

## What embarkation lists and prison registers can tell us about what female convicts left behind.

In 1841, 180 female convicts arrived from England on board the *Rajah*. When they were embarked at Woolwich, the authorities recorded information about the women, including trade. For 60 per cent of the women, no trade was recorded. One of these female convicts was sixteen-year-old Nancey Robertson. At her trial in Inverness for stealing a watch, Nancey stated she travelled the country with her family, her father being a licensed hawker. She was not employed and so was recorded as having no trade.

Of the 72 *Rajah* convicts with trades, twenty were servants, ten were labourers and there were between one and four women with the following trades:

*dress maker; cotton mill piecer; sewer; weaver; bonnet maker; factory worker; hawker; huckster; mill worker; prostitute; steam loom weaver; actress; cleaner; clipper; frame tenter; muslin sewer; reeler; seamstress; shawl fringer; spinning mill worker; straw hat maker; tramp; travelling lace seller; umbrella maker; vagrant; washer woman; and yarn winder.*

It can be argued, of course, that prostitute, vagrant and tramp are not necessarily trades, though they were recorded as such on the embarkation list.

Trades for convicts were recorded again on arrival in Van Diemen's Land. Of the embarkation trades for the *Rajah* convicts, the only ones recorded upon arrival were servant, dress maker, straw bonnet maker, and washer woman. It seems there was no call for steam loom weavers, factory or mill workers, yarn winders or travelling lace sellers in Van Diemen's Land.

Instead, the *Rajah* convicts re-invented themselves on the voyage out, leaving the trades of a life in industrial Britain behind and adopting new trades aboard ship. By the time they arrived in Hobart, besides being servants, dress makers and washer women, the convicts had developed skills as cooks, country or farm servants, dairy maids, nurses, house maids, kitchen maids, laundry maids, needlewomen, and nurse maids – all trades suited to the households in which these women would be assigned in Van Diemen's Land. Sewing skills at least were learnt by a number of the *Rajah* convicts during the voyage under the tuition of Matron Kezia Hayter. The *Rajah* Quilt is an example of their work. Mary Ann Smith may have been one of these women – described as a huckster, an unskilled trade, on the embarkation list, her trade was given as tailoress and dressmaker upon arrival in Hobart.

Nancey Robertson (mentioned earlier) was described as a housemaid by the time she arrived in Hobart – one can only wonder how a girl who had lived with her family travelling the country, followed by time spent in gaol and on board ship, could have gained experience as a housemaid! However, the change in occupation from travelling lace seller to cook and housemaid makes more sense for 54-year-old widow Sarah Dennerley. Sarah probably had enough life experience to be described as a cook and housemaid upon arrival in Hobart.

There were no *Rajah* convicts described as cooks on the embarkation list, however, by the time they arrived in Van Diemen's Land, about fifty of the women were described as having some cooking skill. It is possible that these women were experienced cooks but had never been in paid work as cooks, and others improved their cooking skills in the role of mess women on the voyage.

The trades and occupations in which female convicts were employed in industrialised Britain did not easily transfer to Van Diemen's Land, but life experience did transfer. Settlers wanted domestic servants not factory workers, hucksters or prostitutes. Skills developed as house wives and mothers were useful to colonial employers, though not all transportees, especially the young single transportees, had the necessary life experience.

Was this change in employment skills also the case for female convicts transported from Ireland? Ireland was basically still an agrarian society, like Van Diemen's Land, at the time most women were transported from there. Did their workforce skills more easily transfer to colonial life?

The Grangegorman Prison registers provide trades for female convicts at the time they were admitted to the Depot, in preparation for embarkation on convict ships. Of the 3,133 female convicts who passed through Grangegorman Depot prior to transportation, 65 per cent were recorded as having no trade – a similar proportion to the 60 per cent of *Rajah* convicts with no trade recorded upon embarkation.

Of the remaining 35 per cent of women admitted to Grangegorman Depot, the majority (730) were recorded as servants. There were 74 plain workers (plain needleworkers), 48 spinners, 39 dress makers, 26 labourers, 19 dealers, 11 farm servants and 10 bonnet makers (see Table 1). All 51 other trades mentioned numbered less than ten female convicts.

