

## **SITE INSPECTION REPORT**

### **GOVERNMENT HOUSE JETTY THOMSON BAY, ROTTNEST ISLAND**



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## **Contents**

## **Background**

## **Site inspection**

## **Summary and Conclusions**

## **Recommendations**

## **References**

Cover photograph: Detail of Government House jetty and bathing box 1870 (Rottnest Island Authority)



Figure 1: Site location in Thompson Bay, Rottneest Island (Google Earth)

#### Background

The Rottneest Island Authority (RIA) contacted the WA Museum Department of Maritime Archaeology to request assistance with surveying the site of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Government House jetty preparatory for finalisation of works plans for a replacement Rottneest Island Hotel jetty to be constructed in 2009. The survey was to see if there were any remains of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Government House jetty visible on the seabed in the vicinity of the current 1950s Rottneest Hotel landing jetty (Figure 2).

The RIA provided historic photographs and plans of Government House (current Rottneest Hotel) including relevant excerpts from the *Rottneest Hotel, Thomson Bay Settlement, Rottneest Island Conservation Plan* (Considine and Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd with Chinnery, R., September 1999).



Figure 2: Current Rottnest Hotel jetty built 1953 and modified in 1960s, with historic Rottnest Hotel stone perimeter fence gateposts. View looking NE into Thomson Bay. (Photo: Patsy Vizents/ RIA)

Information supplied by RIA Heritage Officer Patsy Vizents was that:

The first jetty is mentioned around 1870 but as the Governors' Residence was completed around 1858, it could be that the jetty was there earlier. The Governor moved his summer residence from Rottnest to Albany around 1913 and the bathing box, believed to have been damaged in a 1917 storm was removed to Government House Lake.

The jetty could very well have been damaged at that point.

The second jetty was built in 1953 by John Todd for F. Mann, the licensee of the first incarnation of the Governors' Residence as a hotel and there are several photographs of that. There were alterations done in 1960 but nothing noted after that.

The third jetty will be built in 2009.

(P. Vizents to WA Museum, pers. comm., 26/10/09, 3/11/09)

The historic photo dated 1870 shows a worked stone or remnant rock/ reef platform at the approximate high tide mark of the beach with a timber jetty extending from it. A bathing box structure and a landing are on the end of the jetty (Figures 3 & 4).





Figure 3: Government House jetty and bathing box 1870 (Rottnest Island Authority)

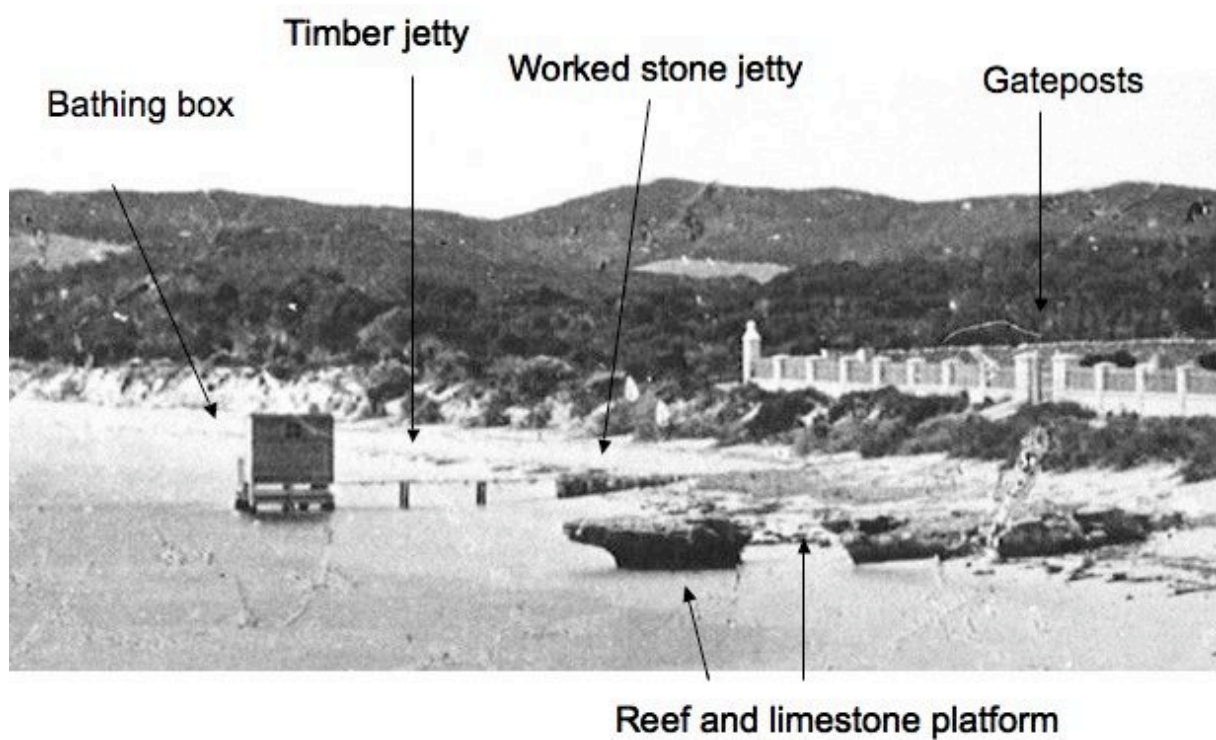


Figure 4. Detail of Government House jetty and bathing box 1870 (Rottnest Island Authority)

Site inspection

Ross Anderson, Mack McCarthy (WA Museum Department of Maritime Archaeology) and Patsy Vizents (RIA) visited the site on Wednesday 28 October 2009.

