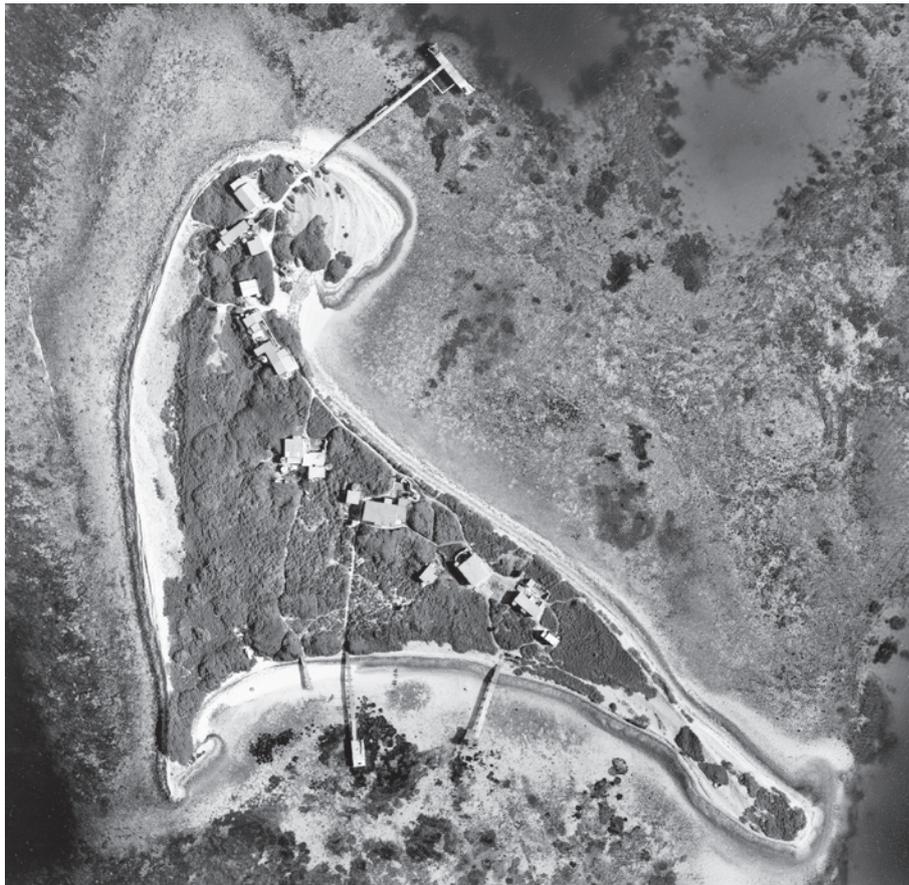


# **DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN**

## **for the protection and use of historic shipwreck and associated maritime heritage sites in the Wallabi Group of the Houtman Abrolhos System**

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*‘...underwater cultural heritage is both finite and non-renewable. If underwater cultural heritage is to contribute to our appreciation of the environment in the future, then we have to take individual and collective responsibility in the present for ensuring its continued survival’(ICOMOS International Charter on the protection and management of underwater cultural heritage, 1996).*

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## Foreword

In 1994, the Commonwealth Government department responsible for administering the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976* saw a need for a set of guidelines to help people look after and make decisions about Australia's historic shipwrecks. This is because there is:

- increasing recognition of the national and international importance of shipwrecks as unique links with the past, a reminder of special moments in lives, history or culture ;
- increasing recognition of shipwrecks as an educational and recreational resource;
- increasing development and travel in remote or previously undeveloped areas;
- recognition that they are part of a location's special identity which could bring economic as well as other benefits to the area; and
- recognition that shipwrecks represent a valuable though limited and irreplaceable resource of cultural values that need to be preserved for the benefit of present and future generations.

A set of *Guidelines for the Management of Australia's Shipwrecks* was developed in 1994 by the Australian Cultural Development Office, Canberra in conjunction with Australia's professional maritime archaeologists, represented by the Australian Institute for Maritime Archaeology. Subsequently, in 1996, Australia was party to the ratification of the ICOMOS International Charter on the Protection and Management of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (ICUCH) which is a supplement to the ICOMOS Charter for the Protection and Management of Archaeological Heritage, 1990. The 1990 Charter defines the 'archaeological heritage' as:

...that part of the material heritage in respect of which archaeological methods provide primary information, comprising all vestiges of human existence and consisting of places relating to all manifestations of human activity, abandoned structures, and remains of all kinds, together with all the portable cultural material associated with them.

The ICUCH recognises that the underwater cultural heritage is an 'international resource' worthy of preservation and management.

Better management of the shipwreck resource is a matter of concern for all levels of government in Australia. The Commonwealth Minister's State delegates on historic shipwreck matters have recognised the increasing complexity of managing shipwrecks as a resource and the consequent need for guidelines to aid in formulating appropriate management solutions.

The Guidelines provide a common basis for the management of shipwrecks nationally by identifying strategies and practices for the management and administration of the resource. They provide administrators with useful measures of the cultural and heritage values of shipwrecks and aid the identification and assessment of wrecks according to their historic, technical, social, archaeological (scientific), and interpretive values. The Guidelines are not intended to prescribe operational, policy and funding matters.

The Guidelines have been used to facilitate the development of a Management Plan for historic shipwrecks and associated maritime heritage sites in Houtman Abrolhos System.

## Introduction

The events of the United Dutch East India Company (VOC) *Batavia* wreck on Morning Reef in the Houtman Abrolhos in 1629, and the subsequent massacres on the islands of the Wallabi Group are of international significance in the annals of maritime history, and hold a premier place in Australian popular history. In 1960, some 330 years later, human skeletal remains and historical artefacts associated with the *Batavia* were found on Beacon Island (Halls, 1964). However, these finds attracted little publicity until 1963 when the location of the *Batavia* wreck site was discovered. Subsequently, both the island and the underwater site became subject to extensive disturbance by amateur investigators and ‘treasure’ hunters (Edwards, 1966; Tyler, 1970; Stanbury, 1998).

Most of the historical sites in the Wallabi Group of the Houtman Abrolhos System are associated with the *Batavia* wreck and its survivors, and the victims of the subsequent mutiny. Although damaged by 30 years of non-professional excavations, these places are still regarded as having a high archaeological (scientific) potential and a significant historical, social and interpretive values.

The degree of ongoing disturbance called for urgent protection and investigation of the sites. Over the past 8–10 years, the Department of Maritime Archaeology has consistently sought funding to undertake such research. Applications have been made for National Estate and ARC funding, with no success. Small amounts of money have been made available through the Commonwealth Historic Shipwrecks Grant, but this too has been insufficient to launch the type of thorough investigations required.

Funding was eventually provided in 1999 by Coastcare/Coastwest to undertake a survey of sites in the Wallabi Group, to carry out a rescue excavation of one of the land sites, and to develop a plan to manage and monitor the sites.

After a general description of the area, the first part of this report outlines the management framework, in which the objective of this plan, legislation, and the authorities involved in the management of the area are discussed. The second part discusses the actual heritage sites in the area, and their historical, archaeological, social, recreational, educational, and interpretive significance. Finally, the risks and disturbance factors are identified, recommendations are given, and management strategies proposed to protect and preserve our precious cultural heritage for the future.

## The area

The Houtman Abrolhos Islands are located about 65 km off the City of Geraldton in the Mid-West Region of Western Australia. They consist of four island groups æ the isolated North Island, and the Wallabi, Easter and Pelsaert Groups æ extending over 80 km from north to south (between latitudes 28°14' and 29°00' S and longitudes 113°35' and 140°04' E: see chart AUS 332; 1: 100 000 SH \*\*\*). In all, there are 108 islands. The islands are surrounded by State Territorial Waters which extend for 3 nautical miles from baselines established on the islands (see later discussion).

