

ANN GREEN

(*America*, 1831)

by

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There were two female prisoners named Ann GREEN aboard the convict ship *America* (2) when it reached Hobart on 9 May 1831 and their histories have sometimes been confused. This present article concerns the Ann Green who was given Identifier (2). Upon arrival, she was allocated Police No. 105 and is listed as I.D. 1359 in the Female Convicts Research Centre (FCRC) database.¹

On 15 July 1830, Green had been charged with ‘stealing from the person’ the sum of £263, a huge amount of money at that time. Her husband, William GREEN, had been tried with her for the same offence.²

At the trial at the York Quarter Sessions at Kingston-upon-Hull, the prosecutor, Mr. William SENIOR, who was the licensee of the London Tavern in Queen Street in that town, told the court that, on the evening of 27 May that year, he had left the residence of an associate at about eleven o’clock to walk to his own home. He was carrying a large sum of money in a leather purse which he had carefully placed in the left-hand pocket of his breeches. As he walked home, Mrs. Green had come out of a dark lane and seized him by the collar, demanding that he give her some gin. In the brief struggle which ensued, the woman had torn his waistcoat and shirt - and buttons had been ripped even from his under-garments. Eventually, he had broken free and Green had run off. It was not until he reached home that he had realised that his purse was missing. He had contacted the local watchmen immediately and told them that he had recognised the woman, whom he knew as Mrs. BRUCE (thought to be the name of her ex-husband).³ She had been a customer at his inn and he knew her to have been ‘on the town’ (that is, a prostitute) for fifteen years. He had then accompanied the watchmen as they searched for the woman for two or three hours without success.

Constable Daniel TAYLOR told the court that he had continued the search in the following days, tracing Ann Green and her husband through neighbouring towns and villages until he found them in a public house at Nottingham. He had apprehended them at once, and a search revealed that both were carrying large amounts of money. William Green’s cash was in his coat pockets while his wife’s was secreted between the inner and outer lining of her stays. Taylor said that Senior

¹ CON40-1-3, Image 263.

² Trial report: *Hull Packet*, 20 July 1830 via FCRC database.

³ No marriage between Green and Bruce has yet been located.

was able to identify that money as his because previously he had taken down the serial numbers of the stolen notes. There were also some unique coins that he knew had been in his purse.

Asked if they had anything to say in their own defence, William Green said that he knew nothing of what his wife had done. Ann Green, however, looked directly at Senior and asked him whether he could say truthfully that it was she who had attacked him – but, before he could answer, the judge intervened, telling her that Senior had already told the court that it was she who had robbed him.

Husband and wife were both found guilty. Each was sentenced to seven years transportation.

A newspaper report of the trial described William Green as ‘a mechanic’ (that is, a labourer) but a ‘respectable-looking man’. Ann Green on the other hand, was described as ‘a disgusting object’, the report noting that she had kept her handkerchief to her face throughout the proceedings. The report concluded with this remark: ‘She is, we are informed, in a miserable state from the effects of a loathsome disease.’⁴

William Green was put aboard the convict vessel *Red Rover* which left Sheerness on 24 October 1830 and reached Hobart on 26 March the following year. His conduct record shows that he offended only once in the colony. On 17 August 1831, he was found in the Rose and Crown Inn and was unfit for work that afternoon. As punishment, he spent the next week on the tread mill.⁵

Ann Green did not leave England until 6 January 1831. After the trial, she had been kept in gaol, where her behaviour had been described as ‘bad’, until she was embarked on *America* (2) which reached Hobart on 9 May.⁶

Upon arrival, she was described as being forty years old and married with two children. She stated that she had been born at Chesterfield, Coventry, in West Midlands County, England. She was five feet and a quarter of an inch (about 153cms) tall, with reddish-brown hair, a perpendicular forehead, low brows and blue eyes. Her face was ‘furrowed’. She had a ‘large, depressed’ mouth from which several front teeth had been lost. She said that she was a house servant, needlewoman and plain cook and that she could also wash and iron. She was a Protestant. She could read and write.

Interestingly, the ship’s surgeon reported that her health had been ‘good’ throughout the voyage; there was no mention of the ‘loathsome disease’ which had been referred to in the newspaper.⁷

It was also noted in Ann’s convict documents that, before her conviction for the theft of the money from Mr. Senior, she had been charged – as Mrs. Bruce - with a similar theft. In 1829, she

⁴ Report: *Hull Packet*, 20 July 1830 via FCRC database.

