Voyage of the 'Gilbert Henderson'

Female Convict Transport
Sailed from Woolwich - 14 Dec 1839
Arr. VDL, Hobart - 24 April 1840

Presentation to Female Convict Research Centre autumn seminar 2014
Dr Raelene Mibus
Bateson:

- Bark rig, 517 tons, built in Sunderland, 1837,
- Captain: James Tweedie
- Surgeon Superintendent: Sir John Hamett
- passage in 132 days
- People transport
- Shipwrecked in 1847

• **Embarked**: 185 females, 24 Children
Shipwrecked 1847 Algoa Bay (now Port Elizabeth)

Dept Woolwich 14 Dec 1839

Fayal, Portugal (Azores) to take on fresh supplies

Table Bay, Cape Town to take on fresh supplies

Arrived Hobart 24 April 1840, in fair weather & northerly wind
Surgeon’s journal

Surgeon Superintendent’s medical & surgical journal, 54 pp.:

- Sick list
- Remarks on deaths: 1 adult, 1 infant
- Medical cases - e.g. Eliza Hall, Mary O’Connor
- General remarks - weekly routines, medical practices, conditions at sea
Personal Account of Voyage

- ca. 25 years after event!
- Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine, 1866
- Midshipman, ‘M.’
- 28 crew
- 6 passengers
- Description of daily routine & events
Life on board the ‘Gilbert Henderson’

Routine of order, ship’s discipline & cleanliness:
• life in a day
• Sunday observances
• weekly work roster
System of minor government

- monitors
- governesses
- classes
- freedoms
- provisions – coarse stuff, tracts, books, bibles
Punishments

‘few and far from severe’

- rations withheld – mildest and most freq.
- sent below
- wooden box
- cropping of the hair
‘The benevolent Doctor’
Sir John Hamett

- High ranking naval officer, experienced
- benevolent

Provided well for his charges:
- provisions
- clean, wholesome envt.
- attended the sick
- made allowances consistent with ship's discipline, examples...
‘The benevolent Doctor’
Sir John Hamett

Examples:
- girl punished & made an example
- interaction between fem. convicts & seamen
- practical joke

Benefits
Arrival in Hobart

- ‘fine day, northerly wind’
- processing the fem. convicts:
  - Customs officer on board
  - Where to next? ‘a painful leave-taking’
    - Direct assignment
    - House of correction
    - Transshipped
Conclusions

• ‘Uneventful’ it was not!
• women well looked after > low death rate
• friendship & learning
  ‘closest thing to family in their new homeland’

Due to - commanding staff
  - improving conditions
  - ship’s build