

## YOUR VIRTUAL DISCOVERY VISIT – 31 TO THE DEFENCE HERITAGE STORIES OF ROTTNEST ISLAND



*The Virtual Visit series was initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic when Rottnest Island was closed to the public due to social distancing restrictions and periods of use for quarantine from March to June 2020. The intent was to maintain a connection to the Island by exploring stories of interest and offering links for self discovery.*

*Now that the Island is once again open to visitors and guiding services are being gradually re-established, these Virtual Visits have been*

*retained as part of an archival record for future*

### NEW RESOURCES – NEW INSIGHTS

Given the myriad of family and social activities over the next few weeks, this will be the last Rottnest Virtual Visit for 2020. The series will recommence on 12 January 2021. Since these Rottnest Virtual Visits commenced in May, a lot has happened to enhance our understanding of Rottnest. There have been several on-island visits through the Maintaining Excellence initiative. Interpretation Plans and site visits to key defence heritage locations have been completed. The revised RVGA web pages and member's digital archives are about to go live. The Wadjemup Museum will soon open with completely new exhibitions and presentations. Feedback, new documentation, new information and new oral histories, all arising for increased discussion and interest has added to our understanding of Rottnest. This Virtual Visit will illustrate this synergy and collate some of our increased understanding of the Rottnest Military Railroad and hidden reminders still on the Island.



Derelict rail wagon photographed during recent DHIP (Defence Heritage Interpretation Plan) Committee orientation visit for RIA staff

A number of Virtual Visits have highlighted aspects of the design, construction and operation of the Rottneest Military Railroad. Information for these articles was largely drawn from photographs, guide notes and reference materials collected by the Military Restoration Group, now held by the RIA. Additional material has since come to light.

A recent visit conducted by the DHIP Committee enabled interested parties to understand better this rail heritage and the location and condition of the physical evidence remaining on Rottneest. Although the remaining rail rolling stock is in a deteriorated condition, it has potential to add to the visitor experience and will be factored into ongoing interpretation projects.



The digitising of the RVGA Archives provided easier access to additional information. This included correspondence with the WA Government Railways to purchase wagons as well as photographs indicating a variety of types in use. Feedback from the wider distribution of the Virtual Visits indicated that, over time, up to 10 wagons may have been purchased although sadly the remnants of only a couple remain. In addition to the identified G Class wagons, the correspondence indicates that H Class wagons were also purchased. Measurement of the remaining wagons indicates that some may be the New Zealand Railways type originally bought in large numbers by WAGR in the 1890s.

[http://westralia.uk/g\\_wagon.htm](http://westralia.uk/g_wagon.htm)

[http://westralia.uk/h\\_wagon.htm](http://westralia.uk/h_wagon.htm)



<https://fremantlebiz.livejournal.com/620301.html>.

This photograph shows two varieties of wagons (note variation in height of sides) at Kingstown Barracks behind the Crab.



Feedback from readers has also provided supporting documentation to what was generally know but often adds interesting details. This includes the reminiscences of Brigadier Hussey provided by the Australian Army Museum of Western Australia and a series of Rottnest relevant articles from *Light Railways*, the journal of the Light Railway Research Society of Australia.

[http://media.lrrsa.org.au/idas045/Light\\_Railways\\_045\\_048.pdf](http://media.lrrsa.org.au/idas045/Light_Railways_045_048.pdf) page 3

[http://media.lrrsa.org.au/ceno131/Light\\_Railways\\_131.pdf](http://media.lrrsa.org.au/ceno131/Light_Railways_131.pdf) page 6

Full identification of the Rottnest relics is provided here

[http://media.lrrsa.org.au/yaka229/Light\\_Railways\\_229.pdf](http://media.lrrsa.org.au/yaka229/Light_Railways_229.pdf) page 39

It is through the active interest of guides, ongoing access to digital information, on-site engagement and pro-active sharing that our knowledge of Rottnest and its stories continues to expand be it geological, heritage, social, historical or natural sciences. With our new web site and digital archive and continued commitment to excellence, 2021 should be a great year.

