

YOUR VIRTUAL DISCOVERY VISIT – 54 TO THE HERITAGE STORIES OF ROTTNEST ISLAND

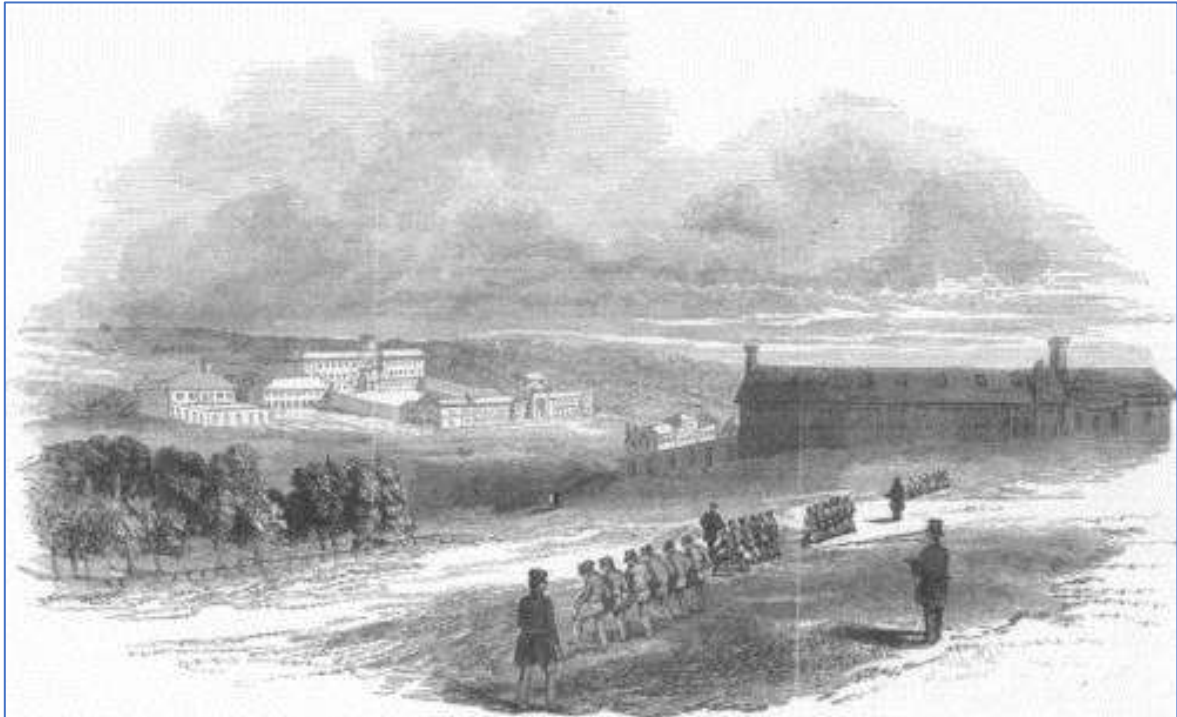


The Virtual Visit series was initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic when Rottneest Island was closed to the public due to social distancing restrictions and periods of use for quarantine from March to June 2020.

Now that the Island is again open to visitors, these Virtual Visits are continuing in 2021 to enable a further enjoyment of stories introduced at the Wadjemup Museum, the Chapman Archives or sites around the Island.

Enjoy, reflect and share.