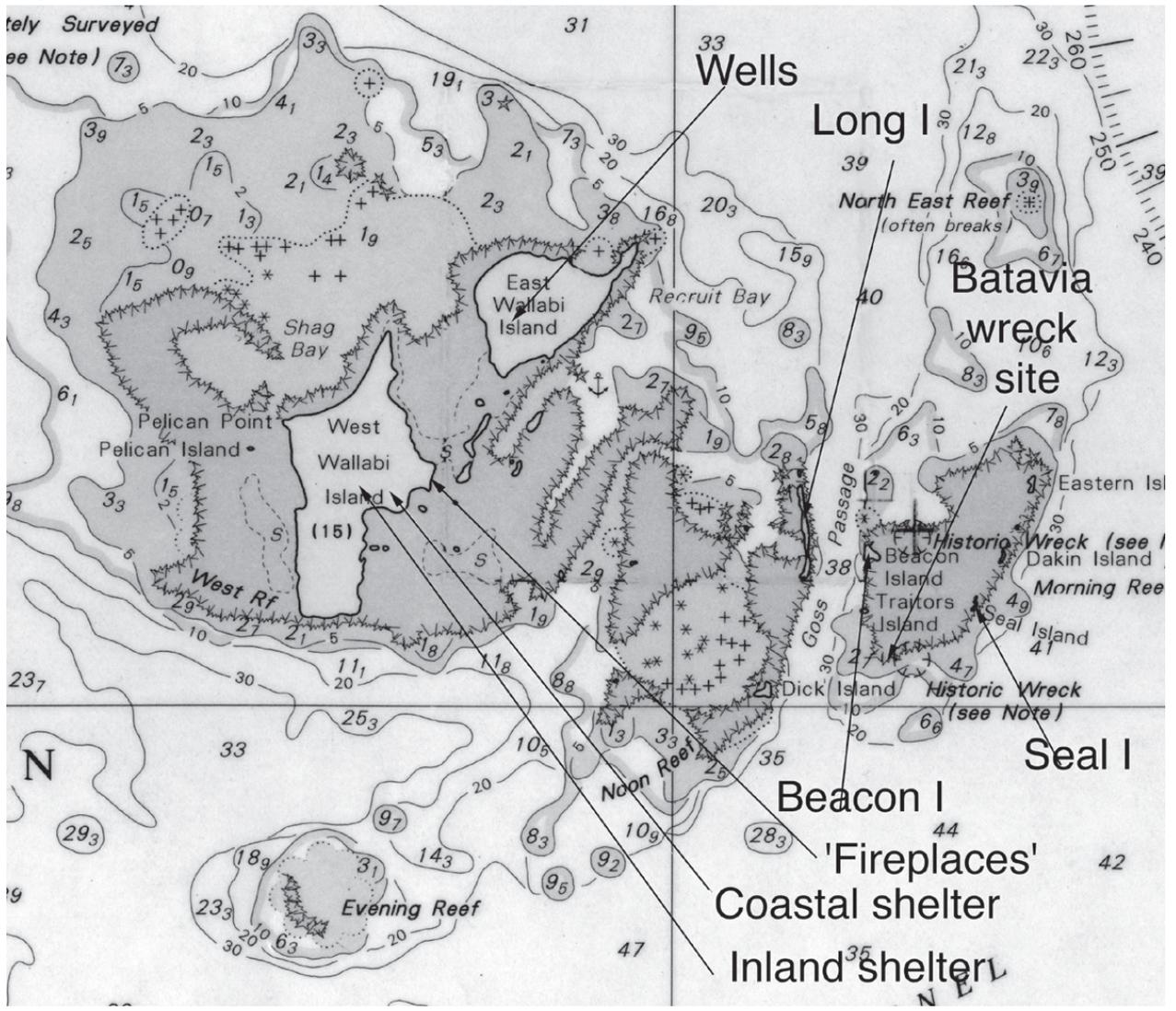
The Houtman Abrolhos Islands and adjoining State Territorial Waters (referred to as the 'Abrolhos System') are located at the edge of the continental shelf, and are surrounded by the most southerly extant coral reefs in the Indian Ocean. They are an A-Class Reserve (A20253) vested in the Minister for Fisheries for the conservation of flora and fauna, tourism and purposes associated with the fishing industry (Fisheries WA, 1998: 1). They are managed by Fisheries WA under regulations established pursuant to the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994 (WA)*. Other government agencies have statutory responsibilities in the area notably the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) and the Western Australian Museum.

The Abrolhos Islands and the waters which surround them are an important part of Western Australia's environment. In addition to the significant natural features, the area supports one of the State's premier primary industries—the Western Rock Lobster fishery, and is a breeding habitat for that resource. The area is also a well-known site of a number of historic shipwrecks and other cultural heritage features. In recent years, the area has attracted a growing number of visitors, recreation and tourism being industries with the potential for economic development.

Tourists are attracted by the area's natural attributes and largely undeveloped environment. Recreational pursuits consist principally of fishing, diving and eco-tourism, although there is a growing interest in the social and cultural history of the islands, particularly their association with the sites of several important historic shipwrecks, and associated historic sites located on some of the islands.

The islands of the Houtman Abrolhos have many unique features which have made them the focus of special studies by geologists, natural scientists and conservationists since the nineteenth century. Frequently, however, the historical and cultural environment of the islands is overlooked. Yet, the activities of human groups over more than three centuries have left a distinct cultural impact on the Abrolhos Islands.

The focus of this Management Plan are the islands of the Wallabi Group and surrounding waters. The islands of the Wallabi Group are uninhabited or only seasonally inhabited by commercial fishermen. East and West Wallabi Islands, the largest of the islands, rise from a limestone platform while the much smaller islands such as Beacon and Long Island, are made up of coral boulders and shingle (Souter 2000), covered in part with sand and guano. The vegetation consists mainly of low shrubs and apart from the historic wells on East and West Wallabi, none of the islands hold fresh water. East and West Wallabi are the only islands in this group housing native mammals such as Tammar Wallabies (*Macropus eugenii*) and a native rat (*Rattus fuscipes*). Birds, however, especially various species of mutton-birds, and seals inhabit many of the islands and surrounding waters (Storr *et al.*, 1986).



## Management framework

### **Objective**

The primary objective of the management plan is to preserve the integrity of historic shipwrecks and maritime heritage sites in the Wallabi Group of the Houtman Abrolhos Islands for the benefit of present and future generations.

### **Areas of jurisdiction**

*Western Australian Museum*—The Museum, under powers of delegation from the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment and Heritage, and the State Minister for Culture and the Arts, is responsible for administering the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976* (Commonwealth) and the *Maritime Archaeology Act 1973* (State). These Acts make provision for the legal protection of historic shipwrecks, historic relics and maritime archaeological sites in the Houtman Abrolhos.

#### DELIMITATION OF WATERS

The waters adjacent to the islands of the Houtman Abrolhos are designated State Territorial Waters for a distance of 3 nautical miles from baselines established on the islands *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, No. S 29, 9 February 1983.

Advice was obtained from the Attorney-General's Department on the interpretation of the territorial sea base lines, which determine the limits of Australia's maritime zones for the purposes of maritime law. The limits of the States are defined by reference to the Letters of Patent applicable to each State at Federation. In the case of detached reefs around islands the situation is more complex, however, in general, the limit of the State's jurisdiction for cultural heritage material is low water mark on the nearest island and not low water on the reef. This means that effectively all underwater cultural heritage material in the Abrolhos below the low water mark comes under Commonwealth jurisdiction.

### **Authorities involved in the management of the area**

The statement of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in the International Charter on the Protection and Management of Underwater Cultural Heritage (see page X) illustrates that the protection of any cultural heritage site – whether above or below water - is an issue of international importance in which we all have a responsibility. Apart from their historical and archaeological significance, cultural heritage sites provide an important contribution to the understanding of our past, and with increasing tourism and growing public interests in these places, they are now also protected for their educational and recreational values.

The VOC ships that wrecked on the Western Australian coastline, and their associated sites on land, form part of both Australian and Dutch history. Supported by the recommendations from the Australian Netherlands Committee on Old Dutch Shipwrecks (ANCODS), the Western Australian Maritime Museum has long carried out research on this unique part of history, not only out of scientific interest, but also as part of its administrative responsibility for the State's *Maritime Archaeology Act 1973* and the Commonwealth *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976*. These Acts effectively combine to protect valuable State and Commonwealth maritime heritage sites, both above and below water, and the Museum is entrusted with the responsibility of managing these sites.

Various State government departments have interests and management responsibilities in the Abrolhos. These include:

*Fisheries WA* — The Houtman Abrolhos Islands are an A-Class Reserve (A20253) vested in the Minister for Fisheries for the conservation of flora and fauna, tourism and purposes associated with

the fishing industry. They are managed by Fisheries WA under regulations established pursuant to the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994 (WA)*. Acknowledging the increasing interest in the cultural and heritage value of the Abrolhos Islands, and the recent increase in number of visitors, their management goal includes the protection of the historic sites (Fisheries WA, 1998: 19, 65). Fisheries Officers from the Geraldton Region have been appointed as Inspectors under the Commonwealth *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976* to assist in this process.

