



PARRAMATTA FEMALE FACTORY FRIENDS INC.
NEWSLETTER – ISSUE NO: 37 SUMMER EDITION 2021



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Female penitentiary or factory, Parramata [i.e. Parramatta] N.S. Wales - Augustus Earle 1826 – nla.pic-an 2818460 National Library of Australia, Canberra

<p>Patrons: Meg Keneally & Thomas Michael Keneally AO President: Gay Hendriksen Vice President: Frank Williams Treasurer/Public Officer: Kerima-Gae Topp General Secretary/Editor: Ronda Gaffey Committee: Minutes Secretary: Lynette Watkins Membership Secretary: Cate Whittaker, Tour Coordinator: Steve Bryant, Anne Mathews, Judith Dunn OAM, Janice Ruse Huntington</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Content</th> <th>Page</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>President.....</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Noticeboard.....</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>History Corner.....</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>'Our Girls'.....</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Research Centre Muster.....</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Serendipity.....</td> <td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Advocacy Corner & Site Updates.....</td> <td>10</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Content	Page	President.....	2	Noticeboard.....	2	History Corner.....	3	'Our Girls'.....	4	Research Centre Muster.....	6	Serendipity.....	9	Advocacy Corner & Site Updates.....	10
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<p>NEXT MEETING: Friday 19th February 2021. General Meeting at 2:00pm VENUE: Parramatta Female Factory Friends' Rooms, Gipps Yard, 5 Fleet Street, North Parramatta. Meeting Dates for 2021 are: Friday 16th April, 18th June, 20th August (AGM), 15th October, 10th December (TBC) 2021.</p>																	

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Factory Friends

Welcome to the New Year. I hope it is treating you kindly. The holiday season is usually a quiet time for us, but this new year is a beehive of activity.



We have been preparing for the Bicentennial Reflection and Walk Commemoration. Although it is a much smaller event than the last Bicentennial (due to Covid), it is just as meaningful and marks the Bicentennial of the women moving from the first factory, (the room above the gaol), to the purpose built Greenway designed female factory that we know and love. To mark this we will have a re-enactment of the walk by the women, from the first to the second factory by a selected number of our members. The reflection itself will be short. Our Patrons Tom and Meg Keneally will be speaking. This will be followed by the first performance of our commissioned work of four songs and finally there will be a laying of flowers and notes to the female factory women. The rooms will be open after the reflection. To be compliant with regulations, the event has been a limited number, seated event. If you missed out then you can email us and request to go on our waiting list parramattafemalefactoryfriends@gmail.com. If you would like to help on the day please email us with 'Bicentennial volunteering' in the subject.

What is possible for all of us, is the purchase of the CD of four songs, *Mothers of the Nation*, *Little Parramatta Mary*, *Banish My Misfortune* and *Shower of Stones*. Thank you to Ronda Gaffey, Anne Mathews and Kerima-Gae Topp for their committment in bringing this wonderful project to fruition.

I would like to thank and acknowledge Ronda Gaffey and the Committee for all their hard work so far with the Bicentennial preparation. In particular, Ronda has worked tirelessly on coordination and is also to be credited with the great idea of the 2021 Bicentennial song commission.

We also met with Minister Harwin and Adam Lindsay, the Executive Director of Sydney Living Museums, who had been taken on a tour of the Female Factory site just prior to our meeting with them. The Minister is a strong advocate for the factory and its World Heritage Status and indeed, has a factory ancestor from the first factory.

With regard to the factory site itself, we are still advocating moving to the spine of the factory but have had no word on that. This becomes more pressing given our recent visitors to the rooms - pigeons. With demolition at the site, there was a little pigeon house moving in! Fortunately, repairs to their way in were undertaken promptly. When next you visit you may notice some site changes. Some of the demountable buildings have been removed from the Gipps Yard and the gate through to the Roman Catholic Orphanage is being reinstated.

