

Australia Bound: convict voyaging 1787-1868

Between 1787 and 1868, around 914 ships left Britain and Ireland with approximately 163,000 convicts bound for New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land and Western Australia. The aim of this research project is to write an experiential history of the convict ship.

Convict ships were designed and experienced as sites of coercion and constraint. Yet they were also sites of mobility and of the crossing and expansion of boundaries: geographical, physical, mental, emotional, cultural, social and more. Convicts were prisoners, but they were also travellers. They were constrained and confined, but in ways that made them move. Australia Bound explores three central aspects of those movements: it examines the multiple spaces and places through which convicts travelled; it considers the attempts to render convicts into the ocean-going subjects of shipboard regimes designed to effect their mental and corporeal transformations; and it explores the subjective, emotional and relational journeys that convicts, their families and friendship networks had necessarily to make.

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