Editorial

Saying thank you and plans for the future.

In this issue of Chainletter we pay tribute to the volunteers and researchers who have made this entire project possible.

We have made history in doing history. There is extraordinary interest around Australia and overseas in the work of the volunteers. And this is the time to honour them.

This issue contains a working paper of a presentation we have been invited to make at a workshop in Amsterdam in February 2014. It is a history of the project and all the university staff involved.

It also tells the story of the technology and the research strategies we employed. And of the mistakes we inevitably made!

In 2014 we can continue researching ships and hope to finish all the women and all the Irish ships, as well as complete many more English men’s ships.

We will not be recruiting new convict researchers for the ships, BUT WE WILL BE RECRUITING NEW VOLUNTEERS for the next phase of Founders & Survivors—Convicts to Diggers. Rebecca Kippen has a call for new volunteers on page 3. Volunteers will be provided with a 12 months Ancestry subscription and we are looking to hold our first training sessions in late April. See the next Chainletter.

2014 will also be the year during which we slowly transfer the full database to a new platform that can be hosted by the Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office.

New entries from the public to the convict database will from now need to be submitted via email to Colette McAlpine for women convicts and Maureen Mann for men. Instructions and a pro-forma will be available from the front page of the FAS website in the New Year.

Compliments of the Season,

Janet McCalman
Volunteers’ Corner

Completion Report
December 2013

Ships Project

The ships project reference population based on 91 shiploads of convicts is now checked, cleaned and coded for place of birth and conviction. It comprises 12,068 men or around 25 per of those with usable records, and 5,549 women or around 45 per cent of the women. In addition, we have another 6,188 (at last count) of convicts from other ships, most of whom have been traced to death.

The reference population provides the core sample for the project. We can impute missing data from a comparison between the characteristics of those successfully traced to a death and those who disappeared from sight.

For men, the likelihood of being traced was higher for those who were older on arrival, had longer sentences (and therefore more likely to die under sentence), who were English- or Scottish-born, convicted outside London, who had trade occupations, both parents alive, who were convicted of the theft of food or animals and who had no conduct offences under sentence. In other words, those we could find were the better behaved, the more skilled, the more emotionally stable and the more likely to recover ‘respectability’ after release from servitude.

That in turn suggests that the convicts whose deaths we could find were more likely to have lived longer than those who disappeared—usually through changing their name.

We will report in detail on our findings once the results have been published in academic journals. If we publish in the public domain first, we can’t re-publish the data in a refereed publication, and once we have published, people who wish to cite our data have a reliable source.

We have sufficient funds for the core team of ships researchers to continue to research ships during 2014. We hope to finish all the women for the Female Convicts Research Centre, so that they have the deaths and marriages confirmed. The FCRC will continue with full transcription of the conduct records and our data will be copied over to their Filemaker Pro database. Colette McAlpine will continue to be in charge of that project.

We hope to finish more men’s ships, especially the Irish ships and a wider range of ships in the 1830s and early 1840s. Maureen Mann in Launceston has volunteered to manage the men’s ships’ new entries for us.

We hope that during 2014 we will be able to transfer our Founders & Survivors ‘life course’ database—the one you are all familiar with—to a new home in the Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office.

New entries on convicts from outside researchers should be emailed to Colette McAlpine for women on colette.mcalpine@gmail.com and Maureen Mann for men on camaden@netspace.net.au. A pro-forma layout for the email will be loaded on to the front page of Founders & Survivors to guide contributors. Colette and Maureen will check and authenticate the new entry and load it up when ready.

We were unsuccessful in our first attempt to secure funding from the Australian Research Council for the next phase of the project, Diggers to Veterans. Funding was tight this round because of the rollout of the Future Fellowships program and the new federal government’s changed priorities for universities and research. We came close and will try again next year.

Meanwhile we have a new interim project: Convicts to Diggers

As you can see from our logo on the website, we have always planned to connect the convicts with their descendants in the First AIF.

AND WE NEED NEW VOLUNTEERS

Rebecca Kippen has an article on page 3 which explains what we need to do and what volunteers could work on.

But the rationale of linking the Convicts and the Diggers is that in many respects the convict records and the AIF service records are similar: they are both intimate records of young men (and women) subjected to a closely observed stress regime.

Of course there are huge differences between penal servitude and war service, but the similarities are that the authorities measured their bodies and human capital, and recorded their reactions under the discipline of a total institution.

Convicts to Diggers seeks to connect the diggers to their convict ancestors, with most emphasis on those members of the AIF recorded as being born in Tasmania. The key question is were the convict descendants in the AIF different from or similar to the descendants of free settlers in terms of stature, education, social status and geographical distribution? Or had the two populations largely converged by 1914? Were the AIF grandsons taller than their convict fathers, grandfathers and great grandfathers? Did they behave differently under stress?

Nowhere in the world can such a detailed cross generational analysis be made! In researching this history we are also making history.
Call for Volunteers

TRACING TASMANIAN-BORN WORLD WAR I ENLISTEES

Rebecca Kippen (University of Melbourne)

We are seeking volunteers for the next stage of the Founders and Survivors project: Convicts and Diggers: A Demography of Life Courses, Families and Generations.

