CONVICT WOMEN
IN THE FEMALE FACTORIES OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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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 crimes, 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 descendants. 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 descendants 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 Jamis 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 Jamis 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 striped cotton), two petticoats (one grey baize and the other of drugged); 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 1826 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.  

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.  

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.

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). 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 housekeepers; 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.

Women were also at Toongabbie agricultural settlement where they worked as housekeepers, 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.
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.

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. 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.

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.

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. 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.

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.\[12\]

**MANAGING THE WOMEN IN THE OLD FACTORY**

In August 1803, Governor King appointed Scottish convict George Mealmaker to superintend a weaving establishment.\[13\] 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.\[14\] 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.\[15\]

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.\[16\]

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.\[17\]

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 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.\[18\]

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.\[19\]
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.\(^n\)

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.\(^m\)

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 \textit{tickets of leave} on arrival, thus avoiding expense to the government. The other women were sent to Parramatta 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 1 pm. 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.\(^n\) Magistrate William Cox suggested that the women preferred working in the Factory and sleeping in the town to assigned service.\(^m\)
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 barracks 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 barracks 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. They 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 Dumaresq) 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.\textsuperscript{166}

The building housed 490 women – the refuse of the English and Irish jails. The arrival of the \textit{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.\textsuperscript{166}

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.\textsuperscript{166}

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.\textsuperscript{149} 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.\textsuperscript{131} 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.\textsuperscript{131}

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.\textsuperscript{149}
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 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 manufactury 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. 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 £146.8.5. By 1832 tenders were called for businesses interested in employing the women to spin wool into yarn at the Factory.

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.

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.

**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.

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.

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.

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. Margaret Murphy was midwife until October 1833. 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. 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.
MISBEHAVIOUR AND PUNISHMENT IN THE FACTORY

Incidents of riot and major disturbance have been frequently cited as continuing proof of the uncontrollable 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 overcrowding. 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.⁹⁴

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.⁹⁵ 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.⁹⁶ 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 mistresses refused. Her sentence was remitted in recognition that her actions had been at considerable personal risk.⁹⁷

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.⁹⁸

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.⁹⁹

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.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Judge Roger Therry, Narrative of the Female Factory at the Cove of Botany, 1829.
⁹⁵ Wall, Women and Work, p. 69.
⁹⁶ Jarvis, Mary Ann, per Competitor, 1830.
⁹⁷ Jarvis, Mary Ann, per Competitor, 1830.
⁹⁸ Anderson, Dr., Narrative of a Visit to the New South Wales Colony, 1832, p. 8.
⁹⁹ Wall, Women and Work, p. 70.
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.\(^{15}\)

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 an air of determination, petitioned the Governor, arguing 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.\(^{16}\)

**GETTING OUT OF THE FACTORY**

**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.\(^{17}\) 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 a good batch from the assignable classes and forward them by van to Bathurst.\(^{18}\)

The authorities were concerned that masters properly supervised their assigned servants. Mary Garvey arrived on the *Elizabeth* and in early 1831 was assigned to Catherine MacElowen (McIlhoun) 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.\(^{19}\)

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.\(^{20}\)

In 1836 the police magistrate at Bong Bong sent a woman to the Factory to be identified because he believed she was illegally at large. Margaret Johnstone had arrived on the *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.\(^{21}\)
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.¹⁰⁹

MARRIAGE AND THE FACTORY

Convict women and marriage has been the subject of a number of studies.¹ⁱ⁰ Governor Darling found that The disposal of the women in an eligible manner, though most desirable is extremely perplexing and embarrassing.¹¹¹ Strategies were adopted to encourage marriage.

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.¹¹²

A formal announcement in the 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.¹¹³

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.¹¹⁴ 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.¹¹⁵ 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.
CHILDMREN 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

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. Darling reiterates that Newcastle was closed as a convict establishment in 1831.

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. 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.

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 Mary, the Pyramus, the Henry Wellesley and the Sir Charles Forbes were all sent within ten days of arrival in Sydney.
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.

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.

A resident matron, 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.

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.
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. 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. 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 MACQUARIE

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. 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.²⁹⁸

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.²⁹⁷ 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.²⁹⁹

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.²⁹⁸ 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.²⁹⁹

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 1833–1834; 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.¹⁰⁹

**MORETON BAY**

The need for remote places of punishment encouraged the decision to place a secondary 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.¹¹⁰

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 *Broadmeadow* 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.¹¹¹