

CONVICT-ERA HANDCUFFS DISCOVERED AT QUEENSLAND MUSEUM

Norfolk Island retains an impressive physical record of its convict era days, mainly due to the Island's remoteness which has made it difficult for items to be removed. However, there are exceptions. We recently discovered two items that made their way off the island and are now located in the Queensland Museum's collection.

A visit to the Queensland Museum in Brisbane late last year by Museum staff member, Sallie Davie, turned up some interesting finds. Conservator, Judith Hickson, delved into their archives and found a set of convict leg irons and a pair of handcuffs from Norfolk Island. Both items had been donated by the family of Captain Walton Drake, who had served as the Administrator/Chief Magistrate of Norfolk Island from 1903 to 1907.

Captain Drake is well-known for the removal of another piece of iron from Norfolk Island – one of the Sirius anchors! In 1905, he and Sir Francis Suttor organised the recovery of the first Bower anchor from the wreck of the First Fleet's flagship HMS *Sirius*. It should be noted that a team of local men (Cornish Quintal, Tilly Adams, Marsh Adams, Fysh Adams, Eustace Christian, Johnny Jackson, Dan Buffett and Nicholas Quintal) actually recovered the anchor. They received the princely sum of twenty pounds as a reward for their efforts. The anchor is on public display in Macquarie Place.

It remains unclear why Drake considered the two pieces of convict shackles to be souvenir worthy, but the handcuffs are intriguing as no other examples remain in the *KAVHA Archaeological* collection. The handcuffs, often described as figure eight handcuffs, have a bar on the right side which is the key mechanism. Many handcuffs during the convict era included a chain, much like our modern day version. These figure eight handcuffs restricted hand movement further and were probably useful when prisoners were being transported and not laboring. Many of these types of restraints were made by Hiatt & Co, but the Norfolk Island example is too corroded to discern a maker's mark.

Thanks to some sleuthing from Sallie and the great staff at the Queensland Museum, we now have another little insight into what life was like for convicts and how their movements were restrained on Norfolk Island.

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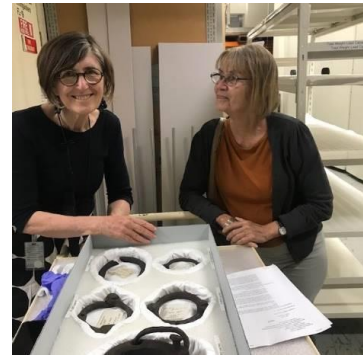


Image 1: Judith Hickson and Sallie Davie with leg irons.



Image 2: Figure eight handcuffs



Image 3: Leg Iron