the couples included five women in the Factory, all of whom had obtained the permission of the committee for this marriage. This included Margaret Hogan per Elizabeth – a widow with four children.\textsuperscript{166} The marriage register of St Patrick’s Roman Catholic Church at Parramatta for 1843 – after the end of transportation – recorded that Henry Boggs of Wollongong married Catherine Nowlan of the Female Factory on 13 March 1843. Her witnesses were Sarah Bell, Mary Corcoran and Alick McKenna – all staff of the Female Factory.
CHILDREN IN THE FACTORY

The presence of increasing numbers of children in the Female Factory created problems practical, moral and political. The baptism of children from the factory became a political issue when the Reverend Samuel Marsden wrote to the Bishop of London in June 1823 complaining that Dr Douglass, magistrate of Parramatta would not allow women in the Factory to bring their children to the church to be baptised. Governor Brisbane was unwilling to interfere with Douglass’ rule. The Colonial Office could see no reason why these women should not take their infants to church, reminding the governor that baptism was a public ceremony, and instructed that this should happen. Brisbane considered that all the children at the Factory were illegitimate and it was best to baptise them in the quickest possible manner not to offend public decency. The new archdeacon indicated that the presence of the mothers could be dispensed with at the church baptism. Mary Adlam, an assigned servant, was convicted of a colonial crime and sentenced to a term in the Third Class at the Parramatta Factory in 1842. She brought her seven year old daughter with her, as her husband was also an assigned convict. When Mary’s sentence in the Factory was completed, she was reassigned to the Manning River and her daughter was transferred to the Female Orphan School. Three years later, following Mary’s death, Robert Adlam had a ticket of leave and was able to retrieve his daughter.

OTHER NEW SOUTH WALES FACTORIES

FACTORY ALTERNATIVES – THE WOMEN OF EMU PLAINS 1822

In May 1822, 32 female convicts from the ships John Bull and Providence were sent to the Government Agricultural Establishment at Emu Plains as an alternative to government employment at the Factory. The women’s huts were located one mile away from the men’s huts. The women hoed the tobacco and maize crops, weeded flax, pulled and husked the maize and did other light farm work undertaken by women in England.

Of these women, 24 married constables, overseers and others associated with the establishment. Eight returned to the factory, of whom five were too old or unfit for field labour (one subsequently died aged 70). Two of the three sent back to the Factory for being pregnant later married the men with whom they had formed an intimacy at Emu Plains. When their pregnancies were reported, the practice of sending the women to Emu Plains was discontinued. Allegations were made that the women had promiscuous intercourse at Emu Plains and infected the men with venereal disease. Rumours circulated that the overseers had been punished for prostituting the women to strangers and that convict men at Emu Plains had been punished for enticing the women to sleep with them.

The allegations were not supported by evidence from the doctors nor in the official records of Penrith Bench. The scandal, however, ended the only experiment to find an alternative to keeping the convict women in the Female Factory at Parramatta.
NEWCASTLE\textsuperscript{171}

The gaol at Newcastle was built in 1818. Located on the headland, near the hospital and the fort, the gaol was part of a penal settlement that was a place of secondary punishment for convicts who committed crimes within the colony. It was closed as a penal settlement in 1823 and the harbour declined as free settlement expanded inland. The gaol was then used as a depot for convict labour, holding male and female convicts being transferred from Sydney to assignment with settlers in the Hunter Valley, or holding convicts due to be returned to Sydney for punishment or re-assignment.

In 1830, the colonial authorities looked at Newcastle as a place to send incorrigible women for short periods, but would not approve the expense of their transfer.\textsuperscript{172} Darling re-iterated that Newcastle was closed as a convict establishment in 1831.\textsuperscript{173}

Following a riot at the Parramatta Female Factory in 1831, 37 women were sentenced to three years at a penal settlement and forwarded to Newcastle Gaol. This was managed as part of the gaol and judicial branch of the colony rather than by the Superintendent of Convicts, as were the other Female Factories. Nevertheless, the institution was known as the Newcastle Gaol and Female Factory and operated from 1831 until 1846.\textsuperscript{174} The male gaol staff, if unmarried, lived in the gaol. A matron assisted by a male turnkey supervised the female prisoners. There were nine sleeping wards and five airing yards, of which three were for the women, but there were no workrooms.\textsuperscript{175}

From 1832 as well as groups of women from the Parramatta Factory, consignments of newly arrived convicts in groups of about 15 were sent regularly to Newcastle for assignment among the settlers of the Hunter Valley. Women from the \textit{Mary}, the \textit{Pyramus}, the \textit{Henry Wellesley} and the \textit{Sir Charles Forbes} were all sent within ten days of arrival in Sydney.\textsuperscript{176}
BATHURST

Resident magistrate, Thomas Evernden, noted that the increased demand for female servants in the Bathurst district due to the expansion of settlement meant that women who were assigned to Bathurst spent 10 to 12 days on the road in a dray, mixing with the men each night. When assigned female servants were returned as unsuitable or pregnant, the masters had to pay to return them to Parramatta. When convict women were found guilty of crimes at Bathurst there was nowhere to imprison them appropriately. The magistrates did not want to return them to Parramatta as it would deprive the district of female labour.178

In 1832 the old military barracks at Bathurst was converted into a Female Factory to hold 15 women. Located on the corner of William and Vale (now Charlotte) Streets, it was a two storey building, with a separate kitchen wing and newly erected wash-house enclosed with a wall. The ground floor had a small room for the matron and a workroom for the women, with a sleeping dormitory upstairs. A separate infirmary wing was added in 1835.179

A resident matron, Mary Black, managed the Bathurst Female Factory. Mary Black nee Dillon was a free immigrant, as was her husband who was employed as overseer by a prominent Bathurst pastoralist. She was appointed in late 1832 and remained in charge until she resigned in mid-1838. Her successors were Mary Jaggers, wife of the clerk of Trinity Church (1838); Sarah Keenan, wife of the gaoler (1838–1840) and lastly Emma Cory, wife of a local constable (1840–1844). In 1844 the Bathurst Female Factory closed and the women were moved into the female wing of the new gaol.180

Practices within the Bathurst Female Factory replicated those at Parramatta. Women could be confined there on the order of the local bench of magistrates for misdemeanours such as being drunk, disobedient or absconding from assignment. Their punishment, in addition to confinement, might include solitary confinement, cutting off their hair, or reduced food rations. The matron in 1838 was assisted by a monitress and portress.181
Every few months, groups of convict women available for assignment to private service were forwarded to the Bathurst Female Factory. For the first few years a bullock-drawn caravan conveyed 15 women at a time, taking two weeks to travel between Sydney and Bathurst. Bathurst residents preferred newly arrived women who had not been exposed to the other convict women at Parramatta.182 The Bathurst Factory did not have regular work for the women held there, possibly because space was limited.

Fifteen women were sent from the Parramatta Female Factory in August 1833 – probably those involved in the riot – but their conduct on the 16 day journey was so violent and disorderly that the residents of Bathurst feared to have them in their homes! The length of their journey – and its riotous incidents – palled compared to the six weeks it took to convey 18 women who had arrived on the Mary in 1836.183 Whilst numbers resident at any one time at Bathurst ranged from 40 to more than 60, almost 500 women passed through its gates in 1837.

PORT MACQUARIE184

The Female Factory at Port Macquarie was located near the corner of William and Munster Streets, now the site of the Presbyterian Church.

Port Macquarie was established as a secondary penal settlement in 1821 and within a year a group of female convicts had been sent there, sentenced by courts in Sydney to internal transportation for crimes or misdemeanours. They were employed as cooks and hut keepers but their presence was considered a destabilising influence on the settlement. Nevertheless, by 1825 there was a log and plaster building capable of holding 50 women and the courts were instructed to send women there where it was hoped secure and useful employment could be found for them.185 Government vessels conveyed them up the coast and brought back those who had served their time.

The Factory building was not suitable and most of the women lived in the township as servants or shared huts with other women. In 1828 the single convict women at
Port Macquarie complained that the married convict women were permitted to live with their husbands while they had recently been put into a room in the gaol.

