

South Australian  
Heritage Act 1978-80:

**HERITAGE SURVEY**  
**ITEM IDENTIFICATION SHEET**

REGION 6 :  
SOUTH EAST

Item No. : ROB:004  
ITEM NAME: Ruins of Robe Gaol  
Former or other names:

LOCATION:  
Address: Harbour's Board  
Reserve, near Robe

Allotment:  
Section : 533  
Hundred : Waterhouse  
County : Robe  
L.G.A. : Robe

S.H.P. Region: 6  
A.M.G., Ref. Z: 54 N: 5886700  
E: 388750

TYPE OF ITEM:

Description: Gaol  
Subject: 3.05  
Period: 1860-1880  
Date: 1860-61 Condition: Ruins  
Architect: Col. Arch. - William Hanson  
Builder: James McEnhill

STATUS State Heritage List: Registered  
National Estate : Listed  
National Trust : Classified

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

RECOMMENDATION: State

Description:

Remnants of stone walls with corbelled parapet wall.

Built largely by local masons such as George Hailes, Levi Cooper and Sandy Park. Noted for its ornamental features. Served as a gaol until 1881 when prisoners were transferred to Mount Gambier. Much of the structure was torn down for road metal. 'Originally intended to serve the whole of the Lower South East it became redundant as the inland population grew and the ports declined.' (A. Barrowman).

Report Text:

REFERENCES: K. Bermingham, "Gateway to the South East" pp. 175, 176  
A. Barrowman, "Souvenir of Historic Robe"

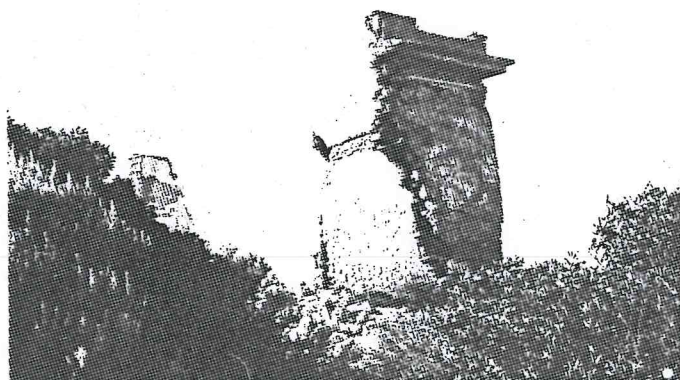
Verbal:

PHOTOGRAPHS:

Slide No : 21/10  
Film No : 23  
Negative No: 2

Archival No: B332 (1918)  
B2207 (1924)  
B6385 (1934)

DANVERS ARCHITECTS Date: 1983



404  
S.A. Archives 871 - Colonial Architect Out Letter Book

1859 May 11 205/59 Commissioner of Public Works. Designs for following works - Gaol at Port Robe £3000. Only half the gaol is to be built at present. The yard and cells for male prisoners and quarters for one gaoler.

1860 May 4 258/60 To J. McEnhill, Robe Town. Permission to use dressed stone instead of brick for certain parts of gaol if saving is effected and quality of work shall be in no wise deteriorated by the alteration.

May 17 278/60 To Wm. Crawford, Robe Town (difficult to read) Robe Town Gaol ... The front entrance arch should be four half bricks ... rings with keystone of good hard freestone - see that proper hanging stones are used for the ... Mr. McEnhill must use brick as specified.

1862 103/62 A gaol has been built at Robe Town, part of which is completed - £1600. Required for completion: £1000.

1863 Estimates p.436. Completing gaol. Present building unsafe and inadequate.

Sept. 28 336/63 To Mr. Coulthard, Mt. Gambier. The chimneys of Robe Town Gaol and the small rooms for gaolers are to be done at once.

1864 Jan. 4 464/63 To Commissioner of Public Works. The building as tendered, two wards, male and female, only one side has been built. Recommend one side (male ward) be built.

1875 Report on Robe Gaol. This building is very insecure for the safe custody of prisoners. Absolutely necessary that building be completed.

