

History

In 1824, the Governor of New South Wales, Sir Thomas Brisbane, gave instructions to establish a new penal settlement in Moreton Bay. Re-offending convicts from New South Wales were sent to remote stations to do the most menial labour on a rigidly-set, monotonous and minimum diet. Punishment was the focus of the new, secondary penal stations.

The Commissariat's primary role was to procure, store and distribute provisions to the military, convicts and colonists. The Commissariat also controlled the supply of hospital requisites and equipment, customs and banking. This stone building, commissioned by Commandant Patrick Logan, was completed in 1829.

In 1839 the costly penal settlement was effectively closed and the bulk of the convict population removed. The Store became a land sales office and then a depot for immigrants unable to be accommodated in the former Military Barracks. A separate kitchen building was constructed in the yard.

In 1860 the building was renamed the Colonial Stores. The first floor was converted into a police barracks, while the ground floor remained a storeroom. An inventory of supplies listed items such as cutlery, paper, candles, police clothing, saddlery and blankets for the Aborigines. Later, a brick storekeeper's cottage, saddle store, stables and stationery annex were constructed in the yard.

From the mid-1880s the building was converted into sundry government offices and renamed the Government Stores. Various additions were constructed to provide more workspace. A third storey, approached by a gangway from William Street, was added in 1913.

Following renovations in 1978, the building became the headquarters of The Royal Historical Society of Queensland in 1981.

Commissariat Store

A museum built by convicts
115 William Street, Brisbane

Opening hours:

Tuesday - Friday

10am - 4pm

Closed on public holidays



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Group tours by arrangement



RHSQ

The Royal Historical Society of Queensland

COMMISSARIAT
STORE
MUSEUM



Ground floor

The Brisbane tuff blocks from which the building is constructed were quarried from the cliffs at nearby Kangaroo Point and laid with the distinctive iron-stained surfaces exposed. Sandstone for the cornerstones, footings, sills and lintels was obtained near Oxley Creek.

The moulded plaque, located beneath the exterior gable and above the front doors, is inscribed with the royal cypher of King George IV and the date 1829 signifying the year of the building's completion.

The mortar in the outside retaining wall dates from 1828 and shows small pieces of shell in the limestone composition. Convicts collected, crushed and burned the shells, which then were mixed with sand to make a lime mortar. Mortar used later in the construction of the building was sourced from Limestone Hill at Ipswich.

The bars in the windows secured the building's contents and were hand-forged at the blacksmith shop located within the lumberyard.

The ground floor interior contains convict and penal settlement banners and hangings depicting the earliest period.

Irregular tool marks can be found on the coarse worked sandstone, best seen around the windows. Similar marks can be seen again on the first floor.

Adze marks are evident on the eight timber bearers that support the first floor. Pit saw marks, the random grooves produced by hand sawing, are evident on most of the hardwood joists, sills and lintels. The grooves stand in contrast to the regular radial marks of a circular saw evident on replacement joists.

The scale models of the Moreton Bay Penal Colony circa 1837 are based on the drawings by Andrew Petrie, Foreman of Works at this time. The green painted perimeter flooring represents the location of the Brisbane River in relation to the models.

A grid numbering system on the floor shows the location of artefacts such as coins, rodent bones, ammunition, nails and buttons found under the original flooring. The remains of the original brick underground drainage system can be seen through the clear acrylic panel on the floor near the original front door.

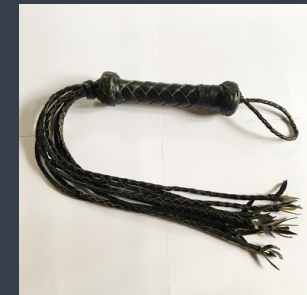


First floor

Glass showcases contain period items reflecting early Brisbane. The displays are changed on a regular basis.

Hanging wall exhibits reflect a growing Brisbane during the time of free settlement from 1842 and include such topics as immigration, exploration and expansion leading to separation from New South Wales.

The windowsills show evidence of having been pit sawn, and carry marks from being used as a cutting surface when the building was an Immigration Depot.



Second floor

A second floor was constructed in 1913 to provide additional government office space with direct access to William Street. The existing roof was dismantled and re-erected over the new storey.

The head office of the RHSQ and Welsby Library are on this floor. Exhibits designed to give visitors an overview of Queensland's history are rotated through the display case.