



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF SITES
RELATING TO THE BATAVIA SHIPWRECK

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INTRODUCTION

On June 4, 1629¹ the Dutch East Indiaman, 'Batavia' went aground in the Abrolhos Islands off the coast of Western Australia. The shipwrecked survivors came ashore on the remote islands of the Wallabi Group and were marooned there until their rescue on September 17, 1629. During their stay the stranded community was ravaged by the infamous mutiny where 125 men, women, and children were murdered. (Drake-Brockman 1963; Edwards 1966).

This paper presents the results of an archaeological survey of the islands in the Wallabi Group. The study focused on the five crude, but intriguing, stone structures on Beacon, Long, and West Wallabi Islands. The goal of the investigation was to establish their relation, if any, to the Batavia survivors. The study was conducted in 1974 by the Department of Maritime Archaeology in the Western Australian Museum.

1 All dates are in the new style calendar.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The Wallabi Group is the northernmost group in the Abrolhos and consists of 32 islands scattered over an extensive system of coral reefs. Within the group there are basically two types of islands.

The larger, western islands, such as East and West Wallabi, essentially consist of consolidated coral-limestone platforms. These platforms or old reef remnants host a rich fauna and flora and generally possess freshwater wells. A distinctive fauna on these islands is the tammar or scrub wallaby (Macropus eugenii houtmanni); after which the islands are named.

In contrast, the eastern islands are considerably smaller and made of accumulations of coral rubble which is semi-consolidated into loose beach ridges. Vegetation is sparse and the islands are without fresh water. Beacon and Long Islands are both examples of this latter type. (Environmental data from O'Loughlin 1964, 1969).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On June 4th, 1629, the Dutch East Indiaman, 'Batavia', struck Morning Reef, thus setting the stage for the terrible mutiny on Batavia's Graveyard (Beacon Island). The ship's 'commandeur'¹

1 The title 'commandeur' designates the senior Dutch East India Company Officer aboard the 'Batavia'. It is not to be confused with the ship's captain or sailing master.

Francisco Pelsaert, maintained a journal of the entire incident. It includes accounts of the shipwreck, the rescue voyages, the mutiny, and the subsequent trials of the mutineers. E. D. Drok has translated the journal and it has been further researched and expanded upon by H. Drake-Brockman (1963). The following synopsis is drawn from their work.

Four days after the wreck, a party including Pelsaert, set out in a ship's boat to seek help from Indonesia. They left behind 268 people marooned on the desolate isles of the Wallabi Group. A week later the senior officer amongst the survivors and the leader of the impending mutiny, Jeronimus Cornelisz, sent Wiebbe Hayes and a group consisting primarily of soldiers to the High (Wallabi) Islands in search of water. At the same time he shifted 45 people from Batavia's Graveyard to nearby Seals (Long) Island. Evidently Cornelisz's aim was to be rid of the people who might be loyal to Pelsaert.

On July 9th, according to a prearranged plan, Hayes sent up smoke signals indicating his party had found drinking water. Cornelisz disregarded the signals, because by this time the mutiny had begun. The first murders occurred on Batavia's Graveyard, but the violence quickly escalated and soon spread to Seals (Long) Island. Small groups of innocent survivors attempted to flee from the blood bath on rafts and timbers. Many were overtaken by the mutineers and murdered, though some managed to escape to the safety of Hayes' camp and warn him of the situation.

The mutineer's goal was to capture the rescue vessel and use it as a privateer. Realizing Hayes might foil their plans, the conspirators attempted to overwhelm his group with both treachery and open attacks. On September 17th the mutineers launched their final attack on Hayes' company. During the fighting the rescue vessel 'Sardam' appeared. The combatants disengaged and Hayes quickly rowed to the ship to warn Pelsaert of the mutineers intention.

The conspirators were then apprehended. Cornelisz was detained on Batavia's Graveyard and the others held on Seals Island. After their trials, which Pelsaert conducted, nine of the leaders were executed on Seals Island.

