

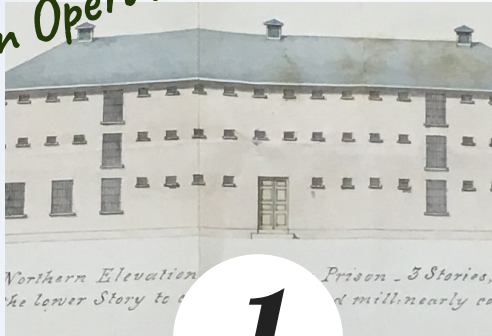
Guyana's Prison System 1814-1966



Images: Obrey James, 2019

Timeline of Guyana's Prison System 1814-1966

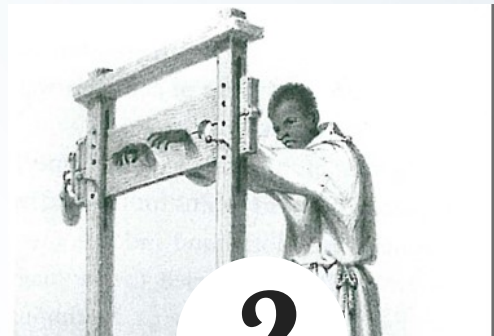
Still in Operation



1

Georgetown prison & New Amsterdam prison were established prior to British colonisation in 1814 as common gaols for the confinement of males & females.

Image: Georgetown Jail, The National Archives, London, CO 111/150.



2

In preparation for the emancipation of enslaved peoples, prisons were established at Wakenaan, Mahaica (1837) and Capoey (1838). Used to confine prisoners sentenced to hard labour.

Image: Stocks for hands and feet, National Library of Jamaica Digital Collection.

Pre-1814

Wakenaan Mahaica Capoey Mazaruni

1837-1854

1837-1855

1838-1876

1842-1930

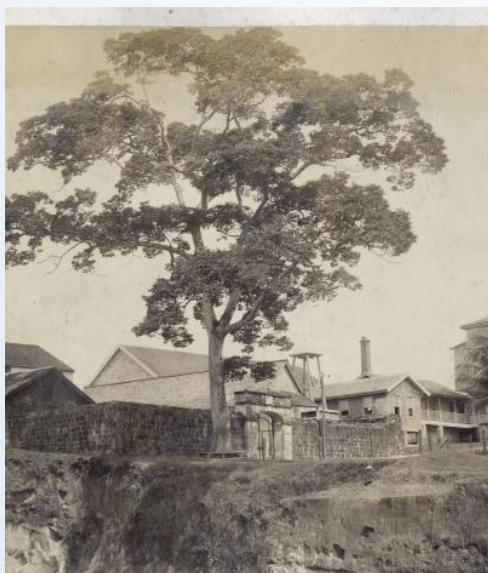
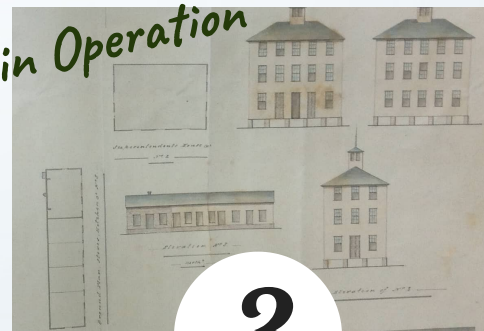


Image: Entrance to prison; HMPS Mazaruni, 1900. New York Public Library.

Still in Operation



3

Her Majesty's Penal Settlement at Mazaruni was established in 1842 by Governor Henry Light for the confinement of male convicts with sentences exceeding 12 months.

Image: Plan of HMPS Mazaruni, 1842. The National Archives, London, CO 111/209.

Prisons for Indentured Immigrants



4

Fellowship Prison was converted in 1884 for female prisoners sentenced to periods of imprisonment exceeding one month. Mahaica prison was re-opened in 1868 to relieve the overcrowded prison system.

Image: Convict, *Illustrated London News*, 1888.

Suddie & Fellowship were established for the confinement of indentured male immigrants convicted for breaches of the Immigration Ordinance.

Prisoners were committed for terms varying from 7 days to 2 months. Until 1879, all prisoners were employed at fieldwork on estates near the prisons.

