

Heavitree Gap Gaol

1904 – 1909

Other Names:

- Common Gaol, Heavitree Gap
- Heavitree Gap Police Station
- Heavitree Gaol

Details

The Heavitree Gap Gaol was Central Australia's first prison. It opened in a small wooden police hut at Heavitree Gap near Alice Springs in 1904. Two teenage boys were among the first prisoners to be committed to the Gaol. The Gaol closed in 1909 and was replaced by the purpose-built Stuart Town Gaol.

The Heavitree Gap Gaol was formally proclaimed Central Australia's first prison in December 1904. It was situated in a small wooden police hut at Heavitree Gap near Alice Springs.

The first prisoners were eight Aboriginal men from Hermannsburg convicted of 'larceny of beef', or cattle killing, in August 1905. Under European law, six of the group were adults, two were juveniles. The two youths, aged 14 and 16, were sentenced to 14 days' hard labour with 20 'strokes of rod'. The gaol's register records that the two boys completed their 14 day term.

Of the adults, 4 were sentenced to 6 months hard labour and 2 to 5 months hard labour. All 6 escaped on the 1st December 1905. They were recaptured on Christmas Day and taken 'at considerable expense to the State' to South Australia. They appeared before the Criminal Court in April 1906 charged with having 'unlawfully assaulted' their gaol guard. Charges against them were dismissed because it could not be proved that they were prisoners at the time the assault occurred. Though free men, they were 'kept by the Government' until they could be 'returned to their own country'. The gaol register records them as being discharged in January and February 1906 respectively, several months before they appeared in court in Adelaide.

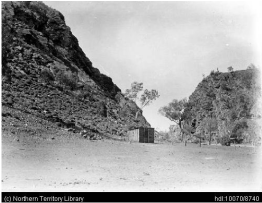
The Heavitree Gap Gaol closed in 1909 when the purpose-built Stuart Town Gaol in Parson's Street, Alice Springs opened.

The wooden hut which served as a gaol at Heavitree Gap no longer exists. Stone buildings associated with the police station at Heavitree Gap were restored in 1971. The area was declared an historical reserve in 1979.

Gallery



Jail at Heavitree Gap



Gaol

Description: The description reads: "Gaol(?) at Heavitree Gap police camp." This photo is undated, the date included is an estimate.

More info

Chronology

- **Heavitree Gap Gaol (1904 – 1909)**
 - Stuart Town Gaol (1909 - 1933)

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