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Female

Felons

The stories

behind the women

Female Felons

The stories behind the women

Crime
in the city

In the 1880s, Melbourne was growing very fast. Following the gold rushes in Victoria, Melbourne's population more than doubled in 20 years between 1871 and 1891. The city was rapidly expanding, made possible by the wealth that came with the discovery of gold in the 1850s. Soon the city became known as "Marvellous Melbourne".

In the 1880s gold discoveries slowed, and the bank crash led to an economic depression in Melbourne in the 1890s. By the late 1880s, many families were struggling to make ends meet, and unemployment levels were very high. There was no welfare support in Victoria before the year 1900, and so poverty became a very visible part of the Melbourne landscape.

For women, prostitution was a lucrative business during this time, and for many it was their only option. Between 1887 and 1894, police estimated that the number of prostitutes had more than doubled, from 403 to 973. Prostitution was not illegal in Victoria, but some of the women in these photos worked on the streets, and were arrested by police on charges of vagrancy or larceny, two crimes which police found useful in clearing the streets of the undesirable signs of poverty and social disorder that these women represented.

These laws were also useful for arresting the poor, sick, old or destitute men and women, who were not able to get help from the various charitable institutions that catered for the city's

Terrace

poor. Without a welfare system, the prison system was used by some desperate women to provide food, shelter, and medical attention. Some of the older women here, who were sent to prison in the early 1890s for their first offence, may have been amongst the people who committed crimes as a way of escaping the hard life on the street.

Below image: Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, looking north from Flinders Street, circa 1900
State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Picture Collection.



Life in the prisons

The prisons of Victoria were modeled on the new English Pentonville prison system. These prisons focused on reforming prisoners, through hard labour and solitary confinement. Solitary confinement kept prisoners from communicating through enforcing silence, and in some cases making prisoners wear "silence" masks while in the company of other prisoners.

The women in these photographs all served their sentences in the Old Melbourne Gaol. Women were separated from male prisoners in the women's cell block at the Old Melbourne Gaol. In 1894, another women's cell block opened at Pentridge Prison, in Coburg.

Society's views of women in prison were very negative, and women's treatment in prison reflected this. Female prisoners were treated particularly harshly if they broke the rules. Compared with male prisoners, punishments given to women who disobeyed were often more severe. Most often, punishment was a period of time in solitary confinement.

Prison life was strictly regulated, with an unchanging daily schedule, and communication with fellow prisoners kept to a minimum. Daily activities for women consisted of laundry duties and picking oakum, a natural fibre used to make rope. Both were very physically demanding chores.

Below image: Laura McDonald. She could not be matched with any prison record, the name was quite common in this period in Melbourne.





The Felons The women

There is a very little known about some of these women. Almost a cursory note of their quiet passing through the old Melbourne gaol. There is also a surprising amount of detailed information regarding those convicted of more serious crimes.

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Mary Bailby | 6. Landa Gull |
| 2. Margaret Parker | 7. Alice Coghlan |
| 3. Elizabeth Stone | 8. Emily Hill |
| 4. Isabella Doran | 9. Catherine Vale |
| 5. Annie Jones | 10. Cecelia Curtain |

1 Mary Bailby	2 Margaret Parker	3 Elizabeth Stone	4 Isabella Doran	5 Annie Jones	6 Landa Gull		
7 Alice Coghlan	8 Emily Hill	9 Catherine Vale	10 Cecelia Curtain	11 Ellen Watson	12 Mary Joshua	13 Annie Duce	
14 Eliza Stewart	15 Polly Larkin	16 Laura Williams	17 Catherine Kelly	18 Sophy Bool	19 Annie Dibbs	20 Mary Yates	21 Sarah Latham
22 Alice Blake	23 Laura McDonald	24 Mary Ryan	25 Mary Ann Falconer	26 Mary O'Neil	27 Mary Mifer	28 Jane Richards	29 Bessie Hamilton

11. Ellen Watson

16. Laura Williams

20. Mary Yates

25. Mary Ann Falconer

12. Mary Joshua

17. Catherine Kelly

21. Sarah Latham

26. Mary O'Neil

13. Annie Duce

18. Sophy Bool

22. Alice BLake

27. Mary Mifer

14. Eliza Stewart

19. Annie Dibbs

23. Laura McDonald

28. Jane Richards

15. Polly Larkin

24. Mary Ryan

29. Bessie Hamilton



1. *Mary Bailby*

Mary Bailby

Age: 54

Trade: Servant

Crime: Larceny

Sentence: 3 month imprisonment

Native place: London

Date of conviction: April 1891

There is little information we can find on Mary, it is noted however, that this was her first conviction.