Our aim is to link the convicts transported to Tasmania with their Tasmanian-born descendants who served in the First Australian Imperial Force (AIF) in World War One. This will allow us to explore relationships between heredity, early-life experiences, individual and familial characteristics, protracted stress, family formation, and upward mobility.

We want volunteers to trace backwards the Tasmanian-born AIF. This will entail identifying ancestors (parents, grandparents, great-grandparents) who lived in Tasmania, using information already gathered in the Ships Project, Tasmanian birth, death and marriage registers, the Tasmanian convict records, and other online sources. We would also like basic information (e.g. age, height, weight, marital status) of the enlistees to be transcribed from the online service records. Information would be entered into a standardised spreadsheet (similar to that used for the Ships Project). We guess that around half the Tasmanian-born AIF had convict ancestry and are very interested in (a) whether we are right and (b) the lives of the convict-descended AIF were different from those who did not have convict ancestry. Did convict ancestry matter, and in what way?

We have a list of around 15,000 Tasmanian-born AIF provided by the National Archives of Australia. As with the Ships Project, we would divide these into manageable groups of 50-150 people, based on World War One Units (or companies in the case of Units in which many Tasmanians served, such as the 12th, 15th, 26th and 40th Battalions).

Unfortunately we have not yet been awarded funding for the follow-up stage to Convicts and Diggers, which is Diggers to Veterans: Risk, Resilience and Recovery. However if we are successful for 2015, then we will also add information on the life outcomes after war service of both Tasmanian- and Victorian-born AIF.

We are hoping to start with at least twelve volunteers who would be willing to attend an information session in either Melbourne or Hobart in April 2014. To register interest, or for more information, please contact Dr Rebecca Kippen on rkippen@unimelb.edu.au.
HONOUR ROLL

We thank the following volunteers and researchers who have made such an extraordinary contribution to the history of Australia’s Founders and Survivors.

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Claudine Chionh
Robin Petterd

And our amazing system designer
Sandra Silcot
This paper will be delivered at an international workshop on population reconstruction at the International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam in February 2014.

The Australian colonies were settled using the forced labour of convicts. Between 1803 and 1853 almost 73,000 men, women and children were transported to an island prison on Van Diemen’s Land, now the Australian state of Tasmania. The convicts’ discipline, health and labour were managed by a ‘paper panopticon’ and those convict records are recognized in UNESCO’s Memory of the World.1

The Tasmanian records, in particular, are arguably the most detailed and intimate records of human beings’ bodies and behaviour in the nineteenth-century world. Since 2008, the Australian project Founders & Survivors: Australian Life Courses in Historical Context has been building a prosopographical life course dataset of that population captured by transportation, starting from the surviving records: an archive that comprises around 68,000 individuals.2

Such a project was impossible before the Internet and the explosion of digitized historical records made available by both government agencies and commercial genealogy enterprises. Information technology has enabled research on a scale that was unimaginable twenty years ago, yet the project has still needed thousands of human hours to decipher, transcribe, interpret, code and connect data: machines could help us create the data libraries, but not in the end, do the research. This paper outlines the design and conduct of the project and links to web documents on the information technology.

Penal transportation was forced labour so that convicts’ work experience and potential usefulness to the colonial economy were recorded, records of their work assignments were created and they were subjected to a muster or census periodically. Finally, there was the conduct record that tracked their ‘moral career’ through servitude, recording infractions against convict discipline, secondary crimes and punishment. These are complex documents, created from the reports sent in weekly to the Convict Department in Hobart by the police magistrates who administered the system of justice.3

Working paper: not for quoting

A HISTORY of the FOUNDERS & SURVIVORS LIFE COURSE PROJECT
Building a Life Course Dataset from Convicts Records

Janet McCalman, University of Melbourne
The Tasmanian records fall into two systemic categories: the Assignment period (1803-1841) where the management of convict labour was outsourced to private employers, and the Probation period (1841-1853) where convicts served a term of probation under penal supervision before being assigned to the labour market. The records for these periods differ in their detail and organization. There are also musters (the convict censuses), records of permission to marry while still under the system, and inquests. Other records of tickets of leave, pardons, absconders, secondary offences and complaints were published in the police gazettes of both Tasmania and Victoria and were also published in the newspapers.

In addition to the convict department’s records created in the colony, indents and descriptions were recorded before embarkation and are mostly held in the National Archives of the United Kingdom. These include some convicts who were withdrawn from the voyage and never embarked, but there was an attempt to reconcile the records created in the place of sentencing and in the penal colony. In addition there are hulk records and prison records held in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Among the richest records are the ships’ surgeons’ medical logs for the voyage that record individual medical cases, individual character assessments as well as general remarks on health and behaviour at sea.

