History – Parramatta Female Factory Precinct

Burramatta Land (≈60,000 Years Ago – Present)

The Burramatta people have lived on the upper reaches of the Parramatta River, including the land of the Parramatta North Heritage Precinct, for at least 60,000 years (Parramatta City Council, 2015). The Burramatta are part of the Darug clan who occupy the Cumberland Plain and nearby areas of the Blue Mountains. The Darug comprise of coastal, hinterland and mountain groups of which the Burramatta form a border grouping between coastal and hinterland communities (Comber 2014, p. 18).

Prior to their dispossession and displacement, the Burramatta travelled seasonally across their land in groups of between 30 to 60 people with the Parramatta River (the southerly edge of the Parramatta North Heritage Precinct) being an important source of food, including eel, from which Burramatta (and later Parramatta) are etymologically derived ('place where the eels lie down') (Parramatta City Council, 2015). The Burramatta fished mullet, crayfish, shellfish, turtles, eels, shellfish, molluscs and other marine animals with the women usually fishing from canoes while the men speared from the banks of the Parramatta River (Kass et al 1996, p. 7). Terrestrial food sources included possums, fruits and vegetables (such as yams). Other flora, such as Eucalyptus leaves, was used for medicines and trees were used to make shelters, canoes and other implements.

British settlement of Parramatta from 1788 began the marginalisation of the Burramatta people from their lands, as occurred with other peoples throughout the Sydney Basin. Contact between the Burramatta and British was limited at first, but gradually some trade took place. Violence became more common as the British settlement grew larger and both groups clashed over resources and control. For example, David Collins (Coombs 2014, p. 19), deputy judge advocate of the Sydney colony, described an incident that occurred in the early stages of British settlement at Parramatta:

There were, however, among the convicts some who were so unthinking, or so depraved, as wantonly to destroy a canoe belonging to a fine young man, a native, who had left it at some little distance from the settlement...

The instant effect of all this was, that the natives discontinued to bring up fish; and Bal-loo-der-ry, whose canoe had been destroyed... meeting a few days afterwards with a poor wretch who had strayed from Parramatta as far as the Flats... wounded him in two places with a spear. This act of Ballooderrry's was followed by the governor's [Governor Phillip] strictly forbidding him to appear again at any of the

settlements; the other natives, his friends, being alarmed, Parramatta was seldom visited by any of them, and all commerce with them was destroyed.

How much greater claim to the appellation of savages had the wretches who were the cause of this, than the native who was the sufferer?

Conflict between the Darug clan and the British settlers escalated in the 1790s. This included several clashes close to the Parramatta settlement, most famously between a Indigenous group led by Pemulwuy and a settler force following a raid on Toongabbie in 1797 (Kohen, 2005). Pemulwuy was wounded in this confrontation but later escaped from hospital to continue to be a leading figure in Indigenous resistance until being killed in 1802. The settlers decapitated Pemulwuy's body with his head sent to Britain and never found again. Dispossession, disease and displacement led to widespread disruption to the lives of Burramatta people and their culture along with the rest of the Darug clan, contributing to the fall in armed resistance in the early 1800s.

Between 1815 and 1835, annual feasts were held in Parramatta between Indigenous people and prominent British settlers, including New South Wales Governors. These feasts would have almost definitely included Burramatta and other Darug people (Coombs 2014, p. 27). At some of these meetings, Governor Macquarie presented breast plates to prominent Indigenous men (or at least those the Governor believed or wanted to be prominent), including to Bungaree with an inscription 'Boongaree – Chief of the Broken Bay tribe – 1815' (Attenbrow 2002, p. 61).

 Imperfect and inconsistent British records may list surviving Burramatta people still living around Parramatta up until the mid 1840s. Despite the trials and tribulations arising from British settlement, Darug and other Indigenous people still reside in Parramatta today with Western Sydney more broadly having the largest Indigenous population in Australia (Parramatta City Council, 2015).

A Tale of Two Mills (1788 – 1818)

The British settlement of Parramatta began soon after the arrival of the First Fleet in Sydney Cove in January 1788. Governor Phillip, acutely aware of the agricultural deficiencies of the area surrounding Sydney Cove and desperate to achieve even some limited self-sufficiency for the colony, explored parts of Sydney Harbour and nearby rivers, finding Parramatta as the most suitable and establishing a settlement in November 1788 (Kass et al 1996, p. 9).

As befitting an agricultural settlement, the first known British use of the area now known as the Parramatta North Heritage Precinct was a land grant to former convict Charles Smith in 1792, who farmed wheat, maize and pigs for approximately a decade. Sometime in the early 1800s, Smith sold his land to Reverend Samuel Marsden, a controversial figure who would later be instrumental in the establishment of the Parramatta Female Factory (Yarwood, 1967).

Marsden, pastor, magistrate and farmer, had previously supervised the construction of the Government Mill, close to what is now the Norma Parker Centre, with mill races extending north-west, through Smith's and now Marsden's land grant. Some of the work built during Marsden's tenure was later replaced because of its poor quality. While the Government Mill was eventually built, the mill was never as successful as was initially hoped and was eventually sold and dismantled due to financial insolvency, especially given competition from other mills in Sydney (Kass et al 1996, p 61; Casey & Lowe 2014, pp. 41 – 42).

