

ANN MORGAN

(*Sea Queen*, 1846)

by

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Ann Morgan arrived in Van Diemen's Land (VDL) per *Sea Queen* on 29 August 1846.¹ She was twenty years of age and single. In November 1845, she had been convicted in England of the theft of a large quantity of woollen cloth and sentenced to transportation for fourteen years. Within three years of her arrival, she had married a former convict, Patrick Connor, but the marriage was not a happy one. After only a few months, she charged Connor with preparing to desert her, leaving her destitute. A year later, she charged him again, this time with a brutal assault on her. Two years later again, she absconded from the colony and fled with Connor to Sydney. Once there, however, he went off with another woman and completely abandoned her. Apprehended as an escaped prisoner a short time later, Ann was returned to VDL where it is believed that she served out the rest of her term. What became of her after that remains a mystery! Frustratingly, she seems to have vanished from all records. Although it is unsatisfying in its conclusion, Ann's story highlights two issues – wife-beating and desertion - that were of very considerable concern in VDL in the convict era.

This is Ann's story ...

Ann (or Anne) Morgan was born at Manchester, England, about 1826.² Her indent document shows her parents' first names as 'John' and 'Catherine' and her sisters' as Margaret, Catherine, Mary and Jane but does not reveal the family surname. It is unlikely that it was 'Morgan'. Elsewhere, Ann's convict documents indicate that her real surname was 'Crawley' or 'Crowley'.³ Was 'Morgan' simply a randomly-chosen alias? Had she been married previously? In any event, it was as 'Ann Morgan' that she was arrested and charged with the crime for which she was transported.⁴

¹ Conduct record: CON41-1-10, image 98; Description List: CON19/1/5, image 194; Indent: CON15/1/3, images 334 and 335; Police No: 684; FCRC ID: 10980.

² Birth year calculated from age shown in indent (CON15/1/3, image 334/50) and on marriage certificate (RGD37/193/1849, Hobart). Ann's indent and conduct record show her first name as 'Ann' but the 'Tasmanian Names Index' ('Libraries Tasmania') lists her only as 'Anne Morgan' – see https://libriaristas.ent.sirsidynix.net.au/client/en_AU/names/?

³ Ann's indent shows her proper surname as 'Crawley' but her conduct record shows it as 'Crowley'.

⁴ CON41-1-10, image 98.

On 18 October 1845, the *Manchester Times* (England) reported that, during the previous week, six people had entered the shop of a Mr. Fleming, a draper and tailor of Stockport, after dark and had stolen forty-seven yards (about forty-two metres) of woollen cloth valued at about twenty pounds. Acting on information received from pawnbrokers to whom the cloth had been sold, the police had quickly rounded up the suspects and charged them with the crime. Named as William Clarke, Elizabeth Clarke, Joshua Whitaker, Grace McNally, Bridget Gilreign and Ann Morgan, all were reportedly well-known to police as ‘prostitutes or thieves’. In court on 24 November 1845, the case against the six was easily proven, especially when one of the women - Gilreign – turned on the others and gave evidence against them. Although there had been a short delay in court proceedings when a furious William Clarke and Ann Morgan rushed at Gilreign to attack her – five of the six were soon found guilty. The two Clarks, Whitaker and Morgan were each sentenced to fourteen years transportation. McNally received a twelve month prison sentence. Gilreign was acquitted for giving evidence against the others.⁵

After the trial, Ann was held in an English gaol while awaiting a ship to take her to VDL. It was noted in the Prison Register that she had been ‘twice tried but acquitted’ and ‘once summarily convicted’ of crimes previously - and that she had had a ‘career of crime for many years’.⁶

Eventually, Ann was put aboard *Sea Queen* which, with 170 female prisoners, departed from Woolwich on 12 May 1846 and reached Hobart on 29 August that year.⁷ In the medical journal he kept during the voyage, Dr. T. W. Jewell, the ship’s surgeon, described Ann’s health as ‘indifferent’.⁸

Upon arrival, Ann was described as being twenty-nine years old – but that cannot be correct. Other evidence shows her to have been only twenty years of age when she arrived at Hobart.⁹ She was five feet and one inch (about 155 cms) tall, of a fresh complexion, with a large head, a small and sharp nose, a wide mouth and a small, round chin. She had auburn hair, red eyebrows and grey eyes. She stated that she could read but not write. She was a Catholic and a housemaid by trade. She admitted to having been ‘on the town’ – that is, a prostitute - for two years.¹⁰

After disembarkation, Ann was sent to the *Anson*, the hulk of a former British naval vessel that had been moored in the Derwent River near Risdon in 1844 to be used to house female convicts in order to alleviate the overcrowding at the Cascades Female Factory. She was to be kept there

⁵ *Manchester Times*, 18 October 1845 via ‘Ancestry, U.K.’ per FCRC website at www.femaleconvicts.org. Stockport is eight miles (about nine kms) south of central Manchester. In court on 18 November 1845, Ann and Whitaker were also found guilty of stealing a man’s waistcoat and trousers from the shop. Their sentences reflected their guilt on both counts.

