

# Was Charlotte Badger a Colonial Renegade?

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## Abstract

English convict and ship's mutineer Charlotte Badger is heralded as New Zealand's first "white" woman settler, who lived with a Māori chief after her arrival in the Bay of Islands in 1806. Almost nothing written about Badger has been correct. The core of her story has been hiding in plain sight in a contemporary newspaper account that has been misinterpreted by generations of historians. Colourful fictions added by two Australian storytellers further clouded the facts. A ship's passenger list and logbook reveal Badger's much more prosaic fate and confirm she did not settle in New Zealand after all.

Charlotte Badger is said to have been New Zealand's first "white" female settler as well as Australia's first female "pirate" at the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Much of what we know about Badger, however, was invented by two Australian story tellers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>2</sup> Subsequent historical essayists have relied on these narratives to give Badger a recorded history and significance in early colonial history that is not supported by the facts.<sup>3</sup> It has been evolving research tools that have given broader access to original archival information that has enabled the events in the life of Charlotte Badger to be challenged and corrected.

Badger did arrive in New Zealand on a ship in 1806, when the region's only outside visitors were whalers and sealers who were starting to use it as a provisioning depot.<sup>4</sup> In the popularly retold Badger story, it was Badger who had led a mutiny on a ship, the *Venus*, stole its booty of supplies and led her marauding shipmates from colonial New South Wales to New Zealand's Bay of Island.<sup>5</sup> It is a story that has endowed Badger with the attributes promoted in popular culture about pirates: the swagger, the derring-do, and the romance of the seafaring outlaw. However, recent research reveals that far from being a pirate and leader of a band of renegades, there is no evidence that Badger was any more than the flotsam of a mutiny that brought her only briefly to New Zealand.

Details of Badger's story can be found in the official records of colonial New South Wales, as well as in newspaper accounts from the first decade of the nineteenth century, many of which are available now or can be identified through web-based search engines. These have enabled a reexamination of the facts of her life, which begin with why the *Venus* was making its voyage from Sydney in the first place.

By 1806, Sydney was home to just over 3000 people and was still in the early throes of shifting from a purpose-built penal settlement to a thriving colonial port town. Only about one-quarter of its inhabitants were serving convicts, while those who had completed their terms of transportation and settled made up a fair proportion of the rest.<sup>6</sup>

By contrast, Tasmania—then known as Van Diemen's Land—was still mainly populated by convicts. The outposts of Hobart and Port Dalrymple were home to just under 800 people, two-thirds of them still under sentence. This meant that nearly everyone in the two settlements, including the military, colonial administrators and settlers, was dependent on food supplied

from government stores, and by early 1806 stocks were getting alarmingly low. The colonial government based in Sydney chartered two vessels to carry supplies of salted pork and as much flour, rice and barley meal as it could spare to tide the settlements across Bass Strait over the winter. The *Venus*, which was owned by Sydney merchant Robert Campbell, was one of the vessels; the *Governor Hunter* the other.<sup>7</sup> The *Venus* set sail on 29 April 1806.<sup>8</sup> On board were two women: Charlotte Badger, who had an infant with her, and Catharine Hegarty.<sup>9</sup>

Badger was from Bromsgrove, a bustling town near Worcester in England.<sup>10</sup> She had been apprenticed by her parish at the age of 10, and it was from her employer that she stole four guineas and a Queen Anne half crown when she was about eighteen years old. She was tried and convicted of housebreaking at the Worcester Assizes in July 1796 and sentenced to seven years' transportation. Badger arrived in New South Wales on the *Earl Cornwallis* in June 1801.<sup>11</sup> Hegarty had also arrived in the colony as a convict on the *Kitty*, in 1792.<sup>12</sup>

Initially, the *Venus* only went as far as Twofold Bay on the southern New South Wales coast where it remained for nearly five weeks, held up by contrary winds. It was here that trouble started brewing on board. As well as government stores, the *Venus* was also carrying a quantity of personal goods and provisions being shipped to officers and settlers. While at anchor in the bay, some of this property was stolen. The vessel's captain, Samuel Rodman Chace, accused his first mate, an American whaler by the name of Benjamin Burnet Kelly, of breaching a cask of spirits, though Kelly denied it.<sup>13</sup>

Captain Chace's suspicions were not limited to the cargo; he began to worry about the safety of his ship itself, as well as for his own life. He was particularly concerned about the conduct of Kelly and the threat of mutiny, and he voiced his concerns to the master of the *Marcia*, also anchored in the bay.<sup>14</sup>

Kelly was sharing his quarters on board with Catharine Hegarty. When the *Venus* eventually put to sea again, Captain Chace discovered that Hegarty had thrown overboard a small wooden box of personal papers that were to be delivered to their owner, Captain Kemp, one of the military commanders at Port Dalrymple. The captain had to waste time putting the ship about to try and retrieve the box but he was not successful. Captain Chace's later account of the incident offered no explanation for Hegarty's action.<sup>15</sup>

The *Venus* reached the port in the Tamar River, on the northern coast of Tasmania, on 16 June and anchored near where the port of George Town is now sited. Soon after its arrival, Captain Chace left the brig to travel by boat upriver to deliver the official despatches he carried to Lieutenant Governor William Paterson at Yorkton (York Town). He was away from the *Venus* overnight, electing to stay on the *Governor Hunter* that had arrived three days before and was lying near the Governor's military settlement.<sup>16</sup>

When the captain returned down the river early the next morning, he was greeted with the alarming sight of his ship under sail. He reassured himself that his ship was coming up the river to meet him, but instead, some hours later, only five of his crew turned up. They had been cast out from the *Venus* by Kelly, the ship's pilot and an army corporal who was on board. The seamen told their captain that the trio had knocked down and confined the second mate and taken the brig out to sea.<sup>17</sup>