Fellowship

1868-1892

Mahaica

1868-1883

Suddie

1875-1914



Image: East Indians working on construction of a path through the forest, British Guiana, 1900. New York Public Library.

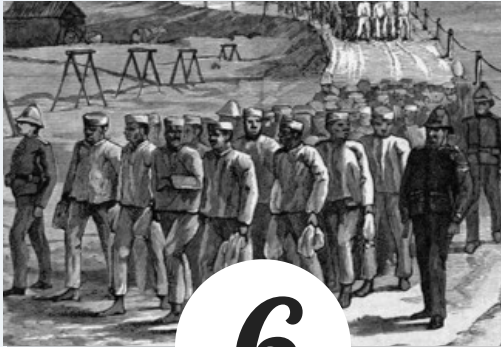


5

Suddie gaol was built in 1875 as a replacement for Capoey. A separate prison was constructed on site for female prisoners in 1876. Solitary confinement and the stocks were used for persistent 'idleness'.

Image: Prison garden, 2019, Obrey James.

District Prisons



6

Best was established in 1879 to provide temporary relief from the overcrowding in Georgetown Prison. It contained 48 cells.

Image: Convicts going to bathe, *Illustrated London News*, 1888.

Best

1879-1881



7

No. 63 was a small district prison with 6 cells. Due to its remote setting prisoners were required to labour on public works under police supervision.

Image: Police officer, British Guiana, 1900. New York Public Library.

No. 63

1888-1909

Morawhanna

1898-1914



8

With 4 cells Morawhanna was described as 'little more than a lock-up with seldom more than two inmates'.

Image: Cutting canal, British Guiana, 1900. New York Public Library.

Mining Districts



9

These prisons were for the confinement of short term offenders. Prisoners were required to labour on remote agricultural stations, as well as attending to the needs of the prisons.

Image: Gold Mining. New York Public Library.

Annai, Kamakusa, Mabaruma & Kurupukari prisons were established as a deterrent to lawlessness in the mining districts.

The prisons were supervised by the police and controlled by the respective district commissioners. Police officers performed the duties of prison officers.

Annai

1925-1931

Kamakusa

1925-1958

Mabaruma

1925-1974

Kurupukari

1931-1948



Image: Washing for gold; Chinese Creek; British Guiana, 1900. New York Public Library.

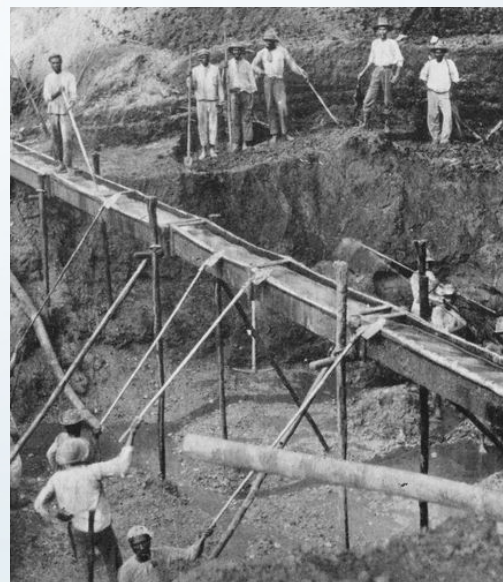


Image: Washing for gold, 13 miles, Potaro, British Guiana, 1916. New York Public Library.

Independence



10

After closing in 1930 due to financial pressures on the prison system, HMPS Mazaruni reopened in 1939. It was re-named Mazaruni Prison in 1950.

Image: Aerial photograph of HMPS Mazaruni, 1921, The National Archives.



11

The prison at Lethum was erected as a replacement for the Kurupukari prison in the Rupununi district in 1947.

Image: Discharged convicts waiting for the boat, *Illustrated London News*, 1895.

