

**AUSTRALIAN JOINT COPYING PROJECT**

**JOHN GRANT**

**Papers, 1769-1810**

**Reel M462**

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Marden, Kent**

**National Library of Australia  
State Library of New South Wales**

**Filmed: 1956**

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

John Grant (b. 1776) was born in Longley, Buckinghamshire, and educated at Christ's hospital, London. In 1791 he was apprenticed to his uncle, a London clockmaker. He later worked as a clerk in an import company, Duval & Co, and later formed his own import company in partnership with William Deeks. The company went bankrupt in 1802, owing to the loss of cargoes at sea. His illegitimate daughter was born in 1803.

Several years earlier, Grant had fallen in love with Anna Maria Ward, the daughter of Viscount Dudley and Ward. In 1799 he was charged with harassing Anna Maria and her mother and was bound over to keep the peace. In 1803 he was imprisoned in Clerkenwell Prison for 'having terrorised Miss Ward and Lady Dudley'. Subsequently he fired a pistol at the family's solicitor, Spencer Townsend, and although Townsend was unhurt Grant was charged with attempted murder. He was sentenced to death, but shortly before the time of execution, the sentence was commuted to transportation. He left England on the *Coromandel* in December 1803 and arrived in Sydney in May 1804.

Grant worked on a farm at Parramatta under relatively easy conditions and formed a friendship with another gentleman convict, Sir Henry Hayes. While living in Sydney he began writing verse and he wrote a number of odes on the King's Birthday over the next five years. He was given a conditional pardon in February 1805. However, he could not reconcile himself to his position in a penal colony. In letters he attacked Governor King for his lack of justice. He was transferred to Norfolk Island in May 1805, where he proceeded to denounce Captain John Piper. In October 1805 he drafted a prisoner's manifesto, entitled 'Bond of Union', calling for a government of men of integrity, as well as freedom of the press, trial by jury and other reforms. In 1806 he was banished to Phillip Island for four months and living in near isolation his health deteriorated rapidly. By 1808 most of the convicts had been removed from Norfolk Island and Grant settled briefly at Hobart, before returning to Sydney. He joined Hayes at his home 'Vaucluse' and renewed his friendships with Simeon Lord, James Williamson and the artist John Lewin. Testimonials in Grant's favour were sent to Governor Bligh and his successor Governor Macquarie and the latter granted him a full pardon in 1810. He returned to England in 1811 and became a merchant in Margate in Kent. He married a widow in 1818, but she died a year later. The date of Grant's death is not known.

The papers of John Grant, which were discovered by W.S. Hill-Reid in Lloyd's Bank in London, are now held in the National Library of Australia. (MS 737)

### Sources:

W.S. Hill-Reid. *John Grant's journey: a convict's story*, London, Heinemann, 1957

Yvonne Cramer. *This beautiful, wicked place: letters and journals of John Grant, gentleman convict*, Canberra, National Library of Australia, 2000

## JOHN GRANT

### Reel M462

Note: The documents were filmed from right to left on the reel, with the title page and list appearing at the end of the reel. The quality of the microfilm is generally poor. Readers should note that many of the documents are reproduced in the book by Yvonne Cramer.

### Correspondence and other documents, 1769-1810

1. Certificate of freedom of the city of London granted to Edward Grant, 3 July 1769.
2. Indenture of apprenticeship of John Grant, late of Langley, Buckinghamshire, to Edward Grant, clockmaker, of London, 7 March 1791.
3. Cashbook of John Grant, 1795-1800.
4. Invoice issued by R. Jackson, hat manufacturer of London, to John Grant for purchases totalling £173.4.6.
5. Commissioners of Bankruptcy. Summons issued to John Grant, 30 July 1802.
6. Statement of financial position of John Grant with William Deeks, 4 May 1803. (4pp)
7. William & Jacob Wood (London). Certificate of sale of 89 dollars for £20.17.1, 11 Oct. 1803.
8. W.H. Clinton (War Office) to John Grant, 21 March 1803: rejects application for enrolment in the Horse Guards.
9. John Grant. Petition to King George III, supported by sundry citizens, requesting mercy after his conviction for firing a pistol at Spencer George Townsend, [1803].
10. Matilda Grant. Petition to Princesses Augusta Sophia, Elizabeth, Mary, Sophia and Amelia [daughters of King George III] supporting her brother's petition and requesting them to use their influence with the King and Queen to reverse the sentence of death imposed on John Grant, [1803]
11. John Grant (Portsmouth) to Elizabeth Grant, 2-4 Dec. 1803: thanks for letters, clothing, chocolate and seeds; wishes his child and her mother could accompany him; requests pair of knee buckles; 'Buonaparte will certainly be among you soon, or in Ireland'; meals; orders for Coromandel to sail with convoy.
12. John Grant (*Coromandel*) to Elizabeth and Matilda Grant, 5 Dec. 1803: farewell; their promise not to neglect his child; his journal will be sent to Jerry Aspinwall.