S.A. Archives 871 - Index to Out Letter Book of Engineer & Architect 1861-64 p.96

1861 Mar. 28 M36/61 To Mr. McEnhill. Re completion of gaol at Robe Town.

S.A. Archives 872 - Index to Letter Book (Out) Colonial Architect 1849-78 p.289

1860 July 5 Reporting completion of gaol.

Ref. Parl. Paper No. 48 of 1864 p.2; Parl. Paper No. 41 of 1863 p.3; Parl. Paper No. 25 of 1861 p.8; Parl. Paper No. 25 of 1862 p.38; Archives 878 p.108; S.A. Gazette 14/3/61 p.217; Observer 1881 vol. 1 p.986d.

Built in 1860/1 for £1959 by James McEnhill. Opened on 14/3/1861. Only half the original design was proceeded with, and for years there were complaints of the inadequacy of the building. There were only four cells and it was easy for prisoners to escape. There was no special accommodation for women prisoners or for the infliction of solitary confinement.

A proposal to close it in 1870 was vigorously resisted. It was actually closed on 1 June 1881, the prisoners being transferred to Mt. Gambier.

Advertiser 27 June 1931

Robe had an imposing gaol with walls 15 ft. high, four strong cellars, turnkey's apartments, a court yard and a large quadrangle.



Parliamentary Paper No. 33 of 1859 p.10

E. A. HAMILTON, Archt.

Works for ensuing year - Robe Town Gaol £1500. Drawings in hand.

Parliamentary Paper No. 31 of 1860 p.6

Returns for six months ended 31 Dec. 1859 - Robe Town Gaol - no work commenced.

Parliamentary Paper No. 25 of 1861 p.9

W. Hanson, Archt.

Yearly returns to 31 Dec. 1860 - Robe Town Gaol expenditure to date £1071.

Parliamentary Paper No. 25 of 1862 p.38

Return of works for year 1861 - Robe Town Gaol - completed. Expended during year £459/4/11

S.A. Archives A609 - Schedule of Government buildings showing their condition, etc of repair etc. and all requirements for year ending 30 June 1

Robe Gaol - Date of erection: 1860  
Walls: stone Roof: iron  
How occupied: prisoners  
Area of building: 2228 superficial feet  
Area of land - allotment: 16758 feet  
Repairs, additions & painting: 275

S.A. Archives Newspaper Cuttings Vol. 2 p.52 - Chronicle 4 February 1837

The cost of the gaol at Robe was placed on the estimates in 1859. Tenders were called for the first portion of the gaol, including a small receiving yard, cells and the keeper's residence, towards the end of 1859. George Hailes was the successful tenderer and the early part of 1860 saw the walls well on the way. In the papers of those days the site is described as about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile from the town and near the point on which the obelisk stands. This reference fixes the approximate date of the obelisk.

While the building was in course of erection such shoddy work was being put into the walls that a civil servant called attention to it, and although this resulted in some improvement, the final result was not very satisfactory. After two prisoners had escaped by picking their way through the walls with a hook from a window fastening, the outer walls of the cells were reinforced with boiler plates, some of which can be seen to this day. These are said to have come from the Admella wreck. The gaol remained open until 1870 when it was closed. However, it reopened in 1872 and remained open until 1881 when it was finally closed.

A large portion of the old building has been used by the local district council for road making purposes, and the councillors were about to deal with what remained in the same way when the residents rose up in protest.

UNRECORDED  
FILMED



perate adventures in which he was engaged, to which further allusion is unnecessary. He rose to be Inspector, and rendered excellent service in checking the lawless careers of many criminals who chose South Australia as their hunting-ground.

When Governor Hindmarsh left the colony—and with him went his marine guard—the peace-loving citizens complained that they had no adequate protection. The numerical strength of the police force was affected by the financial fluctuations of the times, and at certain periods the strain upon it was very severe. Its officers, however, always maintained a high ideal, and when the need for special services came upon it in 1852 the police force was equal to the emergency. If there was a tragedy in the pursuit and capture of bushrangers, the gold escort was a veritable romance. Organized and led by Captain Tolmer, the Commissioner of Police, a body of mounted troopers, month after month, performed the journey from the Victorian goldfields, through hundreds of miles of wilderness, plunging through swamps, fording rivers, traversing rugged ranges, and at times with the greedy eyes of notorious robbers fixed upon them and the treasure in their charge. Frequently a ton of gold was thus conveyed—the gold brought by one party was worth close on £200,000—and in all £2,000,000 worth of the precious metal was brought from the goldfields to Adelaide.