These were the facts outlined in the report provided by Captain Chace at the time of the mutiny. He had wasted no time in informing the magistrate at Yorkton about the calamity of the loss of his ship. Today, a newspaper account of Chace's report to the magistrate remains his only recorded testimony. When the news reached Sydney, Governor Philip Gidley King was outraged by Chace's "most imprudent and unjustifiable" absence from his ship that, he felt, had enabled its capture. There was a loss of £460 worth of government stores on the *Venus*, as well as the "great loss" of the personal comforts that had been heading for the officers in the two settlements. Further stores had to be immediately despatched from Sydney to Port Dalrymple and Hobart, at significant cost to the government. Captain Chace escaped further censure; Governor King felt little would be achieved by the prosecution of such a "worthless character."<sup>18</sup>

There had been less than twenty men on board the *Venus* at the time of the mutiny.<sup>19</sup> Only a handful were among the mutineers. Kelly and a "mulatto," Joseph Redmonds, had been whalers. There was ship's pilot David Evans.<sup>20</sup> John Lancashire and William Thomas Evans were both colonial-charged convicts, and Corporal Richard Thompson was Evans's guard.<sup>21</sup> Lancashire was a transported thief who had committed repeated crimes in the colony; he was being sent to Van Diemen's Land to labour on its public works.<sup>22</sup> Evans had served as a ship's gunner in His Majesty's navy but he had deserted and been sentenced to 14 years' transportation, which he was to serve within the colony.<sup>23</sup> Both Evans and his escort Corporal Thompson had been expected at the military settlement at Port Dalrymple.<sup>24</sup> The inclusion of Corporal Thompson in the group of mutineers at first may seem puzzling but a posting for an English soldier to New South Wales was neither popular nor voluntary as it took him as far from his homeland as he could get. Not only that, the posting, when he signed up, was for life.<sup>25</sup> Thompson could not be blamed for thinking that the scantily populated Van Diemen's land was just that one step further into oblivion.

These men were hardly the band of swashbuckling, treasure-seeking characters that had come to be associated with piracy after the publication of a seminal text in the early eighteenth century, one from which, much later on, *Treasure Island* would draw much of its inspiration.<sup>26</sup> Piracy in colonial Australia was a more desperate enterprise; it was a life-changing quest. Other colonial convicts transported from Britain's shores had sought to escape their fates in crafts large and small; what they were seeking was not gold bullion but their freedom. While only some of the mutineers on the *Venus* were convicts, they were all seeking control over their own destinies. Still, food was an important currency in the colony and the stocks on board the *Venus* were significant. Doubtless, their value was a major consideration to the mutineers but just as important was the provisioning they afforded a band of men—and two women—heading into an uncertain future at sea.

The idea that Badger—and for that matter, Hegarty—were escaping convicts who were among the mutineers took hold as soon as Captain Chace's report reached Sydney. A public notice published in the *Sydney Gazette* on 20 July 1806 identified Badger as such in the list of those on board who "by force and arms violently and piratically" took the *Venus*. Charlotte Badger was described as "a convict, very corpulent, with full face, thick lips, and light hair, has an infant child." Catharine Hegarty, fared slightly better: "a convict, middle-sized, light hair, fresh complexion, much inclined to smile, and hoarse voice." The notice went on to caution authorities at all of His Majesty's ports, as well as anyone in the employ of the East India Company that, if discovered, the mutineers should be immediately taken into custody.

The mutineers sailed the *Venus* across the Tasman and reached the Bay of Islands a few weeks later, it seems without incident. The *Venus* was there when the whaler *Richard and Mary* set sail from the Bay of Islands for Sydney around the beginning of July, according to a report by a local Māori, Matara, who was on board that ship.<sup>27</sup> Anne Salmond has written that Matara, the son of Te Pahi, told Joseph Banks in England in 1807 that six people had been landed from the *Venus* in the Bay of Islands, two men, two women and two children. The two women had been kept apart in their own quarters and the chiefs had declared them strongly tapu. Nobody dared approach them. Salmond suggests that as well as Badger's infant, the other child was one of the ship's boys.<sup>28</sup>

Matara's report was backed up by accounts from two whaling captains published in the Sydney press about the same time, some ten months after the *Venus* was taken at Port Dalrymple. Both Captain James Birnie, of the *Commerce*, and Captain Eber Bunker, of the *Elizabeth*, had only just returned from long whaling voyages to Port Jackson in April 1807 where they were able at last to pass on what was months-old news that both had received firsthand. Together, these reports provided the only details of what had happened to those on board the *Venus* until more information was brought back to Sydney by Reverend Samuel Marsden over seven years later.<sup>29</sup> Captain Birnie told the *Sydney Gazette* that Kelly, regarded as the ringleader of the mutiny, had left the *Venus* in the Bay of Islands, along with a convict named Lancashire, and that both men had subsequently been captured by the masters of two other vessels. Kelly, he said, had been taken by the *Britannia* and was heading back to England for trial. Lancashire had left on the *Brothers*:<sup>30</sup>

The vessel is supposed to be still wandering about the coast, as she had no navigator on board, and no possible prospect can present itself to those that remain in her, but to perish by the hands of the natives, or to fall into the hands of justice.

Birnie had obtained this news from Te Pahi, who controlled the northern end of the Bay of Islands (the so-called "northern alliance"). Te Pahi himself was based at Rangihourā Bay and it has been suggested that this bay was where Badger and the others were landed.<sup>31</sup>

Captain Bunker had further news. According to the report in the *Sydney Gazette* on 12 April 1807:

In December last capt. Bunker spoke the Indispensible, captain Turnbull, off the north end of New Zealand, and learnt that the *Venus* had but shortly left the Bay of Islands, where in addition to the above account [referring to Captain Bierney's account which prefaced Bunker's story] captain Bunker learnt, that two women and a child were put on shore with Kelly and Lancashire, together with some stores. . . . One of the women died on shore there; the other, with her child, captain Bunker offered to take on board, but she declined the proffer.

It has been correctly understood that it was Hegarty who died and Badger who survived with her child. But it is from this information that, much later, new strands of Badger's story would be embroidered that would part company from what actually had been reported in 1806 and 1807. The access provided to colonial newspaper archives by the National Library of Australia's Trove search engine has enabled the discovery of the original sources of much of the more colourful elements of Badger's story.