2. *Margaret Parker*

Margaret Parker

Age: 65

Trade: Servant

Crime: Larceny on two charges

Sentence: One month imprisonment, and fourteen day imprisonment, to be served consecutively

Native place: Scotland

Date of conviction: April 1891

Margaret had no prior convictions. There is no information available from her trial because she was tried in the Box Hill Petty Sessions. Records from Petty Sessions were not required to be kept.



3. *Elizabeth Stone*

Elizabeth Stone

Age: 50

Trade: Nil

Crime: Larceny on two charges

Sentence: Three months imprisonment, and one month imprisonment, to be served consecutively.

Native place: England

Date of conviction: January 1890

Interestingly, Elizabeth was not listed with a trade. This was her first conviction, which suggests either Elizabeth's trade was just not listed, or she was an excellent thief to have reached the age of 50 without being convicted!



4. *Isabella Doran*

Isabella Doran

Age: 28

Trade: Servant

Crime: Larceny

Sentence: One month imprisonment.

Native place: Ireland

Date of conviction: July 1888

With auburn hair and blue eyes, Isabella would have looked the part of an Irish woman. This was her first conviction. She was tried in the Warragul Petty Sessions, about 100kms west of Melbourne.



5. *Annie Jones*

Annie Jones
 Age: 81 Native place: England
 Trade: Servant Date of conviction: April 1891
 Crime: Larceny
 Sentence: One month imprisonment.

This was Annie's first conviction for theft. At 81 years of age, and described as having a sallow complexion, it is possible that Annie stole in order to be sent to prison where she would receive shelter, food and medical services. This was not uncommon in the years of depression in Melbourne before the introduction of a state welfare.



7. *Alice Coghlan*

Alice Coghlan
 Age: 29 Native place: Dublin
 Trade: Servant
 Date of conviction: January 1891
 Crime: Idle and disorderly
 Sentence: Six months imprisonment.

Alice was repeatedly convicted of this offence, so probably well known to the police. The date on her photo indicates she was also in prison later in 1888, probably on a similar charge.



8. *Emily Hill*

Emily Hill
 Age: 20 Native place: Sandhurst [Bendigo]
 Trade: Servant Date of conviction: December 1887
 Crime: Larceny on three charges
 Sentence: Three sentences of two months imprisonment, to be served consecutively.

Emily was convicted of these charges of larceny, but was tried in the Melbourne Petty Sessions, where depositions of witnesses were not kept. As such, all we know about Emily is that she was 5 feet 3 inches tall, and had brown hair and hazel eyes.



6. *Landa Gull*

Landa Gull

Age: 34

Native place: Sydney

Trade: Servant

Date of conviction: May 1889

Crime: Manslaughter

Sentence: Six months hard labour.

The case of Landa Gull (or Gunn) is a sad tale. This case reached the press, and was reported in several newspapers. Alice Gull, Landa's daughter, was admitted to hospital and died six days later of injuries suspected to have been caused by child abuse. Alice had wounds on her legs and face, and marks all over her body. Given the coverage of the case in the media, several former employees of Landa Gull came forward to testify that they had witnessed first-hand Landa's cruelty towards the child. Some also came forward to testify in support of Landa, that they had not known her to be anything but kind to her daughter.

