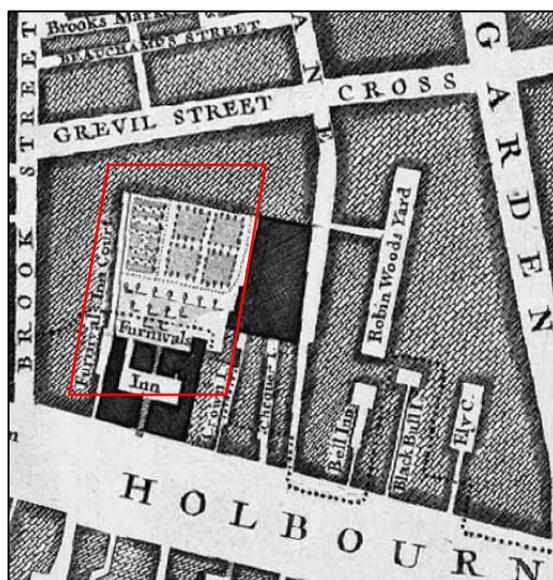


Grace Blaker

Date of Trial:	18 September 1816
Where Tried:	London Gaol Delivery
Crime:	Having a forged bank note
Sentence:	14 years
Est YOB:	1794
Stated Age on Arrival:	23
Native Place:	London
Occupation:	Mantua Maker & Shoe Binder
Alias/AKA:	Mary Blaker, Grace Blaken
Marital Status (UK):	Married – George Blaker
Children on Board:	
Surgeon's Remarks:	<i>A shameless prostitute, insolent, bad disposition</i>
Assigned NSW or VDL	NSW

The *Evening Mail* of 17 July 1816 carried a report about a young woman who had gone on a shopping spree and who, it was suspected, paid for her purchases with 'bad notes'.

A young woman, of fair complexion, dressed very genteelly in chip hat and orange-coloured scarf, went yesterday afternoon into Parlett's tea-warehouse, No. 2, Newgate-street, and having bought a quarter of a pound of tea, tendered a 1/ note, and received 18s silver in change, previously writing her address on the face of the note – Smith, No. 7, Shire-lane; she afterwards went to a linen-draper's in Redcross-street, and changed another note, and received 15s more silver. Mr. Parlett caused her to be still followed to Furnival's inn-court, No. 11, where she went in, and he, Mr. P., relying on his own knowledge of the notes being both bad, procured Read, the officer, from Hatton-garden, and searching the lodging, found various other bad notes, a nest of housebreaking implements, several pieces of printed cotton furniture a piece of black kerseymere, four watches, and many suspicious articles. She, with her husband, will be brought up at the Mansion-house this morning at 12 o'clock.¹



Furnival's Inn Court, Hatton Garden²

The *Evening Mail* followed up on the matter two days later, this time revealing the names of the shopper and her husband.

Yesterday, George Blaker and Grace, his wife, were examined, being charged with uttering forged notes, purporting to be of the Bank of England. The particulars of this case have already appeared in our Tuesday's paper. Mr. Parlett, tea-dealer of Newgate-street, and Mr. Warwick, linen-draper of Cripplegate, now deposed to their having received two notes from the female, which appeared to be bad.

Read, the officer, stated, that he searched the prisoner Grace at the lodgings to which she was traced, but did not find any notes or money upon her; he then searched George Blaker, and found upon his person four 1/ notes, two of which appeared to be forged notes. The officers then proceeded to search the apartment, and found in a box four other 1/ notes likewise forged. Notice being given to Mr. Westwood, solicitor of the Bank, he accompanied the officers on Tuesday morning to the apartments of the prisoner to make a further search, when two 10/, four 5/, and one 1/ notes, all forged, were found in a box, and four watches, several spoons, and other articles. The above notes were produced, and examined by Mr. Glover, Inspector of Bank-notes, who proved the same to be forged. The prisoners were fully committed for trial.³

The housebreaking implements referred to included 'an iron crow, a bunch of picklock keys, and a bottle of phosphorus'.⁴ According to another report, in their defence George Blaker claimed that the notes and implements had been left in the apartment by a man named Neven, of whom the Blakers knew nothing except that he was a carpenter. Interestingly, on being bound over, Grace was asked if she was the wife of the other prisoner [George] to which she replied 'No', but that they 'cohabited together'.⁵

The Newgate prison records show that on 29 July 1816 the Blakers were committed by R. Raynsford. *George Blaker*, aged 32, was charged and detained on oath on two charges of 'falsely making, forging, and counterfeiting, and uttering and publishing as true' forged bank notes, and on one charge of 'having in his custody and possession divers forged and counterfeited Bank-notes, knowing them to be forged', with intent to defraud the Governor and Company of the Bank of England. The wording of the two charges against his co-accused was slightly different. *Grace Blaker*, aged 22, was charged and detained on oath on two charges of 'falsely making, forging, and counterfeiting, and uttering and publishing as true, in the City of London' certain forged and counterfeited Bank-notes, with intent to defraud the Governor and Company of the Bank of England.⁶

As cases 846 and 868 respectively, on 18 September 1816 George and Grace Blaker appeared before the Old Bailey. Their hearings took up very little of the Court's time.