Convict women strongly objected to being confined in one place, and these women argued that as they had not committed any additional crime they should not be kept within the gaol, and that they were being kept there only because they were younger than the other women. Of course, from the point of view of the authorities, it was the freedom of movement of the unattached women around the settlement that was the cause of concern about their depraved conduct.195

There was insufficient employment in the settlement for the women. Various commandants experimented with the women picking cotton in the fields, weeding the grounds of the public buildings, picking oakum (separating the strands of old tarred rope used on ships) and sewing clothing.196 The military officers in charge of Port Macquarie tried various stratagems to reward well behaved women, such as allowing them the freedom of the town for one day a week. The authorities in Sydney stopped this.197

Port Macquarie ceased to be a penal settlement in 1830 and the district was opened for free settlement, creating a demand for labour. Modifications were made to the Female Factory in 1833 to separate it from the watch house where the male prisoners were kept. The government then directed that the Female Factory and gaol be converted to the exclusive use of female prisoners sentenced to the Third Class. As the district opened up for settlement, contingents of female convicts were sent from Sydney to be distributed to the settlers as assigned convicts. In 1833 15 women were sent there for assignment, followed some weeks later by 12 refractory Parramatta women sent there as punishment.198 At the end of 1834 there were 19 women at the Factory, but 13 of those could not be assigned because of infirmity or nursing infant children.199

The matrons at the Female Factory, Port Macquarie were: Sophia Henshaw 1830–1832; Catherine Clarke, ticket of leave, 1832. From 1833 the matrons were the wives of the watch house keeper and there was an annual succession of appointments – Bridget Woolford 1832–1833; Elizabeth Burn 1833–1834; Winifred Blewitt 1834; Mary Stent 1834–1835; Eliza Edwards 1835; Ann Brewer 1835–1842.
In 1842, transportation to New South Wales having ended, the colonial authorities closed the Female Factory at Port Macquarie and directed that any women remaining there were to be returned to the Female Factory at Parramatta.191

MORETON BAY

The need for remote places of punishment encouraged the decision to place a secondary punishment settlement at Moreton Bay (modern Brisbane). A settlement was established at Redcliffe in 1824, and this was moved from the bay into the Brisbane River to the present site of Brisbane in 1825.

Between 1829 and 1837, 135 women were sentenced to Moreton Bay, though there is evidence of small numbers of women there in earlier years. A seven room building was erected in Queen Street as a Female Factory. Initially fenced but subsequently walled to prevent men getting in, the women worked at washing and needlework and picking oakum. In 1837, when there were about 70 women there, they were moved to Eagle Farm where they lived in a slab timber building of four rooms surrounded by a 13 foot high fence. There was a cookhouse, needle room, punishment cells, a store, school, hospital and wash-house. The women worked on the farm.192

Some of the women sent to the Moreton Bay Female Factory had already completed their original sentence of transportation but were subsequently charged with other crimes and received additional sentences. Catherine Buckley had been transported from Cork for seven years in 1809 but as a freed woman was convicted of perjury and sentenced to three years at Moreton Bay in 1826. Margaret Sullivan had arrived on the Broxbornebury in 1814, transported for seven years, but stealing in a dwelling house at Windsor in 1830 led to a colonial death sentence, commuted to 14 years at Moreton Bay. The women were returned to Sydney when their sentences expired, with the exception of Hannah Rigby who was transported three times to Moreton Bay and was the only one to remain when it opened to free settlement.193
Convicts were transported to Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania) from the time of the initial establishment of the colony in 1803 until 1853.
FEMALE FACTORIES OF VAN DIEMEN’S LAND

Dr Trudy Cowley
Female Factory Research Group

From 1803–1853 five female factories were established in Van Diemen’s Land – at Hobart Town, George Town, Cascades (South Hobart), Launceston and Ross. These factories housed only female convicts and were designed as places of labour and hire as well as places of punishment. They also provided a place for the pregnant and the ill. These establishments were referred to variously as factories, houses of correction and, rarely, penitentiaries.

For the first 19 years of the colony, from 1803 to 1821, there were no female factories established in Van Diemen’s Land. This was partly because the number of female convicts in the colony was small, partly because Governor Macquarie refused to allow the erection of a female factory in Van Diemen’s Land, and partly because the female convicts were in great demand as servants, partners and wives. During this period, female convicts were punished in other ways for minor crimes and offences – they were fined, ordered to find sureties for good behaviour, put on a diet of bread and water, confined in solitary confinement in the gaol, put to work at hard labour in the gaol or the hospital, ordered to wear iron collars, put in the stocks, ordered to have their head shaved and, although this was rare, flogged.

At the prospect of an increasing number of female convicts being sent to the colony, in 1817, Lieutenant-Governor Sorell suggested to Governor Macquarie that a female factory be erected at Pittwater (near Hobart). Macquarie replied that it was not intended to send more female convicts from Sydney than was required for the use of settlers and that a factory for female convicts was to be built in New South Wales at Parramatta. Sorell was informed that he was left at liberty to send to that Seminary such refractory or disorderly ill behaved Female Convicts from the Settlement in Van Diemen’s Land as you may deem expedient.198 The Van Diemen’s Land settlements at this time were very much the outposts of Sydney and were under Macquarie’s tight governance.

When the Morley arrived at Hobart in August 1820 direct from England with 50 female convicts of respectfull becoming and grateful demeanour, Sorell felt justified in sending six women, recently arrived from Sydney on the Janus, back to Sydney for misconduct, as he had been previously authorised. Macquarie, however, was sorry that they had been sent and responded that the women could have been kept in Sorell’s own gaol for a few weeks on bread and water, then given out to settlers wanting Female servants, as the Parramatta Factory was not yet completed.199

Female convicts tried for serious offences in Hobart Town were sometimes sent to Sydney, Newcastle or Macquarie Harbour (Sarah Island) for punishment. Several convicts were sentenced to be transported to Newcastle between 1816 and 1821, but only a minority seem to have been sent. Similarly, several female convicts, tried in Hobart Town, were ordered to be sent to Parramatta Female Factory for punishment, but as it was not yet built, not all of them were sent. Several other female convicts were sent to Macquarie Harbour for punishment between about 1821 and 1825.

A small number of female convicts were sent to Sydney for trial during this early period. For example, Mary Evers (per Alexander II to New South Wales and then Kangaroo to Van Diemen’s Land) made the journey to New South Wales to stand trial at Sydney for aiding and assisting the murder of an infant, the illegitimate child
of her mistress. She sailed on the *Elizabeth Henrietta* in September 1817 and returned to Hobart in January 1818 on board the *Governor Macquarie*, presumably having been acquitted.\(^{198}\)

There were a number of reasons why officials thought a female factory a necessary institution. The factory was planned as a place where female convicts could be put to labour and thereby make some contribution to the colony, working for the Government. As well, unemployed, pregnant and infirm female convicts needed to be housed. The institution could also double as an initial reception and, later, hiring depot. It also was seen as a way of keeping the immoral and depraved separate from the better behaved female convicts. A key premise of the establishments was that female convicts would be classified based on their behaviour and separated from each other based on that classification, to avoid new arrivals being *contaminated* by the more hardened criminals. The classification system operated across the entire penal establishment – Crime or Third Class prisoners were judged the worst and sent to hard labour, Assignable or First Class prisoners were the best and awaited assignment, and Second Class prisoners were those working their way up from third to First Class, or whose crimes were of a minor nature, or who were pregnant.

In 1823, as Lieutenant-Governor designate, Colonel George Arthur received from Elizabeth Fry, the great Quaker advocate for prison reform, a number of suggestions relating to female convicts in Van Diemen’s Land, including the erection of a new building for female convicts at Hobart Town, with plans provided.

The factories were designed for the reception of convicts and as such were funded by the Imperial Government. However, free women, mostly women free-by-servitude, but also some who came free, were also sent to the factories, though they only accounted for a very small proportion of the prisoners.

**HOBART TOWN FEMALE FACTORY**

There was a room set aside for the punishment of women at the Hobart Town Gaol, which was *completed* in 1818 and situated on the corner of Murray and Macquarie Streets. This Women’s Room was four metres by three metres and situated upstairs. The women prisoners wore slop clothing and were kept to hard labour whilst there. Hard labour consisted of washing the male prisoners’ clothes and cleaning parts of the gaol, after the men were first removed to the yard.\(^{197}\) This room was too small and too close to the men, so Sorell still sought permission from Macquarie to build a female factory. His request was supported by John Bigge as part of his 1819 enquiry. Sorell was refused by Macquarie in March 1820, but he persisted and, in December that year, requested that *A plain building of size to admit 50 or 60 Women being kept to labor might be erected by Contract*. On 30 June 1821, Macquarie wrote to Sorell ordering that a female factory be constructed at Hobart.

Six months later, Macquarie included among a list of the accomplishments of his administration: *The site of a brick-built barrack, two storeys high, with necessary, offices for the residence and accommodation of 100 Female Convicts marked out and now in progress, it being intended to erect a high Brick Wall round the said Building*. Sorell later indicated that he had *placed the Small Factory adjoining the present prison, with a view that the two might, after a new Gaol was prepared, be united as one Factory or House of Correction for Females. The ample means of division and Classification, Yards, etc., which the present Gaol and Factory offered, with such alterations as they are susceptible of; would, I conceive, render them well adapted and fully adequate to the purpose, and the expense [sic] of a new Factory would be saved*\(^{198}\)
Thus, the first female factory in Van Diemen’s Land was built adjoining the Hobart Town Gaol, separated from it by a brick wall.