*Western Australian Museum, particularly the departments of Natural Science and Maritime Archaeology, together with the Geraldton Regional Museum*—The Museum, under powers of delegation from the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment and Heritage, and the State Minister for Culture and the Arts, is responsible for administering the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976* (Commonwealth) and the *Maritime Archaeology Act 1973* (State). These Acts make provision for the legal protection of historic shipwrecks, historic relics and maritime archaeological sites in the Houtman Abrolhos.

*Conservation and Land Management (CALM) — A-Class reserve - access restrictions*

*Department of Transport* — The Department of Transport is involved in the area through their responsibility for the development and management of Transport's maritime facilities.

Department of Planning: Coastcare/Coastwest

Heritage ... —Heritage Act

### **Planning in the Houtman Abrolhos System**

The Houtman Abrolhos System was vested in the Minister for Fisheries in 1966. Since that time a number of reports have been prepared by specific Task Force groups and/or government agencies addressing issues such as administration, tourism, management and research, with the ultimate aim of developing a comprehensive management policy which would address the multiplicity of values, uses and interests in the Abrolhos System. These include:

- Hatcher, B.G. and Walker, D., (eds.), 1984, Proceedings of a Workshop on the Houtman Abrolhos, WA Branch of the Australian Marine Science Association and W.A. Dept. of Fisheries and Wildlife Special Publications 8401.
- Abrolhos Islands Consultative Committee and Abrolhos Islands Task Force, 1988, *Abrolhos Islands Planning Strategy* AITF, Perth..
- Green, J. and Stanbury, M., 1988, *Report and recommendations on Archaeological land sites in the Houtman Abrolhos* Report—Department of Maritime Archaeology, Western Australian Maritime Museum, No. 29.
- Green, J., 1998, The *Batavia* incident: the sites. In: Green, J., Stanbury, M and Gaastra, F., *The ANCODS Colloquium*. Special Publication No.3 Australian National Centre of Excellence in Maritime Archaeology: 95-100.
- Stanbury, M., 1998, Land archaeology in the Houtman Abrolhos. In: Green, J., Stanbury, M and Gaastra, F. *The ANCODS Colloquium*. Special Publication No.3 Australian National Centre of Excellence in Maritime Archaeology: 95-100.
- McCarthy, M., 19 Wrecks in the Houtman Abrolhos
- Stanbury, M., 1991, *Historic areas of the Houtman Abrolhos. Code of Conduct recommendations for visitors to the Islands* Report—Department of Maritime Archaeology, Western Australian Maritime Museum, No. 29.
- Abrolhos Islands Consultative Council, 1995, *Tourism at the Abrolhos Islands Final Report*.
- Fisheries WA, 1997, *Management of the Houtman Abrolhos System* (Draft version). Fisheries Management Paper No. 104. Abrolhos Islands Management Advisory Committee in conjunction with Fisheries WA, Perth.
- Fisheries WA, 1998, *Management of the Houtman Abrolhos System*. Fisheries Management Paper No. 117. Fisheries WA on advice from the Abrolhos Islands Management Advisory Committee, Perth.

The 1998 Management of the Houtman Abrolhos System document (Fisheries WA, 1998) is the outcome of recommendations, public submissions and community discussions and workshops concerning various issues raised within early documents. One of the principal objectives for management is to include groups and organizations that may have an interest with Fisheries WA in the development of particular management strategies for the area. It is felt that the best results will be achieved through inter-agency cooperation and community involvement, and it is in support of this philosophy that the Western Australian Museum is contributing to the overall management strategy for the Houtman Abrolhos Islands.

Areas of specific involvement identified within the Management of the Houtman Abrolhos System document are as follows:

- ‘Include information about the need to protect the sites in the “code of conduct” for visitors to the Abrolhos Islands’ (Historic and Heritage Sites: page 5, no. 39).
- ‘Train relevant Fisheries WA and CALM Officers in the management of historic sites and provide them with delegated powers as inspectors pursuant to the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976*’ (Historic and Heritage Sites: page 5, no. 40).
- ‘Prepare and implement a management plan for the protection of historic shipwrecks, associated

land sites and other sites of heritage value (Historic and Heritage Sites: page 5, no 41).

- Prepare and implement a public information program about the heritage sites and their history so that people may learn about and enjoy them, and assist in their protection (Historic and Heritage Sites: page 5, no 42).
- ‘Identify sites, in consultation with the community and local dive operators, which are suitable for the development of dive trails and establish a priority order for their development’ (Diving: page 7, no. 56).
- ‘Develop a code of conduct for dive charter operators in consultation with tourist operators’ (Diving: page 7, no. 57).
- ‘Prepare information for the public about dive sites in the Abrolhos Islands in consultation with diving clubs’ (Diving: page 7, no. 58).
- ‘Incorporate recommendations on diving in the code of conduct for the Abrolhos Islands’ (Diving: page 7, no. 59).
- ‘Monitor intensity of diving in the Abrolhos Islands, and any effects divers may be having on the environment’ (Diving: page 7, no. 60).
- ‘Ensure government officers have appropriate authority to undertake enforcement activities’ (Resourcing, Surveillance and Enforcement: page 10, no. 103) .

## **The heritage sites and their significance**

### ***The historic shipwrecks and associated sites***

This section gives a brief description of three categories of land sites on islands in the Wallabi Group which are considered to be worthy of protection: (a) sites associated with pre-European settlement shipwrecks; (b) sites associated with post-settlement or colonial period shipwrecks; and, (c) sites associated with colonial maritime trade and industry. Each group of sites varies in its type of cultural significance; likewise, individual sites within each group. Apart from the educational, cultural, historical and social value that the protection of these sites may have for the Australian public, they inherently present those with more scholarly interests with a number of potential research themes.

The pre-settlement sites are culturally unique, reflecting the earliest attempts by Europeans to survive on Western Australia's isolated, relatively waterless, off-shore islands. These are sites which were temporarily occupied, visited or utilized for some specific purpose by survivors of the seventeenth century Dutch shipwreck *Batavia* (1629). They represent the earliest evidence of European settlements on Australian territory. Underlying the dramatic circumstances and historic events which placed the survivors on the various islands, the sites may be used to interpret the particular social and economic problems associated with survival in an harsh alien environment, such as colonists were to face more than a century later.

The association of these sites with the early European discovery and exploration of Australia makes them historically significant at a national and international level. Certain sites in this group are known to be at risk, recent reports of interference giving cause for concern as to their future integrity.

The second group of sites is related to shipwrecks of the colonial period and the fate of these ships' crews. While the sites may not be classified as culturally unique, they are significant in terms of the maritime history of the Abrolhos Islands as a discrete region and to the broader colonial history of Western Australia. Such sites reflect the gradual increase in colonial shipping to and/or past the Houtman Abrolhos and the hazards these islands continued to present to mariners, even in times of improved navigation technology. They further extend the theme of survival into the nineteenth century and emphasize the geographical isolation facing settlers in the early phase of colonization.

The remaining sites are associated with nineteenth century maritime industries established by pioneer colonial entrepreneurs, in particular the Pelsart Fishing Company and Charles Edward Broadhurst, for the exploitation of island and marine resources. Maritime industries such as whaling, fishing, sealing and guano mining were important economic enterprises in the early colonial years. They provided valuable export and domestic produce which aided colonial economic and rural development and contributed to the growth of colonial shipping and shipbuilding.

Guano mining was carried out on many of Australia's off-shore islands. The archaeological remains of this industry on the Houtman Abrolhos provide a useful data base for comparative research with similarly exploited islands in Shark Bay, the Lacepedes, Browse Island and other Northwest archipelagos, along with off-shore islands in other states of Australia. The remains on certain islands have been surveyed, documented and their historical background researched, but no archaeological excavation has been undertaken. The guano industry was one of the first in Western Australia to employ indentured labour. Apart from the specific technological and operational aspects of the industry, therefore, the sites have an inherent social significance. In many instances, the residual effect on the landscape is very obvious and is of value inasmuch as it reflects the his-

torical pattern of land use in the Houtman Abrolhos from the early nineteenth century through to the mid-twentieth century.

## **The sites**

The heritage sites in the Wallabi Group are protected by:

1. The Commonwealth *Historic Shipwreck Act 1976*: the wreck of the *Batavia* and the *Hadda*
2. The *Maritime Archaeology Act 1973*: the wreck of the *Batavia*, and
3. The *Heritage Act 1991*: sites associated with the early exploration of the Abrolhos Islands and with the guano industry.

This report deals primarily with sites related to the *Batavia*, which has the highest historical and heritage value, but also relates to the *Hadda* and the early exploration and guano mining.

