



## ‘This is the true story of Susannah Noon and the women of the convict ship *Friends*.’

On 8th April 1811 the ship *Friends* sailed from England carrying 101 female convicts bound for the penal colony of New South Wales. Their crimes ranged from pickpocketing to murder, but most of them had been convicted of theft.

Susannah Noon, not yet in her teens, had tried to steal four pairs of cotton stockings, worth ten shillings, from a shop in Colchester. It earned her a sentence of transportation for seven years ‘beyond the seas’. It was a sentence that reverberated throughout her lifetime; she never returned to England.

Instead Susannah and her shipmates found themselves living in a new land as members of a new and unique society. Their only shackles were the vast ocean and their fear of the unknown.

In 1811 there were only one hundred women living in New South Wales who had not arrived as convicted felons. Susannah and the other convict women were expected to work and to marry. Most seized the chance for respectability; some fell victim to further disaster; some

continued to lead lives defined by gaol, alcohol and despair.

Until now, Susannah and the other women of the *Friends* have remained largely silent and invisible to history. In uncovering their stories, author Elsbeth Hardie provides a little-known account of the convict system that prevailed in the early years of transportation and how these women fared within it.

Susannah was the only one of them to move on to another new life in New Zealand, living in a whaling station some years before the arrival of the country’s first organised colonists.

Elsbeth Hardie has resurrected the life of Susannah because she was unknown and forgotten, and because she was an ordinary woman who lived an extraordinary life. She was representative of a small group of pioneering women who have not been written about – the convict women who came to this country in the early years of settlement and remained.



The words 'God Save the King' greeted Susannah above the portal of the Moot Hall on Colchester's High Street when she was marched there for the Lent Quarter Sessions in 1810.



Susannah and the other female convicts were brought by road and river to the *Friends* sitting at anchor at Woolwich on the Thames.

The first history of Susannah and the women of the ship *Friends*

It uses the hitherto unpublished log of *Friends*' sister ship on the voyage, the *Admiral Gambier*, to tell part of the story

Reconstructs the female society of Port Underwood in the late 1830s and early 1840s, beyond the story of the renowned Betty Guard. The stories of other key Cloudy Bay whaling identities are also included

Includes a description of the whaling voyage of the *Australian* in 1831, based on an unpublished ship's log

## Author Information

First time book author **ELSBETH HARDIE** trained as a journalist and has had a career writing professionally for business clients. She is a graduate of the inaugural Creative Writing honours degree course at the University of Auckland. Elsbeth lives in Auckland but maintains strong ties to the South Island where she grew up.



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