

17 – Risdon Cove to Port Arthur

Risdon Cove

You have two options to start this itinerary: one is to go north from the New Town itinerary, wiggle east to the Brooker Highway, and cross the Derwent by the Bowen Bridge and so to Risdon Cove. (Before the bridge, on your right, is Prince of Wales Bay; somewhere towards the river, in today's Glenorchy, were the 50 acres Martha Hayes was given to farm in 1804 (p21).)

The alternative is to cross the Tamar Bridge and follow the road northwards on the east bank of the river. If you go this way, driving through Lindisfarne turn into Derwent Avenue. No. 18, with its Chinese moon gate, is Marie Bjelke Petersen's house (p239). She wrote in a sunny room hung with her own paintings and died there aged 94.

Although Risdon Cove is the beginning of this itinerary, because of its controversial history it is not an easy place to visit. On the one hand, since time immemorial, it was the land of the Moomairremener people, and it was there, on 3 May 1804, that the Risdon Massacre took place (p18). Looked at from the point of view of the British who settled in Tasmania, it is the place where Martha Hayes, John Bowen and the rest of the first party came ashore in September 1803 and started to build homes (p10).

In 'Risdon Cove and the Massacre of 3 May 1804' (2004), Lyndall Ryan draws on the archaeological work of Angela McGowan to note that her report 'not only found traces of the original buildings, erected by the settlers at Risdon Cove in 1803–4, but also evidence of Aboriginal occupation of 8000 years, including an Aboriginal tool-making site'.

Since the early 1970s, and the resurgence of Aboriginal consciousness, the site has been a bone of contention and in 1995 it was handed over to Aborigines represented by an elected Aboriginal Land Council. In 1999, the cove and other Aboriginal sites were declared indigenous protected areas (p232). For today's Aboriginal community, Risdon Cove is a place of cultural renewal and celebration where the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre conducts cultural, educational and environmental restoration programmes.

When I first visited Tasmania in 1980, with my husband who lived there between 1968 and 1978, I was taken to see this historic site. There was little there, and no other visitors; we wandered at will. Now, the easiest way is to drive slowly by. Should you want to enter the site itself, I suggest you contact the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (hobart@tacinc.com.au) and ask their advice about the current position; perhaps best, even, ask for permission. My attempts to clarify several points for this book have had a chequered history.

I cannot improve on the suggestion of Phillip Tardif in *John Bowen's Hobart* (2003): 'At some places the burden of history proves too great to bear. For the present, Risdon Cove is one of those places.'

There is some discussion about the exact mooring of the *Anson*, the probation hulk for women convicts between 1844 and 1849, but here is

the best place to look out onto the Derwent and see Philippa Bowden, her assistants, and those unhappy women they looked after (pp157–66). Typical is Caroline Leaky's Maida Gwynnham in *Broad Arrow*.

Richmond

I'm taking you now to Richmond, but be warned: it is quite a distance from Risdon Cove, the road winding steeply up and down a hill before you reach the most physically historic town in Tasmania. I have usually approached it from Sorell, an easier and pleasing vineyard strewn drive. Louisa Anne Meredith wrote of the journey from Hobart some time after her arrival in 1840:

Moving over Grass Tree Hill from Risdon we came to the valley of the Coal River with the little town of Richmond in its bosom hemmed in by ranges of hills, not lofty, but infinitely varied in outline. It breaks upon the sight, gaining beauty at each new turn in the winding road until near the foot of the mountain, where a spot is often pointed out to strangers as the scene of an adventure with bushrangers ...

It is worth a visit, for the longevity of its buildings and its charm, but others have the same idea! In spite of its history since 1824 and, indeed, several links with women, for reasons of space and lack of links to my history text I have to omit several of them. I hope, however, to put them under 'updates' on the website www.holobooks.co.uk. I am including here Richmond Gaol, the Old Rectory, St Luke's Anglican Church, St Luke's Cemetery and St John's Roman Catholic Church. In the environs are the properties Carrington and Campania.

Richmond Gaol

The gaol, easily found in the middle of the main street, was established in 1825 as a halfway house for male convicts not deemed hard-core enough to be sent to Macquarie Harbour (p59) and later Port Arthur (p280). Although the inmates were mostly male, some women were incarcerated there, mainly after 1835 when solitary cells and a women's room were commenced.

