

Hamilton Murray's 1833 Indiscretion

Before 1833 there is an interesting reference from the Carters Barracks House of Correction in 1826 for Hamilton Murray who had come on the Lord Sidmouth for robbery but his colonial crime was horse stealing. It appeared he had been in the Barracks for 10 months.

Carters' Barracks, Boys Dormitory was established in 1820. It provided separate accommodation and a training program for convict boys under the age of 16 at Carter's Barracks, Brickfields in Sydney. On arrival at the Barracks the boys became government apprentices and were trained to work as tradesman. They lived at the Barracks for a maximum of three years before being assigned to work as servants for up to seven years after their release. Carters' Barracks, Boys Dormitory closed around 1835 when convict boys were assigned directly on their arrival in Australia.

The boys placed at Carters' Barracks were given basic schooling, a strict religious upbringing and were trained to become tradesman. Boys were taught the skills of a blacksmith, carpenter, painter or shoemaker among other trades. The aim of the administrators was to reform the convict boys. There was approximately 200 convict boys and staff housed at the Barracks at any time.

Any boys who tried to escape the Barracks was given a severe lashing upon their return. Floggings or time on the treadmill, which was used to grind grain, were common forms of punishment under the strict regime. There were also two solitary confinement cells for punishment of certain offences and the sleeping area was divided into two rooms to separate the different classes of boys. One class was for good behaviour and one for those whose misconduct meant they received an inferior diet and bedding.

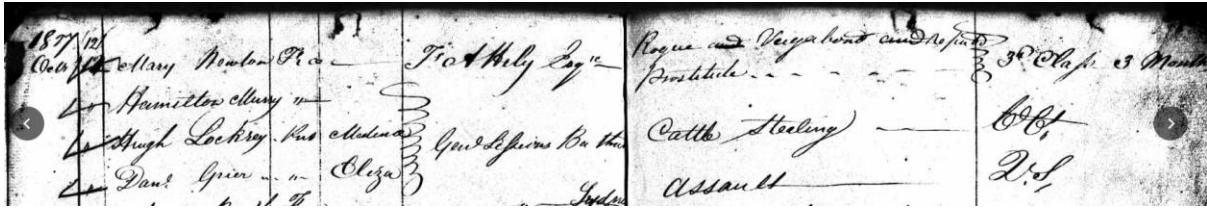
As a result of the separate accomodation and the training program for boys at Carters' Barracks it has been described as Australia's first special institution for juveniles and a predeccesor to the first official reformatory at Point Puer, Tasmania.¹

Why was Hamilton here? Hamilton would have been at least 23 years of age? The fact this document references Lord Sidmouth , a 7 year sentence for robbery it must be our Hamiton Murray.

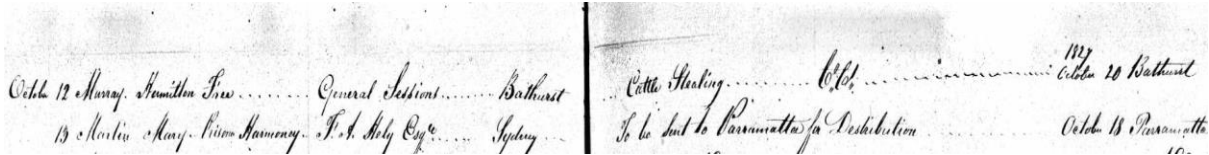
Murray Hamilton	7	Life	Robbery	Horse Stealing	10 months	as
Murray James	7	Life	Vagrant	Highway Robbery	10 months	as
Murray L.S. Vincent	7	Life	Robbery	Horse Stealing	10 months	as
Murray Mary	7	Life	Robbery	Horse Stealing	10 months	as

There is also a Sydney Gaol book with an admission for Hamilton Murray on 12th October 1827 for cattle stealing. There are no references to cattle stealing for Hamilton Murray in TROVE or on the Biographical Database of Australia.

¹ <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/biogs/NE01682b.htm>



A second entrance book from Sydney Gaol confirms he was indicted for trial over cattle stealing at Bathurst General Sessions on 12th October 1827 and it looks like he was admitted to Sydney Gaol on 20th October 1827.