We have been working on improving systems and have added new ex-officio roles which reflect both expertise and interest in the range of things we are doing and puts us in good stead for what is to come. We already have the Tour Coordinator, Steve Bryant and Research Room Coordinator, which is me; Publicity Officer and Newsletter Editor, Ronda Gaffey; Site Monitor, Judith Dunn; the Gordon Tea Room Coordinator, Pauline Garmonsway; Work Health and Safety Advisor, Frank Williams; Technical Coordinator, Kevin Dodds; Incoming Talk Programme Officer, shared by Lyn Watkins and Janice Ruse Huntington; School Education, Cate Whittaker. Coordination roles have volunteers who are assisting and we also have sub-committees as need arises. We have our sub-committees of Constitution Review with Ronda Gaffey, Judith Dunn and Kerima-Gae Topp and Advocacy chaired by Frank Williams with Ronda Gaffey and Cate Whittaker. These will be reflected in the roles and responsibilities document we are currently drafting. More may be added. So from this you can see we are always looking at ways we can do things more effectively, as well as what an active group the Parramatta Female Factory Friends are!

Looking forward to seeing you at our next meeting.

All the best,
Gay Hendriksen

NOTICEBOARD

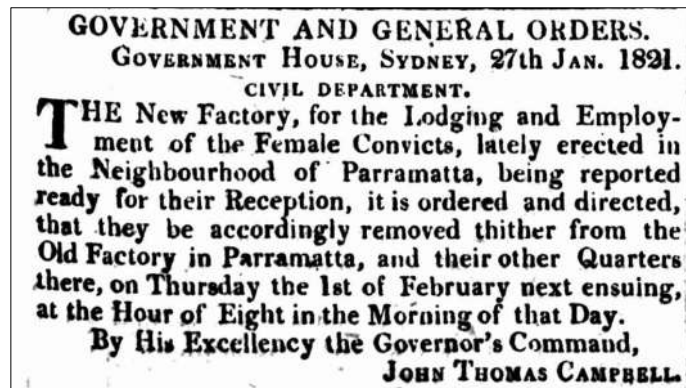
***The next General Meeting is Friday 19th February 2021 at 2pm.** There is no guest speaker. It is anticipated that our Guest Speaker Programme will re-commence in April 2021.

* **The CD, "Mothers of the Nation"** is \$15 plus postage & packaging (TBA); place order as "Bicent. CD Purchase" - email to parramattafemalefactoryfriends@gmail.com

On the morning of 16th January 1821, Governor Lachlan Macquarie inspected the progress of the New Factory - and it was with some satisfaction that he wrote:

I rode out this morning with Secry Goulburn to inspect the Public works now in progress at Parramatta, returning home to breakfast in the Domain. The contractors of the New Factory & Barracks for the female convicts report - and assure me - that the new Building will be ready for the reception and accommodation of the Women - on this day fortnight - namely Tuesday the 30th of this present month of January!!! I have accordingly issued necessary orders for their being prepared to be removed on that day¹

The Governor Macquarie commissioned barracks and factory which were begun in July 1818, were at last near completion. In the Government and General Orders issued from Government House, Sydney 27th January 1821, it was announced that, at eight o'clock on the morning of Thursday, 1st February 1821, the convict women and their children were to be "removed thither", from the "Old" Factory and from "other Quarters" (presumably from other accommodation in Parramatta) to the "New" Factory opposite the Government quarry in "the Neighbourhood of Parramatta." And so began another chapter in the lives of the convict women.