Between 1837 and 1840, 261 women were jailed, for whom 211 records exist, mainly on their way to the Cascades Female Factory (pp62, 247). Of the 211, only 25 women had long records, three were described as 'common prostitutes', and 62 'on the town'. Prior to conviction, 51 were mothers. Others gave birth in the gaol. On 11 March 1838, **Jane Skinner**, attended by **Mary Watson**, released from solitary to help her, had a boy who was baptised on the 18th. He died a week later. **Mary Haigh**, confined there on her way to Cascades, told Governor Franklin's 1841 inquiry (p155) that she was encouraged by the other women in the party to have 'connection with' the constable in charge. **Anne Gough**, assigned to ex-magistrate James Gordon and his wife Elizabeth (p115), was sentenced to solitary between 1837 and 1838 ranging from seven to ten to 25 days for being absent without leave –

that is, disorderly conduct and disobedience. Elizabeth Gordon appears in the Old Rectory next. Ann ended with three months at Cascades. Ann Solomon's husband Ikey spent time there between 1831 and 1834 (pp63–6).

The Old Rectory

On Edward Street, one along from the gaol, is the Old Rectory, what Jane Franklin, visiting it in 1837, called Headlong Hall. Built in 1831 by magistrate James Gordon and his wife Elizabeth (p115), it is a fine example of colonial Georgian architecture. Now privately owned, it was restored to the original design kept in the State Archives. It can be seen from the road.

In 1838, 20-year-old Anne Harbroe travelled out from Surrey to Tasmania with her brother to marry Dr John Coverdale who had arrived the previous year. The wedding took place at St David's Church (p244) six days after her arrival. In due course, having had six children and numerous grandchildren, **Anne Coverdale** (1818–1875) was to be the great-grandmother of Madge Edwards (p268). In 1840, Coverdale was appointed district surgeon for Richmond. The following year, he was accused of not having properly attended an injured man who later died. It was this accusation and the handling of it that finally destroyed relations between Governor Franklin and Colonial Secretary Montagu and led to the latter's dismissal (and eventually to the Governor's recall). Jane Franklin was implicated by Montagu in defending Coverdale on whose behalf the citizens of Richmond had organised a petition. Coverdale was reinstated.

In 1853, the Coverdales moved to the Old Rectory, or Wykeham House as it was then, and in 1860 their daughter Dora (p268) walked from the house to marry Percy Sorell in nearby St Luke's Church; a red carpet was laid door to door so that her feet would not get dirty. In 1865, Coverdale was appointed Superintendent of the Queen's Orphan School (p262) and, in 1874, he was transferred as Civil Commandant of the penal settlement at Port Arthur, where we briefly meet him and Anne again (p282). In 1908, the house was bought by the Church of England and used as the rectory until 1972.

St Luke's Church

Dora Coverdale did not have far to walk in 1860, the church, completed in 1838, is easy to see beyond the Old Rectory. Throughout the years it has been popular for weddings.

St Luke's Cemetery

You look round for the Anglican cemetery and could mistake the nearby Congregational cemetery for it. St Luke's is over by the historic bridge (Australia's oldest) leading into Richmond from Sorell and spread over a sun-bleached slope (Butchers Hill) where the original church was to have been built. It is

not at all like an English country churchyard. Here you will find the graves – often in family vaults, of women who lived in houses yet to visit:

- Ann Jane Hobbs Harris Gunning of Campania (p16)
- Eliza Harris Burn of Campania and Roslyn (p35)
- Susan(nah) Ross Stewart of Carrington (p276)

St John's Church

Opposite St Luke's Cemetery, the other side of the river, and in a crescent leading off the main road just before the bridge, is the oldest Roman Catholic Church in Australia (founded 1835). On the left, facing the main porch, is a little grave. Henry Meagher's father, Thomas Francis Meagher, one of the Irish political prisoners (p164), married **Catherine Bennett** (Bennie, c1831–1854) of New Norfolk in 1851 (p338). Little Henry was born after his father had escaped, and died of influenza in June 1852 aged four months. Catherine travelled to Ireland and then joined Meagher in New York, but their relationship had changed and she returned to his family in Ireland, again pregnant. Soon after giving birth she died, aged 22. **Jeanie Reagan** (Jane Anne O'Regan) married another Irish rebel, Patrick Smyth, at St John's in February 1855.

Carrington

Go back now to the main street and take the road leading to Campania; **it also takes you to the Midland Highway, and thus to the north** and those itineraries. Half-way along, between Richmond and Campania, is Carrington which is of some historical significance, but is one of those properties privately owned that cannot be seen from the road. Its history is for the armchair traveller or for those fortunate enough to be invited to visit it by the owners, in 2008, Robert Bowen and his mother Elizabeth Bowen. I can vouch that it is worth a visit. It is always an idea to ask at an information centre if the status of a historic private house has changed.

