



📷 APPI ghost hunts and tours owner Peet Banks inside 6 Wing. Picture: Justin Sanson

## PARRAMATTA

# Parramatta Gaol ghost tours reopen to sell out crowd

Stacy Thomas, Parramatta Advertiser

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PARRAMATTA Gaol ghost tours are selling out as quickly as they're released.

After a one-year hiatus, Peet Banks has been able to open them up again with huge support from landowners, Deerubbin Local Aboriginal Land Council.

The [Australian Paranormal Phenomenon Investigators](#)-led event takes the small group through the desolate buildings of the old jail at nightfall.

Check out the dark cells and historic chapel or the oldest buildings on site — 1 Wing and the Dead House, built in 1863.

The jail was home to some of the state's worst offenders. Former inmates include escape artist and bank robber Darcy Dugan, standover man John Frederick 'Chow' Hayes, murderer, rapist and drug dealer Arthur Stanley 'Neddy' Smith and double murderer Tony (Anthony) Lanigan.



📷 The corridor in block 6 at Parramatta Gaol. Picture: Adam Taylor

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📷 Guard on duty above The Circle.

One of the most daring escapes in Australian history was foiled by a single phone call. Lanigan spent two years digging a massive tunnel. He had a roster of inmates digging through the night.

With only a day left of digging, Anita Cobby's killer Michael Murphy called his grandmother and told her he would 'see you tomorrow'. She was confused so called the prison to confirm a time. This sparked a search by guards, uncovering the tunnel which was only two metres from gaining access into Parramatta Linen Service.

Lanigan eventually broke free from [Long Bay Jail](#) in 1995 and has never been captured.

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📷 The Circle at Parramatta Gaol.



📷 The Chapel. Picture: Bob Barker

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He thought the songs would ‘fill his wallet’, so a month after being granted his freedom, tried. He got as far as stealing a ladder before his plans were foiled by an officer who took him into the grounds and dug up the jar. Anthes landed himself in the clink for another 12 months as a result.

Hear stories of paranormal activity, encounters and strange things that have happened to former tour participants, inmates, staff and visitors.



📷 Peet Banks. Picture: Justin Sanson

No matter what you believe, one lady will lay it all out on the table for you to decide.

Peet Banks leads the tours and she’s got a story or two to share. She talks about ‘The Circle’ a wired outdoor space used to house unmanageable inmates. It was demolished in 1985 because it was inhumane.

“They would leave them out in the elements. The Circle was located between the structures and if prisoners bashed guards they’d be put in there all day.

“There was no toilet, no bed, just a metal box for most of the day. Then they’d be back in their wing at night.”