The task of data capture was therefore complicated by the multiple sources for each convict. If a life course were to be assembled for an individual, it would need to incorporate these various documents. The next task of the project was to transcribe identifying data for each convict from descriptions lists and indents to define the population for study. Trained transcribers, mostly post-graduate history students from the University of Tasmania, did this work under the rigorous supervision of Dr Alison Alexander. They transcribed the assignment records, recording name, place of birth, place of conviction, crime, sentence, age on arrival in the colony, tattoos and religion. The assignment records were created in alphabetical volumes that included multiple voyages, hence the finding of a particular convict’s record depended on the Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office (TAHO) index references. For the probation period starting in 1841, record keeping became more elaborate and each voyage was recorded in a single volume, with a convict per page. Finding an individual was easier and the project was fortunate that Dr Deborah Oxley who had amassed an extraordinary database in the 1990s from the indents held in the National Archives, gave permission for it to be incorporated. There were incompatibilities between these two initial data capture projects that have caused technical problems, but the Oxley records included more data on the convicts’ families as recorded in the indent. Since then, Tasmanian project leader, Associate Professor Hamish Maxwell-Stewart has greatly enhanced this dataset in partnership with Dr Trudy Cowley of the Female Convicts Research Group, adding deaths found in the convict system, permissions to marry, conduct records for 1 in 25 of the whole convict population, and records of exit from the system and later crimes. This convict dataset resides at the University of Tasmania and is part of an international partnership of record linkage.

The Founders & Survivors project was also designed to take the life courses of convicts beyond the gaze of the paper panopticon and needed to prepare the data for genealogical and demographic research. Once the convict population’s identification data were transcribed, the data had to be translated into a language that would ensure its sustainable use and flexibility. It needed to be assembled and expressed as a library of life courses that were linked to the specific records of original data. The project, under the guidance of Sandra Silcot and Dr Len Smith, decided to follow the practice of the Old Bailey project and use TEI and XML.

With the unique identifiers for each record for each convict, automated data linkage produced a high level of matching for most voyages, with a manageable residue of mismatches for convicts with the same name and those
whose original records were irregular or missing—a deficiency that was unavoidable in a record system that spanned almost a century and worked 10,000 miles apart and across an island that was in the process of conquest and colonization. The project maintained strict archival standards and transcribed the records as they were found, even if original mistakes were identified.

Likewise the amalgamated database included all the transcribed data as it stood in the original sources. The researcher therefore could sight every scrap of information about that convict in its original form. The research could proceed not just with online access, but with every piece of data extracted from the convict records linked to the image of the original source. This enabled further analysis and coding of the original conduct record, for instance, overcoming the time-consuming and error-prone task of full transcription.

Using the open source program Drupal, a website was designed by the artist Robin Petterd from Hobart and the web designer Claudine Chionh in Melbourne. A workstation was mounted online so that researchers could find a convict, consult the transcriptions of the key data and submit additional information from genealogical and wider historical research and construct a systematic prosopography.

**Tracing Convicts before and after sentence**
The greatest impediments to tracing convicts outside the convict system were aliases and common names, particularly among the Celts of Ireland, Scotland and Wales who had adopted patronyms. Spelling of family names was also unstable—again especially for Gaelic speakers undergoing Anglicization—and for the illiterate and semi-literate. Genealogical research into convicts requires a high level of both genealogical skill and historical imagination and knowledge. Researchers have to second-guess people’s movements around the landscape, through the economy, within family structures and associations. It is an exercise in fuzzy searching, looking for misspellings, slight alterations in spelling, phonetic spelling, deceptions, lies, mistakes and telling omissions. It is also time-consuming and expensive, because outside Tasmania, vital registration certificates have to be purchased from the various state registrars of births, deaths and marriages.

Australian state and federal governments have not kept the household schedules of past censuses, so longitudinal research using nominal census data is impossible. However there is an abundance of other sources that are now accessible online. First, the Australian colonies were early to adopt systematic vital registration: in 1838 in Van Diemen’s Land, just twelve months after it began in England and Wales; in 1853 in Victoria and similarly in New South Wales. Victoria established a system of registration that became a world gold standard when William Henry Archer was able to implement the full regime initially recommended by Dr William Farr for England and Wales. NSW and South Australia followed suit, but not with the rigour of the Victorian system. Victorian birth certificates, for instance, list the mother’s other children, alive and deceased, with ages. Death certificates include full details of the deceased’s place of birth, parents and their occupations, time in Australia broken down into various colonies, marriages (place, age at marriage, name of spouse), children of those marriages, alive and dead with ages. In the case of death certificates, the quality of the information depended (and still does) on the knowledge of the witness or the family history that has been passed down as acceptable. Therefore death certificates often have to be read ‘against the grain’ to find convict pasts that were being rewritten within families and communities.