This is the year he achieved his Certificate of Freedom as he had served his 7 years, so it is unlikely that he was convicted-the below notification being in the Sydney Gazette and NSW Advertiser Wed 5 Dec 1827.

ALEXANDER M'LEAY.

Public Notice.

THE undermentioned Persons have obtained Certificates of Freedom during the last Week, vi:—

Brampton	John Treasure
Dick	Samuel Jackson
Eliza (2)	George Foster
John Barry (2)	James Corbally
John Bull	Jane Maher
Lord Sidmouth (2)	Hamilton Murray
Lord Wellington	Mary Courtney
Mary (2)	Joseph Smith

By Command of His Excellency the Governor,
ALEXANDER M'LEAY.
Colonial Secretary's Office, 1st Dec. 1827.

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/artic1>

He is listed in Bathurst Census 1828 as being at Dunheved South Creek , Essington Park under Captain Phillip King as an employed stockman.

Image 265 of 427 of Bathurst
 No. 746 57 ✓

**NEW SOUTH WALES.
Census for the Year 1828.**

By Act of the GOVERNOR and Council of the 6th Geo. IV. No. 4 sec. 2, it is enacted, that if any Householder, Employer of Servants, or Proprietor or Occupier of Lands, shall refuse or neglect to answer, or shall answer falsely or untrue, any of the Questions authorised by the said Act to be put relative to the Population, Cattle, and Occupied Land in the Colony, the Person so offending shall be fined, at the discretion of two or more Magistrates, in a Sum not exceeding Ten Pounds.

HOUSEHOLDER'S NAME, *Capt Phillip King* RESIDENCE, *Dunheved South Creek*

Names of Family and Servants	Age	Class	Arrival		Sentence	Employment	Residence	Religion
			Ship	Year				
<i>Capt Phillip King</i>								
<i>John Flanagan</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>C. F.</i>		<i>1825</i>		<i>Business</i>	<i>High St</i>	<i>Catholic</i>
<i>John Callings</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>C. F.</i>	<i>Isabella</i>	<i>1824</i>	<i>7 years</i>	<i>Laborer</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>do</i>
<i>Owen Mulligan</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>C. F.</i>	<i>South John</i>	<i>1823</i>	<i>7 years</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>do</i>
<i>Hamilton Murray</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>F. S.</i>	<i>Lord Sidmouth</i>	<i>1819</i>	<i>7 years</i>	<i>Stockman</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>do</i>
<i>John Danlos</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>C. F.</i>	<i>Isabella</i>	<i>1823</i>		<i>Laborer</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>do</i>
<i>Richard Cochrane</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>C. F.</i>	<i>Elizabeth</i>	<i>1824</i>	<i>Nov 6</i>		<i>1825</i>	<i>do</i>
<i>Robert the blacksmith</i>								
<i>In the above</i>								
						<i>Hamilton Murray</i>		

In 1833 Hamilton was accused of horse stealing. The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser (NSW : 1803 - 1842) Sat 2 Feb 1833 A man, named Hamilton Murray, has been committed by the Bathurst Bench to take his trial at the next Criminal Court on three distinct charges of horse-stealing.²

instruction and education generally.
 A man, named Hamilton Murray, has been committed by the Bathurst Bench to take his trial at the next Criminal Court on three distinct charges of horse-stealing. The extraordinary exertions of the military and civil police of the district, has greatly decreased the extent and frequency of this offence, as well as cattle-stealing, which for some years past has prevailed in a villainous degree, and for which the locality of the distant stations, their loneliness, and the constant impossibility of exercising over them a constant surveillance, afforded safe covert and convenience.

and she was remanded for sentence.
THURSDAY, 23.
(Before His Honor Mr. Justice Dowling.)
 Hamilton Murray and Thomas Cunningham, were jointly indicted for stealing a filly, the property of

