11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Cultural heritage significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for individuals or groups within Western Australia.

In determining cultural heritage significance, the Heritage Council has had regard to the factors in the *Heritage Act 2018* and the indicators adopted on 14 June 2019.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 7.7.1 Providing for the common defence
- 7.7.2 Preparing to face invasion
- 7.7.3 Going to war

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 501 World Wars and other wars

11(a) Importance in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of Western Australia's history

Cape Peron K Battery Complex is important as a component of Australia's coastal defence system erected in response to external threats during World War II. The Battery formed part of the chain of gun emplacements erected in the west during the war, referred to as 'Fremantle Fortress', stretching from between Swanbourne, Cape Peron, Leighton, Woodman Point, Fremantle, Garden Island, and Rottnest Island.

Cape Peron K Battery Complex demonstrates the military importance of Cockburn Sound during World War II.

Cape Peron K Battery Complex has been associated with the defence of Australia since its acquisition by the Commonwealth in 1916.

11(b) Importance in demonstrating rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of Western Australia's heritage

Cape Peron K Battery Complex demonstrates a distinctive method of coastal defence that is no longer relevant in the age of modern warfare.

Although part of a chain of coastal defences established in Western Australia during WWII, the apparent lack of consistency in the design of some of these places makes each rare for its ability to reveal information about the innovation

of defence personnel and their adaptation of coastal defence sites to suit local conditions and requirements.

11(c) Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Western Australia's history;

Cape Peron K Battery Complex has potential for interpreting the extensive coastal defence system of Western Australia, and the country as a whole.

Cape Peron K Battery Complex has archaeological potential which may reveal more about its brief period of use as a coastal defence site.

The deterioration of elements within the site has revealed construction methods and technical details otherwise unavailable due to the absence of site plans detailing the establishment of the complex.

11(d) Its importance in demonstrating the characteristics of a broader class of places;

Cape Peron K Battery Complex is representative of some of the characteristic components of artillery sites, their design and technical features.

Cape Peron K Battery Complex is representative of other defence systems situated along the Western Australian coastline and islands. Other batteries include Albany, as well as Robb's Jetty, Oliver Hill and Point Bickley on Rottnest Island.

11(e) Any strong or special meaning it may have for any group or community because of social, cultural or spiritual associations;

Cape Peron K Battery Complex is valued by the present and past military community, and the general community for its historic and military associations, and by those who enjoy the area for recreation.

11(f)[2] Its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by any group or community;

Cape Peron K Battery Complex is situated in a striking public open space with native vegetation and panoramic views of the Indian Ocean across Cockburn Sound to Garden Island.

11(h) Its importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement;

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2 For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present,* Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.
For consistency, all references to garden and landscape types and styles are taken from Ramsay, J. *Parks, Gardens and Special Trees: A Classification and Assessment Method for the Register of the National Estate,* Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

Cape Peron K Battery Complex demonstrates technical achievements in its placement of guns and observation posts.

Cape Peron K Battery Complex demonstrates technical achievement through its use of 'Panama Mounts', a versatile design that had the potential to achieve a 360° traverse to increase the capacity of its 155mm guns. Those at Cape Peron were constructed to achieve a 270° traverse.

Cape Peron K Battery Complex demonstrates technical achievement in its design: the guns were placed to enable them to cover any shipping approaching within range south of Rockingham and Safety Bay and the western approaches to Garden Island, as well as providing cover for the boom defence which was laid across South Channel, separating the mainland at Cape Peron from Garden Island.

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1 CONDITION

Overall Cape Peron K Battery Complex is in good condition but the various elements within the site vary from poor to good condition.

Gun Emplacement North and Storage Bunker North are in good condition. The place has been subject to vandalism and graffiti.

Gun Emplacement South and Storage Bunker South are in poor to good condition. The Gun Emplacement has been seriously undermined by erosion and much of the brickwork has fallen through the concrete frame. The Ready Ammunition Bunkers and the Storage Bunker have filled with sand.

The Observation Post is in good condition. It is structurally sound and previous undermining of the foundations appears to have been repaired. The interior has been subjected to vandalism and graffiti and externally there are signs of concrete deterioration.

The Operations Centre is in poor to good condition. Structural damage has occurred to areas of the brick work and floor levels have been raised by sand entering from outside. The place has been subject to graffiti and vandalism.

The Water Tank is in poor condition. The galvanised iron roofing material has largely come off and its timber supports damaged. The tank has also been subject to vandalism and graffiti.

12. 2 INTEGRITY

This section explains the extent to which the fabric is in its original state.

The site retains a high degree of integrity. Although the military hardware has been removed and the condition of some elements is quite poor, the structural elements appear to have been subjected to little or no further intervention. The place is also largely intact as an archaeological site.

12. 3 AUTHENTICITY

This section explains the extent to which the original intention is evident, and the compatibility of current use.

The removal of the military hardware has had an obvious impact on the site's authenticity. However, the remaining structural elements have been subjected to

little or no intervention. Besides those elements which have been damaged and undermined by erosion, they remain in the form in which they were constructed.

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13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place is based on the physical evidence compiled by Dr Kelly Fleming, Principal Heritage Officer, State Heritage, following a survey of the site on 14 May 2012. The documentary evidence was compiled by consultant Historian Eddie Marcus (History Now), in May 2012, with amendments and/or additions by Department of Planning, Lands & Heritage staff and the Register Committee.

13. 1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Cape Peron K Battery Complex (1942) is located on the headland at the end of Point Peron Road, Cape Peron. It comprises two Gun Emplacements (North and South), a Battery Observation Post located on the highest point of Cape Peron, an Operations Centre, and other structures associated with the Battery, which included searchlights located at John Point and Mushroom Rocks.