A significant contribution to what would become an emerging mythology of Charlotte Badger came in 1895 when an "Old Colonial Story," appeared in the *Sydney Evening News* detailing

the events of the mutiny on the *Venus*.<sup>32</sup> It was surprisingly detailed about the interaction on board the ship between Captain Chace and the mutineers in Twofold Bay:

Captain Chace had been ashore, and about dusk was returning in his boat to the ship, when he heard sounds of great hilarity proceeding from those on board. On coming alongside and gaining the deck he found that the two convict ladies were entertaining Mr Kelly, the mate, with a dancing exhibition, the musical accompaniment to which was given by Darra, the earless Malayan cook, who was seated on a tub on the main hatch. Lying around the deck in various stages of drunkenness were the made [sic] convicts and some of the crew, and Mr Kelly presided over a bucket of rum, pannikins of which were offered to the ladies at frequent intervals.

Badger and Hegarty later joined the mutineers, he wrote, “all of whom were armed with pistols and swords.”

The author wrote that in the Bay of Islands Kelly invited local Māori chiefs on board the vessel and cracked open a keg of rum from which all partook in a drunken orgy. He wrote that “Kitty” Hegarty had died when Kelly was away with a Māori war party, allegedly killed by some of the local Māori women, one of whom was anxious to gain Kelly’s affections for herself. “Kelly, Kitty Hegarty, Charlotte Badger, Thompson, and two others, lived among the natives some time,” the story continued:

Of the other woman—Charlotte Badger—and her child nothing was known, save that in 1808 she and the child were offered a passage to Port Jackson by Captain Bunker, but declined, saying she would rather live with the Maoris than return to New South Wales to be hung.

The author then went into considerable detail about the visit by the American whaler *Lafayette*, of Salem, Massachusetts, to a small rocky island of Pylstaart (now Ata) in the Tongan group in May 1826. There, its Captain Barthing had encountered a man who could speak English and who told the Americans that another ship had visited the island 10 years before. On board had been a “very big stout woman with a little girl about eight years of age with her.” The islander had been told by the ship’s crew that she was an English woman who had escaped from captivity by Māori. “No doubt this was the woman Badger described in the official account of the mutiny of the *Venus* as ‘a very corpulent person.’”

It is the amount of detail in the narrative that begs the question of its plausibility. Where would such information have been recorded in the first instance to be accessed by this author nearly ninety years later? Not only that but the 1895 newspaper account also reeks of sensationalism and has been largely ignored by modern historians, but much of it managed to find its way into Badger’s entry in the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* in 1990.<sup>33</sup> And the story did make one key contribution to the Badger mythology that has endured. The story launched the possibility of Badger’s rescue; that she had escaped from New Zealand to go off with a Nantucket whaling captain. The problem with this thesis is that there is no record of a ship called the *Lafayette* in the Pacific in the 1820s. There was no Nantucket whaling captain named Barthing.<sup>34</sup> The author had penned his piece under the alias of “Te Matan” but was later revealed to be well known colonial author Louis Becke who published the same story in a compendium of Pacific tales a few years later.<sup>35</sup> He was a writer known for embellishing yarns and beguiling his readers with a seamless mix of fact and fiction. Island trader Alfred Restieaux (1832–1911), who knew Becke as a first rate fellow, wrote: “I believe most of his stories are

founded on facts. Some of them however have a very small foundation, but he writes his stories to sell and the public does not care for the bare facts, they want to be amused.”<sup>36</sup>

Becke’s take on the Badger story was then aided and abetted by another writer with a similarly inventive bent. In 1937, Roy Alexander, in a story in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, added that Badger had been the architect of the mutiny on the *Venus* and even led the uprising with an assault on Captain Chace.<sup>37</sup> He wrote that when Captain Chace had returned to his ship in Twofold Bay he was so incensed by the party in progress on board he, with the help of his crew, thrashed Kelly and the two women, and put them in irons:

Charlotte wanted revenge for this treatment, besides which she had no desire to spend the rest of her life as an unpaid servant in the new colony, so she formed her plans for capturing the ship with the help of the mate as the *Venus* sailed down the coast. . . . Led by Charlotte Badger, the mutineers forced the crew and the remaining prisoners into the ship’s boat, Charlotte herself thrashing the captain off his own ship and then cutting the boat adrift.

It was Alexander who made the groundless claim that the mutineers on the *Venus* had committed a further act of piracy by attacking another ship before it left the coast of Van Diemen’s Land, commandeering its weapons and supplies. It was a claim that would later contribute to Badger’s description as Australia’s first female pirate.<sup>38</sup> He also repeated Becke’s story that Badger had later reached Tonga on an American whaler, adding that she had lived with Māori for twelve years and was fluent in their language by the time she left New Zealand. Alexander also wrote that the *Lafayette*’s captain had relayed his Tongan tale when the ship docked in Sydney. Except that no such ship had visited New South Wales. Still, these two stories by Becke and Alexander provided source material for some of the future chroniclers of Badger’s life.

Both accounts were in stark contrast to the only contemporaneous account of the mutiny that had been provided by Captain Chace in 1806, an account in which Charlotte Badger featured not at all. If she was a participant in drunken revels that took place on the vessel, it can only be informed speculation. As for her active role in the mutiny itself, her blandishment of a weapon and her assault on the captain; these were all fictions added later by Becke and Alexander.

One of the other misleading tangents to Badger’s story appeared fifteen years after Chace’s published report when, in 1821, an English soldier testified in Sydney at a commission of enquiry into the state of the colony. Ensign Alexander McCrae of the 84th Regiment spoke of his visit to the Bay of Islands with Reverend Samuel Marsden in the *Dromedary* the year before. When asked if there were many runaway convicts living in New Zealand, McCrae replied he had only heard of one woman, “who had been there several years, and lived with one of the inferior chiefs.”<sup>39</sup> Much later, this testimony would be built into Badger’s story and become part of Badger settler lore.<sup>40</sup>

But these accounts are only part of the wider problem of Badger’s reported history: much of it is not true, even down to the simplest of details. For a start, Charlotte Badger was no longer a serving convict when she boarded the *Venus*. The tragedy for many women convicted to transportation beyond the seas is that they often spent large portions of their sentences in English gaol cells waiting for a place on a transport ship. Such was the case with Badger, so that by the time she landed in New South Wales from the *Earl Cornwallis*, in 1801, she only had just over two years of her sentence left to serve. She completed her sentence of

transportation on 11 June 1803.<sup>41</sup> Nor was she a London pickpocket; that was another invention of Alexander's.