Alexander Imley, at Swoosfield, on the 26th Oct. 1833. In appearing in evidence, that the filly was the joint property of Alexander and Peter Imley; the learned Judge directed their acquittal upon that information. They were again indicted for stealing a filly, the property of Alexander Imley and another, on which indictment, the prisoners were again acquitted. Hamilton Murray was again indicted for stealing a gelding, the property of John Roberts, and another gelding, the property of Thomas Fitzsimmons, at Bathurst, on the 24th September. The jury returned a verdict of Guilty, and His Honor sentenced him to be transported for life to a penal settlement.
 John and Richard Cochrane were indicted for

Hamilton was sent to Parramatta Gaol from Penrith Gaol on 7th March 1833. This record has his native place as Belfast, his name as Hambleton and his arrival on Lord Sidmouth as 1819. It states he is a free

<i>William Wilkins</i>	<i>Melville</i>	<i>1829</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>Gloucesters</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>Groom</i>
<i>Hambleton Murray</i>	<i>Lord Sidmouth</i>	<i>1819</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>Free</i>	<i>Belfast</i>	<i>Catholic</i>	<i>Laborer</i>
<i>John Cunningham</i>	<i>Daphne</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>Bond</i>	<i>Snell, C. F. Co.</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>do</i>

² <https://convictrecords.com.au/convicts/murray/hamilton/140359>

man and was to be tried in Criminal Court. He was sent to Sydney Gaol on 11th March 1833 although other documents suggest he was admitted on 10th March.

The Sydney Gaol book describes him also as Hambelton Murray 5 foot 8 complexion sallow and blue eyes and hair very brown. His year of birth is cited as 1800 and his arrival correctly as 1820.

Date of admission in Ancestry is 21st January 1833 which is probably incorrect given he went from Bathurst to Penrith to Parramatta and on to Sydney Goal before his trial in May 1833.

Looking at another of his Sydney Gaol Record Books it states that Hamilton Murray arrived on Lord Sidmouth 1820 and his native place is County Down. He is catholic and a labourer. On entering gaol he was free. He was first admitted to gaol in Bathurst on 10th March – address not clear. Trial 23rd May transportation for life-disposed of to the Hulk 24th May and again on 27th June. This suggests Hamilton may have challenged the first conviction leading to the above Magistrate Dowling making a worse

No.	Name	Age	Place of Birth	Religion	Occupation	Admitted	Disposed of	Remarks
109	Elizabeth	20	Woolwich	C.	Servant	10th March	24th May	
110	Hambelton Murray	30	Co. Down	Catholic	Labourer	10th March	24th May	Transported to the Hulk

conviction of death and again launching him into the Hullk on 27th June.

Use your browser's Print function to print the article from the Sydney Herald (NSW : 1831 - 1842), Monday 27

LAW INTELLIGENCE.

SUPREME COURT.—CRIMINAL SIDE.

THURSDAY.—Before Judge Dowling, and the usual Commission.

Hamilton Murray and Thomas Cunninghame were jointly indicted for stealing a filly, the property of Alexander Inlay, at Swashfield, on the 26th October.

As it appeared by the evidence of the first witness that the filly was the property of Alexander and Peter Inlay, conjointly, the prisoners were acquitted on that information, by direction of the learned Judge.

They were again indicted for stealing the filly, being the property of Alexander Riley and another.

Mr. Therry, who appeared on behalf of the prisoners, objected to this course of proceeding, on the plea of *autre fois acquit*, as laid down in 2d Russel, on Crimes, 39. His Honor over-ruled the objection, the point having been so often decided by the Court, as not to leave a doubt on his mind, and declined to make a note of it, but left it open for the learned gentleman to moot the question before His Excellency the Governor in Council, if he should think fit. Both the prisoners were acquitted.

Hamilton Murray, was again indicted for stealing a gelding the property of John Roberts, and one other gelding the property of John Fitzsimmons, at Bathurst Plains, on the 24th September. Guilty. To be transported for life.