846 - GEORGE BLAKER was indicted for having in his custody and possession a forged Bank of England note, knowing it to be forged.

The prisoner pleaded GUILTY.

Transported for Fourteen Years.

First Middlesex Jury, before Mr. Recorder.⁷

868. GRACE BLAKER was indicted for forgery.

No evidence.

NOT GUILTY

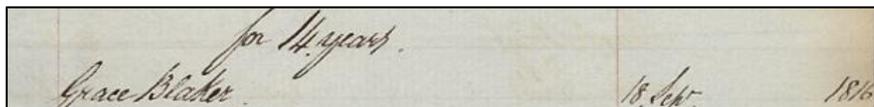
London Jury, before Mr. Recorder.⁸

There are two verdicts recorded for Grace Blaker in the Newgate Calendar, London Verdicts, September 1816, listing. The first has the notation 'G Fel' – guilty of felony; the second has the notation 'NG' – not guilty – but an additional comment in parenthesis, which appears to read 'confessed 20th').

32. Geo. Grace Blaker... G Fel 22.

32. Geo. Grace Blaker... NG (confessed 20th)

Regardless of this conundrum, and no doubt to the relief of both George and Grace who, as we will see, did not want to be separated, Grace Blaker was subsequently recorded as having been sentenced to 14 years transportation.⁹



From the moment they were imprisoned in Newgate George and Grace Blaker entered into correspondence with the Bank of England. Some of the following are undated, but those signed off by George would have been sent before he was removed to the hulk *Bellerophon* at the end of October prior to being embarked on the convict transport *Morley* which set sail in December 1816.¹⁰ The first two letters below allude to George's claim of his and Grace's innocence and point the finger at the real culprits.

215. [F25/3/87] *George Blaker, Newgate, undated, between September and November 1816*

Honerd Sirs I Return My Sincer Thanks and hever Shall think My Self in Dutey Bound to Consider you the Perssever of My Life and My Unfortunet Wife [illegible word] in the Sitewashon that the Lawes of My Country will Permit Me and My Wife and I Solemny Declare to you that My Unfortunet Wife knew not but wat the Notes was Gud I Geve them to her I heard yestady that there was a Man Tacking in Custidy and as not Give is Right name by the Infermachon that I Can Git is names Is Thomas Macklanine and that is the werey Man that those Peapul had them of Exeapt My Self and one the Woman that Was Tride.

In the Case of a Few Days I Shall be habel to in Form you ware you May Discover I beleve ware the Maker of Sum of This Notes but Raley Carnt Say that this Pursen that Is Tacking hup is the Maker of them for God Sake Do not Late it Be none for I Surtiny Shold be Minded and you May Depend that having Intres I Will be Marke for I have Bin heden in it [illegible word] and did not Think of the Concqence of It But I Solemy Declare to you that I Never Did Change but that mone and that Ware at the Robin Hud Pubek Hous and as For the 2 Pond Note Solomy Call My God to Witenes that I ham Innence it is more Intres to the [illegible word] So I hever Remain your humbel Sarvent George Blaker

677. [25/11/109] *George and Grace Blaker, Newgate, undated*

Hon Sir the Nam that I Menshont in the Letter was Rong I was Thomas Larence [sentenced to fourteen yrs trspn, OB, Jan. 1818] and the Names of the Maker of they Notes Is Jon Lowes and the Other Jacakeps and thay have Both in wone [illegible word] and thay Live in Bromigham and Were near the Ship Pubelick Hous and is all the Intiglenes that I Can Give at Preasant but you May Depend that I Will Give you all the Informashon that I Can for I hav mor Shall think My Self in Dutey Bound to Sarve your Gudnes We Remane Hond Sir you Humbol and Trueley Sarvents George and Grace Blaker

Whoever penned the following two petitions was clearly more literate than the author of the two above. George and Grace were trying to retrieve some money they claimed was theirs.

