

MARY MANNING

[*Persian*, 1827]

by

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There are many heartbreaking stories among those of the 13,500 (approx.) women who were transported to Van Diemens Land (VDL) as convicts between the years 1812 and 1853. One of the saddest, perhaps, is that of Mary Manning, a young Irish woman, who arrived per *Persian* in 1827.¹

An unmarried mother when she arrived, she had brought her small child with her. Two years later, she married a free settler and gave birth to twins early the following year. Five months later she and her babies were brutally murdered inside their hut in a remote part of the bush by a small party of aborigines apparently intent on taking revenge on settlers in the vicinity for the atrocious treatment they had long been receiving at their hands. Mary was twenty-three years old. She had been in the colony for only four years.²

This is her story ...

Nothing is known of Mary's early life. Although she was born in County Cork, Ireland, she was living in England at the time of her conviction and transportation. She was a prostitute. She was single but had had a child. The father's name is not revealed.³

At her trial at the Old Bailey, London, on 14 September 1826, Mary was charged with the theft of a watch, hat, handkerchief and small amount of money from a man whom she and an associate, Mary Mahoney, had met in a public-house and then enticed to their room. Both women were found guilty and sentenced to transportation for seven years.⁴

With Mary Manning and her child among the sixty female prisoners on board, the convict vessel *Persian* (1) sailed from London on 14 April 1827. The passage was a relatively quick and easy one and by 8 August the ship had reached Hobart.⁵ The ship's surgeon, James Patton, was pleased to report that, although some of the women had been quite ill, the journey had been made without

¹ CON40-1-7, Image 35, FCRC ID: 10017; Police Number 61.

² See report of inquest: *The Tasmanian*, 18 June 1830, p.5.

³ CON40-1-7, Image 35.

⁴ www.oldbaileyonline.org; case reference t18260914-396

⁵ <http://members.iinet.net.au/~perthdps/convicts/shipsTAS.html>

loss of life or serious casualty. Of Mary specifically, Patton commented that she was ‘a very indifferent character, frequently disrespectful to the officers.’⁶

Upon arrival, Mary was described as being twenty-one years of age, five feet three inches (about 160 cms) tall, with light brown hair and blue eyes. She could read but not write. She was ‘a servant of all work’.⁷

In her first year as a prisoner Mary was badly behaved.

Soon after her disembarkation, she was assigned to a Mr. Hopkins at Hobart but, on 15 November 1827, she had absconded from his premises and remained free for two days, eventually surrendering herself to Mr. Joshua Drabble, the Superintendent of the Female Factory. For this offence, she was punished by being confined to a cell within the Factory for three days before being returned to her service. The punishment seems to have had little effect. On 10 February 1828, she absconded from the Hopkins home again. When apprehended two days later, she was sent to the cells for a term of four days, this time to be fed only on bread and water. On 12 September 1828, still in the service of Hopkins, she was charged with ‘disobedience of orders and making a disturbance ... [which upset] her Master’s family’. This time she was ordered to spend seven days in the cells on bread and water.⁸

Only once more was Mary charged with an offence. On 28 September 1828, now in the service of Dowsett, she was sent to the cells at the Female Factory for another seven days, on bread and water, for failing to return to her service as ordered the previous day.⁹

Somewhere during these early years of her servitude, Mary had met a young free settler by the name of Richard Daniels and, on 20 August 1829, the pair had applied for permission to marry.¹⁰ With approval granted, they were wed in the Parish of New Norfolk on 14 October that year.¹¹ Mary was pregnant at the time and by February of the following year she had given birth to twins – a girl and a boy - whom she had named Eliza and Richard Daniels.¹²

After the marriage, Mary and Richard lived together at a place called ‘The Den’, described later in newspapers as ‘one of the most remote and exposed situations in the island’, where Richard, a farmer, was an overseer in the employ of Captain Wood (or Woods) of Denniston, whose property was in the Regents Plains district, on the Lake River, about thirty-six miles (about fifty-eight kms) from Bothwell.¹³ (Regrettably, it is not known where the child Mary had brought with her on

⁶ Quote not located in Patton’s report but taken from FCRC website.

⁷ Convict documents via FCRC website; ID10017.

⁸ CON40-1-7, Image 35.

⁹ CON40-1-7, Image 35.

¹⁰ Permission to marry: <https://stors.tas.gov.au/CON45-1-1PO24J2K>, pp.39, 40.