⁶ ‘ancestry.uk’ and ‘findmypast.uk’ per FCRC contributor T. Creaney – see ‘Pre-Transportation Notes’ on FCRC website at www.femaleconvicts.org.

⁷ <http://members.iinet.au/~perthdps/convicts/shipsTAS.html>

⁸ See Jewell’s medical journal at www.femaleconvicts.org

⁹ Ann’s conduct record (CON41-1-10, image 98) shows her age as twenty-nine but her indent and marriage certificate (RGD37/193/1849) confirm it as twenty.

¹⁰ Description List: CON19/1/5, image 194; Indent: CON15/1/3, images 334 and 335.

for a probation period of six months before becoming eligible to be hired into service by settlers.¹¹

Soon after completion of her probation in March 1847, Ann was assigned as a servant to a Mr. Peel of Hobart. There, on 31 July that year, she was charged with being absent from her duty and ordered to spend eight days in solitary confinement at the Cascades Female Factory. On 27 June of the following year, still in the employ of Peel, she was charged again with being absent without leave. This time her punishment was more severe; she was sent to the Cascades to serve six months with hard labour.

Soon after Ann's release, a former convict, Patrick Connor, applied for permission to marry her. The application was approved on 24 April 1849 and they were married at St Georges Church of England, Battery Point, Hobart, on 14 May. The marriage register shows Connor as a 'distiller' by trade. Ann is described as a 'spinster'. Both were twenty-one years old.¹²

Connor had been in the colony for only three years. At the age of sixteen, he had been convicted at the Lancaster Manchester Borough Quarter Sessions of December 1844 of the theft from a local warehouse of three coats and sentenced to transportation for seven years. Upon arrival at Hobart per the convict vessel *Palmyra* on 23 August 1846, he had told the authorities that he was single and a native of the town of Drogheda, County Louth, Ireland. He was a Catholic and a tailor by trade. He stated that, prior to his transportation, he had served eight gaol terms for pick-pocketing and for stealing.¹³

In VDL, however, Connor's behavior had been faultless. As a prisoner, he was never charged with an offence. Within three months of his arrival, he was granted a ticket of leave. On 3 July 1849, only six weeks after his marriage to Ann, his conditional pardon was approved.¹⁴

Unfortunately, the marriage was not a happy one. Ann seems never to have adopted 'Connor' as her surname. There were no children of the marriage.

On 26 September 1849, Ann was charged with being 'out after hours' - a euphemism, perhaps, for her behaving in an unladylike manner in a public-house or on the streets. Her behaviour was possibly indicative of the unhappy state of things in the marital home. She was sent once more to the Female Factory, this time to serve a month with hard labour.¹⁵

The month spent at the Female Factory did nothing to improve Ann's relations with her husband. No sooner had she been released than she was back in court, charging Patrick with preparing to desert her and intending to leave her penniless.

¹¹Conduct record: CON41-1-10, image 98; <https://www.femaleconvicts.org.au/convict-institutions/probation-stations/anson>;

¹² Permission to marry: CON52/1/3, page 70; marriage: RGD37/193/1849, Hobart.

¹³ Connor: conduct record: CON33-1-8, image 62.

¹⁴ CON33-1-8, image 62.

¹⁵ Conduct record: CON41-1-10, image 98.

In court on 20 October 1849, Ann told magistrates Wilmot and Forster that Connor had booked passage on the schooner *Agnes and Elizabeth* which was about to depart Hobart bound for the neighbouring colony of Victoria. She argued that his desertion of her was contrary to an Act of Council in the colony which forbade a man who was married to a ticket-of-leave woman to desert her, thus leaving her dependent for her upkeep on the Government's coffers. She said that she had reminded her husband of this but he had told her he was going anyway. To confirm his intention, he had sold up all his goods and effects. In his defence, Connor, who had been arrested as the vessel was about to depart, denied that he was deserting his wife. He claimed that, as he was unable to find work in VDL, he was going to Geelong in Victoria where he knew work was available. He said that he had told Ann of this plan and had promised to send her an allowance of a pound a month during his absence. After hearing both sides of the argument, the magistrates decided that the evidence of the complainant – Ann – had been 'contradictory' and that she had failed to support the charge she had brought against her husband. In dismissing the case, however, Mr. Wilmot cautioned Connor that it was his obligation to maintain his wife who, as a pass-holder, was not like a free woman – and that it was unlawful to desert her. Ann was discharged from the court to her husband.¹⁶

