



Sarah Robinson

Date of Trial:	23 October 1816
Where Tried:	Lancaster Quarter Session
Crime:	Larceny
Sentence:	7 years
Est YOB:	1799
Stated Age on Arrival:	19
Native Place:	
Occupation:	Fustian Cutter
Alias/AKA:	Sarah Ogilvie/Olgylvie (m)
Marital Status (UK):	
Children on Board:	
Surgeon's Remarks:	Lazy, scrophulous and epileptic
Assigned NSW or VDL	VDL

Reporting on the proceedings of the 23 October 1816 Lancaster Quarter Sessions, the *Manchester Mercury* made the briefest mention of the crime for which Sarah Robinson was to be transported – seven years for stealing bank notes.¹ Officially it was recorded that:

Whereas Sarah Robinson late of Manchester in the said county Singlewoman hath at this Session been convicted of Felony This Court doth therefore order and adjudge that she be send and transported to some part beyond the Seas for the Term of Seven Years pursuant to the Statute in such case make and provided.²

Sarah Robinson was by no means a model prisoner at Lancaster Gaol, where she was sent to await her transportation beyond the seas, as evidenced by one particular event recorded by the Governor on 21 April 1817 in his Journal.

About Noon a Number of the female Convicts under Sentence of Transportation were discovered on the Top of the Dungeon Tower. When the Turnkeys went up they found Ruth Guest, Mary Sharp, M.A. Buckley and S. Robinson on the Roof. They had managed to wrench off three padlocks from the lower and upper Doors and had the Impudence to tell the Turnkeys that they had only forced their way through the Doors to see the fine prospect. Their Intention was to let themselves down from the Turret upon the Wall and then proceed to the Roof of the County Hall, where they might have gone down into the Halls, or have let themselves down by means of the Blankets, on the Terrace. However well inclined I may be to overlook this Transgression, some punishment is absolutely necessary, especially as they seem to boast of the Feat. As I have no means of separating them by solitary confinement, the only resource is Irons, which must be tried until I see some signs of sorrow for the rash Act.³

On 19 May the Governor had written to the Secretary of State concerning the orders for transportation for the fifteen females then in custody. It must have been a great relief to the Governor (and to those women possibly still in irons) when he wrote in his Journal on 27 May that having visited all the rooms, wards, &c, attended to the locking up, and visited the Manufactory, he had removed to Deptford eleven females transports – including Sarah Robinson and one of her fellow tower climbers, Mary Ann Buckley.

The next person who had charge of Sarah Robinson was Peter Cosgreave, Surgeon of the convict transport *Friendship*. He too no doubt would have been pleased when he was relieved of the responsibility of this 'lazy, scrophulous and epileptic' woman. The *Friendship* reached Port Jackson on 14 January 1818 and from there Sarah was one of the fifty-three women who were transferred to Van Diemen's Land on the *Duke of Wellington*, which arrived at Hobart Town on 20 February.

Aged just nineteen, Sarah was the second youngest of the *Friendship* women and, unlike many of them, she did have a trade.⁴ She was a fustian cutter, which called for some skill and dexterity.

Fustian was also the old name for corduroy, a kind of cotton velvet. This basic cloth had extra looped wefts

woven in as it was made. The rolls of cloth, 18-24 inches wide, were then sent to specialist fustian cutters. In a well-lit room the cloth was pulled tight over benches up to 150 yards long and stretched with rollers at either end. The cutters would then insert a sharp knife like instrument with long guide into the loops, called a race (a tunnel of loops). The threads were cut with a sweeping movement as they walked the length of the cloth. This was similar to opening a letter with a knife but considerable dexterity and accuracy was needed. The cut wefts formed the pile. The cloth was then brushed to raise the pile.

All this sounds simple but the best quality fustian, like velveteen, needed 40 cuts per inch. This meant that a worker had to walk many miles a day to cut the wefts. If they made a mistake during the cut, there was trouble, likewise, if they had to leave a cloth for someone else to finish this again would lower the value. Different people cut in different ways, perhaps every individual held their knife at slightly different angles which resulted in noticeably different piles. Money was also lost if a knife was broken, as the master's skill was required to sharpen the tool ... time was money and the more you cut, the more you were paid.⁵

Sarah was sent up to Port Dalrymple where it is likely that her skills may have been put to use in government service.⁶ If so, luxurious velveteen would have been replaced by much coarser fabrics.