Parkhurst Prison and the Parkhurst Boys on Rottneest

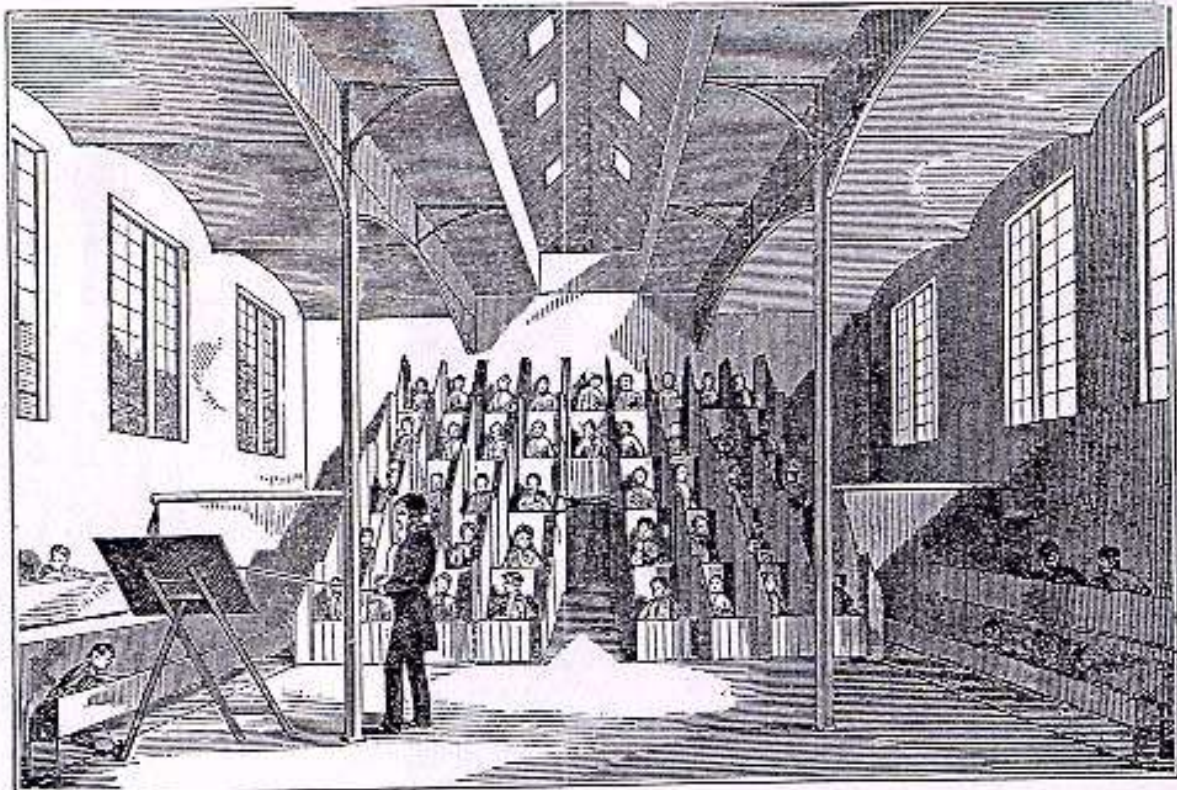


Between 1842 and 1852, juveniles from a reformatory attached to Parkhurst Prison on the Isle of Wight, were sentenced to "transportation beyond the seas" and sent to Australia and New Zealand. They are collectively known as the Parkhurst Apprentices because either before leaving England or on arrival, they were pardoned on the conditions that they be "apprenticed" to local employers. The one condition was that they not return to England during the term of their sentence.

In the ten years of the program, nearly 1500 boys aged from twelve to eighteen were transported to Australia and New Zealand from Parkhurst Prison. Between 1842 and 1849, Western Australia accepted 234 Parkhurst apprentices, all males aged between 10 and 21 years. Initially these Parkhurst Boys arrived on immigrant ships. From 1850

until termination in 1852, boys from Parkhurst for Western Australia arrived on convict transports and were administered by the prison system.

Parkhurst began in 1778 as a military hospital and children's asylum. By 1838, it was a prison for children. Parkhurst became an adult prison in 1863, holding young male prisoners. Almost from its beginnings as a prison for young offenders, Parkhurst was subject to fierce criticism by the public, politicians and in the press for its harsh regime. It became a particular focus of critique for reformers campaigning against the use of imprisonment for children. In the 20th century, Parkhurst enjoyed notoriety as one of the toughest jails in the British Isles. Today Parkhurst forms part of HMP Isle of Wight.



The Probationary Ward School Room.

Parts of this school room at Parkhurst operated under the “separate system”.

Under the “Parkhurst Boy” scheme instituted in 1839, juveniles sentenced to transportation were sent for training in a useful trade to a reformatory in Parkhurst jail. On arrival, it was expected that they could be usefully employed instead of being held in a convict jail. Based on their conduct record at Parkhurst, boys were assigned to one of three categories. The best behaved or compliant were designated free emigrants or exiles and given their freedom immediately on arrival. This applied to 104 boys who mainly arrived in 1851. Boys arriving in Western Australia between 1842 and 1849 (some 230) were in the second category, Colonial Apprentices, usually allocated on a five year indenture. Recalcitrant or non-cooperative boys were normally consigned to Van Diemen’s Land into a harsher, de facto convict regime.

Two Government Juvenile Immigrants were assigned to Pilot Captain Edward Back’s first boat crew. They were Henry Blake (convicted at age 15) and James Bradley (convicted at age 13). Back required them to sleep on the pilot boat rather than in his

house as a security measure for the boat. This was in keeping with Back's official instructions which read in part:

You are hereby required to proceed to Rottnest on the 11th day of September next and His Excellency has been pleased to sanction your occupying the house that Mr Armstrong resides in. Two rooms for yourself and one for your men. You are required on no account to allow the small boat to remain on the beach without one of the boys remaining by her and the boys must sleep on board the boat every night hoisting in the dinghy. You will be supplied with hooks and line for fishing for the establishment on Rottnest and all fish caught will be handed over to Mr Vincent, the superintendent, keeping sufficient for your own use.



Cottage formerly occupied by Moral Agent and Storekeeper, Francis Armstrong

Check the Chapman Archives and archived issues of the *Golden Whistler* for Keith Eddington's articles on Parkhurst Boys on Rottnest Island for further details. Here you will also find the story of John Gavin, another Parkhurst Boy who, at age 15, was the first person to be hanged in Western Australia.

A third Parkhurst Prison Boy, William Cornish, joined Back's crew later. Aged 16, he was transported for 7 years for 'stealing three ducks'. Parkhurst Boys were initially welcomed by the new colony as a potential labour force and this experience was a factor leading to acceptance of convict transportation in 1849.

<https://archives.rvga.asn.au/2020/10/21/golden-whistler-4-11-our-parkhurst-boys-numbered-334/>

https://www.slwa.wa.gov.au/dead_reckoning/private_archives/n-s/parkhurst_boys.html

<http://www.davidandkay.me.uk/bftext/parkhurstboysweb.htm>

<https://membership.wags.org.au/members-data/public-data/parkhurst-boys>

<http://www.brandis.com.au/genealogy/gendata/parkhurst.html>

<https://fremantlestuff.info/people/back.html>

<http://vcp.e2bn.org/justice/page11683-an-overview-of-separation-and-silence.html>