Mazaruni

1939–Present

Lethum

1947–1980s

Enachu

1960–1978

Independence
1966

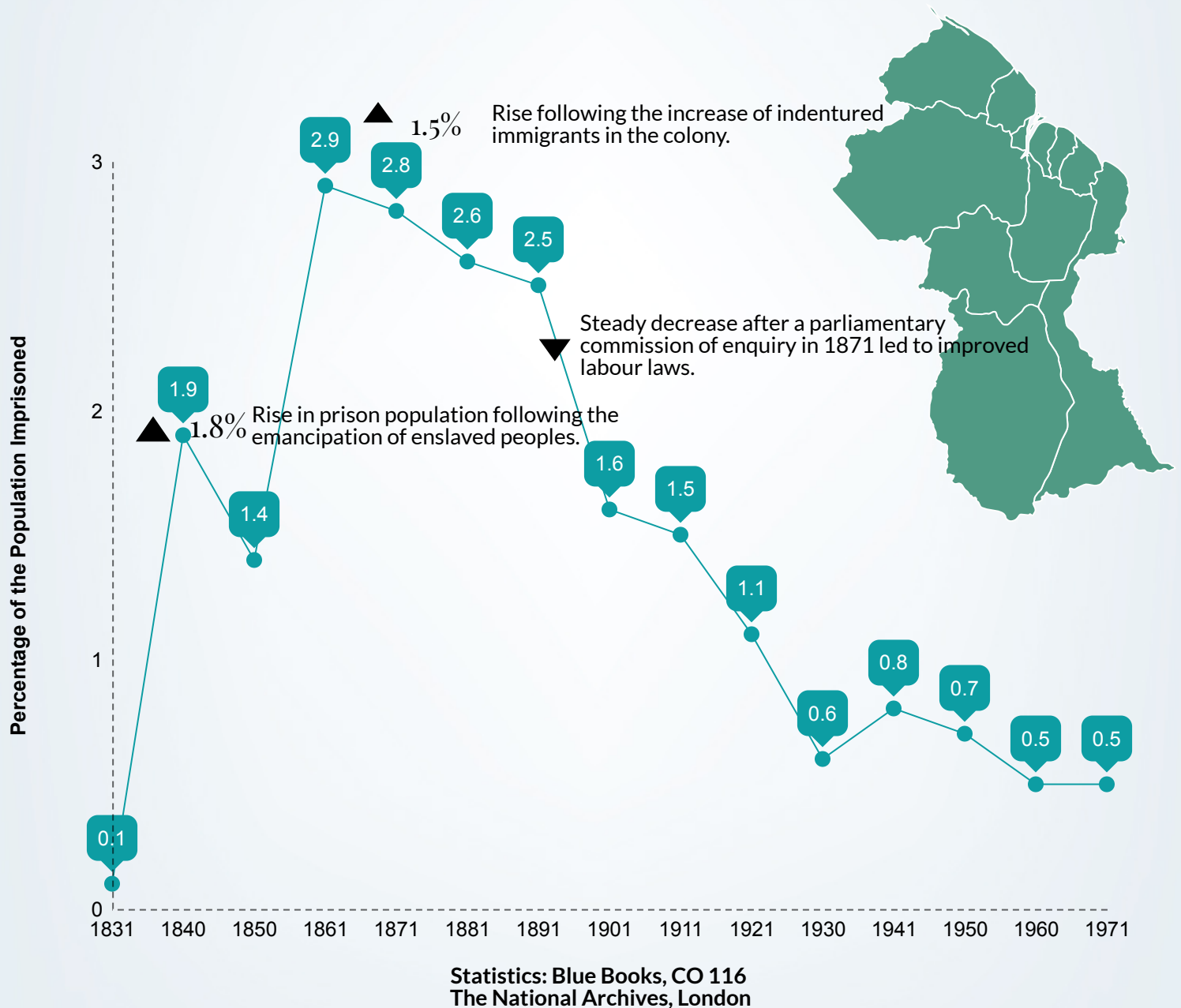


12

Enachu prison was the last prison established by the colonial government. It was built as a replacement for Kamakusa prison in 1960.

Image: Flag of British Guiana, George Arents Collection, 1900. New York Public Library.

Guyana's Prison Population 1831-1971



The penal agenda in British Guiana was driven by the specific needs of the colony. Of particular importance was the abolition of slavery and the introduction of Indian and Chinese indentured labour during the nineteenth century.

History and Security Sector Reform: Crime and Punishment in British Colonial Guyana 1814-1966

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Image: Mazaruni Prison, 2018
Obrey James

Project Members



Professor Clare Anderson
ca26@le.ac.uk



Dr Mellissa Ifill
Mellissa.ifill@uog.edu.guy



Ms Estherine Adams
ea299@le.ac.uk



Dr Kellie Moss
km345@le.ac.uk

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to get in touch with a member of the team.