



**PARRAMATTA FEMALE FACTORY FRIENDS INC.
NEWSLETTER - ISSUE NO: 69 May - June 2026**

Email: contact@parramattafemalefactoryfriends.com.au or PO Box 2489 North Parramatta 1750

PFFF website: parramattafemalefactoryfriends.com.au

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pfffriends/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/parramattafemalefactoryfriends/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/pfffriends/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCON2Yp3db1AgVLHc7JdmXxQ>

Pinterest: <https://www.pinterest.com.au/parramattafemalefactoryfriends/>

Ph: 0456 787 252



The Parramatta Female Factory - Augustus Earle 1826 - nla.pic-an 2818460 National Library of Australia (NLA).

Patrons: Meg Keneally & Thomas Michael Keneally AO
President: Gay Hendriksen; **Vice President/Technical Officer/Tour Coordinator:** Kevin Dodds; **Public Officer/Treasurer:** Sharyn Byrne; **General Secretary:** Jane Clain;
Committee: Site Watch: Judith Dunn OAM; **Publicity/Newsletter Editor:** Ronda Gaffey; **Membership Secretary:** Lorraine Henshaw; **Minutes Secretary/Guest Speaker Coordinator:** Lyn Watkins

2026 - Next Bi-monthly Members' Meeting: Friday 19th June at 12pm - 1pm followed by afternoon tea with Guest Speaker at 1.30pm.
Venue: PFFF Rooms, 5 Fleet Street, North Parramatta.
Parking available at Parramatta Leagues Club Car Park.
Parramatta Light Rail from Parramatta Square to Ngara - short walk to site.

Content

President.....
 Noticeboard.....
 Heritage Festival.....
 'Our Girls' - the 'new' Factory.....
 Research Centre Muster & History Bytes.....
 Guest Speaker Report.....
 Workshop Alerts!.....
 PFFF Calendar 2026.....

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Factory Friends,

As I walk around the Female Factory in the midst of Autumn, I see the Jacaranda trees losing their leaves, the Stone Pine shaking off the last of the pine cones and the Bunyas standing tall. It reminds me not only of the changes of the seasons, but the changes the buildings have gone through and what the surrounds might look like in 50 years. On this note, our advocacy is ramping up to ensure the Factory and surrounds have the best chance of survival into the future.



We have been working hard on objections to development submissions that keep coming, but we are focusing on future management of the site and World Heritage. With regard to this, we are committing to an action on the 18th of June presenting a further petition to our parliamentary representatives. This will be a visible action. We want to highlight it in the community and invite you, your friends and contacts to participate. For details, I will be sending out information about where and when soon. We will also engage the media. Management of the site and World Heritage are essential actions for us.

We will also be alert to critical developments and North Parramatta rezoning decisions.

Our participation in the 2026 Heritage Festival (National Trust) went very well with a fabulous talk by Christine Yeats at our last meeting. We then contributed to the Department of Planning and Development event, providing a talk by Judith Dunn OAM on *Unknown Pioneer Women*, opening the Research Centre, the *Norah's and Sarah's Ye Olde Curiosity Shoppe*, the *Matron Gordon Tearooms* with a sausage sizzle and hosting regular site tours. A huge thank you to all those who volunteered on the day.

Our next social event will be our Members' Morning Tea on Saturday 13th June, always an enjoyable event. Our next guest speaker Mike Traynor, will be looking at the sea voyage to Port Jackson (19th Century) from a human perspective; we will continue the craft workshops (straw plaiting and craft circle) and a workshop on tracing your female ancestors with a focus on convicts.

We continue to have a fabulous tour offer and at our rooms there are displays, merchandise and a tearoom where you can just chill out as you enjoy your Female Factory visit and of course, the Research Centre.

Finally, a warm welcome to new members: *Linda Swinfield, Maree Woods, Allan Murphy, Sue Baker, Catriona Sviderskas, Jen Myer, Deb Phali, Meegan Bryant, Rhonda Kroehnert and Teena Lamb.*

All the best and I look forward to seeing you soon.

Gay Hendriksen President PFFF



PFFF Research Centre

Heritage Festival, 2026

Vale Nicolas Couronne

It was with much sadness PFFF learned of the sudden death of Nicolas Couronne. In late February, Nicolas was returning to Mauritius from Geneva when he suffered a medical episode. Our deepest sympathy is extended to his family and to his friends in Mauritius and in Australia.