Joshua A. Drabble was appointed Superintendent of the Hobart Town Female Factory when it opened and he lived in rooms in the factory with his family. Relations between the Superintendent and his wife, and the prisoners, were not always harmonious. On 2 June 1826 and the following few days, rioting occurred at the factory involving 22 prisoners. When charges were laid against the prisoners on 10 June, Sarah Thompson, per Brothers, was charged with threatening to put a knife in Mrs Drabble.209

Even though they were partly planned as places of labour, the female factories, including Hobart Town Female Factory, did not always work as intended, sometimes because of the lack of hard labour for prisoners to do or the lack of equipment (eg. spinning wheels) or space to do it. It was commented in the Hobart Town Gazette in 1827 that:

The punishment of Mary Pendle for stealing in a dwelling house, was necessarily different from that of the other guilty of a like offence, owing to the difficulty at present existing in the Colony of finding punishments suited to female offenders. She was sentenced to six months imprisonment and hard labour, and his Honor added, that he really hoped the labour she would undergo would be hard.210

Even when there was hard labour to be done, the prisoners shirked their work. On 2 October 1823, 20 prisoners were charged with wetting the yarn spun by her with intent to defraud by increasing its weight and thus make her work less.

Whatever the work set the women, whether it be spinning, carding, washing or picking, they were expected to complete a set amount each day. However, in later years, the Hobart Town Female Factory was so overcrowded that there was very little room available in which prisoners could work. To overcome this, some of the women were sent to work at the Colonial Hospital during the day, most probably doing laundry work, but were kept locked up in the Hobart Town Female Factory at night.

In 1826, Lieutenant-Governor Arthur ordered an investigation into the conditions at the factory. It found that 55 prisoners were crowded into two cramped and unventilated sleeping rooms. In addition, the only yard available to the female prisoners overlooked the area where felons were hanged.211

Overcrowding was a problem which dogged all of the female factories. As the number of female convicts sent to the colony continued to rise until the early 1850s, no sooner would a new factory be built than it was no longer large enough to accommodate the number of prisoners sent there. Not only did overcrowding result in illness, it also meant that the more corrupt prisoners could not be separated from the less corrupt, thus making a mockery of the classification system.

The 1826 enquiry also found that communication between female convicts in the factory and inmates in the Hobart Town Gaol next door, and people passing in the street outside, was too easy. On 11 November 1825, Johanna Leahy, per Janus, was sentenced to three days in a cell on bread and water for improper conduct in being on the roof of the Female Factory yesterday afternoon with intent to get at something thrown over the wall.212 Six months later, Jane Buckingham, per Mary Anne I, was charged with making a hole in the wall of the upper bed room for the purpose of communicating with persons in the street on the twentieth of last month.213
Escape from the factory was also relatively easy. On 10 December 1825, the Hobart Town Gazette reported the following escape:

*Late on Monday evening as Dr Westbrook was passing the Female Factory, he observed two women creeping through a hole which had been made in the wall, and the constable standing unconcernedly looking on. He immediately disarmed this man, the ladies as suddenly drawing back; and at the same time Mr. Drabble discovered that seven prisoners had escaped from the upper bedroom. Six of the number have already been apprehended and sentenced to have their hair cut close off to the head, to be confined in a cell, fed on bread and water, and to wear an iron collar for a week. We have not yet heard what punishment has been inflicted on the constable who so gallantly contributed to the freedom of the fair sex.*

From October 1824 to August 1828, there were at least 18 occasions on which one or more female convicts escaped from the Hobart Town Female Factory, usually either by climbing through the above mentioned hole in the wall, made by the prisoners, or by climbing on to the roof of the building and jumping down to the street outside. There were another nine occasions when convicts attempted to escape. In two of these instances, the women were captured as they broke a leg jumping from the roof – Ann Livingstone per *Henry* in January 1827 and Ann Maloney per *Midas* in April 1827. As mentioned previously, there was a riot at the factory in June 1826: *Last week, no less than 22 of the women confined in the Female Factory were sentenced to various punishments of solitary confinement, and being fed on bread and water, some of whom had been guilty of disorderly conduct, uttering insolent and abominable expressions, escaping from the cells, over and through the outer wall, and of other conduct highly unbecoming the female character. They were fortunately prevented from escaping through a large hole which they made in the wall, and some of the punishments were inflicted for the ill treatment the workmen received in mending it up.*

Other, smaller, incidences of rebellion also occurred. For example, in September 1827, several prisoners were charged with singing obscene songs in the evening. As punishment, they were locked in the ward for three days.

Subsequent to the 1826 inquiry, Arthur commenced building a new factory at Cascades near the foothills of Mount Wellington, on the site of a rum distillery. When this opened in December 1828, the inmates of Hobart Town Female Factory were removed there and the building next to the Hobart Town Gaol was converted to a bond store in February 1827 for the reception of rum and other spirits.
GEORGE TOWN FEMALE FACTORY (c.1822–1834)

George Town (sometimes referred to as Port Dalrymple) was settled in 1804 at the mouth of the Tamar River in the north of Van Diemen’s Land. George Town Female Factory began operating around the same time as the Hobart Town Female Factory, Hobart having been settled around the same time. At first, the factory was simply a shed set up in the lumber yard as a place of hard labour. By March 1822, female prisoners here were making woollen cloth and leather shoes. The women worked in the shed, but slept off site, finding lodging with whoever would provide them with a bed. This often resulted in cohabitation with prisoners, ex-prisoners or soldiers. Female convicts worked in this shed until 1825, when the factory was moved to the former residence of Reverend John Youl.

The Youl family lived in the house from 1821 to 1825 when they moved back to Launceston. The house was then converted to the female factory and female convicts slept on site. However, by 1829, the building was in disrepair, it was cold and damp, with broken windows and doors hanging off their hinges.

Assistant Superintendent of Convicts, Ronald C. Gunn, described the building in December 1830:

The building ... is two stories high and contains seven rooms – 2 occupied by the Supt., one as an hospital for the Females and the other four as the Factory. The whole building is in a very dilapidated state, there are no windows, or at least the apertures for window are without glass, or Venetians, and are now boarded up, and a number of augured holes made through the boards to admit the light. The fencing around the Yard is very insecure, and any of the women could easily get over. ... its general ruinous state is beyond what I can describe ...

The internal Regulations are equally bad, there is no labour whatever performed except washing the few articles soiled in the hospital, and no punishment inflicted, as there is no classification and consequently that greatest punishment of cutting the hair is never done, not even in cases when the women are sentenced to the crime class.

The women being only sent down by monthly conveyance, a considerable portion of their sentence expires before they can be confined in the Factory, and as there is no labour performed when they are there, they generally look to punishment – (that is being sentenced to the Factory) without any dread, and more a time of rest.28

George Town Female Factory suffered the same problems as Hobart Town Female Factory – overcrowding, poor security and lack of hard labour. There were also shortages of materials, machines (for spinning and weaving) and food. The machines were removed to Cascades Female Factory when it opened in 1828. From this time until the closure of the factory, there was very little work for prisoners to do, apart from some sewing and washing. The rules established for the running of Cascades Female Factory were applied at George Town Female Factory from 1829.

Security at the factory was unreliable. After the riot and escapes at Hobart Town Female Factory in June 1826, several of the prisoners were removed to George Town Female Factory. Soon after arrival, in November 1826, three of them escaped from George Town Female Factory – Elizabeth Slater per Brothers, Ann Riley per Mary III, and Sarah Wilson per Mary III. Eighteen months later, Sarah Wilson, along with two other inmates – Mary Sample per Midas and Catherine Taylor per Mary Anne I – escaped again from the factory, this time breaking two spinning wheels in the process. Catherine Taylor had escaped two months earlier. Other escapes occurred in 1829 and later years.
In the final year of its operation, a security breach occurred involving sailors from the Van Diemen’s Land Company schooner Edward. The sailors crossed Regent Square and endeavoured to gain access to the women in the factory. They did not achieve their goal, but did succeed in providing liquor to the prisoners by getting the women to lower down a cord, which was then used to haul up the spirits. Not surprisingly, the women got drunk and were duly punished.207

In the final two years of its operation, a minimum of 25 women and four children and a maximum of 69 women and 11 children (an average of 41 women and six children) were confined in the four rooms of the factory. In November 1834, a new female factory opened in Launceston and so this sink of iniquity was closed.

In the early years of Van Diemen’s Land, a factory located at George Town was appropriate as this town was the main settlement in the north. However, as the population drifted towards Launceston, and the courts sat there, sending female convicts from Launceston to George Town for imprisonment was becoming problematic. To get to the factory, prisoners would travel by horse drawn vehicle or foot by road along the East Tamar, or by boat up the Tamar River; each method of transportation had its own problems:

The disgraceful scenes which have been carried on by the parties conducting the females to and from George Town ... numbers of females sent for punishment to the factory at that place who have been weeks and weeks on the way, stopping at almost every hut and cabin of the government sawyers, and remaining till satisfied with debauchery ... 208

DRUNKENNESS

An awful occurrence took place a few days since, in consequence of the horrible effects of “the dose”. As a boat laden with a full cargo of women going down the river, to the factory, at George Town, was proceeding on its way, two women, who had been previously indulging farther than was consistent with propriety, fell over the side of the boat, and came to an untimely end. An open boat we consider a very improper means of conveyance for women at any time, more especially for so great a distance as from hence to George Town.209

Newspaper articles expressed a desire for a factory to be built in Launceston and for prisoners to be given hard labour to do, so that being sent to the factory would not be seen as desirable. It was argued that female convicts had it easier in George Town Female Factory than they did in assigned service and so it was difficult for masters and mistresses to maintain sufficient female servants, because they committed misdemeanours in order to be sent to the factory where life was easier.