The Aboriginal people of the Rockingham area are part of the Nyoongar people, and Cape Peron has five sites of heritage significance identified by Aboriginal Heritage. However, there is little recorded information about pre-contact Aboriginal associations with Cape Peron. Other Aboriginal heritage sites may exist in the area.[3]

Cape Peron was named after François Péron, naturalist with the French expedition under Baudin, who visited Australia in the *Géographe* and *Naturaliste* between the years 1800-04. Baudin named a number of significant features along the coastline, including Cape Peron, Ile Buache (later renamed Garden Island) and Ile Bertollett (later renamed Carnac Island).[4]

The earliest coast defences in Western Australia were installed in 1893 at Albany. With the opening of the inner harbour for Fremantle in 1897, it was defended by Fort Arthur Head which was equipped with two 6" MK VII guns in 1909.[5]

In May 1913, the commencement of the construction of Henderson Naval Base was celebrated. It was supposed to provide 'accommodation for torpedo boats and torpedo boat destroyers'. An arsenal was to be built, and an explosives depot established, with the intention of making the Base 'one of the greatest in the world'.[6]

In 1916, the Commonwealth acquired 434 acres (175 ha) of Cape Peron from the State Government as part of the Henderson Naval Base for £542 10s. However, the proposal to establish the naval base was suspended.[7]

In 1921, a writer to the *West Australian* suggested that the defence of Fremantle would be better served by diverting money allocated for Henderson Naval Base towards 'fortifying the vulnerable points, such as Rottnest and Garden Islands and Cape Peron'.[8]

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3 'Rockingham Lakes Regional Park Proposed Final Management Plan' (2010), prepared on behalf of the Conservation Commission of Western Australia, p. 43

4 File note PR8679, 'Point Peron' (n.d.), Battye Library

5 McKenzie-Smith, Graham, *Defending Fremantle, Albany and Bunbury, 1939 to 1945* (Grimwade, 2009), p. 4

6 *Daily News*, 8 May 1913, p. 7

7 Australian Archives files PP359, Box 81, File 1946/53, Parts 1-3, Folios 290, 354

8 *West Australian*, 31 October 1921, p. 8

With the increased use of the motor car in the 1920s, Cape Peron was promoted as a tourist destination,[9] and became a popular place for families to camp, despite the limitations of the facilities available in the area.

In 1930, the *Sunday Times* ran an editorial condemning the Commonwealth's proposed increase in areas of Cape Peron to be leased to private enterprises, such as the manufacture of 'turtle products'.[10] This would, said the paper, benefit only a few 'weekenders' and alienate the general public who saw Peron as a 'pleasure resort'.[11]

In 1934, the Commonwealth Government offered Rockingham Road Board a lease for twenty years 'at a nominal rental' covering the foreshore at Rockingham and the Cape Peron reserve. The lease was subject to cancellation 'without notice or compensation' should the land be required for defence purposes in connection with the Henderson Naval Base.[12]

The military did make use of Cape Peron from time to time, including in 1937 when, as a training exercise, the 28th Battalion constructed a defence system there consisting of trenches and barbwire obstacles. Vickers machineguns were dug in to defend against 'imaginary raiding party attacks'.[13]

In 1935, as part of an overall plan to extend and modernise the coast artillery defences throughout Australia, preliminary work for the installation of heavy guns commenced on Rottnest Island.[14] At the outbreak of World War II, the upgrading of coast defences was almost complete. Most significant ports and industrial locations were protected by artillery.[15]

There were 9.2" guns and 6" guns on Rottnest together with 6" guns at Swanbourne and Arthur Head. These were operational and manned by the RAA and RAE regular army unit cadres, pending reinforcement by the Citizen Force Reserve troops.[16]

When hostilities commenced the degree of preparedness was thought sufficient to deter most attacks on shipping and ports, but it was never anticipated that such defences could cope with major assaults such as those launched by the Japanese elsewhere.

Additional 9.2" guns were on order from Britain, but the outbreak of war meant that these could not be delivered to be installed on Garden Island. The new 5.25" dual purpose CA/AA (coast artillery, anti-aircraft) gun also experienced shipping difficulties.[17]

The sinking of *HMAS Sydney* and the entry of Japan into the war on 7 December 1941 changed the strategic picture in the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean theatres. Singapore fell on 15 February 1942, Darwin was bombed on

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9 For example, see *West Australian*, 31 December 1927, p. 10

10 'Turtle Factory' (1923) is entered in State Heritage Office database as place 03203

11 *Sunday Times*, 4 May 1930, p. 7

12 *West Australian*, 6 February 1934, p. 16

13 *West Australian*, 13 October 1937, p. 14; images of the exercise in *West Australian*, 14 October 1937, p. 22

14 Holder, A. D., 'Fremantle and Rottnest Island Coast Defence Batteries: A Brief History' (unpublished, 1998), p. 1

15 Kidd, Reg, & Ray Neal, *The 'Letter' Batteries: The History of the 'Letter' Batteries in World War II* (Castlecrag, 1998), p. 1

16 Holder, 'Coast Defence Batteries', p. 1

17 Kidd & Neal, *The 'Letter' Batteries*, p. 1

19 February by the same Japanese fleet that had attacked Pearl Harbour, and on 3 March, Broome was attacked from the air.[18]

The sudden conquest of Hong Kong, Singapore, the Dutch East Indies and the Philippines left Australia as the most suitable base for the development of an Allied counter offensive. It was realised that Japanese submarines and surface vessels would be active, and that there was a need to supplement Australia's coastal defences.

