

OLD MELBOURNE GAOL

The building of Melbourne Gaol

.....began in 1841 on a block of scrubland fronting a dirt track that became Russell Street. Before the first cell block opened in 1845, prisoners were kept in a series of inadequate lock-ups from which escapes were frequent. By 1850, the new Gaol was already over crowded.

In 1851, the Port Phillip District became the new Colony of Victoria. The discovery of gold that same year stimulated a massive influx of population, making it hard to maintain law and order. A second cell block was begun at the gaol in 1852 and completed in 1858. This cell block remains today. The gaol continued to expand and once covered an entire city block; it included exercise yards, hospitals, a chapel, a bath house and accommodation for staff.

The Melbourne Gaol closed in 1924. It briefly re-opened during WWII to house military detainees, mainly soldiers who were found to be Absent without Leave. From 1972, the cell block has been open as a museum managed by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria).

Silence and Separation

.....were the two foundations of this gaol's system of punishment and reform. Most prisoners began their time in gaol on the ground floor with a period of solitary confinement. Prisoners were forbidden to communicate with each other and were required to wear a silence mask whenever they left their cells. Prisoners were locked in these small cells 23 hours each day, with an hour for solitary exercise. Prisoners could bathe and change their clothes weekly and attend chapel each Sunday. A bible was provided to encourage better behaviour.

Routines in the gaol were regulated by bells and enforced by punishment. Prisoners who demonstrated that they could keep the prison rules were moved to cells on the second floor from which they could go to work in the yards each day. On the third level the large communal cells housed debtors, trusted prisoners and those nearing release.

TOP FLOOR

On this floor, learn about the experiences of women and children in the gaol and the role of the gaol in WWII. See the whipping triangle on which male prisoners were punished for unacceptable behaviour. In cell 9, find the story of Colin Ross, hanged for a crime we now believe he did not commit.

