The Port Arthur Audio Experience
Transcript

PORT ARTHUR HISTORIC SITES

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Port Arthur

Hello and welcome to the Port Arthur Audio Experience.

My name is Colin, and I have been a Guide at Port Arthur for around 30 years. During this time, I have never become immune to the beauty nor the story of this fascinating place and where it sits within a bigger picture of an incredible time in human history. I hope to share some of that with you today.

This beautiful island where I live is known by many names. In 1642, just north of here (at Dunalley) the Dutch planted a flag and named it Van Diemen's Land. The British would continue to use this name until 1856 when Van Diemen's Land officially became Tasmania.

Tasmania's Aboriginal name is Lutrawita. In recognition of the deep history and culture of this place, we would like to acknowledge and pay our respects to the traditional custodians of the land upon which we gather, the Pydarermere people. We also acknowledge and pay our respect to all Tasmanian Aboriginal Communities, all of whom have survived invasion and dispossession, and who continue to maintain their identity and culture.

Port Arthur is most famous for being a prison that operated between the years of 1830 and 1877. But the site is far more than just an old prison. Port Arthur is one of 11 sites that make up the Australian Convict Sites World Heritage listing. Upon arrival, visitors find a vast 100-acre carefully landscaped historic site with over 30 buildings and ruins to explore.

Port Arthur happened to be a particular type of prison, which was a Secondary Punishment Station. The majority of convicts who were transported to Australia would never see places like this, but they would have been only too aware of their existence and reputation.

This was a prison specifically designed for incarcerating repeat offenders, considered to be the worst convicts in Van Diemen's Land. These men who could at best be regarded as incorrigible criminals. Or at worst, incurable criminals. They had already been transported but would then continue to commit further crimes and offences within the colony.

We believe Lt Governor Arthur adopted and applied the concept to Port Arthur of being '*a machine to grind rogues honest*'.

The origin of that concept and intent of a prison comes from the English social reformer, Jeremy Bentham. The idea was that while imprisoned there was an opportunity for convicts, an offer of reform. In order to understand why Lt Governor Arthur would find this a very practical concept, it is important to understand just how remote the Penal colony of Van Diemen's Land was ... some 13,000 miles from England!

The overall desire was that transported convicts would serve a portion of their sentence as assigned workers for free settlers or the Government. Those lacking practical and basic literacy skills could be taught and eventually integrated as contributing citizens to help build the new colony.

It was hoped that with these new skills convicts would be less likely to resort to their old deviant ways and would contribute to the building of a new society. It was a mutually beneficial scheme.

Basically, convicts at Port Arthur had so far not adhered to that particular scheme, but there was still a chance. Even though a convict had fallen to the very bottom of the convict system of Van Diemen's Land, the door to freedom and potentially a better life within the colonies was still ajar, and Port Arthur could help him through that door.

The ultimate goal? To turn these men from infamy to industry. This prison was to be a place of impartial justice – if a convict displayed the will to reform, he could earn reward. If he did not display the will to reform, he would earn punishment. Reward was a possibility. Punishment was a certainty.

Chapter 2: So Why Here?

Why here? What was it about this location that made it perfect for a secondary punishment station?

Port Arthur was essentially about the containment and control of convicts.
Its location on the Tasman Peninsula is certainly isolated and remote, similar to other punishment stations such as Norfolk Island and Sarah Island (both natural prisons).
However remote locations often created difficulties with supply and logistics. Port Arthur would experience none of those problems.

A ship leaving Hobart early morning would travel 42 nautical miles and, under ideal conditions, could reach the safety of the excellent, sheltered harbour the same day. The harbour was the front gate of the prison and essentially the interface between Port Arthur and the rest of the world.

The wharves and jetties for loading and offloading goods and supplies, convicts and other personnel were located directly in front of the Commandant's House.
This is one of the safest, deepest harbours in the southern hemisphere and apart from a few fishing boats, that scene has not changed significantly since convict occupation.

The massive range of rugged hills in the background is now the Tasman National Park which includes a major section of the Three Capes Walk.

In the foreground is the Isle of the Dead, the cemetery.