General MacArthur arrived in Darwin on 17 March 1942 and was invited to assume the role of Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in the Southwest Pacific Area. On 18 April, MacArthur assumed command over all Australian Forces.[19] McArthur subsequently requested an inspection of facilities to ensure that the US Troops stationed in Australia would be properly protected and this led to the establishment of the Letter Batteries.[20]

A report dated 18 May 1942 considered the state of defence of Fremantle:

> **Situation:**
>
> Fremantle is the main Naval repair and operating base in Western Australia… The port is the only one on the West Coast suitable for use by the Army as an expeditionary force embarkation point…
>
> **Existing Seacoast Defenses:**
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | Rottnest Island | 2 guns 9.2" range 29,000 yards |
> | | 2 guns 6" range 18,500 yards |
> | Arthur's Head | 2 guns 6" range 14,500 yards |
> | Swanbourne | 2 guns 6" range 14,500 yards |
>
> **Project:**
>
> The development of Cockburn Sound as a fleet anchorage will involve considerable improvement of the water channel…
>
> Destroyers and torpedo boats, however may strike at the flanks of the anchorage unless protection is provided…
>
> Additional installations in the Fremantle–Rottnest Island–Garden Island triangle will extend and intensify the existing defenses…
>
> [The] following seacoast equipment should be installed:
>
> 1 Battery 2 155mm guns on 360 degree semi-permanent mount in the vicinity of Entrance Point – Garden Island
>
> 1 Battery 2 155mm guns on 360 degree semi-permanent mount in the vicinity of Cape Peron
>
> 2 Seacoast searchlights 60 inch for each of the positions referred to…
>
> Fire control equipment, ammunition storage, troop housing etc., at each proposed emplacement

18 McKenzie-Smith, *Defending Fremantle*, p. 1

19 Kidd & Neal, *The 'Letter' Batteries*, p. 7

20 Horner, D. M., 1995, *The Gunners: A History of Australian Artillery*, St Leonards NSW: Allen and Unwin, p. 319; The term 'Letter' Batteries stems from the allocation of a letter to each by the Land Headquarters to distinguish them from one another. The first eight were designated A-H, with subsequent batteries assigned a letter next in the sequence. 'Point Peron "K" Battery Conservation Management Plan'. Compiled for South West Corridor Development Foundation Inc. by Hocking Heritage Studio in March 2016. p. 55.

One anti-boat boom and eight anti-boat guns to be placed on selected sites.[21]

The Fremantle Area Defences, as part of the Fremantle-Perth Area, consisted of a number of coastal and anti-aircraft artillery units, supported by infantry and other units and deployed to guard the seaward approaches to Fremantle and the port facilities. The defences stretched from City Beach to Rockingham and the Peron Peninsula and included Rottnest and Garden Islands.

The units concerned with the defence of the Fremantle area included Oliver and Bickley Batteries on Rottnest Island,[22] Challenger Battery on Garden Island, Swanbourne, Leighton, Harbour and Peron Coastal Batteries, 5th Australian Heavy Training, 109th Australian Anti-Aircraft Training, 22nd and 29th Anti-Aircraft Batteries, 5th and 10th Australian Garrison Battalions, and the Swan and Fremantle Battalions (Volunteer Defence Corps).

Defences in the area were improved during 1942 by the installation of a fortress radar system.[23] In addition, the Cockburn Sound Anti-Submarine Boom defence net was a buoyed wire mesh net with a central gate opened by a winch. Its role was to prevent the possibility of Japanese submarines entering Cockburn Sound.[24]

In October 1942, 'K' Australian Heavy Battery was formed in New South Wales. Personnel were drawn from NSW, Victoria and Queensland. Major B. Miller was Battery Commander, with Capt. A. Brooke, Battery Captain, and Lt. C. H. McPharlin and Lt. W. B. Jackson, Section Officers. Major F. Vaughan took over command in 1943.[25]

'J' Aust Heavy Battery was also formed in Sydney and was based at the north end of Garden Island to protect the approaches to Fremantle through the South Passage between Garden and Rottnest Islands and to supplement the two batteries on Rottnest Island in a counter bombardment role.[26]

In December 1942, the 'K' Battery personnel arrived in Fremantle without guns or searchlights. To control the coast defences of Cockburn Sound, HQ Southern Fire Command was formed in January 1943.[27]

Peron Battery was to be situated on the western end of Cape Peron with its Battery Observation Post (BOP) on the 30 metre feature some 300 to 400 metres to the south of the gun emplacements. The Operations Centre (Plotting Room) was located, among a thicket of scrub, behind the guns and northeast of the BOP. The battery was served by two 90cm searchlights located at John

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21 'Memorandum for the Chief of Staff', 18 May 1942, quoted in Kidd & Neal, *The 'Letter' Batteries*, pp. 10-11

22 See 'Oliver Hill Battery: Conservation Assessment' (1995), produced for Rottnest Island Authority by G. B. Hill & Partners

23 Jamieson, W. D., 'History of the Army in Western Australia, 1939-45' (unpublished, 1978), p. 4

24 Colvin, Thomas, *The Army as it Was* (Scarborough, 1997), p. 10; Colvin has several anecdotes about time spent at Leighton Battery and at Arthur Head Battery. For more details on the Boom see Matt Carter & Ross Anderson, 'Cockburn Sound's World War II Anti-Submarine Boom Net: Historical Background and Site Inspections' (WA Museum, March 2010)

25 No war diary has been found for this unit, and knowledge of the Battery is mainly derived from R. K. Glyde's, 'The Coast Defences of Western Australia, 1828-1963' (unpublished, 1995), supplemented by material given in Kidd & Neal, *The 'Letter' Batteries*. An exhaustive search of the National Archives also failed to discover new material relating to the Battery.