Giving rise to some controversy was that one of these competitor mills was Marsden's Mill, built by Marsden on the land he acquired from Smith with the ability to use some of the infrastructure built for the Government Mill. This fact, and some tactics employed by Marsden that may have been designed to inhibit the operation of the Government Mill, made some believe that Marsden was engaged in a campaign of deliberate sabotage for his own avarice. These accusers included Marsden's neighbour to east, botanist and explorer, George Caley (Casey & Lowe 2014, pp. 38 – 40; Else-Mitchell 1966). Only adding to the controversial nature of the land was that Marsden's neighbour to the east (closer to what is now Parramatta Stadium) from 1806 was Governor William Bligh, of Bounty and Rum Rebellion notoriety (Shaw, 1966).

The Paterfamilias

Convict women were a dilemma for colonial authorities. In a colony searching for self-sufficiency, convict women were perceived as a comparative drain on resources, extra mouths to feed that could not match the labour productivity of convict men. In particular, while young and healthy convict women were generally assigned to settlers upon landing in the colonies, other, less productive convict women often remained within the early settlements under the stern disapproving gaze of colonial authorities (Hirst 1983, p. 17).

Equally, and for some even more troubling to colonial authorities, was the perceived moral and social threat that convict women posed to the colony. These prejudices were formed prior to women's transportation and carried on throughout their convict experience. Surgeon Superintendent Peter Cunningham (Evans & Nicholls 1976, p. 146) considered that on convict ship voyages:

"The women are more quarrelsome and more difficult to control than the men, their tempers being more excitable, and a good deal being calculated on by them in respect to the usual leniency shown their sex."

After visiting the Australian colonies from 1830 to 1833, W. H. Breton (Evans & Nicholls 1976, p. 146) lamented:

"As to the females, it is a melancholy fact, but not the less true, that far the greater proportion are utterly irreclaimable, being the most worthless and abandoned of

human beings! No kindness can conciliate them, nor any indulgence render them grateful; and it is admitted by every one, that they are, taken as a body, infinitely worse than the males!"

Cunningham's and Breton's opinions were shared by colonial authorities, including Governor Macquarie who declared that "the women sent out are of the most abandoned description" and Governor Bourke later naming the inhabitants of the Parramatta Female Factory as "these outcast women" (Shaw 1977, p. 100; Salt 1984, p. 13). The great disparity between the numbers of men and women in early colonial Australia only suggested to a very few that convict women may have a positive moralising impact on the colony (Ihde 2002, p. 36). For most, however, they only added to the colony's moral depravity with Governor Macquarie (Shaw 1977, pp. 100 – 101) stating:

Let it be remembered how much misery and vice are likely to prevail in a society in which the women bear no proportion to the men... To this, in great measure, the prevalence of prostitution is reasonably to be attributed.

In the colony's early years, female convicts in Parramatta were often housed on the upper floor of the Parramatta Gaol, the so-called factory-over-the-gaol, or found alternative accommodation in Parramatta. This became unsatisfactory for the colony's authorities and moral guardians, including Revered Marsden, for encouraging co-habitation and prostitution while not enforcing vigorous work.

Parramatta Female Factory (1818 – 1848)

Colonial authorities thought they had an answer to improve both the industriousness and morality of convict women through the construction of female factories, work houses in which convict women not assigned to settlers, pregnant or being punished lived and worked. The Parramatta Female Factory was the first of eleven female convict factories established in the colony. From the factory's early design stages, the desired dual role of simultaneously guarding the convict women from the colony and the colony from the convict women was apparent (Salt 1984, p. 46). In providing preliminary ideas for construction, Reverend Marsden wrote to Governor Macquarie (Kerr 1984, p. 42) explaining that:

If the building should be all in one line there will require a very high wall to prevent the women from making their escape out and also to prevent other persons who had no business there from visiting the factory.

Governor Macquarie agreed (Salt 1984, p. 70)

So as to keep them [convict women] within it and prevent their having any Intercourse with the People of the Town, until such times as they should either be Married or Assigned as domestic Servants to Married persons.

Francis Greenway, Sydney's early prolific convict architect, implemented the spirit of Marsden and Macquarie's ideas in the final plans and later construction of the

Parramatta Female Factory, albeit with some competition between Greenway and Commissioner Bigge as to whether a 9 feet or 12 feet wall was a sufficient deterrent to prevent escapees and interlopers alike (Kerr 1984, p. 5). The initial construction does not to appear to have been very sound as major repairs and extensions were made during the operation of the factory (Salt, pp. 46 – 50).