And the headland is Point Puer, which was a boy's prison.

You will hear more about these places on your Harbour Cruise

The 'back gate' of the prison was Eagle Hawk Neck.

It is the only connection by land with the rest of Tasmania, and you would have crossed it to get here today.

Eagle Hawk Neck is very narrow, and therefore easy to control.
A military garrison was in place very early, effectively dividing the Tasman Peninsula from the rest of the colony. By 1832 it was guarded by a line of ferocious dogs. A statue representing one of these animals can be found at Eagle Hawk Neck.

The whole of the Tasman Peninsula was the actual prison.

The area was also rich in resources. The settlement was originally established in September 1830 as a convict timber station and there was an abundance of that most important, valuable resource. Convicts were put to work in felling the enormous trees and producing some of the largest milled timber in the world. But there was also clay for bricks, sandstone for building and coal.

The Coalmines located just past Saltwater River was a much-dreaded place for convicts —- You may like to visit this interesting site while you are on the Tasman Peninsula.

So, ease of supply, a landscape which was a natural prison, and valuable resources made this an ideal location for a Secondary punishment station.

Of note is the large flat grassed area at the center of the Site. We generally call it 'The Oval', or 'The Cricket Ground' as it was the sports ground serving the Tasman community for many years. In fact, by the 1860's Port Arthur had a cricket team. Perhaps this was an inevitable result of English people being together in any place …. But of course, convicts didn't get to play!

When the first convicts arrived in 1830 this area looked very different. It was a small shallow bay which was tidal and marshy. Changes began immediately. The first task was that convicts had to build bark huts to sleep in, and then they started clearing land and felling the huge trees.

This large flat area was reclaimed by convicts over a period of twenty years by hand. At low tide, gangs of convicts carried huge logs and dropped them onto the sandy flats. The gaps were then filled with rubble from the stone breaking yards ……

The reasons?

Perhaps just for the sake of it, simply as means of keeping troublesome men busy and exhausted. But also, to create a very useful flat area in a place essentially bowl shaped with

a small tidal bay in the middle. It was often used to store and dry the stacks of newly cut and sawn timber from the nearby saw pits.

The canal was necessary so the creek could continue to flow into the bay.
However, it was covered over with thick wooden planks supported by stumps or piers running down the center of the canal. The area was not divided as it is today. Settlement creek was also their source of fresh water.

As the site was cleared, gardens both practical and decorative were established and the first of the magnificent oak trees would be planted in the 1830s
The transformation continued and by 1846 acres of gardens were under cultivation with over a hundred convicts employed in growing vegetable. What you see now is quite different to how it would have presented in the convict era.

Visitors often have difficulty reconciling the reputation of Port Arthur as a Hell on Earth with the beautiful, placid gardenesque landscape they find today…

But looks can be very deceiving …a prison it most certainly was!

Chapter 3: The Penitentiary

The Penitentiary is certainly the most commanding building onsite. The word penitentiary originates from Latin, meaning repentance**.**

It was originally built as a flour mill and granary in 1843. It was described as a folly because, in a place notoriously short of water, the mill was to be powered by a water wheel.

However, there was a backup plan, which was a convict powered treadwheel! These devices were certainly nothing new. There was a treadwheel in place at The Hobart Barracks and many a convict had spent time on these never-ending staircases. Some prisons simply used treadwheels as a means of punishment, with the wheel having no other function or purpose. Trundling away would be tedious, exhausting work and we know of at least one convict here who was killed by the treadwheel when he stumbled.

It was hoped that the mill and granary would supply the needs of the Convict Department and produce surplus for export. However, the mill was to be a grand failure. After standing idle for many years, the mill was gutted and converted into the Penitentiary, which had four distinct levels.

The top level was a large dormitory with capacity for around 350 men - accommodation for well-behaved convicts but hardly a penthouse!
On the third story was a Catholic chapel and a large dining hall, which doubled as a schoolroom. There was also a library which held thousands of books.
School rooms and libraries were very unusual for any prison at the time, let alone a place like Port Arthur …. a prison at the end of the earth! Also contained within this massive building were bathhouses, hot and cold water, flushing toilets, a laundry, bakehouse and kitchens.