Nicolas's biography of Constance Couronne, the youngest Parramatta Female Factory woman, *Le Regard de l'Ancestre Esclave - The Gaze of the Enslaved Ancestor*, was launched on 2nd February 2026 in Mauritius. This biography is a fine legacy for a man who was so committed to telling Constance's story.

NOTICEBOARD - DATES FOR YOUR DIARY - 2026

- * Share the passion and share the stories! Our next Members' Morning Tea is **Saturday 13th June - 10.30am** - [RSVP Lorraine. membership@parramattafemalefactoryfriends.com.au](mailto:membership@parramattafemalefactoryfriends.com.au)
- * What does the Parramatta Female Factory and Institutions Precinct 'demand'? **MONEY! MANAGEMENT! & A MUSEUM!** Join us in the **PARRAMATTA ACTION** when we present a petition to the Federal Member and State Member for Parramatta on **Thursday 18th June....more details soon!**
- * The next Bi-monthly meeting will be: **Friday 19th June** at 12pm followed by afternoon tea at 1pm and at 1.30pm Guest Speaker Mike Traynor - the topic: *From Portsmouth to Parramatta* - all welcome.

HERITAGE FESTIVAL (National Trust) 2026

Every year, open day at the PFF&IP brings further public recognition to this highly significant site. This year proved to be most successful with a steady flow of visitors and descendants of Factory women. The day was facilitated by site management, Planning & Development NSW (PDNSW) and offered a range of activities.

Well done to all PFFF volunteers - the guides, the catering, the sales and Research Centre teams - a special thanks to Gay, Kevin, Ronda, Lorraine, Jane, Kerima-Gae, Martin, Eileen, Jeanette, Mel, Kaye, Gerry, Pip, Christine, Ange, and to Judith for her talk. Thank you to Paquita Wiesner and PDNSW for facilitating the day.



Photography: PFFF

The 'new' Factory, built opposite the Governor's Quarry, meant many changes for the convict women.

All unassigned convict women brought to the new Factory and Barracks at Parramatta, would not have been impressed by the imposing building complex and walled compound. They had already been punished having been transported and they were again to be kept behind high stone walls and under lock and key - here, their freedom was to be curtailed. They had to earn their way out of the Factory system¹.

Their lives were now regulated with strict rules governing every aspect of life within the Factory and Barracks. Initially there were two classes which meant the women were separated according to their conduct. By 1826 there were three classes established as a way of managing the women - it was a system of promotion and demotion, of reward and punishment.

On arrival at the Factory, women were allocated to a class according to their 'status' - a woman's previous conduct on the voyage to Port Jackson or in the Colony, mattered. There were three classes - 1st class, 2nd class and 3rd class or 'criminal class'. The belief was that the worst of the women could be kept from influencing others.

The women were distinguished by their clothing, they had different kitchens, ate in separate dining rooms, worked in their dedicated 'class' work room and had separate sleeping quarters; 1st and 2nd class slept in the main Barracks and 3rd Class in quarters built closer to the river. Different yards were also allocated to each class as well as the 'privies'².

Women in 1st Class were awaiting assignment to service or, reassignment. Women were assigned on multiple occasions. One example is Mary Ahern aged 20, a dairymaid per *Palambam 1831*, who on arrival was 'disposed of' to Wm. Hayes of Eastern Creek but she was returned to the Factory only to be sent to Mr. C. Gold of Brickfield Hill, 'to wash etc.'. She was deemed 'useless in service'.

Mary was returned to 1st Class on two occasions before being shipped off to Newcastle 'to be paraded in the usual way', that is, she was selected to participate in the 'marriage line-up'. Mary was married within a few months and was 'out' of the Factory system.

Women in 2nd Class were on probation and may have either been demoted from 1st Class or promoted from 3rd Class. Women who were pregnant, perhaps ill or injured, were placed in 2nd Class as well as women who had been returned from assignment for minor offences. Women who arrived in the Colony with children too young to be sent to an orphan school, were also placed in 2nd Class.