The area under the 1950-60s jetty was snorkelled and no 19<sup>th</sup> century material was visible. A modern stern mooring post, and anchor chains were visible on the seabed, and no evidence of any historic piles or structure piles was seen.

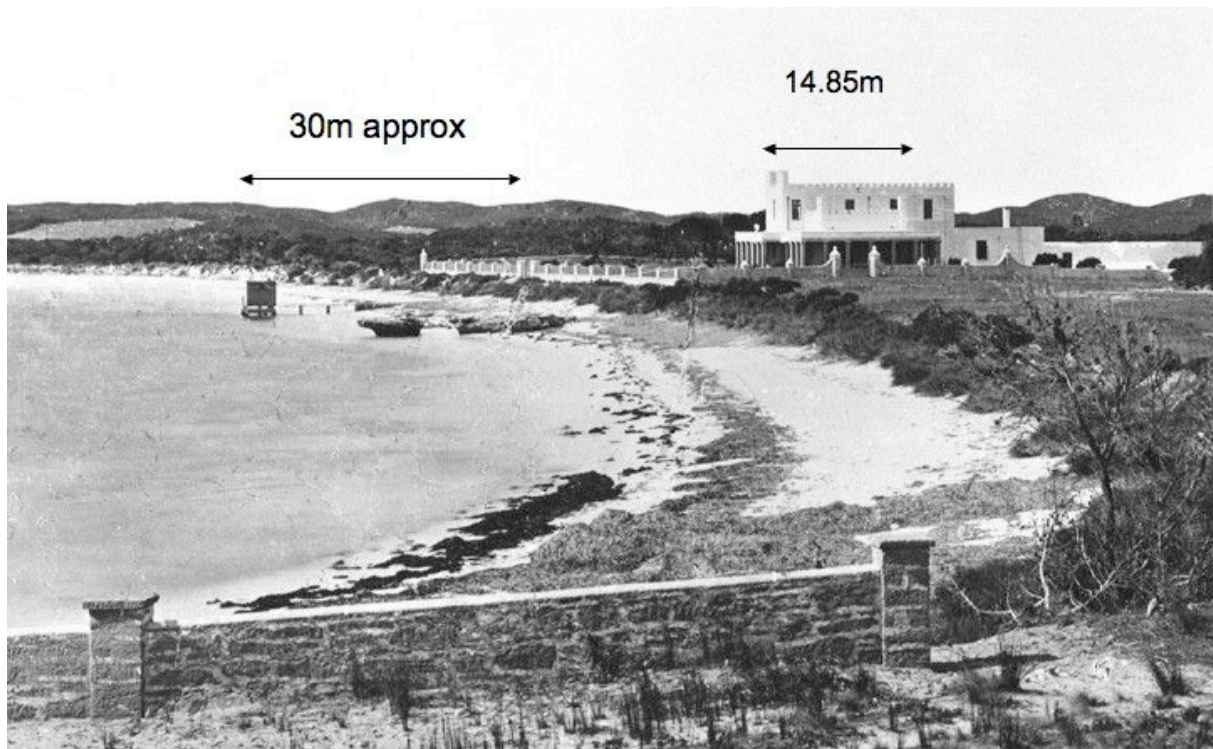


Figure 5: Scaled distance of 30m from stone gateposts to end of bathing box based on physical measurement of existing Rottne Hotel building

Based on the historic photograph, an scale using extant building features showed the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Government House jetty to be approximately 30m from the stone gate posts on the existing original eastern perimeter fence (Figure 5). The distance physically measured from the stone gateposts to the start of the present day 1952 jetty was 28.50m. This distance could be more accurately confirmed as any historic chart or map showing the Government House residence and jetty becomes available, using a geo-referenced GIS overlay method.



Figure 6: Government House showing bathing box c.1898 (Angelo Collection, RIA)

Figure 6 shows another view of the bathing box that gives an indication of its proximity to Government House. Comparison of the historic photographs with the modern beach profile shows that the 1960s construction of the stone groyne for the ferry wharf has resulted in the sandy beach south of the groyne prograding eastwards. Limestone pavement reef visible in the 1870 historic photograph is now covered with sand. Limestone rock outcrops visible in the historic photograph have since been blasted (in the 1960s?). A modern concrete pathway, sand and pine fencing surrounding vegetation now separates the original stone fence from the present day beach intertidal zone and jetty.

A probe survey was attempted in the approximate predicted area of the 1870s worked stone jetty using a stainless steel probe however a layer of hard, wet sand prohibited obtaining any meaningful results.