The original Carrington house dates from 1815, built by Governor Davey and his wife Margaret after Macquarie awarded him 3,000 acres – the largest granted to anyone – in compensation for possessions lost at sea. Neglected by Davey, Margaret and her daughter Lucy (later of Boa Vista, p264) found solace there. When Davey left in 1817, he sold Carrington to his successor William Sorell, so it can be imagined as a love-nest away from the gossip of Hobart for him and Louisa Kent and their growing family (pp53–5). Sorell, in turn, sold it to his successor in 1825, Governor Arthur, making it a country retreat for Eliza Arthur and their even more numerous children.

It was Arthur, so ungenerous with grants to women, who extended his own property to 4,700 acres and had built for his convenience the so-called Carrington Cut, the road that joined Richmond and Carrington to Risdon and its ferry. When Arthur left in 1836, the property was divided into four

and the house bought by James Ross, editor of newspapers that supported Arthur and, at one time, tutor to the Arthur children. Ross substantially rebuilt the house, but he died of apoplexy two years later, leaving his wife **Susannah Ross** (Susan, née Smith, 1796–1871) a widow with 13 children. She therefore opened a boarding school at Carrington, but she sold the house in 1842, moved the school elsewhere and married a Hobart solicitor, Robert Stewart. Although she died at Battery Point, she is buried with her first husband in St Luke's Cemetery (p328).

The new owners of Carrington were Esh Lovell and his second wife **Sophia Lovell** (née Adkins). His first wife, the milliner and matron at Cascades Female Factory, Anne Lovell, had died leaving six children (p124). By Sophia, he had another twelve children – eleven of whom survived – all absorbed into Carrington. Two of his daughters by Anne married two sons of the Lovells' neighbours at Laburnum Park, grandsons of dairy farmer Catherine Kearney (p39). Catherine's sons were granted the land at Coal River and built Laburnum Park – further along the Campania road – before her death.

The story of **Anne Lovell Kearney** (1827–1898) and **Margaret Lovell Kearney** (1829–1875) is told in the highly-regarded *Letters to Anne* (John Rowland Skemp, 1956). Moving though this account is, beware of facts being overtaken by later research, particularly regarding Catherine Kearney. What I



32. Anne Lovell Kearney, from Skemp, *Letters to Anne*

tell of her in the history section owes most to Irene Schaffer's recent diligence, and the Kearley family's research concerning confusion between two women. The same problem applies to those facts in Mary Kinloch Whishaw's *History of Richmond and Recollections from 1898–1920* (nd).

William Kearney was stabbed to death in 1853, leaving his widow, then aged 24, with three children and pregnant. Margaret later spent many years in the New Norfolk Asylum, and died there (p306). Several of the letters in the book are from her to her sister, and sad reading they make. Anne's marriage was not a success, but she was a survivor.

There were many owners after the Lovells. The most recent, the Bowens, added a two-storey wing to Carrington in keeping with the original. In her younger days Elizabeth Bowen was an active member of the National Trust. The property is also a working farm.

Campania House

The township of Campania is beyond Carrington and a third of the way (7 kilometres) between Richmond and the Midland Highway. When we visited Campania House, a little way out of Campania itself, one of its virtues was that it offered colonial accommodation run by Paddy Pearl – a chance to stay in a historic house, constructed in sandstone and cedar, and to eat local produce and drink local wines. But, as I prepare to send Paddy what I have written for her to check, the internet tells me that she has just, within the last week as I rewrite, sold the property and donated the proceeds to Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research. I do not know what Campania House's future status will be.

Anne Jane Gunning, who is buried in the family vault in St Luke's Cemetery, arrived in Tasmania in 1904 with her mother and siblings and soon married George Prideaux Harris (p16) but she was widowed in 1810 when pregnant with her daughter **Melvina Harris** (Malvina, b1811). As the widow of a respected officer, however troublesome Harris had been (p35), her daughters were granted 100 acres each at Coal River in 1813. By 1815, Anne Jane seems to have been living with George Weston Gunning, former soldier and local magistrate; by 1818 they were developing a farm on their combined lands at Coal River and they married in 1820. Maria Lord, who had featured in Harris's troubles, was a witness. Weston House (now Campania House) started in 1813 was completed at about this time. Anne Jane's daughter Eliza married George Burn, nephew of solicitor Robert Pitcairn of Runnymede (p260) at Campania in January 1827. The Burns then lived at Roslyn, built on the grant to the Harris daughters at Coal River, which can be seen from Campania House, though many of the outbuildings were destroyed in the disastrous fires of 1967. Eliza, mother of ten children, lived there for 65 years, managing the property after her husband's death in 1869 and not dying herself until 1892, in her 84th year. She, too, is buried in the Gunning/Burn vault in St Luke's Cemetery.