It appears that the case against Landa was sealed when she was caught in a lie about Alice's father. In

the inquest into Alice's death, Landa testified that Alice's father had died before Alice was born. She had reported her name to be Gull. When newspaper reports of the death reached Malcolm Gunn in Launceston, Tasmania, he came forward as Alice's father and former husband of Landa. It appears that Landa had not wanted her husband to know about Alice's death, as this information would mean that maintenance payments (child support) sent by Mr Gunn would cease. Other inconsistencies in the case meant that Landa was presumed a liar, and was found guilty of cruelty resulting in the death of her three-year-old daughter.

'I beg to report to you the death of a child Alice Gull age 3 years, under circumstances that point to ill usage and neglect.'

[Report from the Children's Hospital to the Coroner, PROV, VPRS 30/P0, Unit 754, case number 3]

'On one occasion she beat her so harshly that I told her I should call the police. She was in the habit of beating her on the slightest pretence...I heard the mother say that if it was not for the child she could earn 30/-per week as a cook.'

[Testimony of Isabella Mackay, PROV, VPRS 30/P0, Unit 754, case number 3.]



9. *Catherine Vale*

Catherine Vale

Age: 19 Native place: Melbourne

Trade: Servant

Date of conviction: August 1888

Crime: Robbery in company

Sentence: Six months hard labour.

Catherine was at home when her husband arrived with a drinking partner Samuel Floyd, whom he had met at the Adelphi hotel in South Melbourne after work that day. The men continued drinking over a few games of cards, and Catherine fetched them beer with the money Floyd had given to "shout" them.

When Floyd passes out drunk, Catherine and her husband searched his clothes for money. When Floyd awoke, he was beaten by George Vale, and then escorted away, into a nearby street. The next day, when the police came to arrest them, Catherine and George Vale denied knowing the man, despite evidence of him having

been in their house (a small pool of vomit) still there on the floor of the room.

'...that they the said George Vale and Catherine Vale...did put in bodily fear and danger of his life and did then feloniously and violently and against the will of the said Samuel Floyd steal take and carry away from the person of the said Samuel Floyd the sum of two pounds or thereabouts...'

[Deposition of witnesses, PROV, VPRS 30/P0, Unit 725, case number 16]

'...this beer is not fit to drink. I could see white stuff in a glass. Vale said drink it up. I then felt giddy. Vale helped me on the bed, on the sofa. I went to sleep. I awoke and found Mrs Vale's hand in my pocket and the male prisoner with his hand on my throat.'

[Testimony of Samuel Floyd, PROV, VPRS 30/P0, Unit 725, case number 16]



10. *Cecilia Curtain*

Cecilia Curtain
Age: 28 Native place: Daylesford
Trade: Servant Date of conviction: August 1888
Crime: Robbery in company
Sentence: Six months hard labour.

Cecilia was blind in one eye. This photo was taken during her second prison term, the second of many to come. From her first conviction in 1883, until the 1920's, Cecilia spent more than nine years on and off in prison. Her severe three-year sentence in 1889 was in fact given because of six prior convictions appearing on her record.

This crime of robbery in company had occurred in the room of a hotel, where Cecilia had taken unrepresented by lawyers, and were judged guilty. Given their previous crimes, they had been given the severe sentence of three years hard labour.

Although Cecilia's trade was listed on her prison record as servant, she was described in the police gazette as a prostitute. Her friend Annie Flowers, who appears in many court cases with Cecilia, was also quite a well known Melbourne prostitute.

'Cecilia Curtain and Annie Flowers did feloniously steal take and carry away the sum of thirteen pounds in money of the moneys of the said John Lawton.'

[Deposition of witnesses, PROV, VPRS 30/P0, unit 747, case number 13]

'I went upstairs into a room, Curtain going with me. I gave her 5 shillings for an immoral purpose. We remained in the room from a quarter to half an hour.'

[Testimony, PROV, VPRS 30/P0, unit 747, case number 13]



11. *Ellen Watson*

Ellen Watson
Age: 48 Native place: Scotland
Trade: Servant Date of conviction: July 1889
Crime: Larceny as a bailee
Sentence: One month imprisonment

Ellen's short sentence could be a result of the fact that she had no prior convictions, and perhaps the object she stole as a bailee was not especially valuable. There is no information about her disfigurement on her prison record.



