

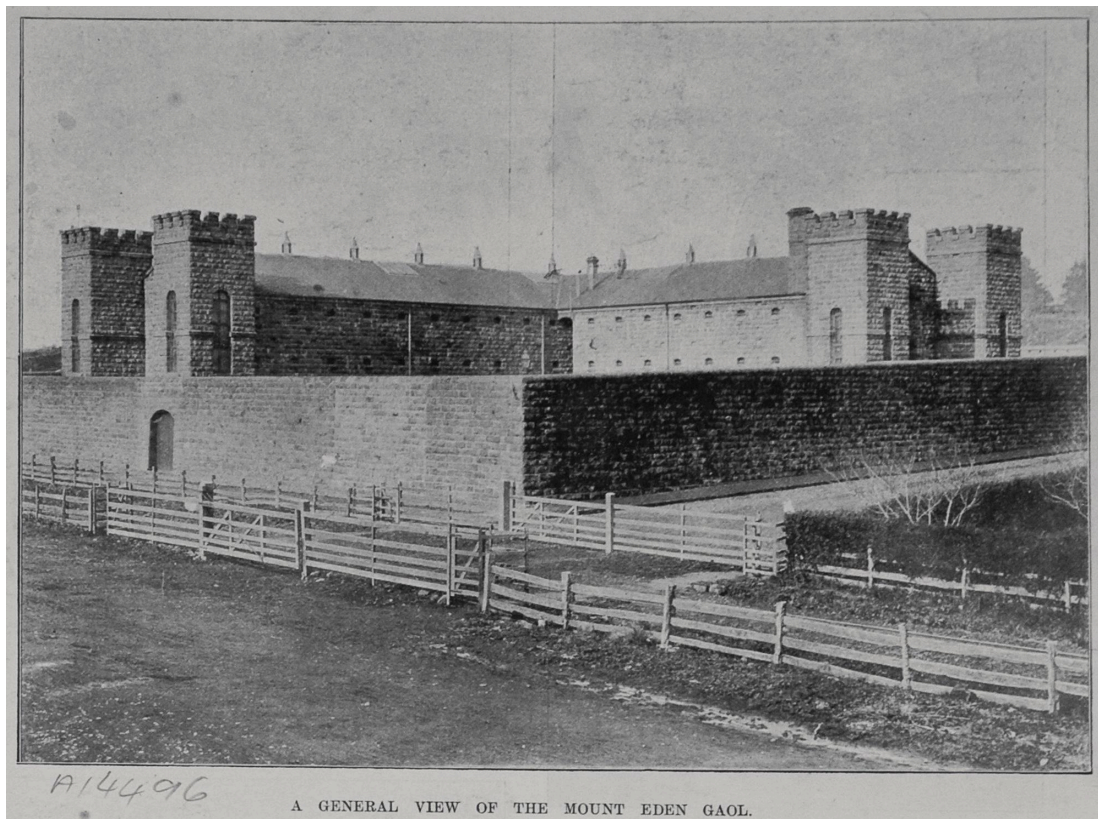
## Enter Through the Gate - A Snapshot into Mount Eden Prison

“The forbidding appearance of Mount Eden Prison, with its grey towers and iron-studded gates, reminiscent of a mediaeval fortress and its thick stone walls on which armed centuries are forever on watch.”