Sorell (Hilda Bridges)

Back in Richmond, cross the bridge and head towards Sorell. Before you get there, as you join the major road, **note that to turn left takes you up the east coast (and that itinerary)**. Turning right, you reach Sorell and, some way beyond, the Tasman Peninsula and Port Arthur.

Sorell and the area just past it harbour memories of the writer **Hilda Bridges** (1881–1971) and her ancestors. Hilda's great great grandmother, Anne Hannaway Nash (d1829) was transported to Australia with her three children in the Second Fleet of 1790. Removed to Norfolk Island, she married fellow convict Robert Nash; they prospered, were pardoned, had four daughters, and were transferred to Tasmania with the other Norfolk Islanders (such as Catherine Kearney) in 1808 (p39). Once again, Nash prospered; on land at Hobart Rivulet he became Hobart's miller and on 200 acres granted at Pittwater (later Sorell) he grew wheat which he supplied to the Commissariat.

The Nashs' daughter, Sally, was the friend of Salome Pitt described in *That Yesterday Was Home* by Hilda Bridges' brother Roy when she was about to marry John Wood (p43). (Sally was also the sister of Susan who married Catherine Kearney's son William, and of the first wife of George Weston Gunning of Campania.) Hilda and Roy's mother, Sally's granddaughter, was **Laura Wood Bridges** (1860–1825). Roy's biography of his family, and description of his and Hilda's life is much admired, and it enhanced his reputation as a writer. But it seems clear to me that Hilda, described in biographical details as his 'lifelong companion, housekeeper and amanuensis', researched, retrieved from memory, and wrote parts of it. She copied out his books by hand before typewriters were common; she would also walk the 5 kilometres across the creek – the Sorell rivulet – at the bottom of the garden to Sorell to post his or her manuscript.

Of her 13 novels Hilda is best known for *Men Must Live* (1938) in which she shows deep concern for the denuding of land by firewood carters who are the baddies of the story. Her hero, Derek Carrell, arrives from England to inherit his godfather's property, Windbrakes, near Sorell (which Hilda calls Storby). Since his godfather's illness and death, the baddies have set to work and Hilda writes of Carrell's perception: 'It seemed incredible to him that in the few short years, since the advent of the timber mills and their attendant juggernaut cars – the timber, and firewood lorries – could have wrought such havoc.' And later he explains: 'I told you to look at those hills, stripped of timber, to learn the reason [for either droughts or floods].' And the retort from the carter which gives the book its title: 'us men must make a living somehow'.

It's not the greatest literature; it's the sentiment underpinning it that counts. Hilda was ahead of her time environmentally, just as Jane Franklin and Louisa Anne Meredith were in the nineteenth century and Isabel Dick in *Huon Belle* (1930) (p292): it was the 1970s before Tasmanians started to campaign against the despoiling of their environment (p231). *Men Must Live* is almost impossible to get hold of, even to read, at least in the United Kingdom – the British Library has a copy.



33. Laura Wood Bridges, from Bridges,
That Yesterday Was Home

Hilda and several of her ancestors are buried in the cemetery in Sorell. Turn down Henry Street, and beyond the Scots Uniting Church is a second graveyard, on the left. Her grave is rather less ostentatious than that of her more famous brother.

Driving through and past Sorell, a turning on the left is signed East Orielson. Along Pawleena Road, at 20 Bridges Road is 'Woods Farm' where Hilda and Roy lived. I'm not sure that I found the abandoned cottage, but the extended family over the generations moved home in this area and it is the landscape that is Hilda's.

Forcett–Lewisham (Dodges Ferry)

The *Princess Royal* ran aground off Dodges Ferry in 1832 and passengers Catherine and Charles Price spent a week with Elizabeth and James Gordon (pp115, 128). I suspect the Gordons were not yet living in Richmond – though the house was built in 1831 (p274) – but on Gordon's grant at Pittwater (Sorell) which he named Forcett after his birthplace in England. Elizabeth Gordon inherited her husband's Forcett estate when he died there in 1842. It is included in Alice Bennett and Georgia Warner's splendidly illustrated *Country Houses of Tasmania: Behind the Closed Doors of our Finest Colonial Estates* (2009).

Forcett today, a few miles along from Sorell, straddling the main highway, is hardly more than a postal address. The drive between the two has sparkling views of the sea, and on the drive direct from Hobart to Sorell (rather than going by Richmond), you cross water three times – a delight.

