Confinement, at least of the penal variety, is part of Australia’s traditional psyche. Ever since Governor Phillip sailed into Port Jackson with the transports of the First Fleet, the convict ‘stain’ has been with this nation. Australia was a place of confinement.

This issue of Historic Environment explores not only those accepted convict origins but expands the definition of ‘confinement’ to include criminal confinement, racial confinement, psychiatric confinement and even migrant confinement.

Mike Pearson provides an excellent introduction considering Australia’s convict past as part of a global event, while Eleanor Casella looks at female confinement at the Ross Female Factory in Tasmania. Roger Beeston presents a look at Bendigo Gaol, both for itself and as a building type in Victoria. Michal Bosworth and Amanda Jean, in their article on gaols and lock-ups in the north-west of Western Australia, discuss the disturbing legacy of the confining of Australia’s Indigenous inhabitants. Anne Willis from Museum Victoria has prepared a fascinating look into methods and impacts of confinement in asylums in Victoria and, to complete this issue, Peter Freeman reminds us of the less than sensitive ‘confinement’ of New Australians at the Bonegilla Migrant Hostel during the post war migrant period.

There is an unintentional inclination towards Victoria in the subject matter and authors in this issue. This was entirely coincidental and does not reflect any particular obsession with, or requirement to, confine the citizens of Victoria!

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