Sydney Gazette and NSW Advertiser (1803-1842), Saturday 27th January 1821, page 1

Macquarie later described the new barracks as:

A Large Commodious handsome stone built Barrack and Factory, three storeys high, with Wings of one storey each for the accommodation and residence of 300 Female Convicts, with all the requisite Out-offices including Carding, Weaving and Loom Rooms, Workshops., Stores for Wool, Flax etc, etc.: Quarters for the Superintendent, and also a large Kitchen Garden for the use of the Female Convicts, and Bleaching Ground for Bleaching the Cloth and Linen Manufactured; the whole of the Buildings and said Grounds, consisting of about Four acres, being closed with a high Stone wall and Moat or Wet Ditch...²

Following their removal from the "Old" Factory to the "New", the women and children were met by a number of dignitaries including Governor Macquarie and the Rev. Samuel Marsden, the Resident Magistrate.

One might wonder what the women thought of their new accommodation now that they were imprisoned behind high stone walls, their lives regulated and without the previous freedom many had. Apparently there was an increase in marriages post-removal from the old factory - marriage being one way to escape the "factory" system³.

References:

Herstory - Another Chapter Unfolds by Anne Mathews, Beth Matthews and Ronda Gaffey pub: Parramatta Female Factory Friends Inc. 2017

¹ Macquarie Lachlan; *Journal 1818-1821*; from <http://www.mq.edu.au/macquarie-archive/lema/1821/1821jan.html>

² Lachlan Macquarie, 'Appendix to the Report of Major General Lachlan Macquarie, Late Governor of New South Wales' in J.T Bigge, Report of the Commissioner of Inquiry into the State of the Colony of New South Wales NSW House of Commons, 1822

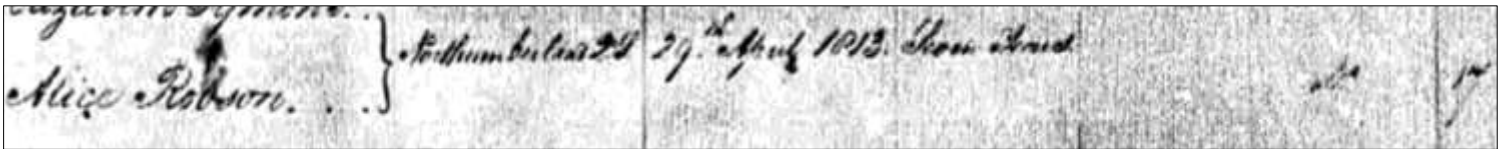
³ *A Forger's Progress - The Life of Francis Greenway* by Alasdair McGregor pub: NEWSOUTH, University of New South Wales, Sydney 2014 p291

In this edition’s profile, we commemorate the dramatic and extraordinary long life of a first factory woman and Tasmanian pioneer Alice Robson (1819 - 1892).

ALICE ROBSON (Blackstone, aka Leith) was born 5th January 1796 in Heddon-on-the-Wall, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, Northumberland, England. She was tried at the Northumberland Quarter Sessions on 29 April 1813. Her occupation was listed as servant. She was aged 17¹.

Her crime was stealing, “with Force and arms,...six yards of printed cotton, two pieces of Fustian, five yards of linen cloth, two yards of white cotton, one yard of tow cloth, one quantity of a yard of flowered muslin, three cotton handkerchiefs, two yards of brown cotton, six yards of blue and white cotton, one Waistcoat piece, one buff coloured handkerchief, two yards of cotton check, one slip of black yarn, one slip of black worsted, pair of worsted stockings, one blue cotton apron, one Leno cuff border and one shawl.”²

The goods stolen by Alice were said to be worth 10 pence and pleading guilty to the charge, she was sentenced to seven years transportation embarking the convict ship *Broxbornebury* which left England 22nd February 1814.



3.

The ship arrived in Sydney Cove on 28th July, after a five month voyage. Subsequently some women were sent to the Hunter while others were sent to the Female Factory at Parramatta.

A year after her arrival, Alice, aged 18, married Richard Blackstone who had arrived per *General Hewitt* in 1814. He had been convicted in Exeter, Devon England in 1813 and had received a life sentence for burglary⁴.