Of the 268 people Pelsaert left in the islands, he returned to find 40 had drowned while swimming from the wreck, 20 had died of illness and disease, and 125 had been the victims of the mutineers violence.

PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

In June of 1963 Max Cramer, his brother Graham, and Greg Allen conducted the first successful excavations¹ on Beacon Island. They found 17th century Dutch artifacts in association with human skeletons. These finds confirmed their hunch that the island had been Batavia's Graveyard and led them, with the aid of Dave Johnson, to discover the wreck on nearby Morning Reef.

1 Individuals on Beacon Island, notably 'Pop' Martin and Dave Johnson, had accidentally unearthed Batavia material prior to this time, but the items were not always properly appreciated.

Less than two months later Max Cramer returned to the Abrolhos with Hugh Edwards and a team of civilian and military divers. They were primarily involved in the underwater excavation of the wreck, but towards the end of their expedition they excavated several areas on Beacon Island. Unearthed in the sandy interior of the island were more burials and the remains of the survivors camps. Also they did a reconnaissance of the stone structures on Beacon and Long Islands (Edwards 1966).

In 1964 Aquinas College (O'Loughlin, 1964) recorded the archaeological sites on West Wallabi Island and test excavated the coastal structure near Slaughter Point. Their excavation yielded Bellarmine potsherds, iron nails and the burnt remains of tammars, seals, birds and oysters. From these results they tentatively concluded the site had been occupied by Wiebbe Hayes or his Dutch contemporaries.

The following year Aquinas College (O'Loughlin, 1966) returned to the coastal site, where they excavated the interior and an extensive area surrounding the structure. Their finds included a ladle roughly fashioned in lead, more potsherds, numerous iron fragments - some of which had been bent in the shape of fish hooks, and the burnt bones of mainly tammars. The second excavation confirmed the findings of the first and established the coastal site as having been used by the 'Batavia' survivors. (For a discussion of the Aquinas College Excavations see the section on site 2).

In 1967 the W.A. Museum sponsored a survey and excavations of the sites in the Wallabi Group. The program was the first large-scale probe into the range of archaeological data that might

date from the 'Batavia' incident. It was also the first systematic study to attempt to determine the origin of the stone structures in the islands. Data was gathered methodically for each site, but, unfortunately, the results were never compiled as a report. Hence an important part of the present study was, wherever possible, to resurrect and incorporate the results of the 1967 Expedition into this paper.

Relative to other shipwrecks with associated camp sites, the 'Batavia' has a rather extensive history of archaeological research. Interest was initially confined to excavations on Beacon Island, but later expanded to surveys and excavations on the neighbouring islands as well. Despite this amount of research, however, no synthesized or comprehensive statements have yet been offered on the land archaeology of the Wallabi Group.

PROCEDURE

The archaeological study was structured in two distinct parts, field and archival. The field work broadly focused on compiling information, in the form of maps, photographs, and written descriptions, on the different structures in the islands that might possibly date from the Batavia era. Since several of these sites were void of artifacts or suitable deposit for excavation, it was not possible to determine their origin on the basis of the field data alone. Hence archival research was required to supplement and confirm the field observations. The archival work consisted of reviewing the literature relevant to the study area - such as explorers' accounts, surveyors' journals, and manuscripts of previous archaeological investigations. The field data was then synthesized with the literary data to formulate interpretations for each site.

SITE 1

On West Wallabi Island are the ruins of two similar stone structures, sites 1 and 2. The inland ruins, site 1, are located in an area of flat and exposed limestone bedrock. This is a walled structure that encloses a single room. The inside dimensions of the rectangular room are 3.8 by 4.2 metres. The walls are constructed of carefully stacked limestone slabs and average .5 metres wide and .7 metres high. The site is excellently preserved.

A prominent feature of the site are the freshwater wells in the vicinity. One is situated beside the structure and 200 metres to the southeast is another that is marked by a cairn of stones. The cairn in itself is intriguing. A small ridge separates the inland site from the coastal one, "but both are clearly visible from this cairn" (O'Loughlin 1964, 36). The origin or function of the cairn is not known.