It is impossible to think that Ann would have been pleased with this decision - and she was not alone in that! Referring specifically to this case in the days which followed, the *Colonial Times* made its feelings on the matter very clear in an editorial:

*Married Female Prisoners are not infrequently deserted by their husbands, who, being originally free or conditionally pardoned, leave the island, and their wives are left chargeable to the colony, no provision being made for their maintenance. [In this case], the husband, Patrick Connor ... was stopped by a magistrate's warrant as he was about to leave the colony for Geelong by a vessel in port. He was brought up at the Police Office on Thursday, but owing to the incomplete testimony of his wife, was discharged, and they went home together. He had made known his intention to leave the colony. In such cases bail should be authorized to be exacted.*¹⁷

A few years earlier, *The Britannia and Trades Advocate* had spoken out forcefully against the gross inequity of the situation in which former convict men could desert their prisoner wives with impunity:

Every thinking man must feel the deep disgrace attached to the gross neglect evinced by the several Governments of the world in their treatment of women ... We earnestly solicit the local Government to immediately look to the manner in which convict women are married to men likely to leave the colony without the

¹⁶ *Hobarton Guardian, or, True Friend of Tasmania* (Hobart) 22 December 1849, p.3.

¹⁷ *The Courier* (Hobart), 22 December 1849, p.2.

*least regard to their unfortunate wives, and destitute children. No prisoner woman ought to be married unless she is as free conditionally to leave the colony as her husband ... At present, no sooner is the man free, than he can dissolve his connection by leaving Van Diemen's Land. His wife is thus, in many instances, thrown upon the world destitute, and perhaps forced again into those sources of misery and crime from which she might have been permanently reclaimed had she been fairly dealt with by her brutal husband ...*¹⁸

There is no doubt that Ann was unhappy in her marriage. In January 1850, just three months after her desertion complaint against her husband had been dismissed, she is believed to have absconded from the marital home in Argyle Street, Hobart. While the details of this incident are vague, it seems that when she was apprehended, she was once again required to return to her husband.¹⁹

This must have been a most difficult time for Ann. A few months later, the *Hobarton Guardian, or, True Friend of Tasmania* of 30 October 1850 carried a report which confirmed the unhappy state of the marriage:

*Ann Morgan, otherwise Connor, laid a complaint against her husband for brutally assaulting her. The poor woman's head and face bore undeniable marks of cruel treatment, and the bench directed that she should be sent to the Factory for protection, until Tuesday next, when the case will be heard.*²⁰

Whether Connor ever appeared in court to answer Ann's charge of assault is unknown. No later report of the case has been located. However, what is known with certainty is that when Ann left the Female Factory after her husband's brutal assault upon her she went straight back to him!

But why? In doing so, Ann really had no choice! For her, it would have been a matter of economic necessity. How else was she to support herself? Most nineteenth and early twentieth century married women were utterly dependent on their husbands for their maintenance. They did not manage their own finances. They did not have the right to vote, sue, or own property. They could not obtain credit or conduct a business in their own names. They were not able to

¹⁸ *The Britannia and Trades' Advocate* (Hobart), 9 September 1847, p.2.

¹⁹ A brief note - 'absconded 5/2/50' - appears on Ann's conduct record but there are no other details of Ann's absconding at this time or of any subsequent punishment. The 'Founders and Survivors' project references the *Hobart Town Gazette*, 31 May 1850 - see https://digitalpanopticon.org/VDL_Founders_and_Survivors_Convicts_1802-1853; see also FCRC website at www.femaleconvicts.org.)

²⁰ *Hobarton Guardian, or, True Friend of Tasmania*, 30 October 1850, p.2.

sign contracts.²¹ The condition of *convict* women, with restrictions about where they could live, work and travel, was more unenviable than that of free women, of course.

Of course, Ann was not the first wife in the colony to be badly beaten by her husband. In fact, vicious wife-beating was rife at the time. It was a time when most men in VDL – as in many other parts of the world - thought of their wives and children as chattels with whom they could do as they wished, free from the interference of others or by the law. And, if the husband were taken to court, he was often treated leniently.