Once built, the Parramatta Female Factory had to also be administered in a manner that improved convict women's industriousness and morality. Throughout the operation of the Parramatta Female Factory, administration often failed to meet high expectations, as moral purpose and sound management came into conflict with personality conflicts and monetary gain. The first superintendent, Francis Oakes, resigned following clashes with the local magistrate, Henry Douglas (Salt 1984, p. 56). Later, husband-wife or mother-son duumvirates became the norm, providing early Australian examples of middle class women taking on authoritative positions in colonial society. This male-female collaboration was also temporarily mirrored in the formation of a Board of Management and Ladies' Committee in Governor Darling's colonial administration (Salt 1984, p. 59).

However, these duumvirates continually ran into problems. Elizabeth and John Fulloon were accused of fraternisation, neglect and maladministration. Ann Gordon was dismissed for her husband's fraternisation and the convict women's immoral behaviour. Sarah and George Bell were replaced following the prison reform movement in Britain led by Elizabeth Fry, although later reinstated after their British replacements, Mrs Leach and Mr Clapham, clashed even before they left England and did not stop until they were dismissed by Governor Gipps. Mr and Mrs Rogers were sacked for reasons unknown and their successors, Mr and Mrs Smyth, dismissed following a Prison Ball that seemed to have gone very well for the inmates and too well for colonial authorities' tastes (Salt 1984, pp. 57 – 61).

The Women of the Female Factory

It was against this backdrop of moral righteousness, colonial self-sufficiency, dubious construction and frequent maladministration that five thousand convict women went through the Parramatta Female Factory over three decades. These convict women equal approximately half of convict women that went through the factory system and around a fifth of convict women transported to the Australian colonies.

Convict women were almost exclusively born and raised in Britain (England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland). However, in marked contrast to their male counterparts, approximately one half were from Ireland, double the proportion of Irish male convicts (Shaw 1977, p.183; Oxley 1996, p. 255). This was likely even higher in the Parramatta Female Factory given the British Government's policy of not sending Irish convicts to Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) (Oxley 1996, p. 129). Approximately one third were from England with the Scots and the Welsh making up the remainder.

Within these countries, the distribution was skewed geographically and socially. In Ireland, while convict women were largely born in the agrarian west and south-west (e.g. Kerry, Mayo and Galway), areas hit worst by the post-Napoleonic Depression, they were mainly tried and transported from the main southern cities (e.g. Dublin, Cork and Limerick) (Oxley 1996, pp. 132 – 135). In comparison, few women were transported from the relatively industrialised north (e.g. Ulster). Therefore, convict women were mainly born in the country, moved to the cities to find work, were found guilty of crimes and then transported to the colonies (Oxley 1996, p. 135). As such, crime was a secondary option after internal migration failed to provide economic security. Oxley (1996, pp. 135 – 136) illustrates some examples:

Such was the case for Bridget Gibbons and her daughter Mary Anne. Bridget, a widow, was a washerwoman, and Mary Anne was a nurse girl. They had migrated south-easterly from Mayo to Dublin where, on 12 May 1827, they were tried and sentenced to seven years' transportation for stealing money. Neither had previously offended...

Brown hair, hazel eyes, ruddy, with skin pitted with pock marks, Bridget Kennedy looked typically Irish. Raised a Catholic in the Meath countryside, she remained in the rural sector employed as a housemaid, and also did some washing. Literacy was not her strong point, as she could neither read nor write. She had not married. At the age of twenty-four, Bridget was tried in nearby Wicklow for her second offence, stealing butter. Two years later she arrived in New South Wales, aboard Palambam, with five years of her sentence left to run. Young, single, Catholic women who moved around the countryside, like Bridget, dominated Ireland's female cargo.

Similar, English convict women were not reflective of broader society. In particular, domestic servants were over-represented in the female convict population (69%), not just compared to the general female population (50%), but also compared to workhouse women (48%) and women prisoners (48%) (Oxley 1996, pp. 168 – 169). Conversely, factory workers were under-represented in the convict population despite being also prone to criminality. Some factor, whether derogatory attitudes towards domestic servants or something else, meant that domestic servants were more likely to be transported than other professions (Salt 1984, pp. 17 – 21).

In general, rather than being the dregs of society as suggested by contemporary authorities and mid-twentieth century historians, convict women were potentially younger, healthier and more skilled than the population left behind. A study of female convicts arriving in New South Wales between 1826 to 1842 found that seventy percent were aged between 18 – 30 with a majority convicted of stealing or robbery (Oxley 1996, pp. 259 – 260).

Contributing to the belief by contemporary authorities and others of the abjectness of convict women was the link between perceptions of women's sexuality and moral judgement. As Carol Liston (Hendriksen & Liston 2012, p. 29) explains:

Sex and bondage make better copy than poverty, desperation, motherhood and housework.

Whether the morality of convict women is relevant to their place in history, what has to be considered is the brutality of their time and the simplicity of contemporary observations. Most women (and men) in late 18th and early 19th Century Great Britain lived an economically insecure life. In particular, internal migrants and domestic servants lacked support networks and job security was largely non-existent. Prostitution was not a transportable crime and could be a primary and/or secondary source of income to prevent starvation. The definition of prostitution, as given by contemporaries, was also not a strictly modern definition, and could cover co-habitation, political agitation and other acts (Salt 1984, p. 26 – 28). Further, women were considered at the time to be at least partly responsible for sexual crimes committed against them; vulnerability was equated to immorality, particularly exposing domestic servants to being maligned and abused.