Hegarty was also no longer a convict. After her arrival in the colony, she had gone to live with Judge-Advocate Richard Atkins who was the father of at least one of her children, and it was probably he who organised an absolute pardon for her in 1800. Even convicts who had completed their sentences applied for colonial pardons to ensure there would be no question around their legal status if they returned to England. Hegarty did return to England in 1800, but in 1803 her ten-year-old son was given permission to travel again to New South Wales to join his father, and it seems she either accompanied him back to the colony or came out later on her own.<sup>42</sup>

Despite the fact that both women were emancipated by the time they boarded the *Venus*, Badger and Hegarty were both described as convicts in newspaper notices following the mutiny.<sup>43</sup>

New South Wales operated like an open prison during this period; the labour of convicts was too valuable to lock away. Instead, arriving women were assigned to settlers and the military as domestic servants and, while they waited for positions, many of the women were housed and put to work as weavers in two rooms above the gaol in Parramatta that became known as the Factory. Primarily serving as a holding pen, the Factory also served as a place of punishment where assigned women could be returned because of bad behaviour or petty crime. It was the idea that Badger and Hegarty were still convicts when they boarded the *Venus* that led to the later supposition that the two women were friends who had met in the Factory and that Badger had had her child there. Badger and Hegarty were then assigned to work for a settler in Van Diemen's Land and that was why they were on the vessel. These ideas became part of Badger's official biography.<sup>44</sup> No records survive for the Factory for the first decade of the nineteenth century, but magistrate's court records do survive. There is no evidence that Badger committed any misdemeanours in the colony in that period; for that matter there is also nothing to suggest Hegarty did. Without a conviction, there was no reason why Badger would have been in the Factory before she went on board the *Venus*. The suggestions that she and Hegarty were already friends before they set sail and were destined for assignment across Bass Strait were further strands of the story penned by Alexander. As a free person, Badger would not have been subject to assignment in Van Diemen's Land. All of this was speculation that somehow became fact.

Why the two women were on the *Venus* remains unknown. They may have been going to take up positions in domestic service in Van Diemen's Land, as freely employed servants, or going to join men there. What is just as likely is that both women were living with men either in Sydney or Parramatta or the Hawkesbury, and that they accompanied these men onto the *Venus*. Since Hegarty was reported with Kelly on the passage—Chace used the word “cohabited”—she could easily have known him before. Another assertion—that Badger was the partner of Lancashire—that appeared in the 1960s seems to have been assumed since they were both said to have been landed from the *Venus* in the Bay of Islands.<sup>45</sup> However, if Lancashire did disembark from the vessel it could have been for a number of reasons, the most obvious being that he fell out with the rest of the mutineers. As well as that, he appeared to have had another paramour back in Sydney, a woman named Margaret Silk whose husband had been sent to Norfolk Island.<sup>46</sup>

The next clue about what really happened to Charlotte Badger is hidden in plain sight in the newspaper report from Captain Bunker in April 1807. It is a fate far more prosaic than the various histories of her afford. The mistake that later chroniclers made was to assume that Bunker met Badger in the Bay of Islands. Robert McNab was the first to posit in 1914 that Bunker was in the Bay of Islands in December 1806.<sup>47</sup> However, what Bunker reported was that he had taken his ship to the fishing ground off New Zealand, as confirmed by shipping records in Sydney; he did not say he had visited the country itself.<sup>48</sup> Instead, Bunker had “spoken” to the captain of the *Indispensible* at sea, using the long metal speaking trumpet that afforded mariners an effective means to communicate across the water. In the newspaper account, Bunker was relaying the information he had obtained from Captain Turnbull in this manner. It was the *Indispensible* that had visited New Zealand and picked up Badger and she was on that vessel when Bunker spoke to Turnbull, when Bunker offered to take Badger instead to Sydney and she had declined him.

Another record provides irrefutable confirmation that Badger was on the *Indispensible*. It is a passenger list that is among papers relating to the early years of Norfolk Island and is located in the New South Wales State Archives. Archivist Bridget O’Reilly says the fragile condition of the list has rendered its text so faint that it is no longer decipherable. Luckily, it was captured on microfilm when it was still just readable. The record’s existence has since been included in the online Biographical Database of Australia.<sup>49</sup>

A year after the mutiny, on 17 June 1807, the Norfolk Island governor Lieutenant Captain John Piper (later of Piper’s Point in Sydney) signed a brief list of passengers who would be returning from the island to Sydney in the government brig *HMS Porpoise*. The list included the name of Charlotte Badger, with the added remark “Brought from New Zealand in the *Indispensible* and is one of the women who was in the *Venus* Schooner when ran away with from P. Dalrymple.” Badger boarded the *Porpoise* on the afternoon of 19 June and the ship sailed from Norfolk Island two days later.<sup>50</sup> It reached Sydney on 13 July 1807.<sup>51</sup>

Badger’s presence on the *Indispensible* couldn’t have been made clearer. At some point after its exchange with Captain Bunker on the *Elizabeth*, the *Indispensible* delivered Badger to Norfolk Island. The only surviving record of the *Indispensible* visiting the island was earlier, at the end of its five-month voyage from England, when it stopped over at Norfolk on its way to the southern whaling grounds; the *Indispensible* was there on 10 October 1806.<sup>52</sup> No record of when the *Indispensible* returned there has been found to date; official lists of ships’ arrivals and departures from Norfolk Island do not exist. And while there is a rich repository of logbooks from early whaling ships in research institutions around the globe, the logbook for the *Indispensible* for this period does not appear to be among them.