The wide territory over which police supervision has

to be exercised, and the multifarious calls on the representative of law and order, often impose extremely arduous duties upon them in outlying stations. Journeys of hundreds of miles are taken as "all in the day's work," and much genuine exploring work has been done by the force. Latterly, moreover, the tendency has been to impose duties on policemen that differ very widely from those of guardians of the public safety. Thus, they are in turn sometimes inspectors, clerks, registrars, census collectors, and the like. In his latest report the Commissioner states that the duties performed by the police are still increasing in number. Five police prisons were established during the previous year, and the officers in charge of police stations at those places were appointed keepers. The work is also increased by the cutting up of large estates for closer settlement.

The present Commissioner, Coloney Madley, and the present Secretary, who has also been Acting-Commissioner, have held their positions for the last ten years. The force (mounted and foot) consists of 2 Inspectors, 5 Sub-Inspectors, 15 Sergeants, 17 Corporals, and 330 constables. There are 18 native policemen, 2 camels, 252 horses, and 50 bicycles. The conduct of the force is exemplary, and physically a finer body of men it would be extremely difficult to find. The monthly parade through the main street of the city is always a sight worth seeing.

## GAOLS AND PRISONS.

Near the north-west angle of the City of Adelaide there stands a massive stone structure, which is familiar to all travellers by railway, and needs no advertisement of its character. It is situated close to the point where the lines from the north and those from the south converge, and whence the trains have a straight run into the Adelaide Station. As it lies between these routes it irresistibly attracts the attention of visitors to the city, and its rounded towers at the corners of the lofty, windowless walls, with the tiers of loose bricks between them, proclaim its purpose. An olive plantation, which is bisected by the southern line of railway, forms part of its grounds, neat garden plots are also in sight, and there are other evidences of industry, but no one could possibly mistake it for a private mansion or a manufactory, or, indeed, for anything else but a gaol.

This building is a reminder of bygone times. It was commenced in the days when Colonel Gawler was Governor of South Australia. He found himself under a supposed necessity of providing employment for a large number of emigrants who could not otherwise obtain support for themselves and their families, and the expenditure he incurred in its erection formed a count in the indictment that was brought against him for reckless extravagance. Possibly a smaller and less costly edifice might

have served the purpose for the time, but it is doubtful if it would have been more economical in the end, and there were considerations present to the Governor's mind which should not be overlooked. Members of the criminal class were being attracted to South Australia, and could not be excluded; many of them were desperate characters, and it was necessary to provide for their secure custody when apprehended; the population was increasing; the existing accommodation for prisoners was inadequate, thirty persons being thrust into a building that was only designed for eight, and its insecurity was proved by outbreaks and escapes. It should be understood, moreover, that the building then erected was only a part of the present gaol, which has been added to from time to time, and now contains separate cells for 200 prisoners, and accommodation for 360 where more than one prisoner sleeps in a single cell.

The second gaol to be erected in South Australia was at the township of Redruth, near the famous Burra Burra Mine. For many years this was the only establishment of its kind in the north, and received offenders against the law from many and distant places. Its usefulness for that purpose was superseded when the Gladstone and Port Augusta gaols were built, and it may be regarded as a testimony to the law-abiding character of



the local population that for considerable periods the officials exceeded in number the persons under their charge. Such being the case the wise course was adopted of utilizing the premises with more advantage in another way, and they are now employed as a Girls' Reformatory in connection with the State Children's Department.

Second in size and extent of accommodation to the Adelaide Gaol is that at Gladstone, which was erected about the year 1888. It contains provision for 62 prisoners in separate cells, and for 186 persons where more than one person slept in a single cell, but happily only a comparatively small percentage of these numbers has ever been under confinement at one time.