12. *Mary Joshua*

Mary Joshua

Age: 30

Native place: New South Wales

Trade: Dressmaker

Date of conviction: November 1888

Crime: Unlawfully wounding

Sentence: One year hard labour

Mary was another offender, who went through the Victorian prison system several times. Her first conviction was for stabbing Patrick Fahey, an acquaintance of her husband, during a dispute between the two men. After her one year sentence in 1888, Mary served several six-month sentences for various crimes of vagrancy, being idle and disorderly, no visible lawful means of support, and habitual drunkenness. She was also convicted under the alias name of "Violet Clifford".

'I sat down in the place and Mr and Mrs Joshua came in. Joshua had my head down I next remembered I was covered with blood. It came from a cut in the side of my head...'

[Testimony of Patrick Fahey, PROV, VPRS 30/P0, Unit 730, case number 12]



14. *Elizabeth Stewart*

Elizabeth Stewart

Age: 31

Native place: Scotland

Trade: Servant

Date of conviction: November 1888

Crime: Larceny

Sentence: One year hard labour

There is very little information available on Elizabeth. We know that she had brown hair and blue eyes, and that she had 28 previous convictions.



19. *Annie Dibbs*

Annie Dibbs

Age: 20

Native place: New Zealand

Trade: Servant

Date of conviction: September 1889

Crime: Larceny

Sentence: One month imprisonment

This was Annie's first conviction, which could explain her short sentence of only one month.



13. *Annie Duce*

Annie Duce
 Age: 16 Native place: Tasmania
 Trade: Servant Date of conviction: April 1891
 Crime: Larceny
 Sentence: Six months imprisonment

Annie was only 16 when she was first caught stealing from a house in which she was employed. She spent the first part of her sentence in the Melbourne Gaol, before she was transferred to the Coburg reformatory for the remainder. From Coburg, she was sent to the Brookside Girls' Reformatory, described by *The Age* on 25 January, 1890 as a place where the girls were at "liberty to scamper among the fields, full and free". This article says that no girl had ever run away from Brookside, because it was such a wonderful home. However, Annie's reformatory school record tells us that Annie ran away five times from Brookside

and from homes where she had been sent by Brookside to work. After her last escape in 1893, Annie was sent back to Old Melbourne Gaol. It appeared that the great reformatory experiment had not worked for Annie.

"Offender was left in charge of complainant's dwelling on the above date, when she absconded [ran away] with the following: About 4 [shillings] in cash, a silver lever hunting watch... a wedding ring, a keeper-ring, an engagement ring... a gold albert and pendant..."

[Victoria Police Gazette, 11 March 1891, p. 79]

"Annie Duce has absconded from the Brookside Girls' Reformatory, Ballarat... Supposed to have gone to Middle Brighton."

[Victoria Police Gazette, 17 August 1892, p. 218]



15. *Polly Larkin*

Polly Larkin
 Age: 29 Native place: Melbourne
 Trade: Servant Date of conviction: April & July 1887
 Crime: Idle and disorderly, stealing from the person
 Sentence: Six months imprisonment and twelve months hard labour with the last week of detention in solitary, to be served consecutively.

Polly was described in her prison record as having a sallow complexion. She had been granted bail for this charge of larceny when she was arrested and imprisoned for idle and disorderly behaviour, for "keeping a disorderly house." Given that Petty Sessions courts, where Polly would have been tried, were not required to keep the deposition files of their trials, we do not know why Polly was sentenced to six months imprisonment for "keeping a disorderly house." We do know that she was brought from prison to the courthouse where she was tried and convicted of stealing Sanders Cadee's 19 pounds.



16. *Laura Williams*

Laura Williams

Age: 25

Native place: Tasmania

Trade: Servant

Date of conviction: July 1889

Crime: Assaulting a constable

Sentence: One year hard labour

Laura had several convictions to her name before this arrest, for crimes of insulting behaviour and obscene language. She was on Flinders Street when a constable came to arrest her for insulting behaviour. Alexander Garrett, a friend of Laura's, came to stop the constable from making the arrest, declaring "Let her go or else I'll knock your bloody head off." When Constable Maher refused to let Laura go, Garrett attacked the constable with several blows to the face. Garrett and Laura continued to beat Constable Maher while their friend looked on. When they fled, Constable Maher was forced to give up the chase due to his injuries and exhaustion from

the fight. Constable Maher was still in the police hospital when he gave his testimony two weeks later.