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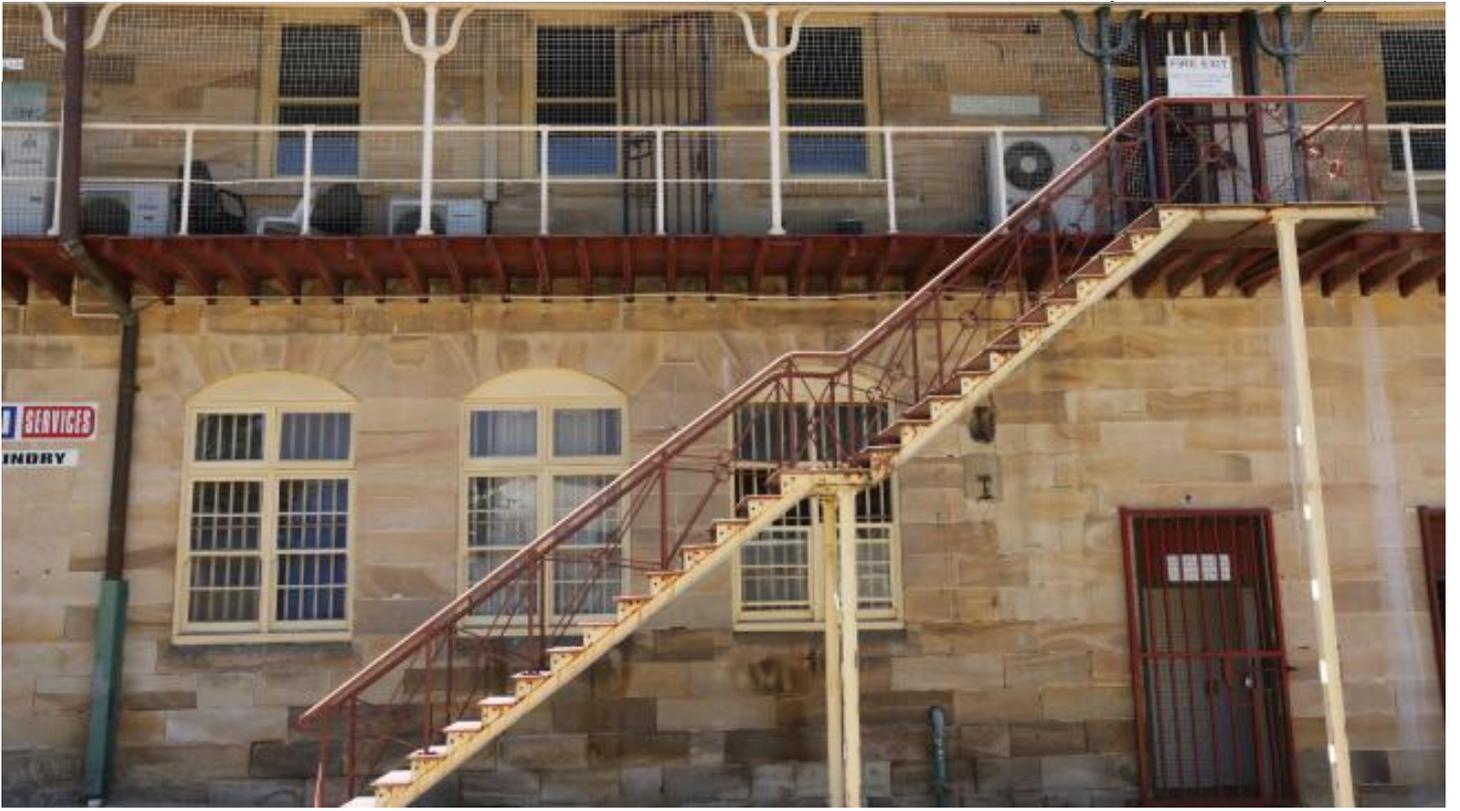


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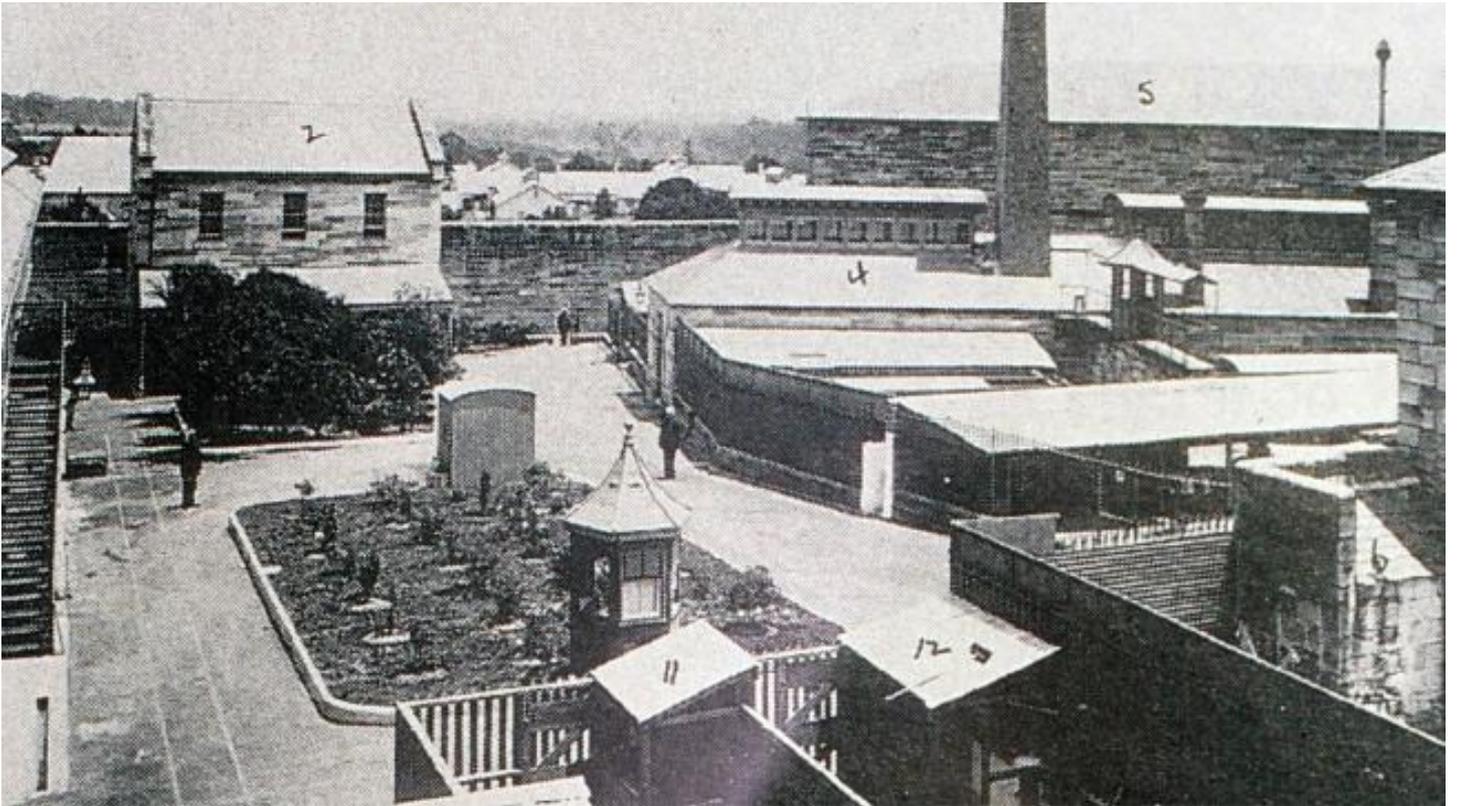
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📷 Inside Parramatta Gaol. Picture: Bob Barker