<b>Trade</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
servant	730	67.2
plain [needle] worker	74	6.8
spinster / spinner	48	4.4

dress maker	39	3.6
labourer	26	2.4
dealer	19	1.7
farm servant	11	1.0
bonnet maker	10	0.9

Table 1: Main trades of Grangegorman Prisoners

Of these 59 trades, only eighteen were not recorded as trades for these women upon arrival in Van Diemen's Land (see slide):

*mill worker; house keeper; peasant; satin stitcher; broker; weaver; cotton weaver; farrier; flax dresser; flax spinner; linen weaver; matron; mill reeler; pin maker; shop keeper; stall keeper; tambour worker; yarn reeler.*

Once again, there was no call in the colony for women with trades related to cloth manufacture. And as with the *Rajah* convicts, by the time the Irish female convicts arrived in Hobart, they had all gained trades, with the majority of them being listed on arrival as housemaids (28%) and country servants (26%) (see Table 2). Some of this skill acquisition may have been learnt in Grangegorman Depot and some may have been developed aboard ship, but the trades stated on arrival may also simply have been life experience skills the women brought with them.

<b>Trade on Arrival</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
house maid	1,254	27.9
country servant	1,183	26.4
laundress	399	8.9
nurse maid	257	5.7
house servant	234	5.2
farm servant	169	3.8
nurse girl	147	3.3
needle woman	135	3.0
cook	106	2.4
kitchen maid	103	2.3
dress maker	54	1.2
dairy maid	45	1.0

Table 2: Main trades of Grangegorman Prisoners on arrival in Van Diemen's Land

Thirteen-year-old Judith Beaky was described as having no trade when she was admitted to Grangegorman Depot in March 1849, but was described as a nursemaid when she arrived in Van Diemen's Land on the *Australasia* six months later. It may be that she had some experience nursing her two brothers and two sisters, but this was not considered a trade by the authorities at Grangegorman because it was not paid work.

Both Mary Boyde and Mary Murphy, also transported on the *Australasia*, were described at Grangegorman Depot as mill workers, but described as housemaids upon arrival in Hobart. There was far more call for housemaids than mill workers in the colony.

So, once again, the trades on arrival were those needed in the households of Van Diemen's Land. However, in comparison to the *Rajah* convicts from Britain, the majority of the trades of the Irish female convicts were 'brought with them' to Van Diemen's Land. Trades stated on arrival most probably also derived from convict women's experience of domestic life. They may not have been employed as a cook or a dairy maid in Ireland, but their life experience would have provided them with many of these domestic skills.

The Grangegorman Prison registers tell us about other things the Irish female convicts left behind and brought with them. Grangegorman was divided into two sections – the Depot and the Prison. Women admitted to the Depot were being prepared for transportation.

The registers for the period 1842 to 1852 contain records for 3,593 women –89.5% (or 3,216) of these women were transported. What happened to the women left behind?

Of the 376 women who were admitted to Grangegorman Depot but not transported, 53.7% were sent back to gaol, usually to the county gaol from which they were transferred to Grangegorman.

**[Slide 8 – Grangegorman prisoners left behind]**

<b>How Disposed Of</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
sent back to gaol	202	53.7
pardoned	54	14.4
died	50	13.3
transferred	34	9.0
sent to lunatic asylum	14	3.7
sentence commuted	13	3.5
discharged	6	1.6
escaped	1	0.3
unknown	2	0.5

Table 3: Grangegorman Prisoners left behind

The remainder were pardoned, had their sentences commuted, were discharged or transferred, others died, one escaped, and a few were sent to the lunatic asylum (see Table 3). The majority of those pardoned were admitted to Grangegorman Depot towards the end of the transportation period.

The average age of the convicts admitted to Grangegorman Depot was 27.3 years. However, the average age of the convicts transported from Grangegorman Depot was 26.4 years, and the average age of the convicts left behind was 35.2 years. The oldest woman to be admitted to Grangegorman Depot was 73-year-old Judith Keogh. She was admitted

in March 1849 but sent back to Clare County Gaol in August the following year. In comparison, twelve-year-old Mary Ryan and Mary Smith were transported on the *John Calvin* and *Waverley*, respectively. This indicates that the authorities, which included the Surgeon Superintendent of the transport ship, were more likely to select healthy women of child-bearing age for transportation.