The Port Augusta Gaol is less than half the size of the Gladstone establishment, having 30 cells and accommodation for 42 prisoners all told. The Mount Gambier Gaol is still smaller, for, though it has provision for an equal number of persons, on an emergency, there are only 14 separate cells. In the Wallaroo Gaol there are 7 separate cells, and in the gaol at Port Lincoln only 4. The country gaols, therefore, are by no means extensive in their provision, and it is satisfactory to observe that they are more than adequate to the demands made upon them.

An Act of Parliament was passed during the session of 1905 to provide for the establishment of police prisons. It made provision for the appointment of any police station as a police prison, and power was given to any properly constituted Court, when awarding imprisonment for a term not exceeding one month, to direct that the sentence should take effect at the nearest police prison in lieu of the nearest gaol. The intention was not to appoint many such police prisons, but only to proclaim outlying places, where police stations are situated, and where the police officers could be gaolers. The policy was that offenders who were sentenced to imprisonment for drunkenness and minor offences, or for short periods of imprisonment in default of payment of small fines, should serve their sentences in police prisons. It was expected that considerable saving would be effected by doing away with transport and escort expenses, and that not much additional accommodation would be required. Under the provisions of the Act police prisons have been established at Tarcoola, Fowler Bay, Streaky Bay, Renmark, and Kingscote.

The Yatala Labour Prison occupies an excellent site a few miles to the north of Adelaide, overlooking the plains and the gulf, and is connected with the city by a railway which branches off the north line at Dry Creek. It was formerly known as the Stockade, and the term was at first sufficiently descriptive, but in the course of years the buildings have been enlarged and adapted in harmony with modern penological architecture. Provision is made for 409 prisoners in separate cells and for 20 in wards or cells adapted for more than one prisoner,

and it is a comfort to know that the prison is rarely much more than a quarter full. As to the labour performed, the majority of the prisoners are employed in the quarries raising and breaking stone, and work is found for a limited number as carpenters, blacksmiths, shoemakers, laundrymen, etc., etc.

During the history of the prison numerous attempts to escape have been made by the convicts, the most serious and determined of which occurred in March, 1904. Nine notorious prisoners, most of whom were in irons, made a simultaneous dash for liberty from three separate quarries. There is no doubt that the plan was pre-arranged and so carefully concealed that the prison officials were taken entirely by surprise. The would-be escapees promptly scattered so as to divide and distract their pursuers. The Adelaide police were promptly summoned, but their services were not required. The prison officials were so smart and active that within two hours they had captured the whole of the nine without external assistance. During the intervening hunt rifles and revolvers were freely used, but by a miracle of bad marksmanship not a man was hit. The Sheriff frankly regretted the ineffective shooting, believing that if some of the prisoners had been disabled other attempts to escape would have been discouraged, and he promptly arranged for the guards to have rifle and revolver practice at a target. Magazine rifles were subsequently issued to the guards, and a regular weekly practice is kept up.

The principal outdoor work performed at the Labour Prison is in quarrying stone and preparing it for delivery. It is said to be rough at first on persons whose hands are soft, and who have never engaged in any manual employment, but they soon become accustomed to it, and perform their allotted tasks with as much cheerfulness as can be expected. The output, in terms of both measurement and weight, in the year 1905 included 8,634 yards of stone, and in addition about 6,661 tons. Much of this was supplied to the Outer Harbour works, a portion for buildings at Port Adelaide and adjacent towns, and the remainder for the maintenance of district roads.

The indoor work is of a miscellaneous character, and much of it consists in making or mending articles required for prison use, which would otherwise have to be purchased. The list includes 146 pairs of boots made and 569 pairs of boots repaired, 633 flannels and drawers made and 2,535 repaired, 910 trousers and 1,330 shirts repaired. Besides these are a host of articles required in such an establishment, besides painting, whitewashing, etc. The total indicates that the prison maintains its right to be known by its distinguishing name.