As you would expect, the Penitentiary also enforced punishment. At ground level were 136 tiny cells used for solitary confinement. Their size (or lack of!) is still evident today. Convicts in these cells were in chains and would often have their sentence of solitary confinement combined with hard labour. It became known that some men would commit a minor offence with the express purpose of being removed from the hard labour of the chain gangs. They would much prefer to be locked in solitary for a few days where they could happily curl up and sleep. By combining the punishment of hard labour with these cells, that particular scheme was foiled.

At the end of the building were workshops for a variety of trades
where better-behaved convicts were learning to become carpenters, coopers, wood turners, tailors, boot and shoemakers, nailers and blacksmiths.

Some convicts however were given very special jobs…

Notorious for his bad temper, burglar **Mark Jeffrey** was made resident grave digger upon Isle of the Dead. Each Saturday afternoon Jeffrey would be picked up from the Island, and sleep overnight in the Penitentiary so he could attend Divine services on the Sunday. Penitentiary staff and more than a few convicts would probably give Big Mark a wide berth while he was staying there. Come Monday morning, he would return to his duties and small hut on the Island re stocked with supplies. Jeffrey seemed to be quite happy in his role. This was perhaps understandable, as prior to becoming the gravedigger, Jeffrey was kept under the very strict regime of the Separate Prison, but more about that terrible place later.

Located next to the Penitentiary (close to the harbour) are the Watchman's Quarters. Of main interest in that area are a number of photographs taken during occupation by well-known Tasmanian photographer **John Watt- Beattie**. These pictures show what was here before buildings were sold off and the fires of the 1890's took their toll.

As you wander the site you will be looking at around a third of what used to be here.

The Penitentiary was left in its ruined state by fires over the Christmas of 1897. Vvisitors often ask why we don't rebuild the Penitentiary or put a roof on the Convict Church. This is a fair question. Port Arthur follows the Burra Charter – which could be called a bible for heritage professionals.

Its basic premise is '*do as much as necessary but as little as possible*'. The ruined state of a building or monument is part of its history.

Following a major storm in 2011 it became necessary to stabilise the Penitentiary when the ground below became unstable, and the building started to lean and crack. A $ 7.3 million conservation project was begun to stabilise and conserve the structure, and the grey steel

pillars you see today are part of that work which will see this wonderful ruin standing for many decades to come.

Chapter 4: The Commandants House and Settlement Hill

A must-see when visiting Port Arthur is the home of the man in charge, the man steering the machine.

The Commandant's House evolved from a small 4 room cottage built in preparation for the arrival of **Captain Charles O'Hara Booth** in 1833, to the extensive rambling building perched on the slope overlooking the harbour. Each Commandant would have their home extended and modified as they saw fit.

Today, as a museum house, a number of eras are represented. Of particular note is the Neo Gothic wallpaper in the entrance and the "oak graining" covering the doors and archways. And at the back of the house is the kitchen, where we can almost smell the fresh bread and other delicacies being prepared.

Commandants were initially military or ex-military, with civilian administrators in charge during the later years. Booth was the most powerful and most important with jurisdiction over the entire peninsula, overseeing major development and construction and the peak of population at Port Arthurm consisting of close to 2500, convicts, military, other personnel and families by 1842.

The area behind the Penitentiary is known as Settlement Hill. During occupation it was crowded with a mix of wooden and stone buildings. Sadly, most of these were lost in the late 1800s – either pulled down and sold or burned by bushfires.

The top of the hill was once dominated by a comprehensive Military Garrison.
Still present today is The Guard Tower**.** This provided the all-important surveillance of the site, a magazine for the safe storage of gunpowder, and if necessary, a citadel for defense.

Tower cottage**,** also close by, was lodgings for Non-Commissioned Officers, inside is an excellent model of the Military area as it was.

As part of their tour of Empire, British Regiments would often be assigned to the colonies of NSW and VDL where one of their duties could be looking after convicts. A duty they hated, especially in a place like Port Arthur where there were only convicts.