Since the inland site is built on bare limestone it has not been possible to excavate it. Instead, the 1967 archaeological expedition carefully searched the surface of the site for artifacts. They found a glass bottle stopper, a piece of green bottle glass, a china handle such as found on tea cups, and two fragments of china crockery. One was decorated with a purple floral pattern and the other had a design similar to a 'blue willow' pattern. China, such as these items, is not associated with the 17th century Dutch, but is more typical of the late 1800's or the early 1900's.

Firm conclusions cannot be drawn from such a small collection of artifacts, but in conjunction with other evidence, some explanations can be offered.

In 1879 the surveyor John Forrest visited West Wallabi Island and noted two structures. He commented, "There are the remains of two old huts and a well of good water on this island" (Forrest n.d., 5). It is not possible to be certain but he was probably referring to sites 1 and 2. They are the only ruins of huts to be reported on the island.

A retired island fisherman, Frank Burton, recalls seeing a stone hut being used in the early 1900's in connection with the guano industry (Crawford n.d.). His recollection is that the hut served as the men's quarters, but he does not make it clear which structure this was. Excavations have shown that site 2, the coastal structure on Slaughter Point, was occupied by the 'Batavia' survivors and no evidence was found to indicate the site had been used since that time (Bevacqua n.d.). Hence, Burton must have been referring to the inland structure. The artifacts collected in 1967 support this and we know two areas on the island, the Southwest Field and Snake Flat Field, were mined for guano in the late 1800's and early 1900's (Well n.d.). The operation, run by Davis & Fallowfield, continued until 1915 when the guano industry closed down (Green 1972).

Thus, it can be tentatively stated that site 1 was used around the turn of the century in connection with the guano industry, though the site's origin is still uncertain. If Forrest

was referring to sites 1 and 2 when he noted the "remains of two old huts" then we know that site 1 was built prior to 1879, which is prior to the establishment of the guano digging on the island. This begs the question: Who built site 1? There are at least two possible alternatives.

Wiebbe Hayes' company constructed and resided in a similar structure on the coast of the island. It is possible they also built the inland site to accommodate their increasing numbers or as a defensive position they could fall back on if overwhelmed by mutineers at the coastal site. The cairn that enables communication between the two sites might support this explanation.

The Abrolhos were being visited by sealers, fishermen and unlicensed guano ships as early as the 1840's (Teichert 1947) (Records of D.L. Serventy in Green 1972). For the most part their activities were not regulated by the government and, hence, there are few records for this period of the Islands' history. Drinking water is scarce in the islands and the few wells were known to these mariners. It is possible, that while replenishing their water stores, a ship's crew constructed the site.

As likely as both explanations are, there is no direct evidence to substantiate either of them. Perhaps future investigators will be able to resolve this point.

SITE 2

Near Slaughter Point, on West Wallabi Island, there is a small structure that has been the object of both popular and serious archaeological interest. Since its discovery in 1964 and the subsequent appearance of popular publications describing the

infamous 'Batavia' mutiny, the site has been commonly referred to as Wiebbe Hayes' Fort. Hayes being the leader of a group of survivors who remained loyal to Commandeur Pelsaert and did not participate in the mutiny. Shortly after the shipwreck Hayes and a party of men were sent to the Wallabi Islands in search of water. In their absence the mutineers began their bloody massacre on Beacon Island. Several people fled to the Wallabis to warn Hayes of the mutiny. For the next 3 months the loyalists held out on West Wallabi, their numbers gradually increasing to 47 as more people escaped from the blood bath. Hayes and his group successfully defended themselves from several mutineers' attacks until they were finally rescued by Pelsaert.

