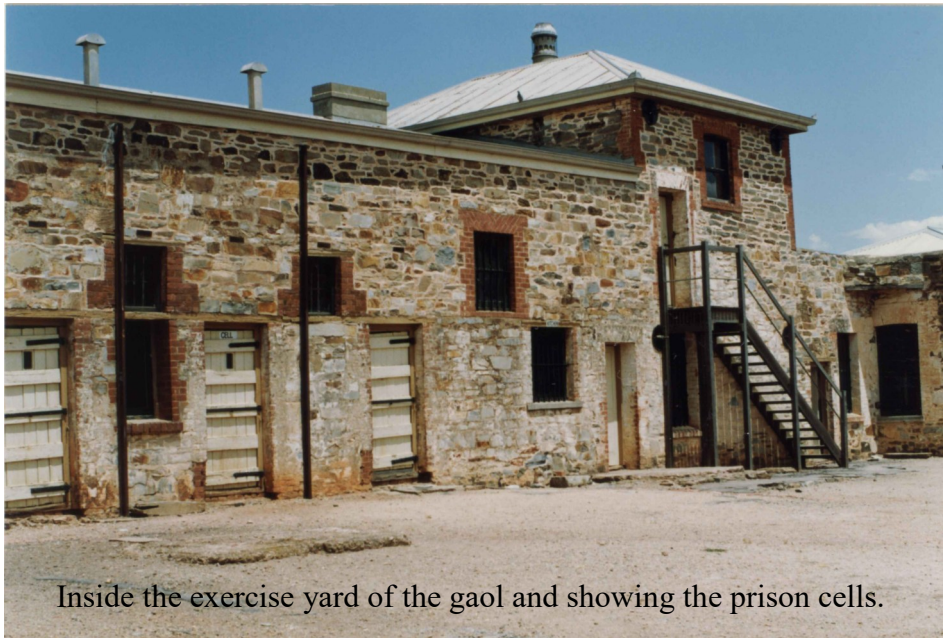


The former Redruth Gaol
2014



Inside the exercise yard of the gaol and showing the prison cells.

Compiled by Julian Ratcliffe
The Burra History Group Inc.
2014

REDRUTH GAOL

BURRA
SOUTH AUSTRALIA



Redruth Gaol
2005

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2007

Redruth Gaol

The Early days

Before the construction of the Redruth Gaol, the police worked from a station in Chapel Street Kooringa and a courthouse in one of the cottages nearby. When the government established the township of Redruth in 1847 the built a 'police lockup' with three cells and a police station and stables for their horses.



The police lockup and stables at Redruth

A New Gaol at Redruth

The Redruth Gaol, the first erected in the colony outside of Adelaide, was completed in 1856 at a cost of £3,200.

Among the first prisoners brought to Her Majesty's Prison at Redruth on 2nd February 1853 and placed in charge of Thomas Perry, were two small boys Andrew Fowley (6 years) and Andrew Brown (8 years) committed for stealing eight pictures from David Mackey's residence in Kooringa. "Big-Headed Billy," an aborigine committed for assault and intent to murder, was placed in the adjoining cell.

Perry's Hotel

Thomas Perry who had been a Turnkey at the Adelaide Goal took up Heritage Trail. Since then its has undergone several restorations. Contact the Burra Visitor Centre for entrance with a "Burra Passport Key"

References

Burra Glimpses of the Past - Ian Auhl
The Story of The Monster Mine – Ian Auhl



The former Redruth Gaol and Girls' Reformatory in 2007

were some important changes made with new and more becoming dresses for the girls, incentives for good behaviour, excursions, picnics and occasionally a visit to a picture show at the Burra Town Hall.

Riotous Conduct

One report in 1919 from Matron Edith Bubb stated "three girls,



The former Redruth Gaol showing the high stone walls and its remote location.

Violet Benson, Ada Newchurch and Ursula Cruse were on the roof, dancing, singing low songs, swearing down-right insolence, destroying government property, undressing and exposing themselves to all passers-by in only their flannels and bloomers…" Given its remote location, there may not have been many who saw it.

The Reformatory's Chequered History

After some daring escapes by spirited girls at various times throughout its history as a reformatory, especially in its first year, and two fires, a riotous revolution among the girls and Miss Edith Bubb's resignation, finally led to its closure in 1922.

Restoring an Historic Site

In 1977, the building was jointly restored by the Burra Council and Burra National Trust and opened as a tourist attraction on the Burra

residence at the gaol itself on its completion in 1856. The gaol became known as "Perry's Hotel" boasted three levels of accommodation, the gaoler's, the prison cells and solitary confinement.

The plan of the gaol included three cells for males and three for females that opened onto exercise yards surrounded by stone walls twelve feet high topped with broken glass.

Increased Accommodation

In 1863, additions to the gaol were made to provide for the gaol keeper, the turnkey and 30 prisoners both male and female.

A Foiled Escape

The one serious effort to breakout of this gaol was made by John Baker in October 1871. Having been arrested in Burra for bushranging activities on the River Darling, Baker and his cellmate planned to feign sickness and break through the lathe and plaster ceiling of the sickbay escaping via the roof. The plan was foiled when Gaol Keeper Perry overhead their discussions and clapped them in irons. On searching the pair he discovered a hammer concealed in one man's riding boot.

Keepers of the Gaol

The order of serving Gaol Keepers was T. Perry, W. Pollitt, B. Young, R. McDonald and G. Mitchell being charged with the keeping of the gaol and strict supervision of appointed Turnkeys.

The Turnkeys were in close contact with the inmates each day being responsible for enforcing discipline, assigning work and providing prisoners with their rations.