Alice and Richard, with their first child Charles, sailed on the brig *Elizabeth Henrietta* to George Town, Van Dieman’s Land (VDL) in April 1818⁵. Here, George was assigned to general labouring on Government Works.

In October 1818, Alice left Richard to live with William Elliott Leith who was the Principal Superintendent of Government Works and Convicts at George Town. In May 1819, their daughter Jane was born. Alice had sought refuge with William because of her husband’s mistreatment of her, however she was to be severely punished for her flight. She was sent to Launceston but she soon made her way back to William at George Town where she was arrested.

Alice was charged as a “profligate adulteress” and in September 1819, was ordered to return to Launceston from George Town (a distance of about 35 miles), wearing an iron collar around her neck, as “a badge of her Infamy and disgrace”. The collar weighed 6^{1/4} lbs. (2.8 kg) and at the time, she was nursing her child⁶.



References:

¹ Profile of Alice Robson in *Our Girls* - unpublished work sourced from original papers, State Records NSW by Anne Mathews and Beth Matthews

² Northumberland Record Office Ref: Q5017 29th April 1813; *Heddon-on-the-wall Local History Society*, heddonhistory.weebly.com>blog/alice-robson

³ *Entry for Alice Robson, New South Wales Convict Indents 1788-1842*; ancestry.com.au

⁴ Profile of Alice Robson in *Our Girls* - unpublished work sourced from original papers, SRNSW by Anne Mathews and Beth Matthews

⁵ *Journey to a New Life - The Story of the ships Emu in 1812, Broxbornebury in 1814*, by Elizabeth Hook, privately published pp101-102

⁶ *Profile of Alice Leith* in Tasmanian Coastal Cemeteries; www.tfhsdev.co/TCC/people/leith.html

**Fustian* - a thick hard wearing twilled cloth with a short knap, usually dyed in dark colours; *twill* cloth - a heavy, tightly woven fabric.

Worsted - a high quality wool yarn - the name is derived from Worstead in the county of Norfolk, England. *Buff* - a light brownish yellow colour. *Tow cloth* - heavy and coarse linen cloth made on a hand loom 19th C. *Leno* - a type of gauze like, open weave cloth.

Commander Cimitiere's punishment of Alice caused much indignation and led to a Magisterial Enquiry which was held in February 1820. The case was heard by 3 Magistrates who concluded that Leith be "Severely and Publicly Reprimanded" for challenging Cimitiere's order; Cimitiere's action was vindicated and Alice's evidence that she had been beaten by her husband was while pregnant, dismissed⁷.

In 1820 Alice applied for her Ticket of Leave and went on to live with William on his 500 acre (later 1000) property at Westbury, where he had been granted land as early as 1816⁸.

No record of a marriage has been found for Alice and William however they had another six children who were born in Westbury, VDL.

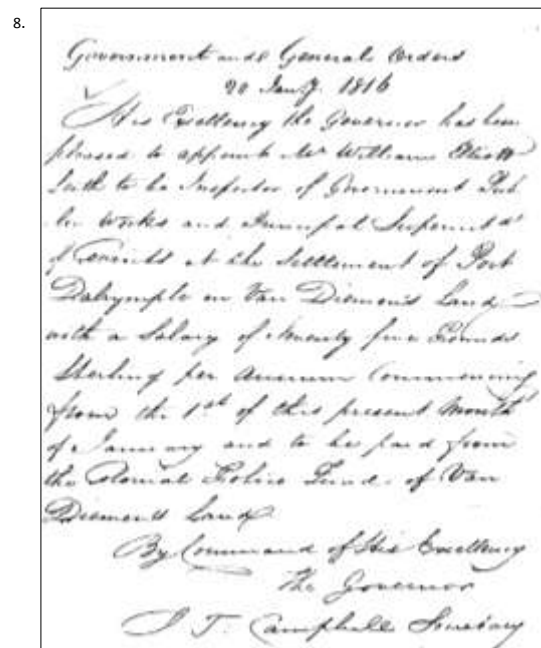
The paternity of their daughter Jane, born in 1819, was challenged by Richard Blackstone however William Leith claimed her as his child. Jane bore his surname, as did all Alice and William's children.