Life in the Female Factory

Within the Parramatta Female Factory, convict women were separated into classes based on a number of factors, particulary their conduct and recidivism. This had major impact on their day-to-day lives (Salt 1984, pp. 70 – 74). The system was devised by colonial authorities to reward convict women for good behaviour and punish bad behaviour. The system was initially implemented by Governor Macquarie and later reinforced by Governor Darling.

Convict women in the 'First Class' could earn money for the work they did, although some wages were kept until they left the factory (Salt 1984, pp. 71 – 73). 'First Class' women could also be assigned to work in private homes, although whether that was better than working in the factory would have varied in each occurrence. In the mid 1820s, these women were also given better food and clothes, as well as permission to attend Church and receive visitors.

'First Class' women could also marry, which was the official sanctioned means to escape the factory, replacing the factory as paterfamilias with a husband (Salt 1984, pp. 80 – 81). The factory acted as a marriage bureau where suitors undertook a three-day process to choose and woo their bride (Hendriksen & Liston 2012, p. 45). Given the advantages to both bride and groom in marriage, pragmatism likely triumphed over romance. Despite this, husbands were known to return their wives to the factory if married life proved less than agreeable (Salt 1984, pp. 87 – 88). 'Second Class' convict women received less clothes and food, and could not be assigned or receive visitors. Colonial authorities designed this class to protect convict women from the dangers of early colonial life and the presumed descent into moral depravity that these women would resort to for survival. For the convict women, this involuntary protection regulated their lives while not always providing the safety and security promised.

In contrast, the 'Third Class' was created to protect the colony from the convict women rather than the other way round. The women of the 'Third Class' had committed crimes in the colony or broken the factory's rules. Annette Salt (1984, pp. 86 – 87) details several examples:

Refusal to remain in their masters' service earned hard labour at the Factory for Sarah Brown, Mary Lee, Catherine Kiernan and Mary Draper. Elizabeth Hunter and Elizabeth Fuller were charged by their husbands with drunkenness and/or with prostitution... Mary Fitzgerald received three months' hard labour at the Factory... for escaping police custody... Margaret Donnolly and Johanna Lawson for escaping from the Factory and stealing clothes while at large. Ann Hayes was sentenced by the Sydney Bench of Magistrates to twelve months' hard labour at the Factory for prostitution and being 'a pest to society'.

For most of the factory period, 'Third Class' women were given less food and clothes than other women, and were kept in the worst of the accommodation. Their labour was often harder and they could keep none of their wages.

Work inside the factory for all classes largely revolved around the making of cloth and linen (Salt 1984, pp. 102 – 109). Other women worked on the operation of the factory itself, including in cooking and washing. Some of these services were extended to the public, including washing. In addition, women could work as needleworkers or hat-makers for example. The workers of the female factory were susceptible to the supply and demand of labour in the fledging colony and often went without work when the production costs were too high or their labour not in demand.

All female factory women suffered when the model of the female factory was superseded by reality, particularly in overcrowding and poor rations. Designed for 300 women, the actual number of women greatly exceeded the design after the mid-1820s. Estimates are difficult to certify, but it is likely that numbers largely varied between 400 and 1200 women over the lifespan of the factory (Salt 1984, pp. 50 – 53). In addition to the women, hundreds of children also lived at the factory with their mothers. With an increase in numbers, combined with deliberate or incompetent maladministration, sleeping quarters, food and clothing allocations would have been inadequate.

Overcrowding was also evident in the hospital at the Parramatta Female Factory, although this would have been mirrored in the other early colonial hospitals (Salt 1984, pp. 111, 113). The hospital could not only be accessed by factory women but also, for most of its lifespan, all colonial women. The most common conditions included dysentery, eye infections, fungal infections, diarrhoea and fever. The hospital was also the place where factory women gave birth. The hospital was also the subject of scandal from the death of Mary Ann Hamilton, who died of malnutrition following her admission.

'Amazonian Banditti'

Order was not always maintained at the Parramatta Female Factory with several recorded instances of riots. In 1833, mass hair-cutting, despised by convict women, seemed to have precipitated a riot as described by Reverend Marsden (Hendriksen & Liston 2012, p. 23):

I told you when I was in Sydney on Tuesday that I expected the women in the Factory would excite a riot again. They began on Wednesday night to be very troublesome and this morning they struck work. This was also the day for their hair to be cut. They one and all are determined not to submit to this operation. 40 Soldiers with their officers were ordered to attend the constables to the factory. Anderson and I went before, Captain Westmacott gave directions for the soldiers – the women had collected large heaps of stones and as soon as we entered the third class they threw a shower of stones as fast as they possibly could...

The Sydney Gazette gave a detailed description of a previous riot in 1827 that spilled over into the Parramatta township (Salt 1984, pp. 94 – 95):

We briefly noted in our last, as the circumstances was hastily communicated to us on Saturday evening, the fact of a riot having taken place on the morning of the same day, at the Factory in Parramatta. Since then, we have been made acquainted with further particulars...