675. [25/11/108] *George Blaker, Newgate, undated in 1816*

Sir I am sorry to be thus troublesome to you but owing to me and my wife being so long Confined we are reduced to the Greatest distress and at the time I was taken into Custody Mr Reed the officer took from me 2£ in Notes and some silver, I have applied to him Several times for it and he always put the person I sent to him Off with Evasive answers. Till Absolute Necessity Obliged me to Apply to the Magistrates for it, when Reed informed him he had given the money to a Turnkey belonging to this place, but he has since been with me and says he has given the 2£ to you. If that is the Case, I hope you will Take my distressed situation into your Consideration and Let me have it, as I assure you I have no means to procure any necessarys without it &c

I am Sir your Obedient Servant George Blaker

676. [25/11/111] *Female prisoner [undoubtedly Grace Blaker], Newgate, undated in 1816*

Honored Sir With Humble submission I beg leave to Address you relying on your Well Known goodness to Excuse this presumption but as you have extended your Benevolence to my fellow prisoners and hope You will not Exclude me I have been a long time in prison without a friend to render me any Relief which is mostly the case with those who depart from on Rectitude which I Unfortunately Experianced and I humbly hope you will Extend Your Charity for I am in the greatest Distress there is 2£ 12 shillings which the officers took from My Husband which we never have had I am Sir with the greatest Respect your Humble Petetioner



The last of the letters to which George put his name was rather touching – he petitioned that both he and ‘his unfortunate wife’ be transported together.

678. [25/11/106] *George and Grace Blaker, Newgate, undated in 1816*

Your well known Humanity to the unfortunate induces me to trouble you, with theses few lines, as I flatter myself you can render me, and my unfortunate wife, happy, in our truly Wretched Situation, we are both Convicted by the laws Our Country and are to be Transported for 14 Years, if through your goodness you Could make interest, for us to go together, We will as in duty bound for ever pray. I trust Sir if you could take the trouble to enquire the Behavior of me and my Wife Since our Unfortunate Confinement, hope you will find we shall not disgrace your kindness

We remain Hond Sir Your most Obedient and Truly Humble Servants George and Grace Blaker

The following four letters were sent by Grace Blaker, with two also being ‘signed’ by Jane Brown. Jane was another of those tried at the Old Bailey on 18 September, found guilty of possessing forged notes, and sentenced to fourteen years transportation. *En route* to Sydney this unfortunate woman threw herself overboard and was drowned.¹¹

679. [25/11/107] *Grace Blaker, Newgate, 4 November 1816*

Sir With due respect I humbly beg leave to Solicet your well known benevelence to the unfortunate Give me leave Sir most respectfully to inform you my Husband is gon on Board redy for his Voyge and I am left in the greatest Distress haveing no Friend now he is gon and nothing but the alowence of the Prison to live on his Relations haveing done all in their power Since our Confindment I therefore have Presume to write to you trusting to your goodness to Excuse this Liberty if Sir you will Pleas to assist me in this my distress it Shall be Ever Greatfully acknowledged by Sir your much distressed humble Sevant Grace Blaker

262. [F25/4/35] *Grace Blaker, Newgate, 14 May 1817*

Sir I hope you will Pardon the Liberty I Presume in troubling you, but being Distressed through me Confinement and the Absence of my Husband Obliges me to Solicit for A little of your benevolent Charity, Sir the Ship Doctor have Inspected the Prisoners for the Purpose of going Abroad and Informs us that the Ship will Sail before the first of June I am Very Unhappy, Concerning Some of me Cloaths I was Obligated to Pledge, which I Shall be at a great loss for them, if I do not get A little of your benevolent Charity to Release them, I Remain your Humble Petioner Grace Bleaker

263. [F25/4/36] *Grace Blaker and Jane Brown, Newgate, 29 May 1817*

Sir I hope your goodness will pardon the liberty I take in writing to you but we have had orders this morning for the Ship & we are going on Saturday Morning and humbly Begg you will please to Consider My Present Distress as I have Contracted A few Triffling Debts in the Goal and I have A Desire to pay what I owe as I Dont wish to Go away in Debt to any person and By so Doing you will very much Oblige your most obedt humble servts And Humble petitioners Grace Blaker & Jane Brown

Annotated: £5 has been ordered to be paid to Grace Blaker. 5/- a week has been paid to Jane Brown, Convict £5

264. [F25/4/37] *Grace Blaker and Jane Brown, Newgate, 31 May 1817*

Sir I hope your Goodness will please to Excuse my troubling you but there is a Mistake in our payments as we have not Recd any money for this 7 weeks and we Have found the 5£ Pound we Recd little Enough to Redeem our Clothes out of pawn And pay our Debts in the prison and I hope Sir you will have the Goodness to let us Have the Remainder as we want to get Necessarys to take on Board with us and Sir you will Greatly oblige your humble Petitioners Grace Blaker and Jane Brown