- *Sun*, 1930

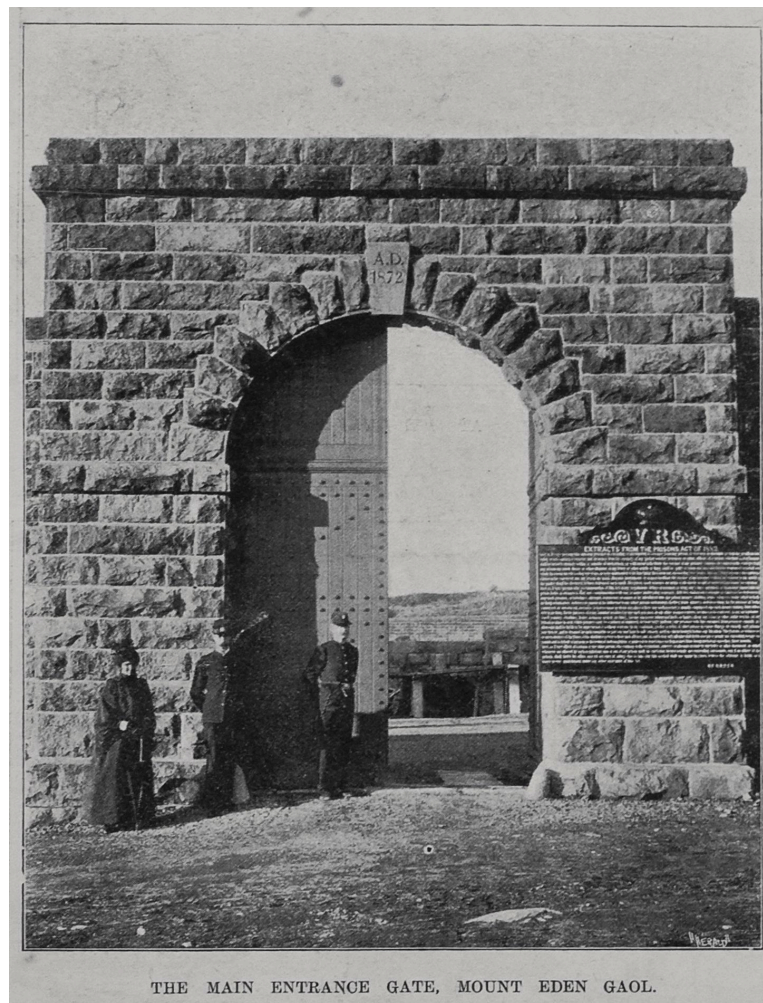
Mount Eden Prison has always been shrouded in a cloak of mystery. Few people outside of those that work there and call it home have seen it's inside. Images provide a powerful insight into the conditions and lives of the inmates within its walls. This article will provide an insight into Mount Eden Prison, and compare photos from the Prison in the 1900s and the 1990s.

### Mount Eden in the 1900s



Photograph showing a general view of Mount Eden Prison taken in 1900. *Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections*, AWNS-19000803-08-01.

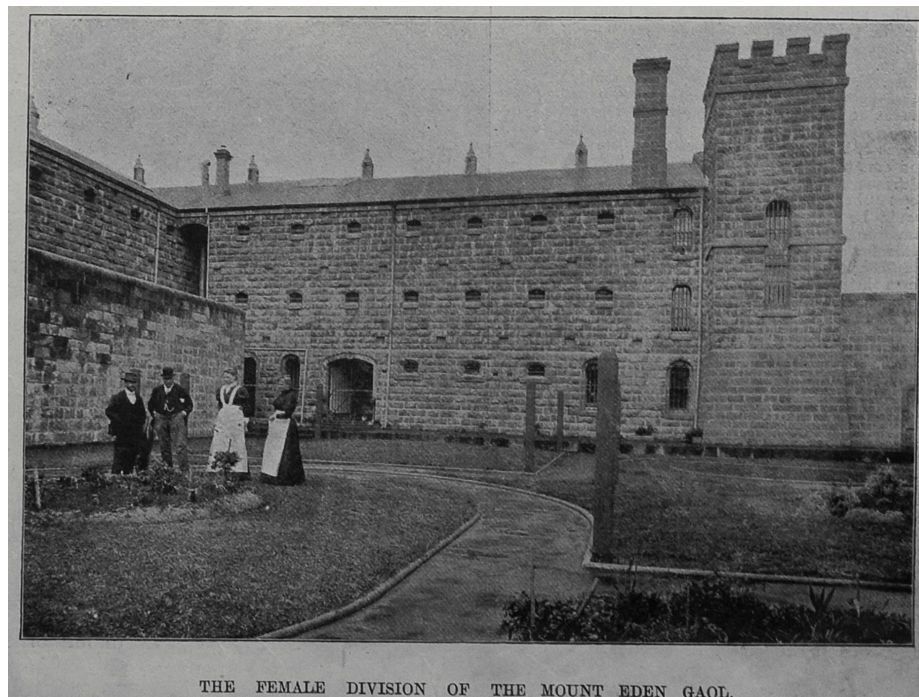
With its forbidding towers and basalt wall, Mount Eden Prison has always been intriguing for me. It has played an important role in Auckland's history and stayed a stable fixture right next to a highway. What greatly interested me was the history of punishment within the prison, and how people within the prison sought to make it a better place. Understanding the conditions



A photograph of two prison officers and a woman standing in front of the main gate of Mount Eden Prison in 1900. *Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections*, AWNS-19000803-08-02.