References:

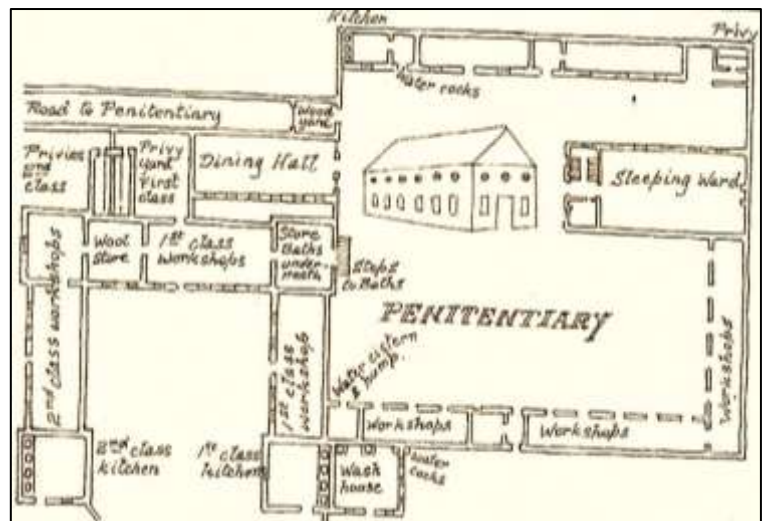
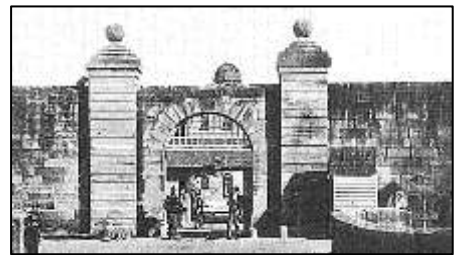
Mathews, Anne and Matthews, Beth; *Our Girls* - unpublished work sourced from original papers SRNSW;

¹Parramatta Female Factory by Augustus Earle c1826 NLA; Photo Factory Gates - SAG;

²Kerr, James Semple, *Design for Convicts* - diagram, Parramatta Female Factory based on plan by Wm. Buchanan, 1833;

Mary Ahern - family history notes - J.Gaffey and R.Gaffey; Salt, Annette, *These Outcast Women*; Hale & Iremonger, 1984.

1.



2.

Women in 3rd Class³ were deemed incorrigible - it comprised women who had committed a serious offence in the Colony and been sentenced by the court or put under punishment by the Matron or the Factory Board of Management. Common offences included theft, refusal to work or neglect of work, destruction of property, fighting, disobedience, drunkenness and repeated insolence.

3.



Research has found any number of women who were repeat offenders. Perhaps one of the most 'notorious' of all is Mary Corcoran per *Hooghly* 1831. From the time of her arrival until 1836, Mary was returned to the Factory at least twelve times - her crimes included being 'at large', being 'abusive and in liquor', 'insolence and disorderly' and 'improper conduct'. Mary's last assignment was in June 1838 - she was returned to the Factory, 'never to be assigned'.

Mary had challenged the system and the system had given up on her changing her ways - Mary received her Certificate of Freedom in 1838 and in June 1839, she was given a position at the Factory, 'in charge of the laundry' - her behaviour was noted as 'well behaved'. In February 1840, she was appointed to a more substantive Factory position as Sub-Matron at a salary of £75 per annum - for Mary it was quite a turnaround in her turbulent life.

For the convict women, the class system was intended to provide incentive - good behaviour was rewarded; across the classes, the work was different and there were other privileges. Women in 1st Class were allowed visitors and could attend church on Sundays - they worked sewing slop clothing, straw plaiting and in all stages of cloth production from scouring wool to weaving.

For 2nd Class women, work was primarily laundry, a Factory 'mainstay' and source of income. To be 'put to the tub' was tedious hard work and not without its dangers with many women suffering scalds from boiling water and skin irritations.

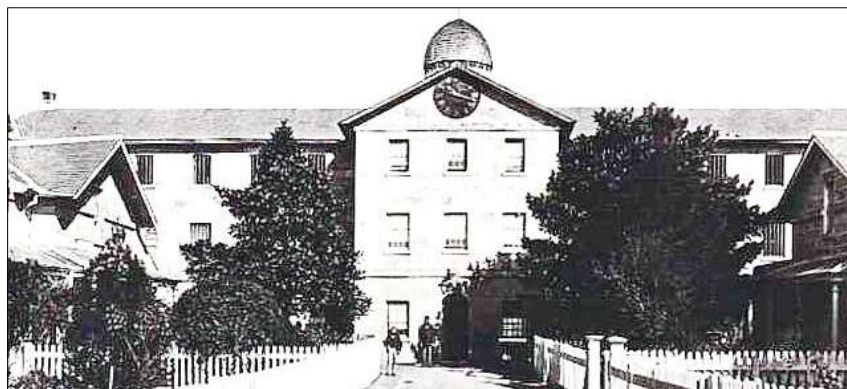
4.