The FAS Life Course Project Team: from left Dr Len Smith (ANU), Dr Rebecca Kippen, Prof Janet McCalman and Sandra Silcot (University of Melbourne) and (at back) our colleague from Umeå Sweden Dr Per Axelsson.
program that transcribes the text and invites users to correct it, while keeping a wiki-like record of corrections and registered editors.\textsuperscript{14}

**Crowdsourcing**

It was clear from the beginning that the task of tracing large numbers of convicts was impossible without volunteers. Funding to pay research assistants on that scale is unattainable in Australia and we estimate that already the project has captured something like AUD4 million worth of research assistance. Volunteers were also necessary to provide the links from present day families back to convicts who had concealed their past with aliases and false trails. When new funding was awarded in 2011, it became feasible to extend the tracing work to build a systematic reference population by dividing the convict population into historical cohorts created by their shared experience on the convict ship, and researching every convict on that voyage: the Ships Project. This reference population would enable us to assess the significance of those found and those not traced and impute results where necessary.

Over a research period of twenty months, fifty-four volunteers from all states of Australia and even the United Kingdom completed 91 ships from 1812 to 1853, yielding research populations of 12,068 men and 5,549 women, or around 45 per cent of the women and 25 per cent of the men in the convict population with intact records. In addition the database contains another 47,000 records of the one convict that at times was capable of selecting cohorts with specific characteristics: e.g. Lincolnshire convicts who had concealed their past with aliases and false trails. When new funding was awarded in 2011, it became feasible to extend the tracing work to build a systematic reference population by dividing the convict population into historical cohorts created by their shared experience on the convict ship, and researching every convict on that voyage: the Ships Project. This reference population would enable us to assess the significance of those found and those not traced and impute results where necessary.

The project experimented with artificial intelligence, or cluster analysis, using a self-learning algorithm developed by a team at Monash University led by Damminda Alakahoon. This clustering tool is ingenious and very flexible, but it could not work on handwritten text, and the transcribed text proved so variable and unstable that it was scarcely cost effective.\textsuperscript{15} The technique was capable of selecting cohorts with specific characteristics: e.g. Lincolnshire poachers, but its lack of precision and the fuzziness of data entered by many hands over a long historical period meant that it picked up convicts with prior convictions for poaching and missed those where poaching was described differently. The Tasmanian

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**Resources**

The Founders & Survivors project began with a database of births, deaths and marriages for Tasmania from 1838-1899 transcribed twenty years before by Dr Peter Gunn from the original documents held in the Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office. Dr Rebecca Kippen later added to the transcriptions and used that database for her doctoral dissertation on the causes death in nineteenth-century Tasmania.\textsuperscript{13}

This database provides causes of death and some identifying information for individuals—sufficient to find most convicts who died in Tasmania before 1900. Since the mid-1990s digitized pioneer indexes have been available for Tasmania, Victoria, and New South Wales, and since around 2010, Ancestry.com has published them as the Australian Indexes to Births, Deaths and Marriages with a steady updating with new data. Coverage is now good for Victoria and NSW, with deaths publicly searchable until 1985, and marriages and births restricted by privacy legislation to a hundred years after the event. Tasmania is still patchy after 1899. Queensland and South Australia are improving and are better for deaths than other vital events. New Zealand has recently made historical death certificates searchable online, although Ancestry.com does not yet include their index. Ancestry.com has therefore provided quicker access than the use of multiple CDs.

FindMyPast provides the best access to British and Irish data but both companies have database searches that enable searching censuses, births and baptisms, marriages, convictions and time in hulks. FindMyPast has digitized some of the Irish prison registers and its British Papers online has proved very useful, while Ancestry.com has digitized Australian electoral rolls. But the digitization project that has transformed this historical research is the National Library of Australia’s historical newspapers’ database that now covers 518 metropolitan and regional newspapers. The technology is OCR from microfilm that is accompanied by a tidy interactive
database can find discrete cohorts such as blue-eyed male Lincolnshire poachers, but beyond that relational databases are limited in the level of analysis they can enable. Clustering remains useful but was not very helpful for the life course analysis that was the key rationale of this longitudinal study.

Demographic and historical analysis required that the data be categorized into multiple variables, coded for characteristics and outcomes and interpreted according to research hypotheses. These research hypotheses and the coding have to be defended as part of the research process and are particular to the historical period and institutions under examination. Since our interest is in the life course and the effects of different life stages on survival and family formation, we have divided the convicts’ life courses into (1) Life before sentence (2) Life under sentence (3) Life after sentence. Data had to be extracted from the mixture of descriptive and quantitative text collated on a convict, interpreted and coded so that one can infer life course effects.

This coding exercise was conducted by the volunteers using spreadsheets hosted by Google Docs that linked to the record system transcribed and created from the digitised images (pubsearch). The spreadsheets were generated from the convicts on each ship. Each convict’s amalgamated record has a unique id that is hot-linked to the spreadsheet. When researchers worked on a convict, they filled out a new contributed entry (CCC) that recorded life events with source: births, baptisms, marriages, children’s births, residences, occupations, death data, descendants who were found to have served in World War I, linked to their digitized service record in the National Archives of Australia, and finally general biographical data as free text, which most commonly are extracts from the digitized historical newspapers. Many entries are extensive and rich records of life after sentence, and standard historical sourcing has been enforced. The CCC therefore provides a

The Life Course of a successful convict: William Adams, per Agincourt (1844)
textual history of the data found about a convict and his or her descendants, which is then hot-linked to the Google Docs spreadsheet for each ship where that data is summarized numerically and coded.