The bound indentures record Grace Blaker as being aged 23, and a mantua maker and shoe binder by calling when she arrived at Sydney on 14 January 1818.¹² There are contradictory reports as to her behaviour during the voyage. Predictably, Surgeon Cosgreave was not impressed – he referred to Grace as ‘a shameless prostitute, insolent, bad disposition’. However, John Gyles, a missionary and one of the free *Friendship* passengers, had prepared a separate report, dated 9 February 1818, and entitled ‘Observations on the under-mentioned Female

Convicts, sent from Newgate, and arrived per ship Friendship, for the information of the Committee of Ladies'. The feedback provided in respect of Grace Blaker reads:

Retained, with her husband, at Port Jackson; behaved quiet and orderly on board, but much insulted by the captain and surgeon; and there is no doubt but herself and husband will do well here; she appears to be a decent woman; lives at Paramatta [sic].¹³

Following a brief three-week spell on the hulk *Bellerophon*, on 18 November 1816 Grace's husband George had been transferred to the ship *Morley* which was about to make the first of its four voyages to New South Wales as a convict transport. George Blaker arrived in the colony on 10 April 1817, three months before the *Friendship* left London.¹⁴ According to the convict indents he was 35 year old native of London and a smith by trade. He was 5' 7½" tall, with a sallow complexion, brown hair and hazel eyes.¹⁵ In 1818 and 1820 George was listed as being employed in government labour and on 26 January 1821 he received a ticket of leave number 7/2405.¹⁶

Meanwhile, Grace Blaker had been located in the 1819 muster, living with George Blaker.¹⁷ George also featured in the 1821 and 1822 Parramatta District Land and Stock registers, which show that he had some leased land under cultivation and ran a couple of horses and a few sheep and hogs.¹⁸ They were together at Parramatta for the 1822 and 1825 musters, George listed as a ticket of leave man earning his living as a blacksmith, while his wife was still classified as a convict.¹⁹ In 1823 George received three town allotments in Parramatta – numbers 4, 23 and 25 Campbell Street – totalling 470 perches and an estimated quit rent value of just over £10.²⁰ It was also in October of this year that George was assigned a convict servant – Thomas Gill, per *Ocean* who had arrived in the colony two months earlier on 27 August.²¹

Grace and George were in demand as witnesses to various marriages.²² As an aside, they were both able to sign their names. Grace and George were two of the three witnesses for the marriage on 4 September 1821 between Isaac Mobbs and Ann Tomlinson, both 'free' and of Parramatta. In May 1822 Grace did the honours for the marriage of Nathaniel Peyton and Susanna Humphrys. George Blaker was one of the witnesses of the marriage between Sophia Richards (alias Pear) and John Hughes, held on 3 September 1822. Sophia was one of the *Friendship* women, and one who certainly made a success of her colonial life.²³ John McManis of Parramatta and Susannah Cobcroft of Wilberforce were married on 9 September 1823 at Windsor. Together with one Richard Cobcroft, George and Grace witnessed the event. Samuel Henry Salmon was 33 when he married, with the consent of friends, the young Harriet Henrietta Tierney, aged 20, on 24 July 1828. There were only two witnesses at the St Johns Church wedding – George and Grace Blaker.

In November 1828 the first official census of New South Wales was conducted. George Blaker completed household return for No. 43, Parramatta.

DISTRICT of <i>Parramatta</i>		NEW SOUTH WALES.		Census for the Year 1828.					
No. <i>43</i>									
By Act of the Governor and Council of the 9th Geo. IV. No. 4 sec. 2, it is enacted, that if any Householder, Employer of Servants, or Proprietor or Occupier of Lands, shall refuse or neglect to answer, or shall answer falsely or untrue, any of the Questions authorised by the said Act to be put relative to the Population, Cattle, and Occupied Land in the Colony, the Person so offending shall be fined, at the discretion of two or more Magistrates, in a Sum not exceeding Ten Pounds.									
HOUSEHOLDER'S NAME, <i>George Blaker</i>				RESIDENCE, <i>Parramatta</i>					
Names of Family and Servants.	Age.	Class.	Arrival.	Year.	Business.	Employment.	Religion.		
<i>George Blaker</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>S.L.</i>	<i>Morley</i>	<i>1816</i>	<i>16 years</i>	<i>Blacksmith</i>	<i>Parramatta</i>	<i>Protestant</i>	
<i>Mary Blaker</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>C.</i>	<i>Friendship</i>	<i>1815</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>As above</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>do</i>	
							<i>George Blaker</i>	<i>do</i>	
							<i>John Brown</i>	<i>do</i>	