A case in point – Some time ago, a resident in the country a few miles from town, found it necessary to the peace and comfort of his family that one of his female assigned servants should be brought up to town, before the Police bench. The sitting magistrate sentenced her to six months’ confinement in the factory. Upon her return from thence, when she was reproved for some misconduct, she replied: “Oh send me to the factory! I had much rather be there than here! Plenty there to eat, and very little to do.” According to the representation of some of our correspondents, the women are partly employed in washing, mending, and making clothes for the George Town gentlefolks, J.P.’s, &c.210

When the George Town Female Factory was located in the lumber yard, Mark Wilson, the Chief District Constable, acted as Overseer. When the factory moved to Reverend Youl’s former residence, Mr Robert Graves was appointed Superintendent. His young wife, Sophia,211 and their young child lived at the factory with him. Sophia was expected to assist in running the factory as Matron. Graves wrote several complaints to the Civil Commandant at George Town, Lieutenant Edward
Abbott, about his poor pay and lack of supplies. He expected that his pay would rise as the number of prisoners at the factory increased but this did not happen. Sophia gave birth to twins in 1827 and another child in 1829. By then, possibly due to illness, Graves had taken to drink and was thus dismissed from his position in September 1829. He left George Town with his family on the Speculator for Hobart, but died on board, aged 31 years.

Graves was replaced as Superintendent by Samuel Sherlock; his wife Mary Ann was appointed Matron. They were appointed on 9 October 1829, resigned their positions on 15 January 1831, but stayed on until the factory closed in 1834. The remaining prisoners were removed to the newly built Launceston Female Factory.

**CASCADES FEMALE FACTORY (1828–1856)**

As a result of the inquiry into the Hobart Town Female Factory in 1826, Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur looked around for a place to build a new female factory. He chose the site of a failed rum distillery at Cascades near South Hobart, owned by Thomas Y. Lowes. The site was in an east-west running valley about six kilometres from Sullivan’s Cove, nestled under Mount Wellington. It was bitterly cold in winter and hot in summer. The Hobart Rivulet ran through the valley next to the site. It was purchased in 1827; John Lee Archer was employed as architect.

The first prisoners moved there from the Hobart Town Female Factory in December 1828. The first group of convicts to be marched there directly from their transport ship were those who arrived on the Harmony in January 1829. Prior to the opening of the Cascades Female Factory, when a ship arrived, prisoners were assigned directly from the ship into service, unless they were ill, in which case they were sent to the Colonial Hospital, or they had behaved badly on the voyage, in which case they were sent to the Hobart Town Female Factory.

On 1 January 1829, the Colonial Secretary, John Burnett, published *Rules and Regulations for the Management of the House of Correction for Females*. These were the same rules and regulations which were applied at George Town in 1829. They stated that the person generally responsible for the factory was the Principal Superintendent of Convicts. As a magistrate, he could pass sentence on prisoners for offences committed within the factory; he was to enforce cleanliness, quietness, regularity, submission and industry.

To run the establishment, the following officers were appointed: Superintendent, Matron, Crime Class Overseer, Crime Class Task Mistress, Porter, Clerk and two Constables. Their duties were described within the rules and regulations, as were the procedures for dealing with female convicts, both upon arrival and whilst within the establishment, including their clothing, classification, hours of labour, diet and punishment.

Reverend James Norman was responsible for the religious instruction of the establishment and the Medical Attendant had responsibility for the Hospital and the Nursery within the factory. He was required to attend the factory every morning *whether there are, or are not, any sick women*.

In 1829, Mrs Forcett was appointed Matron of Cascades Female Factory and her husband was appointed Gatekeeper. The Overseer was Jesse Pullen and the Super-
intendent was Esh Lovell. They held those positions until 1 January 1832, when John Hutchinson was appointed Superintendent and his wife, Mary Hutchinson,\textsuperscript{212} was appointed Matron. Assisting them were William Cato as Overseer and his wife Elizabeth Cato as Assistant Matron – they were appointed on 18 April 1831 and dismissed ten years later. John Hutchinson was replaced by John May as Superintendent, and Mary Hutchinson held her position as Matron until June 1851 when she was transferred to Launceston Female Factory. Charlotte McCullagh was appointed Matron in her place and remained there until the establishment became a gaol in March 1856.

As the number of female convicts being sent to Van Diemen’s Land grew, Cascades Female Factory was extended several times, from the initial building of one yard to five yards in 1853.\textsuperscript{213}

Yard 1 opened in 1828. It consisted of six sub-yards – nursery, kitchen, Crime Class (Third), hospital, Assignable Class (First), Probation Class (Second) – and a chapel. This is the open yard with the archway, where the gatehouse was, which is a public space today.

Yard 2 opened in 1832. It was a punishment yard, consisting of solitary cells, light cells (or solitary working cells) and the washing yard. Solitary cells did not let in any light, but light cells did and so prisoners confined in them could still work. A church now stands on this yard.

Yard 3 opened in 1845. This was another punishment yard. It contained two double-tiered cell blocks of separate apartments. Each cell measured 3.5 metres by 1.3 metres and had an arched ceiling with maximum height of 2.75m. The doors of adjoining rooms opened on opposite sides of the building to make it more difficult for prisoners to communicate with each other. Silence was the rule in these separate apartments. This is the yard where the Female Factory Historic Site shop now stands.

Yard 4, the Nursery Yard, opened in 1850. It contained a two storey nursery building, a yard and the Matron’s Cottage. The Matron’s Cottage is in use currently as a gallery and research and meeting area as part of the Female Factory Historic Site. The remainder of the Nursery Yard has recently been purchased.

Yard 5 opened in 1853. It was modern! It had flushing toilets and piped water. There was a large yard and a double storey building containing a mess room and kitchen downstairs and dormitories upstairs. It seems to have been used for First Class prisoners. Residential houses now cover the area of this yard.

Cascades Female Factory operated as a factory for 28 years and during that time there were two distinct phases of operation – the first during the assignment system and the second during the probation system. The biggest change came when the probation system was more fully extended to female convicts as a result of the Inquiry into Female Convict Discipline established in 1841.

As well as looking into incidences of rioting, unnatural behaviour (lesbianism), trafficking and other forms of ill-discipline amongst the female prisoners at both the Cascades and Launceston Female Factories, the inquiry also investigated the nurseries (particularly the high infant mortality rate) and the on-site hospitals.

The Rules and Regulations promulgated in 1829 provided strict guidelines on the running of the factories. However, before the 1841–1843 inquiry, overcrowding, understaffing, corrupt officers and poor nourishment made it difficult to keep the
classes separate, and trafficking, bullying and rowdiness flourished, along with the Flash Mob. Testimony at the inquiry suggests that the Flash Mob consisted of a group of unruly women who trafficked in goods, bullied other prisoners, had lesbian relationships with each other and preferred to be in the factory than assigned to service. Several of these women were moved between the Cascades and Launceston factories due to rioting and other offences, and even removed to other gaols, such as Longford Gaol and the men’s prison at Launceston, as they could not be controlled within the confines of either factory.

After the 1841–1843 inquiry and the introduction of the probation system, life in the factories changed. Under the probation system, newly arrived convicts underwent six months probation prior to being hired out to service. For many of the female convicts who arrived during this period, probation was completed on board the Anson, a hulk moored in Prince of Wales Bay on the Derwent River. The classification system for probation pass holders – that is, those convicts who had completed their probation and so were available for hire – was opposite to the classification system in the factories: Third Class Probation Pass Holders had the most freedom and First Class Probation Pass Holders the least. To obtain a ticket of leave, a convict had to have first been a Third Class Probation Pass Holder.

At the factories, a strict regimen of silence and task work was introduced. With the opening of Yard 3 at Cascades Female Factory in 1845, punishment by separate treatment and solitary confinement could be enforced. No doubt bullying and trafficking still occurred, but with the expansion of the factory and the relief of overcrowding, order and control could better be enforced.

The first riot to occur at Cascades Female Factory was on 8 February 1829, just two months after it opened. Prisoners were protesting against the imprisonment of two inmates in solitary confinement, prisoners who had been attempting to receive contraband provisions (probably to augment the poor rations provided). At least nine of the main offenders, including the two placed in solitary confinement, were charged with offences.