The *Batavia* material consists of two separate groups:

1. Material in the sea, comprising the primary wreck site and the secondary deposition site on the inside of Morning Reef.
2. Material on land, which has been the subject of the Coastcare/Coastwest grant, comprising a complex association of sites and material.

The primary sites are:

1. Beacon Island, comprising :
  - known grave sites that have been excavated;
  - known grave sites that have not been excavated;
  - suspected further grave sites of unknown position; and
  - other archaeological sites (camp sites, fire places, etc) of uncertain position *Batavia*-related.
  - archaeological sites relating to the *Hadda* (1877).
2. Long Island: unlocated massacre sites and execution site
3. Islands on Morning Reef with possible material and sites (unlocated)
4. Traitors Island with possible material and sites (unlocated)
5. West Wallabi Island
  - Structure known to be *Batavia*-related (coastal structure)
  - Structure of uncertain origin, but unlikely to be *Batavia* related (inland structure)
  - Various structures, possibly *Batavia*-related (so-called fireplaces)
  - Various wells, some *Batavia*-related
  - Structures related to post-*Batavia* incident (surveying, guano and fishing)
6. East Wallabi Island
  - Various wells

## **Significance of the cultural resource**

### *Heritage Significance (Historical)*

The Batavia survivors' camps on Beacon and West Wallabi Islands are the second oldest European sites in Australia, and the earliest substantial European archaeological sites. The events of the wreck and subsequent massacres which resulted in the sites are of international significance in the annals of maritime history, and hold a premier place in Australian popular history.

The Houtman Abrolhos Islands have an extensive history of early visits (some disastrous) and discoveries. The first dramatic encounter after 1619 AD, when Frederik de Houtman first discovered and named the area, was that of the United Dutch East India Company (VOC) ship *Batavia*, which wrecked on Morning Reef in the Wallabi Group in June 1629. The mutiny and subsequent massacre of the survivors of the wreck has long been recognised as one of the most notorious and fascinating incidents in maritime history. Popular accounts of the disaster and fate of the 230 men, women and children who were stranded on a group of small, waterless, coral islands while the ship's Commander, Francisco Pelsaert, accompanied by senior ranking officers, some crew and passengers, ostensibly sailed away in search of water, were being published as early as 1647 (Jansz, 1647). Versions of the story appeared in Dutch, English and French texts.

In modern times, interest was renewed by fictionalised versions of the wreck saga by historian Henrietta Drake-Brockman (1957) and her subsequent publication of an English translation of Pelsaert's Journal, including the confessions of the mutineers (Drake-Brockman, 1963). Her research ultimately led to the discovery of the *Batavia* wreck.

Although regularly passed by various other Dutch, French and English explorers, the islands of the Wallabi Group remained virtually isolated after the *Batavia* disaster until halfway through the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the guano mining industry started to bloom (Stanbury 1998). The mining itself resulted in some cases in substantial alteration of the islands' topography, but otherwise appears to have left relatively little tangible evidence in this part of the Abrolhos, even though historical evidence indicates that camps and shelters were built on the islands by miners, fishermen and other visitors. In 1877, the *Hadda* wrecked close to Beacon Island and its crew stayed in the islands for five days (Green *et al.* 1998, Appendix 1).

### HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHAEOLOGICAL–SCIENTIFIC)

Although the archaeological record on the islands is confused and complicated due to years of non-professional excavation, and unintentional and deliberate interference, these sites are still regarded as having a high archaeological potential value. Together with potentially undisturbed (grave) sites, of some of which the location is known, they will provide a wealth of information that will contribute to our understanding of the events in 1629 and of life in general in 17<sup>th</sup> century northwest Europe.

Survivors from the *Batavia* are known to have occupied islands in the Wallabi Group for about three months. During this period they were forced to survive both an unfamiliar environment and the increasingly murderous whim of the mutineers who controlled the group. While contemporary historical accounts provide details of the trials and retribution of the mutineers, little is known of the day-to-day existence of the stranded community. Their social organization, where they camped, how they subsisted, is barely known.

Archaeological evidence of the survivors was discovered on Beacon Island as early as 1960 (Halls, 1964), and again in 1963 and 1964, following the discovery of the wreck site, on both Beacon and West Wallabi islands. Subsequently, both the island and the underwater site became

subject to extensive disturbance by amateur investigators and ‘treasure’ hunters (Edwards, 1966; Tyler, 1970; Stanbury, 1998). The wreck became the focus of intensive professional maritime archaeological investigation (Green, 1989), whereas the land sites experienced limited historical or archaeological study. The Coastcare/Coastwest funded excavation of the mass grave in 1999 has shown the vulnerability of the sites, yet the wealth of information that can be retrieved from the skeletal and other remains.

#### *Social significance*

*The area is well-known for its historic shipwrecks and other cultural heritage features, which has attracted a growing number of visitors, recreation and tourism. The ‘Batavia Coast’ forms part of Geraldton’s cultural and social identity.*

The Houtman Abrolhos Islands are an A-Class Reserve (A20253). Already in 1894 collections were made for the Museum in the acknowledgement of the area’s unique environmental value. The A-Class status was gazetted as early as 1929, and a board was appointed to control the reserve for recreation and tourism purposes (Green *et al* 1998, Appendix 1). The conservation of its flora and fauna is now primarily the responsibility of Fisheries WA and CALM, but is very much assisted by local community groups such as Friends of the Abrolhos and Fisheries WA Volunteer Group. The existence of associations such as Maritime Archaeology Association of WA (MAAWA) and Batavia Coast Maritime Heritage Association also demonstrate the interest in care for the cultural aspect of the environment, and the extent to which the Geraldton community has identified itself with the cultural heritage in the area.

#### *Recreational and educational significance*

The historic sites are receiving a growing interest from tourists and recreational visitors, and especially the wreck sites form a major attraction to amateur divers. Our culture heritage is regarded as a valuable source of information to help understand our past. The status of A-Class Reserve demonstrates the unique environmental value of the Abrolhos islands. This environment, both above and under water, has attracted a growing number of visitors, especially recreational fishermen and amateur divers who have an interest in the historical shipwrecks. These and the associated land sites have a high educational value for visitors, being the tangible evidence of the actual historical events. The unique historical value of the Abrolhos Islands has also offered important research opportunities for historians and archaeologists.

#### *Interpretive significance*

The historical sites provide a wealth of information that is not only important as direct evidence for the historic events, but also as a source from which survival of the early colonists in Australia’s harsh and alien environment may be interpreted, and life standards in general in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The sites which were temporarily occupied, visited or utilized for some specific purpose by survivors of the seventeenth and eighteenth century Dutch shipwrecks *Batavia* (1629) and *Zeewijk* (1727), represent the earliest evidence of European settlements on Australian territory. These pre-settlement sites are culturally unique, reflecting the earliest attempts by Europeans to survive on Western Australia’s isolated, relatively waterless, off-shore islands. Underlying the dramatic circumstances and historic events which placed the survivors on the various islands, the sites may be used to interpret the particular social and economic problems associated with survival in an harsh alien environment, such as colonists were to face more than a century later.

Study of human remains in particular may give details about these people’s life in their homeland, their social status, and their personal medical history. The combined results of all of the victims may be used to interpret life standards in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, life on board a seafaring ship like the

*Batavia*, and may tell us what kind of people undertook such a long, uncomfortable and dangerous journey.



Low



Medium



High



Very High

Level of Archaeological Sensitivity

## **Management issues and recommendations**

### ***Management issues: risk factors***

The islands in the Wallabi Group are uninhabited or only seasonally occupied. The most important economic values of the islands lie in the fishing industry and in tourism and recreation. Groups or individuals that use the area in this context are mainly commercial operators, both for professional fishing (wet line and crayfish), and tourism (especially boat charters for recreational diving and fishing). Their economic interest in the islands and surrounding waters is represented by professional and amateur organizations, such as the Geraldton Professional Fishermen's Association and recreational fishing and diving clubs. The historical background of the islands and the presence of especially the underwater heritage sites form a major attraction to amateur divers.

Furthermore, because of their unique historical and environmental value, the Abrolhos Islands have been attracted by a growing number of scientific researchers, such as historians, archaeologists, marine and terrestrial biologists, geologists and geomorphologists.

