

Reformatory for Boys

1864 – 1893

Other Names:

- Jika Reformatory for Boys
- Sir Harry Smith
- Ballarat Boys' Reformatory

Details

The Reformatory for Boys was first located aboard the hulk (ship) *Sir Harry Smith* in 1865. In 1873 the Reformatory moved to Coburg in the grounds of Pentridge prison and was known as the Jika Reformatory for Boys. In 1879 the Reformatory moved to Ballarat. The Ballarat Boys' Reformatory closed in 1893. From this period, juvenile offenders were generally sent to smaller, private reformatories, run by charitable or religious organisations. A small section of the Royal Park Depot in Parkville was a government-run reformatory from the 1890s.

Juvenile offenders in the new colony of Victoria were originally the responsibility of the Penal and Gaols Department. Male offenders were once housed in the hulk *Deborah*.

In 1864, with the passage of the Neglected and Criminal Children's Act, juvenile offenders came under the umbrella of the new Department of Industrial and Reformatory Schools.

Between 1865 and 1873 the former naval hulk, the *Sir Harry Smith* operated as an industrial school and reformatory for boys. It received its first boys from the *Deborah*. (The Department also had an industrial school situated on a ship, the *Nelson*.)

However, the ship reformatory was found by the Victorian government to be an unsuccessful model. The Royal Commission on Penal and Prison Discipline 1871 reported, 'a ship is not a fitting place for reformatory purposes if the boys be not expressly designed for a sea-faring life. Experience too clearly proves that immoral practices of the worst kind spring up amongst them, which can never be effectually suppressed'.

It recommended that the reformatory on board the ship be abandoned as soon as an appropriate building for the boys could be found.

In 1873 the boys moved to the grounds of Pentridge prison and were housed in an existing building (F Division).

The Reformatory for Boys moved to Ballarat in 1879, to a building formerly used as an industrial school for girls. At Ballarat, boys received training in farm, garden and dairy work, shoemaking, carpentry, painting and blacksmithing.

The boys' labour was much in demand, especially from local farmers. Boys could earn the 'privilege' of being released from the reformatory to a placement in a service-home, where the employer was the boy's 'guardian'.

The Superintendent's Report from 1884 describes the system of classification used for boys in the reformatory. The reformatory had three divisions: A (best), B (medium), and C (refractory). Each of these divisions had a senior and junior section, with separate dormitories. As an inducement to behave well, boys were first admitted

only to the B or C divisions. Some of the privileges enjoyed by those in A division were

the run of the outer paddock, the walk after service on Sundays, the best dormitories, precedence in distribution of library books &c, eligibility to act as monitor, or to have charge of one of the horses, or to go out on licence, &c. I must say that there is no desirable enjoyment that is not within the reach of an 'A' boy.

The principal punishment at the reformatory, reported the Superintendent, was the system of 'fatigue' where boys were made to labour during play hours. (Isolation [with employment] in a lighted cell) was the punishment for more serious misconduct.

Guillaume reported that the Department kept an 'After-Career Book' to keep tabs on former residents of the reformatory and report to the government of the boys' prospects after release.

In 1890, an editorial in the *Age* noted that the days of children being held in reformatory schools for periods of five years or more was over. The newspaper claimed that a boy could 'work his way out' of Ballarat in nine months, and thereafter only be subject to the 'unobtrusive supervision' of the Department.

The government reformatory at Ballarat was closed in 1893. The building then housed a 'lunatic asylum'.

From the 1890s, juvenile offenders were generally sent to smaller, private reformatories, run by organisations including the Try Society, Salvation Army and Gordon Institute.

Gallery



Convict Hulk *Success* at Williamstown

Description: The former prison hulk HM *Success* was the site of a reformatory for boys.



Boys' Reformatory, Ballarat

More info

Chronology

- Ballarat Industrial School (1869 - c. 1879)
 - **Reformatory for Boys (1864 – 1893)**

Related Entries

Ran

- [Ballarat Probationary School for Boys, Alfredton \(1890 - 1892\)](#)

Run by

- [Department of Industrial and Reformatory Schools, Colony of Victoria \(1864 - 1887\)](#)
- [Department for Reformatory Schools, Colony of Victoria \(1887 - 1900\)](#)

Date: 1887 - 1893?

Related Events

- [Royal Commission on Penal and Prison Discipline, Victoria \(1871 - 1872\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [The 'Deborah' \(1864 - 1873?\)](#)
- [The 'Sir Harry Smith' \(1865 - 1873\)](#)

Date: 1865 - 1873

- [The 'Nelson' \(1868 - 1876\)](#)
- [Royal Park Depot \(c. 1880 - 1955\)](#)

From the 1890s, there was a reformatory section of the Royal Park Depot.

- [Wandin Yallock Reformatory School \(1886 - 1905\)](#)

In 1893 several boys were sent from Ballarat Reformatory for Boys to Wandin Yallock Reformatory School.

Related Legislation

- [The Neglected and Criminal Children's Act 1864, Victoria \(1864 - 1888\)](#)

The Reformatory for Boys was established under the provisions of the Neglected and Criminal Children's Act 1864.

- [The Juvenile Offenders' Act 1887, Victoria \(1888 - 1890\)](#)

The administration of the Reformatory for Boys was governed by the Juvenile Offenders Act 1887.

Date: 1887 - ?

Resources

- Lynn, Peter, [Pentridge Prison](#), eMelbourne: the city past and present, 2008
- Victoria. Royal Commission on Penal and Prison Discipline., [Report \(No.3\) of the Royal Commission on Penal and Prison Discipline: Industrial and Reformatory Schools](#), 1872
- Victoria. Children's Welfare Department and Reformatory Schools, [Report of the Secretary / Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools](#), 1887 - 1895. *Relevance:* Mentioned in reports dated 1888-1894
- [The Ballarat Reformatory](#), The Age, 16 April 1880

Records

For more information and to access your records, follow the links below:

Records

- [Victorian Government Wardship and/or Out of Home Care Records \(1864 - current\)](#)
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