Entering through the prison gate at Mount Eden Prison in the 1900s, you enter a world of dark, damp and deplorable conditions. The prison was split into a male and female division, and featured cells, workshops, a chapel, garden, officer's quarters, kitchen, bathrooms and watchtowers. These images will showcase some of the conditions of the cells and prison in the 1900s.

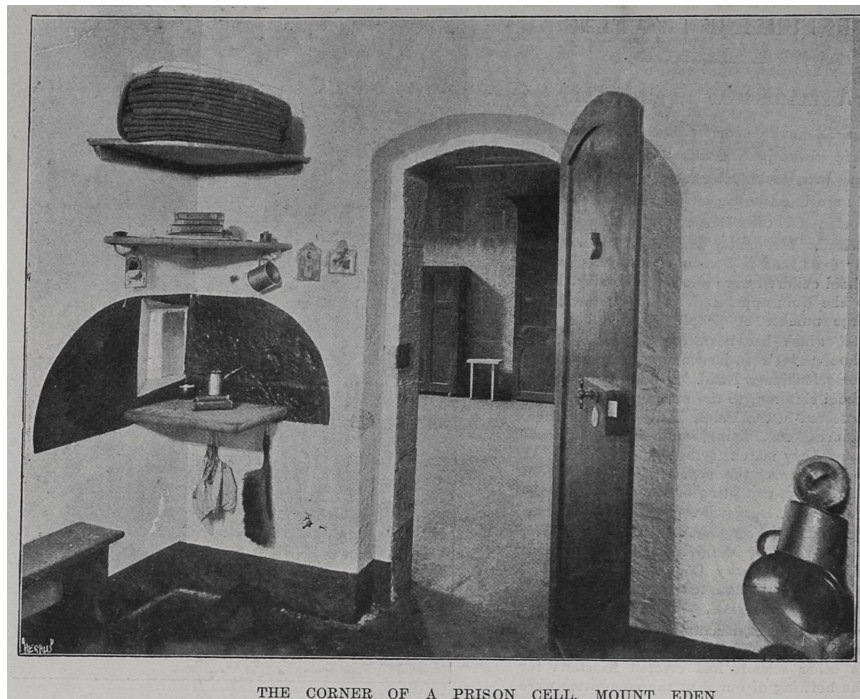




THE FEMALE DIVISION OF THE MOUNT EDEN GAOL.

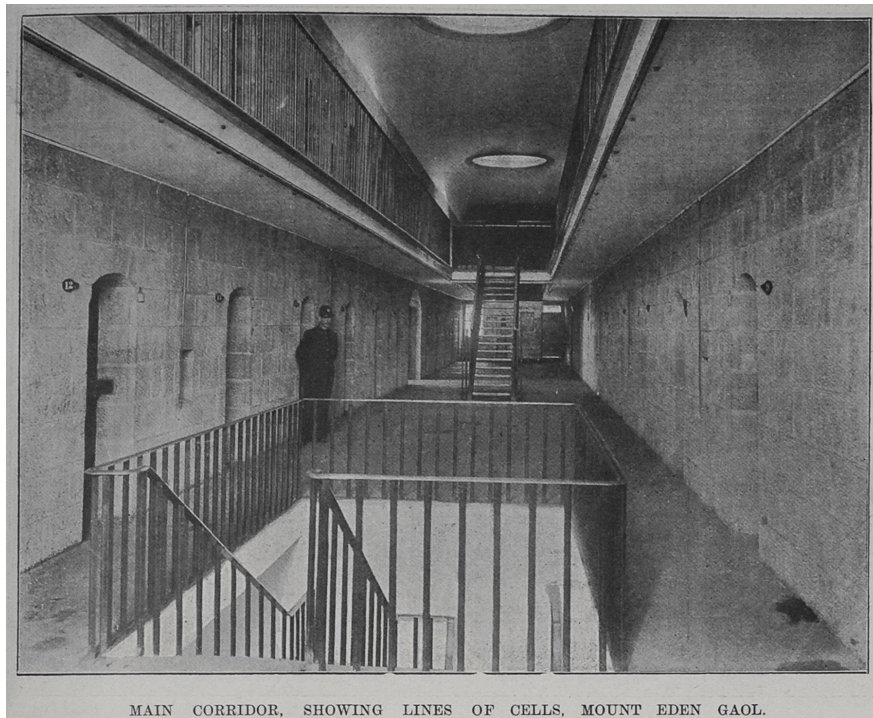
A photograph of the female division of the Mount Eden Prison in 1900. *Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections*, AWNS-19000803-09-08.