Alice and William Leith were among the first European settlers in the Westbury district. William held the license for the Rose Inn, Westbury (1830) and was also postmaster there (1833) as well as Inspector of Stock (1837)⁹.

William Elliott Leith died in 1852 aged 82. He was buried in the Anglican Cemetery, Westbury. He was 26 years Alice's senior and had 2 previous marriages and children.

Alice Leith later lived with her daughter Annie at Don near Devonport and died there on the 29th November 1889 aged 92 years of age. At the time of her death she had been in the colony 76 years. She had led a long and productive life, she raised her children and had outlived two of them. One was her daughter Jane who died in July 1888 and Alice, her youngest daughter, who died in June 1889 shortly before her mother's death. In 1868 Alice and her mother had held the license of the Glenmore Hotel¹⁰.

There is a headstone bearing Alice's name in the Don Congregational Cemetery though her death is recorded as 1903. The grave is thought to be a family grave with members of her extended family buried there¹¹.



12.



References:

⁷ Alice Robson from *Journey to a New Life - The Story of the ships Emu in 1812, Broxbornebury in 1814*, by Elizabeth Hook, privately published p 102

⁸ Entry for William Elliott Leith in *New South Wales Record of Appointments to Government Offices 1814-1825*, SRNSW; ancestry.com.au

⁹ Alice Leith, in *Tasmanian Coastal Cemeteries* by Lesley M McCoull from www.tfhsdev.com/TCC/people/leith.html

¹⁰ Alice Robson (1797-1889) in *Heddon - on - the - Wall Local History Society*, heddonhistory.weebly.com>blog/alice-robson

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Photograph : Headstone of Alice Leith, Don Congregational Cemetery; public family tree - Alice Leith; ancestry.com.au

¹³ Photograph: Headstone and grave of William Elliott Leith, Anglican Cemetery, Westbury; from billiongraves.com/grave/william-elliott-leith/28255114

¹⁴ Image: Jane Leith (1819-1888) from Ryan - Public Tree, posted by Peter Ryan; ancestry.com.au

*the last recorded instance of an iron collar being worn by a woman as punishment in VDL was in 1834; D/base-www.femaleconvicts.org.au

RESEARCH CENTRE MUSTER

Welcome to our second research centre muster. Development of the resources, hard copy and digital, and researching the factory and the women to ensure access for all, are our top priorities. Research inquiries slowed over Christmas but the research being undergone did not slow down.

We had some unexpected visitors, pigeons which have now left the building and the research group and Infrastructure NSW did a big clean-up....Another good reason for our inclusion in the main buildings area. Of course the Bicentennial Preparation is still engaging a lot of our time and a part of that is ensuring the research centre is ready for visitors on the day.

We are developing digital resources on our two centre computers and beginning our vertical files, so if you have digital or hard copy information about your factory ancestor or someone you are researching that you want to share, please bring it to the rooms on meeting days and give it to one of our research volunteers. We have a form for you to fill out with the key information and permission for it to be public access.

Do keep those relevant research book donations coming in. We have had a substantial donation from the City of Parramatta Library of family history books from across NSW. It is surprising how often a local social history publication can provide an answer for the female factory women. Kevin Dodds and Janice Ruse Huntington went on a book buying foray for the research centre. As a result Kevin came back with a wonderful donation from him, of the now hard to find, musters books which is a real boon for research as that is one of the primary resources for identifying factory women.

From time to time, if we come across a factory woman whose story has a particular interest, the researcher doing it will do a focus story on it. Below is one about an irrepressible woman who was also a part of the 1827 insurrection.

I look forward to seeing you at the research room sometime.

Cheers

Gay Hendriksen

And the Research continues...