#### Discussion and summary

Based on comparison with the available historic photographs and modern plans it is apparent that the beach has prograded and any possible remains of the Government House jetty are likely to be under the current sand beach level. As the jetty was largely destroyed and the bathing box removed around 1913-1917 predicted remains would be bases of timber piles (below seabed level) and the worked stone component of the jetty. Further excavations in this area could attempt to determine the level of the beach limestone pavement and delineate the worked stone jetty to accurately determine if there are any remains of the worked stone jetty structure, and if so fix its exact position.

For the purposes of the current investigation to determine if the planned replacement jetty is likely to impact the historic 19<sup>th</sup> century Government House jetty, reference is made to Figure 7 and the shaded area of the pathway depicted as 'Feature 8' in the 'Archaeological sites of potential' plan (Considine and Griffiths, with Chinnery 1999: 173). The shaded area of archaeological potential matches the predicted location of the end of the historic jetty and bathing box resulting from this inspection, and thus the area considered to have archaeological potential extends to the start of the present day (1952) jetty and inter-tidal zone .



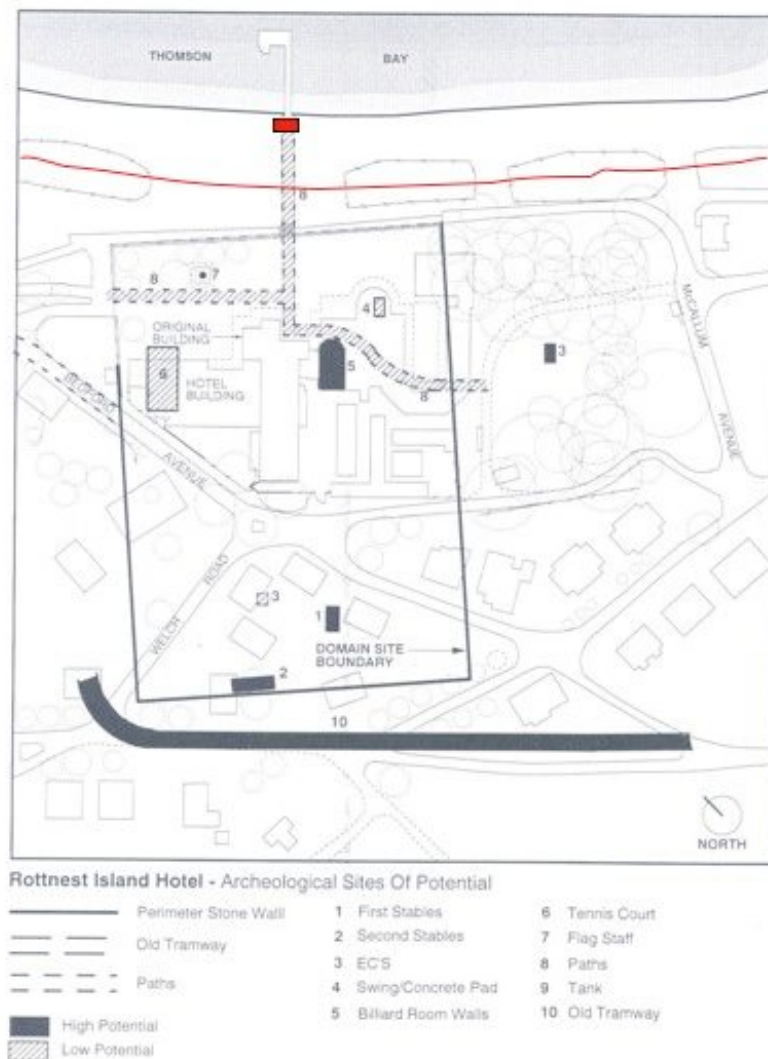


Figure 7: The black and white map layer depicts the 1952 jetty in Thomson Bay with present day beach line. The red line depicts the approximate 1870s beach line/ intertidal zone, with red box marking the end of historic 1870s jetty and bathing box. (after Considine and Griffiths, with Chinnery (1999): 173)

As the jetty is pre-1900 it would be protected by the Western Australian *Maritime Archaeology Act 1973*. It is recommended that the archaeological potential be upgraded from 'low' to 'high', given that it is on a known pathway alignment, is eligible for protection as a maritime archaeological site, and if there are any remaining features they would be buried, and possibly preserved.

The jetty and bathing box were a significant feature of the Governor's residence, and can be compared and interpreted in terms of 19<sup>th</sup> century bathing, Rottne Island tourism and recreational activities, status, social mores and health and hygiene.

#### Recommendations

- 1) Any sub-surface works or disturbance in the vicinity of the current beach and inter-tidal zone should be monitored by an archaeologist;
- 2) If any sub-surface remains such as timber piles, posts, planks, worked stone or artefacts are found works should be stopped and the finds immediately reported to the Western Australian Museum's Department of Maritime Archaeology;



- 3) Future work in the area could involve excavation of the beach to the limestone pavement level in order to determine the location of the worked stone jetty, and any related material.

## References

Considine and Griffiths Architects Pty Ltd with Chinnery, R., September 1999, Rottnest Hotel, Thomson Bay settlement, Rottnest Island conservation plan, unpublished, Perth: 173.