📷 An early photo of Parramatta Gaol. Picture: John McClymont Collection

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found all 12,” she said.

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## Paranormal investigators hear strange conversation at Parramatta Gaol

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In one form or another, the jail has been in operation since 1798. Back in the 1800s, historical information suggests executions took place outside for the public to witness.

“Before the jail closed in 2011, it was the oldest running prison in Australia.”

It has had its fair share of animosity. In the early 1980s, four prisoners were murdered at the jail.

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📷 Inside the prison chapel. Picture: Chris McKeen

The Parramatta jail ghost tours are held twice a month. Tickets for next month's tours — March 3 and 24 — have been released this week.

Participants are able to use APPI's ghost hunting equipment to add to the experience.

Details: [parramattagaolghosttour.com.au](http://parramattagaolghosttour.com.au)

## FAMOUS INMATES

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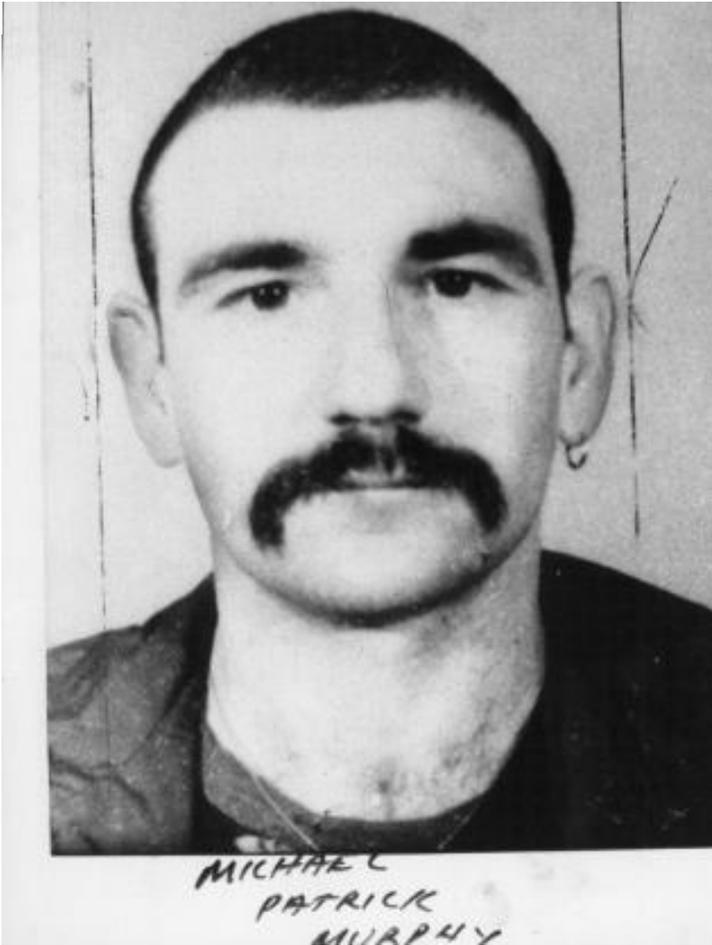


