

# **A COMMUNITY APART:**

A History of Fremantle Prison, 1898-1991.

Norman Megahey, B.A.(Hons)

This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

.....*M. Murgaley*.....

## ABSTRACT

Much of the recent historiography of prisons has tended to focus on prison systems rather than on individual prisons. Much of this historiography also links development of prisons with major transformations in Western society. Michel Foucault, for example, sees the emergence of prisons in the mid-eighteenth century as a re-arrangement of the power to punish, a means of adapting to the emerging structures of modernity. David Rothman argues that the penitentiary was developed in North America in the 1820s as a means of ensuring stability, while Michael Ignatieff links the development of prisons in England with the development of capitalism and the search for a new form of social order to cope with this.

A major problem with these approaches is the tendency to accept official versions at face value and to ignore the realities of the day-to-day organization of prisons. More recently, historians have begun to rectify this shortcoming and have started to scrutinize the experiences of prisoners and prison staff, and to explore the prison world from the inside.

This thesis is an exploration of the world of Fremantle Prison in Western Australia, from 1898 until its closure in 1991. The thesis has two major concerns: to distinguish between official rhetoric and reality, and to bring into focus the experiences of inmates and their keepers. In addressing these concerns the thesis unlocks the prison gates and reveals something of the reality of prison life as both inmates and warders contributed to the shaping of the daily prison regime. A central argument is that throughout its existence

Fremantle Prison was insulated from developments occurring across the rest of the Western Australian prison system. The thesis suggests reasons why this was so.

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**Abbreviations**

AN	Archive Number
B.L.	Battye Library
C.S.O.	Colonial Secretary's Office
OH	Oral History
M.V.& P.	Minutes, Votes and Proceedings of the Western Australian Parliament
W.A.P.O.U.	Western Australian Prison Officers' Union

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