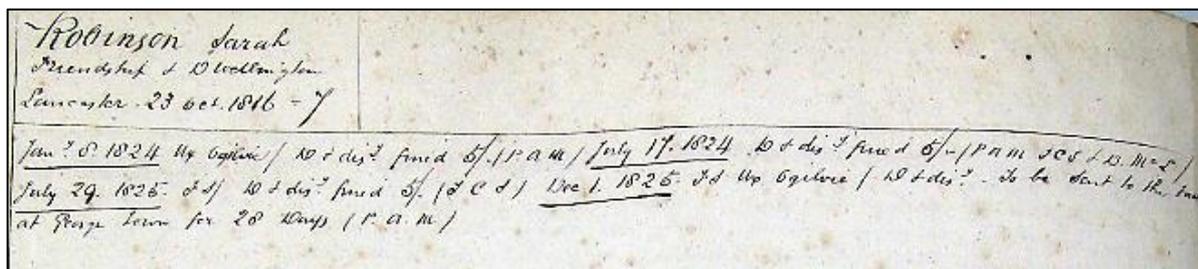
The Port Dalrymple Population Muster of 1820 records Sarah Robinson as being married to Peter Ogilvie and this is confirmed by the 1823 muster in which Sarah, living at Launceston, was listed as the wife of Peter Ogilvie.⁷ Her name was also included in a list of 'Prisoners of the Crown in Van Diemen's Land claiming expiration of Sentence', which was forwarded by the Colonial Secretary on 31 December 1823 to Lieut. Governor Sorrell. The list was headed up:

List of Persons in Van Diemen's Land with their Times, places of Trial and Sentences extracted from the respective Indents of the Ships by which they arrived in this Colony; and also their personal Descriptions as taken at Muster on arrival at Sydney Cove.⁸

Unfortunately, while confirming the trial and transportation details, the columns for describing what Sarah Robinson looked like are annotated '(No Description)'. In its 9 April 1824 issue *The Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser* published a list of persons who had obtained their certificate of freedom during the previous week. Sarah Robinson was one of those listed.⁹

Sarah Robinson and Peter Ogilvie were one of many pairs who were married in 1819 by Reverend Youl.¹⁰ However, when these marriages were subsequently entered into the St John's Launceston register, no details were given as to the actual date and place and witnesses, nor to the status and ages of the couples – although, based on their convict records, Sarah would have been about 20 years old and her husband about 50. It can be surmised that by 1823 Sarah and Peter had been together for at least four years.

Up to this time Sarah had kept herself out of trouble, with only one offence being recorded against her name – on 26 February 1818 for being drunk and disorderly, and for which she was to be confined in the Georgetown Gaol for one week and to be put in the stocks for 2 hours.¹¹



However, over the next two years she was had up on four more charges of drunk and disorderly behaviour. On 8 January 1824 (ux Ogilvie) she was fined 5/-. On 17 July 1824, by which time she was free by servitude, her unsociable behaviour earned another 5/-. Charged with being drunk and disorderly on 29 July 1825 Sarah was found guilty as charged, and required to fork out another 5/-. By the time of the last offence the authorities clearly thought a custodial sentence would encourage her to abandon the bottle. On 1 December (free by servitude and

ux Ogilvie) Magistrate Peter Archer Mulgrave sent her to the Factory at Georgetown for 28 days.¹²

Sarah would have spent Christmas Day and also have seen in the New Year in the Factory. But very shortly after that, as an inmate and only 25 years of age, she died and was buried on 12 January 1826. The informant was Robert Graves, Master of the Factory.¹³ As far as is known Sarah had no children to mourn her passing and, equally, widower Peter Ogilvie was not burdened with any family responsibilities.