On the following morning (Saturday), about 7 o'clock, the new Matron, Mrs Gordon, being then in charge, the allowance of bread and sugar being stopped in consequence of the conduct of the previous day, a considerable number of the women broke out of the Factory; but persuaded by Mrs Gordon and the constables, they returned in again, threatening at the same time, that, if the usual allowance of bread and sugar was not immediately forthcoming, they would tear down all before them.

Some little delay ensured, and, in about half an hour afterwards, a numerous party again assailed the gates, with pick-axes, axes, iron crows, the united force of which, wielded as they were by a determined and furious mob, soon left a clear stage, and the inmates of the Factory were quickly poured forth, thick as bees from a hive, over Parramatta and the adjoining neighbourhood. About one hundred came into the town, exclusive of numbers that took different routes.

Constables were seen running in all directions. A Captain, a Lieutenant, two serjeants, and about forty rank and file were in immediate requisition by the Magistrates, and were seen flying in all directions with fixed bayonets, for the double purpose of securing the fugitives, and staying the mutiny; and so violent were the Amazonian Banditti, that nothing less was expected but that the soldiers were obliged to commence firing on them.

After a little time, however, numbers of those who had broke loose were secured, and conducted back to the old quarters under a military escort, shouting as they went along, and carrying with them their aprons loaded with bread and meat, for which, after the manner of a conquering army, they had laid the inhabitants of Parramatta and its vicinity under contribution.

Individuals

In general, very little is known about the lives of individual women in the Parramatta Female Factory with most information derived from knowledge about overall conditions and treatment. Broad factors can only tell so much though and often exaggerate the generalities and diminish the breadth and depth of individual experience. For some women, the factory would have been a sadistic, inhumane prison while for others the factory offered some sanctuary from a brutal, uncertain world. Some individual stories are known, and Hendriksen (Hendriksen & Liston 2012, pp. 19 – 22) details the diversity of their experiences along with those from other factories or the previous Parramatta Female Factory-over-the-Gaol:

Anne Dunne *was born in Carlow, Ireland c. 1810. She was found guilty of stealing linen, and sentenced for seven years. She had one previous conviction, which carried a sentence of seven months. Anne arrived on the Hoogley in 1831 with a son, John. They both went directly to the Female Factory. She was assigned to Penrith, firstly to G. Wentworth, then to Mrs McHenry. Anne married James Tompkins and possibly died in 1879.*

Elizabeth Browning Owen *was transported, aged 29, on the Morley in 1820. Her offence is not described but she was a needleworker and brought with her four children – John nine years, Eliza seven, Robert five, and Elizabeth three. She was assigned to the Female Factory, Parramatta and her two daughters were sent to the Female Orphan School. On several occasions she applied for their return to her but not until her remarriage to Emmanuel Marvin in 1822 was she successful. Elizabeth was granted a ticket of leave, and died in 1839....*

Ann Entwistle, *whose story by circumstance was entwined with* **Mary Hindle's**. *She, along with Mary Hindle, was sentenced to death in 1826 for machine breaking. Ann was accused of destroying shuttles with a piece of iron at Helmshore Mill in Lancashire which she did. Mary was accused of shouting encouragement to the rioters. She said that she had gone to the scene of the riot to look for her daughter. Both had their sentence commuted to life and were transported on the Harmony 1 arriving in Sydney in 1827.*

Ann Entwistle was 46 years old and a widow with three children, Catholic and illiterate. Mary Hindle was 28 years old, married with one child, literate, Protestant and a laundress. On arrival Ann was assigned but was returned to the Female Factory in 1828 into First Class as unsuitable. Two years later Ann had married John

Butcher and was granted a ticket of leave in February, followed by a conditional pardon in 1844. Her death date is unknown.

Mary Hindle was assigned to John Nicholson on arrival. She received a ticket of leave in 1831. In 1838 she was reported as a runaway while being escorted to the Female Factory, Parramatta... Mary was released from the Factory in 1840 and worked as a laundress for Thomas Ryan... Once again she absconded and was returned to the Factory. In 1841 Mary committed suicide.

A detailed account of the lives of convict women arriving in New South Wales in 1829 was written by Babette Smith in *A Cargo of Women: Susannah Watson & The Convicts of the Princess Royal* (1992). Susannah Watson lived in the Parramatta Female Factory after becoming pregnant while on assignment and with the father unwilling to support Susannah and her children (Smith 1992, pp. 52 – 59). While at the factory, her oldest son, Thomas, was taken from her to the orphan school in Liverpool, as was the practice when children reached three years old. A short time later, while Susannah was still at the factory with her newborn son, Thomas became ill and died. Susannah eventually received her freedom in 1844, settled around Braidwood and died in 1877 (Hendrikson & Liston 2012, pp. 21 – 22).