At least if stationed in Hobart there were plenty of pubs, houses of ill repute, gambling and so on. Hobart, believe it or not, was a very wild town!
One of the few means of entertainment for a soldier at Port Arthur was hunting escapee convicts. Most escapees would be captured very soon after they had bolted. Some convicts who continued to flee when challenged by the soldiers would suffer dire consequences.

For example, **Sgt Murphy** shot and wounded escapee **Edward Howard** who ran off when challenged. **Private Bayliss** shot and killed **James Hall** who rushed him while being escorted back to Port Arthur following a foiled escape attempt.

Another escapee was killed when a musket discharged accidentally as a soldier was apparently fitting him with leg irons. An event of this nature would necessitate an inquisition, but nothing much ever came from them. These bored young soldiers were often in trouble and would have far more in common with the convicts than their officers. **Sergeant Killion** would be in strife for dealing in sly grog and serving strong spirits under the counter at the “wet” canteen.

The military area was also the site of the main Semaphore mast, a structure over 23 m high with colored paddles and a variety of flags enabling visual signals and coded messages to be sent over long distances very quickly. Semaphore was a very efficient means of communication, weather permitting.

Among the wooden buildings and houses covering the rest of the hill, was a School house for the children of the military and administrators who ran the prison. One teacher **John Goodman** often had difficulty in his job, because the children would not take any notice of him. Class discipline would perhaps understandably suffer as a consequence of their teachers’ status… Goodman was a convict.

The houses of Settlement Hill were very basic, built of weatherboards and lime washed. Deputy Commissariat Officer **Thomas Lempriere** continually complained that his house. ‘*did not have a single window or door*’ that was ‘*wind or watertight! The whole being built of green wood, every door and window has shrunk* …!’

The commanding ruin you can see at the top of the hill is the Hospital.

This sandstone building was preceded by two earlier buildings of timber construction. The Port Arthur hospital was neither better nor worse than most of the hospitals one may be unfortunate to find themselves in at this time. Hospitals were dreaded and commonly referred to as dying places.

The small yellow cottage nearby was “home” for a period of months to political prisoner and leader of the Young Ireland Movement **- William Smith O’Brien**. Originally sentenced to death for High Treason, he would instead be transported to Van Diemen’s Land, finally ending up at Port Arthur. Stories of other political prisoners are represented in this cottage. A practical means of disposing of political agitators was to transport them to the remotest outpost of the British Empire which was …. Damn Demon’s Land!

The mounded area just below Settlement Hill was once the site of the Original Prisoner Barracks …….and the triangles, where floggings would be carried out But more on that later**.** It is well worth the climb. Those exploring Settlement Hill are rewarded with sweeping views of the Site and harbour.

Chapter 5: Transportation

Now just a bit about transportation – the back story.

The first convicts arrived with the First Fleet in 1788. The last would finally disembark at Fremantle in 1868.

During those 80 years approximately 165,000 men, women and children would be transported to the Australian colonies. a mass enforced migration.

Around 72,000 of these would be sent to Van Diemen's Land.

The popular view that Australia was just a dumping ground for British criminals is more or less correct … but far too simple.

Let's take a moment to consider the bigger picture.

Britain was in the throes of the Industrial Revolution. A time of great social upheaval where everything changed, and nothing would ever be the same.

Also, changes in agriculture meant that large numbers of people who had been existing within a predominately rural, agrarian society would make for the towns and cities looking for work which, for so many, was simply not there.
This sudden migration into towns and cities caused gross overcrowding which resulted in filth and squalor, inevitable disease, crushing poverty and, as a consequence, an unprecedented wave of crime. Stealing and thieving became a means of survival.

If caught the consequences would be dire. Over 220 crimes were punishable by death and British Prisons could be best described as nothing more than, vile overcrowded holding pens.

One solution was transportation.

And… transported convicts could be very useful! A coerced labor force who would work to help establish and build the colonies. They would clear the land, or break the ground ..so to speak.

This would very much be the case with NSW and VDL.

