

HM SHREWSBURY PRISON



EARLY YEARS

- Prison located in grounds of Castle Fortress
- 1536 this became insecure
- 1588 It appears (no firm evidence) the prison was built between the two sets of castle gates in buildings now known as Windsor Square
- 1702 New goal and house of correction built in two separate units
- 1786 goal and buildings condemned

LORD HOWARD

- The Penal reformer visited the two prisons in 1774 and 1776 to assess conditions.
- He ordered improvements – prior to his visit bread was the only food supplied and straw the only bedding.
- His bust set over the prison entrance – a gift from magistrates to acknowledge his service.
- The street leading up to the NEW prison is also named after him.



CURRENT PRISON SITE

- On this site since 1793 – Original building constructed by Jonathan Scoltock, with Thomas Telford acting as Surveyor. Total cost £30,000
- The bust of Lord Howard moved from the former House of Correction into new prison façade. Below his bust is a carved swan and cygnet to depict “Sabrian” the Roman name for the River Severn.

PRISON ALTERATIONS/ NUMBER OF CELLS

- Over the years up to 1886 various alterations made.
- In 1886 cells increased to 199 (including 3 for punishment)
- In 1890 prison rebuilt
- 1904 accommodation for 180 men and 27 women.
- In 2002 certified normal accommodation was 184 BUT **340** were currently locked up

EVENTS LEADING UP TO CLOSURE

- 2004 – Parliamentary enquiry into suicides at Prison – 3 inmates hung themselves in 2 weeks
- 2005 – Shrewsbury Prison named as the most overcrowded in England and Wales (178 places in use but held 326 inmates).
- In January 2013 announced that prison would close. Last inmates were transferred from Shrewsbury on 27th February 2013 ahead of its closure in March 2013.

EXECUTIONS – PART 1

- Between 1902 and 1961 seven people at the Prison were executed by hanging for the crime of murder.
- Four of these (in the 1950s) were conducted by ALBERT PIERREPOINT and his assistant.
- Pierrepont was an English hangman who executed between 435 and 600 people in a 25-year career (including 200 convicted of war crimes).
- He famously hung John Christie, Derek Bentley and Ruth Ellis.



ALBERT PIERREPOINT



EXECUTIONS – PART 2

- Executions took place at 8.00 am. All executed prisoners were buried in unmarked graves inside the prison.
- Last execution took place in 1961.
- In 1972 the Ministry of Justice instructed that the remains of 10 prisoners be exhumed with 9 cremated and one body handed over to relatives.

THE DANA

- A name still often used for the Prison as well as the adjacent road running from the prison to town centre via a footbridge over the Station.
- The now disused Platform 8 at the Station was used for transporting prisoners between 1868 and the First World War.

POETRY

- The Prison is mentioned in part of the poem 'A Shropshire Lad' by A E Housman. The proximity of the prison to the Station is highlighted in the verse:

They hang us now in Shrewsbury Jail:

The whistles blow forlorn.

And trains all night groan on the rail

To men that die at morn

CURRENT USE OF PRISON

- Jailhouse Tours runs guided tours, theme events, history days, horror tours, etc., etc.,
- As well as the general prison, cells and leisure areas, you can see the execution room and where the executioner stayed the night before – a grim reminder of how prisons were.
- Self-guided tours are also available. Prices vary – see Jailhouse Tours website.

NEWS AS AT 6TH JUNE, 2019

- Article in the Shrewsbury Chronicle stating that the former Prison has gone up for sale.
- Site owner, Since 2014, Osbourne Property Group, went through a protracted battle to secure Planning Permission for University accommodation.
- Planning Permission now in place to convert site into a mixture of luxury apartments and student accommodation.
- Site being marketed by Towler Shaw Roberts, comprising 2.5 acres plus the car park.
- Jailhouse Tours to remain for the foreseeable future.