Bunker had said that it was December 1806 when he spoke to the *Indispensible* north of New Zealand, when he was told by its captain that “the *Venus* had but shortly left the Bay of Islands,” and it follows that for the *Indispensible*’s captain to have known this, his ship had been in New Zealand at the same time as the *Venus*, in late October or November. This was when the *Indispensible* had picked up Badger. The *Venus* had to have sailed from the Bay of Islands before Bunker spoke to Turnbull on the *Indispensible*, which means, at the very most, Badger could have spent five months in New Zealand. It is probable she spent a considerable period of time on board the *Indispensible*; the whaler was unlikely to have wasted valuable weeks returning to Norfolk Island to deliver a stranded woman so soon after its arrival in the

whaling grounds; its pursuit of a cargo of whale oil and bone would have been a far more important concern.<sup>53</sup> We know only that Badger had reached Norfolk Island by June 1807.

What is certain is that, by the end of 1806, Badger was not in the Bay of Islands living with Lancashire or settling into the whare of a local Māori chief there. This makes a nonsense of the oft-repeated claim, first put forward by Becke, that Badger told Bunker she would rather stay with Māori than return to Sydney, quite apart from the fact that Bunker had reported nothing of the sort.<sup>54</sup>

There are no surviving records of Charlotte Badger in the first few years after she arrived back in Sydney. Then, in 1811, she appears in Sydney marrying a soldier, Private Thomas Humphries. She was described as a spinster in the marriage register at St Philips Church on 4 June. Humphries was with the Royal Veteran Company, which was made up of those British soldiers who were either unfit for active service but who could manage guard duty or who had elected to stay on in the colony after their tour of duty was officially over.<sup>55</sup> He had arrived in New South Wales as an army private in 1808 on the *Recovery* and was about sixty years old when he married Badger; she was in her early thirties.<sup>56</sup>

Badger features in the New South Wales population musters of 1811 and 1814. In the latter muster, she is shown as “free” with one child, married to a veteran and living in Parramatta on the stores provided to army personnel and their families.<sup>57</sup> It is likely this child in 1814 was the girl who appeared in musters in the next decade. Badger was in Windsor in 1824 and in Parramatta in 1825, still married to Humphries. In both years she was shown with a daughter named Maria, whose age was given as 10 in 1825.<sup>58</sup> Nothing more has yet been found about Maria. No birth records have been located for any child of Badger’s in the colony.<sup>59</sup> As well as no birth record, no further record of Maria has been located in New South Wales.

Nor has any record been found of the death of Badger’s first child who was with her on the *Venus*. If the infant reached Norfolk Island with her, it appears he or she did not leave again. The presiding church minister left Norfolk Island before Badger arrived there and no burial records exist after April 1806 until the island was resettled years later. There was no mention of a child in the *Porpoise*’s passenger list when it sailed from Norfolk Island and there was nothing about a child boarding the *Porpoise* in the ship’s log, though the boarding of a woman was recorded. However, this is not definitive: children were often omitted from ships’ passenger lists in the early colonial area.

What is interesting among what records that have survived—and they are fairly wide-ranging, if not complete—is that there was no contemporary public commentary on the return of Charlotte Badger to New South Wales. There was nothing in the published official correspondence; no court records to suggest she was prosecuted; no immediate news in the press of her return. (Six weeks later the *Sydney Gazette* suspended publication for nearly nine months.) Most tellingly, she returned to Sydney as a passenger, not a prisoner, on the *Porpoise*, which was a government vessel. This leads to the conclusion that, despite the colonial government’s threats of punishment following the mutiny, no action was taken against her for any role in it. It seems, in the end, she was seen as much a victim of the mutiny as Captain Chace.

Thomas Humphries left the Royal Veteran Company in 1822 around the time it was disbanded. His eligibility for a soldier’s grant of 100 acres in the colony elevated he and his wife to the

status of landowners, something that would never have been possible for either of them had they never left England.<sup>60</sup> In 1825, though, the couple were living apart. Badger was in Parramatta and her husband was living on an army pension in Sydney.<sup>61</sup> It is possible Badger had been sent for a brief period to the Factory in Parramatta as the result of a petty crime in the colony but no record of this has been located. In the first comprehensive census taken in the colony, in 1828, Badger's name cannot be found; nor can that of her husband.

The couple were together at least in New South Wales on 5 July 1843, when Badger stood before the judge in the Windsor court house in the Hawkesbury, accused of stealing a blanket from one Jane Oliver a few months earlier. Humphries, described as a householder, together with a local carpenter and a cabinetmaker, stood sureties for his wife. The charge against her was dismissed.<sup>62</sup> Badger by this time was in her mid-sixties. If it was the same man—and likely it was—an army pensioner named Thomas Humphries died in Windsor on Christmas Day that year; he was ninety-two years old.<sup>63</sup>

Beyond that, nothing more is known with any certainty about Charlotte Badger and her colonial family. What is known is that she did not settle in New Zealand, though she and Catharine Hegarty were the first European females known to have set foot in the Bay of Islands and stay, if just for a brief time, under the protection of Māori at the turn of the nineteenth century. There is also no evidence to support her active role in the mutiny on the *Venus*, let alone her later accolade of “pirate.” Generations of writers and researchers, many unwittingly, have contributed to the myth of Charlotte Badger. Her story as it has unfolded since Becke's 1895 account, in particular, begs the question today of what is a reliable source of historical information. Now, with greater access to archival content and old texts through online search engines, though they are far from representative of the full historical oeuvre both published and unpublished, historians have more resources than ever before to locate, test, challenge and confirm factual information that is in circulation, and in the case of Charlotte Badger, to address the inaccuracies in earlier interpretations of her history.