Jesse Pullen, the overseer of the establishment, gave evidence at the inquiry into the riot. In the morning, after Pullen had seen men on the hill behind the factory shouting to some of the women in the Crime Class Yard, a bundle containing cheese and butter was thrown over the wall of the factory. Several of the men were soldiers from the 40th Regiment. Pullen, along with several inmates, went to retrieve the bundle. Shortly afterwards a loaf of bread was thrown over and a prisoner, Sarah Beckley, per Sir Charles Forbes, picked it up and took it to the dining room. She refused to give it to Overseer Pullen, so he left to report the incident to the Superintendent, Esh Lovell. As he did so, 30 to 40 of the prisoners followed him, clapping their hands and hooting him out of the yard. Pullen returned with Lovell to the yard and attempted to restore order. The two women seen shouting over the wall to the soldiers on the hillside, Sarah Beckley and Elizabeth Davis, per Borneo, were eventually sent to the cells having made violent resistance. Pullen continued:

When the two women who were put in the Cell were resisting us in the Crime Class Yard the Women in the sleeping Rooms who were locked up commenced shouting, swearing, and making use of the most abominable Language to me and my Wife that I ever heard.

They continued making a violent noise and knocking at the Doors to get out for upwards of an Hour when in the upper Room thro’ the Vent Hole over the Door which admits air to the Room they threw a large Piece of Cloth in a Blaze of Fire which fell up on the steps which
certainly would have been set on Fire had it not been immediately extinguished, and thro’ the Air Holes on the opposite side a Quantity of Fire was thrown out which fell at the Bottom of the Steps leading to the Chappel which was extinguished by Mr Lovell with the Water he got in the Second Class Yard. When we first discovered the Fire the Yells and Screams were indescribable, from all Parts of the Building except the Nursery & Hospital those in the 2nd Class and Assignable Class not knowing what it originated in, thought the Building was on fire and several in the Second Class fainted with the Fear occasioned by the Blaze. There were three or four Parcels of fire thrown out upon the Steps leading to the Sleeping Rooms which being made of Pine had the Fire not been immediately extinguished would certainly have set the whole Buildings on fire. Pullen was then sent by Lovell to town to fetch the Principal Superintendent of Convicts, James Gordon, and two constables to help restore order. In response to the riot, it was ordered that a fence be erected around the establishment to prevent the approach of those who are in the Habit of giving such annoyance every Sunday. The palisade fence, however, does not seem to have stopped the acquisition of contraband by the inmates. In March 1829, Margaret Gordon, per Henry, was charged with smoking in the nursery this morning contrary to the regulations of the establishment, and refusing to give up her pipe to Mrs Rillen when demanded. Three years later, Elizabeth Davis, per Borneo, again imprisoned at Cascades Female Factory, was charged with being drunk and disorderly and sentenced to seven days in solitary confinement on bread and water. Prisoners were not allowed to have alcohol nor tobacco, among other things, such as food which was not part of their rations.

The riots which occurred in the 1840s at both Cascades Female Factory and Launceston Female Factory were the result of overcrowding, poor rations, unnatural connexions, boredom and aversion to solitary confinement. The riots are well documented in the Inquiry into Female Convict Discipline of 1841–1843 and on the conduct records of the rioters, but the newspapers of the day were oddly silent about them. Major riots occurred at Cascades Female Factory in 1839, 1842 and 1843.

On 4 May 1839, Ellen Scott, per Eliza III, a notorious prisoner considered to be part of the Flash Mob, violently assaulted Superintendent Hutchinson with intent to kill him or do bodily harm. Scott was assisted by other convicts, including five from the Atwick. Scott was initially removed to Hobart Town Gaol, then to Launceston Female Factory to serve two years hard labour.

Over three years later, on 23 August 1842, 17 prisoners were charged with being involved in a riot at Cascades Female Factory. It occurred in the Crime Class Yard where upwards of 150 women were housed. These women had no access to the yard at this time as there were some workmen employed in the interior of the building and the authorities wished to prevent communication between them and the prisoners. At about 3pm the women in the upper shop of the Crime Class Yard started dancing and singing, refusing to desist when ordered to do so by the turnkey, who reported the incident to Superintendent Hutchinson. The women continued their riotous behaviour for some hours before Hutchinson sent for police constables. The constables were effective in separating the riotous prisoners from the others and so quelled the riot.

Six months later, on 27 March 1843, there were riots at both Cascades Female Factory and Launceston Female Factory. At this stage, no evidence has been found to suggest that they were coordinated but it seems a remarkable coincidence that they both occurred on the same day.
INFANT NURSERIES

Initially, the nursery for the infants of prisoners was set up in Yard 1 at Cascades Female Factory. Prior to this, the infants and children stayed with their mother, whether on assignment or in the care of the Government. The nursery operated there for ten years until, due to the high infant mortality rate, it was moved off-site to a house in Liverpool Street, Hobart, near the Colonial Hospital. The nursery usually housed those children of convicts less than two or three years of age – those who had not yet been fully weaned. The death rate amongst the infants was abnormally high. Findings from inquiries, inquests and newspaper reports state that the high death rate was the result of poor nourishment, overcrowding, poor ventilation and damp, and, in some cases, minimal care. The most common cause of death amongst the infants was diarrhoea.

After four or so years at Liverpool Street, the nursery, still under the superintendence of Matron Slee, was moved to Dynnyrne House, South Hobart in 1842. This building no longer exists, but photographs of it, looking towards Mount Wellington, show Cascades Female Factory in the background, about half a mile away on the other side of the Hobart Town Rivulet. Nursing mothers were sent here directly from the ship, with their infants, when they arrived. Older children were sent to the Queen’s Orphan Schools at New Town.

Eight years later, the nursery was moved from Dynnyrne House to the new Nursery Yard (Yard 4) which had opened at Cascades Female Factory. However, the infant mortality rate was still high and so the nursery was again moved, this time to Brickfields at New Town (which was by this time no longer operating as a hiring depot). Brickfields was located where Rydges Hotel and North Hobart Football Oval now stand. After two years there, the nursery again returned to Cascades Female Factory in 1854. However, a year later, in 1855, it moved again, to the infirmary in Liverpool Street, Hobart.

During all this time, the infant mortality rate remained higher than that in the normal population. Prisoners were not responsible for the care of their children. Nurses and warders were appointed from amongst the First Class prisoners and they each had care of many of the infants. In 1838, an inquest into the death of Thomas Vowles, aged 14 months, provided information on the access mothers were given to their children in the nursery. Mary Vowles (who had arrived as a free immigrant on the Princess Royal but was colonially convicted) received permission from the Principal Superintendent of Convicts, Josiah Spode, to take her child to the factory when she was sentenced; Vowles was under the impression that she would be able to nurse it whilst there. However, Superintendent Hutchinson removed the child from her to the nursery. Vowles and the other mothers of children in the nursery were able to see their infants once a month, courtesy of Superintendent Hutchinson. Vowles saw Thomas once before he was taken home by her husband, to die of diarrhoea just a few weeks after they entered the factory.
BRANCH FACTORIES

Branch factories were set up in Hobart at several locations during the operation of Cascades Female Factory. These operated in connection with Cascades Female Factory and under its regulations. At Brickfields, New Town, a hiring depot for female convicts operated from 1842 to 1852. In 1843, the house in Liverpool Street, Hobart also operated as a hiring depot. From 1844 to 1849, the Anson hulk operated as a probation station, and in 1844 and 1850 New Town Farm operated temporarily as a probation station. In 1852, prisoners with children were moved from Cascades Female Factory to New Town Farm.

In 1856, Cascades Female Factory changed from being under the control of the British Government, to being under the control of the local authorities. From this time it operated as a gaol, not a female factory. More of the prisoners from this time were native born or women who had arrived free in the colony or those who had already received a Certificate of Freedom. It closed as a gaol in 1877 when all remaining female prisoners were moved to the gaol in Campbell Street, Hobart.

LAUNCESTON FEMALE FACTORY (1834–1855)

The construction of Launceston Female Factory, started in 1831, was completed in July 1834, though it still required furnishing in September of that year. It was built next to the Gaol on the corner of Bathurst and Margaret Streets, with the entrance facing Paterson Street, where Launceston College now stands. There are only a few remnants of the outer wall standing.

John Lee Archer, who designed Cascades Female Factory, was the architect, but this factory was built on a more modern design. The buildings formed a cross and with walls around the outside to enclose two yards between each pair of two arms of the cross, the overall design was an octagonal shape. The Launceston Female Factory plan of 1840 shows the design of the ground floor of the original building plus plans for the addition of solitary cells and separate apartments at the rear of the complex. It is not certain whether or not these were ever built. The nursery was above the surgery and office at the entrance, and the hospital was above the gatekeeper’s residence. Above the Superintendent’s quarters in the centre of the building, from where he could see the entire complex, was the chapel. Each arm of the cross, apart from the entrance, terminated in solitary cells and privies. The upper floor of each arm was a dormitory, one for each of the three classes. There was also a yard for each of the three classes of prisoners. The first escapes from Launceston Female Factory occurred on 16 November 1834 when Rosina Gavilin, per Frances Charlotte, and Sarah Smith, per Eliza III, made a hole in the wall of one of the privies and absconded. Other escapes occurred in later years.