Richard Coberoff, and John Coberoff, were

The Sydney Herald (NSW : 1831 - 1842) Mon 27 May 1833 Page 2 LAW INTELLIGENCE. Hamilton Murray and Thomas Cunninghame were jointly indicted for stealing a filly, the property of Alexander Imlay, at Swashfield, on the 26th October. As it appeared by the evidence of the first witness that the filly was the property of Alexander and Peter Imlay, conjointly, the prisoners were acquitted on that information, by direction of the learned Judge. They were again indicted for stealing the filly being the property of Alexander Riley and another. Mr. Therry, who appeared on behalf of the prisoners, objected to this course of proceeding, on the plea of *autre fois acquit*, as laid down in 2d Russel, on Crimes, 39. His Honor over-ruled the objection, the point having been so often decided by the Court, as not to leave a doubt on his mind and declined to make a note of it, but left it open for the learned gentleman to moot the question before His Excellency the Governor in Council if he should think fit. Both the prisoners were so acquitted. Hamilton Murray, was again indicted for stealing a gelding the property of John Roberts, and one other gelding the property of John Fitzsimmons at Bathurst Plains, on the 24th September. Guilty! To be transported for life.

sentence of death recorded against them.

Hamilton Murray, convicted of horse stealing, was placed at the bar, when Judge Dowling addressed him, observing that he had been sentenced to transportation for life after conviction, under a late Act of Parliament, the Judges however entertained a doubt whether that Act applied to this Colony at present, not having been re-enacted by the Colonial Legislature, and adopted; and the Court having power to alter a sentence during its sittings, now ordered sentence of death to be recorded against him.

Robert Forrester and John Norris for cattle

The Sydney Herald (NSW : 1831 - 1842) Mon 1 Jul 1833 Page 3 LAW INTELLIGENCE. Hamilton Murray, convicted of horse stealing, was placed at the bar, when Judge Dowling addressed him, observing that he had been sentenced to transportation for life after conviction, under a late Act of Parliament, the Judges however entertained a doubt whether that Act applied to this Colony at present, not having been re-enacted by the Colonial Legislature, and adopted; and the Court having power to alter a

sentence during its sittings, now ordered sentence of death to be recorded against him.³

The Biographical Dictionary of Australia translates the writing on his 1827 certificate of freedom documents that indicates : *Put by in letter from Bathurst dated 10 Jul 1833 stating that Murray had been convicted of felony by the Sydney Criminal Court; in lieu of CF 27/1042 dated 26 Nov 1827 now returned mutilated & cancelled; Ticket destroyed by me Murray having been transported to Norfolk Island for life by the Sydney Criminal Court 27 Jun 1833 for horse stealing; [BDA: Biog Item No. 120921122].*

Hamilton was transported to the Phoenix Hulk on 12th May 1833

		Return from the 20 th				to the 26 th May 1833							
3371	James Ward	Sept 1817	And	And	Manchester	Assistant	Labourer	21 May 33	Wentworth	of the Longmire			
3372	as Mutually	Sept 1818	And	And	Essex	Catholic	Labourer	21 May	Mrs. Campbell	of the Norfolk Island			
3373	Pat Byrne	March 1819	And	And	London	Assistant	Labourer	20 th May	Mrs. Campbell	of the Norfolk Island			
3374	David Lennox	July 1819	And	And	London	Assistant	Labourer	22 nd May	Mrs. Campbell	of the Norfolk Island			
3375	John Douglas	March 1819	And	And	London	Assistant	Labourer	24 May	Mrs. Campbell	of the Norfolk Island			
3376	Hamilton Murray	March 1819	And	And	London	Catholic	Labourer	24 May	Mrs. Campbell	of the Norfolk Island			

The next Hulk record with the admission date as 27th June 1833 also shows he was initially transported to Norfolk Island for Life then sentenced to death and the record shows a second transported for life to Norfolk Island. He was transported to Norfolk island on 4th September 1833.

High Court Number	Sentence Number	NAME	ARRIVAL		ORIGINAL CONVICTION				COLONIAL CONVICTION				Sentence	Decision of His Excellency the Governor	When Forwarded		
			Ship	Year	When	When	Offence	When	When	When	Offence	Sentence					
76		Hamilton Murray	Bathurst	1826	Sept 1819	Sept 1819	Sept 1819	Sept 1819	Sept 1819	Sept 1819	Sept 1819	Sept 1819	Sept 1819	Sept 1819	Sept 1819	Sept 1819	Sept 1819

An account of what life on the Hulk was like in 1836 is found at <https://frankthepoet.blogspot.com/2011/12/phenix-hulk.html>

The Sydney Herald Monday 28 November 1831 p.4
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article12843772>

–Mr. McKaig, formerly Chief Mate of the Phoenix Hulk, has been appointed Superintendent of that

³ Op cit

vessel.—

Report from a convict who spent time on the Phoenix Hulk in Sydney Harbour in 1836
Thomas Cook, *The Exile's Lamentation*, 1978, pp. 43-44.