¹¹ Marriage: RGD36/1370/1829, New Norfolk; Mary’s surname is shown in the church register as ‘MANNINGS’.

¹² The birth of the twins does not appear to have been registered; but see *The Tasmanian*, 18 June 1830, p.5.

¹³ *Hobart Town Courier*, 19 June 1830, p.2; *The Tasmanian*, 18 June 1830, p.5.

Persian was at this time. The child was not with the couple at the remote farm. What had happened to it? There is no answer to this question yet.)

As it happens, it was not a good time to be in such an isolated location. The Daniels's nearest neighbor was a Mr. Kemp, whose property on the Sorell Lake was twelve miles (about nineteen kms) away. Even though Richard had two ticket-of-leave men - Cliffe and Betts - working for him on his farm, this isolation was particularly frightening in view of the conflict between white settlers and the native people which seemed to be escalating in that area at the time.¹⁴

Of course, there had been trouble between white settlers and the indigenous people as early as 1803 when formal colonization of VDL began. According to Ryan (2008), conflicts with the Aborigines over the exploitation of their food resources continued sporadically between 1804 and 1820, and included mass killings as well as the kidnapping of Aboriginal women and children.¹⁵

Ryan gives a number of examples. On 3 May 1804, a large group of Aborigines, men, women and children on a kangaroo drive, suddenly appeared on top of a hill behind the Risdon outpost. Misunderstanding their intentions, the officer in charge ordered two detachments of military to fire on the Aborigines in two separate engagements and at least two Aborigines were killed. Between 1804 and 1806 an unknown number of Aborigines were killed by military forces on the Tamar River near Launceston. In 1807 or 1808, two bushrangers, Lemon and Brown, were reported to have tortured and killed five Aborigines, two males and three females, in the southern interior. A Government Notice in 1810 claimed that bushrangers George Getley and William Russell had tortured and murdered many blacks and were themselves killed by them. In 1830, James Hobbs, a government official, testified that, in 1820, after the destruction of 930 sheep by Aborigines, a detachment of the 48th Regiment had shot twenty-two Aborigines at Oyster Bay on the east coast.¹⁶ There are many more examples in Ryan's work and in newspapers of the times.

Fortunately, from the very early days of settlement there were many better-minded people in VDL who were outraged by the indiscriminate slaughter of native people and associated acts of violence. In 1813, a Government notice had condemned the practice of killing Aborigines and kidnapping their children.¹⁷ And in 1817, Lieutenant-Governor William Sorell had issued a proclamation forbidding white settlers from wantonly firing at 'the defenceless natives' and threatening to punish severely those who did. His proclamation read:

¹⁴ See, for example, *The Hobart Town Courier*, 18 April 1829, p.1 and 8 May 1830, p.2; *The Cornwall Press and Commercial Advertiser*, 17 March 1829, p.2; *Colonial Times*, 18 September 1829, p.3 - and many others.

¹⁵ See Lyndall Ryan (2008): 'List of Multiple Killings of Aborigines in Tasmania, 1804-1835', online at www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/fr/document/list-multiple-killings-aborigines-tasmania-1804-1835#title3

¹⁶ Ryan (2008), *op cit.*

¹⁷ Ryan (2008), *op cit.*, quoting *Hobart Town Gazette*, 13 August 1816; 29 March 1817; 25 October and 13 December, 1818.

WHEREAS it has been represented to His HONOR the Lieutenant GOVERNOR that several Settlers and others are in the habit of maliciously and wantonly firing at and destroying, the defenceless NATIVES or ABORIGINES of this Island; and whereas it has been commanded by His Majesty's Government, and has been strictly enjoined by His Excellency the Governor in Chief, that the Natives of New South Wales and its Dependencies should be considered as under the British Government and Protection; These Instructions render it no less His Honor the Lieutenant Governor's Duty than it is his disposition to forbid and prevent, and when perpetrated to punish, any ill-treatment of the Native People of this Island and to Support and Encourage all Measures which may Tend to conciliate and civilize them: His Honor the Lieutenant Governor thus publicly declares his determination, that if, after the promulgation of this Publication, any Person or Persons shall be charged with killing, firing at, or committing any Act of Outrage or Aggression on the Native People, the Offender or Offenders shall be sent to Port Jackson to take their Trial before the Criminal Court.¹⁸

A year later, the *Hobart Town Gazette* was pleased to be able to report that ‘the hostility which has so long prevailed in the breasts of the Natives of this Island towards Europeans’ seemed to be gradually subsiding. In part, the article read:

... Several of [the native tribes] are to be seen about this town and its environs, who obtain subsistence from the charitable and are well-disposed. The more we contemplate the peculiar situation of this people, the more deeply we are impressed with the great [back-log] of justice which is due [to] them ... Are not the Aborigines of this Colony the children of our Government? Are we not all happy but they? And are not they miserable? Can they raise themselves from this sad condition? Or do they not claim our assistance? And shall that assistance be denied?¹⁹

Unfortunately, and not withstanding this more-enlightened attitude of the settlers to the native population, conflict continued.