The factory initially held 68 women and 11 children, but only a few years after it opened it was overcrowded. From 1840 onwards, all convicts were sent to Van Diemen’s Land, New South Wales no longer accepting them. As a result, the female factories operating became overcrowded as they were designed for a much smaller female convict population. As mentioned previously, this meant that prison authorities were unable to enforce the classification system of convicts. As at Cascades Female Factory, rioting and other forms of insubordination were sometimes a result, with most occurring at Launceston Female Factory between 1840 and 1844, before the implementation of the recommendations from the 1841–1843 Inquiry into Female Convict Discipline.
On 18 October 1842, prisoners in the crime class barricaded themselves into the building and withheld the constables for over 24 hours. Only after about 30 prisoners from the men’s gaol next door were fetched to assist the constables, was the siege broken. Seven of the ring leaders were subsequently ironed and placed in the gaol before being sent to Cascades Female Factory aboard the Lady Franklin.

In the following days the prisoners remained restless. When Mary Sheriff, per Atwick, who had previously been involved in incidents, was sentenced to solitary confinement by Captain Arthur Gardiner, she pleaded with Dr Maddox, the sub-Assistant Colonial Surgeon, to have Gardiner overturn the sentence saying she was ill. When Dr Maddox refused, Sheriff and two accomplices, Elizabeth Elemore, per Gilbert Henderson, and Eliza Owen, per Hindostan, rushed Dr Maddox and stabbed him with a sharp implement. The injuries were minor and so, even though a sentence of death was passed against the prisoners, their lives were spared and the sentences commuted to transportation for life. This of course meant that they stayed in Van Diemen’s Land, but they were removed from Launceston Female Factory to Cascades Female Factory.

At this time, in vain attempts to try and control their behaviour, the most recalcitrant prisoners were moved between the two factories. Many of these women were part of the Flash Mob. Thus, the Flash Mob operated not only at Cascades Female Factory, but also at Launceston Female Factory. Information provided at the 1841–1843 inquiry told how prisoners at Launceston Female Factory had formed relationships with one another, to the extent that if one completed her sentence and so was assigned, she would immediately commit some offence in order to be sent back to the factory.
Superintendent Pearson stated at the inquiry:

*I do not consider that being in the factory here at present is any punishment at all and I do not think that the women consider it a punishment. I have known repeated instances of women going out and committing crime on purpose to get back in a day or two with supplies of tobacco, tea and sugar etc. for the others.*

One of the prisoners who gave evidence at the inquiry, Eliza Churchill, per *Navarino*, concurred with the Superintendent and stated, *They would sooner be there than assigned to a settler as they could get more to eat,* even though the rations convicts were supposed to receive from their masters were superior to those they received in prison.

It was these women who were the ring leaders of the riots and other forms of insubordination and who controlled the trafficking of goods such as tobacco and rum in the factory – *If they had money, however, the women could usually get what supplies they wanted.* Evidence presented at the 1841–1843 inquiry showed how employees at the factory were involved in the trafficking of goods, and this resulted in some changes in staff.

Robert Pearson was appointed Superintendent on 3 January 1840 and his wife Elizabeth was appointed Matron. James Fraser was appointed Superintendent in July 1842 and Christina Fraser was Matron from April 1847. Samuel Johnston was appointed Overseer and his wife Catherine was appointed Sub-Matron in January 1845. Mary Hutchinson took over as Matron (Superintendent) in June 1851, when she was transferred from Cascades Female Factory.

The overcrowding problem at the Factory was partially resolved in 1844 when a hiring depot for female convicts was opened in Launceston, St John’s Square, separate to the factory. The factory then became solely a place for punishment of female convicts and a nursery, until 1848 when the hiring depot closed.

The nursery at Launceston Female Factory became just as overcrowded as the rest of the factory, and as overcrowded as the nursery at Cascades Female Factory. As such, it too had a high infant mortality rate. Between 1841 and 1850 there were 229 births at Launceston Female Factory, and in the same period there were 57 infant deaths and eight stillbirths.

The daily diet for prisoners and children when the factory opened in 1834 was meagre:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSIGNABLE CLASS</th>
<th>CRIME CLASS</th>
<th>CHILDREN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>½ lb meat</td>
<td>½ lb meat</td>
<td>4 oz meat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 lb bread</td>
<td>1 lb bread</td>
<td>8 oz bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 oz sugar</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1 oz sugar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 oz roasted wheat (coffee)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ oz salt</td>
<td>½ oz salt</td>
<td>½ oz salt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ lb vegetables</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>½ lb vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1 pint milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>½ pint oatmeal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It has been suggested that the poor nutritional value of the diet, particularly for the crime class prisoners, caused irritability and contributed to their bad behaviour.
When Ross Female Factory opened in 1848, the majority of the infants, pregnant women and nursing mothers were removed there. Launceston Female Factory operated as a factory for another seven years when its operation was taken over by local authorities, through the Sheriff's Office. From 1856, as with Cascades Female Factory, the establishment operated as a gaol. The building was eventually demolished at the beginning of the twentieth century to make way for the building of Launceston High School (now Launceston College).

ROSS FEMALE FACTORY (1848–1855)

As the ‘interior’ became more settled and the towns along the main road from Hobart to Launceston grew in size, the number of convicts assigned and hired to masters in these areas increased markedly. It was often the more recalcitrant prisoners who were assigned to service in the ‘interior’, those who were continually found drunk and disorderly in Hobart and Launceston or those who were continually absent without leave or absconded. It was believed that there were less distractions for these convicts in the country areas and so they were less likely to misbehave. However, misbehave they did and the authorities recognised the need for a place of punishment and hiring for female convicts in the interior. The chain gang station at Ross was chosen as the site for the last female factory to be built in Van Diemen’s Land. Being on the road from Hobart Town to Launceston, the factory could also act as a stopover place for prisoners being moved between the two largest towns.

The establishment was designed to be multi-purpose – it would act not only as a female factory, but also as a probation station, hiring depot, lying-in hospital, nursery and overnight station. It opened in March 1848. Ross Female Factory had some advantages over the other factories. It was built in the dry climate of the Midlands and, being in the country, the air was fresher. Thus, there was not the problem of dampness causing illness as occurred at Cascades Female Factory in particular. Also, because the factory was built when the female convict population was at its peak, it did not experience the problems of overcrowding that the other four factories did. This also meant that the nursery was not overcrowded. Another benefit to the prisoners was that the Superintendent was also a medical doctor – Dr William John Irvine.

As a result of these advantages, the infant mortality rate at Ross Female Factory was low, especially compared to the rates at the Cascades and Launceston factories. However, the rations were still meagre and hunger drove some prisoners to dishonourable acts. In January 1852, Caroline Rankin, per Australasia, who had given birth to an illegitimate daughter at the factory nine months previously, was charged with appropriating the children’s food. In August 1850, Ellenor Onions, per Australasia, had been charged with having meal bread and potatoes improperly in her possession.224

When the prisoners arrived at Ross Female Factory, usually by foot with a guard or by coach without a guard, they were made to take a bath and issued with prison clothing. The clothing consisted of: a jacket, a pair of stockings, a pair of shoes, a cap, a shift, a handkerchief, a petticoat and an apron. These items were made from wool, calico or flannel. The women were then assigned to the appropriate ward – crime class, probation pass holders or nursery.
The problems cited in the 1841–1843 Inquiry into Female Convict Discipline were not overcome with the new regime under the probation system. Evidence exists of trafficking, escapes and unnatural connexions at Ross Female Factory even though it started operation long after the recommendations of the inquiry had been put in place. For example, on 19 April 1851, Caroline Rankin, per Australasia, received two months hard labour for bringing a quantity of tobacco into the factory; and on 21 December 1850, Mary Hassett, per Australasia, was charged with lying on the floor with Ellen Hartley in an indecent manner, she received 14 days in solitary confinement as punishment.

At the end of 1848, Assistant Superintendent Dr John Imrie reported on the shameful practices carried on by some of the inmates of the Crime Class ward. A quarrel arose from some of the women deserting the beds of those to whom they acted in the capacity of men, and betaking themselves elsewhere ...

The women were removed to undergo strict separate treatment at Cascades Female Factory, under a careful watch, and orders were given to erect separate apartments at Ross Female Factory as soon as other works in progress would allow. Some three months later, one of the women, Margaret Kelly, per Royal Admiral, was still the subject of careful observation after being removed to Brickfields Hiring Depot. In March 1850, Dr Imrie reported to Robert Pringle Stuart, Visiting Magistrate to Ross Female Factory, on the unnatural practices suspected to be occasionally carried on here and elsewhere ... Mary Elliott, per Sea Queen, was believed to be one of the pseudo-male individuals whose presence was particularly sought. Mary Elliott was supposedly large and masculine in appearance and, on the evidence of a fellow female convict, when in Hobart Town, she was in the habit of never going out on service, but rather inveighing the very young and inexperienced and the purse keeper of her successive admirers, who confided their purses to her care. Imrie also referred to Mary Sheriff, per Atwick, passing through Ross Female Factory on her way from Launceston Female Factory to Cascades Female Factory for separate treatment, as being one of the women belonging to the species.