Women in 3rd Class were put to hard labour breaking stones for road base, wood chopping and picking oakum (removing tar from rope used in *caulking* - making ships water tight). The women were humiliated and punished further by having their hair closely cropped or heads shaved. Governor Gipps later put a stop to this 'barbaric practice' and introduced a system of solitary confinement instead (c1838) with a new cell block being constructed.

Ultimately, the 'new' Factory provided much needed accommodation and regular work, but it was also a gaol and punishment was harsh - the women were defiant as evidenced in the number of absconders and the riots in response to their living and working conditions. Despite the chronic issues of overcrowding, faults with the assignment system and periods of mismanagement, it served the Colony for twenty-seven years, 1821-1848.

5.



Photographs: ³ 3rd Class Sleeping Quarters & Penitentiary; ⁴ Extract from cartoon - *Ways and Means - the Last Shift* c1840. SLNSW; ⁵ the Female Factory Barracks - c1870, Parramatta Female Factory.

The Research Centre is continuing to be busy with Factory research, inquiries and visitors. Our digital projects also include ordering our current digital collection and continuing our State Archives project this year. Our Creative Initiatives planning is well under way with the next event being an exhibition in 2027. Thank you to our wonderful research team.

We are focusing on four special projects at the moment. One is the 1827 riot, as we move towards its Bicentenary in 2027. There is a project called *the 111* which is researching the women who moved from the first experimental Factory to the purpose-built Factory. There is a visual upgrade of the *Herstory* displays. Registration is well underway for our CD, microfilm and microfiche collections. Our systems and inquiries are steaming ahead. Old newspapers are being registered for Female Factory information. All in all, hard work is continuing on our Research Centre resources.

We are also busy installing a new shelving system.

Our Workshop Program will continue with a follow up to our very successful Straw Plaiting Workshop earlier in the year and a Research Workshop on finding your female ancestors with a focus on convicts. Research inquiries continue, local and interstate.

Don't forget our Bicentenary Time Capsule. There would be a list of the Friends but what would be nice also would be a list of women and associated people for the Factory and their descendants as well as those who honour the women and the histories, so if you want to be included contact the Research Centre with your information or email it to gayhendriksen@parramattafemalefactoryfriends.com.au with 'Time Capsule' in the title.

Our Factory women's list continues to grow so please keep those names and stories coming in. Given there are over 5,000 names we really need your help to give back the life stories to these names. You can give directly to us at the Research Centre or email it to:

gayhendriksen@parramattafemalefactoryfriends.com.au and put 'Research Centre' in the subject field.

If you are interested in being involved with the Research Centre you can email me or visit us, on a Friday. If you would like to visit and explore our resources, you are welcome 10am to 2pm on Fridays.

A day in the life of...

This newspaper article shows the conditions and process of receiving a convict servant in the Colony of NSW, 1st April 1826 - from the Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser (1803-1842).



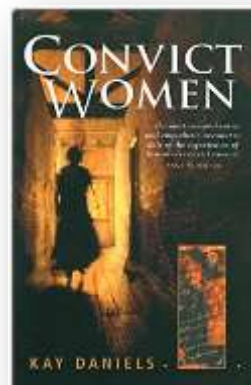
General Regulations, for the Guidance of the Board appointed to report on the Applications for Convict Servants and Labourers.

1st. **U**PON the Arrival of a Ship with Convicts, the Principal Superintendent shall, as soon as they have been mustered, prepare and lay before the Board a correct List, classing the Individuals according to their Trades, &c. as likewise a List of the Applicants for Servants or Labourers, to be made out in the Order in which the Applications have been received. He is also to prepare and submit similar Lists, whenever the Number of disposable Prisoners shall amount to Ten.

2d. In assigning Convicts, Preference will be given to the Claims of new Settlers, as their being enabled to proceed in improving or stocking their Farms must depend on their receiving the necessary Assistance in this Respect.