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<sup>1</sup> Pirate was used to describe Charlotte Badger in commentary at the time and later. While a broader discourse on that practice is not the purpose of this paper, it is acknowledged that modern scholars have challenged the fictional and cultural representations of piracy within examinations of the historical reality and empire-building context of colonial-era piracy. See Gabriel Kuhn, *Life Under the Jolly Roger: Reflections on Golden Age Piracy* (California: PM Press, 2010); Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Louis Becke, *Sydney Evening News*, 23 November 1895, 3; Roy Alexander, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 October 1937, 21.

<sup>3</sup> James Belich, *Making Peoples* (Auckland: Allen Lane, Penguin, 1996), 132–33; , Anne Salmond, *Between Worlds, Early Exchanges Between Māori and Europeans 1773–1815* (University of Hawaii, 1997), 361; Trevor Bentley, *Captured by Māori* (Auckland: Penguin, 2004), 26–38; Vincent O'Malley, *The Meeting Place, Māori and Pakeha Encounters, 1642–1840* (Auckland University Press, 2012), 161; Bill Beatty, *A Treasury of Australian Folk Tales & Traditions* (London: Edmund Ward, 1960), 165–68.

<sup>4</sup> *Sydney Gazette*, 12 April 1807, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Belich, *Making Peoples*, 132–33; Bentley, *Captured*, 26–27; Beatty, *Treasury*, 165–68.

<sup>6</sup> Frederick Watson, ed., *Historical Records of Australia [HRA]*, series 1, vol. 5 (Australia: Parliament Library Committee, 1915), 613–15.

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<sup>7</sup> *HRA*, series 1, vol. 5, 753; *HRA*, series 3, vol. 1 (Australia: Parliament Library Committee, 1921), 660–61.

<sup>8</sup> *HRA*, series 1, vol. 5, 768.

<sup>9</sup> F. M. Bladen, ed., *Historical Records of New South Wales [HRNSW]*, vol. 6 (NSW Government Printer, 1898), 98; *Sydney Gazette*, 20 July 1806, 1.

<sup>10</sup> “Charlotte Badger in the England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538-1975,” [www.ancestry.com.au](http://www.ancestry.com.au). Badger’s baptismal date is identified here as 31 July 1778. Cited from *England, Births and Christenings, 1538-1975* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Family Search, 2013). It is not confirmed but assumed this is the correct entry since she was only person by that name shown in the church records in the relevant time period, and Bromsgrove was where she worked and committed her crime.

<sup>11</sup> *Gloucester Journal*, 18 July 1796, 3; “Charlotte Badger in the Australian Convict Transportation Registers – Other Fleets & Ships, 1791-1868”, *Earl Cornwallis*, August 1800, [www.ancestry.com.au](http://www.ancestry.com.au). Cited from *Home Office: Convict Transportation Registers*, The National Archives, Kew, HO 11/1; Ian Duffield, “‘Haul Away the Anchor Girls’: Charlotte Badger, Tall Stories and the Pirates of the ‘Bad Ship *Venus*,” *Journal of Australian Colonial History* 7 (2005): 39.

<sup>12</sup> Portia Robinson, *The Women of Botany Bay* (Sydney: Macquarie Library, 1988), 333.

<sup>13</sup> *HRA*, series 3, vol. 1, 660–6–61; *Sydney Gazette*, 13 July 1806, 4.

<sup>14</sup> *Sydney Gazette*, 13 July 1806, 4.

<sup>15</sup> *Sydney Gazette*, 13 July 1806, 4. The only other report of this incident was given in a despatch from Lieutenant Governor Paterson to Governor King. Paterson wrote that he “learned by Accident that a Box of Letters had been opened and thrown overboard...when I asked the Master if what I had heard was true, he said it was.” *HRA*, series 3, vol. 1, p. 660. This was later misquoted by Duffield as Paterson “learnt that by Accident a Box of Letters had been thrown overboard.” In the same paper, the author wrote that this box had been retrieved from the sea by Captain Chace, which did not happen. Duffield, p. 57.

<sup>16</sup> *Sydney Gazette*, 13 July 1806, 4.

<sup>17</sup> *Sydney Gazette*, 13 July 1806, 4.

<sup>18</sup> *HRA*, series 1, vol. 5, 753; Series 3, vol. 1, 494.

<sup>19</sup> *HRNSW*, vol. 6, 126. The report mentions a crew of 14 but it is not clear if the convict guard Richard Thompson and the two male convicts were included in that number.

<sup>20</sup> The existence of David Evans and his role of pilot on the ship depends on a newspaper report of Captain Chace’s account, in which Chace named Evans as one of the ringleaders. However, Evans was not named in a list of the mutineers at the end of the newspaper article. There is no other surviving record of David Evans in the colony. Also, David Evans, the pilot, subsequently has been confused with the convict William Evans, a navy gunner, by later writers.

<sup>21</sup> *Sydney Gazette*, 20 July 1806, 1.

<sup>22</sup> “William John Lancashire in the Proceedings of the Old Bailey,” 6 April 1796,

[www.oldbaileyonline.org](http://www.oldbaileyonline.org);

William John Lancashire in the Australian Convict Transportation Registers—Other Fleets & Ships, 1791-1868,” *Barwell*, September 1797, [www.ancestry.com.au](http://www.ancestry.com.au). Cited from *Home Office: Convict Transportation Registers*, The National Archives, Kew, HO 11/1 (he was recorded in the England & Wales Criminal Register as John Willm Lancashire, a 22-year-old herald painter originally from Bath, [www.ancestry.com.au](http://www.ancestry.com.au). Cited from Home Office: Criminal Registers, Middlesex, The National Archives, Kew, HO 26/5/50); John Lancashire, NSW State Archives & Records, Criminal Court Records Index 1788–1833 (1 April 1802, 30 September 1802, 4 and 8 January 1806), Bench of Magistrates Index, 1788–1820 (24 October 1798, 3 November 1801, 17 July 1802, 16 July 1803 and 5 April 1806). Transportation followed his final conviction, Reel 656,39 (where he is recorded as James in the online index) [www.records.nsw.gov.au](http://www.records.nsw.gov.au); *Sydney Gazette*, 24 July 1803, 2; *Sydney Gazette*, 31 July 1803, 3; *Sydney Gazette*, 29 December 1805, 2; *Sydney Gazette*, 12 January 1806, 1; *Sydney Gazette*, 6 April 1806, 4; P. G. King, State Library of New South Wales, King family correspondence, vol. 8, 1775–1806, Memo re: J. W. Lancashire [1805], 138.