Laura was arrested on a description provided by Constable Maher: "a woman twenty four years of age, five feet four or five inches in height, dark complexion dressed in red skirts dark bodice and dark straw hat" [Warrant for the arrest of Laura Williams, PROV, VPRS 30/P0, unit 758, case number 17].

Police testimony says she denied the charge at first, and later declared she was drunk, and although at first she had wanted to assault the policeman, she had later "told the men to knock off kicking him and not to kill him." We hear Laura's words only through the testimony of the police constables.

"Prisoner Garrett and I struggled together for several minutes and all this time prisoner Williams continued to beat me about the head with her (Williams) umbrella."

[Testimony of Constable Thomas Maher, PROV, VPRS 30/P0, unit 758, case number 17]

"We both fell to the ground again together and there Garrett held me round the neck and cried out "Laura" (meaning the prisoner Williams) "tear his bloody eyes out." I then felt prisoner Williams hands pressed tight on both my eyes. The blood was running from my left eyelid into my eye."

[Testimony of Constable Thomas Maher, PROV, VPRS 30/P0, unit 758, case number 17]

"[Polly Larkin] did feloniously steal take and carry away from the person of the said Sanders Cadee the sum of nineteen pounds two shillings and sixpence in money.."

[Depositions of witnesses, PROV, VPRS 30/P0, unit 694, case number 4]

"She stood in front of me and asked me to go home with her. I said I would not and she said "all right" and turned in another direction. She had been standing in front of me close up to me. When she went away she passed by my right hand coat pocket and when she was a yard or two away I put my hand in that pocket and missed my purse..."

[Testimony of Sanders Cadee, PROV, VPRS 30/P0, unit 694, case number 4]



18. *Sophy Bool*

Sophy Bool

Age: 39

Native place: New South Wales

Trade: Dressmaker

Date of conviction: June 1888

Crime: Larceny as a bailee [selling hire purchase furniture]

Sentence: Six months with hard labour and six months without hard labour, to be served consecutively

Sophy's crime was stealing several items of household furniture, including a piano, totaling a value of more than 200 pounds. Sophy had hired this furniture from various dealers in Melbourne, paying the first few months hire payments, and had then pawned the items to other dealers in the city.

Evidence given in Sophy's criminal trial suggest that she had some money. She had a place to live, and a trade. She was able to employ a defence lawyer, Mr Fisher, and she had a domestic servant working for her, Annie Robinson, who inadvertently became Sophy's accomplice in her series of crimes. Sophy was arrested in Sydney.

Sophy had no criminal record before being charged and convicted of larceny. There is no testimony from Sophy herself, so we may never know what circumstances led to her taking this criminal course. One dealer testified that Sophy had told him she would pay him after her husband arrived from England. If her husband never came this could account for her suddenly dire financial situation. However, like so many of these cases, without Sophy's voice on the record, her motivations for turning to crime will remain a mystery.

"Sophy Bool being then the bailee of a certain chattel to wit one pianoforte did fraudulently take and convert the said goods to her own use, and thereby feloniously did steal the same contrary to the statute."

[Depositions of witnesses, PROV, VPRS 30/P0, unit 722, case number 16]



19. *Catherine Kelly*

Catherine Kelly

Age: 38

Native place: Ireland

Trade: Servant

Date of conviction: December 1889

Crime: Receiving, larceny of a cheque

Sentence: Six months imprisonment

Catherine (arrived in the Colony in 1857, aged 6, came free), was accused of stealing from a man who lived in the same boarding house as she. According to Cornelius Gleeson, the informant, Catherine had overheard Gleeson's conversation with another boarder, Mr Mullins, whom Gleeson had asked to write a letter for him, asking for three pounds from an acquaintance. Gleeson accused Catherine of taking the cheque from his mail without permission. Various witnesses were brought to testify that Catherine had tried to cash the three-pound cheque with them. Despite her pleas of innocence, Catherine served six months for her crime.