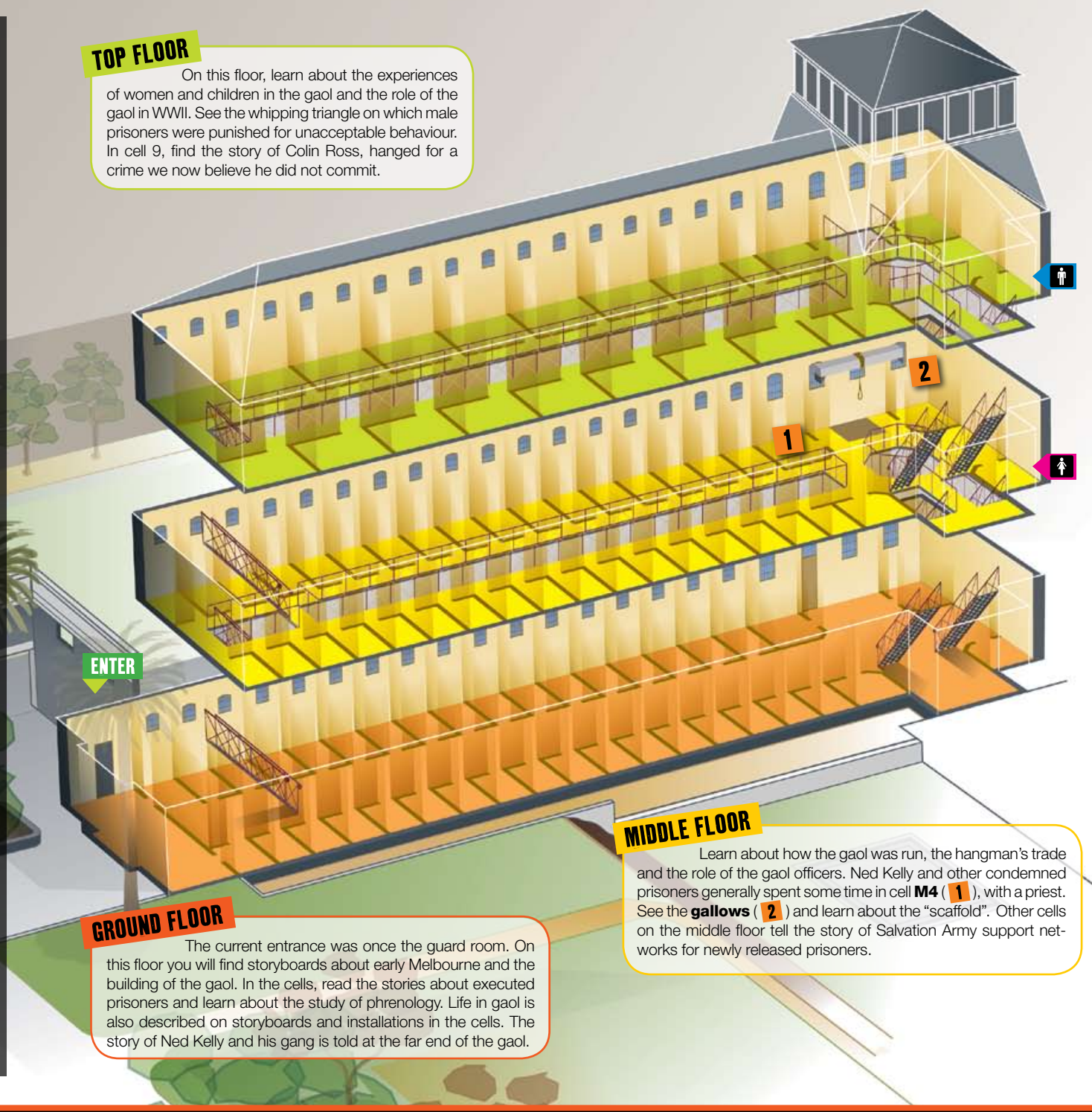
ENTER

GROUND FLOOR

The current entrance was once the guard room. On this floor you will find storyboards about early Melbourne and the building of the gaol. In the cells, read the stories about executed prisoners and learn about the study of phrenology. Life in gaol is also described on storyboards and installations in the cells. The story of Ned Kelly and his gang is told at the far end of the gaol.

MIDDLE FLOOR

Learn about how the gaol was run, the hangman's trade and the role of the gaol officers. Ned Kelly and other condemned prisoners generally spent some time in cell M4 (1), with a priest. See the gallows (2) and learn about the "scaffold". Other cells on the middle floor tell the story of Salvation Army support networks for newly released prisoners.



OLD MELBOURNE GAOL
Crime & Justice Experience



NATIONAL TRUST



OLD MELBOURNE GAOL (CELL BLOCK)

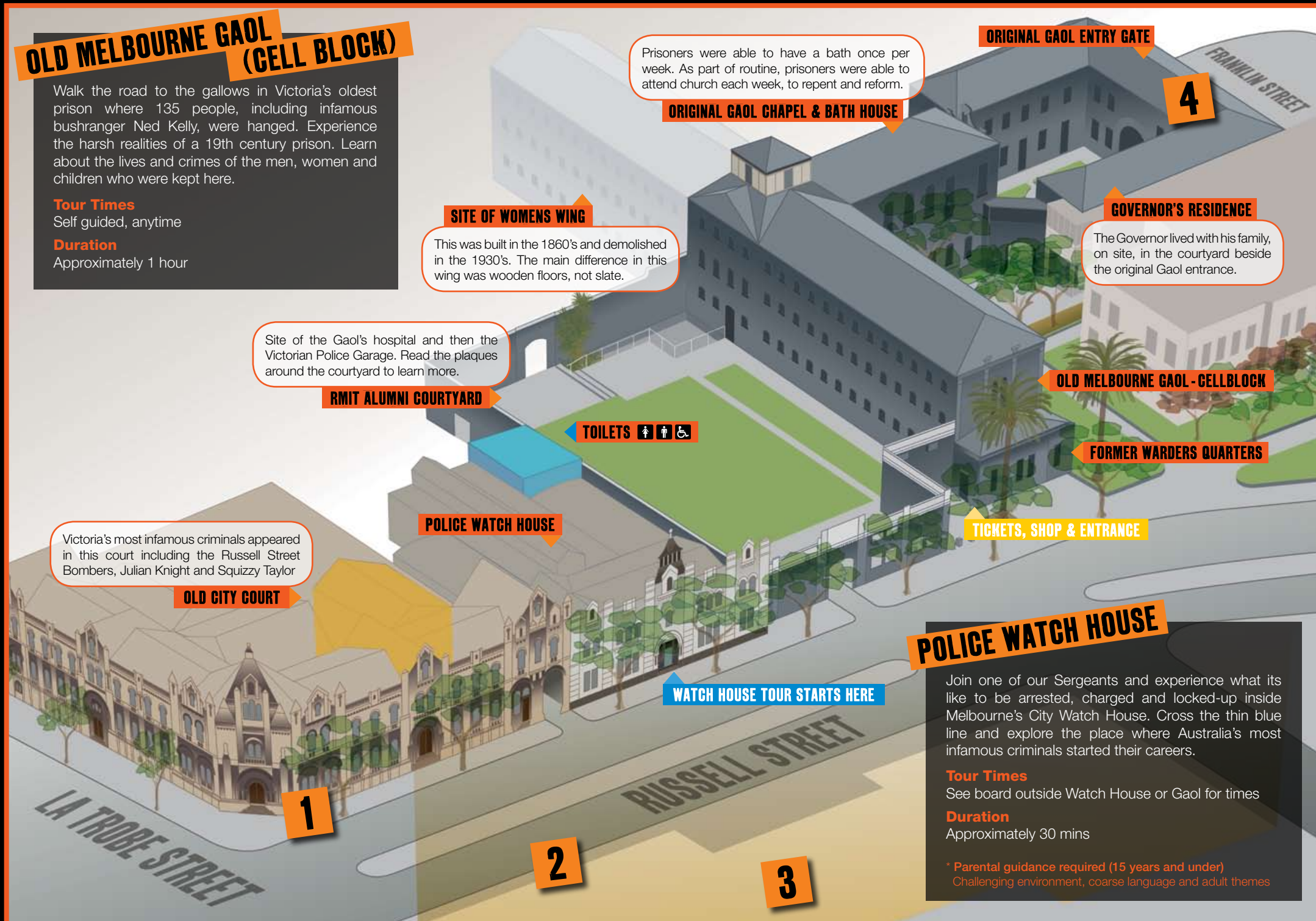
Walk the road to the gallows in Victoria's oldest prison where 135 people, including infamous bushranger Ned Kelly, were hanged. Experience the harsh realities of a 19th century prison. Learn about the lives and crimes of the men, women and children who were kept here.