13. John Grant (*Coromandel*) to Elizabeth and Matilda Grant, 2-22 May 1804: voyage; sightings of birds and fishes; disembarkation at San Salvador; 'priests are as numerous as locusts'; fruits and crops; death of Capt. Robinson; sighting of South West Cape of Van Diemen's Land; changes in climate; sighting of coast of New South Wales; arrival at Port Jackson (7 May); Sydney Harbour; meetings with Major Johnston and John Harris; disembarkation (9 May); meetings with Judge Advocate Richard Atkins; beauty of countryside; meetings with Aborigines; journey to Parramatta; offer of a house by James Williamson; rum trade; the emancipists. (20pp)
14. John Grant (San Salvador) to Elizabeth Grant, 2 Feb. 1804. Not filmed, missing.
15. John Grant (Parramatta) to Elizabeth and Matilda Grant, 13-16 July 1804: life at farm at Parramatta; 'I am my own Master to a certain degree'; offer of his services to R. Atkins; meetings with Atkins and his wife; Atkins's 'excessive drinking'; visit to home of William Cox; divisions in colony between Governor King and the military and between free people and prisoners; interest of John Palmer in Grant's situation; meeting with Capt. Charles Bishop and Robert Campbell. (20pp)
16. Poem by John Grant: 'Pope to Attenbury', 1804. (2pp)
17. Poems by John Grant: 'The jug', Parramatta, Sept. 1804 (1p); 'Thoughts in a mulberry tree', Parramatta, Nov. 1804 (1p.)
18. Poems by John Grant: 'The chicken and the grasshopper', Parramatta, Oct. 1804; 'Devotion, an allegory', Parramatta, Oct. 1804; 'The Dream', Norfolk Island, 1805; 'Reflexions', Norfolk Island, Oct. 1805.
19. Poem by John Grant: 'Ideas awakened before daybreak by a terrible storm', Dec. 1805.
20. Poem by John Grant: 'Written on the morning of Mr Wakefield's funeral', n.d.
21. John Grant to Elizabeth and Matilda Grant and to William Barnes and Mr Pearce, Aug.-Oct. 1804. Not filmed, missing.
22. John Grant (Parramatta) to Elizabeth and Matilda Grant, 1-10 Jan. 1805: Grant's appeal to Governor King for emancipation; offer of services to R. Campbell; relations of G. Johnston and R. Campbell with Governor King; talents of artist John Lewin; Grant's 'Panegyric on an eminent artist'; abundance of cotton trees; need for simple carding machine for fine cotton; no one in colony knows how to bring indigo, tobacco or coffee plants to perfection; Captain Bishop's grief about disappearance of George Bass; Captain William Kent; Grant enraged by Governor King; Cox family moved to Hawkesbury River; Cox an example of 'how much ability and activity may overcome Misfortune'. (20pp)
23. John Grant (Sydney) to Elizabeth and Matilda Grant, 28 April 1805: appointment of J. Williamson and Rev. S. Marsden as trustee for Capt. Bishop's affairs; help of Capt. Kent in obtaining emancipation for Grant; cruel proceedings of Governor King against Sir Henry Hayes; farming on Bishop's farm; Mrs Williamson.
24. Certificate of emancipation, signed by Governor Philip G. King, issued to John Grant on condition that he continue to reside within New South Wales during the period of his original sentence of transportation, 1 Feb. 1805.

25. John Grant to Elizabeth Grant: 'a paquet [of poems?] for publication'. Not filmed, missing.
26. John Grant (Norfolk Island). Bond of Union, Norfolk Island, 13 Oct. 1805, and Additional Bond of Union, Hobart, 8 April 1808. (2pp)
27. William Deeks (London) to [Grant], 18 Nov. 1805: settlement of accounts with William Barnes; loss of £900 in Jamaican currency; news of Grant from his mother. (3pp)
28. John Grant (Norfolk Island) to Elizabeth and Matilda Grant, 3 June 1806: list of letters sent between July 1804 and June 1806; 'Ode on His Majesty's birthday 1806'.
29. John Grant (Norfolk Island) to Matilda Grant, 8 June 1806: lists his poems written in exile.
30. John Grant (Norfolk Island) to Matilda Grant, 9 June 1806: forwards revised Birthday Ode 1805'; a copy can be given to Mr King.
31. John Grant (Norfolk Island) to Matilda Grant, 9 June 1806: sends translation of epitaph by Virgil; has completed a small pastille for Matilda; translation of 'Bérénice', a play by Racine. (in French)
32. Robert Campbell (Sydney) to Grant (Norfolk Island), 27 May 1807: bank notes received from Elizabeth Grant when Campbell was in London and forwarded to Capt. Piper; offers to send letters to England on his next ship; probable that a second application by Grant's friends in England to Capt. Bligh might ease his situation.
33. John Grant (Norfolk Island) to Robert Campbell, 20 June 1807: thanks for letter and parcels; neglect of Grant by the new Governor; fears loss of his manuscripts when he leaves Norfolk Island; believes remittances will arrive from his brother in India.
34. John Grant. Drafts of letters to various citizens requesting their signatures to the additional Bond of Union, 9 April 1808. The recipients included Major George Johnston, Capt. William Bligh, Robert Campbell, James Williamson, Charles Grimes, John Harris, John Palmer, Capt. John Macarthur, Sir Henry Hayes and Maurice Margarot.
35. John Grant (Sydney) to Elizabeth and Matilda Grant, 7 March 1810: thanks for letters; news of his brother Samuel returning to England; papers sent to England; Samuel Marsden's praise of Elizabeth Grant; Grant's impending interview with Governor Lachlan Macquarie; arrival of missionaries from Tahiti; sends transcript of a letter from King Pomare; encloses 'Ode on His Majesty's Birthday, 1809'. (4pp)
36. Grant to Elizabeth and Matilda Grant, 16 April 1810: Mrs Margarot returning to England; sends remittances and copies of letters to S. Marsden and L. Macquarie concerning a free pardon; has offered his services to the Governor. (3pp)
37. John Grant to Elizabeth Grant, 10 May 1810: sends remittances; return of Richard Atkins to England; hopes Grant's daughter will be admitted to Christ's Hospital; sends copies of letters to W. Bligh and L. Macquarie; 'whether I shall ever or never return home is very uncertain. (3pp)
38. Grant (Sydney) to Samuel Grant, 11 May 1810: thanks for remittances; despatch of six volumes of journals in care of Edmund Griffin; summarises contents of each volume; hopes of receiving a free pardon; testimony of William Bligh; Grant could have assisted Bligh in publishing his account of events in New South Wales; 'in this Country the system of Slavery still predominates'. (3pp)