It is rather faint but tells us that George was 48 years old and a blacksmith; his wife, now calling herself Mary Blaker, was 34. Both declared themselves to be Protestants. The TNA copy of the 1828 census records George as holding a ticket of leave, but the status for Mary is given as 'C' – convict. Further, in 1828 George completed a

schedule of land and livestock. Apart from his own property and 3 horses at Parramatta, he was the landowner of Charles Martin's farm at Wilberforce and of Mrs. Blower's farm at Prospect.²⁴

LAND and LIVE STOCK POSSESSED or HELD by the Householder and his Servants.								
District where Situated.	Name of Farm.	Name of Proprietor or Tenant.	Total Number of Acres.	Acres Cleared.	Acres Cultivated.	LIVE STOCK.		
						Horses.	Horned Cattle.	Sheep.
Wilberforce	Chas. Martins	Geo. Blaker				1		
Parramatta	Geo. Blaker	Geo. Blaker				3		
Prospect	Mrs. Blower	Geo. Blaker					2	

1830 was a milestone year for Grace and George Blaker – fourteen years after their convictions they were granted their tickets of freedom. From these certificate butts we now have a description of Grace Blaker – 5' tall, with a ruddy complexion, auburn hair and light hazel eyes. Understandably, George's hair was now tending to grey. Grace was a native of London, and George's place of birth is now narrowed down to Clapham.²⁵

CERTIFICATE OF FREEDOM.	CERTIFICATE OF FREEDOM.
No. 307776	No. 307881
Date, 1 November 1830	Date, 8 December 1830
Prisoner's No. _____	Prisoner's No. _____
Name, George Blaker	Name, Grace Blaker
Ship, Morley (1)	Ship, Friendship (3)
Master, Brown	Master, Armit
Year, 1817	Year, 1818
Native Place, Clapham - Surrey	Native Place, London
Trade or Calling, Blacksmith	Trade or Calling, Milliner
Offence, uttering forged notes	Offence, passing forged notes
Place of Trial, Clerkenwell G.D.	Place of Trial, London G.D.
Date of Trial, 18 September 1816	Date of Trial, 18 September 1816
Sentence, fourteen years	Sentence, fourteen years
Year of Birth, 1780	Year of Birth, 1790
Height, 5 feet 7 1/2 inches	Height, 5 feet
Complexion, Sallow	Complexion, Ruddy
Hair, Black to Grey	Hair, Auburn
Eyes, Hazel	Eyes, Light Hazel
General Remarks, Had a Ticket of Leave, No. 7/2405 dated 26 Jan'y 1821.	General Remarks, Wife of George Blaker

Earlier in 1830 an address was presented to Mr A.C. Innes, Esq., Superintendent of Police at Parramatta, by the inhabitants of that town on the occasion of him standing down from his position. George Blaker was one of the undersigned 'Landholders, Merchants, Dealers, Housekeepers, and others of the inhabitants of Parramatta and its districts' who expressed their appreciation of Mr. Archibald Clunes Innes' services and their best wishes for his future.²⁶

As so optimistically predicted by missionary John Gyles in 1818, over the twelve or so years they had been in the colony Grace and George seem to have settled well into life at Parramatta. They went about their business quietly, and with some success - as evidenced by some land acquisitions – and they managed to avoid any untoward behaviour that might have drawn attention to themselves in the pages of the Sydney Gazette.

But, from the early 1830s things started to unravel beginning in late 1831 if the following record refers to 'our' Mrs Blaker. On Monday 31 October, Mary Blaker, together with a Mary Kennedy, appeared in front of the Bench of Magistrates, Sydney, on a charge of drunkenness. They were fined 5/- which was duly paid. At least, unlike others similarly charged on the day, the pair avoided the stocks.²⁷

In April 1831 four of George Blaker's cattle had been left (agisted?) in a paddock at Megong. From 25 February to 3 March 1832 the following notice was published four times, calling upon George to remove his stock and to pay the outstanding dues, failing which they would be sold off.²⁸ Had his obligation to pay slipped his mind, or was he unable to meet his commitment?

L EFT in RICHARD KEAF's Paddock, at Megong, on the 21st of April, 1831, FOUR HEAD of CATTLE, the property of GEORGE BLAKER, Parramatta, of the following description:— One poll Cow, white and brown neck and shoulder, brand not legible. One black Cow, with a white spot on the rump, four white legs, branded I. C. One yellow Steer, with a white streak on the back, brand not legible. One brindle Heifer, with a white streak on the back, not branded. If the above Cattle are not taken away within 21 days, and the expenses paid, or a settlement made for the same with ROBERT PITT, who has them in his possession, they will be impounded in Bong Bong, and sold to defray the same.