In late March 1824, the *Hobart Town Gazette* reported that James Taylor had been speared by a small party of aborigines at the Old Beach and that his life was ‘despaired of’.²⁰ In May 1824, William Tibbs was the first man tried before a tribunal of justice ‘for shooting a black man’; he was found guilty.²¹ In late October 1824, twenty aborigines approached the house and stock-yard of Mr. James Hobbs, situated about fifteen miles (twenty-four kms) east of York Plains. According

¹⁸ *Hobart Town Gazette*, 24 May 1817, p.1.

¹⁹ *Hobart Town Gazette*, 25 April 1818, p.2.

²⁰ *Hobart Town Gazette*, 2 April 1824, p.2.

²¹ *Hobart Town Gazette*, 28 May 1824, p.2.

to a report in the *Hobart Town Gazette*: ‘As soon as, the natives appeared in sight, they were instantly driven back – but another party of at least 150 more of the same tribe advanced in an opposite direction who, armed with spears and waddies, surrounded the house. Mr. Hobbs's two servants defended themselves with muskets for five hours from the spears and stones which were thrown at them until at length the blacks surrounded them with fires. On the following day they ventured to return home, when they found that all their provisions, clothes, bedding, and utensils had been taken away.’ The newspaper concluded its report with the thought that ‘unless these depredations are now checked, their progress will at some future period, in all probability, be attended with more fatal consequences.’²² In December 1826, a man by the name of House was chased by natives in the Macquarie district and eventually found dead.²³ In July 1827, *The Colonial Times* reported that the ‘savages’ had appeared at Quamby’s Bluff where they attacked the house of Mr. Widdowson and murdered two of his stockmen.²⁴

On 1 November 1828, appalled at the continuing atrocities by both sides of the conflict, George Arthur, who had replaced Sorell as lieutenant-governor of the colony, proclaimed martial law, stating that it would ‘continue to be in force against the Black or Aboriginal natives within the several districts of this island’ because of their ‘repeated incursions upon the settled districts’ and that ‘all soldiers and other subjects of His Majesty, Civil and Military, are hereby required and commanded to obey and assist their lawful superiors in the execution of such measures as shall from time to time be directed to be taken ...’²⁵

It was into this climate of tension that Richard Daniels had brought his wife Mary and their twins, now five months old, to live in a hut at Captain Wood’s remote farm.

Soon after lunch on 10 June 1830, Richard and his two ticket-of-leave labourers had left the hut to plough a field about a half a mile away. As always, Daniel had advised Mary to remain inside with the twins and to keep the door of the hut firmly closed. A couple of hours later, Richard noticed that the door of the hut was ajar and, thinking that something could be wrong, hurried back to check. As he approached the hut, he saw Mary’s body, covered with blood, on the ground outside. Beside her were her two infants, both lifeless and in a similar bloody condition. Hoping that at least one of the children might still be alive, he hurried off to the hut of Mr. Kemp, the nearest neighbour, to get help and to summon Dr. Sharland from Bothwell. Upon arrival, Sharland found that Mary had been speared and had suffered terrible blows to the head. The two children, their faces discoloured, appeared to have been strangled. All three were dead.²⁶ An axe, three guns,

²² *Hobart Town Gazette*, 29 October 1824, p.2.

²³ *Hobart Town Gazette*, 2 December 1826, p.4.

²⁴ *Colonial Times*, 6 July 1827, p.4.

²⁵ Arthur’s proclamation was re-published in *The Hobart Town Courier*, 2 October 1830, p.2.

