

General remarks of Surgeon-Superintendent Peter Leonard.  
Voyage of the Convict ship, Atwick to Hobart Town. 1837-1838

The following numbers of Convicts, Free Women and children were embarked on board the "Atwick" at Woolwich in parties from different localities in the Country and at various times between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> September, 1837 – viz:

Convicts	151
Free Women	5
Convict Children	18
Free W Children	9
Total	183

One death occurred during the Voyage and one Birth making the total landed at Hobart Town on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> January 1838 the same in point of number as embarked at Woolwich – viz: 183.

The general condition of the Convicts and others when received on board was favourable, and their general health tolerably good, but there were some whose Persons were in a most filthy condition and others whose strength had been increasingly impaired by dissipation and previous Disease. Care was taken to have the former thoroughly cleaned and some attention was required during the voyage in supporting the enfeebled constitutions of the latter. The only Person who died was a Case of this description – of intemperate habits and irregular mode of life, she (Case 2) had for a long period suffered from the effects of her irregularities when on shore, and, after repeated attacks of Intermittent Fever, ultimately fell a victim to that species of apoplexia dependent upon nervous and vascular debility which occurs in individuals whose constitutions have been weakened by intemperance.

The means used for the Preservation of Health were such, I believe, as are very generally adopted – viz – attention to cleanliness and dryness in the Prison – free ventilation there - bodily exercise and constant mental employment on Deck if the weather would at all permit. Personal cleanliness and a constant attention to muster below immediately there was a probability of a shower, or, of sprays coming on board so that the person and clothing should, like everything else below, be kept thoroughly dry.

The Prison was opened at Sunrise, the bedding brought on deck, shaken and stored in the [...] – each Prisoner was then mustered to wash her Person and during the warmer weather to bathe, a screen being thrown around the Bathing Tubs placed on the Quarter Deck for that purpose. The Prison deck was at the same time cleaned with stones and sand. After this breakfast was served at 8 o'clock. During the Forenoon such of the Convicts as could not read or write were engaged at School under some of the best educated amongst themselves who were appointed as Schoolmistresses. The others were employed at Needlework. Dinner was served at noon. The convicts were mustered to Wine a short time before dinner and to Lime juice immediately after it. One glass of wine was allowed to each and the allowance of Lime juice and Sugar for each was mixed with Water so as to form half a Pint of Sherbet. To prevent a possibility of drunkenness by disposing of, or giving away the Wine, each individual was impelled to drink it in passing muster, and in like manner they were compelled

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to drink the sherbet that it might not be wasted or misapplied, but that each might experience its full benefit in the prevention of scurvy.

During these daily musters a scrutiny of their [Heads] and Clothing took place to ascertain their state of Health and their attention to personal cleanliness and to keeping their clothes in good repair.

During the afternoon the Convicts were employed at School or at Needlework as in the earlier part of the day. Tea was served at 4pm – after which the Bedding was taken below. Two hours in the evening were then devoted to dancing and various innocent amusements for the sake of exercise. Immediately after Sunset all were mustered below and locked up for the night.

Such is an outline of the daily arrangement and methods adopted for the preservation of health and order. These were never varied excepting during bad weather when it was sometimes impossible to have the whole of the Prisoners on Deck or to have the meals cooked exactly at the usual hours.

The Prison Deck, Water Closets, and Hospital were sprinkled with Chloride of Lime three times a week generally at night after Prisoners had returned to bed – as a means of fumigation. Every facility was afforded the Convicts by numerous washing days to have their inner clothing kept at all times thoroughly clean. They were compelled to wear the clothing supplied by Government while every article of Private clothing which they possessed was packed up and stowed away in the Hold so that the Prison might be kept clear and circulation of air unimpeded. Windsails were directed down the Hatchways during the night and swing stoves containing coke were frequently kept burning in the Prison and Hospital during the day when the weather was damp.

The case of Scorbutus (8) detailed in this Journal is worthy of notice as an instance of the singular simulation of other diseases which Scorbutus not uncommonly exhibits, more particularly in the earlier stages. The Case shows how cautious it is necessary to be in the Treatment of Diseases occurring in crowded ships, during long voyages. There is little doubt in my mind that on board Prison Ships the greater part of the Cases of Disease which happen, - in balance their form may be whether as Ophthalmia, Dysenturia, Phthisis or Fever & C – are more or less dependent on or connected with a Scorbutic tendency and in many instances, are in fact, Scorbutus itself assuming the form of one or other of these.

In the present instance the thoracic pain was severe and the respiration considerably affected but the pale countenance and soft pulse particularly [presented]. The abstraction of Blood. Counter irritation by means of Tartar Emetic internally and a Blister over the seat of pain was performed and certainly relieved the patient of the assumed Pleuritic symptoms chiefly by the former cleansing the Alimentary Canal of its contents. Had the patient been bled the chances of her recovery would, in my opinion, have been greatly lessened – if not altogether prevented. It was not until the eighth day after she was placed on the sick list that the strongly marked symptoms peculiar to Scorbutus made their appearance – viz – the tender gums and discoloured patches on the extremities. For some days previous to the occurrence of these

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more decided symptoms of Scorbutus, and subsequent to the disappearance of those which simulated Pleusitis, a person well conversant with Sea Scurvy might have suspected the real nature of the Disease from the excessive sense of weakness, the hurried pulse on exertion, the pallid countenance, foetid breath and dark coloured defaecations – but no one ill used to being presented with the freaks of this singular malady could have done so.

It is remarkable that this was the only case of the Disease which made its appearance during the voyage, and that there was not found a tendency to it or the slightest symptoms of it in any other Individual on board. Indeed the occurrence of illness of any kind amongst the persons embarked was very infrequent. With the exception of the two individuals affected with rheumatism and ophthalmia who were sent to Hospital in Hobart Town, all were landed in excellent health.

[signed] P. Leonard  
Surgeon Superintendent.