The possession of NSW and VDL gave the British a much-needed presence in the Southern Hemisphere - facilitating valuable trade throughout the regions of Southeast Asia, and expanding their Empire, in both strategic and financial competition with the Dutch and French, the other Superpowers. There was also the hope that these new colonies would somewhat alleviate the loss of the American colonies.

Typical crimes leading to transportation were of petty larceny or petty theft and generally, the majority of those transported had prior convictions. Contrary to popular belief, transportation of first offenders was very rare.

Some examples of convicts who would find their way to Port Arthur include:

Thomas Walker was transported for stealing a handkerchief and a quantity of coin. Later at Port Arthur he would steal the Commandant's boat!

James Gavagan was 11years old when he got 7 years for stealing 21 umbrellas.

James Forbes - sentenced to 7 years for stealing a horse and a cow.

James Bull - 10 years for stealing … a bucket of soot!

People were sentenced to transportation for theft, forgery, embezzlement, political crimes, highway robbery, assaults, court martialed soldiers, and …

Dennis Collins … threw a rock at the King!

But when it comes to that old favorite story of convicts being transported for a first offence of merely stealing a loaf of bread ……?

Among the surviving VDL convict records we have only found evidence of one!

Thomas Winter was 15 years old when transported 7 years for stealing bread …
There are no priors listed - The Judge must have been having a very bad day… As he was only 15, Winter was sent directly to Point Puer

Where did this story end …?

Samuel Speed was among the last convicts transported to Freemantle 1868. He was in his early 20's, homeless and begging for food when sentenced to 7 years for deliberately setting fire to a haystack. He is believed to be the last surviving convict. Sam was in his late 90's when he died in 1938 - 150 years after the First Fleet arrived … and only 1 year before World War 2 began.

So, what was the outcome for the majority of convicts?

English social reformer **Jeremy Bentham** would refer to those transported as '….an Excrementitious mass … '

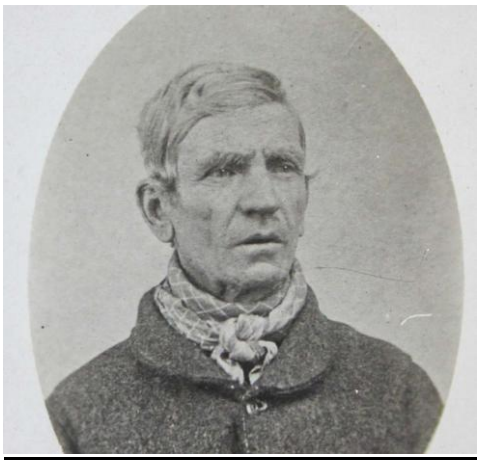
But Naturalist **Charles Darwin** had a very different assessment of transportation after visiting Australia, including Hobart, as part of his epic 5-year global circumnavigation. In 1836 he commented:

'*As a means of making men outwardly honest, of converting vagabonds, most useless in one country into active citizens of another, and thus giving birth to a new and splendid country, it has succeeded to a degree perhaps unparalleled in history.'*

For so many people, being transported was simply the best thing that could have happened!

Port Arthur convicts could not be numbered among them.

Chapter 6: Punishment and The Separate Prison



There were numerous punishments which could be inflicted on convicts.
During the early years at Port Arthur flogging was quite prominent. Generally, the number of lashes inflicted being 24 ,36 ,50, 75 with a maximum of 100 delivered with the dreaded cat 'o nine tails!

Those in Britain calling for the end of this violent punishment would argue that *'by flogging a person, we are simply inflicting pain upon the external, the inner person becomes embittered by this'*. Which was quite true. Also, among convicts there was the expectation that they should… meet their punishment! Meaning convicts would stand up to it, take it bravely and stoically an defy the pain.

One man who endured his punishment in silence would later say '*I held my pain within, I swallowed my pain….*' This is an example of the sheer pride and bloody-mindedness of one individual while enduring the lash. Some men would accumulate hundreds of lashes with apparent, little or no effect. They may not have been impervious but would very determinedly offer the impression that they were.

A convict by the name of **William Derrincourt,** was reputed to have sung a song during his 50 lashes.