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<sup>23</sup> *HRNSW*, vol. 6, 98; *Sydney Gazette*, 26 February 1804, 1; *Sydney Gazette*, 1 April 1804, 2; *Sydney Gazette*, 20 January 1805, 2; *Sydney Gazette*, 20 July 1806, 1. In the last notice in the Sydney newspaper, convict William Thomas Evans was incorrectly named as Richard Thomas Evans. He was named as R—T—E in the public notice published in the *HRNSW*.

<sup>24</sup> *HRNSW*, vol. 6, 99.

<sup>25</sup> J. W. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army*, vol. 5 (London, 1923), 302.

<sup>26</sup> Harold Francis Watson, *Coasts of Treasure Island: A Study of the Backgrounds and Sources for R. L. Stevenson's Romance of the Sea* (San Antonio, Texas: Naylor Co, 1969) 150–56.

<sup>27</sup> *Sydney Gazette*, 16 July 1806, 3.

<sup>28</sup> Salmond, 360. One of the ship's boys was named a "a native of this colony" in the public notice of the mutiny in the *Sydney Gazette* (13 July 1806), but that did not mean he was Aboriginal. It was a term used in that period to describe someone who was born in the colony, as opposed to the settlers and convicts who had arrived on ships.

<sup>29</sup> Reverend Samuel Marsden reported on the fate of the *Venus* after he made his first visit to New Zealand in the *Active* at the end of 1814. After sailing into "Bream Cove" for fresh supplies of water, Marsden learned from Māori there that the *Venus*, on its way down the New Zealand coastline, had also called into in what is now known as Whangarei Harbour and had taken two women, one from the Bay of Islands and the other from Bream Cove. The *Venus* had then sailed on to the Firth of Thames where local chief Te Haupa and one of his daughters went on board the vessel. The ship's crew tried to shanghai them too, setting the sails to leave, but the chief was able to jump overboard and reach his canoe. His daughter remained a captive on the ship. "Such are the horrid crimes which Europeans, who bear the Christian name, commit upon the savage nations," Marsden wrote in his journal. See Robert McNab, ed., *Historical Records of New Zealand [HRNZ]*, vol. 1 (Wellington, 1908), 378–79.

In May 1808, the *Sydney Gazette* referred to the *Venus* as "last seen upon the coast of New Zealand, in a distressed condition, and has never since been heard of." It was over 100 years later that Robert McNab wrote that a colonial schooner, *Mercury*, had visited New Zealand (presumably in the early years after the mutiny) and learned that the *Venus* had been taken by Māori, who killed and ate her crew and burnt the vessel's hull to retrieve the iron. McNab was known for his painstaking research of primary sources, but it is not evident where he obtained this account which has been often quoted since. *Sydney Gazette*, 29 May 1808, 2; Robert McNab, *From Tasman to Marsden*, (Dunedin: J. Wilkie & Co., 1914), 112.

In 1955, Professor Eugenio Sarlas, of the University of Chile, in Santiago, published findings based on records he had located in files in the National Archives of Chile that recorded the visit of a vessel of the same dimensions as the Robert Campbell-owned *Venus*. It was captained by Benjamin Kelly "of New York" and was flying an American pennant. In January 1807, it had sailed into Talcahuano, the port of Concepcion, where Kelly told the port authorities he had come across the Pacific from Sydney's Port Jackson (Eugenio Sarlas, *Los Primeros Contactos entre Chile y los Estados Unidos 1778–1809* [Santiago: Andrés Bello, 1971], 253). Salas's original paper is "Las Primeras Relaciones entre Chile y Australia," *Boletín de la Academia Chilena de la Historia* 53 (1955), quoted by C. W. Vennell, *The Brown Frontier* (Wellington: A.H. & A. W. Reed, 1967), 15–27.

<sup>30</sup> *Sydney Gazette*, 12 April 1807, 1. Other than Birnie's report about Kelly and Lancashire being captured, there is no further record of them being returned to New South Wales or England for trial.

<sup>31</sup> Tony Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2014), 62–63; Bentley, *Captured*, 26.

<sup>32</sup> *Sydney Evening News*, 23 November 1895, 3.

<sup>33</sup> Mary Louise Ormsby, "Badger, Charlotte fl. 1806–1808," *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. 1 (Wellington, 1990); also at <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1b1/badger-charlotte>.

<sup>34</sup> While American shipping records are not complete for this period, there is no evidence that a ship named *Lafayette* visited the South Pacific around this time. No ship by that name visited Port Jackson. Though it could be based on a woman other than Charlotte Badger, all indications are that this section of Becke's story was entirely fictional.

<sup>35</sup> Louis Becke, *Ridan the Devil and Other Stories* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1899).

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<sup>36</sup> James A. Mitchener and A. Grove Day, “Louis Becke Adventurer and Writer,” *Rascals in Paradise* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1957); Jane Resture, The Alfred Restieaux Manuscripts Part II, [www.janeresture.com](http://www.janeresture.com)

<sup>37</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 October 1937, 21.

<sup>38</sup> Belich, *Making Peoples*, 133; Beatty, *Treasury*, 165–68.

<sup>39</sup> *HRNZ*, vol. 1, 542.

<sup>40</sup> Belich, *Making Peoples*, 133; Salmond, *Between Worlds*, 361; Bentley, *Captured*, 30–38; O’Malley, *Meeting Place*, 161.

<sup>41</sup> Convict Transportation Register, *Earl Cornwallis*, [www.ancestry.com.au](http://www.ancestry.com.au).

<sup>42</sup> Alan Atkinson, “Richard Atkins: The Women’s Judge,” *Journal of Australian Colonial History* 1, no. 1 (1999): 122–23.

