

Pratique

Friends of Woodman Point Recreation Camp

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SPRING 2024

UPGRADES IN AND AROUND THE ISOLATION HOSPITAL

The winter months have seen several significant upgrade projects completed in and around the Isolation Hospital.

The rusting screws holding the Colorbond sheets of the Isolation Hospital external walls are no more! More than 4,500 screws on the lower parts of the walls have been patiently removed and replaced over a period of numerous months by a team, spearheaded by Graeme Jeisman, Ross Marsh, Gary Marsh and Greg Ireland. It was a job that required great care as any screws that broke off in the process prevented their replacement being inserted in the existing screw holes. It was a mammoth job and our sincere thanks go to Graeme, Ross, Gary and



Greg for their commitment to finishing this onerous task.

The replacement of these tek screws above head height posed safety issues to our team and a decision was made to have this part of the project completed by outside contractors. Thanks to a successful grant application to the City of Cockburn by Ainslie Poore, we were able to employ the services of the IFM Group to remove the remaining tek screws. Our thanks to Ainslie for writing the successful grant and to Ryan Dunne and the workers at IFM who completed the job. With a bit of luck, this work should provide considerable longevity to the external cladding on the walls of this historic building.

Graeme Jeisman has also spent many hours replacing the running boards around the base of the decking at the Isolation Hospital. Installed to keep wildlife from living underneath the building's wooden floors, many had deteriorated over time, hanging off their original fixings and providing little, if any, resistance to wildlife seeking a hiding place there. The

new 'skirting' is looking pretty smart and we thank Graeme most sincerely for the many hours he has spent on these repairs.

Ryan Dunne and his IFM Group have also been active in securing the mortuary drainage pit near the remains of the mortuary foundation slab, as well as clearing the actual drain in the centre of the slab.

Both the drain and the pit were severely overgrown with tree roots and, with permission from Parks and Wildlife Services, these roots were cleared in an attempt to slow root damage to the drain itself and to the nearby drainage pit. In a further effort to secure the drainage pit and improve its safety, IFM have kindly erected a safety barrier around the drainage pit.



The barrier provides a level of safety without compromising the view of the drain and its connection to the mortuary slab. Our sincere thanks to Ryan, Steve and team from the IFM Group who donated both materials and their time to undertake this improvement for Friends.

FROM THE PAGES OF HISTORY

Continuing a series of articles recalling some of the patients who were nursed and cared for at the Woodman Point Quarantine Station.

John Higgins c1838 - 1906

Fearing by society over many centuries, leprosy is a disease that is curable and not highly contagious. With a relatively long incubation period averaging 5 years, it tended to occur among people living in poverty, spread by a cough or contact with fluid from the nose of a person infected with the disease.

The disease causes damage to the nerves, respiratory tract, skin and eyes and over time, the patient's ability to feel pain diminishes. This may lead to a loss of parts of a person's extremities, such as limbs and digits, from repeated injuries or infection of unnoticed wounds. Such was society's fear of this disease that its sufferers were cast into a life of isolation and rejection.

Whilst leprosy was never a rampant disease in Western Australia, it was nevertheless present in our society and so Woodman Point Quarantine Station was to become home to some of the unfortunate sufferers of this disease. Its most famous leprosy patient was John Higgins, an Irishman employed by the Perth Municipal Council as street sweeper, principally by night.

John was a married man with a grown up family when in late July 1902, he was taken to Guildford Hospital and placed into isolation for suspected leprosy. When questioned about his condition, Mrs Higgins indicated she had observed tell-

tales signs of the disease on her husband up to two years before, but had not suspected the cause, nor had the disease spread to her over this period of time.

When his diagnosis was confirmed in late August of that year, John Higgins was immediately transferred to Woodman Point – taken initially by vehicle to the Causeway and then by launch to the Quarantine Station. With no definitive isolation area for accommodating lepers, he was initially housed in an unsuitable lazarette, a store room about 50m east of the main building at Woodman Point hurriedly prepared for him. Later, more comfortable quarters were prepared for him and it was these quarters that were to become John Higgins' home for almost four years until his death in 1906.

John's home, a small two-roomed isolated cottage, stood by the beach, in the centre of a sandy patch of land enclosed on three sides by a 10 foot high galvanised iron fence, and on the fourth side by the stone wall of the Quarantine Station. It became known as the Leper Hut. Inside, the rooms were furnished with a table, a chair, a stretcher and a stove. A ladder, placed in the middle of the enclosure, enabled John to climb up and see outside his quarantined enclosure. But his was a lonely life. When there was no one in quarantine, he was permitted to walk about the station within certain bounds, but he did not regularly engage in exercise. With the exception of passing fishermen, who might talk to him over the fence, he had little interaction with people or society, save a daily visit from his quarantine orderly Mr Weare delivering his food.

