



**HERITAGE
COUNCIL**
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES

Register Entry

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that the following entry refers to the deaths in custody of Aboriginal people.

1. **DATA BASE No.** 516
2. **NAME** *Thomson Bay Settlement, Wadjemup/Rottnest Island (1831; 1839; 1841; 1842; 1844; 1846; 1847; 1849; 1851; 1857; 1859; 1863; 1864; 1867; 1870; 1871; 1879; 1881; 1890; 1892; 1895; 1898; 1901; 1919; 1930; 1934; 1935; 1936; 1946; 1953; 1966; 1967; 1987; 1992)*
FORMER NAME (or OTHER NAMES) Wadjemup; The Settlement
3. **LOCATION** Thomson Bay, Wadjemup/ Rottnest Island, 20km west from Fremantle
4. **DESCRIPTION OF PLACE INCLUDED IN THIS ENTRY**
Part of Reserve 16713 comprising portion of Lot 10976 on Deposited Plan 216860 being part of the land contained in Crown Land Title Volume LR3096 Folio 976 and portion of Lot 11022 on Deposited Plan 216932 being part of the land contained in Crown Land Title Volume LR3096 Folio 921 as shown on Heritage Council Curtilage Map P516-0.
5. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA** City of Cockburn
6. **OWNER AT REGISTRATION**
State of Western Australia (Responsible Agency: Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions; Management Order: Rottnest Island Authority)
7. **HERITAGE LISTINGS**
 - Register of Heritage Places: Interim 03/07/1992
Registered 14/06/2021
 - National Trust Classification: Classified 11/06/1973
 - Town Planning Scheme: -----
 - Municipal Inventory: -----
 - Register of the National Estate: -----
 - Aboriginal Sites Register Registered
P3781 Wadjemup Aboriginal Prisoners Cemetery (Rottnest)
P3540 Rottnest: Lodge/Quod

8. ORDERS UNDER SECTION OF THE ACT

9. HERITAGE AGREEMENT

10. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Thomson Bay Settlement, Wadjemup/ Rottnest Island, comprising buildings, roads, paths, walls, engineering structures, plantings, jetties, archaeological sites and a portion of Garden Lake on Wadjemup/ Rottnest Island, relating to the following phases of development: Aboriginal Prison (1838–1902), Seafaring (1848–1903), Boy’s Reformatory (1881–1901), Governor’s Summer Residence (1848–1913), Recreation (1902 to the present), Fremantle Prison Annex (1903 to 1931) and Military use (1914–1915; 1934–1945), has cultural heritage significance for the following reasons:

collectively, the individual components form a cultural environment, which possesses significant aesthetic qualities that are heightened by natural landscape and marine features. The place is unique in the way in which so many very significant cultural elements are concentrated in a single place. Similar individual attributes are found in many places, but the combination on Wadjemup/ Rottnest Island is unique;

the place contains the only purpose-built Aboriginal Prison constructed in Australia and the nineteenth century prison facilities of the Quod remain highly intact;

the place contains key elements of the Aboriginal Prison established on Wadjemup/ Rottnest Island. With a brutal reputation, the Prison was used by the Colonial government as an actual and symbolic means to defeat Aboriginal resistance to colonisation in the State. As a site of exile and often death for Aboriginal men under Colonial law from 1838-1931, the Wadjemup Aboriginal Burial Ground and the Quod are particularly significant to the Aboriginal people of Western Australia;

the Wadjemup Aboriginal Burial Ground, unmarked for over a century, is believed to have been the site of more Aboriginal deaths in custody than any other location in the State or nation;

the place holds significance for Aboriginal people as a place of remembrance and as a symbol of social protest due to its associations with incarceration and Aboriginal deaths in custody, which reflects the impact of Wadjemup/ Rottnest Island and the prison system on the deterioration of Aboriginal wellbeing since colonisation. The removal of Aboriginal men and boys, many of whom were significant figures, warriors and elders, from their traditional lands caused catastrophic damage to traditional knowledge and culture across the State, which has had lasting ramifications for Western Australian Aboriginal people to the present day;

as the main entry point to Wadjemup/ Rottnest Island, the place has iconic landmark aesthetic values when viewed from the water. The place has an

important place in Western Australians' sense of identity and as a visitor's destination and is highly valued by the general community for its social and recreational associations and as an iconic holiday destination;

the place contains a rare surviving example of a large group of buildings constructed in the early and middle part of the 19th century that have not only survived but have been adapted to serve continuous use. The unified group of buildings along Vincent Way are simple in form and construction, derived from local materials and conditions, in harmony with the landscape setting of Moreton Bay fig trees and olive trees;

the functions of the Aboriginal Prison, the Boys' Reformatory and the pilot boat service, are all represented in the built environment in a legible way, and represent a series of practices that were either discontinued or are no longer common in this State;

The buildings and elements from the period Wadjemup/ Rottneest Island operated as a Aboriginal Prison demonstrate the role of Aboriginal labour in the development of Western Australia and is reflective of development elsewhere where Aboriginal labour was utilised, yet not acknowledged;

Hotel Rottneest (fmr Governor's Residence) was a seat of Government from the 1860s through to the early 20th century when Colonial Governors were in residence. The 1920s conversion of the former summer residence of the Governor of Western Australia to tourist accommodation, and its subsequent use as a hotel from the 1950s has enhanced its aesthetic, historic and social value to the people of Western Australia;

The buildings and elements from the period Wadjemup/ Rottneest Island operated as a Aboriginal Prison demonstrate the planning and development of a nineteenth century island penal establishment. The regimented and hierarchical layout of the former Superintendent's Residence (Cottages F & G), Second Superintendent's Quarters (Manager's Residence) and cottages located along the sea wall with the Quod, former Mill and Hay Store (Museum) and archaeological remnants of the fenced gardens behind, demonstrates both the self-sufficiency of the settlement as well as the harsh conditions faced by the inmates. Collectively, the buildings from this period, including the Boys' Reformatory, the Pilot Station and Governor's Residence, are a remarkably intact example of a British colonial outpost established from the 1830s in the formative years of the Swan River Colony;

The methods of construction used in the roof systems of the former Superintendent's Residence (Cottages F & G), Second Superintendent's Quarters (Manager's Residence) and cottages located along the sea wall are rare in Western Australia, with the use of stone and split timber trusses, commonly referred to as 'Vincent's Trusses'; and,

reflecting the importance of the offshore location of Wadjemup/ Rottneest Island, the place is valued for its role in housing internees and prisoners of war during World War I, as an annex of Fremantle Prison, its importance in Australia's World War II national coastal defence system, and more recently, its use to quarantine returned Australians during the Covid-19 pandemic.