I was arraigned in the Quarter Sessions in May, 1836, and on of Guilty the plea of "Forgery" was sentenced to transportation to Norfolk Island for life.

I was accordingly removed to that floating Den of Infamy, the hulk Phoenix, until opportunity offered for the Shipment of a draft of re-convicted prisoners to that place.

During my stay on board, scenes of depravity which human nature shudders to contemplate were exhibited with apparent delight. Nor were the means as resorted to by the Keeper for the punishment of slight Offences, at all calculated to lessen the successful spread of so demoralizing a contagion. The men of the adjoining Cell to that in which I and 9 others were chained, had been smoking a Tobacco pipe one Evening, contrary to the Rules of the Establishment, when the Keeper came to our Cell and charged us as the Offenders.

He sent for 10 pairs of Handcuffs, took our shirts, Blankets and clothes away, and manacled each of our hands behind our backs, he reefed the legs, which were very heavily Ironed, to the upper part of the Iron Staunchions of the Cell by means of a Bar outside, with the whole weight of our chains and bodies pressing on our Shoulder blades for the night, in a state of perfect Nudity. By the following morning, and for two days afterwards, I could scarcely regain the use of my Arms.

I have also seen men in a similar position, with the additional torture of a gagging instrument to silence their Cries, and the throwing of Buckets of Water over them when in that state. Numerous complaints had been made to the Authorities, but the capabilities of the Keeper and his aidants were such, that no prisoner could withstand the case they would make out to render futile the complainants' assertions; and thus these Outrages upon humanity commissioned with impunity.

The Keeper's predecessor, Captain Murray, who had practised similar cruelties, died in a state of Mental derangement, and the one in question (Mr McKeig) laboured under a similar malady, brought on by the excessive use of Ardent Spirits and it is to be hoped the Almighty had received their Souls.

The Phoenix itself:

The 589 ton Phoenix ship was built on the Thames. On 21 July 1824, the Phoenix arrived in Van Diemen's Land with a load of convicts from England. Under the command of Captain Robert White, the Phoenix picked up a pilot just outside Sydney Heads but on entering the harbour struck the Sow and Pigs Reef. The keel was found to be so damaged that it could not be repaired. The ship was sold to the NSW Colonial Government for £1000 and converted to a prison hulk for those awaiting secondary transportation to Norfolk Island and Moreton Bay. The Phoenix Hulk was usually moored in Lavender Bay in Sydney Harbour. By the end of 1837 it was described as being in a sinking state and was auctioned for £145, the prisoners being temporarily housed on Goat Island.⁴

⁴ <https://frankthepoet.blogspot.com/2011/12/phoenix-hulk.html>

Life for Hamilton would not have been easy. The hulk records state he was sent to Norfolk Island on 4th September 1833. What did Hamilton do between being on the Hulk in May then again in June. Did he go back to Sydney Gaol or was he free to move around Sydney?

Norfolk Island when Hamilton was there was a brutal penal colony⁵

1825–1853

In 1824, as pastoralists were settled across the mainland, the Colonial Office decided to revive the penal settlement on Norfolk Island as a place of banishment for the worst re-offenders. On 6 June 1825 Major Turton, along with 34 troops, six women and children, and 57 convicts, reoccupied the Island. By 1829 there were 211 convicts on Norfolk and by 1834 there were close to 700 convicts, all employed by the government which, according to personal accounts of convicts and visitors, inflicted on them harsh punishments verging on the inhumane. It was not until Alexander Maconochie was appointed as Commandant of Norfolk Island in 1840 that the convicts started to be treated more humanely.

