Abstract

From the crowded tenements of Edinburgh to the Female Factory nestling in the shadow of Mt Wellington, dozens of Scottish women convicts were exiled to Van Diemen's Land with their young children. This is a rich and evocative account of the lives of women at the bottom of society two hundred years ago.

In the early nineteenth century, crofters and villagers streamed into the burgeoning cities of Scotland, and families splintered. Orphan girls, single mothers and women on their own all struggled to feed and clothe themselves. For some, petty theft became a part of life. Any woman deemed 'habite & repute a thief' might find herself before the High Court of Justiciary, tried for yet another minor theft and sentenced to transportation 'beyond Seas'.

Lucy Frost memorably paints the portrait of a boatload of women and their children who arrived in Hobart in 1838. Instead of serving time in prison, the women were sent to work as unpaid servants in the houses of settlers. Feisty Scottish convicts, unaccustomed to bowing and scraping, often irritated their middle-class employers, who charged them with insolence, or refusing to work, or getting drunk. A stint in the female factory became their punishment.

Many women survived the convict system and shaped their own lives once they were free. They married, had children and found a place in the community. Others, though, continued to be plagued by errors and disasters until death.
Abandoned Women: Scottish Convicts Exiled Beyond the Seas. Mary Ann McAllister might have agreed that she was “fully ripe for transportation,” though her reasons would have been different from those the Procurator Fiscal had in mind when describing Catherine Chisholm. Mary Ann was ready to leave because she had no reason to stay. Abandoned Women has 55 ratings and 12 reviews. Carolyn said: Abandoned women, the Scottish convicts were called by an eminent twentieth-century Austra...Â Start by marking “Abandoned Women: Scottish Convicts Exiled Beyond the Seas” as Want to Read: Want to Read saving… Want to Read. Currently Reading. Read. Other editions. Enlarge cover.