Serial escapee **Thomas Davis,** following 100 lashes, would spend a month recovering in hospital …but even that did not stop him in his relentless pursuit of freedom.

And at a time when the possibilities of reform were being considered, it was well known that flogging did not achieve that aim. Many, including Commandant Booth believed that solitary confinement was a far more effective punishment. Flogging at Port Arthur was gradually phased out during the mid to late 1840's. However, what replaced it would be something far more insidious and potentially far more damaging.

The grey walled building to the south of the site was The Separate Prison.

To me, the Separate Prison represents one of the more terrifying aspects of the penal system and the consequences of an overly ambitious and very flawed premise. A convict in total isolation, under conditions of strict silence would have the opportunity to contemplate past misdeeds and to meditate upon them.

The belief was that reformation would be generated from within and would therefore be more permanent. If a convict continued to cause trouble or disturbance while in the Separate Prison there was the added threat of the "dumb cells" .

These cells with their thick stone walls and 4 doors, were not only soundproof, but light proof …. and the maximum sentence could be 30 days! You can still find a dumb cell in the Separate prison, try it out ……I dare you!

Convicts under Separate Treatment were required to wear a mask whenever they were outside of their cells to maintain their anonymity. And they were only outside of their cells when on the way to exercise for one hour each day, in a walled yard, watched by guards. Or when in Chapel, where to prevent communication or pollution each convict was locked into separate compartments.

The Separate Prison robbed a convict of his identity, his name replaced by a number, his very face covered by a mask. But today it's quite different with visitors finding an exceptional display of photographic portraits of some of these men including the likes of …

Ex-soldier, deserter and definite hard case **Dennis Doherty.**
Following years as a convict both on Norfolk Island and Port Arthur where he endured dreadful punishment, Doherty would continue to remain defiant and as a consequence spent years in the Separate Prison, including sentences in the "dumb" cells.

After 42 years as a convict, he would eventually confess '*I am broken at last*!' I wonder, was he really… or just feigning?

Aged 16 when sent to Port Arthur for an attempted unnatural act. **Leonard Hand** was considered by Dr Coverdale to be mentally childish and silly as a result of his time spent in the Separate Prison over 3 years at his own request!

Next to the Separate Prison is a fine-looking building with an impressive clock tower. This is home to our present-day museum. It was The Lunatic Asylum and would be the last major

construction to be undertaken at Port Arthur, built in 1868. Housed within were men suffering from a variety of mental illness**.**

A severe case was **John Quigley**, another ex-soldier whose behavior had always been observed as erratic, often bizarre, to the extent where some believed he was pretending. But especially so following a fight with another convict on Norfolk Island where he suffered a fractured skull and very probable brain damage**.** Quigley was considered too dangerous and disruptive for the Asylum. So, like a number of others he would be kept in the purpose-built C wing of the Separate Prison**.** Eventually a cage would be built for him just outside of the walls at the western end, where he seemed to be quite content although apparently, on occasion he could be observed running around his cage on all fours …. roaring like a lion!

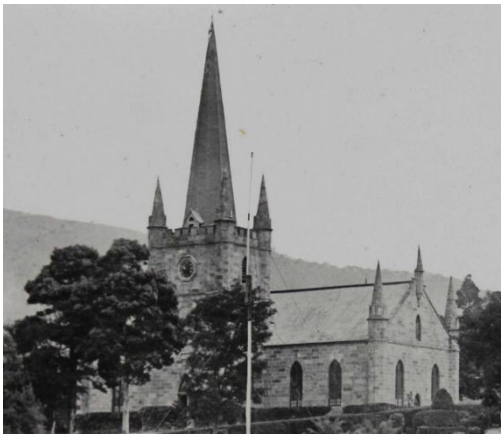
Over time it would become inevitable that a small number of those transported who had not managed to find a life within the colonies, those infirm, incapable and growing older would need at least a semblance of support. These men were the declared Invalids and Paupers. Broken old men in their 60's, 70's, 80's, rather unsympathetically considered by many to be …. the detritus of transportation.