The use of the word 'fort' to describe the structure is unfortunate as it is both misleading and inaccurate. Actually, the site is a roofless, unimposing hut built of limestone slabs. It has defensive capabilities, but the defences are subtle and only become apparent after some scrutiny. For instance, the site commands a good view of the surrounding sea and countryside, and at the same time it is naturally camouflaged by vegetation from passing boats. It is protected on the seaward side by an extremely shallow reef and mudflat that is generally not navigable by even small boats. Also the structure is strategically close to a fresh water well.

The site is situated on shrub-covered, slightly sloping terrain and consists of a rectangular shaped enclosure that measures 3 by 8 metres. Across the interior is a partition

wall that divides the structure into two compartments. There is a passageway between the compartments.

The walls of the structure were built entirely of stacked slabs of limestone. No mortar was used in the masonry, nor were the slabs modified. The original height of the walls was probably .7 metres and the width .5 metres.

In 1963, while researching the background of the 'Batavia' disaster, Edwards (1966, 191) found that the ruins of unidentified huts had been noted on West Wallabi Island in 1879 (Forrest n.d.). This, and also information on the ruin's location from local fishermen, led him to hypothesize that the huts represented Wiebbe Hayes' camps.

The following year, he visited the Wallabi Islands with a group of students from Aquinas College to look for the ruins. After locating them (sites 1 and 2) the Aquinas group converted Edward's initial hypothesis into two research goals:

1. To establish that the ruins were related to Wiebbe Hayes' occupation of the island, and if so,
2. To determine the subsistence diet of the castaways.

Towards these ends, they excavated narrow trenches along the walls of site 2, the coastal structure. Their excavation revealed sherds of Rhenish stoneware. Such sherds are from what is commonly called Bellarmine jugs. These jugs are among the

more distinctive relics to be raised from the Batavia shipwreck. The Aquinas group also discovered iron nails, two subsurface fire pits, and the burnt remains of tammars, seals, shearwater, and oysters. From these results, particularly the Rhenish stoneware, they tentatively concluded the site had been occupied by Hayes or his Dutch contemporaries (O'Loughlin 1964, 34-39). In addition to this excavation they also describe several other features in this portion of the island - a number of stone fireplaces along the coast, the wells, the cairn, and site 1, the inland structure.

The next year, Aquinas College sponsored another expedition to the Wallabi Group (O'Loughlin 1966, 11-13). Again they focused their investigation on the coastal structure, where they excavated the interior and an extensive area surrounding the site. Their finds included more sherds of Rhenish stoneware, a ladle roughly fashioned in lead, a large quantity of iron fragments, some of which were bent into the shape of fish hooks, and the burnt bones of primarily tammars. The Rhenish potsherds fit together with those found in the previous year. Lead ladles have been salvaged from the 'Batavia' wreck. The one from West Wallabi Island appears to have been crudely fashioned in the general shape of those from the wreck. Though they don't elaborate on their data, Aquinas College's most significant discovery was that the collected food remains reflected the subsistence of approximately 40 men for three months. This corresponds with what is known of Hayes' existence in the islands. They also point out how the site's location corresponds to that given in Pelsaert's journal. Relevant to this is the proximity of the freshwater wells and the presence of Tattler Island off

Slaughter Point. Presumably this small islet is where the main body of mutineers remained when Cornelisz visited the loyalists camp for the last time (see Drake-Brockman & Drok 1963, 253). The combined evidence from the second Aquinas College excavation confirmed the findings of the first and established the coastal site as having been occupied by a group of 'Batavia' survivors, probably Wiebbe Hayes and his company.

In 1967 the W. A. Museum conducted a survey and excavation of sites related to the Batavia shipwreck. They re-excavated portions of the interior of the site on Slaughter Point and also two trenches in the nearby vicinity. The results of this excavation were never compiled into a report. Much of the data has since been lost or is in a confused state. An incomplete catalogue of artifacts from this expedition indicates that a large number of unidentified iron fragments and bones were found (W. A. Museum n.d.). The catalogue lists two artifacts of special interest: a lead ladle and a thin, square piece of lead. The ladle is roughly made and is similar to the one discovered by Aquinas College. The small piece of lead is important because pieces identical in size and shape have been found on Beacon Island and at the wrecksite. They are believed to have been used as weights for measuring small quantities on a balancing scale.