Turn right at the sign to Lewisham and Dodges Ferry and you find evidence of not only the *Princess Royal's* fate, but also that of Sergeant Samuel Thorne and his wife Ann, the baptism of whose child is one of those confusing the first born in Tasmania (p15); he was, in fact, the first born in what was to become the colony of Victoria.

Drive along that turning, and then turn right along Scenic Drive towards the Lewisham Tavern which overlooks the sea and where an ordinary but convenient meal is to be had with a marvellous view. Half-way along towards the tavern on the left is a recreation ground and a bollard with a plaque naming it the Samuel Thorne Reserve. Unfortunately, by the time Samuel was appointed district constable at Sorell in 1829, which is presumably why he is thus honoured, Ann was dead, but the child born at Port Phillip survived and Ann had another three children, some of whose descendants are those of **Harriet Thorne** (b1805). One of them has written *Sergeant Samuel Thorne* (Malcolm Ward, 2007), a copy of which I have not been able to see. There is some suggestion on a website that the remains of the Thornes' house exists near the Lewisham Tavern, but that, too, has escaped me.

Back on the main road, you are soon at Dodges Ferry and there at the jetty is a plaque commemorating the grounding of the *Princess Royal* and the kerfuffle surrounding its women immigrant passengers. There are some fine beaches round here, but best not to let anyone else know!

Port Arthur

The old penal settlement of Port Arthur at the foot of the Tasman Peninsula is 60 kilometres from Hobart, less distance obviously if you are following this itinerary and just leaving the Sorell area, though I doubt if you would want to do the whole itinerary in one day.

Because of its history of brutality between 1830 and 1877 and the massacre of 35 people, mainly tourists, in 1996, Port Arthur is another place to visit with sensitivity towards the past. And, because it was for male convicts, the history of non-convict women who lived there is a strange one. There is also relevant writing by several women.

In spite of the burden of its past, Port Arthur has been called Australia's prime historic site, and oldest continuous tourist attraction, tourists arriving in droves within ten years of its closure. In the 1880s and 1890s, the coach journey from Hobart took eight hours; most took a daily excursion by steamboat. In 1881, Marianne North (p252) was one of those who did the trip – most got seasick. The journey by car today takes about an hour and a half.

Begun in 1830 as a punishment timber station, it soon replaced Macquarie Harbour (p59) and Maria Island as the main location for secondary punishment – for male convicts committing crimes or infringements after transporta-

tion. The system was one of hard labour, corporal punishment, and solitary confinement. Reform of convicts was intended, so there was also religious and educational instruction. The convict labour of many kinds helped defray the expense of its maintenance. Its location ensured that it was virtually impossible to escape from, though several were desperate enough to try.

The women there were, to a large extent, divorced from what went on, and yet they were surrounded by it, and their husbands were involved, in one way or another, in its operation. Margaret Glover provides a useful introduction to them in 'Women and Children at Port Arthur' (1985). She believes that **Elizabeth Brownell** (née Freeman, d1875), wife of Dr Thomas Brownell, religious instructor, was the first when she came in 1832. The Brownells married in Yorkshire in 1825, arrived in Tasmania with two children in 1830, and were posted first to Maria Island. They were at Port Arthur then for only six months, leaving either because of Elizabeth's ill-health, or because, according to another source, Brownell felt he was failing to reform the convicts in his charge. He judged the methods of discipline as 'bordering on cruelty' but 'just'. While Elizabeth worked as a school teacher, he tried medical practice and farming, but, by 1840, they were back at Port Arthur, where he was medical officer in charge, for 15 months, and back for nearly five years in 1853. Meanwhile Elizabeth, whatever her ill-health, had completed her family of eleven children, not all of whom appear to have survived.

Charlotte Lempriere arrived with her husband Thomas, storekeeper for the commissariat, in 1834, and they stayed for 15 years. We have already met them at Macquarie Harbour (p60), and they had also spent time at Maria Island. With these inhospitable postings, their marriage and Charlotte's strength – she had twelve children over 20 years – were much tested, and not found wanting. Their relationship had started propitiously. Charlotte's father was in the army in the West Indies with his family; Thomas, an army adjutant seven years older than Charlotte, was acquainted with them. Her father died and the family returned to England, but the couple met again, by coincidence, on the ship out to Tasmania in 1822, and romance blossomed.

