

CONVICT STORIES

PROFILE: Elizabeth Blair, age 15
Also known as Eliza Blair, Elizabeth Allsop

What do we know?

Elizabeth Blair was born in 1826 in Greenock, Scotland. In June 1841, having been tried at the Glasgow Courts of Judiciary and found guilty of housebreaking, she was sentenced to 7 years Transportation and put on board the *Garland Grove*, which departed from London and sailed for Van Diemen's Land. She was 15 years old. In October 1841, four months later, the *Garland Grove* arrived in Hobart. Elizabeth was one of 80 female convicts from the ship that were transferred immediately to Launceston and interned at the Launceston Female Factory. She was assigned to service sometime between 1841 and 1844, in a small settlement called Campbell Town, 68km south of Launceston. Throughout this period, she was found guilty of several offences including being absent without leave, and absconding. Her punishments for these crimes included periods in solitary confinement and months of hard labour. In January 1844, a listing appears in the Cornwall Chronicle, Launceston's local newspaper, stating that Eliza Blair and William Allsop, a freeman, had applied for permission to marry. They wed on June 26 that year at St John's Church in Launceston, and one year later, on October 3, their son John Allsop was born. Just a month later, on November 4, 1845, Eliza's Ticket of Leave was granted. She died on May 30, 1853, of influenza. She was 33 years old and was listed as living with her family at George Street, in Launceston.

How do we know about Elizabeth?

The above information was found using primary source material available through the State Library of Tasmania's website. As an exercise, look up the site yourself and try to find the appropriate sources:

- **CON19-1-3:** A book containing the names of female convicts arriving in Tasmania on five ships (the *Garland Grove*, *Mexborough*, *Emma Eugenia*, *Hope*, and *Royal Admiral*) between 1841 and 1843. The names are listed in alphabetical order within the sequence for each ship, and Elizabeth Blair, convict number 507, can be found on Page 10 of the record. The book lists the age, physical characteristics, trade, and in some cases hometown of each convict, so we can learn that Elizabeth was 15 at the time of her transportation (from this we can work out that she was born in 1826), 4 feet 8 inches tall, with brown hair, a fresh, freckled face, and a 'rather large' head.
- **CON40-1-2 (image 92):** Conducting registers for female convicts – surnames beginning with A-C. This source lists the conduct, or behaviour, of female convicts whilst they were carrying out their sentences. It confirms that Elizabeth's convict number was 507, she arrived on the *Garland Grove* in 1841, and lists the offences she committed whilst under sentence, for example being absent without leave, and absconding. Importantly, the source shows that Elizabeth was granted her Ticket of Leave on 4 November 1845 – this is the date written in red ink on the left margin of the page.
- **RGD37-1-3:** Marriages in the District of Launceston – shows us that at age 18 Elizabeth married William Allsop, who was 25.
- **RGD33-1-23:** Births in the District of Launceston – this source documents the birth of Elizabeth and William's son, John, on October 3, 1845.

Hint: The Tasmanian Names Index is a very useful resource in finding all available primary source information about one person:

https://talis.ent.sirsidynix.net.au/client/en_AU/names/search/results?qu=Elizabeth&qu=Blair

What else can we find out or cross-reference what we already know?

- We can get a picture of what Eliza would have looked like using the Convict Mugshots website: http://wwwFOUNDERS-storylines.com/mugsheets/convicts/profile/5349/eliza_blair (also click on the *Garland Grove* link for more information on the ship. The Ship's Surgeon was Robert Dobie – perhaps you might like to research him as well!)
- We could see if there were any Scottish records about Eliza's life prior to transportation. We know that she was convicted at the Glasgow Courts of Judiciary.
- We could look for photographs of Launceston in the 1840s, or maps, to try and get an idea of what it was like to live there during this era
- We could look for accounts or historical books about the voyage of the *Garland Grove* in 1841, to see what Elizabeth transportation experiences was like.
- We could research Elizabeth's son and his descendants to see how his life in Australia turned out