20. *Mary Yates*

Mary Yates

Age: 39

Native place: Dublin

Trade: Nil

Date of conviction: April 1888

Crime: Larceny

Sentence: One month

There is very little information given for Mary. We know this was her first conviction in Victoria.



21. *Sarah Latham*

Sarah Latham

Age: 40

Native place: England

Trade: Needlewoman Date of conviction: April 1888

Crime: Larceny on three charges

Sentence: Three one-month sentences, to be served concurrently

Sarah appears in the police gazettes as Susan Latham. She had six previous convictions.



22. *Alice Blake*

Alice Blake

Age: 24

Native place: Ireland

Trade: Servant

Date of conviction: April 1890

Crime: Larceny

Sentence: One month imprisonment

We only know that Alice was tried in the Preston Petty Sessions, and served her sentence at Old Melbourne Gaol. It was her first conviction.

“the said defendant [Catherine Kelly] did feloniously steal take and carry away the cheque of the value of three pounds the property of the said informant...”

[Depositions of witnesses, PROV, VPRS 30/P0, unit 771, case number 15]

“I am not guilty and I never received the cheque.”

[Prisoner’s statement in defense, PROV, VPRS 30/P0, unit 771, case number 15]



23.
Laura McDonald

24.
Mary Ryan

We could not match these women with any prison records. Their names, were quite common in this period in Melbourne.



25. *Mary Ann Falconer*

Mary Ann Falconer

Age: 44

Native place: Ireland

Trade: Servant

Date of conviction: September 1889

Crime: Larceny

Sentence: One month imprisonment

We know little of Mary Ann besides the fact that this was her first conviction. She was tried in the Richmond Petty Sessions, so probably lived or worked near Melbourne city.



26.
Mary O'Neil

Mary could not be matched with her prison record. Her name was quite common in this period in Melbourne.





27. *Mary Mifer*

Mary Mifer

Age: 42

Native place: England

Trade: Servant

Date of conviction: May 1888

Crime: Larceny

Sentence: Three months imprisonment

Mary was listed as having seven previous convictions. Given that she does not appear in the central prison register, these must all have been for petty crimes such as petty larceny and vagrancy.



28. *Jane Richards*

Jane Richards

Age: 34

Native place: Adelaide

Trade: Charwoman

Date of conviction: April 1888

Crime: Larceny

Sentence: Three months imprisonment

Jane is listed in the police gazettes as being a charwoman (a woman hired to clean houses). Rather than live in as a housekeeper or servant, Jane would have visited houses on a daily basis to work in the house.

1826

Jane Richards
3 months Imp



29. *Bessie Hamilton*

Bessie Hamilton

Age: 22

Native place: New South Wales

Trade: Servant

Date of conviction: February 1888

Crime: Larceny from the person

Sentence: Twelve months hard labour

Bessie Hamilton appeared in the criminal trial briefs many times in the period before and after this prison sentence of twelve months hard labour. Although her trade is listed in the prison record as a servant, evidence suggests Bessie was a prostitute. The charges laid against Bessie came from several men who accused her of approaching them on the street late at night, and taking their money from their pockets. Bessie was found not guilty of many of these charges, usually due to a lack of evidence as to whether the men had given her this money of their own will, for "immoral purposes."

Bessie's supposed crimes occurred in the area of Melbourne known as the theatre district. This was a common place for women like Bessie to loiter at night, given that men often passed through this area on their way home. During the late 1880s there was a rise in crime rates in Melbourne, and police were known to target known prostitutes and pickpockets in order to clear up the streets. Bessie's severe sentences of twelve months in 1888, and two years in 1890 only shortly after her release, would suggest she was a target of this police tactic.

"the said Bessie Hamilton and Kate Manning did feloniously steal take and carry away from the person of George Armytage two postal notes of the value of nine shillings and six pence and ten shillings in money.."