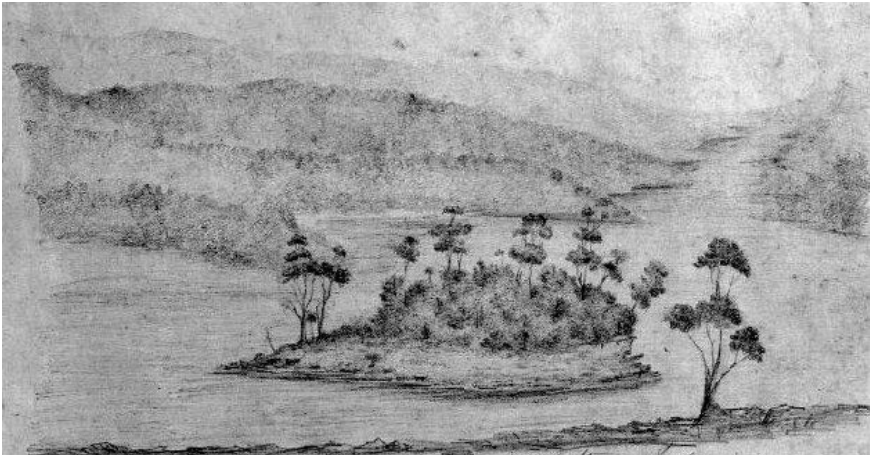
One of their daughters was the very active Emily Dobson (p206). From Thomas's diary (held in the Mitchell Library, Sydney), which Margaret Glover draws on, it seems likely that Emily was born at Port Arthur; Charlotte certainly attended another woman during her confinement. The accommodation at the settlement, in spite of the fine buildings around them, was basic. Whatever the drawbacks, Charlotte led a full social, artistic and intellectual life. She was physically active, musically gifted – she played the piano and sang – and her husband enjoyed her company and sought her opinion. He taught the children French, but Charlotte spoke it as well, and it is no wonder that the adult Emily Dobson was linguistically adept in her international work. Charlotte also collected ferns and seaweed.

A French mariner visiting the Lemprieres at Macquarie Harbour in 1831, and Port Arthur in 1839, declared that the mistress of the house 'looked quite as well and as young as she had in 1831, demonstrating that the best possible cosmetics for a woman's charms are tranquillity of mind, self-respect, the

affection of those around her and the knowledge that she had fulfilled her duty'. There is something bizarre about such sentiments, and even her tranquillity, under the circumstances. But what else could she do but try and achieve that?

To add to that bizarreness, and indeed that of some aspects of Tasmania and its reconstruction, Lindsay Simpson, in her novel *The Curer of Souls* (2006), portrays Jane Franklin as having an unrequited love affair with Thomas Lempriere. Jane certainly visited Port Arthur (p146) during the Lemprieres' time there, but I'm afraid that's a step too far for me, and on a par with Richard Flanagan's novel *Wanting* (2009) about Mathinna and the Franklins. Jane Franklin and her husband seem to have become a punchbag for modern Australian writers and these fantasy slurs on the reputation of real people call into question a particular type of historical fiction. Having said that, Lindsay Simpson's first fiction work is well crafted, though she did not need, as she does, to acknowledge the influence of AS Byatt's *Possession* (about imaginary historical characters); it is obvious.

Catherine Mitchell (née Keast, 1812–1899) did not lead so apparently tranquil a life at Port Arthur as Charlotte Lempriere. She arrived in Tasmania in 1839 to marry John Mitchell, Superintendent of Point Puer, the boys' section of the penitentiary, and they lived there until 1849. All we know about Catherine's time there is the haunting pencil sketch, the title of which says it all and is ironic considering her husband's position: 'Isle de Morts, Port Arthur, Tasmania. My first two darlings lie here. Francis Keast Mitchell and Henry John Mitchell – first 8 months, second 10 months.' Her babies died in 1841 and 1843; in all, she had three daughters and seven sons.



34. 'Isle de Morts', by Catherine Mitchell, from www.john-daly.com/deadisls/sketch

The Isle of the Dead is just off Port Arthur and it is possible to access on the internet the names on the graves in the cemetery, though most convict graves are unmarked. Anne Coverdale of Richmond (p274) died at Port Arthur in

1875 when her husband was its last Commandant, but she seems to have been buried elsewhere. The Isle of the Dead, like Point Puer and everything else, has organised tours. In a horrible twist, Anne's brother, Dr Edward Harbroe, found guilty of attempting to solicit a boy near Fingal, was sentenced to Port Arthur – but he had already been transferred to the New Norfolk Asylum when the Coverdales arrived there.