The gaols and prisons are included in the Department of the Sheriff, Mr. Otto Heinrich Schomburgk, who is Comptroller of the Labour Prison. The Super-



intendent of that establishment is Mr. Thomas Farrell, who was formerly keeper of the Adelaide Gaol. The present keeper of the Adelaide Gaol is Mr. George W. H. Norcock, who previously served in the same capacity at Palmerston. The keepers of the country gaols are as follows:—Gladstone, Mr. Robert McDonald; Port Augusta, Mr. Frederick S. Becker; Mount Gambier, Mr. Samuel R. Criddle; Wallaroo, Mr. Charles W. Hardy; Port Lincoln, Mr. Alfred Kelly, Sergeant of Police.

The annual reports of the Sheriff contain internal evidence, apart from specific statements, that the management of the penal establishments is humane and intelligent. The general health of the inmates of the Labour Prison indicates that the sanitation, food supply, etc., are satisfactory. Discipline is maintained, but there are weekly visits paid by visiting justices, when opportunity is given for complaints to be made, and is a safeguard against any continued injustice being perpetrated. Prisoners can hardly be expected to be pampered, and it is significant that when they were dissatisfied with the quality of their potatoes and their supply of tobacco, arrangements were immediately made to obtain a better sample of the one and a different brand of the other.

In reference to the moral welfare of the prisoners, and their opportunity for making a fresh start when their sentences have expired, the latest report of the Sheriff contains the following paragraph:—"Ministers of the various denominations attend the prison regularly. Three services are held on each Sunday, and visits for moral instruction are paid twice a week. Once in each month the Prisoners' Aid Association visits the prison, and provides an excellent entertainment, consisting of vocal and instrumental music. These visits are eagerly looked forward to, and are much appreciated by the prisoners. The Association also renders valuable assistance to prisoners on discharge, by providing them with clothing, and on the recommendation of the indefatigable Secretary, Mr. George Crase, railway passes are supplied to each prisoner on discharge, should he desire to proceed into the country in order to obtain employment. Several prisoners have during the year been provided by the Association with remunerative employment on board ships sailing for England; others have been assisted with money and passes to other States. A list of prisoners due for discharge is regularly furnished

to the Salvation Army, and an officer of that organization attends and interviews the prisoners, with a view to rendering them assistance on their discharge.

The total expenditure for gaols and prisons during the year 1905, including everything, from salaries and supervision to tools, gratuities to prisoners on discharge, and other incidentals, was £14,916. The total amount of cash received and paid into the Treasury for the same term was £1,973. No account is taken or credit allowed for the estimated value of the labour by which economies are effected, and when the cash income is deducted from the total expenditure, it is found that the average annual cost per prisoner is £48 14s. 8d. Every prisoner, therefore, costs the State nearly a pound a week, which is a point to be noted by students of penology.

Those who are interested in this particular science may find abundant material for useful consideration in the tables which are issued with the Sheriff's annual report. On December 31, 1905, there were confined in the Yatala Labour Prison 117 prisoners, and in the Adelaide and country gaols 142, making a total of 259, of whom 29 were females, which was a decrease of 8 as compared with the number on December 31, 1904. The manner in which the habit of criminality operates when once formed is clearly shown by the records of admission. During the year the number of distinct and separate persons admitted was 888 males and 143 females, but some of them returned to custody so often that the gross number of admissions, instead of being 1,031, rose to 1,556. One female was received thirteen separate times, one 11, and one 9, while one male came back 11 times, two 10 times each, and many others several times.

As to the growth or decrease of crime, the fact may be observed that while the daily average for 1905 was 265·60, the number in confinement on the last day of the year was 259. On that date the estimated population of the State was 374,398. Mr. Schomburgk remarks that if the number of persons in the prisons and gaols be compared with the total population, "it will be seen that the proportion of prisoners to each 1,000 of the estimated population was '069, or, in other words, that out of every 1,446 of the general population one was in prison. This is probably the lowest record for any State in the Commonwealth."

## FACTORIES AND EARLY-CLOSING.

The industrial legislation of South Australia includes provision for conciliation in cases of dispute; for the inspection and regulation of factories, and the constitution of Wages Boards and for early closing of shops.