For instance, in 1841, a man named James McGoughan appeared to answer the complaint of his wife with assaulting her. McGoughan told the magistrate that his ‘good lady had been very obstreperous’ and that he had been obliged to administer a little necessary ‘correction’. The magistrate, ‘seeing the matter in its true light’, dismissed the charge.²² In September 1842, William King was charged by his wife with a most brutal assault. When he returned home one night, drunk as usual, he was enraged to find her asleep. Seizing her by the hair, he flung her from the bed and threw her, naked, from the house. A newspaper report of King’s behavior referred to it as ‘conduct which for unprovoked brutality has rarely been equalled and certainly never surpassed’. However, after expressing their ‘utter abhorrence at such unmanly and disgraceful conduct’, the magistrates sentenced ‘the inhuman brute’ to pay a penalty of forty shillings and costs and to find sureties to be of good behavior towards his wife for six months.²³ In November 1846, Whitby, a farmer, who was known to have beaten his wife viciously for trivial reasons on many occasions, was charged with knocking her down, kicking her, jumping on her repeatedly and almost causing her death. The court was told that the poor woman had rarely escaped a day without a severe beating. In court, Whitby did not deny the assault. After being ordered to find sureties for his good behaviour for six months, he was free to go.²⁴

In commenting on ‘the condition of women’ in 1856, the *Tasmanian Daily News* acknowledged that there had been some improvement in recent times in the way colonial courts had dealt with husbands who bashed their wives. It claimed that a number of men had been ‘astonished’ recently when they had been sent to gaol for it. But, the paper argued, tougher sentences for bullying husbands were not the answer:

We are loathe to say anything against a movement which is at least in the right direction insofar as it recognizes the right of women to a legal protection of which they have hitherto enjoyed but little, but we fear that in this instance the good accomplished is by no means unmixed with evil – as the wife, in being protected

²¹ https://www.library.hbs.edu/hc/wes/collections/women_finance_investment/;
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_the_Victorian_era#Working-class_domestic_life

²² Colonial Times (Hobart), 20 July 1841, p.3.

²³ Launceston Examiner, 24 September 1842, p. 2.

²⁴ The Cornwall Chronicle (Launceston), 28 November 1846, p. 919.

*against brutality, is often left subject to destitution ... She receives no permanent relief and soon falls again into the power of her tyrant.*²⁵

Ann had certainly put herself again into the power of her tyrant husband when she had returned to the marital home after the beating her husband had given her in October 1850. However, no more was heard of the couple for another two and a half years.

Then, on 30 May 1853, there was an explanation for the tranquility that had descended on the Connor home when the following report appeared in *The Tasmanian Colonist*:

*Another absconder, a female, named Ann Morgan, was sentenced to 18 months' hard labour for absconding from the colony in April 1852, and remaining at large until apprehended in Sydney in April last. In her defence, the prisoner stated that she was compelled by her husband to go with him to Port Phillip [Melbourne], whence they went to Sydney, taking with them money enough to take a public-house, which they kept for some time, until her husband took up with another woman, and turned her away, telling her the Government might keep her.*²⁶

How did Patrick and Ann manage to get to Sydney? A report of their departure from VDL and the twelve months they spent in Sydney has not been located. All that is known is that they arrived there in April 1852, that Ann was arrested in Sydney in April 1853, and that she was returned to VDL on the brig *Emma* a week or two later. Back at Hobart, she was proved to be an absconder and sentenced by the police magistrate to eighteen months imprisonment at the Cascades with hard labor.²⁷

But had Ann *really* been 'compelled' by her husband to accompany him to Sydney? How had he been able to do that? Was it by threatening her with further physical violence? Would the financial necessity to stay with her husband have been sufficiently compelling for Ann to risk leaving the colony while still under sentence? Had she, in fact, been only too happy to get away from VDL and her convict condition? The police magistrate who ordered her to gaol for absconding was apparently not swayed by her claim that she had been 'compelled' by her husband to abscond.

How long had the pair stayed together in Sydney? How had Ann managed to support herself after Patrick had abandoned her? Who was the other woman? Did Patrick ever return to VDL? Many unanswered questions remain.

²⁵ Tasmanian Daily News, 11 February 1856, p.2.

²⁶ *The Tasmanian Colonist* (Hobart), 30 May 1853, p. 2.

²⁷ CON41-1-10, image 98; *Colonial Times* (Hobart), 31 May 1853, p.3; *Launceston Examiner*, 2 June 1853, p.4; *The Tasmanian Colonist* (Hobart), 30 May 1853, p. 2.

Unfortunately, there are no confirmed sightings of Ann after this time – and so the most frustrating question of all, perhaps, is the unresolved one of what happened to her after she was released from prison. It would be another five years before her fourteen-year term of transportation had been completed.

She was still only twenty-eight years old.