26 Kidd & Neal, *The 'Letter' Batteries*, p. 32

27 McKenzie-Smith, *Defending Fremantle*, p. 10

Point and Mushroom Rocks, not the 150cm searchlights usually associated with such batteries.[28]

Two Flank Observation Posts (FOPs) were included in the planning for this Battery. One of these was on Garden Island, and the other on Penguin. It is not clear if the latter was developed.[29] Peron Battery also had barracks for the artillerymen, which were probably constructed between December 1942 and January 1943.[30] Facilities for the army personnel at K Battery Camp included an Officers' mess, Billets, and a Canteen.[31] The camp was situated adjacent to the coastline just north of the two gun emplacements.[32]

The equipment issued to Peron Battery was: one 155mm gun M1918M1 No. 169 on an M3 carriage; one 155mm gun M1917A1 No. 69 on an M3 carriage; and, two 18 pounder QF Mark II guns.[33]

The M1917/M1918 gun was ideally suited for a coast defence role. It was semi-mobile and extremely accurate with a maximum range of 20,000 yards (18 km) firing a 96 pound high explosive or a 109 pound armour piercing projectile.[34] The American fire control system was replaced in Australia by the British-Australian system which improved the rate of fire from four to six rounds per minute.[35]

A total of 68 155mm guns were released to Australia. Sixteen were lost in transit due to the sinking of ships, but the remainder, along with 60 Sperry searchlights and generators, were landed by the end of 1943.[36]

The M1917A1 was of French World War I design modified in the USA by the addition of pneumatic tyres, hydraulic brakes and a US-designed breechblock. As a field gun it had a limited 'on carriage' or top-traverse capacity of 30° right and left of centre and therefore, was limited when engaging moving targets in coast defence.[37]

To overcome this deficiency and increase the speed of traverse, emplacements were developed in reinforced concrete with a central pivot which carried the wheels of the gun, with a concentric outer ring containing an iron railway-style rail which took plates bolted to the trail instead of spades. Split trails connected the central gun to its concentric ring and allowed for maximum flexibility. These emplacements allowed for a potential 360° traverse.[38]

Importantly, such gun sites could be created anywhere and guns mounted as and where required. They offered great strategic flexibility. Described in the

28 Kidd & Neal, *The 'Letter' Batteries*, pp. 249-50

29 Glyde, 'Coast Defences', p. 116

30 'Point Peron Recreational Camp: Heritage Assessment' (August 1996), prepared by Cox Howlett & Bailey

31 'Health School', *West Australian*, 9 October 1946, p. 18

32 'Point Peron "K" Battery Conservation Management Plan'. Compiled for South West Corridor Development Foundation Inc. by Hocking Heritage Studio in March 2016. p. 69.

33 Glyde, 'Coast Defences', p. 116

34 Kidd & Neal, *The 'Letter' Batteries*, p. 71

35 Kidd & Neal, *The 'Letter' Batteries*, p. 69

36 Kidd & Neal, *The 'Letter' Batteries*, p. 69

37 Kidd & Neal, *The 'Letter' Batteries*, p. 69

38 Kidd & Neal, *The 'Letter' Batteries*, p. 75

USA as 'Permanent Emplacement', these mounts were referred to in Australia as 'Panama Mounts'.[39]

At Cape Peron, the gun emplacements enabled a traverse of 270° and were thus able to cover shipping within a range to the south of Rockingham and in Safety Bay, to the west over Garden Island and the boom defence facility between Cape Peron and Garden Island.

The 155mm guns were locally designated Peron 'K' Section, and the two 18 pounder guns, Peron 'H' Section. 'H' Section covered the water area between Point Peron and the southern end of Garden Island until 12 pounder guns were installed on Collie Head at the southern tip of Garden Island.[40]

Because the guns proved troublesome to operate because of age and wear, it was decided to re-equip Peron Battery with 5.25" guns, which could also be used against aircraft. However, by the time the smaller guns arrived in Fremantle, Cockburn Sound was not to be used as a wartime naval base and they were never installed.[41]

Both the original and replacement guns were stored at 71 Australian Field Ordnance Depot at Bushmead until the mid-1960s when coastal defence equipment was disposed of.[42]

The establishment of a Coast Artillery Searchlight (CASL) Section was usually a total of twenty personnel. The officer also acted as engineer adviser to the Battery Commander.[43]

The role of the CASL Section was to provide a visual search and engagement facility for the guns during the hours of darkness. Though the guns could be directed at unseen targets the spotting of fall of shot was essential to effect line and range corrections.[44]

The powerful beam of the searchlight was used to check a suspect vessel and if necessary, engage it using a visual gun sighting system. Fall of shot could be observed in the beam: either a silhouetted splash if short of the beam or unseen if beyond the beam.[45]

Communication with the searchlights and the Director of Electric Control and generators was by telephone from the Battery Command Post.[46]

The Battery was also issued with a large range finding and plotting room equipment and other fire control instruments.[47]

An engine room equipped with a 10hp diesel engine driving a 5KW 220v generator supplied power to the Battery, including a pump for the camp water supply.[48]

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39 Kidd & Neal, *The 'Letter' Batteries*, p. 75

40 Glyde, 'Coast Defences', p. 117

41 Glyde, 'Coast Defences', p. 117

42 Rockingham Tourist Centre, 'Gun sites at Cape Peron'

43 Additional information on CASL Section can be found in *The Aiming Post* (The Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society Of Western Australia Newsletter), September 2000

44 Kidd & Neal, *The 'Letter' Batteries*, pp. 79-80

45 Kidd & Neal, *The 'Letter' Batteries*, pp. 79-80

46 Kidd & Neal, *The 'Letter' Batteries*, pp. 79-80

47 Glyde, 'Coast Defences', p. 117

48 Glyde, 'Coast Defences', p. 117

The reduced threat to Western Australia finally led to further rationalisation in the second half on 1944. The 155mm guns on Cape Peron were withdrawn in December with the men assigned to developing CA/AA batteries. Although 5.25" batteries were proposed the Peron Battery was abandoned before construction started.[49]