In February 1844 Maconochie was replaced by Captain Joseph Childs and on 14 September 1844 the administrative control of Norfolk Island passed from New South Wales to Van Diemen's Land.[2] During this time the island regained its reputation for brutality, which it retained until the penal settlement settlement was finally closed in 1853.

The only transport to Norfolk Island would have been the Esther leaving 31st August 1833 [Ref: item 4/3898 pp.415-9, 422-3 reel 1063]. Perhaps 4th September was when Hamilton joined the ship. This was confirmed by the records held at [Australian Historical Criminal Justice Data Dataverse](#) (Griffith University) prepared by Tim Causer of records for the Norfolk Island Penal Colony.⁶

Hamilton Murray's record indicates he did come on the Esther and he was sent on 5th September 1833. It lists data on Lord Sidmouth the fact he was tried in Antrim for robbery and sent out for 7 years so its definitely our Hamilton. His notes state:

[OFFENCES PRIOR TO TRANSPORTATION][PROBATION STATIONS IN VDL][TICKET OF LEAVE][CONDITIONAL PARDON/CERTIFICATE OF FREEDOM][CAREER SUBSEQUENT TO NORFOLK ISLAND][IF SENT TO NORFOLK ISLAND FOR A SECOND TIME, WHY?][ARRIVED AT/SENT TO NORFOLK ISLAND (2ND TIME, SHIP WHERE AVAILABLE)][LEFT NORFOLK ISLAND/ARRIVED VDL (2ND TIME, SHIP WHERE AVAILABLE)][NI OFFENCES (2ND STRETCH)][IF SENT TO NORFOLK ISLAND FOR A THIRD TIME, WHY?][ARRIVED AT/SENT TO NORFOLK ISLAND (3RD TIME, SHIP WHERE AVAILABLE)][LEFT NORFOLK ISLAND/ARRIVED VDL (3RD TIME, SHIP WHERE AVAILABLE)][NORFOLK ISLAND OFFENCES (3RD STRETCH)]

This suggests Hamilton was also sent to Van Diemen's Land and he may have been sent to Norfolk Island several times. Cannot find records to substantiate this.

⁵ <https://mhns.wa.gov.au/guides/norfolk-island-guide/>

⁶ <https://dataverse.ada.edu.au/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.26193/RR82PE>

There is a reference that he was committed for trial in 1834 for riot.⁷

In January 1834 a serious insurrection occurred on Norfolk Island, involving over a hundred convicts who made a series of concerted attacks against their guards, with the ultimate aim of taking control of the island and effecting an escape by the next Government vessel to arrive with supplies. [\[19\]\[20\]\[21\]](#)

*On the morning 15 January 1834 about 30 men, following a pre-arranged plan by pretending sickness, fell out of various of the Camp and Longridge gangs and went to the hospital. They entered the hospital and secured those there by locking them in a room, and then proceeded to break off their irons. From the hospital the mutineers waited for the gaol-gang to be turned out for work under an armed guard. As this occurred the insurrectionists rushed from the hospital behind the gaol and attacked the rear rank of the guard. After a short struggle during which two or three muskets were wrested from the soldiers, six of the mutineers were killed or wounded and the guard "succeeded in dispersing and finally in securing them".*⁸

Hamilton must have been involved but was not a leader as they were hanged for mutiny. Norfolk Island history tells the riot as:

Of all the convict uprisings during the Second Settlement this was arguably the most audacious. Three months in the planning, it involved more than 130 convicts in three simultaneous riots aiming to overthrow the Military, kill the Commandant and escape the island. The newspaper, court documents and eyewitness reports of the day reveal the drama, high emotion and vast cast involved.

The plot had been formulated in whispers, eventually written down and over the months, shared with approximately one in every six convicts. As Justice William Westbrook Burton, the Judge who eventually heard the case remarked, "It was a deep laid, well concocted, and very generally extended Conspiracy".