From the following news snippet in *The Currency Lad* of 16 March 1833 we understand that the Blakers had spent time away from Parramatta, but where and when is not clear.²⁹

Our old townsman, Mr. G. Blaker, has again come to reside in Macquarie-street (Parramatta), where he intends carrying on the business of a general smith and bell-hanger.

The selling off of land over the next few years raises further questions as to the Blaker's financial situation. By 1834 one of the town allotments granted to George Blaker has passed into the hands of one George Tribe.³⁰ In November 1835 auctioneer Samuel Lyons advertised the sale of a more substantial part of the Blaker holdings.³¹

<p style="text-align: center;">GRANT</p> <p style="text-align: center;">From the Crown</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Six Valuable Allotments in the rising Town of Parramatta, with a Cottage erected thereon.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">BY MR. SAMUEL LYONS,</p> <p>At Borton's London Tavern, George-street, on Tuesday, 1st December, at 11 o'Clock, precisely,</p> <p>THIS valuable Property is situated in Campbell-street, Parramatta, on the rising ground, near the Parsonage House, commanding a most beautiful and extensive view of the Town and neighbourhood.</p> <p>The Premises are well known, as belonging to Mr. George Blaker, where he has carried on an extensive business for many years.</p>	<p>Part of the Ground has been planted with the choicest Fruit Trees, and the whole is well supplied with excellent water. The allotments are well adapted for the erection of neat retired Cottages and the site is unequalled by any for disposal in the rapidly increasing Town of Parramatta.</p> <p>The Land, held by Deed of Grant from the Crown, for the convenience of buyers, will be submitted for Sale in Five Lots, each having a frontage of about 50 feet to Campbell-street, by 135 feet depth, more or less. The remainder, held by Lease from the Crown, now rented to Mrs. Bedford, whose Lease has 18 months unexpired will be sold in one Lot.</p> <p>Terms.—Twenty per cent. cash deposit on the fall of the hammer, the residue by approved Bills, at 3 & 6 months, with security on the Property, if required.</p> <p>Purchasers to pay their own conveyance, and expense of security.</p> <p>A Plan of the above is in preparation, and will be exhibited at the Office of the Auctioneer.</p>
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For whatever reason the sale did not go ahead at this time but it was advertised as being back on the market again on 26 January and 2 February 1836. The Parramatta Sales scheduled for 26 January were postponed to 5 February 'in consequence of the opening of Landsdown Bridge, by His Excellency the Governor'.³² This time the sale went ahead, as recorded in the Register of Memorials. The Blakers sold the property to Charles Marsh. The selling price for the land 'together with the messuages tenements or Dwelling houses thereon erected with their and every of their appurtenances &c. &c.' was 'one hundred and ten pounds in hand paid'.³³

Date of Instrument.	Nature of Instrument.	Names of the Parties.	Names of the Witnesses.
<p><i>Nineteenth and twentieth days of February</i></p> <p><i>In the Year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and thirty six</i></p>	<p><i>Release and Conveyance</i></p>	<p><i>Geo. Blaker & Wm. — to — Chas Marshall</i></p>	<p><i>A. H. Marshall</i> <i>John Penamatta</i></p>

Having to sell must have been a real blow for the Blakers. One year after the sale, and at the relatively young age of 42, Mary Blaker, wife of a blacksmith, died and was laid to rest at Parramatta on 5 February 1837.³⁴

<p><i>Mary Blaker</i> No. 101</p>	<p><i>Parramatta</i></p>	<p><i>5th Feb. 1837</i></p>	<p><i>42 years</i></p>	<p><i>Blacksmith's wife</i></p>	<p><i>St. John's Parramatta</i> <i>Off. of Minister</i></p>
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Was George Blaker the vendor who, in July 1838, was divesting himself of more assets – as described in a notice published by S. Phillips, Auctioneer?³⁵

PARRAMATTA.

To Timber Merchants, Builders, and OTHERS.

MR. S. PHILLIPS,

Will sell by Auction **THIS DAY, July 30th, 1838,** without reserve,

ALL the Materials of that Capital Cottage known as "BLAKER'S COTTAGE," Parramatta.

Terms made known at time of Sale.