On 24 November 1944, No. 2 gun and No. 17 CASL were removed from their emplacements. On 1 December 1944, Peron Battery ceased operational duties.[50]

In early 1945, personnel were reallocated to anti-aircraft units in the Fremantle area and 'K' Australian Heavy Battery disbanded.[51]

HQ Southern Fire Command was disbanded with HQ Northern Fire Command renamed in January 1945 as HQ Fremantle Fire Command.[52]

The artillerymen of Leighton Battery were merged with the AA gunners on Garden Island to form 802 CA/AA Battery at Leighton, which was completed. 802 CA/AA Battery took over the care and maintenance of all remaining coast defences under HQ Fremantle Fortress until the end of the war.[53]

After the War, the camp buildings were leased to the National Fitness Council. The 'K' Battery Camp was first used by 'inland' children in 1946.[54]

An image published in 1948 shows that the camouflage netting was still in place covering the 'abandoned gun positions'.[55]

Immediately after the War was over, Cape Peron was used again by holiday makers,[56] despite regular concerns about the sanitary conditions in parts of the camping areas.[57]

The military evidently still occasionally used Cape Peron for training exercises, including in 1954 when trainees fired live ammunition from 3.7" guns.[58]

For many years, the Peron Battery's Observation Post on the highest point of the Cape has given visitors spectacular views of the surrounding coastline, but the gun sites were relatively unknown.[59]

The construction of walkways in 1992 allowed access to the gun emplacements and their associated buildings. A restoration programme was coordinated by the Rockingham and Districts Tourist Authority.[60]

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49 Kidd & Neal, *The 'Letter' Batteries*, pp. 249-50

50 Kidd & Neal, *The 'Letter' Batteries*, pp. 249-50

51 Kidd & Neal, *The 'Letter' Batteries*, pp. 249-50

52 McKenzie-Smith, *Defending Fremantle*, pp. 11-12

53 McKenzie-Smith, *Defending Fremantle*, pp. 11-12

54 *West Australian*, 9 October 1945, p. 18; *West Australian* 30 November 1946, p. 6. Pictures of a camp, including images of gun emplacements being used as improvised amphitheatres can be seen in *Western Mail*, 9 June 1949, p. 10.

55 *West Australian*, 5 May 1948, p. 9

56 *West Australian*, 30 December 1948, p. 13

57 e.g. *Sunday Times*, 4 January 1953, p. 5

58 *West Australian*, 27 October 1954, p. 3

59 'Point Peron Recreational Camp'

60 Rockingham Tourist Centre, 'Gun sites at Cape Peron, 1942-45: A World War ll Legacy' (n.d., c. 1993)

Also in 1992, one of the Gun emplacements (Gun Emplacement South) was cleared by the crew of the guided-missile frigate *HMAS Adelaide*.[61]

In 1993, the Peron Battery was placed on the Interim List of the National Estate Register, and made a permanent entry in 1995.[62]

By the late 1990s the 'K' Camp buildings had deteriorated. They were subsequently demolished c.1997.[63]

In March 2016, a Conservation Plan was compiled for 'Point Peron "K" Battery' by Hocking Heritage Studio for the South West Corridor Development Foundation Inc.[64]

Since 2017, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions has undertaken major capital works to the place, such as construction of retaining walls, seating, resurfacing, drainage, balustrading, and interpretive signage.

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Cape Peron K Battery Complex is situated at the end of Point Peron Road on the Cape Peron headland which is just south of the townsite of Rockingham. The site comprises scrubby coastal vegetation set in an extensive dune system overlying a limestone peninsula. The WWII elements include two roughly circular concrete and brick Gun Emplacements, each with two adjacent Ready Ammunition Bunkers and concrete and brick Ammunition Storage Bunkers between 12-14 metres to the east. A concrete Observation Post is situated at the south end of the site and a concrete and brick Operations Centre lies approximately 50 metres north east of this location. Other structural elements include a set of steep bituminised and limestone lined steps (unknown date) leading from the car park to the Observation Post, and a concrete Water Tank in the south east quadrant of the site. Physical evidence for two Search Lights, understood to have been situated at John Point and Mushroom Rock, could not be investigated due to these areas being inaccessible. The elements are linked by rough crushed limestone or sand paths.

Gun Emplacement North

Situated on a raised dune in the northern portion of the site, Gun Emplacement North comprises a large horizontal twelve-sided concrete polygon frame sunk into the dune surface. The frame is approximately 22 metres in circumference (270°) and terminates at two concrete walls (3.4 metres in length) which form a wedge of approximately 90°. These concrete walls meet at a smaller central cylindrical concrete base (approx. 9.7 metres in circumference). A third concrete 'spoke', level with the floor, completes the frame and runs from the central concrete circular base to the exterior concrete frame forming a 'Y' shape. Another smaller concrete circle (approx. 6.2 metres in circumference), encircled by an iron rim with eight iron bolts protruding from it in a roughly circular pattern, is situated in the centre of the small central concrete base.

Between the large concrete outer frame and the smaller central circular concrete base is a sunken flat bricked area laid in a pattern which reflects the

61 http://www.ozatwar.com/bunkers/peronbattery.htm (accessed 10 May 2012)

62 'Gun sites at Cape Peron'

63 'Point Peron "K" Battery Conservation Management Plan'. Compiled for South West Corridor Development Foundation Inc. by Hocking Heritage Studio in March 2016. p. 69.