Jacobina Burn's (p74) granddaughter, Jemima Burn Irvine, accompanied her husband when he was appointed senior Assistant Superintendent of 1,300 prisoners in 1846, and they were there until 1850. In her older age she not only told KR von Stieglitz about a childhood attack by Aborigines (p102), but also about Port Arthur. Her memory of it needs to be quoted nearly in full, and I leave it to you to decide what to make of it in conjunction with other accounts (I have left out only her dropping plugs of tobacco for a prisoner to pick up):

There has been a great deal of exaggeration about Port Arthur and the way the prisoners were treated there, but you have only to look at the numbers of them who came on and did well for themselves to realise that it was not so bad after all. Some of them were flogged, of course, but this did not happen very often. I don't remember a single case of misconduct all the time we were there, so orderly were the prisoners ...

We used to have them as servants and some of them had worked in the best houses in England. You can have no idea what good work they used to do and how much we came to like some of them. They were not the depraved nearly maniac creatures you may have read about, at all. Some of them had been sent out for trifles, and never broke the law again.

In those days there was a charming society at Port Arthur. We had the Commandant and his clerks, the Superintendent and his clerks, Mr Lempriere, the deputy-commissary-general and his clerks, two military officers and a detachment of soldiers, two clergymen – Church of England and Roman Catholic, and two doctors. There were no lawyers – we were a peaceful settlement! Most of these men had families; all were intelligent, musical and altogether delightful people.

There were beautiful gardens, all kept in perfect order and all kinds of flowers and vegetables grew well there.

Caroline Leakey (p165) arrived at Port Arthur to try and regain her health in 1851 and spent a year there staying with the Reverend Thomas Garlick and his wife, **Anne Garlick** (née Miles) and their three children, one of whom had been born that year. In *The Broad Arrow*, the Garlicks become the Harelicks, and the Reverend Herbert Evelyn, father of the sickly Emmeline (who must represent the author herself) is temporarily to replace Harelick as the minister.

In comparing Caroline Leakey's novel with Marcus Clarke's *For the Term of His Natural Life*, the contrast could not be more striking between the control and subtlety of the writing in *The Broad Arrow* and the uncontrolled, unbearable brutality of the treatment of Rufus Dawes.

Caroline describes the ordinary life of the women there but then Emmeline's cousin Bridget – who had earlier visited the women's convict hulk the *Anson* (p166) – stands in front of the lovely English church at Port Arthur and extols its beauty. Her interlocutor replies: 'Beautiful as it is, it was sown in blood, Miss D'Urban, as indeed we may say of the whole civilized structure of this island.' Mrs Evelyn plays the Mrs Bennet role, making the shadows around her darker by careless talk and odd behaviour.

The assigned servant Maida Gwynnham follows the family to Port Arthur and sees the place and its context more clearly than the others as she nurses Emmeline and accompanies her coffin to the Isle of the Dead.

Tasma's short story 'What an Artist Discovered in Tasmania' (1878), from where I took the quotation that starts the preface, is rather idiosyncratic. A London artist arrives at Port Arthur to paint 'the most hardened criminal face on the earth'. That is not how it turns out. The punishment of convicts is over when Tasma (pp68, 256) sees it as the place where Cain would have killed his brother Abel. Setting the scene, she writes:

Whether from the association that has gathered round it, or from a natural exclusiveness breathed in its rocky boundary, it seems to scowl in its solitude like an outcast from the mainland ... The salt breezes may blow across Port Arthur at the present time, untainted by convict breath, yet I question whether the echo of the clanking chain, and the reprobate's curse, will not sound above the 'swish' of the tide and the rustling of the fruit trees for many a generation to come.

Following the closure of the penal settlement in 1877, Port Arthur was to have a chequered career of selling off of properties and attempts to retrieve them, of decay and attempts at preservation, of fossicking from its structure of materials by inhabitants of the township, named Carnarvan, that had sprung up, and attempts to retrieve them. In any case, the convict bricks had been under-fired and so were of little use. Bushfires in 1895 and 1897 further ravaged it.

In 1888, a pottery was set up at Port Arthur producing artefacts of that name. Well known for their artistic and literary talents were the sisters **Heather Mason** and **Anne Mason**. Heather hand-painted pottery at or from Port Arthur and entered samples of it in the 1894–95 Tasmanian International Exhibition of Industry, Science and Art. The sisters also painted two of the six murals in the Commandant's residence which became a hotel after 1877, one of which shows a boating scene, possibly in Venice, the other the Parthenon. The sisters left Tasmania in 1897. Heather appears to have exhibited at the Royal Academy, London, in 1907. In 1971, the potter **Alice Mylie Peppin** (1907–1992) set up a pottery at Port Arthur in memory of the potter Maude Poynter (who appears in the 'Midland Highway' itinerary (Bothwell, p329)).