No. 2	1819	George Town Factory.	12 th January 1826.	25.	Friendship	-	Mr Graves Master of the Factory.
No. 3	1319						

I wonder if, when she married him, Sarah was aware that Peter Ogilvie had been transported for brutally murdering his wife named alternatively Margaret or Isobel Hastie. The trial at the Glasgow Court of Justiciary of Peter Ogilvie, wright, for the murder on 2 July 1810 of his wife in their own house, near the Infirmary, was reported in detail, and occupied several column inches of the *Perthshire Courier* of 24 September 1810, and in summary, a truncated account in the issue of the previous week.

GLASGOW, Sept 13 – Yesterday morning the Circuit Court of Justiciary was opened here, by the right honourable Lord Armadale. The Court proceeded to the trial of Peter Ogilvy, for the murder of Margaret Hastie, his wife. The trial lasted several hours, when the jury were enclosed. The jury this morning, returned their verdict, finding him *guilty*, by a plurality of voices; but, in respect of his former good character and behaviour, which were proven by the gentlemen in whose service he had been for five years, and by others acquainted with him, and other circumstances appearing in proof, they recommended him to mercy.¹⁴

He had pleaded 'Not Guilty', and claimed to have no knowledge of how his wife came to be in such a badly battered state in their bedroom. However, in his defence, a number of witnesses claimed that his wife was a habitual drunkard, who financed her habit by pawning whatever clothing and household goods she could lay her hands on, the 'lifting' of his shoes from his feet while he was asleep being the final straw. Testimony was given that she badly ill-treated her husband and was violent when intoxicated. One witness went so far as to say that, if she had been the victim of an assault by her husband, 'it was an *ill wife* getting her *paying*'.

Despite the recommendation for mercy, there was no guarantee that Peter Ogilvie would escape a trip to the gallows, scheduled for 31 October 1810, after which his body would be donated to the Professor of Anatomy. It was not until April 1811, after a series of stays of execution, that:

On Wednesday, Peter Ogilvie, a prisoner in Glasgow jail, received from the Prince Regent, a final remission of his sentence for execution, on condition of being transported beyond the seas for life.¹⁵

The first stage of the reprieved man's journey was his removal from the Glasgow Tolbooth to the Edinburgh Tolbooth in June 1811.¹⁶

Thursday morning, Peter, Ogilvie, who was sentenced at last autumn circuit to be executed at Glasgow, for the murder of his wife, and Thomas Stewart, alias Robert Stewart, alias Michael Macfaden, who also was sentenced, at last Circuit at Inverary, to be executed for horse stealing, but reprieved, were sent off, under an escort, for Botany Bay. They arrived here on that evening, and were lodged in the tolbooth.

He was then transferred to the hulk *Retribution* moored at Woolwich where, at the age of 43, he was received on board on 7 July 1811.¹⁷ The next stage of his journey was embarkation on the convict transport *Indefatigable* in April 1812 in readiness for the sailing date of 4 June. After a voyage of 137 days the vessel arrived at Hobart on 19 October 1812.¹⁸ According to the bound indentures, Peter Ogilvie was one of three convicts who had been tried in Scotland and who had been transported for life. However against the names of all three of them was the notation 'Life, but to be enacted to the Contractor for seven years only'.¹⁹

He was mustered at Port Dalrymple in 1816 and 1820, and included in the 1821 Dalrymple population muster.²⁰ He was possibly the Peter Ogilvie who in 1820 was paid two amounts of £6 5 0 as salary from 1 April to 30 September as Overseer at Port Dalrymple, and again in the following year a quarterly salary £6 5 0.²¹ He can be placed in the Launceston district in November 1829 because on 24 November he was charged and reprimanded by W. Lyttleton for being drunk and disorderly on the street – the only offence recorded on his Conduct Register.²² Only two more records have been located for Peter Ogilvie – the 1830 and 1835 muster lists, for both of which he was described as ‘Missing’.²³

There is an 1838 Hobart death record for a Peter Ogleby, but nothing in the details to prove whether or not this was in fact Peter Ogilvie who, according to his estimated year of birth of 1768, would have been aged 70 in 1838.²⁴

✓ Peter Ogleby	Hospital	21 st February	75 years	Object of Charity	Free by Stricture
----------------	----------	---------------------------	----------	-------------------	-------------------

NOTES

¹ *Manchester Mercury*, 5 Nov 1816, p.4.