Richard Baker was 97 years old when he finally passed away here 1861.
He had been transported for robbing his lodging 1822 - before Port Arthur had even been thought of! A common cause of death among these "old gentlemen" was 'Visitation from God' …. another was …'Expiry of life!'

The remains of their Mess Hall can be found just across the creek from the Asylum. By the mid 1860's these poor souls, the declared Invalids, Paupers and Lunatics would outnumber actual convicts.

The machine was definitely winding down.

Chapter 7: Civil Officers Row and The Convict Church



The attractive houses located toward the western side of the Site are called Civil Officers Row. This is where the professionals lived with their families. They preferred to call it Quality Row.

At the southern end of the "Row" is the Visiting Magistrates House which for a time was occupied by Commandant **William Champ**. Champ was regarded as being less severe than his predecessor, Commandant Booth, and later went on to become Tasmania's first Premier. This house was also occupied on occasion by the Senior Surgeon and in the early 1900's it was a hotel described as '…*unsurpassed by any other in Tasmania for comfort and convenience …* '

The small cottage next door is the Roman Catholic Chaplain's house, built 1844 to house the first Catholic Chaplain **Father William Bond**. His appointment was an intelligent response to an influx of Irish following the famines and a dispute over the inflammatory content of a sermon by the anti-Catholic, Church of Ireland Protestant Rev Durham.

Next in the row is what we call the Junior Medical Officers House. Originally built for **Thomas Lempriere**, this museum house is a must see for anyone visiting the Site, with its lovely furniture, beautiful blackwood archways and doors all carved by skilled convicts. The house would later be used to accommodate the Doctors and their families. At the rear of the house and separate are the kitchens and servants' quarters. Upstairs is the Nanny's room and children's bedrooms.

Situated on the corner is the Accountants House. By the late 1880's the house would be used as a school and is presently our Education Centre.

And finally, The Parsonage, probably better known these days for its reputation as one of more haunted buildings in the country rather than as the home of the Reverend, the man responsible for Moral Reformation.

The **Reverend George Eastman** was the most famous and probably the most universally respected of the Reverends. He was known to the convicts as "the good parson". The Parsonage was originally a double story building, the top floor was sadly lost to fire.

Families at Port Arthur were large, the **Lempriere's** and **Brownell's** both had 13 children, the **Eastman's** 10! By 1842 there were around 120 children being raised and educated within this prison and the wives were virtual prisoners in their own homes They could not enjoy the freedom of simply walking out the door on a fine day, as they were living in the middle of a prison, among the worst convicts in VDL! Despite this, picnics, soirees and dinners would be held regularly, as birthdays and special occasions would be celebrated. Their days would be consumed in needlework and tapestry, pressing flowers and collecting seaweed samples.

Mrs. Champ sent a collection to the Universal Exhibition in Paris 1855 and an album of **Charlotte Lempriere's** seaweed collections can be viewed in our museum. Small day-to-day problems would arise, often involving alcohol. The Lempriere's soon discovered their governess, a freewoman named **Miss Wood** had a drinking problem. After being found drunk one too many times Miss Wood was dismissed.

The officers would have to keep a constant eye on the convict servants living with their families. Thomas Lempriere found that his male servant was stealing his wine and had him sent 'back to the works', a labour gang! At a celebration following a baptism, two female servants were noticed as being extra clumsy ……they would be dismissed for having partaken too liberally of …the rosy God…and within a month or so another servant **Hannah** was not only drunk but insolent as well!

Convict Servant **Anne Forrest** would be found drunk with the soldiers, and was on at least one occasion kept in Solitary for 48 hours to sober up and to dry out.
I believe these women were eventually sent to the Cascades Female Factory.
To learn more about the female convicts I thoroughly recommend a visit to the Cascades Female Factory – in South Hobart.

The Convict Church, is without doubt the most beautiful building in Port Arthur and one of the truly iconic buildings in this country. Lt Governor Arthur would personally lay the foundation stone.

Built by convicts it would have a capacity for a congregation of over 1200. Both convicts and free persons would attend but would enter the church through different doors and be separated by curtains.