The volunteers coded the spreadsheet drawing on data from the convict records in pub search and from the digitized images of conduct records, descriptions and appropriation lists. This required considerable paleographic skill and a knowledge of the argot of the penal system. Rather than ask volunteers to transcribe and then code the full conduct record, it was decided that it would be more efficient to ask them to count and code clearly visible events: appearances before a police magistrate which were dated and underlined. Events relating to those like ‘stripes’, days in ‘solitary’ or the ‘cells’ and offences such as ‘insolence’, ‘drunkenness’, ‘refusal to work’ which could be aggregated or recorded for their presence or absence.

They coded for level of insults suffered and recorded offences within the system such as sexual offences and drunkenness that might point to behaviour after sentence. They summarized family formation, mobility, descendants and end of life, details and sources for which were recorded on the CCC life course. Volunteers were trained in regular workshops held in Melbourne, Hobart and Launceston, and a training manual was created using animated screen capture images on Google Docs’ equivalent of PowerPoint. Images were thought to be more effective communication rather than textual instructions. The spreadsheet was large, with 27 columns, variously colour coded for columns that required numbers and columns that contained codes. Coding regimes were detailed on drop down menus for each column for reference and filters applied to reduce mistakes. The spreadsheets, when cleaned, can be exported to SPSS for statistical analysis.

**Crowdsourcing and building a community partnership**
The volunteers were remarkable. They were a highly self-selected group of people, all of them with the instincts of good historians. They were mostly retired from work, and of an age...
to have been schooled in copperplate handwriting (which was phased out in Australian schools in the early 1960s). The project had built a following from newspaper, television and radio publicity because the ‘story’ captured the imagination of many. A full-colour newsletter was produced every four months and distributed online to recruit volunteers, disseminate instructions and report results. It also enabled the volunteers and the research team to publish substantial articles based on the research, with full illustrations. Book reviews and news of other convict projects such as the Female Convict Research Centre and the Port Arthur Historical Centre added to the feast of material reaching a rapidly growing national and international following.17

From the beginning, it was obvious that volunteers should feel part of the research team, share in the planning and reporting, and in the intellectual life of the project. This was sustained by whole day workshops providing lunch and talks, discussion groups and coaching sessions. Each year finished with a small conference and the project will have a final conference in 2014. Volunteers proved to have a wide interest in the historical issues, brought valuable insights and findings, and did some remarkable research into elusive lives. A number have emerged as born history writers and we hope to support some in producing their own books on their ship research. It hardly needs saying that new friendships have been built for everyone.

An exciting late development, through the initiative of Colette McAlpine from the Female Convict History Centre is the relationships she has built with scores of local and family history societies in the United Kingdom. Every day there are emails with information on convicts from county and local records. We achieved our initial dream of a chain across the ‘10,000 miles’ between the ‘Old Dart’ and the Antipodes.18

Colette McAlpine has also enabled a continuing partnership with the Female Convicts Research Centre, so that the two projects are exchanging data and expertise and building complementary datasets.

Lessons learned
The hope of an open-website with contributions from the public was naïve. The problems with spam overwhelmed our technical staff and the system itself, and if the project manages to find a sustainable home, email contributions that are vetted and uploaded by a volunteer research team will have to suffice.

The development of the interface, the data entry forms and the spreadsheet system was iterative and we accumulated some baggage that needs removing. It is very difficult, as with all multiple-user data entry, to maintain consistency, but we are now engaged in a large cleaning and authenticating exercise and have sufficient funds to pay the best volunteers to do this work. Google Docs saved us from building an expensive workstation of our own, and has been cost effective and easy to use. Drupal for the interface has struggled under the load and none of the software proved adequate to the task of managing family trees and relationships.

This we have resolved, with the support of the Australian National Data Service, by customizing a Norwegian open source genealogical program called Yggdrasil. Our system designer, Sandra Silcot, has spent twelve months adapting and extending Yggdrasil so that it can manage and store individuals who are ‘created’ or ‘aggregated’ from the sightings in historical sources and where they can be studied as a population rather than in separate lineages. Underlying this is a program for data linkage called LNKT, developed by Dr John Bass for the Western Australia Health Department.19 These software packages manipulate the data for us, but the matching and discovery, the interpretation and the coding have all needed human beings.

We thank the Australian Research Council, the Australian National Data Service, the Institute for the Broadband Enabled Society and the Tasmanian Archives & Heritage Office.
The high-level architecture of the final database that will be linked to a public portal via the Tasmania Archives and Heritage Office. This will make available to the public the life course histories of the convicts from birth to death and indicate whether descendants have been found. For privacy reasons, descendants’ names and dates will not be made public.
When Selina Langley stood in the dock at the Old Bailey on 19 August 1850 and heard her sentence to seven years’ transportation she could never have imagined her future. Selina became the matriarch of a large Launceston family and perhaps she outlived every other transported woman.