The evidence given by other prisoners at Ross Female Factory suggests that these women preyed on the young girls new to the factory, sometimes resulting in assault. On 21 December 1850, Mary Hassett, per Australasia, who was on the same day charged with lesbian activities was also charged with concocting a plan and conspiracy to assault her fellow prisoners.

The factory closed in January 1855 and the Police Department took over the site, though the Roman Catholic Church used the Chapel for services. Some mounds in a sheep paddock and the Superintendent’s cottage are all that is left of the factory today, though recent archaeological digs at the site have been unearthing the plan of the site. The most recent dig revealed the foundations of the nursery ward.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Ship</th>
<th>From whose source returned</th>
<th>When returned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mary Flajin</td>
<td>'Mrs Hulthunson'</td>
<td>12 Nov 1827</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cathrine Hyams</td>
<td>'Complaint of Mr Smith'</td>
<td>14 Nov 1827</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hannah West</td>
<td>'Useless in her Service'</td>
<td>19 Nov 1827</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Norah Leary</td>
<td>'Useless in her Service being pregnant'</td>
<td>20 Nov 1827</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hannah Bryan</td>
<td>'Useless in her Service being in a bad state of health'</td>
<td>22 Nov 1827</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ellen Maddox</td>
<td>'Useless in her Service'</td>
<td>23 Nov 1827</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mary Barrett</td>
<td>'Useless in her Service'</td>
<td>24 Nov 1827</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mary Birnie</td>
<td>'Useless in her Service'</td>
<td>29 Nov 1827</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mary Huffle</td>
<td>'Useless in her Service'</td>
<td>29 Nov 1827</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mary Boulton</td>
<td>'Useless in her Service'</td>
<td>5 Dec 1827</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mary Boultes</td>
<td>'Complaint of her Master'</td>
<td>7 Dec 1827</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ann Gorman</td>
<td>'Mariner no further occasion for her Service'</td>
<td>3 Jan 1828</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Mary Forman</td>
<td>'Lord Melville being at large from her'</td>
<td>6 Jan 1828</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Eleanor Smiler</td>
<td>'Indecency of another her mistress'</td>
<td>10 Jan 1828</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Hannah Matthews</td>
<td>'No further occasion for her Service'</td>
<td>12 Jan 1828</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Colonial Secretary's Office
11 December 1827.
Female Factory Records are incomplete for the Colonies of New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land. These lists are being updated regularly. To date the combined lists have 9,145 names of female factory women.

Colony of New South Wales list developed by Anne Mathews and Beth Mathews.

Colony of Van Diemen’s list developed by Trudy Cowley and the Female Factory Research Group.

For updates on the Colony of New South Wales contact Parramatta Heritage Centre.


This publication acknowledges the previous research work done by Joan Reese with State Records Female Factory Records lists and family historians whose research has also uncovered the names of many of these women.

DUPLICATE NAMES IN THE LIST INDICATE THAT THERE WAS MORE THAN ONE CONVICT WOMAN WITH THE SAME NAME OR THAT IT WAS UNSUBSTANTIATED AS THE SAME PERSON AT THE TIME OF PUBLISHING.
Van Diemen's Land
OBJECTS IN THE EXHIBITION
1 Elizabeth Fry Reading the Bible in a Women’s Prison, 183–, artist unknown, watercolour, National Library of Australia

2 Letter from Elizabeth Fry to Samuel Marsden, 1820, Elizabeth Fry, document, Dixon Library, State Library of New South Wales

3 Reproduction of part of the Rajah Quilt, 2008, Diane Zimitat and Christine McKenna, fabric scraps, Reproduction Courtesy of the National Gallery of Australia

4 Chronicles of the sea no 14, March 24 1838, including the lithograph Loss of the ‘Amphitrite’ (female convict ship), Captain Hunter, August 31st, 1833, Lent by the Australian National Maritime Museum

5 Surgeon W.B. Marshall’s ‘a word of exhortation to a servant’ – delivered to the 91 female convicts and 9 children on board the 275 tonne convict barque ‘Fanny’, 1833, Rebound in quarter leather, Lent by the Australian National Maritime Museum

6 ‘Emmeline, the Glasgow Lass’ and ‘The Convict Maid’, undated, broadsheet, ink on paper, Lent by the Australian National Maritime Museum

7 Sarah Lawson [nee Leadbeater], c.1800, artist unknown, watercolour on ivory, Dixon Library, State Library of New South Wales

8 A View of Part of Parramatta, Port Jackson, 1796–1809, unsigned, watercolour, Dixon Library, State Library of New South Wales

9 Parramatta Female Factory, undated, Society of Australian Genealogists collection

10 Parramatta Female Factory, undated, Ralph Hawkins Collection

11 The Female Factory at Parramatta, a Station 15 Miles from Sydney, 1823, Charles Henry Roberts, pencil drawing (in sketchbook), National Library of Australia

12 Report and Estimates of the Value of the Improvements which have taken place in the Public Buildings of Sydney, Parramatta, Windsor, Liverpool and Campbelltown, between the 25th of December 1822 & the 24th of December 1823 inclusive, and an Expose of the present state of the Public Buildings in New South Wales, 1824, Standish Lawrence Harris, manuscripts and drawings, Dixon Library, State Library of New South Wales

13 Lunatic Asylum, Parramatta, 1855, lithograph of ground plan by Colonial Architect, Allan & Wigley, Dixon Library, State Library of New South Wales

14 Bathurst Plains and Settlement, New South Wales, 1825–1828, Augustus Earle, watercolour, Dixon Library, State Library of New South Wales
15  *Bathurst*, 1847–1857,  
Joseph Backler attrib., oil on canvas,  
Dixson Library, State Library of New South Wales

16  *Port Macquarie, NSW*, 1832,  
Joseph Backler, oil on canvas,  
Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales

17  *Port Macquarry [Macquarie], c.1842–1850*,  
Georgiana Lowe, watercolour drawing,  
Dixson Library, State Library of New South Wales

18  *Newcastle, New South Wales*, 1824,  
Joseph Lycett, aquatint,  
Dixson Library, State Library of New South Wales

19  *Newcastle from the Ballast Wharf*, 1845–1846,  
M. Croasdill attrib., watercolour,  
Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales

20  *Public Buildings at Moreton Bay*, 1832,  
William C. Looker, pencil and wash sketch,  
Dixson Library, State Library of New South Wales

21  *Hobart Town from the New Town Road*, 1844,  
John Skinner Prout, tinted lithograph,  
National Library of Australia

22  *The Female Factory from Proctor’s Quarry*, 1844,  
John Skinner Prout, tinted lithograph,  
National Library of Australia

23  *Plate belonging to Mother Mary John Cahill*, undated  
silver,  
Congregational Archives of the Sisters of Charity

24  *The Prisoners of Australia: a Narrative by the Author of “Miriam”*, 1841,  
Charlotte Anley, published book,  
Dixson Library, State Library of New South Wales

25  *Minutes of Proceedings of Committee from the Board of Management of the Female Factory*, 1834, manuscript,  
State Records Authority of New South Wales

26  *Revd. S. Marsden, Senior Chaplain of New South Wales and the Founder of New Zealand Mission*, 1835,  
Richard Woodman, stipple engraving,  
National Library of Australia

27  *Portrait of Francis Oakes*, undated,  
artist unknown, painting,  
Australasian Pioneers’ Club Collection, Union, University & Schools Club

28  *Mary Hutchinson*, undated,  
artist unknown, oil on canvas,  
Private Collection

29  *Ways and Means or the Last Shift*, c.1844,  
Edward Winstanley, lithograph,  
Dixson Library, State Library of New South Wales
30 Beautifully Linked, c.1844, Edward Winstanley, lithograph, Dixson Library, State Library of New South Wales

31 Convictos en la Nueva Olanda [Convicts in New Holland], 1789–1794, Juan Ravenet, wash drawing, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales

32 Colonial Shoe, undated, leather, Janice Ruse–Huntington Collection

33 Materials Issued to the Female Factory, Parramatta 11 Jan 1839–10 Nov 1842, manuscript, State Records Authority of New South Wales

34 Rules and Regulations for the Management of the Female Convicts at the New Factory at Parramatta, 1821, document, Dixson Library, State Library of New South Wales

35 Rules and Regulations of the Cascades Female Factory, Five papers on convict discipline and transportation to Australia, 1843–1850, gilt, moire cloth, board, ink and paper, Lent by the Australian National Maritime Museum

36 Letter from Francis Oakes Concerning Head Shaving, 1822, Francis Oakes, document, State Records Authority of New South Wales

37 Children’s Toys, early–mid nineteenth century, clay, bone and ceramics, Parramatta Heritage Centre Collection

38 Archaeological Material from Parramatta Female Factory, undated, glass, kaolin and ceramics, Sydney West Area Mental Health Service Collection