⁵ CON31/1/16, Image 52.

⁶ CON 40-1-3, Image 263.

⁷ CON 40-1-3, Image 263.

had been accused of stealing a leather wallet from a Mr. EASTWOOD, a waterman, of Brotherton, England, but on that occasion she had been acquitted.⁸

Shortly after her arrival in Van Diemens Land (VDL), Ann was assigned to thirty-four year-old Mrs. Sarah BROMLEY, whose home, 'Montfort Cottage' was at Hamilton, about twenty-eight miles (45 kms) northwest of Hobart.⁹ Sarah BENNETT, a prisoner who had also arrived on *America* (2), accompanied Green to 'Montfort Cottage'. Bennett had been assigned to Mr. George STEELE, Mrs. Bromley's twenty-three year-old son-in-law, who also lived there.¹⁰

Neither of the convict women enjoyed being there. On 24 October 1831, only about six months after being assigned there as servants, both absconded, fleeing to the neighbouring town of Bothwell, where they complained to the Police Magistrate, Mr. D'Arcy WENTWORTH, J.P., that 'Montfort Cottage' was a 'debauched house' and a 'most improper place' in which to live.¹¹

Just two years earlier, Mrs. Bromley's husband, Dr. Edward Foord BROMLEY, had gone off to England and had not yet returned. He had left the colony in disgrace. Between 1820 and 1824, he had served as treasurer of the colony but had been dismissed from his post when it was discovered that the staggering sum of £8,500 was missing from the treasury coffers. Although he had been absolved of the theft himself, he had been held responsible for the loss of the money because he was supposed to be safe-guarding it. The authorities had insisted that he find the means to make good the loss. In 1829, he had managed to persuade the authorities to allow him to return to England where he hoped to be able to borrow money from his family to make restoration.¹²

Unable to manage her farm alone, and not knowing when her husband would return from England, Mrs. Bromley had invited her step-daughter Eliza Henrietta (Bromley) STEELE, the daughter of Dr. Bromley by an earlier marriage, and her husband, George, to live in her home. Mrs. Bromley was pleased to have George Steele there as her farm manager.

At Bothwell, Police Magistrate Wentworth took sworn depositions from Green and Bennett. Green's deposition read:

Island of Van Diemen's Land (Police)

Ann Green, Sworn, Saith – I am assigned servant of Mrs. Bromley at the Lower Clyde. I have been nearly six months in Mrs. Bromley's house and altho' I

⁸ *Hull Packet*, 18 August 1829 and 27 October 1829.

⁹ CON 40-1-3, Image 263.

¹⁰ Steele-Bromley marriage: RGD36/1523/1830, New Norfolk.

¹¹ TAHO CSO1/1/1/298, File 7250.

¹² For a full account of the Bromley story, see Bradmore, D.J. (2012). *Dr. Edward Foord Bromley (1776-1836): Surgeon, Civil Servant and Magistrate, Van Diemen's Land*. Melbourne: Published by the author.

have twice asked for Aprons and Stockings she has always told me she had none to give me, and once she told me to ask Mr. Steele for them.

I have only had one pair of boots since I have been in Mrs. Bromley's house.

Mr. Steele is in the habit of making use of very abusive language to me as well as to the other servants. He never can speak to a servant without making use of very improper language. In fact, it is not a fit place for any woman to stop who has any wish to reform her character. I am compelled on Sundays to do needlework and that is the only day that Mrs. Bromley will allow me to bake.

I have witnessed a most improper scene between Mr. Steele and Mrs. Bromley and I am afraid from the quantity of Mercury that she is taking (she has been twice in a salivation in the last month) that she is laying violent hands on herself and that I am in danger of being brought to a Criminal Court.

It is altogether, I consider, a debauched house and most improper place for a woman to stop in.

[Signed]: Ann Green.

Taken and Sworn before me

This 24th day of October 1831.