Mary Grant Bruce (Minnie, 1878–1958), journalist and children's author, visited from Melbourne in 1913 and published 'Port Arthur Today' in which

she described the severe cracking in the edifice of the church and the fire damage to many buildings, destroying woodwork and weakening masonry.

Melbourne lawyer **Anna Teresa Brennan** (1879–1962) (not to be confused, as has been done, with Anna Helen Brennan) was the first Australian-born woman admitted to practice. After a visit in November 1918, she starts ‘Peace at Port Arthur’ (1918): ‘Today Port Arthur is a tourist resort built upon a memory...’ The ruins make her think of ‘some ancient monastic house’. In spite of the decay and destruction of the buildings, avenues of old trees remain and at the end of one of these, ‘stands a willow tree planted by Lady Franklin ... She had brought the slip of willow from Napoleon’s grave.’ Jane Franklin was in the habit of planting trees hither and yon. The two willows she planted at the New Norfolk Asylum (p305) and one at Turriff Lodge (p302) were said to come from the same source. Then there was the pear tree at the Bush Inn at New Norfolk (p301), and a Cypress and a pear tree just outside Franklin (p294). The peace the title refers to is not that of a deserted ruin but, as Anna ends:

The little township is taking its evening rest, when suddenly a shot is heard, then another. We know what it means. Here, as elsewhere, throughout the Allied nations, the great news has come. The still spring night breaks into pandemonium. There is no sleep till late that night ... Next day the little village is astir. It is the children’s day. I watch them as, each carrying a flag, they march in procession down the convicts’ avenue. The taint of slavery is gone, a new generation hails its ransomed freedom. At night there is a glare across the water. A bonfire is burning upon the Island of the Dead.

Chloe Hooper’s novel *A Child’s Book of True Crime* (2002), called ‘an erotic thriller’, is set before 1996 in a small town near Port Arthur and tells of a young school teacher, Kate Byrne, having an affair with the father of one of her pupils. His wife has just published a novel about a wife stabbing her husband’s mistress to death. Kate takes her class to the visit the ruins of the old penal settlement and, in the first-person narrative, gives a lyrical description of what she sees.

You might wonder why I now go backwards to 1953; it will become apparent. On Tasmanian-born Carmel Bird’s website (www.carmelbird.com) you will find ‘Summer at Port Arthur 1953’ about a two-week camping holiday her extended family spent there on the ‘grassy piece of flat open land that went from the sea to the ruins of the old convict settlement’. While their fathers went fishing, she and her cousin clambered all over the ruined and unstable buildings, in retrospect oblivious of health and safety. The ‘golden church’ that Bridget D’Urban had admired and that described by Kate Bryne without its steeple, resembled for Carmel ‘a romantic little Norman castle’. It was an idyllic childhood holiday.

But in 1996 Carmel’s ‘Fresh Blood, Old Wounds: Tasmania and Guns’ was published following the Port Arthur massacre that year (it can also be found on her website). She wrote: ‘... people spoke of “Tasmania’s loss of innocence”. If Tasmania was ever innocent, it was innocent a long, long time ago.’ And

she wrote of 'many old, old wounds which have been suppurating beneath the surface of Tasmania for years, concealed but active'.

Margaret Scott (1934–2005), poet, teacher and environmentalist, migrated to Tasmania in 1959. Retired from teaching in 1991, she settled on the Tasman peninsula to write and restore a federation homestead which burnt down, together with all her papers, in 2003. By the time she died, there was a growing arts community on the peninsula of which she was an important part. The massacre of 1996 therefore hit her hard, but she was determined to send out a positive message about it in *Port Arthur: A Story of Strength and Courage* (1997), and an account in *Changing Countries: On Moving from One Island to Another* (2000) – a mixture of fiction, essays, autobiography and poetry. She wrote:

Five people ended up jammed together by the locked door in the gift shop, but the panicky stampede for safety, the screaming and clawing and thrusting away of the helpless, simply did not happen. Perhaps things went on so fast that there was no time for panic to set in, and yet that explanation won't quite do. People did react to danger. A number of people pushed someone else out of the way, but never, it seems, to try and save themselves; it was always in an attempt to save another's life ... They were generous, loving and brave and although many of them died, they demonstrated that, when put to the ultimate test, altruism is alive and well in late twentieth century Australia. For that, in a time when it often seems that selflessness is an outdated virtue, we owe them an immeasurable debt.

I suspect those two reactions by contemporary women writers and thinkers are not contradictory, but compatible, and both necessary.