We have been busy preparing for the upcoming Bicentennial re-enactment, which has slowed down our research activities. Lyn and I usually share our knowledge and resources and this works well for both of us. However, whilst we have nothing significant to report on enquiries, we have sent out letters of introduction and permission requests to our enquirers and will soon be in a position to progress the research. Watch this space...

Janice Ruse Huntington and Lyn Watkins

FOCUS STORY - A WOMAN TORN by Kevin Dodds

Hannah Jeffries never could have imagined her life. Even in her wildest of dreams – the highs and the extreme low points in her life. However, like many convict women – Hannah had a resilience about her that is also typical of those cast out to a faraway colony for a petty crime. Hannah was born 1797 in Wexford, Ireland¹. It is a beautiful part of Ireland, with harbour views and the river Slaney entering the Irish Sea. It is often noted as the sunniest of all the Counties in Ireland.

¹ Access to database using my account on [BDA Online – Biographical Database of Australia \(bda-online.org.au\)](http://bda-online.org.au) on 21 January 2021

Hannah met a man called James Churches and she travelled with him to Gloucestershire and they had a son in 1819². That is when the research trail goes cold, it appears James did not, or was not able to provide for them as well as could be expected and they ended up moving to Dorset with Hannah working as a Chambermaid in a respectable house. James may have with been around but it's a mystery.

However, by 1824, Hannah her son now 5 years old, fell foul of the law and was caught stealing money (bank notes) from a person in the street and was charged with Street Robbery and convicted at 17 Oct 1824 at Dorset Assizes, Dorchester, England and sentenced to 7 years for her crime³.

Hannah was separated from her son and sent to Goal on 17 Oct 1824, I can only hope that James Churches or someone with some decency was able to raise the young Master Churches. I just can't imagine how torn Hannah would have been. I think and justifiably so, it showed in her rebellious behaviour after her arrival in Australia.

Hannah spent until 24 Jul 1825 in gaol and then another 146 days at sea before arriving in Sydney on 17 Dec 1825 on board the Midas. The Master was a James Baigrie, and the Surgeon was Dr Charles Cameron, who were in charge of 109 females and landed 50 women in Sydney Cove and sailed onto Van Dieman's Land with another 58 as one female died on the voyage⁴.

Between 1825 and 1831, Hannah met with various punishments at the Parramatta Female Factory as set out here:

1826	3 Aug	2nd class	abusing the cook	24-hour punishment
	12 Aug	1st class	sent to E C Close, JP	
	14 Aug	1st class	refusing to work	confined to cell
1827	3 Sep	2nd class	disobeying orders	20-hour punishment
	20 Oct	2nd class	improper conduct	24-hour punishment
1828	24 Mar	1st class	disobeying orders	14-hour punishment
1829	7 Mar	3rd class	disobeying orders	24-hour punishment
	20 Jul	2nd class	quarrelling in mess hall	24-hour punishment
	4 Nov	2nd class	fighting	24-hour punishment / 1 month ⁵

Of note is her early assignment to a Mr E. C. Close J.P.⁶ where Hannah only lasted two days and then was sent back to the factory and confined to the cell. Two days, was it Hannah or was it Mr Close J.P. or Mrs Close that caused such a quick departure, noting she had spent at least six years as a chambermaid in Gloucestershire and Dorset.

I think it is safe to say that Hannah had the presence to behave herself when she wanted to and could remain in 1st Class, if she so desired. You can say that Hannah was certainly a determined and forthright woman and did not care as much about the punishment as standing up for herself. Usually one offence could be seen by many as keeping someone in line. Well that didn't work with Hannah. Let's not forget that Hannah was in the Parramatta Female Factory on 27 October 1827 when the riot took place and noting her forthright character, it is more likely than not she would have been in the thick of the action and with women from all Classes 1st, 2nd and 3rd broke out of the Factory by breaking down the gates to obtain food in nearby Parramatta, in response to the deliberately corrupt short rationing, overwhelming overcrowding and extremely harsh conditions⁷.