<sup>43</sup> *Sydney Gazette*, 13 July 1806, 4; *Sydney Gazette* 20 July, 1806, 1.

<sup>44</sup> Ormsby, “Badger.”

<sup>45</sup> Vennell, *Brown Frontier*, 22. Vennell first published some of his story in the *New Zealand Herald* in 1956.

<sup>46</sup> *Sydney Gazette*, 29 December 1805, 2; *Sydney Gazette*, 12 January 1806, 1; *Sydney Gazette*, 23 March 1806, 4. Margaret Silk arrived free in Sydney with her convict husband William Silk on the *Britannia* in 1797.

<sup>47</sup> McNab, *From Tasman to Marsden*, 110.

<sup>48</sup> “Report of Ships and Vessels Port Jackson, from 1 January to 30 June 1807,” *HRA*, series 1, vol. 6 (Australia: Parliamentary Library Committee, 1916), 192.

Confusingly, there was a brig called the *Elizabeth* in the Bay of Islands in April 1807, but it was not Bunker’s vessel. It had sailed from Sydney on the last day of February bound for Tahiti and it stopped in New Zealand for some repairs and to obtain fresh provisions, according to a missionary, Gregory Warner, who was on board. In a letter written from the Bay of Islands, he wrote that he was expecting the ship to set sail again on 12 April. “Religious Intelligence,” *The Evangelical Magazine* 20 (London: 1812).

<sup>49</sup> “Charlotte Badger, Arrivals and Departures NSW 1788–1825,” Society of Australian Genealogists, 2011, Sydney; Repository: SRNSW reel 763, 4/11681, p. 77. Cited from [www.bda-online.org.au](http://www.bda-online.org.au).

<sup>50</sup> Captain’s log, *Porpoise*, The National Archives, Kew, ADM 51/4487.

<sup>51</sup> *Porpoise* passenger list, NSW State Archives, Norfolk Island Letters, papers and returns 1807–13, NSW SA 4/1168a 77, Reel 763.

<sup>52</sup> *Sydney Gazette*, 26 October 1806, 1; *Lloyd’s List*, London, No. 4053, 16 May 1806.

<sup>53</sup> It is not possible that the *Indispensible* took Badger to Norfolk Island in early October 1806. There was not enough time for that ship to have sailed from England to New Zealand and then back to Norfolk by 10 October, and in any case, Bunker—who spoke to Badger on the *Indispensible*—did not leave Sydney in the *Elizabeth* until 11 October 1806: see *Sydney Gazette*, 12 October 1806, 1.

<sup>54</sup> Becke, *Sydney Gazette*, 23 November 1895, 3; Ormsby, “Bunker”; Bentley, *Captured*, 30; O’Malley, *Meeting Place*, 161.

<sup>55</sup> Marriage Register, St Philips Church, Sydney, 4 June 1811 (bride recorded as Charlotte Badgery; Humphries recorded as “Private Invalid Company”). Cited from [www.bda-online.org.au](http://www.bda-online.org.au); “Thomas Humphries and Charlotte Badgery in the Return of Marriages, St Phillips (sic), Sydney, 1 January to 30 September 1811.” Cited from State Records Authority of New South Wales, Kingswood, *Main Series of Letters Received 1788–1825*; Series NRS 898 Reels 6020–6040, 6070 Fiche 3260–3312.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Humphries, *Colonial Regiment—New Sources relating to the New South Wales Corps—1789–1810*, ed. Pamela Statham (Canberra: ANU Tech, 1992), [www.bda-online.org.au](http://www.bda-online.org.au).

<sup>57</sup> “Charlotte Badger in the NSW Census and Population Books 1811–1825”, 1811, 1814, [www.ancestry.com.au](http://www.ancestry.com.au). Cited from the State Records Authority of New South Wales, Kingswood, *Population musters, Dependent settlements*; Series NRS 1260 Reel 1252 (in online index under Chas Badger in 1814).

<sup>58</sup> “Charlotte Badger in the NSW Census and Population Books 1811–1825”, 1824, [www.ancestry.com.au](http://www.ancestry.com.au). Cited from the State Records Authority of New South Wales; Kingswood, *Population musters, Dependent settlements*; Series NRS 1261 Reel 1254 (in online index

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under Bodger); “Charlotte Badger in the New South Wales and Tasmania, Australia Convict Musters, 1806-1849”, 1825, [www.ancestry.com.au](http://www.ancestry.com.au). Cited from *Settlers and Convicts, New South Wales and Tasmania*, The National Archives, Kew, London, HO10/19.

<sup>59</sup> Despite the absence of a baptismal record, Badger’s child was given the name Ann in the novel *Charlotte Badger Buccaneer* by Angela Badger in 2002. This was a fictional device of the author, but has been since requoted elsewhere as fact.

<sup>60</sup> “Thomas Humphries in the NSW Colonial Secretary’s Papers 1788–1825”, 3 November 1823 [www.ancestry.com.au](http://www.ancestry.com.au). Cited from the State Records Authority of New South Wales, Kingswood, *Main Series of Letters Received, 1788–1825*; Series NRS 898 Reels 6020-6040, 6070 Fiche 3260-3312.

<sup>61</sup> “Charlotte Badger and Thomas Humphries in the New South Wales and Tasmania, Australia Convict Musters, 1806–1849,” 1825, [www.ancestry.com.au](http://www.ancestry.com.au).

<sup>62</sup> “Charlotte Humphries in the NSW Criminal Court Records 1830–1945”, 13 May 1843, [www.ancestry.com.au](http://www.ancestry.com.au). Cited from the State Records Authority of New South Wales, Kingswood, *Clerk of the Peace: Registers of Criminal Cases Tried at Country Quarter Sessions: Parramatta: 1839–1876, Windsor 1839–1843*; Series 848 Reel 2757 (her transport ship was named in the court record as *Marquis Cornwallis*); *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 July 1843, 2 (she was misreported as Charles Humphreys).

<sup>63</sup> Burial register, St Matthews Church, Windsor, 27 December 1843 [www.bda-online.org.au](http://www.bda-online.org.au).