

YOUR VIRTUAL DISCOVERY VISIT – 35 TO THE 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.

Now that the Island is again open to visitors, these Virtual Visits are continuing in 2021 to enable a further enjoyment of stories introduced at the Wadjemup Museum, the Chapman Archives or sites around the Island.

Enjoy, reflect and share.

COLONEL EDWARD FOX ANGELO



Colonel Angelo (1836-1902) was a soldier from aged 18 and a Crimean War veteran. He was Commandant of the Western Australian Defence Force from 3 June 1882 to February 1886 when he was appointed Government Resident (administrator) at Roebourne. He was Superintendent of Rottnest Island 1890-98. He entertained various distinguished guests, hunted and fished and engaged in artistic pursuits. ... He founded a Rottnest Literary Institute and wrote and published on various topics.

As Superintendent he also improved facilities on Rottnest, including construction of a good sewerage system and a new lighthouse. Replaced as Superintendent in September 1898, he retired from public life. He died on 15 November 1902 and was buried in the Presbyterian section of Karrakatta Cemetery.

In spite of his exceptional record of military and public service, Angelo is probably best remembered today for the 15 photographs comprising the Angelo Collection. The Collection represents some of the most significant portraits of life on Rottnest Island in the 19th Century. The collection contains photographs of male Aboriginal prisoners engaged in a variety of activities on Rottnest Island. They are perhaps the



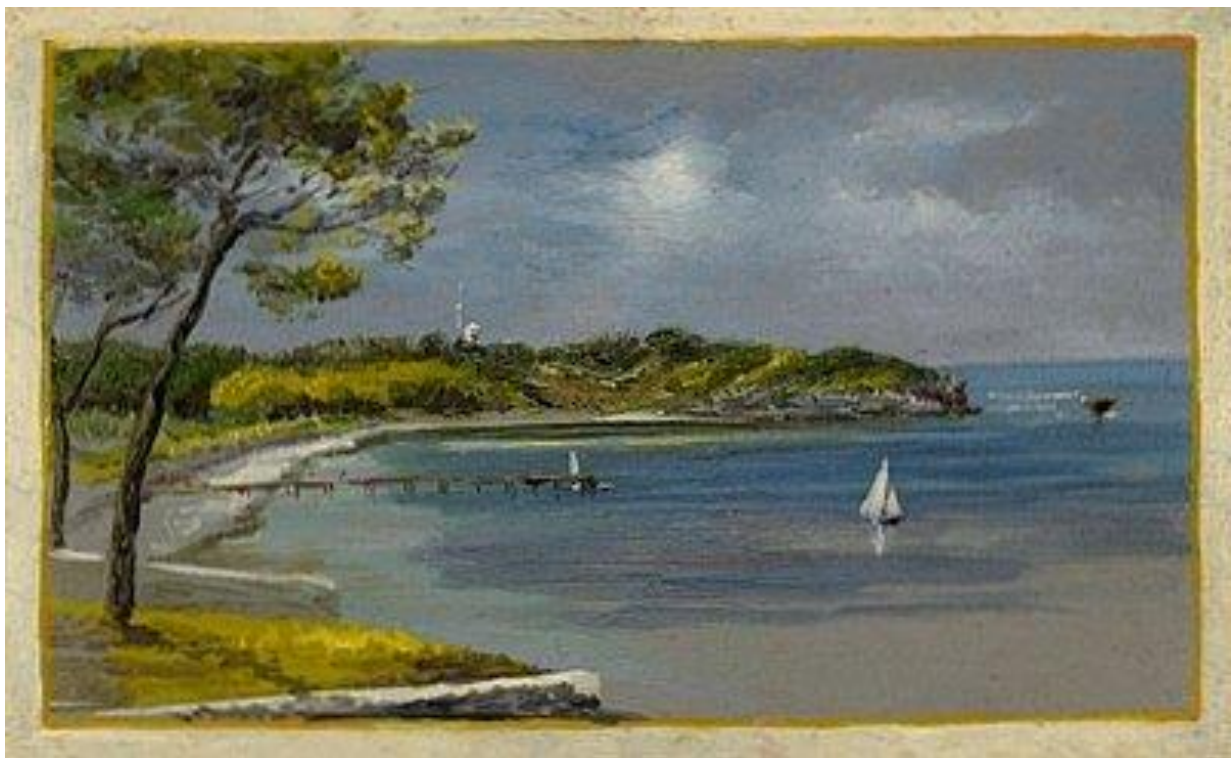
most significant and poignant photographs of their type. Periodic rotation of exhibitions means that the images are not currently on display in Lomas Cottage.

THE SOLDIER ARTIST AND SCHOLAR

Field Sketching was originally a military skill developed to a fine art in the 18th and 19th Centuries. In a time when maps were of variable accuracy or often non-existent, field panoramic sketches drawn/painted from a known point allowed officers to visualise the ground they would be working in. Attention to terrain detail and vegetation and accurate rendering of built structures were important elements of the field sketch.

With the advent of portable photographic equipment and aerial photography in the early 20th Century, sketching and watercolours started to become obsolete as a military skill. By the end of World War 2, field sketching had all but died out, although it has continued to be used by snipers, intelligence personnel and special forces to a far lesser degree.

A collateral modern benefit are the sketches of barracks, public buildings and scenery drawn or painted, off duty, by military officers. These works often provide the only public record of these scenes before photography. This detail in this sketch of Thomson Bay shows that Colonel Angelo was an accomplished practitioner



*Thomson Bay, Rottnest Island painted by Edward Fox Angelo.
Wordsworth Collection, National Gallery of Australia.*

The Colonel's artistic endeavours were not limited to watercolours. On display in the Museum are album pages of pressed, dried and mounted seaweed collected from Rottnest beaches by Miss Duffield a descendant of Samuel Duffield, the third lighthouse keeper on the Island 1854-79. Edward Angelo had similar seaweed album skills as reported in the West Australian, 20 July 1896

Colonel Angelo took up the cause of Anglo-Israelism, a movement which was in vogue during the late 1800s. He went on to write a scholarly book about the subject and had

it published in 1896 – almost certainly at his own expense. Anglo-Israelism also called British Israelism is a pseudo-archaeological belief that the people of the British Isles are genetically, racially, and linguistically the direct descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of ancient Israel.

<https://crimeanwar-veteranswa.com/stories/the-august-colonel-angelo/>

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/33138056?searchTerm=Angelo>

<https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Angelo-64>

There are currently over 47 entries relating to Colonel Angelo and his large family in the RVGA Chapman Archives. Access to multiple sources and notes continues to inform Guide tours and experiences on offer to Island Visitors. This now includes the “Who Lived Here?” ramble along Vincent Way, a feature of Holiday Guiding.



Some Rottnest characters! Henri Courderot, Mary Curtis, Edmund Ashworth, Henry Vincent and Francis Fraser Armstrong and Connie Pym (née Angelo)

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