The State Board of Conciliation consists of a President—His Honor Mr. J. G. Russell, I.S.O., S.M.—and six members. Mr. Alexander Buchanan, S.M., is

the Registrar. An account of its proceedings and the action of its President in settling industrial disputes is given in another part of this work.

The Chief Inspector of Factories is Mr. John Bannigan, who was appointed on September 2, 1896. The other officers are a male and a female inspector, and a junior clerk. Much interesting information is supplied

ROBE - GAOL

Ref. Colonial Architect Outgoing Correspondence

205/59 11/5/1859 to Commissioner of Public Works

Designs for following works  
Gaol at Port Robe £3,000.0.0

Only half the gaol at Port Robe is to be built at present.  
The yard and cells for Male prisoners and quarters for one  
gaoler.

268/60 4/5/1860 to Mr. M. Enhill, Robe Town

Permission to use dressed stone instead of brick for certain  
parts of Robe Town Gaol if saving is effected and quality of  
work shall be in no wise deteriorated by the alteration.

276/60 17/5/1860 to Mr. Wm. Crawford, Robe Town

Robe Town Gaol ... The front entrance arch should be four  
half bricks ? rings with keystone of good hard freestone -  
see that proper hanging stones are used for the ??  
Mr. Enhill must use brick as specified.

103/62

A gaol has been built at Robe Town part of which is completed.  
£1,600. Require for completion £1,000.



ROBE - GAOL

Ref. Colonial Architect Outgoing Correspondence

1863 Estimates P.436

Completing Gaol - Robe Present building unsafe and inadequate.

336/63 28/9/1863 to Mr. Coulthard (Mt. Gambier)

The chimneys at Robe Town Gaol and the small rooms for gaolers are to be done at once.

464/63 4/1/1864 to Hon. Commissioner of Public Works

The building as tendered, 2 wards, male and female at Robe town only one side has been built. Recommend one side (Male Ward) be built.

1875. Report on Robe Gaol

This building is very insecure for the safe custody of prisoners. Absolutely necessary that building be completed.

Parl. Paper 48 of 1864 p.2, 41 of 1863 p.4, 25 of 1861 p.8, 25 or 1862 p.38;  
Archives 878 p.108; S.A. Gov. Gazette 14/3/61 p.217; Observer 1881 vol. 1 p. 986d.

Built in 1860/1 for £1,959 by James McEnhill. Opened on 14/3/1861. Only half the original design was proceeded with, and for years there were complaints of the inadequacy of the building. There were only four cells and it was easy for prisoners to escape. There was no special accommodation for women prisoners or for the infliction of solitary confinement.

A proposal to close it in 1870 was vigorously resisted. It was actually closed on 1/6/1881, the prisoners being transferred to Mt. Gambier.

Newspaper Cuttings Vol. 1 p. 263 Advertiser 27/6/1931

Robe had an imposing gaol with walls 15 ft. high, 4 strong cellars, turnkey's apartments, a court yard and a large quadrangle.



DEPARTMENT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD

HERITAGE UNIT

FILM NO.

PHOTOGRAPHIC FIELD DOCUMENTATION RECORD

307.

SITE

PAECHTOWN BARN lot 13 - Gottlob Paech Barn.

TOWN OR AREA

DISTRICT

FILM TYPE Ilford FP4.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Lothar.

CAMERA Rolleiflex.

DATE

NEG.

SUBJECT

9/80.

1

Black.

2

Barn from Paechtoun Rd. - stumps clearly visible

3

Barn from. South-West

4

Detail - S-W. corner.

5

Blank.

6

Main door detail (left wing not orig.)