39. John Grant (Prospect Hill) to Elizabeth, Matilda and Samuel Grant, 27 July 1810: sixth annual ode on the King's birthday; promise of a free pardon from Governor Macquarie; hopes of a passage to England. (3pp)
40. Extract from Thomas Bewick's *History of Quadrupeds*, 4th ed., 1800. 'The Jaguar' (ms, 1p.)
41. Memorandum on the distillation of spirits by the process of Sr. Argand, citizen of Geneva, n.d. (ms, 13pp, in French)

## Journal and notebook of John Grant, 1805-10

42. Journal of John Grant, January 1805-March 1810. (92pp)

The journal contains relatively few dated entries and is instead a discursive manuscript containing recollections of past events, detailed records of conversations, and reflections, lamentations, accusations and commentaries on people and events. It also contains copies of letters, petitions, the Bond of Union, and poems. There are references to Grant's love for Anna Maria Ward, his shooting of the solicitor Spencer Townsend, and his imprisonment in Clerkenwell Prison in 1803. He also wrote about some of the convicts who accompanied him on the *Coromandel's* voyage to Sydney in 1804. The early entries in the journal, some of which are repetitive, deal with Grant's trial before a board of magistrates in May 1805 on a charge of writing seditious letters to Governor King and the Judge-Advocate Richard Atkins. Later entries describe his voyage to Norfolk Island, his assignment to a farmer John Foley, the arrival of his friends Sir Henry Hayes and Maurice Margarot, living conditions on Norfolk Island, relations with convicts, crops and farming, and his three month imprisonment on Phillip Island (1806). Included in the journal are copies of his letters to Governors King and Bligh and to his sister and brother and general reflections and diatribes on the convict system and the suppression of personal liberty in the penal colony. Among the many individuals referred to in the journal are Sir Henry Hayes, James Williamson, Richard and Elizabeth Atkins, Samuel Marsden, Capt. Charles Bishop, Capt. John Piper, Major Joseph Foveaux, Thomas Hibbins, Capt. Forrest, John Morris, Robert Campbell and Winefred Dowling.

The journal is in poor condition, fragments are missing and in places it is illegible.

43. Transcript of the journal of John Grant, January 1805 – March 1810. (typescript, 154pp)  
The transcript was made by W.S. Hill-Reid, Joan O'Hagan and others. They were not able to decipher some pages, but it covers most of the original journal.
44. Notebook-diary of John Grant, January-May 1809 (130pp)  
The small notebook contains dated entries, mainly dealing with public events in Sydney as well as Grant's daily activities, interspersed with anecdotes, extracts from prayers and the Bible, general reflections and recollections of past events. It deals in particular with the overthrow of Governor Bligh in 1808 and his departure from Sydney in March 1809. There are also notes about Grant's work, illnesses, his frequent visits to Vaucluse, the home of Sir Henry Hayes, the receipt of letters from his family and others, his petitions to return to England, his journals, financial transactions, and the Bond of Union. There are lengthy entries about litigation, particularly the aborted trial of John Macarthur in 1808, and the

imprisonment of Sir Henry Hayes and John Palmer. There are references to many other individuals including William and Elizabeth Bligh, Major George Johnston, Major Joseph Foveaux, Richard and Elizabeth Atkins, Capt. Charles Bishop, Capt. Eber Bunker, Robert Campbell, Rev. Henry Fulton, Edmund Griffin, Charles Grimes, John Harris, Anthony Kemp, John Lewin, Simeon Lord, Maurice Margarot, Capt. William and Elizabeth Paterson, William Redfern, James Williamson and Anna Maria Ward.