64 'Point Peron "K" Battery Conservation Management Plan'. Compiled for South West Corridor Development Foundation Inc. by Hocking Heritage Studio in March 2016.

twelve-sided polygon shape of the frame, with a small step (two bricks high) up to the central concrete area, and two small steps (each two bricks high) up to the larger outer concrete rim. The steps are also arranged in a twelve-sided 270° polygon. The triangular (approx. 90°) wedge formed by the termination of the two ends of the concrete circular frame and the two walls, is oriented with its base directed to the northwest and comprises a grassed area of earth level with the walls. The larger exterior concrete frame has an iron railway type rail running its entire circumference and a series of five semi-circular depressions (40 x 14 x 8 centimetres) which contain large iron rings along its interior edge. The structure is comprised of rough reinforced concrete with large to medium sized granite conglomerate visible within the matrix. The brick is good quality red fire brick. No brick maker's marks were visible at this location due to the structure being in an intact state.

Directly adjacent to the Gun Emplacement are two small Ready Ammunition Bunkers. These are largely identical, besides the reversing/mirroring of some elements, and are situated at approximately 50° and 155°. The bunkers are rectangular (approx. 2 x 3 metres) with an unroofed continuous front chamber, and two internal chambers covered with a concrete roof and separated by a concrete wall. The larger of the two chambers (approx. 1.6 x 1 metres) has timber horizontal supports bolted to its interior which probably previously held shelving. The front wall of the forward chamber has two shallow half circle indentations for placing ammunition for the gunners. The structure is comprised of rough reinforced concrete with large to medium sized granite conglomerate visible within the matrix. Evidence for what was probably the timber frame in which the concrete was poured to construct the bunkers is readily discernible on its surfaces. There is evidence in a few areas for deterioration of the concrete exposing the underlying iron reinforcing and the bolts of some of the timber supports are broken. Graffiti is visible in a number of locations on both bunkers.

Overall Gun Emplacement North, and its associated infrastructure, is in good condition.

Storage Bunker North

Approximately 12 metres to the east (85°) of Gun Emplacement North, set into the adjacent sand dune, is a large two-roomed concrete bunker structure accessed via a small set of concrete steps and a brick lined 'dugout' which faces south and a concrete 'tunnel' along its southern edge. The roof is flat rough concrete with a number of small rectangular protrusions along its edge above open square holes or vents that open into the interior of the structure.

The bunker has a concrete outer shell and the first room of the bunker, the smaller of the two (approx. 2.5 x 4.8 metres), is bounded by three concrete walls then is divided from the second chamber by a brick wall along its east. The second larger room (approx. 4.7 x 4.3 metres), while also comprising a concrete exterior wall, has a second internal brick wall set approximately 0.7 metres from the external concrete wall. The cavity between the two walls is empty and does not continue right up to the roof, terminating approximately 0.5 metres below it. The brick wall has a number of window-like openings (approx. 0.5 x 0.3 metres) along its top edge the function of which is unclear. The brick wall may have acted as a fire wall to reduce the potential for stored ammunition to take the impact of any bombing assault and/or to prevent accidental misfires within the bunker from spreading to the surrounding scrub. The first smaller compartment was likely used to store other supplies.

The internal walls of the structure are largely painted white but it may not have been originally as other walls are unpainted red brick. A timber lintel above the door to the larger chamber would suggest a door had been hung here at some stage as would extant timber supports embedded in the door to the smaller chamber.

The concrete the structure is comprised of is rough reinforced concrete with large to medium sized granite conglomerate visible within the matrix. As described above for the Ready Ammunition Bunkers its concrete surfaces display evidence for the method used to construct the bunker i.e. a timber plank frame into which the concrete was poured and set. The brick is good quality red fire brick. No brick maker's marks were visible at this location due to the structure being in an intact state. The floors of both chambers are currently dirt though an original floor surface may exist beneath this but was not investigated for this assessment. Graffiti covers much of the interior and exterior walls of the structure.

Overall Storage Bunker North is in good condition.

Gun Emplacement South

A second gun emplacement is situated on a raised dune approximately 125 metres south of Gun Emplacement North and is accessed via an overgrown sandy track. The structure appears to be identical to Gun Emplacement North but its condition is poor. The sand dune on which the structure is situated has been severely undermined by erosion along its western edge which has resulted in the brick floor fracturing into numerous pieces most of which have dropped through the concrete frame onto the sand dune below. A large proportion of the fragmented brick has also slipped further down the slope. The movement of the dune has resulted in some cracking and warping of the concrete frame exposing some of the iron reinforcing. The lower half of the central concrete cylindrical base and the majority of the large outer frame are also exposed. This site has not been cleared in recent times and scrub is growing within and directly adjacent to the structures.

The deteriorated condition of the structure has allowed for some further understanding of the gun emplacement's construction. The concrete frame appears to have been set as one complete piece with the brick inlaid into its centre directly on top of the sand substrate, albeit with some evidence for mortaring to parts of the concrete base. The fracturing of the brick floor has also exposed the underside of the brick including its maker's mark, and all bricks examined depict two 'frog' compartments imprinted with the letters S/B. Other brick across the site was marked with 'State Brickworks' so this may be a variation of that manufacturer's imprint and would be consistent with supply from State industries to the military. The ends of the iron rail that runs across the surface of the large twelve-sided polygon concrete frame has also been exposed clarifying that this terminates at the two small walls set at a 90 degree angle.

As for Gun Emplacement North there are two Ready Ammunition Bunkers adjacent to Gun Emplacement South. These again appear identical but have also been subject to undermining/erosion and butt up against the exposed concrete frame of the Gun Emplacement. The Ready Ammunition Bunker to the northeast is on an angle down the slope while the one to the southeast is filled with sand. There do not appear to be any extant timber supports as observed in the others.

As noted above, Gun Emplacement South is in poor condition. However, its deteriorated state has revealed fabric useful in understanding its construction while much of the fabric remains on site. There appears to have been some intervention to the fabric with evidence for cracks in the concrete being repaired at some stage. The isolated location and lack of a clear entry path to this site has resulted in less graffiti.

Storage Bunker South

Approximately 14 metres to the northeast (60°) of Gun Emplacement South set into the adjacent sand dune is a two-roomed concrete bunker matching that recorded above for Gun Emplacement North. Reversed in its orientation, access to this bunker is from its north side.