From Female Factory to Lunatic Asylum

The end of transportation of convicts to New South Wales in 1840 did not immediately cause the closure of the Parramatta Female Factory and, perhaps somewhat counter-intuitively, led to an increase in numbers as other female factories were closed down and women were relocated to Parramatta (Kass et al 1996, p. 135). However, continued maladministration, disorder and an increased demand for female labour in the colony led to a dramatic decrease in numbers in the factory by the mid-1840s (Salt 1984, p. 121). The continued high cost of the factory's operation meant that it was now seen as an untenable drain on colonial resources.

While female factories were in decline, the demand for lunatic asylums was increasing. The mentally ill had been held in Castle Hill (closed in 1825), Liverpool and a new asylum at Gladesville (Tarban Creek), but even the latter was already overcrowded less than a decade after its construction (Kass et al 1996, p. 136; Smith 1999, p. 4). Given that the Female Factory was both a penitentiary and a refuge, the factory was well-suited to transition its function to housing the insane. The transition was not sudden or abrupt, and convict women and the destitute continued to be housed in the factory/asylum for a time, however by 1848, the Parramatta Female Factory had become the Parramatta Lunatic Asylum. The NSW Government Gazette (Smith 1999, p. 10) proclaimed:

His Excellency, the Governor directs it to be notified, for general information, that portion of the Invalid Establishment (formerly the Female Factory), has been appointed a public Asylum for the reception and custody of Lunatics.

Parramatta Lunatic Asylum/Hospital for the Insane/Psychiatric Centre (1848 – 1983)

The conversion to the Parramatta Lunatic Asylum occurred during the slow transition of the submergence of mental illness inside criminality and poverty towards the identification and treatment of mental illness as a distinct medical condition (Garton 1988, pp. 21 – 23). In Sydney, however, of the mental asylums, Parramatta was placed at the rear of the transition as the designated asylum for the criminally insane and 'incurable' cases, thereby allowing other asylums, particularly Gladesville and Callan Park (established in 1885), closer to the fore for treatment (Smith 1999, p. 10; State Records of NSW 2016).

Housing the criminally insane, in particular, darkened the operations and reputation of the asylum. The second superintendant Dr Richard Greenup (1852 – 1866) was stabbed in the abdomen by a criminally insane patient, James Cameron, and died two days later (Phillips 1972). Tragically, Greenup had been passionate in improving the conditions for patients, including lessening confinement and other restrictions. The *Sydney Morning Herald* (Smith 1999, p. 13) observed:

He was distinguished as a warm promoter of benevolent and literary institutions... his character was that of a Christian gentleman, and those who knew him best testified to his considerate and humane disposition, which lead him to be too trustful, even of such men as those who are confined in the criminal division of the asylum – a confidence that has eventuated in his untimely demise.

A number of other murders occurred during the asylum's operation, including a patient murdering another patient with an axe in 1849, a patient, Peter Westmeyer, repeatedly bashed into an iron bed stead in 1876 and an attendant dying in 1882 after being kicked in the stomach by a criminally insane patient (Smith 1999, pp. 10, 16, 21).

Compounding matters, staff were relatively poorly paid, expected to work long hours with little leave and often slept in the dormitories with the patients (Smith 1999, p. 13). The Asylum was also frequently overcrowded, despite numerous expansions and constructions. These constructions also included the demolition of most of the former Female Factory. Unfortunately, and perhaps inevitably, these factors combined with societal attitudes towards the mentally ill led to mistreatment of patients by some staff, although successive superintendants often made a point to crackdown on such behaviour (Smith 1999, p. 14).

Conversely, other patients would have had much more positive experiences, especially compared to their alternative treatment in society at the time. Even in the early stages of the asylum, some patients were allowed to freely access the grounds. Patients were kept occupied through work, including in the Asylum's farm

established in the Governor's domain, and recreational activities that included dances and eventually cinema. The treatment of female patients by female staff, particularly after complete segregation in 1877, does not appear to be the subject of complaint, unlike the corresponding male division.

Over its operation, like other asylums and mental hospitals, Parramatta was often the subject of criticism and reform movements as government and societal attitudes towards the treatment of mental illness evolved. For example, Dr Frederic Manning, NSW Government Inspector for the Insane (and former Medical Superintendant of Gladesville Asylum), criticised it for being 'a prison and a bad prison into the bargain' (McDonald 1974). The visiting Catholic Bishop of Hobart, Dr Wilson, in 1863 described the asylum as 'a frightful old factory prison at Parramatta, with its doleful cells and its iron bar doors, even for women', although the Bishop went on to compliment the staff: 'great cleanliness and order were evident in every part; no doubt the best is done for the patients, under the existing circumstances' (Smith 1999, p. 12).

Reforms, constructions and staff changes followed many instances of public discussion, scandal and/or debate. However, the most significant change occurred following the broader public debates and government inquiries into mental health treatment in the 1950s and 1960s, including the Stoller Report in 1955 and the Royal Commission of Callan Park Mental Hospital in 1961. What followed over the next several decades was the movement towards community outpatient treatment of mental illness and the subsequent decline in the need for in-patient treatment and residence. Reflecting this change, the NSW Institute of Psychiatry moved in 1995 into buildings formerly occupied by patients (Smith 1999, p. 39).