When she was charged, Selina was living with her partner in crime, Charles Wilcox. He too was sentenced to transportation for their joint crime of robbery with violence. What would become of their tiny baby, Charles? What would her new life hold for her? Her partner, Charles, did not arrive to find out.

Little did Selina know that in Tasmania she would be so loved that over one hundred years after her transportation, her granddaughter would still be placing in memoriam notices in the Launceston Examiner on the anniversary of her death—so much did she miss her darling grandma.

Selina died in 1931. Does this make her our last convict standing? The newspaper reported her death referring to her long-term residence in Launceston.

Mrs. Selina Oatway, an old resident of Launceston, passed peacefully away on Saturday morning at the residence of her grand-daughter, Miss Lily Pearson, 58 Tamar-street, after a long illness. She leaves a daughter. Mrs. Ricketts and a son, Mr. William Pearson of Nicholson-street, Melbourne.

Tributes flowed for the old lady, and her family thanked one and all by placing a notice in the newspaper.

The family of the late Mrs. Selina Oatway wish to thank all kind friends for letters, telegrams, cards, and floral tributes and personal expressions of sympathy, especially Dr. Newell. For his attention in the great loss of their loving mother and grandmother. Will one and all accept this is a personal acknowledgment of appreciation.

When Selina arrived on the Aurora in 1851, she stated that she was a housemaid aged 18. Perhaps she passed her birthday on the voyage, as when the 1851 census was recorded at Millbank prison on the night of 30 March, Selina was still 17. She was tiny at 4/9½ and pockmarked. She served her sentence without incident, working in Hobart town, before she married a shoemaker named Charles Pearson in April 1853. She was 21 and pregnant. Her son, Charles who accompanied her on the voyage to Van Diemen’s Land, died at the Convict Nursery when he was just 12 months old.

The growing Pearson family moved between Hobart, Longford, Launceston and Fingal, before finally settling in Launceston. Six mainly unnamed children were registered as born to the couple by 1866. They were still tiny when Charles, aged only 36, died of consumption in the July of 1868. Things had not gone well for Charles. He advertised for staff for his shoemaking business in Fingal in 1867 when he promised best wages and constant work. Later that year, his business was insolvent. When he was buried in the Church of England cemetery in Launceston, his funeral was attended by fellow members of the Loyal Cornwall Lodge of Odd Fellows.

What was Selina to do? From the accounts of the inspector for the Launceston Benevolent Society in 1870, we know that Selina was industrious, endeavouring to manage for her family of five children left living in Balfour Street. The inspector was not so kind, when he visited in October of 1870 to find Selina’s family had expanded. Selina refused to name the father her child and Mr Mason then recommended that the compassionate allowance afforded her be discontinued. Again what was she to do? Her little children prevented her from going out to work. In 1874, the Benevolent Society sent her blankets and later that year the investigator returned to determine whether the rumours that Selina had taken to drink were accurate or not. He noted that the rumours were unfounded.

During the 1870s, Selina used the law to settle her domestic disputes. When one of her neighbours killed a drake belonging to Selina, by dashing it on the ground, Selina took her to court. Ellen Smith had to pay not only the cost of replacing the drake, but also the cost of the hearing. Selina and her daughter-in-law, Louisa Pearson, also appeared in court charged with insulting the other in 1878. Louisa was married to George Smith, a tinsmith, and earlier that year they had named one of their nine children, Emily Selina and Selina had registered the child’s birth. Selina also registered the birth of her granddaughter, Sarah Selina, born to Isabella and John McManus in 1878.

Selina was intimately involved with her...
family, registering several births of her grandchildren. And she was being courted.

Selina remarried in 1885. Her new husband was 41 and a storeman. He said he was a bachelor, but Charles Moses Oatway had married the previous year. What happened to this wife, we do not know. We do know that Selina’s marriage to Charles was not a success. Four years after they married, Charles abandoned Selina who was forced to seek support from the courts. Charles was ordered to provide a home for his wife and one little child. We do not know the name of this child. Charles left the state and settled in NSW. Selina was by then in her mid 50’s. She probably lied about her age when she married Charles. She said she was 40, but she was more likely closer to 50. Over the next 20 years, Selina remained close to her growing number of grandchildren and she was witness for the wedding of her friend Elizabeth Gamble.

Selina continued to live in Launceston and by 1919 she had moved from Margaret Street to 58 Tamar Street. Here she lived with her granddaughter Lily May Pearson. Lily was born in 1902 at Fingal, the daughter of Charles and Alice. Lily was still quite young when her father died, but she had her grandmother to support her. Selina waved farewell to her grandson Arthur Hughes when he went off to fight in WW1 with the 15th Fields Engineers. She welcomed home his wife, Minnie, whom he married in England. She worried for her soldier grandsons, Arthur and William Pearson, whose father, Charles, died in 1916. Selina lived through Federation, a world war and into another depression. She certainly survived the convict system.

