

## Accidental Housemaids

Too afraid to reveal their past for fear of denying themselves a future  
From London's sewer filled streets to Millbank's damp cells  
From Tipperary to transportation  
They arrived in Van Diemen's Land where all would bear the convict stain.

Prostitutes, the colonials exclaimed  
And on the town the records revealed  
But no, I am a housemaid replied many a soul.  
And like in some sadistic game of double jeopardy,  
They served their masters  
From a past of desolate poverty and deprivation,  
To the surreal world of serving the well-heeled

To the female factory they were told  
If they absconded from duty or were expecting a child  
So here is the twist, was the master the father or was he just not impressed

The stories are real  
Of heartbreak and loss  
Away from family  
Dead babies in the nursery

They had come to a land  
Free of smog laden skies and crowded slums  
To fresh air and sunshine  
And room for all

Desperate, resourceful and determined  
Many moved on, to be founding mothers  
Raising families and working hard to be free

We will never hear their voices or be able to empathise  
But through the strength of the human spirit to survive  
Many rose above those unfortunate times

Bearing the scars of their past  
Of lost love that can never be replaced  
Our nation is all the richer as we remember these pages of our past,  
Of the Convict Women who strived and succeeded  
May our memories of them never fade.