

Redruth Girls' Reformatory

1897 – 1922

Other Names: • The Protestant Reformatory for Girls

Details

Redruth Girls' Reformatory was established by the government in 1897 in the former Redruth Gaol outside Burra. When the Girls' Reformatory, Edwardstown closed, Protestant girls were sent to Redruth and Catholic girls to the Catholic Girls' Reformatory, Kapunda. In 1909 girls from Kapunda were also moved to Redruth. In 1922 the government closed the Redruth reformatory and the girls were sent to the Salvation Army run, Barton Vale Girls' Home.

In 1897 the South Australian Government began renovations and additions to the disused Redruth Gaol near Burra in preparation for it to be used as a Reformatory for Protestant girls. All girls had been accommodated at the Girls' Reformatory, Edwardstown, since 1891, but it was decided that girls of different religious denominations should be separated. Both the Catholic and Protestant groups were sent to country areas, where it was hoped escapes would become less of a problem. Catholic girls were sent to the Catholic Girls' Reformatory at Kapunda. In January 1898 the first 30 Protestant girls were transferred from Edwardstown to Redruth along with the resident matron, Mary Elizabeth Holden. She remained there until her retirement in 1909. A permanent historical display at the now heritage listed building reports that her time was 'one of the most lively periods of the reformatory'. During those first 12 years there were forty escapes, a suicide attempt and a fire which destroyed the laundry building.

The second matron, Elizabeth Price, came from the Catholic Girls' Reformatory, Kapunda, which closed in November 1909. The 11 girls still resident there accompanied her to Redruth. The 1909 Annual Report of the State Children's Council provides a snapshot of life at the reformatory. Twenty one girls were in residence. Five girls were newly admitted, one for larceny, two charged as uncontrollable, one under unfit guardianship and the last because of failure to pay a fine. Many girls were readmitted, mostly from Edwardstown Industrial School or the Salvation Army Girls' Home at Fullarton. Those that were discharged or transferred mostly went into service or returned to the Industrial School. Others were admitted to a Lying-in home, meaning that they were due to give birth. During their time at Redruth girls were constantly employed at various jobs including sewing (mostly for all the government institutions), knitting, laundry work and caring for poultry.

The final matron, Edith Bubb, remained at the reformatory until its closure in 1922. That year the Government decided that the Redruth gaol was not a suitable building or location for a reformatory. The remaining 11 girls, aged from 13 to 20, were transferred to the newly opened Barton Vale Girls' Home, run by the Salvation Army under the supervision of the State Children's Council.

Gallery



Redruth Gaol, Burra

Description: This image shows the building that housed Redruth Girls' Reformatory between 1897 and 1922. The library description states: Redruth Gaol, Burra was erected in 1856 and was the first gaol in South Australia outside of Adelaide. It cost 3200 pounds. It was reopened in 1897 as a girls reformatory after the prisoners were transferred to Gladstone Gaol.

More info

Chronology

- Girls' Reformatory, Edwardstown (1891 - 1898)
 - **Redruth Girls' Reformatory (1897 – 1922)**
 - Barton Vale Girls' Home (1922 - 1947)

Related Entries

Run by

- [State Children's Council \(1886 - 1927\)](#)
Date: 1897 - 1922

Related Organisations

- [Catholic Girls' Reformatory, Kapunda \(1897 - 1909\)](#)
When the Girls' Reformatory, Edwardstown, closed Protestant girls were sent to Redruth Girls' Reformatory and Catholic girls to the Catholic Girls' Reformatory, Kapunda. Upon its closure in 1909 girls from the Catholic Girls' Reformatory, Kapunda, were transferred to the Redruth Girls' Reformatory.
Date: 1897 - 1909
- [Girls' Probationary School \(1901 - 1945\)](#)
Some girls from Redruth Girls' Reformatory were sent to the Girls' Probationary School
- [Catholic Girls' Home Parkside \(1930 - 1943\)](#)
Many of the Catholic girls sent from Barton Vale Girls' Home to the Catholic Girls' Home Parkside had previously been at the Redruth Girls' Reformatory.

Resources

- [Girls' Reformatory, Redruth](#), Burra Record, 19 July 1922
- Spence, Catherine, *State children in Australia : a history of boarding out and its developments*, 1907

Records

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

Records

- [Records of the Social Welfare Department and predecessors \(1849 - c. 1987\)](#)
- [Minutes - Ladies' Committee, State Children's Council \(1911 - 1916\)](#)
Held by State Records of SA. These brief minutes relate to all aspects of the business of the Ladies' committee. Many relate to the cases of individual children under the care of the Department, including those at the Redruth Girls' Reformatory.

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