The condition of this bunker is poorer than that described above. Its position, set low into a mobile sand dune, has resulted in the floor level being raised substantially due to sand entering through the small open vents at the top of the bunker's external walls. In addition there is substantial blackening to the interior walls indicating fire damage. Some walls are again painted white and although there is less graffiti than that observed at Gun Emplacement North, it is still present on most wall surfaces. Brick debris, possibly from the Gun Emplacement, is scattered across the interior of the structure though some could also have come from the brick 'dugout' at its entrance as this is almost completely beneath the dune's surface so it is impossible to determine whether it is intact.

Overall Storage Bunker South is in poor condition.

Observation Post

Approximately 200 metres and 140° from Gun Emplacement South is the Observation Post situated on a raised dune, the highest point of the site. The structure is primarily brick construction with a thick concrete roof, foundation, and 'framework'. The exterior has been painted an olive 'military' green but the timber panel framework concrete construction method observed at the other bunkers is also apparent here.

There are two rooms, one accessed through a small passage to the left of the entrance door on the west side, and the other up a small flight of concrete stairs directly in front of the door. Both rooms have large horizontal viewing slots extending the entire width of their northern walls. A large wrought iron gate covers the entrance and is padlocked at all times (BCA holds the key). However, the large slots have no covering and the building can be accessed by climbing up and through one of these as evidenced by the graffiti covering the interior.

The lower room is 4.5 x 2.5 metres and is empty besides two large concrete pillars embedded in its northeast and northwest corners. The pillars, which are 1.4 metres high, are square and approximately 0.3 x 0.3 metres thick. Although largely intact some large chips of concrete are missing from their tops. The pillars probably served as bases for instrumentation of some type such as telescopes or other viewing apparatus. A series of compartments each 0.8 metres wide, 0.5 metres deep and 0.5 metres high, lines the northern wall. These are currently empty. The floor of the first chamber comprises square cement slabs, two of which have been damaged. The interior brick walls are unpainted besides the graffiti which covers every wall.

The upper room is 6.8 x 4.8 metres and is again empty. A series of shallow square compartments set into the western and eastern walls are the only elements besides the viewing slot. The floor again comprises cement slabs but these are rectangular strips rather than squares. Graffitti again covers the majority of the interior.

The Observation Post is in good condition overall. It is understood that previously the foundations had been undermined by erosion but these appear to have been repaired. There is some evidence of concrete deterioration which has exposed the underlying iron reinforcing on the exterior southern wall and signs of patching to the exterior brick surface is evident on the south wall beneath the paint.

Operations Centre

Approximately 30° and 60 metres from the Observation Post is a brick and concrete bunker which has been identified as the Operations Centre. The low-lying structure has been constructed into a sand dune hollow and is accessed from a small sandy path from the southeast.

Externally the Operations Centre is a roughly L-shaped squat brick-walled structure with a thick rough concrete roof with two large raised concrete lines running north-south across its roof. These have iron bolts protruding at intervals are likely to have supported machinery or perhaps communications equipment. Access to the bunker is via a small brick lined sand filled 'dug out' which may have a set of concrete steps similar to that seen elsewhere beneath the sandy surface. There is some damage to the brick at the entrance and a large iron grate door is lying nearby which may have covered the entrance at some stage.

Internally a small brick tunnel leads to a wide double doorway and into a large room. The doorway has an iron frame and one side of a heavy iron door remains in situ. The other door is inside the room lying on the floor surface. The floor surface of the tunnel entrance has been raised with sand entering from outside. There is a small window aperture on the right as you enter the tunnel looking which looks through to the larger room.

The second area is one large room. It is double brick lined with a small cavity between the brick and has two small 'window' apertures directly beneath the roof on the north and south walls. The floor surface is dirt and again appears to have been raised by additional sand entering from outside. A large pile of brick rubble is situated in the northwest corner which appears to have resulted from damage to the internal brick cavity wall surrounding the small window aperture. Other debris and modern rubbish is also in evidence, as is the second part of the iron door as discussed above. The walls are painted white and are covered in graffiti. The roof is concrete and the same timber plank concrete construction is visible on the surface as noted elsewhere. The damage to the brickwork, and exposure in the window apertures, has allowed access to the brick makers' marks. In-situ brick in the south wall window aperture displays the two embossed frogs seen previously (i.e. S/B) while other areas of brick damage to the structure, and some of the brick debris, display a single frog imprinted with STATE/BRICKWORKS.

Overall the Operations Centre is in good to poor condition. Damage to the brickwork has resulted in structural damage and there is some deterioration evident in the concrete roof but overall the bunker's structural integrity appears sound.

Water Tank

Approximately 140 metres due north of the Observation Post is a large concrete Water Tank on the side of an east facing sand dune.

The tank comprises prefabricated interlinking concrete 'slats' held together by heavy iron bracing rods some of which are missing. The roof of the tank, formerly a timber framed galvanised iron 'cone', has only one piece of iron remaining in situ while a few of the timber supports remain in their entirety the remainder have broken off. Large sheets of the roof iron are hanging down the north side of the tank allowing access to the underside and the manufacturer's mark – LYSAGHT/QUEEN'S HEAD/AUSTRALIA. The mark also depicts a side profile of a woman's head and the numbers and letters L/W/W/L/2554/8 in and around a rectangular frame.

The interior surface of the tank displays evidence for a black coating, possibly waterproofing, and graffiti is present on its surfaces. A galvanised iron pipe runs up the external south side of the tank from its top edge down into the ground where it presumably intersects with an underground pipe system.

The condition of the Water Tank is generally poor. The roof has deteriorated and a number of the iron bracing rods are missing.

