

María (a slave)

Borneo

(arrived Hobart 8 October 1828)

Native Place: British Honduras (now Belize)

Age: 18

Tried: September 1825, Honduras

Conditional Pardon Application:
28 January 1839

Trade: servant of all work, was, iron, nurse

Sentence: life

Offence: murder

Conditional Pardon Approved:
20 November 1840

Whilst a Convict

- ❖ Maria boarded the *Borneo* with two boxes of clothes, 7 Spanish Dollars, 1 Doubloon, and an English sovereign.
- ❖ Although she told the Muster Master she was the daughter of Bryan Middleton, a mahogany cutter, she was written into the convict records simply as 'Maria (a slave)'.
- ❖ On 22 November 1830, little more than a year after she arrived in Van Diemen's Land, Maria married John Murray in St David's Church, and thereafter was assigned to her husband. They set up a boarding house in Hobart.
- ❖ Early in 1832, another female convict assigned to John Murray stood in the Supreme Court accusing Maria of theft, but the Court found her not guilty after local tradesmen testified to the falseness of the charges.
- ❖ On 18 November 1838, Revd William Bedford baptized the Murray's three-month-old baby girl, Fedicia Exine. There may well have been other children during Maria's first eight years of marriage, but if so, their names did not enter the records.

After Gaining Freedom

- ❖ Almost 14 years after her trial, with not a single blemish on her conduct record, Maria was recommended for a conditional pardon. It took nearly two years for approval to come from England.
- ❖ In the interim, on 26 June 1839, a Maria Murray died of consumption, and in the absence of any further reference, it looks as if the woman born into slavery never gained freedom.