Sadly, Selina outlived most of her children. Her daughter, Isabella McManus, died in September 1930 just a few months before her mother. Selina had a special relationship with her granddaughter, Lily, who cared for her until her death. Lily’s notices in the Examiner are testament to the strong bond between the two women. So was Selina our last convict standing? I am not yet sure, but I do know that she was remembered long after many others had been forgotten.

Deep in my heart her memory is kept, One that I loved and will never forget.

1. Proceedings of the Central Criminal Court, 19th August 1850, page 118
2. CON41-1-31
3. Examiner 18 January 1954 p 10
4. Examiner 19 January 1931 p 7
5. Examiner 24 January 1931 Edition: DAILY p 1
6. 1851 CensusClass: HO107; Piece: 1479; Folio: 1004; Page: 7; GSU roll: 87802-87803
7. Tas death 1852/1297
8. RGD 35 1868/667 Launceston
9. The Cornwall Chronicle 27 March 1867 p 5
10. The Cornwall Chronicle 28 September 1867 p 5
11. The Cornwall Chronicle 25 July 1868
12. NS185-1-1 Record Book of Inspector of the Launceston Benevolent Society
13. Launceston Examiner 21 September 1876
14. Launceston Examiner 4 November 1878 p.3
15. RGD 33/1/56 1878/3397 Launceston;
16. RGD 33/1/56 1878/3452 Launceston
17. RGD 37/1/44 1885/736 Launceston
18. RGD 37/1/43 1884/716 Launceston
19. Launceston Examiner 6 August 1889 p 2
20. RGD 37/1/53 1894/602 Lefroy.
22. Tas birth 1902/0712
23. Tas death 1917/0331
24. Examiner 17 January 1941
Losing and remaking a family: the Keoghs of Co. Wexford

Garry McLoughlin, FAS Ships Volunteer

Here is another story of Irish family reunion and survival via transportation and free emigration. This is a new dimension to the Irish Famine diaspora.

The Keogs (or Kehoes) were an Irish family who made their way to Australia via Van Diemen’s Land by a combination of convict transportation and free settlement. They were a rural family from Buncldy (formerly Newtonbarry) right on the Wexford/Carlow border, comprising father Martin (b. abt. 1792), mother Elizabeth (b. abt. 1798), Patrick (1822), Bridget (1826), Anne (1828), Margaret (1832), William (1834). John (1838) aged about 10 and probably the youngest, was left in the care of his older siblings, while Mary (b. 1836) aged 12 accompanied her mother Elizabeth on the Kinnear.

Martin, the father was the first to arrive. A ploughman and shepherd who could shear, and with a previous conviction of lamb-stealing, he was sentenced to seven years for stealing eight sheep and transported on the Orator in 1843. In Van Diemen’s Land he committed no offences, was granted a Ticket of Leave (TL) in June 1847 and a Certificate of Freedom (CF) in October 1849. According to his conduct record, in June 1851 he was allowed free passage for his wife and family, so it seems the authorities were unaware of the transportation of his wife, two daughters and son who were already in the penal colony. It also implies that Martin had quickly become aware that Australia held more promise for his family than Ireland. After the family reunited and the children married, School and was discharged to her father’s November 1849 by which time Martin was a free man. Elizabeth settled with her family in the Brighton/Pontville area and after Martin’s death in 1871 stayed in the area close to where her daughter Mary and her family were living. She died at Launceston in 1887 aged 90.

Anne Keogh, housemaid, was sentenced to seven years for stealing a fowl and some wheat, another typical famine crime. She too had a previous conviction, also stealing wheat. She arrived in VDL on the Waverley in 1847. Like her parents she committed no offences, gained her TL in 1852 and her CF in 1853 while living at Oatlands. In 1849 she married Thomas Corfield (Neptune 1837), a convict from Worcester, England, transported for life for highway robbery. Unusually for the time, they married in a civil ceremony, which may well signify a compromise between English Protestantism and Irish Catholicism. In 1852 Thomas and his brother-in-law Thomas Matthews left for the Victorian goldfields but were to return unlucky a year later. Anne and Thomas had five children in the Bothwell area and moved to Victoria in about 1858 spending their remaining years in South Melbourne where Thomas died in 1878 and Anne in 1893.

Irish Convicts

Ryland St, Newtonbarry, Co. Wexford, late nineteenth century

Ryland St, Newtonbarry, Co. Wexford, late nineteenth century
Patrick Keogh, a farm labourer sentenced to seven years for stealing three sheep during the Famine, arrived on the Pestongee Bonmagee in 1849. He was given his TL on arrival, but was convicted of misconduct twice while in hired service as well as getting drunk and using obscene language, for which he served time at hard labour, and was fined and reprimanded. He married Johanna Shannahan, a free woman, in 1852 at Hobart and they had six children. Patrick became a farmer and died at Penguin in the north-east in 1876 after being kicked by a horse.

