

RESEARCH ENQUIRIES INFORMATION SHEET

If you are enquiring about a convict or official associated with the Port Arthur penal settlement

The Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority has a range of resources to assist people undertaking research. The following resources will help you.

If you know or you think your ancestor was a convict:

- ❖ Their records have been photographed and are freely available via the [Libraries Tasmania](#) website. Their [Guide to the Convict Records](#) makes reference to many other useful resources.
- ❖ The ship your convict ancestor travelled on to Van Diemen's Land, may have a Surgeon's Report of the voyage to the colony. You can view the Records of the Admiralty online via [Trove](#).

If your ancestor was not a convict, but an official at Port Arthur such as a Commandant, Medical Officer, Chaplain or Overseer:

- ❖ Search the Names List via the [Libraries Tasmania](#) website.

If your ancestor was in the military:

- ❖ The War Office records including pay lists and muster rolls have now been digitised. You can view the Records of the War Office online via [Trove](#).

Other sources of information on convicts – predominantly from the [Libraries Tasmania](#) website:

- ❖ Check the conduct record
 - Did the convict die while in the system?
 - Check Convict Death Register (CON63) – now viewable online.
 - Check for an Inquest – now viewable online
- ❖ Did the convict commit a major offence after arrival for which he/she was tried in a court again?
 - If a Supreme Court trial, there may be copies of the trial papers.
 - If a Quarter Sessions trial, there may be Lower Courts papers.
 - Both of the above may now have been digitized and accessible via the [Libraries Tasmania](#) website.
 - The newspapers of the time often have more information. Check the papers of the area in which the trial took place - usually Hobart or Launceston. Many are now accessible via [Trove](#).

- ❖ Did the convict, specifically a female, bring children out to the colony with her?
 - If so, there could be references to them in the Queen's Orphan School registers via the [Libraries Tasmania](#) website.
- ❖ Did the convict marry?
 - Check the applications for permission to marry.
 - Check for birth, death and marriage registrations.
 - Check the census index.
- ❖ Did the convict apply for his wife and family to come out from England?
 - If so, there could be a reference in the Name Index
 - Check the free arrival index for reference to the family arriving.
- ❖ Did the convict depart the colony?
 - Check the departure index, and if the convict departed, the free arrival index. He/she may have returned again.

If you are researching a female convict, all of the above applies, plus, check the [Female Convicts Research Centre](#) website. Many additional resources can be found there including access to their database.

If you are researching information on a subject:

- ❖ Check the [Libraries Tasmania](#) website.
- ❖ For photos, maps or plans check the [Libraries Tasmania](#) website or [Trove](#).
- ❖ If looking for information on an event check the newspapers of the time via [Trove](#)

Useful publications:

- ❖ *Port Arthur: a place of misery* by Maggie Weidenhofer (B&M Reid, in assocn with PAHSMA, 1990)
- ❖ *The Convict Ships 1787-1868* by Charles Bateson (Library of Australian History, 1983)
- ❖ *The Convict Probation System, Van Diemen's Land, 1839-1854* by Ian Brand (Blubberhead Press, 1990)
- ❖ *Penal Peninsula : Port Arthur and its outstations, 1827-1898* by Ian Brand (Regal Publications, 1989)

Remember:

When conducting online research:

- ❖ Think like a detective!
- ❖ Be aware that many people were in the colony with the same name. Keep this in mind when searching as there may not be enough information to make a match.
- ❖ Always consider alternative spellings of a name.
- ❖ Always record the reference that the information or copy of a record came from.

For all other research enquiries please email: library@portarthur.org.au

Thank you.