In early 1903, it appeared that Higgins' condition was improving. He had put on

weight, the lesions on his skin appeared to be fading and there was raised hope that he may be on the road to recovery and eventual release. But sadly, this was not to be the case. Treatments for this disease are only effective in the early phase of incubation. As Higgins had contracted the disease more than two years previously, his treatments proved to be ineffective and were not continued.

At this time, Higgins was interviewed over the quarantine fence by a local newspaper reporter and society learned a little of his meagre existence. He was sustained by a large cocktail of pills to alleviate his disease and spent much of his time smoking his pipe and reading his prayer books. He indicated he was happy to read anything, but his eyes tired quickly and he needed to rest them often. He heard nothing from his family, despite sending them some letters, so his existence was sad and lonely to say the least. He remained upbeat though indicating that he was treated very well and had nothing to complain about, though he had hopes that one day he might be sent to isolation in Sydney. There, he would have fellow lepers in isolation to talk to. When asked if he was looking forward to a possible return to society, he sadly indicated "I thought so at first, but now I am afraid I'll have to stay here now till I die."

Higgins' suspicions were sadly to become his reality over time. In the coming years, disease began to ravage his body and he lost the use of his fingers. The sinews of his legs also became affected and over time, he became unable to walk. Despite the ravages of the disease and his lonely existence, John Higgins continued to display great fortitude to the end and was seldom heard

to complain about his plight.

His isolation continued until 9 February 1906 when John Higgins collapsed and died suddenly at 3.45pm in the Plague Hospital. It appeared that the disease had slowly impacted his vital organs and he died quietly and unexpectedly. He was cremated under the supervision of Dr Blackburne, the government bacteriologist, the following day in the Station's crematorium and his remains buried in the first Woodman Point Quarantine Station cemetery

In the days that followed, the newspapers of the day reported the death of John Higgins, acknowledging that he had indeed endured what was virtually "a living death" for almost four years before he eventually passed.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

I'm now back home from my winter retreat in Exmouth and really enjoyed the warmer weather up north. Thanks to Neil for covering for me during my absence.

It seems to have been a very busy three months in my absence. Heritage tours are booming with 10 being conducted over this time and a swag more on the books in the coming months. With that on the horizon, it is great to be able to welcome Keith to the tour guiding team as our newest tour guide.

In addition to tours, there have been requests from four church and ladies groups for face-to-face presentations on the history of the Woodman Point Quarantine Station. These presentations have all been received with great interest and appreciation of the work that Friends

engage in.

Despite constant advice to tour organisers that our heritage tours are walking tours, there are often issues for tour participants with limited or minimal mobility. In an attempt to address this issue, the tour team, led by Jenni, are introducing a shortened one-hour tour that will considerably reduce the amount of walking required to learn about the rich history of Woodman Point. These tours, which will still include morning tea, will tour the Isolation Hospital, and if feasible, will then involve a short optional walk to the Crematorium to view the structure and hear of its history. This tour has already attracted some attention from community groups and we hope it will fill the tour void for those people who find the longer walk too much.

There have also been many requests for participants to have more time to view the many exhibits in the Isolation Hospital. To this end, Jenni and her team are also investigating the feasibility of introducing a couple of IH Open Days each year when people can come along and leisurely tour the IH at their own pace, reading and enjoying the history within the museum itself. This option would not involve visiting other sites within the quarantine precinct, though morning tea would be included in the nominal charge, would also be. It is hoped that this option might be in place for the coming year.

In May, Friends received a grant from Volunteering WA to conduct a luncheon to recognise the work of our volunteers and supporters, past and present. This was held during National Volunteer Week at the end of May and by all accounts, it was a great gathering of those that have helped, and are helping Friends to be great. More than 30 people attended and I

was disappointed not to be able to join in this recognition of all our work.

At the end of May, our long-awaited tourism and heritage signs were installed at the corner of O’Kane Court and Cockburn Road. This signage directs interested passers-by to our new signage on the front perimeter fence of the Recreation Camp, acknowledging the heritage site and promoting Friends’ heritage tours. Thank you to Neil for his work bringing this project to fruition.

Friends have been very successful with grant applications this year. In June, we received a further grant from the City of Cockburn to complete our project replacing the tek screws on the Isolation Hospital walls. On 26 June, Ainslie and Suzy attended a presentation night at the City of Cockburn where we received this money. It has already been put to good use in July when this project was completed by IFM group with the replacement of all tek screws on the higher parts of these walls. A big thank you to Graeme, Ross and Greg, and to Ryan from IFM Group for their work completing this essential project.

Later in July, the IFM group also undertook work to help preserve the morgue slab and have also installed a safety fence around the morgue drainage pit. Thank you once again to Ryan, Steve and the crew from IFM Group for their work on this project.

I was saddened to hear the passing of our member Barry Ireland. Barry was incredibly generous, gifting Friends with many personal objects from the Poore family collection for our museum, and making substantial donations to assist Friends to continue their heritage work.