The female division of the Prison was set up in a similar way to the male division. It featured two private rooms for matrons, a day room and four cells. The cells were often cramped with six or more inmates being kept in them.



THE CORNER OF A PRISON CELL, MOUNT EDEN.

Photograph of a corner of a prison in Mount Eden Prison in 1900. *Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections*, AWNS-19000803-09-02.



MAIN CORRIDOR, SHOWING LINES OF CELLS, MOUNT EDEN GAOL.

A photograph of a main corridor showing cells in the Mount Eden Prison in 1900. *Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections*, AWNS-19000803-09-01.

The wings in Mount Eden Prison were three stories in height, with cells along both sides, and staircases leading up to the upper level cells. The result was to give an effect of being in a massive fire-escape.



INTERIOR OF THE PRISON CHAPEL, MOUNT EDEN.

Photograph of the interior of the chapel taken in 1900. *Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections*, AWNS-19000803-09-06.

Inmates at the prison also had access to a chapel where reverends and religious members would come to preach. The chapel created a 'homely' feel, and offered a place of respite for inmates.

All of the features seen in Mount Eden Prison continued to be seen in the 1990s. However, some changes were made to the cells and an exercise yard was added. Whilst, the bleak nature of the Mount Eden Prison was exchanged for a more modern, clinical feel.

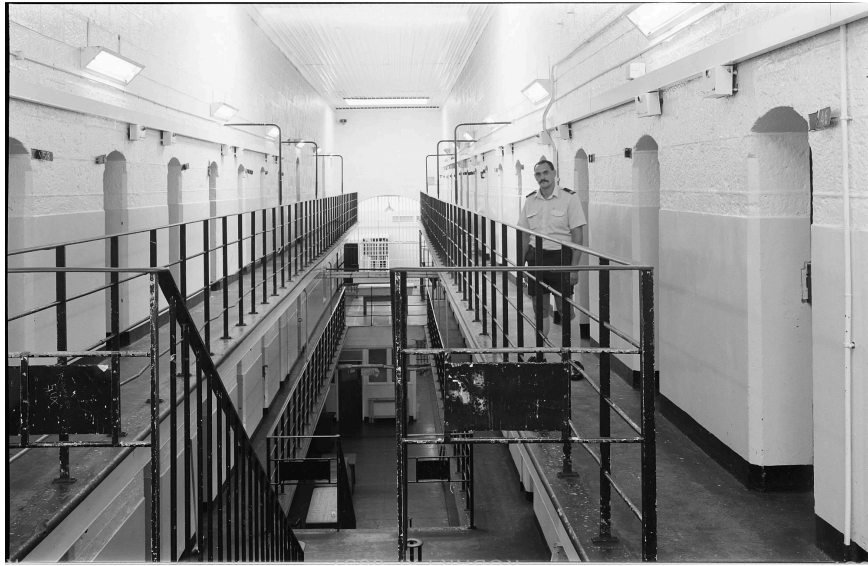
### Mount Eden in the 1990s

Retaining much of its features since the 1900s, Mount Eden Prison continued to reign with its basalt wall and watchtowers. As these images will show as taken in the 1990s, Mount Eden Prison has continued with much of the same problems as seen in the 1900s. Residents and visitors to Auckland, have bypassed the Prison on a daily basis, without knowledge of what's hidden behind its walls.



Photograph of the entrance to Mount Eden Prison at Lauder Road taken in 1990. *Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections*, 273-MAT231-PAN.





A photograph of an officer standing in the East Wing of Mount Eden Prison in 1990. *Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections*, 273-MAT084-02.

As seen in the above image, the cells continued to be arranged in a similar way to what was seen in the 1900s. Cells arranged in the wing still gave the same effect of being in a fire escape, but now with white painted brick, giving a clinical feel.

