



Port Arthur Historic Site

TASMANIA

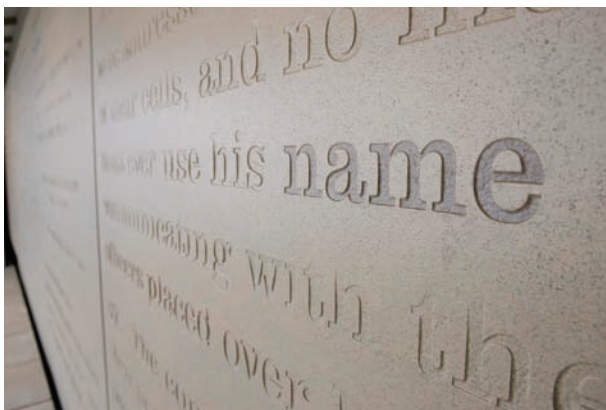


At once beautiful and darkly tragic, Tasmania's Port Arthur Historic Site is a place of contradictions that has helped shape Australia's colonial past.

Hundreds of thousands of visitors each year are drawn to experience the paradox of this brutal penal settlement which sits quietly on the Tasman Peninsula surrounded by verdant lawns and English oaks.

Part of the public fascination with Port Arthur is its many-layered history and the role it has played in shaping aspects of Australian society from the 1830s to the present day.

It was here that many transported and re-offending convicts spent their days. Its isolation and formidable geography gave it a feared reputation. Over time, and after transportation of convicts ended, the buildings were used for many years to accommodate convict invalids, paupers and 'lunatics'. The site has continued to evolve through phases of significant development, decline and change, bushfires, demolitions, constructions, major landscape alterations and restoration work.



The buildings, ruins and other site features that remain today, are now a major tourist attraction and Australia's most vivid and well-known reminder of its convict beginnings. The tragic loss of 35 people at a gunman's hand in 1996 added another emotionally powerful layer to its history and gave it a new national significance and led to Australia's tightened gun laws.

Port Arthur remains a physical chronicle of a dramatic part of Australia's history. Its 60 or so buildings and picturesque landscape offer visitors a challenging mix of both beauty and horror and have helped the site to become Tasmania's most popular tourist destination.

National Heritage List: 3 June 2005

