

**INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF ELLEN PARKER AGED 22 YEARS, PER "SEA QUEEN"  
HELD AT THE CASCADES FEMALE FACTORY ON 13 FEB 1849**

**Archives Office of Tasmania, Inquest SC195-1-24-2028**

**Certificate of Verdict:**

An Inquisition indent taken for our Sovereign Lady the Queen at the House of Correction for Females known [as the] Cascades Factory near Hobart Town in the County of Buckingham within the Island of Van Diemen's Land this Thirteenth day of February in the Thirteenth year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lady Victoria by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland Queen Defender of the Faith before me Algernon Burdett Jones Esquire one of the Coroners of our said Lady the Queen for the said Island and its Dependencies on vies of the Body of Ellen Parker then and there lying dead upon the Oaths of Peter Dudgeons - Edward Prentis - Samuel Ridler - John Fenton - Henry Birch - William Graham and John Tigue - good and lawful men of the said Island and duly chosen and who being then and there duly sworn and charged to enquire for our said Lady the Queen when where how and after what manner the said Ellen Parker came to her death do upon their Oath say THAT the said Ellen Parker a Prisoner confined at the House of Correction for Females at the Cascades near Hobart Town in the Island aforesaid on the Twelfth day of February in the year aforesaid at the House of Correction aforesaid by the Visitation of God in a natural way - to wit of apoplexy - did Die.  
**[signed by all except Tigue, who makes a mark]**

**The Testimony of Witnesses:**

Information on Oath of witnesses taken this thirteenth day of February in the year of our Lord one Thousand Eight Hundred & forty nine at the House of Correction for Females at The Cascades near Hobart Town in the Island of Van Diemens Land before me Algernon Burdett Jones Esquire one of Her Majesty's Coroners for the said Island upon view of the Body of Ellen Parker then & there lying dead as follows -

To wit. ---

- 1) The information on Oath of **Esther McIntyre** who saith I am a Prisoner of the Crown undergoing a sentence of imprisonment & hard labour at the House of Correction for Females at the Cascades near Hobart Town & I am employed as a yard's woman at the range of the separate apartments that are under the charge of Mr Livingston. It is a part of my duty to assist in giving the women confined in the separate apartments their meals. I have this day seen the Body of Ellen Parker now lying dead in a separate apartment which is under the charge of Mr Livingston. I saw deceased in the same apartment yesterday morning -- she was then alive & quite well - I served her with her dinner about a quarter past 12 o'clock yesterday - she had her stool upward & was sitting on it looking out of the opening over the door - she got down - I then gave her, her dinner -- and she said "thank you" - I then went & served other women - and returned in about ten minutes to "Parkers" apartment with her soup - I found deceased lying on her face on the floor.

I observed that the side of her ear, was black - and I then got frightened and I called out for assistance - I opened the door of the next apartment and let out

the woman who was in it who is named "Little" - I then sent the helper for Mrs Livingston -- who ran for Mrs Hutchinson the Matron - Mrs Hutchinson came immediately. Parker appeared to me to be dead when I first saw her lying on the floor -- she was lying with her limbs straight out - her hands were by her side - I did not touch her - I had served her with her breakfast yesterday morning & with water twice between Breakfast & Dinner time -- Deceased had not been more than a few days in the apartment and appeared to be quite well when she first went into the apartment.

Deceased did not complain of being ill at all yesterday morning - there was nothing on the floor that I saw -- Deceased dinner that I gave her consisted of a piece of mutton and potatoes. I gave her, her allowance of bread given at Breakfast time.

Deceased refused to go into her cell after chapel on Sunday last. There was no violence used to put her in. Mr Livingston asked her to go in -- she said she would not go into that cell. Mr Livingston told her he would allow her to go into any cell she liked - she said "No" - she wanted to go into a dungeon where she could not see anything. Mrs Hutchinson - who was with her for some time & then coaxed her to go in -- Deceased was a woman of violent temper - and was inclined not to obey any orders that were given her.

