

ELLEN AND MARY ANN'S STORY, TOLD FROM MARY ANN'S POINT OF VIEW. (FICTION BASED ON FACT)

My name is Mary Ann Lascelles and I'm writing this from Geelong in the Port Phillip District - that's now called Victoria after Her Majesty in England.

I'd like to tell you the story of my mother Eleanor Wainwright. Well, she was an ordinary woman, you know, but to me it's the ordinary people that helped to build this land.

Now Ellen was one of the first white people to come. Yes, she was a convict, and I've heard all this about the women of the First Fleet and how they was dirty, drunken, depraved and degraded: but I ask you - what chance was there for any of them? Four men to every woman! Could they stay pure even had they wanted to?

Well, me mother was seventeen when she was took. Stealing a petticoat, woollen cloak and a silk hat, it was said. Now she didn't say much about the old country, so I guess we'll never know for sure - but I always felt that Mister Standen gave them to Ellen and when the return on his investment wasn't what he expected, he cried thief. Well, like I say - we'll never know. She took another name to try to protect her folks, she was really Esther Eccles, she said.

From the Castle at Lancaster she was sent to Portsmouth, then with 48 other women had an invigorating sea trip in the "Prince of Wales". She said once it wasn't the crowding she minded - most folks was used to worse - it was the smell - them all being sick below there in the dark.

It still remember when they took us from Norfolk Island to Van Diemens Land, that was bad enough, but nothing like nine months on end - it's a wonder any of them lived to breed.

I was born on Norfolk Island in 1795. My mother had had a daughter, Mary Ann, to James Wilson, a sailor on the Sirius, in her second year at Sydney Cove. They was near starved to death. Governor Phillip was expecting help from England - food; seeds and tools to grow more food. But what did they send him? More mouths, more convicts. Ha! And they weren't farmers - they were petty crims. What did they know about the land? And the land was all wrong, hot in Winter. The soil was not English soil used to being dug - just sand and grass, black natives and odd animals, birds that mocked their efforts and deer-like animals that hop.

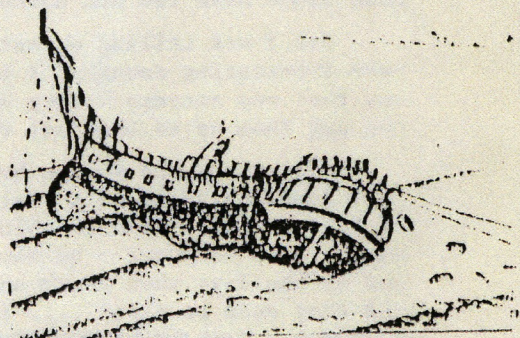
Well, Governor Phillip sent some of his people to Norfolk Island, and Ellen and her babe were in the second lot sent to grow food there to support the colony. My mother was on the Sirius when it was wrecked there.

The first baby died on Norfolk - I was born, given the same name as her that died. My papers say father unknown, but I heard a whisper that it was James Lucas. I had a brother Henry but he didn't live.

My mother became Thomas Guy's woman. Well it was a Norfolk marriage really. He was a highwayman, a strong hard man. She had three more girls from him, Ann, Eliza and Frances. They was both time expired now - well, she only had seven years, he had life, and we had a hut and tried to scratch a living from the soil. But it was hard. The crops was blighted and we had empty bellies and near naked bodies when they sent us to Van Diemens Land.

Thomas and Ellen was given land at New Norfolk - even a shingled hut by the river there. It was called "the hills" by the settlers. The Government wanted it called Elizabeth Town but the people called it New Norfolk after Norfolk Island.

My first husband Dennis McCarty built the first house there. He was a man of action my Dennis. He was a convict too - although more your Irish Political prisoner, not a common lag. Dennis made money, we had large grants of land and Governor Macquarie and his wife stayed in our house. We had entry to Government house too, something most other emancipists couldn't get. Dennis had boats, built on the Derwent. He'd been to Port Phillip long before it was settled, in the "Geordie". There was money to be made from trading with the sealers - hard men



living rough with black gins for wives. Although they was more like slaves, swimming up and clubbing the seals for their men. Dennis was the first to find coal at Macquarie Harbour too, even though it cost him a boat to do so.

We was comfortable, getting almost to be the gentry of the land, although Dennis had had some trouble with Captain Lascelles (my second husband) trying to get him for smuggling rum.

My sister Anns' husband, David Watson Bush, him that used to be Rev. Bobby Knopwoods clerk, was running a coach between Hobarton and New Norfolk. It was Davey taught me to read and write. Dennis always wanted us to improve. Dennis got my mother respectable, married by Rev. Knopwood to Thomas Guy the year after me and Dennis was married. Eliza married William Wheeler, a sea faring man. Well, he and Davey and William Hobson - Frances' husband were all old lags, who else was there around? And William Hobson had been convicted at thirteen years old for robbery, he was supposed to hang - things was tough in old England.

Where was I? Your thoughts do run on when your getting on in life.

Yes, Davey was running a coach on Dennis' Road - although he was niver paid for it - not by the Government. Oh they offered a reward right enough. Dennis built it and claimed the reward, but he was drowned in the Derwent before he could collect it. And me well I married Thomas Lascelles. They looked queer at me, four months a widow marrying again, but a lone woman was fair game.

Thomas had been in the 73rd Regiment - a captain no less. He'd been Governor Davey's secretary, until he had to resign. I thought it was a step up, him being free - well, I was free born myself; but life with Thomas was not a bed of roses. He was a Magistrate at Richmond - til he was outed. He left us at "Froggett", his farm, and was editor of the "Colonist" newspaper in Hobart. That fell through and he came back to "Millbrook" Dennis' property. And all this with just enough visits home to give me eight of his children! Millbrook was sold for Dennis' and my children, I didn't want Thomas' spendthrift ways to take it all, but he went bankrupt and spent the money held in trust for them too.

He went to Victoria. We had nothing, I was glad Davey had taught me, I opened a girls' school in Argyle Street, Hobart, to support my children, little enough came from Thomas.

But our children have done well. Edwin, Thomas Jnr. and Martha's husband Charles Dennys (her cousin) are woolbrokers and Tanners here in Geelong. I'm living with Martha and Charles. Thomas didn't send for us. He's been in the legislative Council, been made a J.P., then outed again. All his life his flash deals, connections and good blood have led him nowhere.

But I was telling my mothers story wasn't I? Although I dare say my own has been interesting enough. I could tell you about the time the bushrangers came - now that was strange - they knew everything of value in the house, had a list, some one put them up to that all right.

Well Ellen and Thomas both died at New Norfolk. An inquest on my mother in 1839 found she died of a visitation of God. No doubt he'll be looking for me sooner or later. But I like to think back to the good old days my little Sophie (apple of Dennis' eye - he named a boat for her) playing in the sun by Derwent Water.. and of the days when Dennis and old Thomas my step father was chasing bush rangers... and they seem so close I could touch them