It was definitely George Blaker who, by order of the Court of Requests, was admitted to the Parramatta Gaol on 16 August 1838 as a debtor. He was held there for two months before being discharged by order of the Commissioner on 10 October. He was back inside in 1842, the Gaol Entrance Books recording that he was admitted on 27 June and released forty-eight hours later. What had earned him this short stay is not specified, but it was most likely drink related.³⁶

George Blaker outlived his wife by ten years. He died at Parramatta on 17 February 1847 and was buried the next day at St. John's. The burial entry records his age as 66 and his occupation as whitesmith.³⁷

<p><i>George Blaker</i> No. 1027</p>	<p><i>This Parish</i></p>	<p><i>Feb: 17</i></p>	<p><i>Feb: 18</i></p>	<p><i>66 yrs</i></p>	<p><i>Whitesmith</i> <i>St. John's Parramatta</i></p>
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The report of an inquest which was held on the day George died is most revealing.

INQUESTS.-Two inquests were holden in the course of Wednesday by the Coroner for the district, C. Bethel Lyons, Esq, and as it will be perceived, in both cases death was hastened, if not primarily induced, by long continued intemperance; the sudden deaths which occurred affording a most fearful instance of the effects of this desolating vice. The first inquest, which was held at the house of Mr. J.P. Fitzsimmons - the Cottage Inn, in O'Connell-street, was on view of the body of George Blaker, then lying dead in the house of Mr. Gower, in Hunter-street, in this town. It appeared that the deceased, who was an aged man, being about seventy years of age, returned home about dusk on the previous evening in a state of intoxication, and was got to his bed. Shortly afterwards he appeared to be extremely unwell, but declined any medical gentleman being sent for by the parties whom he was residing with, alleging that all he suffered arose merely from the effects of what he had been drinking, and that he should be well in the morning. He was, however sedulously attended until between two and



three o'clock in the morning, when he appeared better, and as he was in the habit of being almost every night in a state of intoxication, credence was naturally given and belief entertained that he would be well on the ensuing day; but at about five o'clock, A.M. he was found lying dead. Dr. R.C. Rutter having given evidence that there was not the slightest marks of violence about the body of the deceased, and that death had been induced by drunkenness, the Jury returned a verdict of natural death, accelerated by continued habits of intemperance.

The deceased was well known in Parramatta, where he was from a lengthened residence of about thirty years, a public character. He is stated at one time to have been possessed of considerable property, but through that vice which caused the melancholy termination of his existence, he became so reduced in circumstances that, during the later years of his life he had to gain his subsistence as an itinerant lock and tinsmith, and scanty as were the means he thereby acquired, the greatest portion was spent in intoxicating liquors; and a statement reached the writer of this, that Blaker's wife, some time since deceased, also died from intemperance.³⁸

The report charts George's decline from a well-regarded member of the Parramatta community and indicates clearly that the last ten years or so of his life were pretty miserable. Sadly, it would seem that his wife Grace (Mary) Blaker's life had taken a similar path – she ended up a drunkard, and had died of intemperance.

Grace and George Blaker spent 19 years and 30 years respectively in the colony. After a promising start in adjusting to their new environment, they subsequently managed to squander whatever material gains they had made over that time. This misfortune, together with the fact that they were a childless couple, meant that they were destined for obscurity, leaving no legacy or anything of significance by which to remember them.

NOTES

¹ *Evening Mail*, 17 Jul 1816, p.2. A chip hat was a type of straw hat, often decorated with ribbons and flowers.

² Locating London's Past, 1746 Map, <https://www.locatinglondon.org/>.

³ *Evening Mail*, 19 Jul 1816, p.4.

⁴ *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, 26 Jul, 1816, p.2.

⁵ *Kentish Gazette*, 30 Jul 1816, p.2.

⁶ Findmypast (FMP), England & Wales, Crime, Prisons & Punishment, 1770-1835, Newgate Prison Calendar, Series HO77, Piece number 23.

⁷ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 13 May 2019), September 1816, trial of GEORGE BLAKER (t18160918-29).

⁸ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 13 May 2019), September 1816, trial of GRACE BLAKER (t18160918-52).

⁹ FMP, England & Wales, Crime, Prisons & Punishment, 1770-1835, Newgate Prison Calendar, Series HO77, Piece number 23.

¹⁰ Prisoners' Letters to the Bank of England, 1781-1827. Ed. Deirdre Palk. London: London Record Society, 2007. British History Online. Web. 14 May 2019. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol42>. Note: according to the editor of Prisoners' Letters to the Bank of England, the Old Bailey verdict for Grace Blaker was incorrectly recorded – refer to Index of Prisoner/Letter Writers: A-L.

¹¹ Refer to BOF, Section 3c, Jane Brown.