<b>How Disposed Of</b>	<b>Average Age</b>	<b>Count</b>
sent back to gaol	38.7	202
pardoned	33.0	54
died	28.7	50
transferred	28.4	34
sent to lunatic asylum	33.2	14
sentence commuted	32.8	13
discharged	40.7	6
escaped	24.0	1
<b>Overall</b>	<b>35.2</b>	<b>374</b>

Table 4: Grangegorman Prisoners left behind

Those sent back to their county gaol, pardoned, sent to a lunatic asylum, discharged or had their sentence commuted were much older, on average, than those transported to Van Diemen's Land (see Table 4). However, this difference in average age was less pronounced for those women with children. Sixteen per cent (or 507) of the women transported from Grangegorman had children with them and eighteen per cent (or 69) of the women left behind were admitted to Grangegorman with children.

The average age of women transported with children was 32.1, whereas the average age of women left behind with children was 33.5. This indicates that older women with children were more likely to be transported than older women without children. Sixty-year-old Johanna Murphy was transported on the *Blackfriar* in 1851 bringing with her eleven-year-old daughter Eliza Boyne.

Marital status also played a role in who was transported and who was left behind. Single women were more likely to be transported, and married or widowed women were more likely to be left behind (see Table 5).

<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Transported %</b>	<b>Left Behind %</b>
single	73.4	47.4
married	18.5	33.3
widow	8.2	19.2

Table 5: Marital status of Grangegorman prisoners

However, if the women had children admitted with them to Grangegorman Depot, then the opposite was the case – single women with children were less likely to be transported

than single women without children, and married and widowed women with children were more likely to be transported than those without children (see Table 6).

<b>Percentage of Convicts</b>	<b>Single</b>	<b>Married</b>	<b>Widow</b>
Transported	73.4	18.5	8.2
transported with children	7.2	41.9	35.0
transported without children	92.8	58.1	65.0
Left Behind	47.4	33.3	19.2
left behind with children	11.4	28.5	19.7
left behind without children	88.6	71.5	80.3

Table 6: Marital status of Grangegorman prisoners with and without children

Many of the women transported, both from Ireland and on the *Rajah*, were accompanied by relatives, friends and partners in crime. Johanna Murphy (mentioned above), was transported with her 36-year-old sister, Eliza Ryan, as well as her having her daughter on board.

However, female convicts also left behind relatives, friends and partners in crime. For example, Susan Hamilton and her daughters Jane Allen Hamilton and Elizabeth Hamilton were tried at Londonderry in March 1848 for stealing hens, geese and turkeys. They were admitted to Grangegorman Depot a month later, but Jane Allen was sent back to the county gaol just two months after admission whereas mother Susan and daughter Elizabeth sailed on the *Lord Auckland* in October 1848. There is no note on the Grangegorman Prison register as to why nineteen-year-old Jane Allen was sent back to the county gaol – it may be that she was pardoned or had her sentence commuted.

Mary Rooney, for example, was sent back from Grangegorman Depot to Louth County Gaol because her sentence was commuted; and 33-year-old Bridget Burke was given a free pardon and sent home on 9 September 1850. Bridget was tried at Waterford on 5 January 1849 for receiving stolen goods and admitted to Grangegorman Depot on 25 February 1849. Tried and transferred from Waterford County Gaol to Grangegorman Depot with Bridget were sixty-year-old Catherine Burke (possibly a relation) and 25-year-old Ellen Manley, both charged with larceny, and thirty-year-old Mary Costello, also charged with receiving stolen goods. Both Catherine and Ellen were sent back to the county gaol, but Mary was transported on the *Australasia*. It is not recorded if Catherine and Ellen were also pardoned.

Mother and daughter, 42-year-old widow Ellen Burke and fourteen-year-old Mary Burke, were tried together at Waterford City for stealing bed clothes and admitted to Grangegorman Depot on 17 April 1848. Mary died at Grangegorman just thirteen days later. Ellen was transported on the *Kinnear* sailing from Dublin the following month.

When Ellen arrived in Van Diemen's Land she did not mention a daughter, only a husband previously transported and a brother and sister left behind.

In summation, many of the trades and occupations of the female convicts in Britain and Ireland were not transferrable to Van Diemen's Land, particularly those associated with cloth manufacture. However, many of their skills developed through life experience as mothers, daughters and house wives were transferrable to an agrarian based colonial society. This was particularly true for the Irish convicts. And these Irish women were more likely to be transported if they were young and single. These women both left behind and brought with them children, relatives, friends and partners in crime.