

Port Arthur Talks

A Legacy of Madness? Pentonville Prison to Port Arthur presented by Honey Dower

Honey Dower is close to finishing her PhD on health and madness during the Pentonville Prison Experiment at the University of Tasmania (UTAS). After gaining a BA (Hons) at the UTAS, she completed her MA in History at the Australian National University. As a historian, her research interests include health in institutions, crime and punishment, and historical criminology. She is passionate about public-facing history, dark and difficult histories, and education in the heritage and public history industries.

In 1842, an experimental prison discipline was instituted at the new Pentonville Prison, London. This system called “separate treatment” confined prisoners in silence to their cells for 22 hours a day – comparable to the type of “solitary confinement” used in prisons today. Although the Pentonville Prison Experiment (1842-9) was soon plagued with claims of mental and physical illness, its subjects were nevertheless transported to the Australian colonies, namely Van Diemen’s Land. Through the lobbying of an ex-warder from Pentonville and an ambitious ship surgeon-superintendent, a “model prison” was proposed for the Port Arthur penal settlement. This prison intended to mimic Pentonville Prison in every way – despite the objections that this system made inmates “mad”. This talk surveys the complex legacy of “separate treatment” and traces this discipline from the controversial Pentonville Prison to Port Arthur itself, where this prison system was in action until the closure of the settlement in 1877 – some twenty-eight years after the London-based experiment ended.

ALL WELCOME!

Tuesday 24 August 2021 at 12:00 p.m.

**1830 Restaurant & Bar, Visitor Centre,
Port Arthur Historic Site**

This event is free and attendance is by booking only.

For bookings please phone 1800 659 101 between 10am and 4pm
or email: reservations@portarthur.org.au

Physical distancing requirements will be observed at all times.