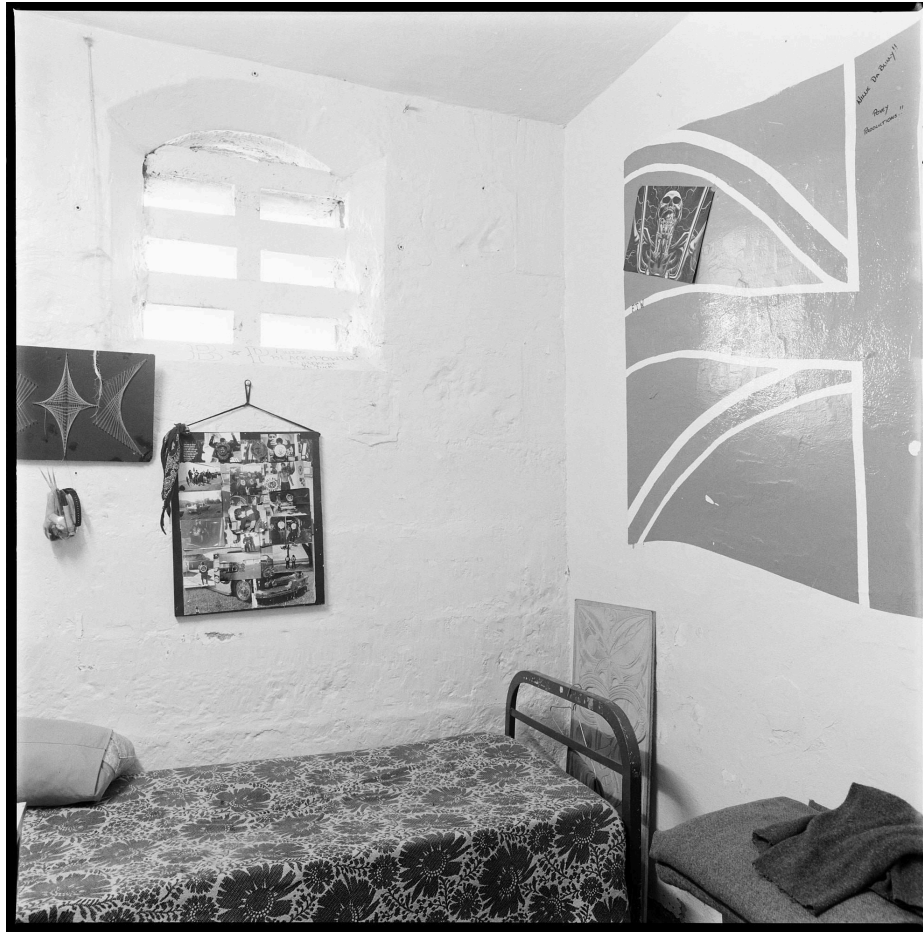


Photograph of the interior dome of Mount Eden Prison taken in 1990. *Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections*, 273-MAT085-06.



A photograph of a cell in the East Wing taken in 1990. *Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections*, 273-MAT087-04.

Cells in Mount Eden Prison in the 1990s, saw either one or two inmates confined to them. Whilst overcrowding continued to be a problem, inmates were able to personalise cells to their taste. The following pictures show cells in the East Wing of the Prison, with posters and graffiti highlighting the personality of the inmates. This is in stark contrast to the bare and damp cells seen in the 1900s.



Photograph of a cell in the East Wing taken in 1990. *Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections*, 273-MAT086-08.

Solitary confinement cells in Mount Eden Prison have the hallmark of cells in the 1900s. The cells are badly lit, bare walls, a single bare bed, one table, toilet and no entertainment. Inmates also had a separate exercise yard, to limit their social interaction with other inmates. The three images displaying the solitary confinement cells give an impression of loneliness, despair and hopelessness.