The main risks of disturbance of the heritage sites in the Wallabi Group are formed by

- increase in development on the islands
- increase in number of visitors
- natural degradation

Digging activities and building of structures in archaeologically sensitive areas cause the most serious threats. Although residential buildings on significant islands such as Beacon Island may in some cases have served to protect the sites by securing the buried material beneath building foundations, digging can have disastrous consequences because the exact location of many of the archaeological remains is uncertain. Accidents such as the one that led to the rescue excavation of the mass grave on Beacon Island (described in this report) are to be avoided at all costs. Unauthorised digging and constructing, as well as increasing numbers of visitors, not only puts pressure on the sites directly, but also indirectly through pressure on flora and fauna.

More visitors, whether recreational or professional, increase the chance of unintentional or deliberate disturbance of the sites. Uncontrolled access to the islands has resulted in the past in illegal souveniring and vandalism. Littering and unauthorised disposal of rubbish will disrupt the natural environment and alterations in vegetation may accelerate natural degradation of the sites.

The sites are subject to natural degradation through geomorphological changes (wind and water erosion), and natural decay. Moreover, faunal activities, such as mutton-bird nesting, of have shown on Beacon Island to have a major impact on the sites.

### ***Recommendations and proposed management strategies***

#### *General recommendations*

##### **BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES**

- No activities should be permitted that are likely to endanger archaeological and cultural material.
- Appropriate authorities should advise on and assist with special requirements for individual client groups, e.g. professional fishermen, tour operators, recreational groups.
- Areas of 'Very High' and 'High' archaeological sensitivity (see fig X and caption) cannot be considered for building or development. Archaeological investigation of areas of 'Medium' or 'Low' sensitivity, prior to building or developmental activities, is highly recommended, as the presence of archaeological remains cannot be excluded.

#### VISITORS

- Access to all land and underwater archaeological and historical sites should be free to public, but subject to other considerations of access (e.g. mutton-bird breeding seasons).
- Information should be available to the public about the sites and their significance.
- Signage with guidance and behavioural codes is to be positioned in the area of the heritage sites.

#### NATURAL DEGRADATION

- Natural degradation cannot be controlled unless special constructions are built on or around the sites. This would require knowledge of the precise boundaries of buried remains and therefore potential partial excavation of the site, which is not desirable. Constructions above ground would form a disturbing factor in the landscape.
- Erosion of the sites through nesting activities of mutton-birds is a natural process that has taken place for centuries. Although this causes ongoing damage to buried remains, wildlife on the Abrolhos is protected and interference with the birds is not desirable.
- Disturbing the vegetation, touching historic structures, and walking on the site accelerates erosion and degradation. Signage with behavioural instructions for the visitor should be placed to minimise human interference.
- Burying of rubbish, whether compost or other materials, should not be permitted, as it changes the composition of the soil and vegetation. This alteration may affect buried historic remains and accelerate their decay and degradation.

#### *Recommendations per site.*

SITES ASSOCIATED WITH THE SURVIVORS OF THE DUTCH EAST INDIAMAN BATAVIA (1629).

**SITE 1.** Beacon Island: ‘*Batavia*’s Graveyard’ (1:100 000 GJ 725468)

**SITE DESCRIPTION:** Coral/ limestone island with (i) shipwreck survivors’ encampments; (ii) burial or ‘graveyard’ site; and, (iii) coral/limestone structure (Cornelisz’ ‘prison’)

**AREA:** Houtman Abrolhos

**LOCATION:** Wallabi Group

**MAP:** (i) 1: 100 000 WALLABI, SHEET 1641 (EDITION 1) SERIES R 611.

(ii) 1: 5000 MORNING REEF, WALLABI GROUP, HOUTMAN ABROLHOS, W. F. JEFFERY, Surveyor, 1980.

(iii) 1: 500 BEACON ISLAND SURVEY, Paul Morris & Peter Harvey, 1986.



**Background History:** (i) On 4 June 1629, the VOC ship *Batavia* was wrecked on Morning Reef in the Wallabi Group of the Houtman Abrolhos (AUS 332, Lat. 28° 29.517’ S, Long. 113 ° 47.514’ E). Approximately 316 men women and children were aboard the ship. Immediately following the shipwreck, 180 persons, among them 30 women and children, were landed on a ‘coral shallow’, devoid of fresh water, with some ship’s provisions - barrels of biscuit and water (Drake-Brockman, 1963: 44).

The island, now called Beacon Island, was referred to as ‘*Batavia*’s Graveyard’. While Commander Pelsaert, along with 44 survivors, sailed to Batavia in the *Sardam*, many of the people left on the Abrolhos were subjected to wilful murder and other cruelties instigated by the Undermerchant, Jeronimus Cornelisz, and a group of followers. In a short time, they killed 96 men, 12 women and 7 children.

Little is known of the day to day existence of the stranded community on *Batavia*’s Graveyard. Exactly where and how the survivors organized their encampments; what they subsisted on; and how they coped with their environment is scarcely documented in available historical records. Before the atrocities began on 4 July 1629 (Drake-Brockman, 1963: 252), the community had been on the island for one month (30 days), Cornelisz having spent 10 days on the wreck and ‘one month’ (20 days) on the island (Drake-Brockman, 1963:158). During this time, the number of people occupying *Batavia*’s Graveyard was only marginally reduced: a group of 22 people, led by Weibbe Hayes, had been sent to search for water on a ‘long island’ (West Wallabi) and had not returned (Drake-Brockman, 1963: 143) and a smaller group had been marooned on Traitors Island. Given the relatively small area of Beacon Island (c. 5.25 ha), a population of 180 people with mixed social and cultural backgrounds





would have been a sizeable community in terms of social space and pressure on natural food and/or other available resources, even for a short period of time. In the best of circumstances, social conflicts could be expected to arise from the proximity of living, the diversity of the social group and the stressful situation.

According to Pelsaert's Journal the survivors lived in 'tents', although there is no indication as to the exact number (Drake-Brockman, 1963). A contemporary illustration by Jan Jansz in the 1647 edition of *Ongeluckige Voyagie* shows four: a large tent and three smaller ones. Most likely, the larger tent belonged to Cornelisz and his immediate Council while two of the remaining three were probably the main mess tents for the community. To allay suspicion, 20 to 24 of Cornelisz' most willing supporters were said to be divided, with their weapons, into two tents, taking away all weapons from those who had any (Drake-Brockman, 1963: 252). The fourth tent was probably that occupied by the predikant, Gijsbert Bastiaensz, his wife and six children and their young maid as reference is made to the 'predikant's tent' (Drake-Brockman, 1963: 181;184).

Following the discovery of the wreck site in 1963, Beacon Island became the focus of exploratory digging. In 1963 a site (E.S. 'C') was excavated on the 'northern end' of Beacon Island believed to be to the north and west of Bevilaqua's hut, (Edwards, 1988, pers. comm.) and artefacts were found at a depth of 3 to 18 inches (7.6 - 45 cm). They included a 'metal object with a type of crest on it, two keys and the hinges of a box' (WAM File MA 74/74). In addition, there were sherds of tin-glazed majolica ware and earthenware from apothecary jars or albarelli.

A trench (T.T.A.) was dug between the houses of Mr. W. Bevilaqua and Mr. D. Johnson, but this yielded nothing. Three trenches 'A', 'B', and 'C' were run off at right angles to the main trench, again with no result.

In 1967, test excavation of Site 'C' was undertaken by Colin Jack-Hinton of the W.A. Museum. Artefacts included a bone comb, button, porcelain and majolica sherds, metal fragments and so on. A large quantity of midden material was recovered from the Site 'C' surface area among which were butchered animal bones, a musket ball and a copper-alloy fish-hook. A coral/limestone structure at the southern end of the island, commonly referred to as 'Cornelisz' prison', produced brass sheeting, a small piece of fabric, iron fragments and animal bones. A clay pipe bowl was found nearby but this, together with remains of a pale green glass bottle appear to be 19th century in origin. The exact location of Site 'C' is presently uncertain.

In 1973, a series of 0.5 m wide by 0.5 m deep test trenches were dug: one in the area between Johnson's and Bingham's (formerly Bevilaqua's) hut on the east side of the island and three between Johnson's hut and the jetty on the south side of the island. All proved to be sterile.

In 1974, a test excavation [Test trench 1] in the sandy interior of the Southeast portion of Beacon Island - between Johnson's and Royce's huts - was carried out (Bevaqua, 1974). This test excavation revealed a range of artefacts that closely corresponded with material associated with the wreck of the

*Batavia*. Some objects were identical to items raised from the wreck site. The evidence reinforced the belief that Beacon Island was *Batavia's* Graveyard. Unfortunately, the natural disturbance of the site by nesting shearwaters made it difficult to determine whether the midden remains were the result of human activity or natural deposition.