Good read and online history adventures

Good read..... A good read this time is *Convict Women* by Kay Daniels. This is a classic read on convict women and a great way to get a context for the convict women and so the Female Factory Women.



HISTORY BYTES

<https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/male-orphan-school/>

This is a good summary of the Male Orphan School where the boys of the Female Factory women went while the women were serving their sentence.

Of course you can find digital resources like this at the Friends rooms including the PFFF Research Centre and Babette Smith Collection – where we can help you help yourself in your history and family history discovery!

GUEST SPEAKER REPORT - Christine Yeats FRAHS - Registers of the Forgotten...



It was with pleasure we took our seats at the last meeting to hear Christine Yeats speak on the topic, *Registers of the Forgotten, 19th Century Asylum and Mental Health Facilities*.

No-one wants to find their ancestor in an asylum but Christine gave examples of the unlikely causes of becoming a patient in the many mental health facilities of the 1800s.

Starting with the first Asylum at Castle Hill¹ in 1811, we learned of a number of sites to search when looking for that lost ancestor. Besides the known institutions, there are admission registers, Court warrants and police apprehension records to name a few. Christine also advised to check gaol records as the criminally insane were sometimes lodged there rather than a health facility.

1.



Christine's fresh look at this subject has given us new places to research for that elusive person we may be trying to track down. She is a professional historian and noted speaker with a wealth of knowledge, so we were very grateful she could find the time to deliver her interesting and informative address to us.

Judith Dunn OAM

¹ The Old Asylum, Castle Hill - 1811-1826 - engraving.

More dates for your Diary! Workshop Alerts!

Friday 26th June

Straw Plaiting, Braiding & Craft Circle with Lyn Watkins

Friday 24th July - Workshop

Finding your Female Ancestors with Danielle Lautrec.

More details soon!



MONTHLY COMMITTEE MEETINGS 10.30AM.

BI-MONTHLY MEMBERS' MEETING 12 - 1PM FOLLOWED BY AFTERNOON TEA. GUEST SPEAKER 1:30PM.

PFFF RESEARCH CENTRE IS OPEN 10AM - 2PM EVERY FRIDAY. RESEARCH ASSISTANCE BY APPOINTMENT.

REGULAR & BESPOKE SITE TOURS - BY APPOINTMENT. CONTACT: TOUR COORDINATOR: contact@parramattafemalefactoryfriends.com.au

2026	PFFF MEETINGS - DATES &	EVENTS & ANNIVERSARIES
May	<p>Newsletter 15th Committee Meeting</p>	
June	<p>Friday 19th Committee Meeting Guest Speaker General Meeting <u>Saturday 13th June - Members' Morning Tea</u> <u>Thursday 18th June ACTION DAY in Parramatta</u> <u>Workshop - Friday 26th Braiding & Craft Circle</u></p>	<p>AGM PREPARATION</p>
July	<p>Newsletter 17th Committee Meeting <u>Open Day - Macquarie Anniversary Fri 11th July</u> <u>Workshop - Friday 24th - Finding your Female</u> <u>Ancestors - Danielle Lautrec</u></p>	<p>Thurs. July 9th 208th Anniversary - Gov. Macquarie laid the foundation stone for the <i>new</i> Factory.</p>
August	<p>Friday 21st Committee Meeting AGM</p>	<p>History Week (August) TBA Parramatta Open TBC</p>
September	<p>Newsletter 18th Committee Meeting <u>Workshop - 25th TBA</u> <u>Member's Morning Tea</u></p>	<p>18th - 20th September NSW & ACT Assoc. of Family History Soc. Annual Conference -Port Macquarie</p>
October	<p>Friday 16th Committee Meeting Guest Speaker: General Meeting RIOT DAY -199th Anniversary Event 24th Oct The Annual Thomas Keneally Lecture -</p>	<p>Riots: 27.10.1827; 11.10.36</p>
November	<p>Newsletter 20th Committee Meeting <u>Workshop Fri 13th Saturday 14th - Craft Circle</u></p>	<p>Parramatta Foundation Day Festival TBC Riot: 29.11.1831</p>
December	<p>Friday 11th Committee Meeting General Meeting</p>	<p>*(2nd Friday) PFFF Christmas Afternoon Tea</p>

The Parramatta Asylum c1870
 Fleet Street, North Parramatta.