¹² Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Convict Indents, 1788-1842, Bound Indentures, 1814-1818.

¹³ House of Commons, Parliament, Reports from Committees : gaols and other places of confinement, 1819. Evidence tendered by Newgate Gaol Keeper, William R.H. Brown. Incidentally, although the report was addressed to the Committee of Ladies, Mr. Brown felt it his duty to read it first, as he did all such correspondence. Letters etc of slight importance would then be passed to the addressee. In this instance, 'being of considerable importance', he felt it his duty to retain the report. Did the Ladies ever see it?

¹⁴ Ancestry, UK, Prison Hulk Registers and Letter Books, 1802-1849, Bellerophon, Register, 1802-1834.

¹⁵ Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Convict Indents, 1788-1842, Bound Indentures, 1814-1818.

¹⁶ Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Settler and Convict Lists, 1787-1834. Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Convict Records, 1810-1891 – NOTE - transcript incorrectly recorded as 'Van Diemen's Land, 1828'. See also Community Contributions by D. Wong and Robin Sharkey, Convict Records, <https://convictrecords.com.au/convicts/blaker/george/63363>.

¹⁷ Ancestry, New South Wales, Census and Population Books, 1811-1825, Population Muster, 1819.

¹⁸ Ancestry, New South Wales, Census and Population Books, 1811-1825, Land and Stock Books 1821 and 1822.

¹⁹ Ancestry, New South Wales and Tasmania, Australia Convict Musters, 1806-1849, New South Wales 1822 and 1825.

²⁰ Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Colonial Secretary's Papers, 1788-1856, Series: NRS 898; Reel or Fiche Numbers: *Reels* 6020-6040, 6070; *Fiche* 3260-3312, p. 14. By 1834, this property was in the possession of George Tribe (*Sydney Gazette* 4 Aug 1834, p.4).

²¹ Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Colonial Secretary's Papers, 1788-1856, Series: NRS 898; Reel or Fiche Numbers: *Reels* 6020-6040, 6070; *Fiche* 3260-3312, p.46. Just over a year later, and by then in the employ of Mr. Key of Parramatta, 'lifer' Thomas Gill



was sent off to Port Macquarie for three years for stealing tea and sugar from his employer – Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Colonial Secretary's Papers, 1788-1856, Series: *NRS 898*; Reel or Fiche Numbers: *Reels 6020-6040, 6070*; *Fiche 3260-3312*, p.63.

²² Biographical Database of Australia (BDA), various biographical reports.

²³ Refer to BOF, Section 3a, Lucy Mears and Sophia Richards (Sisters).

²⁴ Ancestry, 1828 New South Wales, Australia Census (Australian Copy), (NRS 1273) 1828 Census: Householders' Returns, Parramatta. Ancestry 1828 New South Wales, Australia Census (TNA Copy), New South Wales, Census A-B, 1828. BDA, Biographical reports for Charles Martin and Martha Blower – 1828 Land Stock: NSW Land & Stock Census 1828.

²⁵ Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Certificates of Freedom, 1810-1814, 1827-1867, (NRS 12210) Butts of Certificates of Freedom, 1830, November and December.

²⁶ *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 4 Mar 1830, p.2.

²⁷ Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Criminal Court Records, 1830-1945, Bench of Magistrates, Sydney: Punishment Book, 1830-1831.

²⁸ *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 25 Feb 1832, p.4. Bong Bong was the first village established in the Southern Highlands. The settlement is now just a name on the map, the site being about 7kms from Bowral, and marked by a historic marker – The Southern Highlands of NSW, <https://www.highlandsnsw.com.au/towns/bong.html>.

²⁹ *The Currency Lad*, 16 Mar 1833, p.3.

³⁰ *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 30 Jul 1834 [Issue No.126], Memorial 868, p.562. *The Sydney Herald*, 4 Aug 1834, p.4.

³¹ *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 24 Nov 1835, p.3.

³² *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 26 Jan 1836, p.4, and 2 Feb 1836, p.4. NOTE: No adjustment rental term of Mrs. Bedford in these two advertisements.

³³ Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Land Grants, 1788-1863, Registers of Memorials.

³⁴ NSW Registry of Births Deaths & Marriages (NSW BDM), Death registration 2410/1837 V18372410 21. Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, St. John's Parramatta, Burials, 1790-1986.

³⁵ *The Sydney Monitor*, 30 July 1838, p.4.

³⁶ Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Gaol Description and Entrance Books, 1818-1930.

³⁷ NSW BDM, Death registration 591/1847 V1847591 32B. Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, St. John's Parramatta, Burials, 1790-1986.

³⁸ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 Feb 1847, p.2.



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