39 Archaeological Material from Cascades Female Factory, undated, bone, stone, ceramic, wood and metal, Female Factory Historic Site Ltd Collection

40 Thread Reel, undated, wood and metal, Parramatta Heritage Centre

41 Wool from a Ewe (No. 2), from Sheep Bred by Samuel Marsden, New South Wales, 1804, wool sample, Lent by the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, Gift of the Colonial Secretary’s Department, 1866

42 Spinning Wheel, undated, wood, metal and yarn, Hand Weavers & Spinners Guild of NSW

43 Wool Cards, undated, wood and metal, Hand Weavers & Spinners Guild of NSW
44 Rock Breaking Hammer, date unknown, wood, Ralph Hawkins Collection
45 Sieve, undated, wood and metal, Ralph Hawkins Collection
46 Christening Gown, 1828, cotton, Tasmania Museum and Art Gallery
47 *Letter to Alexander McLeay from Samuel Marsden*, 1833, Samuel Marsden, document, State Records Authority of New South Wales
48 *ticket of leave* case, undated metal, Ralph Hawkins Collection
49 Archeological Material, undated [1800–1860], ceramics, metal, bone, glass, clay, slate, coin, terracotta, leather, mother of pearl, Parramatta Heritage Centre Collection
50 Lacemaking Bobbin, c.1840, bone, glass and metal, Lent by the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, Purchased 1998
51 Lacemaking Bobbins, c.1840s, wood, glass and metal, Private Collection
52 Lacemaking Sample, reproduction of bobbin lace, 2008, Artist’s Collection
53 Sewing Samples, 18--, Reading and Stephanoni Co., Annette Butterfield collection
54 Patchwork Cot Cover, 1842, cotton, Tongarra Museum Collection, Shellharbour City Council
55 Layette Pillow, 1833, cotton muslin, linen and brass pins, Lent by the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, Purchased 1978
56 Bonnet, women’s, c.1845, straw, horse hair and silk, Lent by the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, Gift of Mr Pat Williams, 1987
57 Bonnet Veil, Honniton Lace, 1830–1840, linen and muslin, Lent by the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, Gift of Robert Lloyd in memory of Miss Del Agnew, 2006
58 Women’s Ankle Boots, 1804, silk and leather, Lent by the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, Purchased 1942
59 Anne Dunne, c.1860, ambryotype photograph, Courtesy of Maureen Upfold, Susan Bulbrook and Helen Soars

60 Mary Jones’ Conditional Pardon, document, National Museum of Australia

61 Emma [Emmilla] Mayner, c.1855, photograph, Courtesy of Shirley Moore

62 Emma [Emmilla] Mayner’s Children, c.1855, photograph, Courtesy of Shirley Moore


64 Bookmarks, c.1860s, Emma [Emmilla] Mayner, thread, paper and ribbon, Courtesy of Shirley Moore

65 Letter from Ann Gordon about Jane New, 1829, Ann Gordon, document, State Records Authority of New South Wales

66 Susannah Watson’s Plait of Hair, c.1865, hair and ribbon, Courtesy of Babette Smith

67 Letter from Susannah Watson to her Daughter Mary Ann Birks, 1857, Susannah Watson, document, Dixson Library, State Library of New South Wales

68 Bonnet, 18–, black silk, Cascades Female Factory Historic Site

69 Colonial Cloth Samples from Hyde Park Barracks, Historic Houses Trust Collection.

70 Shadows of the Stone, 2008, Jenni Trezise, mixed media, Artist’s Collection

71 The Passage of Time, 2008, Narelle Munro, photographs, Artist’s Collection

72 Christening Gown, 2005, Christina Henri, photogram, Artist’s Collection

73 Response to Lace, 2008, Deb Walker, mixed media, Artist’s Collection
In this reference list, the following abbreviations have been used:

HRA Historical Records of Australia
HRNSW Historical Records of New South Wales
SRNSW State Records of New South Wales

WOMEN TRANSPORTED – MYTH AND REALITY
Gay Hendriksen
Curator
Parramatta Heritage Centre

7. HRA I, Vol.3 p.28
10. Gordon, Anne Weekly Return and Distribution of Prisoners and Children in the Female Factory, Parramatta from 27th February to 3rd March 1831, Colonial Secretary's Papers SRNSW
14. Hunter to Portland, 3 July HRA, Series 1, Vol.4, p.586
17. Marsden, Samuel Letter from Rev. Samuel Marsden to Governor Macquarie, 19th July 1815
20. Meredith Mrs C. Notes and Sketches of New South Wales During a Residence in that Colony from 1839 to1844, pp.162–163
22. Reid, Thomas Two Voyages to New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land. London, Longman, Hurst, Reas, Orme and Brown 1822, pp.244,245
23. Reid, Thomas Two Voyages to New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land. London, Longman, Hurst, Reas, Orme and Brown 1822, p.31
24. Fry, Elizabeth Letter from Elizabeth Fry to Samuel Marsden, 11th February 1820
25. Hayter, Kezia Elizabeth Diary Wednesday 9th February 1842, p.31
27. Marsden, Samuel Letter to Governor Macquarie, Parramatta, 19th July 1815
30. Mealmaker, George Dundee Address to the Friends of Liberty. Dundee, Berean Meeting-house, July 1793
32. Clapham, John Letter from John Clapham to Right Honbl. Lord Glenelg, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 18th June 1830, ML [No.100, of 7.7.38], p.2113
CONVICT WOMEN
IN THE FEMALE FACTORIES OF NEW SOUTH WALES
Dr Carol Liston
Associate Professor in History
School of Humanities and Languages
University of Western Sydney

62 Extracts of Log Book of Prince of Wales transport, HRNSW 2, p.405
Phillip to Sydney, 15 May 1788, HRNSW 1 Pt.2, p.127
Middleton to Nepean, 11 December 1789, HRNSW 1 Pt.2, p.35
Macquarie to Bathurst, 19 July 1820, HRA Vol.X p.318 ff
Convict Ships, Musters and Papers, SRNSW Reel 2417, 2/8242, f.183
Convict Ships, Musters and Papers, SRNSW Reel 2417, 2/8242, f.187
Convict Ships, Musters and Papers, SRNSW Reel 2421, 2/8257, f.258
Convict Ships, Musters and Papers, SRNSW Reel 2421, 2/8257, f.258
18 December 1827, Letter 27/11661 in SRNSW 4/1958. The ship was probably the Louisa.
Brisbane to Bathurst, 28 April 1823, HRA XI, p.75
Journal of George Thompson, Royal Admiral May 1792, HRNSW 2, p.796
Journal of George Thompson, Royal Admiral May 1792, HRNSW 2, p.795
Hunter to Duke of Portland, 18 November 1796, HRNSW 5, p.142;
Government and General Order, 29 August 1797, HRNSW 3, p.291
Government and General Order, 7 November 1798, HRNSW 3, pp.508–9
Government and General Order, 3 July 1799, HRNSW 3, pp.685–6;
Hunter to Portland, 30 September 1800, HRNSW 4, p.214
King to Hobart, 14 August 1804, HRNSW 5, p.426
King, Present State, 12 August 1806, HRNSW 6, p.151
King, Present State, 12 August 1806, HRNSW 6, p.151
King, Present State, 12 August 1806, HRNSW 6, p.151
Note by King, King to Hobart, 14 August 1804, HRNSW 5, p.426
King to Hobart, 14 August 1804, HRNSW 5, p.426, 449
Macquarie, List of persons holding Civil and Military Appointments, 30 April 1810, HRNSW 7, p.366;
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Dr Trudy Cowley
Female Factory Research Group

194  *HRA III*, 2 pp.290–292
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201  Rayner, Tony *Female Factory Female Convicts*. Dover: Esperance Press, 2004, p.117
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206  AOT, CSO 1/19/340, 4 December 1830 p.28
207  AOT, CSO 1/19/340, pp.64–66, D’Arcy to Burnett 31 January 1834
208  *The Independent*, 9 February 1830
209  *The Independent*, 25 May 1831 p.3 col.2
210  *The Independent*, 25 May 1831 p.2 col.4
211  Sophia was the daughter of First Fleeter Richard Morgan, the subject of a novel by Colleen McCulloch called *Morgan’s Run*.
212  Mary Hutchinson’s father, Francis Oakes, had been for many years the Superintendent at Parramatta Female Factory.
213  Lucy Frost’s booklet *Footsteps and Voices* provides an excellent history of Cascades Female Factory: Frost, Lucy *Footsteps and Voices: an Historical Look into the Cascades Female Factory*. Hobart: Female Factory Historic Site Ltd, 2004
214  AOT, CSO 1/365/8341
215  AOT, CSO 1/365/8341
217  AOT, CSO 22/50 No.208 pp.375–405
218  Adapted by Trudy Cowley from plans held at the Archives Office of Tasmania, PWD 266/748
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220  AOT, CSO 22/50 pp.281, 284
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226  AOT, MM 62/31 No.13859
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