

# HEAVITREE GAP POLICE STATION

Updated: 4<sup>th</sup> June, 2002

The Heavitree Gap Police Station is of significance to the Northern Territory as the first permanent police base in Central Australia.

From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until at least 1927 the Northern Territory Mounted Police did not merely maintain law and order in Central Australia, they also functioned as agents and principal representatives of a distant central government. Their stations were the physical representation of government.

A temporary police camp had been established in 1879 at the Alice Springs Telegraph Station, but the move to the site at Heavitree Gap on 21 April 1886 determined the first permanent police station in the Territory.

Initially, the police station comprised of bough wurleys and a tent for stores. By 1887 a thatched log hut had been added and in the following year an old hut from the Telegraph Station was erected for use as living quarters.

Today, owing to flooding from the Todd River, railway construction and use of the area for Telstra cabling no trace of these early buildings remain.

1888 saw the erection of a store (possibly of slab and stone) and a two roomed, stone and thatched dwelling with a verandah all around. The latter forms the nucleus of the existing stone building.

By 1893 the buildings were roofed with iron and the police station contained an office, kitchen, two storerooms, a log hut which functioned as a cell, a horse yard, camel yard and a garden.



*Heavitree Gap Police Station c.1993*

In December 1904 Heavitree Gap police station was formally proclaimed a public gaol, prison and house of correction.

As early as 1905 it was apparent that the buildings, in a dilapidated condition, offered inadequate security for confinement of prisoners. Several escapes confirmed this and in September 1909 the Executive Council ordered the closure of the Heavitree Gap gaol and the remaining prisoners were transferred to Stuart Town.

Although all the buildings were then intended for demolition, they remained in use until at least 1940, firstly as the quarters of the Junior Constable and later by the District Stock Inspector. The site was also used as a rations distribution point for the local Aboriginal people.

The buildings continued to degenerate until the commencement of restoration work in 1967 by local builder, John Taylor with works completed by 1971.

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