The trial proceedings are recorded in The Sydney Gazette on Saturday 13 September 1834. Crown Solicitor David Chambers stated the case for the prosecution and outlined the plan:

"It had been arranged that on that morning about 30 men should fall out of the gangs on pretence of sickness and go to the hospital, there secure all the inmates, and wait a certain signal to rush round the back of the gaol at the time the guard received the gaol-gangs". The convicts would then attack the guards of the gaol-gang from the rear. Meantime, "It was further arranged that about 60 men who were at the Longridge farm (about a mile from the settlement) should have scouts posted along the road to give the signal to the men at Longridge when the hospital party had rushed from the hospital, and that the men at Longridge should thereupon rush the tool-house ... arm themselves with axes, pitchforks, and other weapons and run down to the assistance of the hospital and gaol parties ..."

Once overcome the soldiers would be placed in front of the convicts and marched to the Settlement Guard who would not shoot for fear of harming their comrades. If they did not surrender, the building would be set alight to burn them out. From there the mutineers would cross the road, storm Government House and secure the Commandant. Chambers continued: "When having obtained from the Commandant the private signal for vessels arriving

⁷ <https://richardjohnbr.blogspot.com/2014/09/norfolk-island-rebellion-in-1834.html>

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norfolk_Island_convict_mutinies#:~:text=1834%20rebellion,-1834%20Convict%20Rebellion&text=In%20January%201834%20a%20serious,vessel%20to%20arrive%20with%20supplies.

off the island, they were to put him to death, together with Captain Fyans and all other persons who were obnoxious ...” The women were to be shared amongst the men who “behaved best during the contest”.

The first ship to arrive to the island would have a boat sent to her with a party of convicts dressed as soldiers who would rush the military. While that vessel sailed for South America others who could not fit would leave using the large launches.

In reality, the dreaming, scheming and planning of sailing off to everlasting freedom was fanciful. At the time their motivations were written from two opposite view points. The first as articulated by the Crown Prosecutor held the view that this was simply “a diabolical conspiracy ... where the projectors are bad men combining together for a wicked purpose ...” The inherent wickedness of these men was the reason they were on Norfolk Island to begin with and they were acting true to form. The opposing view was that the conditions on Norfolk Island also drove men to act this way “... if men are thought worthy to live, why reduce them to a state to avoid which they court death ... and commit new and still more fearful crimes? This is the natural consequence of the unnatural system pursued at Norfolk Island – a system which, so long as it is persevered in, will tend only to multiply crimes, and to provide occupation for the executioner”. (The Sydney Gazette Thursday 16 October 1834).⁹

Hamilton’s time on Norfolk was under a hideously cruel Commandant James Morisset. The editor of a Sydney newspaper, E. S. Hall, wrote in 1832 that the convicts on Norfolk Island had been "made the prey of hunger and nakedness at the caprice of monsters in human form ... and cut to pieces by the scourge ... [and] have no redress or the least enquiry made into their suffering".¹⁰

The post rebellion treatment was equally harsh by Captain Fyans who was second in charge to Morisset who had become too ill to govern

Captain Fyans adopted harsh measures against the rebels. It took blacksmiths nine days to make new irons for the prisoners. Rebels locked in the gaol awaiting trial were kept naked in a yard so crowded that not a third of them could sit at a time. For the next five months, while the reports went back to Sydney and arrangements were being made to send a judge to Norfolk Island, the rebels were kept locked to a chain cable. Mass floggings went on into the evening, until the ‘desperate lawless and listless mob’ had been scourged into submission. Some convicts, weary of their ‘acute and intolerable sufferings’ planned to commit group suicide, but never put their plan into action. It took Fyans and his staff five months to interrogate all the witnesses and take their depositions for trial. In this, Fyans was supported from March 1834 by Joseph Anderson, the new commandant of the island. Of those charged with mutiny, half were lifers and another third had sentences of fourteen years. In the course of the rebellion’s suppression, Knatchbull turned informer. 162 rebels were charged but the Attorney-General ruled that only 59 should be tried. The trials took place on Norfolk Island in July and twenty-nine rebels were sentenced to death. [11] Thirteen were eventually executed in front of their fellows on 22 and 23 September.¹¹

⁹ <https://www.discovernorfolk.com.au/convict-mutiny-15th-january-1834-norfolk-island/>

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Morisset

¹¹ <https://richardjohnbr.blogspot.com/2014/09/norfolk-island-rebellion-in-1834.html>