On that note, I think I should describe our little Hannah. Hannah was only 5' 1 ¾ ", with a marked, ruddy and freckled complexion, her flowing dark brown hair tucked into her bonnet and illuminating her face with her bright and light hazel eyes. Hannah had a raised mole on the outer corner of her left eye, and another mole on the right

² Irish Convicts to NSW by Peter Mayberry (pcug.org.au) accessed 21 January 2021 and Convict Records: Hannah Jefferies accessed on 21 January 2021

³ Australia, List of Convicts with Particulars, 1788-1842 - Hannah Jefferies 1825

⁴ Australian Convict Transportation Registers – Other Fleets & Ships, 1791-1868 - Hannah Jefferies 1825

⁵ Microfiche of the Parramatta Female Factory compiled by Joan Reese and Joan Reese's NSW Colonial Secretary's In Letters 1826 – 1895 CD-ROM and additional information supplied from research conducted by descendent Michael Dwyer on 5 December 2020.

⁶ NSW, Australia, Convict Indents, 1788-1842 for Hannah Jefferies

⁷ Conviction (2015) The Rowan Tree, Sydney, Australia (for an account of the 1827 Riot at the Parramatta Female Factory)

cheek with a flat nose and a scar on under lip, a wart on back of right wrist⁸. Although small in stature, Hannah was a feisty little character, and you could say not easily pushed around.

Upon release from the Parramatta Female Factory, Hannah made an Application to Marry dated 23 Jan 1832 to a farmer – William Coleman, however, this was refused as the records showed Hannah was already and still married to a James Churches⁹. It is mentioned that James Churches was supposed to have followed Hannah to Australia as a convict himself, but no records can be found (at this stage by the writer).

However, Hannah's love for William was such she did not worry about being married in a church and actually cohabited with William Coleman. They had three children and were eventually married in 1850¹⁰.

William and Hannah's children were: Sarah Caroline Coleman, 1832-1913 who married Joseph Prior Philpot and had 4 children. Joseph died in 1859 and she married John Grose and had four children. John died and she married John Page and they had two children (10 children in total)¹¹; Caroline Coleman, 1833-1905, married William Brazier (1818-1882) and had 13 children¹²; William Henry Charles Coleman, 1834 – 1900, married Sarah Sloane and they had 13 children¹³.

Hannah had a total of 36 grandchildren which seems actually astounding. Imagine the Christmas Dinner! Birthdays! Holidays! It would be a spectacle just to get them together around a dinner table.

Hannah died at Nubrygyn, New South Wales in 1872 aged 76 years and her husband William died in 1883 aged 77 years. Below is the list of names of those buried at Nubrygyn Cemetery.

Hannah Jefferies would have been torn at the separation of her first-born child and I can't imagine how she coped with the tragedy. However, her fighting spirit was evident and she endured the harsh punishments in the Australian Colony to finally marry and raise a family in country New South Wales. I, or can I say we, hope that Hannah lived a fulfilling life and was able to recover from those early tragedies in her life and thankfully to her children was able to bring 36 children into the world, that otherwise would not have been born.

14



⁸ NSW, Certificate of Freedom No. 31/1097 – 2 November 1831 for Hannah Jeffries

⁹ NSW, Application to Marry (Prisoners Marriages Refused) – January 1832 for Hannah Jefferies

¹⁰ NSW, Births, Deaths and Marriages – Family History Search at bdm.nsw.gov.au accessed on 21 January 2021 – 467/1850 V1850467 36B – COLEMAN, WILLIAM married JEFFRIES, ANN at MM (Code – Church of England at Montefiores, Wellington, NSW).