²⁶ The deaths do not appear to have been registered; registrations of births, deaths and marriages was not compulsory in VDL until 1838..

some knives, items of clothing and a quantity of sugar had been taken away. Two waddies and the head of a large spear were found at the side of the hut the next morning.²⁷

On 12 June 1830, an inquest on the bodies of Mary and the children was held before Mr. Anstey, Coroner of the district of Oatlands and the Clyde, at Denniston. The verdict was 'Wilful murder against some persons unknown, belonging to the Aboriginal tribes of the Island.'²⁸

By the time of Mary's ghastly murder, there had been so much killing and so many abhorrent atrocities committed by both sides that the colonial authorities could no longer ignore the situation. Four months after Mary's murder, Lieutenant-Governor Arthur implemented his (now infamous) 'Black Line' operation. At the time, he had considered that this was the best way to end the conflict once and for all.²⁹

The operation began on 7 October 1830 when Arthur ordered Major Douglas of the British 63rd Regiment to lead a force of 2,200 men, in a staggered line stretching over two hundred miles (three hundred kms) wide and, starting in the north of the colony, to drive the aborigines south to the Tasman Peninsula which Arthur had designated as an aboriginal reserve. The force comprised about 550 soldiers, 900 free settlers and 740 ticket-of-leave convicts.³⁰

The campaign was a dismal failure. Hampered by bad weather, rugged terrain, swamps, thick scrub, poor maps and inadequate supply lines, many of the convicts and settlers - weary, footsore and semi-naked – had deserted the line and returned home. Some of the natives had managed to slip through the cordon and attacks had continued behind the lines even while the operation continued. On 26 November 1830, the operation was abandoned. Only two aborigines had been captured and two others killed.³¹

Nevertheless, Ryan (2012) has estimated that only about three hundred aborigines remained alive in the colony when it was all over.³²

²⁷ Report of inquest: *The Tasmanian*, 18 June 1830, p.5.

²⁸ For reports on the Daniels' murders, see *Colonial Times*, 18 June 1830, p.2, 25 June 1830, p.2; *The Hobart Town Courier*, 19 June 1830, p.2; *The Tasmanian*, 18 June 1830, p.5.

²⁹ https://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/A/George%20Arthur.htm

³⁰ Ryan (2008), *op.cit.*

³¹ For more detail of the 'Black Line', See Ryan, 'The Black Line in Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania), 1830', in *Journal of Australian Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2013; Connor 'British Frontier Warfare Logistics and the 'Black Line', Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania), 1830' in *War in History*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (April 2002), pp. 143-158; and https://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/F/Frontier%20Conflict.htm; <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/the-black-line>; <https://www.newcastle.edu.au/research-and-innovation/publications/the-black-line-in-van-diemens-land-tasmania-1830>

³² Ryan (2012). *Tasmanian Aborigines*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

In the following years, a more benign approach, supported by Arthur, saw George Robinson, a missionary, scour the countryside for any remnants of the tribes that remained.³³ Those he found, and who were willing to listen to him, were taken to Flinders Island off the north-east coast of VDL where it was hoped that they could be well cared for. But this, too, failed. Before long, most of the aborigines on Flinders Island had died of diseases that had been brought to the colony by white settlers. Towards the end of his term of governorship, Arthur expressed the view to the British Government that it had been an error not to have entered into a treaty with the aborigines in the early days of colonization.³⁴

And so, what more can be said about the short, sad life in VDL of convict Mary Manning? Perhaps there is nothing that can be said other than she was, through circumstance, in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Finally, it might be of interest to some to know that Mary's husband married again a few years after her death. His new wife was Elizabeth Morgan.³⁵ The couple lived happily together, their marriage producing at least five children: Arthur Daniels (1851), Christopher Daniels (1854), Henry Daniels (1856) Walter Daniels (1859) and Alfred Daniels (1862).³⁶

Richard Daniels died at Kangaroo Point in 1867.³⁷

³³ See George Robinson in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/robinson-george-augustus-2596>

³⁴ Ryan (2008), *op.cit.*

³⁵ Marriage: Daniels/Morgan 28 May 1833, RGD362291/1833, New Norfolk.

³⁶ Arthur RGD33/167/1851; Christopher RGD33/200/1854; Henry RGD33/247/1856; Walter RGD33/211/1859; Alfred RGD33/222/1862; all registered at Clarence.

³⁷ Richard, death: not located; See Richard's will:

https://libriestas.ent.sirsiidynix.net.au/client/en_AU/names/search/results?qu=NI_NAME%3DRichard&qu=NI_NAME%3DDaniels&qf=NI_INDEX%09Record+type%09Wills%09Wills