[Esther McIntyre signs her sworn testimony with an "X"]

- 2) The Information on Oath of **Mary Ann Little** who saith I am a prisoner of Crown confined in the House of Correction for Females at the Cascades near Hobart Town - I have this day seen the Body of Ellen Parker now lying dead - I saw it in one of the separate apartments - I was confined in the separate apartment yesterday next to the one that deceased was in -- she was talking the whole morning in a childish manner - I remember when the yardswoman brought us our dinners - The Deceased spoke to me after I had got my dinner - About ten minutes elapsed from the time the yardswoman gave me my dinner till she came with the soup -- Deceased got her dinner at the same time as myself - When the yardswoman McIntyre came with the soup she screamed and said Parker was dead - she then opened my apartment & I went into Parker's -- I saw Parker lying on the floor with her mouth wide open and her tongue out - her face was quite black. I was frightened at first & ran out - but tuned back & tried to lift her -- I felt her right wrist & could perceive her pulse a little - I then told McIntyre to call Mrs Livingston which she did - I did not hear any noise in "Parkers" apartment after she got her dinner - and I could hear if she moved in her cell.

[Mary Ann Little signs her sworn testimony with an "X"]

- 3) The Information on Oath of **Mary Livingstone** who saith, I am the wife of Gilbert Livingstone, and am employed with him in superintending No 2 range of separate apartments in the House of Correction for Females at the Cascades near Hobart Town - I have this day seen the body of Ellen Parker lying dead in one of the separate apartments under my husbands & my charge - She was a Prisoner of the Crown undergoing a sentence of Imprisonment with hard labour in the House of Correction. She was placed

in the apartment on Wednesday last on the same day she was received into the House of Correction -- she complained of being ill on Thursday & Friday last. She saw the medical officer on Friday last. She complained again of being ill on Saturday and had a fit on Sunday last, she was taken out of the chapel on Sunday on account of it, she was a bad tempered woman and worked herself into fits when annoyed. She had a memorial sent in to the Government to be permitted to marry and she heard on the Sunday that permission had been granted, and having a long sentence, it caused her to work herself into the fit.

She was under my charge once before, for nearly twelve months -- she was at time violent in her temper but never had any fits then -- she was very childish and talkative yesterday morning & kept shouting to the other women. By shouting I mean calling to the other women & telling them what she was doing and what she had done, but knowing that she was childish & fearing she would become violent I did not take so much notice of her - I was afraid she would become violent because she had threatened to break her door on the Sunday afternoon.

About five minutes after the meat & vegetables had been served out at dinner time yesterday, Esther McIntyre called me, and I went to the apartment where Parker was & saw her lying on the floor on her face - she was quite black in the face & appeared to me to be dead - I went immediately for Mrs Hutchinson & sent the nurse to Parker as I passed the Hospital.

Mrs Hutchinson came with me - The nurse had lifted up Parker's head a little, and her face had become white - Mrs Hutchinson asked where Parker's dinner was - I looked at her dish & found in it nothing but the skins of potatoes which had been given to her, I found a small piece of meat on the floor near the door, it was marked as if it had been bitten, I found a piece of bread on the shelf of the apartment which was marked as if a piece had recently been bitten out of it - Mrs Hutchinson put her finger in Parker's mouth to see if she had been choked - & said that she felt something in her throat - There could be nothing done for her - She was quite dead.

Parker did her work yesterday morning -- she stitched two or three wristbands of boys shirts.

Mary Livingstone signs her sworn testimony with an "X"]

- 4) The Information on Oath of **William Secombe** who saith I am a legally qualified medical Practitioner and Colonial Surgeon in Medical charge of the House of Correction for Females at The Cascades near Hobart Town. I have this day seen the Body of Ellen Parker lying dead in the separate apartments under Mr Livingstone's charge - I have this day performed a Post Mortem Examination of her body - There were no marks of violence on it except a very slight superficial bruise on the left cheek as if she had fallen on it. I found all the viscera perfectly healthy - the stomach was full of food which had apparently not been swallowed long consisting of potatoes & meat - On examining the brain I found the vessels very turgid with dark blood, and on removing the brain itself from the skull I found about two table spoonfuls of

dark coloured blood at the base of the cerebrum on the right side. The brain itself appeared perfectly healthy - I am of opinion that the deceased's death was caused by the effusion of the two table spoonfuls of blood - and that her death arose from natural causes - I found a little frothy mucus in the throat but no disease [sic] in the brain to account for her having fits. Fits may be produced by passion or any violent excitement --

I saw the deceased on Friday last and gave her some aperient medicine She said she wanted some aperients medicine and I gave her some [sic] - she appeared to me to be quite well and spoke quietly & rationally - I believe her death to have arisen from apoplexy. I could not find anything to account for her death except what I have described. I do not think she was a subject to be admitted into Hospital on Sunday last.

[signed] William Seccombe, Colonial Surgeon

(transcription by Lucy Frost, 17 July 2013)