Tour Times

Self guided, anytime

Duration

Approximately 1 hour



SITE OF WOMENS WING

This was built in the 1860's and demolished in the 1930's. The main difference in this wing was wooden floors, not slate.

Prisoners were able to have a bath once per week. As part of routine, prisoners were able to attend church each week, to repent and reform.

ORIGINAL GAOL CHAPEL & BATH HOUSE

ORIGINAL GAOL ENTRY GATE

4

GOVERNOR'S RESIDENCE

The Governor lived with his family, on site, in the courtyard beside the original Gaol entrance.

Site of the Gaol's hospital and then the Victorian Police Garage. Read the plaques around the courtyard to learn more.

RMIT ALUMNI COURTYARD

TOILETS ♀ ♂ ♿

OLD MELBOURNE GAOL - CELLBLOCK

FORMER WARDERS QUARTERS

TICKETS, SHOP & ENTRANCE

POLICE WATCH HOUSE

WATCH HOUSE TOUR STARTS HERE

Victoria's most infamous criminals appeared in this court including the Russell Street Bombers, Julian Knight and Squizzy Taylor

OLD CITY COURT

POLICE WATCH HOUSE

Join one of our Sergeants and experience what its like to be arrested, charged and locked-up inside Melbourne's City Watch House. Cross the thin blue line and explore the place where Australia's most infamous criminals started their careers.

Tour Times

See board outside Watch House or Gaol for times

Duration

Approximately 30 mins

* Parental guidance required (15 years and under)
Challenging environment, coarse language and adult themes

1

2

3

DID YOU KNOW?

1* Court Complex

The Old Magistrates' complex opened in 1913 and closed in 1994. The unique and creative style of the building draws heavily from the Norman Romanesque aspects of Canterbury and Peterborough Cathedrals in England. The design was considered to be controversial at the time and was heavily criticised.

2* Russell St Bomb

On 27 March, 1986 a stolen car loaded with about fifty sticks of gelignite was parked outside the main door of the Russell Street police station where it exploded, killing Constable Angela Taylor and injuring twenty-two other police and civilians. A group of armed robbers with a pathological hatred for the police were held responsible, two of whom, Stanley Taylor and Craig Minogue, were convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment for Constable Taylor's murder.

3* Police HQ

At ten stories, with a tall radio mast and a striking cream brick art deco façade, the former Police Headquarters built in 1943 and closed by 1994 became a Melbourne landmark. Commonly known as 'D.24' after the police communications centre it housed, it also graced the opening scenes of the long running police television serial Homicide.

4* Original Gaol Gate on Franklin St

Prisoner Anne Miniver Davis stole clothes belonging to the wife of the Governor and wearing these, took advantage of the confusion brought about by the opening day of Ned Kelly's trial to walk out this main gate undetected in 1880. She remained at large for 3 years before being recaptured and returned to the Gaol.

* Refer to map for locations