² Ancestry, Lancashire, England, Quarter Session Records and Petitions, 1648-1908.

³ Findmypast (FMP), England & Wales, Crime, Prisons & Punishment, 1770-1935, Lancaster Gaol, Governor's Journal. M.A. Buckley was Mary Ann Buckley.

⁴ Female Convicts Research Centre (FCRC), Female Convicts in Van Diemen's Land database, Convict ID: 3617.

⁵ Fustian Cutting, http://www.themeister.co.uk/birchall/fustian_cutting.htm.

⁶ Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office (TAHO), Assignment List, CON13/1/1, p.141.

⁷ Ancestry, New South Wales, Census and Population Books 1811-1825, Port Dalrymple Population Muster, 1820. Ancestry, New South Wales and Tasmania, Australia Convict Musters, 1806-1849, Tasmania, 1823. FCRC, Female Convicts in Van Diemen's Land database.

⁸ Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Colonial Secretary's Papers, 1788-1856.

⁹ *The Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser*, 9 Apr 1824, p.1.

¹⁰ TAHO, Launceston marriages 1819, RGD36/1/1 no 327.

¹¹ FCRC, Female Convicts in Van Diemen's Land database. Phillip Tardif, "Notorious Strumpets and Dangerous Girls : convict women in Van Diemen's Land, 1803-1829", Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1990.

¹² TAHO, Conduct Register, CON40/1/7 image 256.

¹³ TAHO, Port Dalrymple deaths 1826, RGD34/1/1 no 1316.

¹⁴ *Perthshire Courier*, 24 Sep 1810, pp.3-4; *Perthshire Courier*, 17 Sep 1810, p.4.

¹⁵ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 17 Apr 1811, p.3.

¹⁶ *Caledonian Mercury*, 29 Jun 1811, p.3.

¹⁷ Ancestry, UK, Prison Hulk Registers and Letter Books, 1802-1849.

¹⁸ Free Settler or Felon? Convict Ship Indefatigable 1812, https://jenwillets.com/convict_ship_indefatigable_1812.htm.

¹⁹ Ancestry, New South Wales, Australia, Convict Indents, 1788-1842, Bound Indentures, 1801-1814.

²⁰ Ancestry, New South Wales and Tasmania, Australian Convict Musters, 1806-1849, 1816 and 1820. Ancestry, New South Wales, Census and Population Books 1811-1825, Port Dalrymple Population Muster, 1821.

²¹ *The Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter*, 11 Nov 1820, p.2. *The Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser*, 6 Oct 1821.

²² TAHO, Conduct Register, CON31/1/29 p.15.

²³ Ancestry, New South Wales and Tasmania, Australia Convict Musters 1806-1849, Tasmania, List of convicts (incomplete) 1830 and 1835.

²⁴ TAHO, Hobart deaths 1838, RGD34/1/1 no 5407.



SOURCES

Genealogy Websites

Ancestry

Lancashire, England, Quarter Session Records and Petitions, 1648-1908

New South Wales and Tasmania, Australia Convict Musters, 1806-1849

New South Wales and Tasmania, Australian Convict Musters, 1806-1849

New South Wales, Australia, Colonial Secretary's Papers, 1788-1856

New South Wales, Australia, Convict Indents, 1788-1842

New South Wales, Census and Population Books 1811-1825

UK, Prison Hulk Registers and Letter Books, 1802-1849

FindmyPast

England & Wales, Crime, Prisons & Punishment, 1770-1935

Other Websites

Female Convicts Research Centre, <https://www.femaleconvicts.org.au/>

Free Settler or Felon? <https://www.jenwillets.com/>

Fustian Cutting, http://www.themeister.co.uk/birchall/fustian_cutting.htm

LINC Tasmania, <https://www.linc.tas.gov.au/>

Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office, <https://www.libraries.tas.gov.au/archive-heritage/>

Online Newspapers

British Newspapers (FindmyPast)

Aberdeen Press and Journal

Caledonian Mercury

Manchester Mercury

Perthshire Courier

TROVE

The Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter

The Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser

Publications

Tardif, Phillip, "Notorious Strumpets and Dangerous Girls : convict women in Van Diemen's Land, 1803-1829", Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1990

© Leonie Fretwell, 2019