¹¹ Information gained from a paid subscription of Ancestry.com on 21 January 2021

¹² Information gained from a paid subscription of Ancestry.com on 21 January 2021

¹³ Information gained from a paid subscription of Ancestry.com on 21 January 2021

¹⁴ Picture of commemorative headstone at Nubrygyn Cemetery, downloaded on 21 Jan 2021 from: <https://austcemindex.com/image?code=qOvGqCZC4o1k4G2zXtofAQ%3D%3D>

SERENDIPITY - DISCOVERING OUR CONNECTIONS & THE UNEXPECTED

by Janice Ruse Huntington

The day after the distribution of the November - December Newsletter, we received an email from a rather excited PFFF member saying she was “gobsmacked” to find the *Descendant’s Corner* article on Catherine Boyle which was written by fellow PFFF member Yvonne Davidson. With little hesitation, both members were asked if they would like to have each other’s contact details and after an enthusiastic “yes”, they were put in touch to share their family research and to delight in discovering they have a common ancestor!

A Very Personal Serendipity

James Ruse is believed to have carved his own headstone, evidenced by the colloquial spelling peculiar to his Cornish upbringing, for example, ‘*I sowl the Forst Grain*’ [sic], ‘*now with my Hevnlly Father I hope ever to remain.*’ Read the whole headstone for the best effect. James was obviously literate, but not proficient.

It was reported in a news clipping of 1925, that a man named Michael Shea who filled in the date of James’ death, shaped the slab, touched up the inscription and smoothed the grain of stone on which James had carved his own memorial.

I had James Ruse’s headstone removed after shocking vandalism at St John’s Campbelltown Cemetery, where the Ruse graves, incredibly, escaped destruction. When it was relocated to safety, but still accessible at the Campbelltown and Airs Historical Society Museum, there was no evidence of Shea’s name carved on the base of the headstone, which might have been expected. However, if Shea had merely made a few corrections and tidied up the stone, he may not have taken credit for the creation of it.

Serendipity stepped in not so very long ago when another descendant and I visited the graves of James and Elizabeth Ruse, as we have frequently done. This time however, we noticed an overturned headstone laying on the ground near the Ruse headstones...facedown...signed at the bottom... SHEA.

From this unusual circumstance, we know that there was a man named Shea around at the time of James Ruse’s death to fill in the final details of his life.

Always look at your surroundings for clues!

Janice Ruse Huntington



Janice at the grave of James and Elizabeth Ruse - photograph by Quentin Jones courtesy SMH

We would welcome your “serendipities”. Please email Janice, at parramattafemalefactoryfriends@gmail.com

ADVOCACY CORNER & SITE UPDATES

by Ronda Gaffey

To date, there is no news regarding the DA approval for the proposed Western Sydney Startup Hub (WSSH) at the Female Factory site. We continue with our advocacy for appropriate adaptive re-use of the Factory buildings within this National Heritage Listed Parramatta Female Factory and Institutions Precinct.

Demolition of non-heritage items in the Gipps Yard (Artisan’s Yard) at the factory site and near the Roman Catholic Orphan School c1840 (the former Parramatta Girls’ Home), on Fleet Street, is completed. A Parramatta Girls’ Home Memorial and Garden is planned for this site.



Roman Catholic Orphan School, Fleet Street



Artist’s Impression - ParraGirls Memorial and Garden; Family & Community Services - NSW Government.

In late December PFFF were informed by Infrastructure NSW that conservation work is planned for the former Hospital Kitchen Block (c104) and replacement of the slate roof. Scaffolding will be in place until April, weather permitting.

Some further archaeological investigations are planned for early 2021 around the Hospital Kitchen Annexe (104a), the Hospital Kitchen Block (104) and Asylum Ward (107) - all of which are within the Factory footprint and, location for the proposed WSSH and café.



104a Hospital Kitchen Annexe c1892 - factory footprint



104 Hospital Kitchen Block (c1892) female factory footprint



The Female Factory 3rd Class Yard and right, Asylum Ward 107 (c 1876) which is the location of the proposed WSSH.