In 1980, a further test excavation [Test trench 2] was carried out, parallel and adjacent to the northeast side of Test trench 1. Again, the artefacts were consistent with similar finds from the wreck site and included a brass buckle, shoulder-belt fitting, bone bead and numerous majolica, glass and metal sherds.

In 1994 and 1999, excavations took place in the back yard of Ashplant's hut. The site, containing a mass grave with the skeletons of five individuals (Hunneybun 1995; Pasveer 2000), was discovered during the construction of a leach drain in the late 1980s. While the Museum sought for funding to investigate the area, the site was reportedly vandalised. The risk of further damage and future disturbance resulted in the decision to remove the skeletal remains and associated artefacts.

(ii) In the confessions made by the murderers, reference is made to 'holes' having been prepared for the purpose of disposing of certain victims' bodies. The predikant's wife, his six children and young maid appear to have been buried in this fashion (Drake-Brockman, 1963: 181; 184), likewise Jacop Hendricxs (Drake-Brockman, 1963: 186). In 1960, the first evidence of human skeletal material was discovered by Pop Marten and after examination by Dr. Roylance the find was reported to the police. Other skeletons were subsequently unearthed and more are reputed to be buried beneath Johnson's hut.

(iii) Following Pelsaert's return from *Batavia*, attempts were made to salvage as much of the valuable cargo from the wreck site as possible. Much of the salvaged material, including several money chests, was taken to *Batavia's* Graveyard. Here too, Cornelisz was bound and subjected to torture in order to extract a confession from him. A coral /limestone structure at the southern end of Beacon Island has been traditionally referred to as 'Cornelisz' prison' although there is no documentary evidence to support this. A small number of artefacts have been recovered from the site and its surrounds but, apart from a few iron fragments and brass sheeting, none of the objects can be conclusively associated with the *Batavia*, one clay pipe bowl exhibiting mid to late 19th century characteristics.



## Classification of sites:

### 1. Northern end of Beacon Island

**Encampment site:** Site E.S. 'C' (exact locality unknown but believed to be to the north and west of Bevilaqua's hut); ceramic, iron, lead and copper fragments; iron key, hook, hinge and nails all consistent with similar finds from the *Batavia* wreck site.

**Midden site:** Site 'C' (surface); variety of animal, bird and fish bones with evidence of butchering; musket ball, fish-hook and metal fragments.

**Burial sites:**

1960 - Skeleton - BAT.M3901 (5 ft. 7 in; 1.71 m) found on Beacon Island by Pop Marten and Dr. Roylance about 8 feet (2.4 m) from the south side of William Bevilaqua's (later Bingham's) shack on the north side of the island. Covered by 16-18 inches of soil and resting on coral. Soil around grave sifted but nothing found which was foreign to the island.

1994 – Mass grave containing the skeletal remains of a man aged 20-25, an adult aged 30-35, an adult aged 40-45, a child aged 12-14, and a child aged 5. Buried in a circular pit. Associated

finds: metal buttons, fragments of a pewter spoon, fragments of fabric, and a dark black deposit yet to be investigated. Skeletal remains have been fully excavated.

### 2. Southeast sandy interior

**Encampment site:** Test trenches 1 & 2, between Johnson's and Royce's huts; variety of artefacts consistent with similar finds from the *Batavia* wreck site.

**Burial sites:**

1963 - Two skeletons - BAT.A15507 & BAT.A15508 found by Dr. Naoom Haimson on Beacon Island.

No. 1. [BAT.A15508] Incomplete - possibly female or boy (pelvis missing), found in association with pistol shot in ribs, a purse and two copper coins.

No. 2. [BAT.A15507] Lying in north-south direction at east corner of Mr. Johnson's house. 6 ft (1.8 m) tall, right foot missing, right shoulder blade broken and cutting edge wound along top of skull (possibly Andries de Vries - Edwards, 1966: 167).

Mass grave—5 bodies excavated 1994 and 1999.

### 3. Southeast promontory

**Coral/limestone structure:** 'Cornelisz' prison' (see Figure X). This structure has been subject to interference in recent years (i.e. reconstruction of the walls) and probably differs from its original form.

### 4. The Beacon

**Plate coral beacon** of uncertain origin, possibly a survey cairn from the time of the original survey of the Wallabi Group by Forrest.

**Significance:** Beacon Island is historically, culturally and archaeologically significant in view of its confirmed association with the crew and passengers of the wreck of the *Batavia*. Although there has been a substantial amount of uncontrolled and controlled excavation on the island, the exact areas of 17th century human encampment are not clearly defined. Should the existing cray fishermen's huts at any time be demolished, the island would still offer some archaeological research potential, there still being a likelihood that artefact material lies buried beneath these structures, as well as in unexcavated parts of the island. The question of the exact location and limits of the encampments



could be determined more accurately by sample survey techniques and/or limited test excavation. It is known that at least one of the present buildings overlies human skeletal material which would provide an interesting resource for physical anthropologists to study 17th century individuals.

*Recommendations:*

- The whole of Beacon Island to be protected as a maritime archaeological site under sections 4.(1) (b) and 4. (1) (c) and as a protected zone under section 9. (1) of the *Maritime Archaeology Act*, with particular reference to the restriction of digging and/or any major earthworks without Museum approval.
- All future building or minor works are to be submitted to Fisheries with appropriate planning permission and detailed plans of proposed work
- Any drainage work is to be completed above ground following guidelines to be developed by Fisheries
- All sanitation work, including toilets is to be placed above ground using dry composting
- Grey water disposal is to follow appropriate guidelines
- No further major construction work is to be undertaken on Beacon Island
- A programme is to be developed to clean up the island and to dispose of any rubbish.
- Also, that no further occupation or dwellings be permitted on the island and that in the long-term (10-20 years) the existing camp-sites be removed.

**SITE 2.** Long Island: ‘Seals Island’ (1:100 000, GJ 715475)

**SITE DESCRIPTION:** Coral/limestone island with (i) occupation and slaughter site of survivors; (ii) gallows site of *Batavia* mutineers; (iii) mutineers’ prison.

**AREA:** Houtman Abrolhos

**LOCATION:** Wallabi Group

**MAP:** (i) 1: 100 000 WALLABI, SHEET 1641 (EDITION 1) SERIES R 611.

(ii) 1: 5000 MORNING REEF, WALLABI GROUP, HOUTMAN ABROLHOS, W.F. JEFFERY, Surveyor, 1980.

**Background History:** (i) A party of cabin Boys, Men and Women, about 45 in number, were sent to Seals Island (28 Jun 1629) to search for water. Seventeen days afterwards, on 15 July 1629, all except ‘7 Boys and some Women’ were murdered (Drake-Brockman, 1963: 159), these subsequently suffering the same fate (Drake-Brockman, 1963: 173). Four people, however, managed to escape.

Melrose (1981) states that about 1967:

‘a party made two excavations on the northern end of Long Island. After a section of loose coral was cleared to some depth, small rectangular man-made shafts led down to water. This was at first drinkable but soon turned to salt’ (Melrose, 1981: 12).

The only artefact recovered on Long Island that can be positively associated with the *Batavia* is a salt-glazed stoneware beardman jug sherd, found at the northern end of the island in 1967 by Jack-Hinton et al.

(ii) On 18 September 1629, Pelsaert ordered the principal mutineers and other accomplices to be taken to Seals Island for security pending their interrogation on Beacon Island (Drake-Brockman, 1963: 118; 146). Following the confession of their crimes, the condemned mutineers were sentenced to have either both hands or their right hand cut off prior to being put to death on the gallows. Seals Island was the place designated for these punishments to be carried out.



(iii) A coral/limestone structure, of similar construction to that on Beacon Island, on the east side of the central part of Long Island is traditionally believed to be the place where the prisoners were held prior to punishment. No artefactual evidence has been recovered from this site to confirm this belief. On the other hand, no alternative historical evidence has been put forward to refute the assumption that this structure is associated with the *Batavia* incident.



#### **Classification of sites:**

**1. Occupation site:** possibly north end of Long Island, exact location not identified.



2. **Slaughter site** - of survivors.
3. **Gallows site**: possibly on the high ridge on the east side of Long Island, exact location not identified.
4. **Coral/limestone structure** - possibly mutineers' prison.

**Significance:** Long Island is historically significant in terms of the *Batavia* incident. Although few artefacts have been found, the island has never been subjected to close archaeological scrutiny, except for surface exploration for potential occupation sites. No excavation has been undertaken on the island by the W.A. Museum and the

potential for such work remains.