7

N-W. corner detail





FILM 43  
NO 9

GAOL RUINS  
6823-10262

ROBE  
19-2-79



FILM 43  
NO 10

DETAIL, GAOL RUINS  
6823-10262

ROBE  
19-2-79





FILM 43 OLD GAOL FROM NORTH  
NO 8

ROBE  
19-2-79



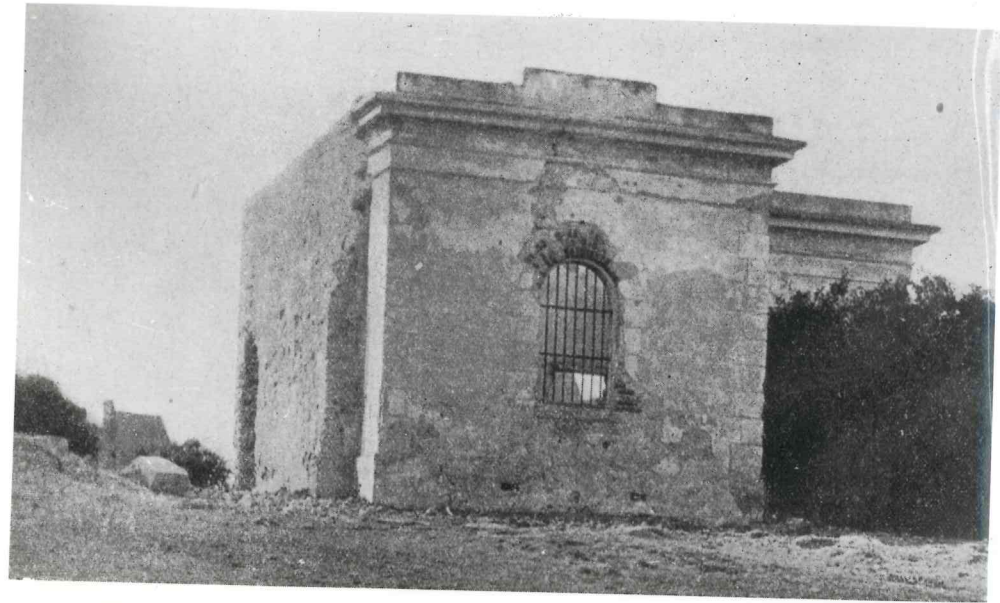






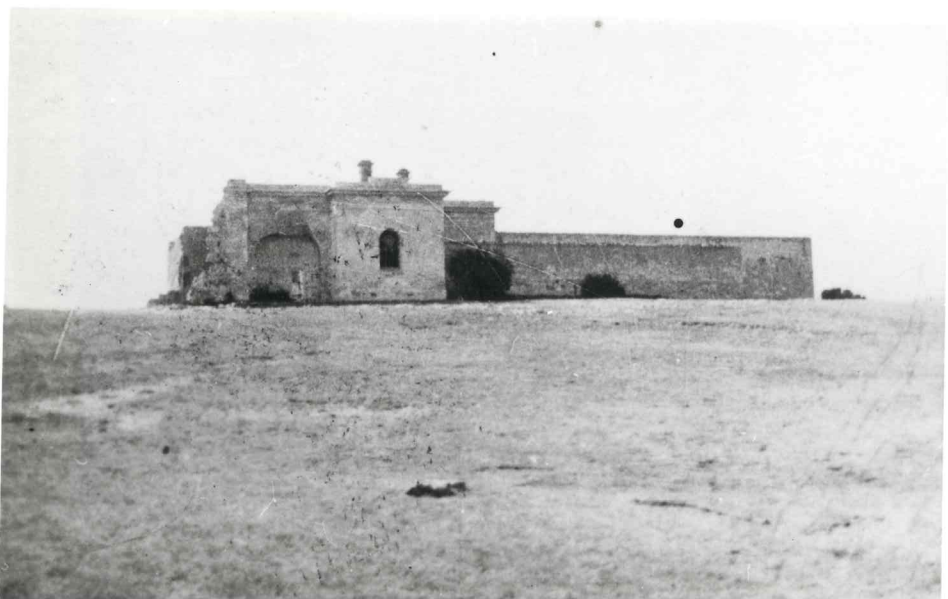


Bobbe: 17-08-81  
at 10:00 am.





Rebe: 17.8.81  
Old Rebe Synag.



Rebe: 17.8.81  
Old Rebe Synag.