We extend our deepest sympathy to Barry’s family in their loss.

Gary Marsh
President

UPDATE FROM THE CAMP

During the 2023/24 financial year, Woodman Point Recreation Camp hosted 319 events, contributing to 26,150 bed nights and 48,085 participations. These impressive numbers highlight Woodman Point’s strong performance throughout the year. Clearly, Woodman Point remains a popular destination for the Western Australian community.

Since 1983, an estimated 732,686 people have stayed at Woodman Point, and since 2010, there have been over 682,070 activity participations across various programs. Feedback from our guests and stakeholders is regularly sought and the camp builds that understanding through its annual client survey which has been recently completed by Research Solutions.

In June, the DLGSC Strategic Plan (2024 to 2029) was launched. This plan defines our revitalised purpose, vision, mission, and values, outlining strategic priorities for the next five years. It represents a significant milestone in our commitment to fostering a cohesive, prosperous, vibrant, and healthy Western Australian community. Woodman Point has a key role in broadening the opportunities for children, young people and families to benefit from camp experiences.

Despite the quieter winter months, Woodman Point has made substantial progress on site improvements, including:

- replacement of the two 100m flying

- fox cables, which remain a popular program at Woodman Point.
- renovation of the west end of the Grevillea shower block, with considerations for extending renovations to the Spinifex shower block.
- upgrades to audio-visual equipment in both the Recreation Hall (formerly the Linen storage block) and the main Dining Hall, enhancing client experience.
- planned replacement of fire hydrants across the site.
- investigation into adding WiFi to the Isolation Hospital by DLGSC Corporate Services.

Furthermore, Woodman Point aims to strengthen its team through the recruitment of an Operations Officer. The Operations Officer will focus on maintaining the physical environment and enhancing client relations.

We express our gratitude to the Friends of Woodman Point for their ongoing commitment and support of the department and the camp.

Ben Walton
Camp Manager

LATEST NEWS FROM FRIENDS

- ❖ It is with sadness that Friends acknowledge the recent passing on 29 July 2024 of our member, Barry Ireland.

Barry, the eldest grandchild of Bertie Poore, the Quarantine Station’s long serving nurse from 1921 to 1956, was incredibly generous, gifting Friends with many objects for the Isolation

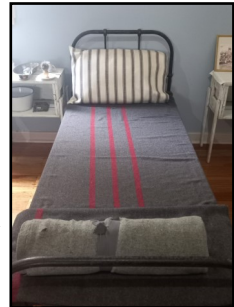
Hospital’s collection and recently, making several donations to Friends, to enable us to continue preserving the history of the Quarantine Station.



Barry and Greg Ireland at the Isolation Hospital

Friends extend their deepest sympathy to Barry’s family: Irene, Stewart and Sharina, and to his brother Greg and the extended Ireland and Poore families in their loss.

- ❖ Many thanks to the Cockburn CWA for generously making new period-like pillow slips for displays in the Isolation Hospital. They add a great touch to the hospital beds throughout the IH.



- ❖ The next meeting of Friends will be held at the Isolation Hospital on Wednesday 18 September 2024 commencing at 6.30pm. All members are welcome to attend.

NEW MEMBERS

Friends welcome the following people who have recently joined our group.

- Robert Wilson from Beeliar

HERITAGE TOURS

Friends of Woodman Point Recreational Camp operate regular heritage tours of the former Quarantine Station and the Isolation Hospital Museum on week days for community groups. Morning tea is included in all tours.

Regular Sunday heritage tours , conducted on the third Sunday of each month, provide tours for members of the public to visit the former Quarantine Station and to learn about this important Western Australian heritage site.

We acknowledge the contribution of our valued volunteer tour guides who lead heritage tours of the former Quarantine Station.



Jenni



Chris



Bernadette



Suzie



Gary



Keith



Neil

UPCOMING HERITAGE TOURS

September 2024

9 Sept City of Cockburn
 11 Sept Western Suburbs View Club
 13 Sept Elite Bus Tours 1
 15 Sept Monthly public tour
 24 Sept Elite Bus Tours 2

October/November 2024

10 Oct Wanneroo RSL
 18 Oct Mandurah Island Probus
 20 Oct Monthly public tour
 29 Oct Rockingham View Club
 13 Nov Glyde-in Community Centre
 17 Nov Monthly public tour

COMMITTEE 2023 – 2024

PRESIDENT
Gary Marsh



TREASURER
Greg Ireland



PAST PRESIDENT
Jenni Carder



**SECRETARY/
MEMBERSHIP**
Ainslie Poore



VICE PRESIDENT
Neil Wilson



EX-OFFICIO COMMITTEE MEMBER
Ben Walton



MEMBER SERVICES

HERITAGE TOUR BOOKINGS
Jenni Carder



PRATIQUE
Neil Wilson



WEBSITE MAINTENANCE AND DESIGN