In 1974, in conjunction with this survey, a test excavation was carried out at the Slaughter Point site. The results verified and, in some cases, expanded upon the findings of the previous excavations. The most salient conclusion was that this site probably represents the first structure to be erected by Europeans on the continent of Australia. For a thorough discussion of the Slaughter Point site the reader is referred to Bevacqua (n.d.).

SITE 3

Extending the length of the southern half of Long Island is a protected depression bordered on both sides by dunes of wave deposited coral. In this slight depression is site 3, a shelter built of stacked coral slabs or plates.

The interior of the shelter is rectangular and measures 1.8 by 2.7 metres. The floor consists of small coral pebbles and opening towards the north is a well defined entrance.

The north, south and east walls are faced on the inside, but the exterior consists only of mounded coral rubble which gives the shelter the impression of having a sunken floor.

The inner face of the west wall consists of three massive coral slabs positioned vertically. Smaller slabs stacked horizontally make up the core. The outside of the wall is now tumbled down, but originally may have had vertically placed coral plates similar to the inner face.

Among the sites recorded in this survey, site 3 is unique in the use of massive coral plates positioned vertically to form wall faces.

Much of the coral used in the construction of the site has grayed from natural weathering. Though the surface of the interior and parts of the surrounding mound consist of white, unweathered coral where the ground has been upturned, probably by artifact hunters.

Pelsaert mentions that the mutineers shifted 45 men, women and children to Seals Island (Long Island) and later murdered the majority of them. He further states that after his return the mutineers were held, pending their trials, on Seals Island. It was also on this island their executions were carried out.

When discovered in 1964 site 3 was identified as the prison where the mutineers were held. This is a rather tenuous identification. Very little artifactual material has been found on the island that can be definitely associated with the 'Batavia'. The only 17th century Dutch items are a brass pin and a potsherd. Neither of which were found near the structure, nor was any midden noted at the site. Archival research did not reveal any information concerning the structure or the island.

Hence the origin of the site is unclear. The complete lack of data makes it hazardous to offer any interpretation.

SITE 4

Located on the barren southeast point of Beacon Island is site 4. It is what archaeologists often refer to as a complex site or an aggregate of related features. The features seem to have served as crude windbreaks and include:

- A:** A rectangular structure that encloses an area 1.5 by 1.8 metres. The interior has been fully excavated and the walls heightened in recent years.

- B. A circular structure approximately 1 metre across on the inside with low walls .5 metres high. The floor is covered by a large coral plate .75 by .6 metres. The structure abuts feature A on the north corner.
- C. 1.5 metres northwest of feature B is a shallow depression measuring 1.2 by 1.8 metres. On the north, east and west sides it is surrounded by a low mound. This semicircular mound is made of small coral rubble; no masonry is apparent. The interior has been excavated.

When discovered in 1963 Edwards (1966, 177) hypothesized the site was used to imprison Cornelisz, the mutineers' leader, while he awaited trial. Since then the site has been popularly accepted as 'Cornelisz's Prison', though subsequent investigations have found evidence to the contrary.

The site was excavated in 1967. The discoveries included a clay tobacco pipe bowl, portions of two broken bottles, pieces of brass and lead sheet, a glass mirror, small fragments of corroded iron, bits of jarrah bark, and a few bird and fish bones.

The W.A. Museum maintains an extensive collection of artifacts from the Dutch, as well as colonial, wrecks on W.A.'s coast. The artifacts from site 4 were compared with this collection to determine their approximate age. It was immediately apparent that they were not Dutch, but that they were similar, and in some cases identical, to material raised from

colonial wrecks. For instance the bowl capacity of the clay pipe was far greater than that of 17th century Dutch pipes, but it did match the size of a pipe from the 1898 wreck of the 'Sepia'. Similarly, the bottles from site 4 resembled pickle jars recovered from the 1852 wreck of the 'Eglinton'. Nothing similar to the glass mirror has been found with the Dutch wrecks. Additional research into the tobacco pipe has shown that clay bowls of the same size and shape were used in England circa. 1850-1910 (Atkinson & Oswald 1969, type 30).