*Recommendations:*

- Long Island to be protected as a maritime archaeological site under section 4. (1) (b) and (c) of the Maritime Archaeology Act.
- No building to be allowed in archaeologically sensitive areas

**SITE 3.** Traitors Island (1:100 000, GJ 725459)

**SITE DESCRIPTION:** Limestone island occupied by shipwreck survivors

**AREA:** Houtman Abrolhos

**LOCATION:** Wallabi Group

**MAP:** (i) 1: 100 000 WALLABI, SHEET 1641 (EDITION 1) SERIES R 611

(ii) 1: 5000 MORNING REEF, WALLABI GROUP, HOUTMAN ABROLHOS, W.F. JEFFERY, Surveyor, 1980

**Background History:** Fifteen people were marooned on Traitors Island by Cornelisz. While attempting to escape to the Wallabi Islands on rafts, they were intercepted by some of the mutineers. Those that did not manage to escape by swimming away were either drowned or killed. The small islands situated along Morning Reef would likely have assisted survivors in their escape.

***Classification of site:***

**1. Occupation site** - no archaeological evidence located.

**Maritime archaeological significance:** Traitors Island is historically significant as an occupation site of *Batavia* survivors. Other islands in the Morning Reef complex might also have been similarly used by survivors attempting to escape from the shipwreck and/or the mutineers and during salvage operations.

***Recommendations:***

- Traitors Island and all the small islands of the Morning Reef complex to be protected as maritime archaeological sites under section 4. (1) (c) of the Maritime Archaeology Act.
- No building to be allowed in archaeologically sensitive areas

**SITE 4.** Slaughter point, West Wallabi Island (1: 100 000 GJ 651481)

**SITE DESCRIPTION:** Weibbe Hayes encampment.

**AREA:** Houtman Abrolhos

**LOCATION:** Wallabi Group

**MAP:** (i) 1: 100 000 WALLABI, SHEET 1641 (EDITION 1) SERIES R 611.

**Background History:** Jeronimus Cornelisz had sent Weibbe Hayes, a soldier, with a party of people (primarily soldiers) to a 'long island' in search of water (Drake-Brockman, 1963: 143). After searching for twenty days, they found 2 pits with fresh water which rose and fell with the tide (Drake-Brockman, 1963: 143; 149). The island also had good food resources in the form of birds, fish, eggs and 'Cats' (Drake-Brockman, 1963: 235). According to prior arrangements, they made three fires as signals which Cornelisz, preoccupied with massacre, disregarded.

Meanwhile, several parties of 4 to 5 people escaped to 'Weibbe Hayes' island on rafts until 45- 47 people were safely ashore. After hearing of the developments on Batavia's Graveyard, they prepared to defend themselves against attack, making weapons out of 'hoop-iron and nails, which they bound to sticks' (Drake-Brockman, 1963: 143-44). Three times they were attacked by the party of murderers, managing to capture Cornelisz when he approached them with cloth as a peace-offering in exchange for 'the little yawl that those who had escaped had taken with them' (Drake-Brockman, 1963: 253).

Returning to the Abrolhos, Pelsaert noticed smoke on a 'long island 2 miles West of the Wreck.....' (Drake-Brockman, 1963: 141) and anchored the *Sardam* off the 'High island' (East Wallabi). As Pelsaert approached the island in the ship's boat on 17 September, 1629, he was intercepted by Weibbe Hayes who informed him that mutineers were ready to seize the *Sardam*, and that 14 days previously he had captured Cornelisz. Only that morning, 2 sloops of men led by Wouter Loos, had attacked them, leaving four of Weibbe Hayes' men seriously injured.

In 1963, while researching the history of the *Batavia* disaster, Edwards (1966: 191) found that John Forrest had reported the 'remains of two old stone huts' on West Wallabi Island (Forrest, 1879). Edwards hypothesized that the 'huts' represented Weibbe Hayes' camp and subsequently accompanied a team of students from Aquinas College in 1964 to search for the ruins.

The Aquinas College expedition located two structures, (the inland site and the coastal or Slaughter Point site) and described several other features in this part of the island - 'fireplaces' along the coast, wells and cairns. They excavated narrow trenches along the walls of the coastal structure finding Rheinisch stoneware sherds from a beardman jug with the Coat of Arms of Amsterdam (BAT 446), iron nails, fire pits, burnt remains of tammars, seals, shearwater and oysters. In 1965, they continued their investigations and excavated the interior of the structure and an extensive area surrounding the site. Their evidence further substantiated a belief that this was the site occupied by Hayes and his men.

In 1967, the W.A. Museum re-excavated portions of the interior of the Slaughter Point site and two trenches in the nearby vicinity. Artefacts recovered from this excavation were identical to objects found on Beacon Island and from the wreck site. In 1974, the W.A. Museum carried out a survey of sites on West Wallabi and a test excavation of the Slaughter Point site (Bevacqua, 1974). A considerable amount of midden or food remains were recovered representing naturally occurring food resources. The artefacts consisted primarily of iron nails and portions of barrel hoops. The combined archaeological record is compatible with the historical evidence and archaeological material recovered from other sites associated with the *Batavia*.

In 1980, the W.A. Museum re-investigated the inland structure. Excavation was not possible as the site is situated on flat pavement limestone. Debris within the structure was sifted but no significant artefacts were found. The origin of this site, therefore, remains questionable. If this was one of the two stone huts referred to by Forrest in 1879, then it certainly pre-dates his visit. It is curious, however, that earlier visitors to the island, notably Stokes, did not mention seeing the

structure, while they reported finding wells of good water that are situated in its vicinity. It is possible, therefore, that this inland structure is associated with the 19th century guano miners, L.A. Manning having had a lease for the Wallabi Islands for two years prior to Forrest's visit. Evidence for this, however, is still inconclusive.

#### SUMMARY OF 19TH CENTURY VISITS TO WEST WALLABI.

- 1840 Stokes named the easternmost point of West Wallabi 'Slaughter Point' and reported that two caverns about half a mile (c. 0.8 km) west of this point contained 3 tons of excellent water. He makes no reference to any stone structures (Stokes, 1846, 2: 161).
- 1843 Gilbert visited the island, but failed to locate fresh water and makes no mention of the stone structures (*Inquirer*, 19/4/1843).
- 1876 L.A. Manning & Co. granted a lease for two years to remove guano from islands in the Wallabi Group (SDUR/M6 795).
- 1879 Forrest examined the island for guano deposits. He reported a good well of fresh water and the 'remains of two old stone huts...' but does not indicate where these are located (Forrest, 1879, Fieldbook No. 22, 6/4/1879).
- 1897 Survey of guano deposits on West Wallabi by A.J. Wells (1897) - no mention of 'stone huts', but a house is shown on his survey map, midway along the northwest shore of the island. A jetty is shown extending from this point on later maps with a tramway extending southwards to Horseyard Bay (Storr, 1965). In 1986, traces of this tramline were found to continue to the south west guano fields. These are all related to the 19th and early 20th century activities of guano miners (see Site 16).

#### **Classification of sites:**

- 1. Limestone Structure 1** - coastal or Slaughter Point site (Weibbe Hayes' encampment). Rectangular structure approximately 7.9 m x 3 m x 0.55 m, originally divided into two 'rooms'. Walls show marked reconstruction since 1974. Rheinisch stoneware jug sherds, iron nails and barrel hoops, midden material, lead objects etc.
- 2. Limestone Structure 2** - inland site. Four walls broken by an entrance in north facing wall, approximately 6.5 m x 5 m x 0.75 m. No artefacts of 17th century origin.
- 3. Fireplaces** - three structures on east coast of Slaughter Point (to the NE and ENE of Structure 1) consisting of limestone slabs that have been stood upright to form a three-sided protection from the wind.
- 4. Middens** - possible midden site (marked 'site' on compass traverse by Orme and Randall, 1986). No evidence of Dutch material.
- 5. Wells** - a deep brackish well lies to the northeast of Limestone structure 1, recently marked by the placement of a wooden fence post; another lies to the east. Several small wells are located in the vicinity of Limestone structure 2 with a deep well situated to the WSW, close to a survey cairn.

**Significance:** West Wallabi Island is historically and culturally significant as it was a site occupied by survivors of the *Batavia*. Limestone structure 1 (Slaughter Point site) and its surrounds have produced archaeological evidence which confirms its association with the *Batavia* incident. Other features, such as Limestone structure 2, the fireplaces and middens, possibly relate to the incident but there is no conclusive proof. The wells would certainly have been used by the survivors but no in situ archaeological material has been found to substantiate this.