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📷 Michael Murphy.



📷 Darcy Dugan.

**Darcy Dugan:** Born in 1920, Dugan was a career criminal with a long line of robberies before he earned his nickname Houdini for his repeated escapes from custody.

**John Frederick 'Chow' Hayes:** Known as Australia's first gangster, Hayes was a major player in the Sydney gang wars of the 1920s and 1930s.

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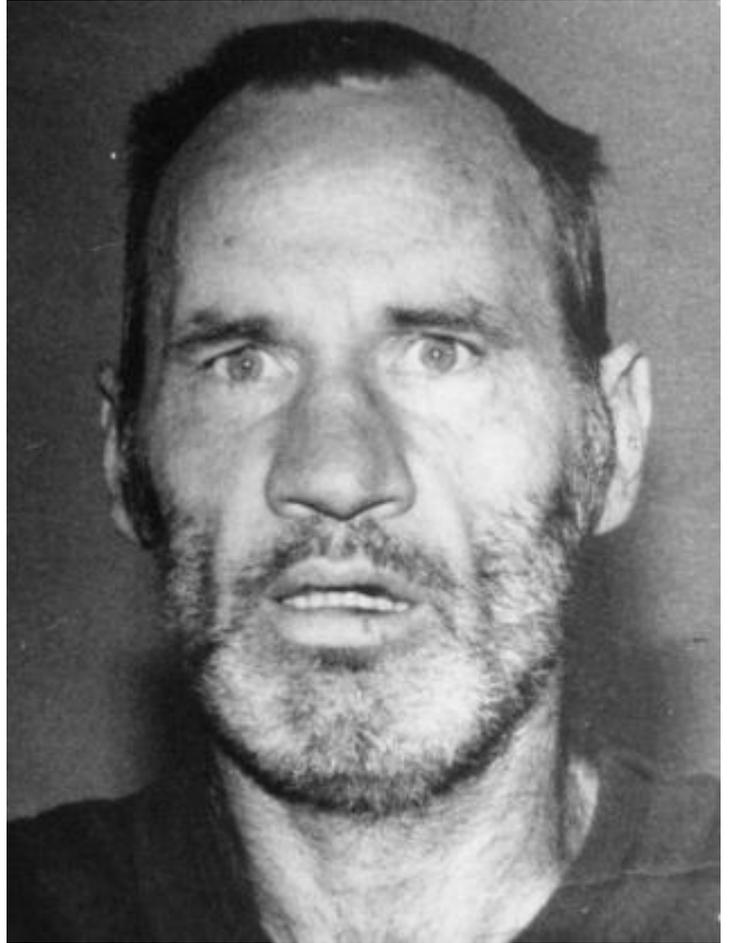


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📷 John Frederick 'Chow' Hayes, Picture: Historic Houses Trust

📷 Anthony Lanigan was convicted of the 1977 murder of Narelle Grogan.

**Leonard Keith Lawson:** On parole for rape in 1961, Lawson stabbed to death Jane Bower, 16. The following day he took students hostage at Sydney Church of England Girls' Grammar School. Wendy Luscombe, 15, was killed during the siege.

**John Lewthwaite:** He murdered five-year-old Nicole Hanns in 1974 after she disturbed him while he was trying to abduct her nine-year-old brother.

**Anthony Lanigan:** Convicted of the 1977 murder of Narelle Grogan in an opal heist while on parole for manslaughter.

**Arthur 'Neddy' Smith:** Smith is serving two life sentences for the road rage murder of Ronnie Flavell in 1998, and the murder of brothel owner Harvey Jones in 1983.

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