It must be made clear that this comparison of artifacts does not absolutely date the material, but it does indicate the items were probably in general use on ships in the late 1800's; and more important, it shows the occupation of this site is probably not linked with the 'Batavia'.

The bits of jarrah bark were a significant discovery. Jarrah does not grow on the treeless islands of the Abrolhos, but is confined to the southwest corner of the Australian mainland. This is good evidence the site was occupied by people that had sailed up from, or had contact with Fremantle or Albany, the two main ports in the southwest.

Beacon Island does not possess merchantable deposits of guano (Forrest n.d.) (Wells 1897), so the site can not be attributed to guano diggers. There is also reason for not attributing it to fishermen or sealers. Fishing and sealing are specialized activities and the camps of men who participate in it would reflect this specialization. Their camps would be littered with fish or seal remains and broken or discarded tools

of their trade, such as fishing tackle, harpoons, or gun cartridges. Nothing of this sort has been noted at site 4.

A likely explanation for the site stems from a discovery in 1960. In that year Edwards (1966, 92), while searching for the 'Batavia', found a colonial shipwreck within a mile of Beacon Island. He investigated it and concluded it was the 'Hadda', a three masted barque of 334 tons under the command of John L. Parker. The ship had sailed to the Lacepede Islands to take on a load of guano, but because the captain lacked the necessary license she was forced to return to Fremantle without a cargo. En route, due to contrary currents and stormy conditions, the 'Hadda' went aground in the Abrolhos on April 30, 1877. The crew was not able to free her and in two days, after the water level reached the wheelhouse, they had to abandon the ship. Captain Parker and his crew of 11 saved all their personal effects and moved to a nearby island. They remained there till May 7 when favourable seas enabled them to safely travel to Geraldton in their two small boats (C.S.O. Records for 1878).

An enquiry in Geraldton cleared the 'Hadda's officers of any negligence in the mishap (C.S.O. Records for 1878). Afterwards Captain Parker bought the wreck for £150 at an auction (Inquirer: May 16, 1877). It is assumed he returned to the islands to salvage it, but this point is not certain.

After the 'Hadda' was abandoned it is believed the crew came ashore on Beacon Island and constructed the crude shelters (site 4) as their camp. There are a number of reasons to support this.

1. The 'Hadda' crew stayed in the islands for five days. The small amount of midden from site 4 reflects a brief occupation such as theirs.
2. The artifacts from site 4 fall within the range of items the 'Hadda' probably carried and it is known the crew brought ashore all their personal effects. The pipe, mirror, and bottles are likely things to be among a sailor's effects.
3. The site is situated on a point where, regardless of tides, small boats could be easily landed or launched in the shifting of men and material from the nearby wreck.
4. For the vast majority of the year Beacon Island is swept by strong southerly winds. Site 4 faces directly into these prevailing winds making it ill-suited for a camp for most of the year.

The enquiry records describe how the 'Hadda' was running before a northerly wind when she struck a reef. They also state the wind was accompanied by squalls and dark stormy conditions. It can be expected that the crew built windbreaks to protect themselves from the northerlies that were temporarily blowing, because when these squally winds abated they probably departed for Geraldton. Hence their camp would not need to be protected against the prevailing southerlies.

SITE 5

The Beacon Island cairn is situated on a low ridge at the north end of the island. Roughly circular, it is built of coral slabs stacked to a height of 1.75 metres. The slabs range in size from .07 to .84 metres across. The diameter at the base is 2.20 metres and at a man's chest height the diameter is 1.7 metres.

Positioned upright on the top of the cairn is a weathered wood pole which extends an additional 1.15 metres above the coral masonry. The post is imbedded approximately 40 centimetres into the centre of the cairn. At this point it is braced by at least two short, horizontally placed, bits of wood board, which are wedged between the post and the coral slabs.