*Recommendations:*

- The two limestone structures to be protected as maritime archaeological sites under section 4 (1) (b) and (c), each within a protected zone of 100 metres radius
- Any interference with the structures and/or removal of material from within the protected zones to be prohibited
- Any digging within these zones to be restricted to bona fide archaeological researchers with the permission of the Museum.
- Access to the site should be permitted, but Signage is to be erected to guide visitors to sites while minimising impact on flora and fauna, and the site itself
- Anchorage?

**SITE 5.** East Wallabi: ‘High Island’ (1:100 000, GJ 670510)

**SITE DESCRIPTION:** (i) Wells; (ii) Slaughter site

**AREA:** Houtman Abrolhos

**LOCATION:** Wallabi Group

**MAP:** (i) 1: 100 000 WALLABI, SHEET 1641 (EDITION 1) SERIES R 611

(ii) 1: 5000 MORNING REEF, WALLABI GROUP, HOUTMAN ABROLHOS, W.F. JEFFERY, Surveyor, 1980

**Background History:**

(i) Pelsaert ordered the thickets on the ‘High Island’ to be burned so that they could catch the wallabies - ‘Cats’ - better and see if they could find ‘hidden pits [*putten*] as had been found on Weibbe Hayes’ island’ (Drake-Brockman, 1963: 214). They found one pit with stinking water, one with brackish water and one with good water the opening of which they enlarged with pick-axes and crowbars (Drake-Brockman, 1963: 214 ). From this well, they filled the ship’s empty water vessels and took them on board.

(ii) At least one survivor was reported to have been killed on the ‘other High Island’ by Cornelisz’ men (Drake-Brockman, 1963: 116). While Cornelisz visited Weibbe Hayes’ island on 5 August 1629 (West Wallabi) he left Zevanck and others to kill the upper barber, Frans Jansz, of Hoorn on the High Island (East Wallabi). Under the pretext of going in search of seals, Lenert Michielz, Hans Jacopsen, Mattys Beer and Lucas brutally killed Frans Jansz (Drake-Brockman, 1963: 187).

No detailed archaeological survey of East Wallabi has been undertaken but surface investigation in the 1960s produced a mammal bone that had clearly been butchered. There was no other archaeological evidence, however, to associate this find with the *Batavia* . Stokes visited the island in 1840 and he and his men could have shot wallabies on East Wallabi Island as they did on West Wallabi, at Slaughter Point. Storr (1965:4) reports that the island was once used to depasture a flock of goats.

**Classification of sites:**

1. **Resource site (water) - wells**
2. **Slaughter site - killing of Mr. Frans Jansz, Upper barber**

**Maritime archaeological significance:** East Wallabi is historically significant as a place visited by the *Batavia* survivors and from which they obtained fresh water but there is little evidence to indicate the survivors had any encampments there. The island has not been subjected to detailed archaeological survey but based on the historical evidence its archaeological potential would appear to be limited.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The wells on East Wallabi to be protected as maritime archaeological sites under section 4. (1) (c) of the Maritime Archaeology Act within a protected zone of 100 metres radius of each well.
- Signage is to be erected to guide visitors to sites while minimising impact on flora and fauna, and the site itself

SITES ASSOCIATED WITH 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY GUANO MINING

**SITE 6.** West Wallabi

**SITE DESCRIPTION:** Maritime industrial site - guano mining

**AREA:** Houtman Abrolhos

**LOCATION** Wallabi Group

**MAP:** (i) 1: 100 000 ABROLHOS, SHEET 1641 (EDITION 1) SERIES R 611.

(ii) 1: 15840 ABROLHOS ISLANDS WALLABI GROUP VICTORIA, Houtman Rocks, B8051/2, Press 17e 325, 22.4.1898

**Background History:** To date, little detailed historical information regarding the activities of the guano miners on West Wallabi has been compiled. The first licence was granted to L.A. Manning in 1876 but whether he established any permanent camp on the island is not known. It is also uncertain whether West Wallabi was one of the islands included in Broadhurst's lease of 22 islands from 1884 but this seems probable.

By 1897, when A.J. Wells undertook a survey of the guano deposits on the island, a house had been erected about midway along the northwest coast of the island (Map ii). From this point, a wooden jetty extended out to sea, submerged remains of the wooden jetty piles still being visible in 1980. Running WSW from the jetty was a tramline, its route still being identifiable in 1986 by made-up ground and the remains of wooden sleepers, particularly at the southern end of the track in the proximity of Horseyard Bay. A horse-yard on the east side of the southern end of the tramline (Storr, 1965: Figure 1) was barely identifiable in 1986, a concentration of grasses and weeds being the only clue to its location. The well called 'Horse well' by Storr (1963, Figure 1) is a substantial well and was found to be protected with a sheet of corrugated iron in 1986. A series of limestone cairns and wooden survey posts at various points of the island are likely to relate to the survey undertaken by Wells in 1897.

**Significance:** In addition to being an island occupied by the *Batavia* survivors, West Wallabi is historically significant in terms of the pattern of land use and economic development of the Houtman Abrolhos.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The areas of the island formerly associated with the mining of guano to be recognized as being historically significant.

## UNDERWATER SITES

### **SITE** *Batavia* wreck site

**SITE DESCRIPTION:** Main wreck site and inside reef area

**AREA:** Morning Reef, Wallabi Group

**LOCATION:** 28° 29.517S 113° 47.511E

**MAP**

**Background History:** On the morning of the fourth of June 1629, the V.O.C. retourschip *Batavia* was wrecked on the Houtman Abrolhos, off the coast of Western Australia. The shipwreck was a prelude to an extraordinary tragedy. The commander, Francisco Pelsaert, all the senior officers, some crew and passengers, (48 in all), deserted 268 people on the ship and on two waterless islands, whilst they ostensibly went in search of water. Abandoning this fruitless search on the mainland coast, they then made their way to Batavia, to obtain help; taking, in all, 33 days to get there. On arrival, the high boatswain was executed, on Pelsaert's indictment, for outrageous behaviour before the loss of the ship. The skipper, Adrien Jacobsz was arrested, again on Pelsaert's word, for negligence. Governor General Coen dispatched Pelsaert seven days later in the yacht *Sardam* to effect a rescue of the survivors. With extraordinary bad luck, it took 63 days to find the wreck site, almost double the time it took the ship's boat to get to Batavia. On arrival at the wreck site, Pelsaert discovered that mutiny and a terrible massacre had taken place. Led by the undermerchant, Jeronimus Cornelisz, a small group of mutineers had massacred 125 men, women and children. Pelsaert, after arresting the ringleaders, set up a court on the islands where the mutineers were tried and the guilty executed. Whilst the lengthy trials were underway, Pelsaert diligently set about recovering the chests of specie and other valuable items from the wreck, using divers from Gujarat. When the *Sardam* finally returned to Batavia, some of the other lesser offenders, who had been flogged, keelhaunched and dropped from the yard arm as punishment on the voyage home, were executed. In the end, after it was all over, out of 316 people aboard the *Batavia*, only 116 survived.

### **Significance:**

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Removal of modern rubbish and the concrete memorial under Henrietta's anchor
- Feasibility study is to be undertaken for an appropriate wreck trail marker (not to be placed on the wreck site)
- Marking of the inside reef area
- Possible mooring site to be investigated

### **SITE** *Hadda* wreck site

**SITE DESCRIPTION:** Main wreck site

**AREA** E of Beacon Island Wallabi Group

**LOCATION:** 28° 28.33602 S 113° 47.54502 E

**MAP**

**Background History:** The barque *Hadda* arrived at the Lacepedes in April 1877 from Melbourne. Like the ill-fated *Aboyne* and other vessels, the *Hadda* had been chartered by Poole, Picken and Co., the lessees of the islands. But Captain Parker was told that he would have to procure the necessary licence from the Commissioner of Crown Lands in Perth before he would be allowed to load his vessel. So the *Hadda* sailed in ballast for Fremantle. The course steered was calculated to miss the Abrolhos altogether, but the *Hadda* was steering very badly, the helm being constantly adjusted. The vessel was heading south-east by south when she struck on the Abrolhos at 10 pm on 30 April. She struck forward and ran right up on the reef (1). Immediately, the water began to rise in the hold, so the sails were furled and the boats taken out with anchors, to attempt to warp the vessel off the reef. Such efforts were to no avail. In the morning, the eleven crew would have seen Beacon Island close by, and it seems probably that they would have explored the island. They remained on board for their accommodation until