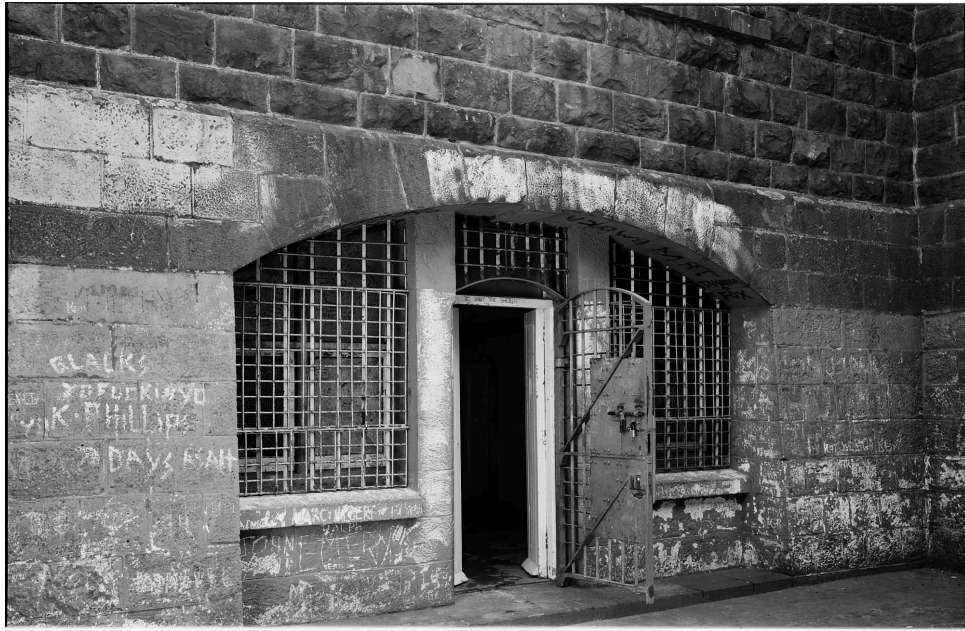




A photograph of a solitary confinement cell that was formerly used to house inmates before executions taken in 1990. *Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections*, 273-MAT083-10.

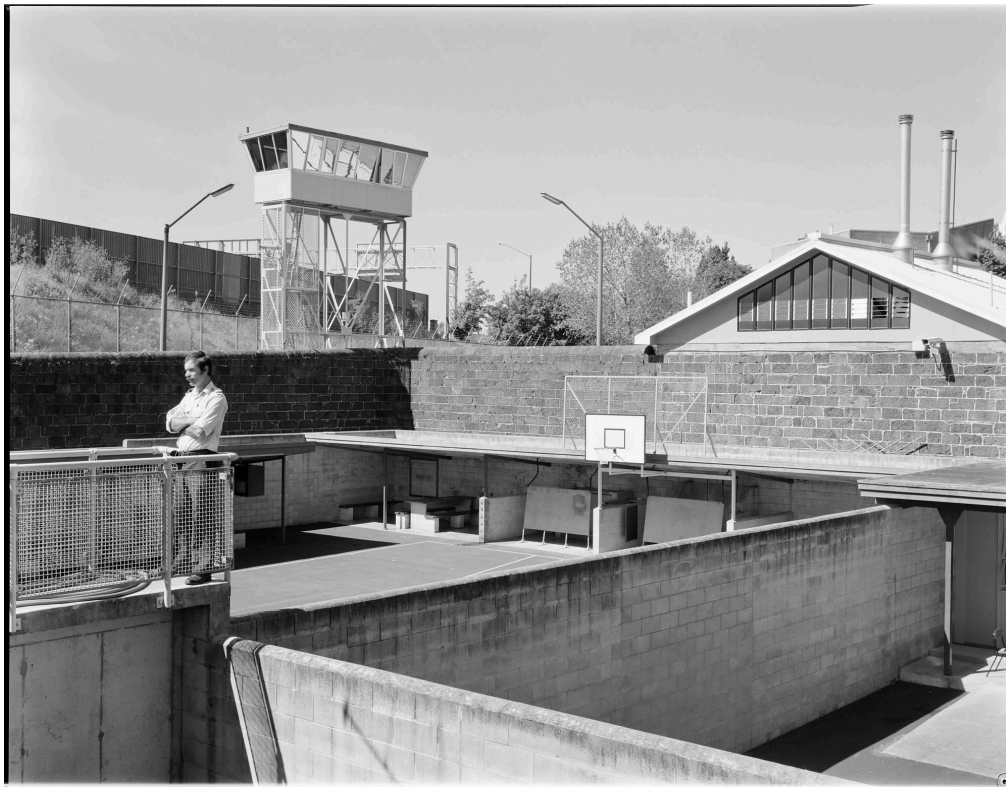


Photograph of the solitary confinement cell taken in 1990. *Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections*, 273-MAT083-09.



Photograph of the exercise yard for the solitary confinement cell. *Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections*, 273-MAT088-04.

In contrast to the gardens seen at Mount Eden Prison in the 1900s, the Mount Eden Prison of 1990 had basketball courts available for inmates to use. Gone are the gardens and greenery, and instead replaced by concrete and brick. Instead of inmates being surrounded by green fields, they instead spend their time surrounded by concrete walls.



Photograph of the exercise yard showing basketball courts taken in 1990. *Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections*, 273-MAT235.

Mount Eden Prison has changed over the years, but many things continue to stay the same. These images provide an intimate insight into life at Mount Eden Prison in the 1900s and the 1990s. Life for inmates at Mount Eden Prison has continued to be one where they suffer from isolation, deprivation and deplorable conditions. Whilst a new prison was built in 2011, these images of the old Mount Eden Prison remind us of the conditions that our inmates have suffered under.