[Depositions of witnesses, PROV, VPRS 30/P0, unit 731, case number 12]

"She wanted me to go home with her but I had no intention of going with her. I was not dreadfully shocked when she asked me to go home with her. I did not give her the £1 to go home with her.."

[Testimony of James McInnes, PROV, VPRS 30/P0, unit 731, case number 13]

"I said 'If you don't give her in charge I'll lock you both up for insulting behaviour.' He then said he would give her in charge and he signed the charge book.."

[Testimony of Constable Henry Farrell, PROV, VPRS 30/P0, unit 731, case number 13]

"I never saw him before. It is hard, anything that happens here is put on to me"

[Testimony of arresting officer, hearsay of Bessie Hamilton's appeal, PROV, VPRS 30/P0, unit 798, case number 25]

PRISON AND LEGAL TERMS

Alias - A different name, usually used to deceive by disguising one's true identity.

Bailee - A person who hires an object, and so has legal possession of the object, but not ownership.

Brookside Reformatory - A reformatory school for girls in Ballarat. Young girls who had not been a part of the foster care system, but who had been found committing crimes or were at risk of entering a life of crime. They were licensed out to local farms as domestic servants when it was believed they had reformed from their criminal ways.

Coburg Reformatory - A reformatory school (see Brookside Reformatory) for girls. Situated in Coburg, next to Pentridge Prison. Believed to be inferior to Brookside because of its proximity to the evils of Melbourne city, and to the influence of the prisoners at Pentridge.

Hard Labour (H.L) - A sentence of hard labour for women meant that they worked long hours in the laundries, and picked oakum, a natural fibre used to make ropes. Both chores were very physically demanding.

Idle and disorderly - People were arrested for being idle and disorderly if they were hanging around on the streets for no reason, or without a job. This crime was a category of the Vagrancy Law (see Vagrancy), and was used by police to lock away troublemakers on the streets of Melbourne, and poor people without homes or jobs.

Insufficient means - See No visible means of support.

Larceny - Stealing another person's property, such as pickpocketing, stealing money or objects. In the case of Catherine Kelly, it meant stealing a bank cheque, and in the cases of Sophy Bool and Ellen Watson, larceny as a bailee meant stealing objects they had legally hired, but did not own outright.

Manslaughter - Inflicting physical injury on a person which results in their death, but done without the intention of killing the person.

Old Melbourne Gaol - The first prison building in Victoria, the Old Melbourne Gaol, located in Russell Street, operated from 1842 to 1924. After Pentridge prison opened in 1851, Old Melbourne Gaol operated as a short term remand prison.

No visible means of support - Also known as the "poor law," this offence made poverty a crime. Police had the power to lock up people suspected of committing a crime, or people of a low social class who had not committed any specific crime. This crime was a category of the Vagrancy Law (see Vagrancy) and was used to arrest prostitutes, youths, the poor, ill and elderly.

Petty Sessions - Local court sessions where criminals were tried on minor (petty) charges such as vagrancy, being idle and disorderly, having insufficient or no visible lawful means of support, and petty larceny. The Melbourne Petty Sessions heard the trials of one-third of the city's arrests. The records of witness testimonies from these sessions have not survived.

Robbery in company - The crime of stealing committed by two or more people.

Solitary confinement - Prisoners were kept alone in a prison cell. Prisoners who broke the rules were made to spend a period in a cell in silence, where they were not allowed to speak to other prisoners, not allowed to wave, gesture, or communicate in other ways. In earlier prison days, solitary confinement was a part of the sentence. It was suggested by one prison inspector that female prisoners should spend their entire sentence in solitary confinement. Solitary confinement was used less after the 1880s, when it was recognised that the mental health of prisoners suffered from this treatment.

Vagrancy - Not having a home or a job, and so being forced to live on the streets. In the 1880s and 1890s in Melbourne, this was a crime. There were over 100 different ways a person could be arrested for vagrancy, including some mentioned above (see Idle and disorderly and No visible means of support). Police found the Vagrancy Law very useful for arresting people they knew were criminals, or who were just being a nuisance.