Margaret Keogh, a housemaid, was sentenced to seven years for burning down a house, which may have been a deliberate act to get herself transported. She arrived on the Midlothian (the last convict ship out of Ireland) in 1853. In Tasmania she offended once by disobeying orders and spent seven days in the cells, but received her TL in 1854 and was granted a CP in June 1856. In 1854 Margaret married James Wallace a London convict (Oriental Queen 1853), a whitesmith, and had seven children in the Launceston area. In her old age she moved to Victoria and died at Footscray in 1912.

Bridget emigrated in 1854 on the Duchess of Northumberland and in the following year married Michael Burke. Three years later Michael sponsored his brother-in-law William who duly arrived in 1857. He and Bridget had nine children and she died at Hobart in 1892.

John Keogh arrived in Hobart as a free settler in 1857. He married Sarah Jane Lythgo at Pontville in 1862 and they had 11 children. He died at Lebrina, north of Launceston, in 1931 aged about 95.

William also arrived in 1857 on the Sir W.F. Williams and in 1863 married Jane Roach at Hobart. They had 11 children and he died at Hobart in 1912.

As mentioned, Mary came out as a 12 year old with her mother on the Kinmare. After rejoining her parents following Orphan School she married Thomas Matthews a Londoner who had been transported on the Hindostan (1841) for embezzlement at the age of 16. The couple settled in the Green Ponds area (now Kempton) and eventually had about nine children. Mary was widowed in 1880 when Thomas committed suicide by taking strychnine and she married James Clark eight years later. She too later moved to Melbourne and died at Prahran in 1909.

The Keoghs are typical of that minority of Tasmanian convicts who were genetically successful—intermarrying with other convicts, marrying out with free immigrants, and having large families and with many descendants. Like other such families, they sent a number of these descendants to World War 1. They managed to reunite and preserve their family at a time when Irish families were being forced apart by famine and emigration. A significant factor in this cohesion was convict transportation itself. We know of other families who migrated through a combination of transportation and free immigration: wives and children joining convict husbands and fathers, free brothers and sisters joining convict siblings. However, unlike the Keoghs, many of these reunions went undocumented. The cohesion is demonstrated by the two brothers-in-law trying their luck on the goldfields together and Michael Burke sponsoring his brother-in-law William’s voyage out.

Given the family’s limited command of English, one wonders about the kinds of communication between Martin and Elizabeth and their three remaining adult children back in Wexford. Was word sent out via other convicts or emigrants? Quite likely the Tasmanian family prevailed on literate scribes to write for them, no doubt to encourage their remaining children to make the voyage. In terms of literacy, Martin couldn’t read or write English, but his wife and daughters could read and son Patrick could both read and write a little. Although the question was never asked in the records, we can conclude with certainty that given their rural background and the times they lived in, their first language was Irish.

A process of Australianisation began to happen: Gaelic gave way to English, Irish married English, convicts married free settlers, free married free and freed, Tasmanians moved to the mainland, Catholics married not only Protestants but even Masons. Margaret’s husband Thomas was prominent in the Lodge, and her son John was educated enough to become a clerk.

Tasmania might not have been perfect, but at least the Keoghs didn’t have to steal food anymore.

NOTES
The birth dates are approximate only. The spelling of the surname varies. Martin and Elizabeth were transported as Kehoe. The children usually as Keogh.

I wish to acknowledge the following F & S researchers for their contributions:
Trish Currie for her submissions on Martin and Margaret Keogh and James Wallace.
Alison Ellet for her submissions on Elizabeth Keogh and Thomas Matthews.
Steve Rhodes for his submission on Patrick Keogh.
The late Cecile Trioli for her submissions on Anne Keogh and Thomas Corfield.

Descendant and family historian Kathleen Xepapas for her additional information on the family. There are several family histories derived from Martin and Elizabeth Kehoe on ancestry.com.

Martin Keogh: http://foundersandsurvivors.org/node/100212
Elizabeth Keogh: http://foundersandsurvivors.org/node/97281
Anne Keogh: http://foundersandsurvivors.org/node/93648
Patrick Keogh: http://foundersandsurvivors.org/node/95738
Margaret Keogh: http://foundersandsurvivors.org/node/100213
Thomas Corfield: http://foundersandsurvivors.org/node/114283
James Wallace: http://foundersandsurvivors.org/node/100256
Thomas Matthews: http://foundersandsurvivors.org/node/97275
Do you want your convict’s original record transcribed?

The Port Arthur Historic Sites Resource Centre offers a range of services:

Research
We can provide copies of records relating to Tasmanian Convicts held at the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office. They can include:
- Conduct/Police record
- Indent (which may provide details of relatives)
- Physical description
- Appropriation list
- Surgeon’s report (of the voyage to the colony)
- Application for permission to marry

We can check a variety of indexes for further reference to a convict and can conduct a name search to determine whether a person arrived in Tasmania as a convict.

Transcriptions
For those having difficulty deciphering the abbreviations often found on conduct records, indents or description lists, we can assist by producing a typed transcription.

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