

Carters' Barracks, Boys Dormitory

1820 – c. 1848

Other Names: • Carters' House of Correction

Details

Carters' Barracks, Boys Dormitory was established in 1820. It provided separate accommodation and a training program for convict boys under the age of 16 at Carters' Barracks, Brickfields in Sydney. On arrival at the Barracks the boys became government apprentices and were trained to work as tradesmen. They lived at the Barracks for a maximum of three years before being assigned to work as servants for up to seven years after their release. Carters' Barracks Boys Dormitory closed around 1835 when convict boys were assigned directly on their arrival in Australia. In 1848, convicts were transferred from Carters Barracks to Cockatoo Island.

Carters Barracks was located on the site of what would become Sydney Central Railway Station.

The boys placed at Carters' Barracks were given basic schooling, a strict religious upbringing and were trained to become tradesmen. Boys were taught the skills of a blacksmith, carpenter, painter or shoemaker among other trades. The aim of the administrators was to reform the convict boys. There was approximately 200 convict boys and staff housed at the Barracks at any time.

Any boys who tried to escape the Barracks were given a severe lashing upon their return. Floggings or time on the treadmill, which was used to grind grain, were common forms of punishment under the strict regime. There were also two solitary confinement cells for punishment of certain offences and the sleeping area was divided into two rooms to separate the different classes of boys. One class was for good behaviour and one for those whose misconduct meant they received an inferior diet and bedding.

As a result of the separate accommodation and the training program for boys at Carters' Barracks it has been described as Australia's first special institution for juveniles and a predecessor to the first official reformatory at Point Puer, Tasmania.

Carters' Barracks was provided with four acres of land for the boys to create a market garden. The Barracks became self sufficient in fresh produce and produced enough for the boys, the Benevolent Asylum which was located next door, and excess to sell to the market.

Governor Darling ordered an inquiry into the institution, which was conducted by his aide Thomas de la Condamine. As a result, in February 1826, Darling instructed closer supervision of the boys to commence.

The Boys Dormitory and trade program was a contentious issue amongst society. An article in *The Sydney Monitor* (1832) argued that the boys would be better put to use on farms in the country as labourers where they wouldn't be exposed to drunkenness or gambling, there would be little to steal and they would be separated.

The closure of the Boys Dormitory at Carters' Barracks, around 1834, is largely attributed to institutional failings. The harsh regime was criticised and the grouping of young criminals together was thought to have harmful influences. The closure was a slow process, with new boys not being admitted but the Barracks continuing to operate until every boy had been fully trained and placed in suitable employment.

Part of Carters' Barracks was turned into a Debtor's Prison from 7 December 1835 while the rest of the property continued to accommodate convict men (presumably including young men under 18 years of age). By 1848 the Government had approved the Irish Sisters of Charity running a training facility for women in the building. The organisation was called the House of the Good Shepherd.

In 1848 the remaining convicts at Carters' Barracks were transferred to the penal establishment at Cockatoo Island and the building was adapted into an immigration depot.

Gallery



Plan Of Sydney With Pyrmont 1836

Description: This section of the Plan of Sydney with Pyrmont shows the location of Carters' Barracks.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Secretary to the Governor \(26 Jan 1788 - 1 Jan 1821\)](#)
Date: 1820 - 1821
- [Colonial Secretary \(1 Jan 1821 - 1 April 1959\)](#)
Date: 1821 - 1835

Related Organisations

- [Benevolent Asylum, Sydney \(1821 - 1901\)](#)
Carters' Barracks, Boys Dormitory provided fresh produce to the Benevolent Asylum from the market garden they worked on.
- [Point Puer \(1834 - 1849\)](#)
- [House of the Good Shepherd \(1848 - 1901\)](#)
House of the Good Shepherd was located in the former building of Carters' Barracks, Boys Dormitory.

Records

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

Records held by other organisations

- [House of Correction, Carters Barracks: registers of convicts \(1837 - 1841\)](#)
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