Artesian Well

The remnants of a circular stone lined well with a corrugated iron lid are located between the Water Tank and the pathway extending to the Observation Post.

Storm Water Drain

At the northern end of the Cape Peron peninsula is a concrete and iron stormwater drain manhole. This is not believed to be directly associated with the Battery. Its date is unknown.

Search Lights

The sites of the two Search Lights, believed to have been located on Mushroom Rock and John Point, could not be investigated due to these areas being inaccessible. It is unknown if any fabric relating to these elements remains extant however, a small cylindrical structure located on John Point and visible from the peninsula may be associated with the Search Light.

Tunnels

No evidence for tunnels similar to those at *Leighton Battery* were in evidence at *Cape Peron K Battery Complex*. However, there is some possibility underground access points were incorporated into the complex which have since been concealed by the fairly mobile sand dune system at this site. Further investigations, such as an archaeological excavation inside one of the structures, would be required to confirm this.

General

Due to time constraints, and the thick coastal scrub covering the site, a full pedestrian survey of *Cape Peron K Battery Complex* was not possible. However, it is probable that other features and archaeological material may be located across the site.

13. 3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

The following coastal defence gun batteries, and associated infrastructure, were emplaced or under construction in Western Australia between June 1934 and August 1944:

Rottnest

- *P526 Oliver Hill Battery,* Rottnest - 2 x 9.2" guns MK10 on MK7 mounts
- P3321 Bickley Battery, Rottnest - 2 x 6" MKXI on PV6 mounts
- P9146 Battery Observation Post & Timber Signal Station, Rottnest

Swanbourne

- Swanbourne Battery, Swanbourne - 2 x 6" MK7 guns on CP mounts

Mosman Park

- *P3247 Leighton Battery*, Mosman Park - 2 x 6" MK7 guns on CP mounts

Garden Island

- P18495 Garden Island Batteries (4) which includes:
  - P3301 Challenger Battery, Garden Island ['J' Heavy Battery] - 2 x 155mm guns on Panama Mounts
  - Beacon 'J' Battery, Garden Island - 2 x 4" US Naval guns
  - Garden Island, southeast - 1 x 3.7" AA gun sited an A/ACA role; 1 x 12 pounder Naval gun (at one stage, two guns)
  - Scriven Battery, Garden Island - 2 x 9.2" guns MKXV under construction

Fremantle

- Coast Artillery Searchlights, Port of Fremantle defences - Total of nineteen
- Harbour Battery, Fremantle - 2 x 6 pounder twin barrel coast defence guns

Rockingham

- P3365 Peron 'K' Battery, Cape Peron - 2 x 155mm guns on Panama Mounts

Albany

- *P026 Albany Forts* [Princess Royal Battery] - 2 x 6" QFC guns MK5; 2 Coast Artillery Searchlights

Geraldton

- 2 x 4" US Naval guns & 2 Coast Artillery Searchlights.[65]

In addition, 9.2" guns were also installed at the following locations:

- North Head, Sydney Harbour (NSW)
- Cape Banks, La Perouse (NSW)
- Fort Drummond, Wollongong (NSW)
- Fort Wallace, Newcastle (NSW)
- Darwin (NT).[66]

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65 Information taken from Holder, 'Coast Defence Batteries', p. 9; see also 'Oliver Hill Battery: Conservation Assessment', p. 5

66 'Oliver Hill Battery: Conservation Assessment', p. 6

Two WWII coastal defence batteries have been entered in the State Register of Heritage Places:

- *P3247 Leighton Battery* comprises a complex of underground tunnels, rooms and an observation post, a semi-buried command post, two 6" gun emplacements (all 1942), two 5.25" gun emplacements one of which remains buried (1944-45), and a radar hut (c. 1947).
- *P526 Oliver Hill Battery* consists of two 9.2" breech loading guns manufactured in 1901 and 1902 together with their emplacements, a network of underground tunnels servicing them, and the abandoned shacks and equipment. The 9.2" guns are the last of this type still in existence in such intact condition. The only location in Australia when guns are still in position is *Oliver Hill Battery,* Rottnest Island. Elsewhere, they remain in position on Robben Island, South Africa, and possibly in Gibraltar.[67]

In addition, *P26 Albany Forts,* comprising a renovated artillery battery and army barracks, consisting of two guns, an underground magazine, numerous transported buildings, ruins, a few substantially reconstructed buildings and a parade ground has been entered in the State Register of Heritage Places. This place has a lengthy association with coastal defences and was also utilised during WWII.

The following coastal defence places are in the State Heritage Office assessment program as part of a larger associated place:

- P18495 Garden Island Batteries (4) - is in the assessment program as part of P4501 Garden Island
- *P526 Oliver Hill Battery,* P3321 Bickley Battery, and P9146 Battery Observation Post & Timber Signal Station as part of P3650 Rottnest Island.

Cape Peron K Battery Complex is one of a number of coastal defence sites in Western Australia and elsewhere around the country. The place represents a small component of the infrastructure created during this period of 'preparedness' following the perceived increasing threat to Western Australia during the latter stages of WWII. Although there are better preserved examples of gun emplacements and complexes in Western Australia, limited intervention has occurred at *Cape Peron K Battery Complex* which has resulted in a relatively high degree of authenticity. The military hardware has been removed but the associated structures remain largely intact. The place is also an intact archaeological site.

13. 4 KEY REFERENCES

Kidd, Reg, & Ray Neal, *The 'Letter' Batteries: The History of the 'Letter' Batteries in World War II* (Castlecrag, 1998).

13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH

Archaeological excavations within one or all of the extant structures would clarify whether a tunnel system linked any of the facilities.

67 'Oliver Hill Battery: Conservation Assessment', p. 7

To date no historical site plans have been located and it is possible these do not exist. However, further research may reveal plans at some point in the future.