[Signed]: D. Wentworth, J.P. ¹³

Bennett's deposition fully supported Green's statement. She claimed that on one occasion she had seen Steele in bed with Mrs. Bromley when Steele's wife, Eliza, was in the next room. More than once, she stated, she had seen Steele lying on the sofa with Mrs. Bromley while Eliza and her children were in the same room. She added that Steele had once tried to molest her.¹⁴

Wentworth was disinclined to believe Green and Bennett. A very experienced official, he was well aware that convicts often made false accusations against their masters and mistresses in order to be taken away from situations which they were not enjoying for one reason or another. But, despite his misgivings, Wentworth did not send the convict women back to 'Montfort Cottage', as he was quite entitled to do. Rather, he returned them to Hobart to await assignment elsewhere. At the same time, he sent one of his constables to 'Montfort Cottage' to ask Mrs. Bromley what she had to say about all of this – and, more significantly, he reported the complaints of the women to the lieutenant-governor of the colony, George ARTHUR, at

¹³ TAHO CSO1/1/1/298, File 7250.

¹⁴ TAHO CSO1/1/1/298, File 7250.

Hobart.¹⁵ As a result of his enquiries, Arthur forbade Mrs. Bromley to have assigned servants, male or female - in her home or on her property - for some years.¹⁶

As it happens, Green and Bennett were correct in their assessment of the situation at 'Montfort Cottage'. Well after Green and Bennett had been assigned elsewhere, a child born at Hamilton on 19 January 1835 was registered at New Norfolk in 1836 as that of George Steele and his wife, Eliza.¹⁷ However, DNA analysis undertaken in 2018-2019 by descendants of that child indicates – seemingly without doubt – that, while George Steele was the father of the child, the mother was Sarah Bromley.¹⁸

As far as is known, Green had no more contact with the Bromley-Steele family after absconding in 1831. Muster documents show that she was next employed by a Mr. R. P. STUART, thought to be a settler in the Norfolk Plains area, south of Launceston. On 2 February 1832, she was charged by Stuart with 'making use of gross language before her Master's children' and with 'absconding herself without leave.' For this offence, she was sentenced to six months imprisonment at the Female Factory at George Town. The General Muster of 1832 shows her in the service of a Mr. BOYD in the Norfolk Plains area. The musters of 1833 and 1834 show her working for a Mr. WALKER, still at Norfolk Plains. On 4 March 1834, she was charged by Walker with 'idleness and gross insolence'. Her punishment was to spend seven days in a cell, fed only on bread and water. That appears to have been her last offence in the colony.¹⁹

In 1835, Green was granted a ticket of leave. In 1836 she was free by servitude. In 1837, she was granted her certificate of freedom.²⁰

But, as with many other female convicts, what happened to Ann Green after she had served her time remains a mystery. Did she ever collect the certificate of freedom? Had she passed away before then? There are seventeen deaths for an 'Ann Green' listed in TPI Digger but, because of the dates of their death and the estimated years of their births, none seem likely to be her.

Did she revert to the name 'Ann Bruce'? Again, that is unlikely. There is only one listing of an 'Ann Bruce' in TPI Digger and she died at the age of forty-five in 1868.

Did Ann Green change her name again? Did she leave the colony? Did she ever re-unite with her husband William?

There are no answers to these questions at present.

¹⁵ TAHO CSO1/1/1/298, File 7250.

¹⁶ TAHO CSO1/1/1/298, File 7250.

¹⁷ Birth: RGD32/1836/7340, New Norfolk.

¹⁸ DNA analysis: personal communication with descendants; see also Bradmore, D.J. and J. Carter (2016). *Sarah Bromley: Success, Sorrow and Scandal in Van Diemen's Land*. Melbourne: Published by the authors.

¹⁹ CON 40-1-3, Image 263; the musters of 1832, 1833 and 1835 are available via 'Ancestry.com'.

²⁰ ToL: *Hobart Town Gazette*, 18 June 1835; Certificate of Freedom: *Hobart Town Gazette*, 30 June 1837.

Finally, it is interesting to note that an entry in some genealogical databases shows that, in September 1837, Green applied for permission to marry a man by the name of Joram FOOT, an ex-convict, now free. Permission was granted and the pair married on 9 January 1837. However, this is an instance of the confusion between the two Ann Greens. It was the other Ann GREEN [with Identifier (1), Police No: 100 and FCRC database ID: 1358] who married Foot.²¹

²¹ RGD36/3689/1837. Hobart.