The beacon is well constructed and at present is in extremely stable condition, so stable in fact, it can be easily climbed. The flattened top, paved with coral slabs, provides an excellent vantage point for a man to stand and view the surrounding sea and islands. The upright post may possibly have served two purposes: (1) to provide a brace for lookout to steady himself in a wind, (2) to increase the range from which the beacon would be visible from at sea.

The cairn was included in this survey for two reasons. It was originally believed to be associated with the 'Batavia' and also it was believed that the name of the island was somehow related to the history of the cairn.

To substantiate these beliefs required extensive archival research. Pelsaert's journal makes no reference to the site, so the research first focused on reviewing the accounts of the first explorers to visit the Wallabi Group for any mention of the cairn on Beacon Island (Stokes 1846, Wickham 1840). This was unsuccessful and the explorers primarily confined their observations to the larger Wallabi Islands.

The investigation then led to the old records of the W.A. Lands and Surveys Department. It was here, in the field book of an early surveyor, that the origin of the cairn and the history of the island's name were discovered.

In 1897 a colonial surveyor, A. J. Wells, conducted a survey of the Abrolhos. The purpose was to estimate the quantity and quality of the guano deposits in the islands. While working in the Wallabi Group he mapped the area of the guano fields on West Wallabi and the Pigeon Islands (Wells 1897, 3). In his mapping he used several cairns and prominent landmarks in the islands as triangulation points, including the cairn on Beacon Island (Wells n.d.). The maps resulting from this fieldwork clearly shows Beacon Island as being unexpectedly designated "Goss' Monument". The triangulation station on the island is marked "Pole and Cairn" and corresponds to the location of site 5. Wells' field book (n.d.) does not state he built the cairn, but there is reason to assume he did. It was common practice for the early surveyors to construct permanent markers on prominent points in the islands. For instance, Wells' records show that Gun Island, in the Pelsaert Group, possessed a cairn and pole identical to the one on Beacon Island. Today most of the larger Abrolhos islands have cairns dating from these early surveys.

The nomenclature investigator in the Lands and Surveys Department reported that Wells was responsible for naming the island "Goss' Monument" in 1897. Why he named it this is not known. The name, "Goss' Monument" was little known and never popularly used by the island fishing community. They preferred, possibly because of the cairn, to call it Beacon Island. On some maps the island remained "Goss' Monument" until 1968 when the widely used "Beacon Island" was officially recognised.

SUMMARY

There has been considerable speculation as to the origin of these crude structures in the Wallabi Group. Their construction has been variously attributed to sealers, guano-diggers, fishermen, castaways, and the 'Batavia' survivors. The goal of this study was to establish the sites' origin and dispel the erroneous conjecture that surrounds them.

As in many studies of this nature, the goal was only partly achieved. For instance, site 1, the inland structure on West Wallabi Island, is known to have been constructed prior to 1879, but the particulars of its origin have not been brought to light. It is possible it was built by Wiebbe Hayes, but there is no direct evidence to substantiate such a view. There is evidence the site was abandoned during the late 1800's and later, in the early 1900's, it was used in connection with the island guano industry.

Excavations have established site 2 on West Wallabi Island as having been the camp of a group of survivors from the 'Batavia' shipwreck, probably Wiebbe Hayes and his band of loyalists. It is important to note that this site may represent the first structure to be built by Europeans on the continent of Australia.

Site 3 on Long Island poses the greatest mystery. It does not possess any archaeological data that would suggest its origin or function, nor did the archives contain any reference to it. Hence, it is not possible to say whether it dates from the 'Batavia' era or not.

The artifacts from site 4 on Beacon Island clearly date from the 1800's. It is the author's contention the site was built and briefly occupied by the crew of the 'Hadda' which went aground near the island in 1877.

Lastly, site 5, the cairn on Beacon Island, was probably erected by colonial surveyors in 1897 who used it as a triangulation station in their mapping of the islands.

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