Prison Life

Rations for prisoners were spartan but adequate, with bread and potatoes being the staples, with one piece of meat for working men and rice, tea, sugar, salt and 4 ounces of tobacco each week. As no fruit or vegetables were issued because they were a luxury in Burra for those outside the gaol, constipation was a common complaint among the inmates with large doses of castor oil the prescribed remedy.

For the celebrations of the visit of HRH the Duke of Edinburgh to the colony on the 11th November 1867 saw the inmates, nine white men, three aborigines, one mother and baby, two single women, two lunatics and a Chinaman, treated to roast beef, plum pudding and a pint of beer.

A description of the Gaol

The Burra historian Ian Auhl writing in 1979 noted 'from the outside the 118 year old gaol is not the usual grim fortress which prison authorities once felt it necessary to design as penal institutions. Nevertheless it is forbidding enough….It was almost as difficult to get into as to get out. The procedure

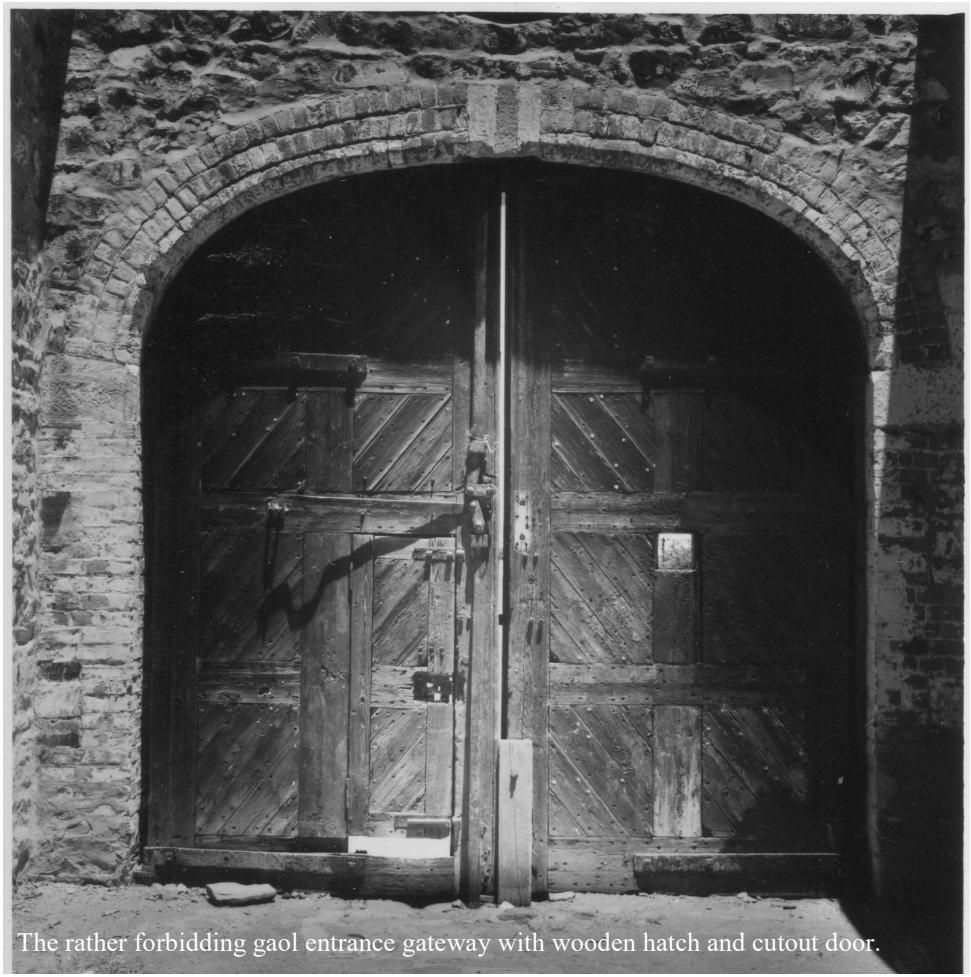
for gaining admittance….was to thump an iron knocker vigorously against the heavy gateway and await inspection through a wooden hatch.. and enter through a cut-out door.
Once inside, the building becomes more formidable. The walls seem higher. Your chances of escape seem less. They become almost non-existent when you step into one of the cells and the heavy doors close behind you. Gloom envelopes you.'

The end of an era

The first goalkeeper, Thomas Perry retired in November 1878, due to ill health. He died a year later.

The Gaol Closes

The gaol closed in 1894 with the transfer of prisoners to Gladstone Gaol.



The rather forbidding gaol entrance gateway with wooden hatch and cutout door.

After its closure as a gaol, for three years, this building became the residence of the Woollacott family one of the pioneer families of the Burra.

A Girls' Reformatory

After falling into disuse, it was renovated and re-opened as the Redruth Protestant Girls' Reformatory in 1897 and being close to the township of Hampton became known as "Hampton Court." It was originally 'home' to thirty girls transferred from the Edwardstown Girls Industrial School. Although they were some of the 'more intractable' girls from Adelaide they were suddenly in a depressing prison. Believing that escape would be impossible, the authorities soon learned they were wrong, with 16 absconding in the first year. The girls complained that although they liked Matron Holden, they didn't like being shut up by high walls.

Following subsequent escapes, W J Davey the editor of the *Record* wrote, 'once a girl is placed behind prison walls, she loses hope, her heart becomes callous and she leaves gaol more stubborn, more wretched and more downcast.' Some of the girls were there for trivial offences for as little as being beyond their parents control; some because they were pregnant out of wedlock.

A New Matron

In 1916 with the appointment of Miss Edith Bubb as the matron, there



Matron Edith Bubb with the girls of the reformatory in 1918