Moral reformation at Port Arthur was essentially about instilling the fear of God, the threat of Divine retribution and the possibility of redemption and a place in paradise. Lt Governor Arthur believed that no criminal could actually be cured unless he had embraced the word of God. Sadly in 1884 embers from a garden burn off landed on the shingle roof, which quickly caught fire and within half an hour the whole church was ablaze, ruin we see today.

The small wooden church is St David's which was built May of 1927 in response to a growing community having nowhere to worship.

Further on from the Convict Church you will find Government Cottage - essentially built to accommodate visiting VIPs to Port Arthur. Located at the top of the lovely gardens, it would at least feel separated from the convict areas.

The beautiful Government Gardens were created as a place where the families could enjoy a pleasant environment and feel a semblance of safety and normality … but the reality of where they were must have been very difficult to escape.

Chapter 8: 1877 and Beyond

Inevitably the machine winds down…

The year **1842** was the peak of Port Arthur with well over 1200 convicts.
At that time, it was a bustling place of industry and would have been one of the more populated settlements in Van Diemen's Land.

1853 bought the end of transportation to VDL and the slow, inevitable decline of Port Arthur. During the last 6 months of operations there were only 50 or so convicts here, and the machine finally closed in September **1877**.

During its 47 years Port Arthur saw around 7,200 convicts who served in excess of 13,000 sentences, repeat offenders were not that unusual. **George Britton,** transported 7 years for stealing clothes**,** would accumulate one of the longest convict records in VDL history. He would serve six sentences at Port Arthur and two on Norfolk Island. One could definitely consider George Britton to be an incurable.

As the prison closed tourism began. In fact it just a few months after the last convicts left in 1877. Many of the houses would become Hotels to accommodate the curious. Including at one stage the Separate Prison, but although alterations were started, mercifully fire intervened! Tourism has continued ever since and Port Arthur is a must see for anyone visiting the state.

In 1874 **Marcus Clarke's** *For the term of his Natural Life* was published. This semi-fictionalized account of the tragic life of a convict was a very popular book which has been

adapted for stage and screen. This work generated great interest in Port Arthur for years to come.

For a brief time in the **1880's** Port Arthur was re-named Carnarvon in an attempt to do away with the convict stain.

Generations of Australians felt shame over their links to a convict past and would deny and remove any connection to this part of their history. However, people continued to call this place Port Arthur and over time the name and notoriety proved to be more attractive than repulsive as Australians finally came to terms with, and became more curious about, their convict past.

In **1884/18855** land and buildings were auctioned. The military barracks were dismantled and the materials taken to Hobart to build houses.

I believe the asking price for the Church with land was around 12 pounds!
Thankfully no one bought it!

1895 - a major bushfire raged through the settlement destroying many buildings

1897 - another fire pretty much destroyed what was left, including the Penitentiary.

However, the fact that Port Arthur's buildings were now ruins did not in any way discourage visitors – if fact, it did quite the opposite.

In a ruined state Port Arthur gained a more gothic, even romantic aspect.

By the **1920s and 1930s** the Port Arthur area had three hotels and two museums, not to mention tour guides, catering to tourism. **The Scenery Preservation Board** was created to manage the site and also saw the reinstatement of the name 'Port Arthur'.

The historic site has been managed by the current **Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority** since **1987** with funding for conservation work provided by the Tasmanian Government.

Sadly in **1996** tragedy struck the site and 35 people lost their lives – the Port Arthur Massacre. A memorial can be found at the site of the former Broad Arrow Café.

And in **2010** the site gained World Heritage Status as part of an 11-site nomination known as the Australian Convict Sites World Heritage Property. You can find five of these properties right here in Tasmania.

The Port Arthur prison was founded on an idea which was then quite new, that prisoners could be reformed while still being punished.

The principles of classification, separation, surveillance, discipline, education and training are still cornerstones of many present-day penal systems.

We still wrestle with the idea that we can simultaneously reform and punish. But the machine “to grind rogues honest” s still grinding away regardless.

And it is with that thought that I will leave you to enjoy the rest of your day.

Thank you