Roman Catholic Orphan School (1844 – 1886)

The Roman Catholic Orphanage was one of many orphanages established in the colonies to house children. In Sydney, the Female Orphans Asylum was established in 1801 and Boys' Orphanage in 1819. The Roman Catholic Orphan School was originally established in Waverley in 1836 following agitation from the Catholic community that Catholic-born children were being housed in the Protestant-run Female and Boys Orphanages. In agreeing to their separation, Governor Bourke (Ramsland 1986, p. 53) explained the issue:

These destitute children, whether born in the Factory and baptized by a Romish Priest at the desire of the mother or bred in the Catholic Faith by their Parents, are placed indiscriminately in the Protestant Orphan Schools, where the doctrines of the Church of England are taught, and its forms observed to the entire exclusion of any creed.

The term 'orphan school' can be misleading as many of the children placed into colonial and later 'orphanages' still had parents alive, but who could either not support their children or authorities had taken their children away. For example,

many of the mothers of children of the Roman Catholic Orphanage were housed at the adjacent Female Factory, noting the high Irish Catholic population, indeed this has been assumed to be the reason why the Roman Catholic Orphan School was moved from Waverly to Parramatta in 1844 (Ramsland 1986, p. 57).

The term 'school' is also potentially misleading as while children were educated, the building itself was reminiscent of the adjacent Female Factory in that it was designed for keeping children in. The Sydney Herald (Ramsland 1986, p. 54) described the school's construction as:

The new Orphan School adjoining the Factory is rapidly progressing, and will be ready for the roof in about six or eight weeks. It consists of four storeys, the lowest being intended as a storeroom of fifty feet, and the horizontal dimensions are about 56 x 22 feet... The school is to be walled in, the outhouses being ranged round the limits of the enclosure.

The school employed a matron, surgeon, master/boys' teacher, assistant matron/girl's teacher and female servants with annual funding provided by the colonial administration, although distinctly less than the support provided to the Protestant orphanages (Ramsland 1986, pp. 54 – 55). The Sisters of the Order of the Good Shepherd would at first assist and then eventually run the school with their Superior acting as matron, following their recruitment in Ireland by the parish priest of Parramatta, William Ullathorne (Suttor 1967). The children were taught basic skills in order that they could later be apprenticed. For authorities, the entire process could then turn the children from burdens on the state to workers providing an economic benefit to the colony.

However, the theoretical purpose of the orphan school was overwhelmed by its continued underfunding, even more so than the Protestant orphan schools, because of the sectarian stigma. Following a visit by the new Governor, William Denison, in 1855, a government report found severe faults in both Roman Catholic and Protestant orphan schools, remarking that the 'utter inefficiency of the Establishments, as now conducted, to produce any good effect upon the Children maintained in them' (Currey 1972; Ramsland 1986, p. 149).

The report particularly criticised the poorly funded Roman Catholic orphan school, including substandard nutrition, lack of dining utensils, poor and few clothing, inadequate sanitation and bedding, non-existent education and overcrowding (Ramsland 1986, pp. 150 – 151).The children were locked in at night, which could have been catastrophic in case of fire. The girls' education was substituted for laundry and other domestic work needed to keep the institution running. Boys were made to do heavy labour. The psychological impacts were immediate with the report (Ramsland 1986, p. 151) noting that:

Instead of the exhuberant [sic] vivacity usually displayed by children just escaped from the confinements of school, we saw in general sluggishness. They stood or sat

basking in the sun, instead of entering with spirit into the games common among boys of their age.

However, in the successive years little changed. A visit by another Governor, the fourth Earl of Belmore, in 1871 found that the buildings were 'destitute of colour' and in a 'disreputable state' and looking like a 'half-gaol, half-lunatic asylum' (Ramsland 1986, p. 154). A journalist in 1886 (Ramsland 1986, p. 154) reported that the staff were also impacted by the underfunding with:

The Nuns are as badly off for room as the children. They have, indeed, a neat little parlour for visitors, but to obtain sleeping room they have been compelled to partition off a part of the girls' school, and in order to secure a dining-room they had to clear out a cellar crammed full of all sorts of rubbish, and infested with rats.

The continued chronic underfunding combined with the broader reform movement for boarding out children led to a stark reduction in numbers in the early 1880s at the Roman Catholic Orphan School. There were over 300 children at the start of 1880 but this had reduced to 193 by the end of 1883 and by the end of 1885, only 63 children remained. The Orphan School was closed in 1886 with the remaining children relocated to the St Vincent's Home in Manly, but not without protest from the nuns ostensibly writing on behalf of the children (Ramsland 1986, p. 200):

We, the orphan children of St Patrick's Roman Catholic Orphanage in Parramatta, hereby protest against the unjust usurpation by the Minister of Public Instruction which deprives us of the grants that were made by the Crown for the Maintenance of the Roman Catholic Orphan School.

Parramatta Girls' Industrial School (1886 – 1974)

Our purpose today in this Great Hall of this great Australian Parliament is to begin to put right a very great wrong. To acknowledge the great wrong that has been done to so many our children. And as a nation to apologies for this great wrong. And as a nation, to resolve that such systematic abuse should never happen again. The truth is this is an ugly story.

- Prime Minister Kevin Rudd – Apology to Forgotten Australians (Herald Sun 2009)

We are sorry because none of us can give back what was taken. We are sorry because not one of us here today has the power to undo the damage done. We are sorry because we cannot restore to you the one thing to which all children should be entitled as a basic right – a safe and beloved childhood. We are sorry because, across the generations, the system failed you, the nation failed you, by looking the other way.

- Opposition Leader Malcolm Turnbull – Apology to Forgotten Australians (Australian 2009)

The Parramatta Girls' Industrial School was established on the grounds of the former Roman Catholic Orphan School to replace similar girls' institutions at Newcastle and Cockatoo Island that were being closed down. A high wall was built to prevent any escape by the girls yet the buildings so criticised by so many were not extensively modified (Ramsland 1986, p. 200) Girls were taught domestic work in what was envisioned to be a school-like environment run by a former headmaster of Parramatta Public School (Kass et al 1996, p. 233).

However, regardless of any intentions, what transpired over the next nearly hundred years at the Parramatta Girls' Industrial School is emblematic of the treatment of many children in institutional care across Australia into the late twentieth century. The scale and severity of the mental, physical and sexual abuse of these children has only recently started to be recognised by the broader community, including through the 2004 Senate Report *Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children* and, at the time of writing, the on-going *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*. These reports provide detailed descriptions of the suffering faced by young girls at the Industrial School. What follows is only a small snapshot.

Over 30,000 girls were housed at the Parramatta Industrial School, holding approximately 180 girls at a time, between the ages of 8 to 18 and usually for a period of six months to three years (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses into Child Sexual Abuse 2014, p. 7). The girls often came from other institutions, abusive homes, designated by child welfare authorities to be 'neglected' or 'uncontrollable' and included Indigenous girls who were part of the Stolen Generations.

The treatment of these girls was based on societal attitudes that progressed little from the treatment of convict women at the Female Factory. The Senate Report (2004, p. 55) heard evidence that:

Girls were treated far worse than boys... it was because of entrenched Victorian attitudes to fallen women and the view that girls were inherently more difficult to reform than boys...

And also found that, again similar to the experience of women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries:

Often young women were punished even though they had been the victims of serious crime. As the entry books to the Parramatta Industrial School show, girls who were raped or the victims of incest often found themselves committed to the institution, while the perpetrators remained free.

The girls suffered from mental, physical and sexual abuse, as their testimony described (Senate 2004, p. 56):

When I got to Parramatta I was told that they break my spirit at that time I didn't know what they meant..

The frequent riots at the institution throughout its operation gave government authorities and the wider community evidence of what was going on behind closed doors. However, only until a sustained campaign in the 1960s and 1970s by the Women's Liberation Movement, including Bessie Guthrie, was the institution closed down in the mid-1970s (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses into Child Sexual Abuse 2014, pp. 8 – 9). Earlier, riots and the subsequent protests and public attention had only led authorities to establish a facility at Hay in south-western New South Wales, where 'problem' girls at Parramatta were often drugged and sent to an institution that was even more dehumanising and abhorrent (Senate 2004, pp. 56 – 57).

The long-term psychological and physical effect of the institution on the girls has only recently been recognised by the broader community. The surviving women often found difficulty in re-establishing relationships with their parents and forming relationships with partners and/or children. The lack of meaningful training at Parramatta led many to be ill-prepared for the outside world and they struggled to hold down permanent employment. Indigenous women had to deal with a cultural break with their communities that was difficult, if not impossible, to re-establish.

These long-term impacts led many to crime and destructive behaviours (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses into Child Sexual Abuse 2014, pp. 28 – 32), as well as serious struggles with mental health, for some women leading to suicide or attempts to commit suicide. In contrast, despite repeated efforts by survivors to report their abuse to the police and other authorities, none of the perpetrators have ever been jailed for their crimes (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses into Child Sexual Abuse 2014, p. 5).

Norma Parker Centre/Kamballa (1980 – Present)

The Norma Parker Centre/Kamballa was designed to provide a more reformative and humane institution for young female offenders in response to community concerns arising from the Parramatta Girls Home and other similar institutions across New South Wales (Betteridge 2014, pp. 34 – 35). Programs like periodic detention and work release accompanied extensive renovations to the buildings to better improve rehabilitation outcomes. In the early period of this institution, young boys were also incarcerated in part of the institution called 'Taldree' before being relocated. The Norma Parker Centre was closed in 2008 and has been largely vacant since.

The centre was named after the acclaimed social worker and educator, Norma Parker (1906 – 2004). Parker had previously lived at the Parramatta Girls Home in 1943 as part of her work as a member of the Delinquency Committee of the Child Welfare Advisory Council (Land & Henningham 2002). Parker worked extensively through the tertiary sector, public sector and non-government organisations, including in the establishment of the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS).

Parker was awarded the Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1972 for her work.

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