

## YOUR VIRTUAL DISCOVERY VISIT – 112 TO THE DEFENCE HERITAGE STORIES OF ROTTNEST ISLAND



*The Virtual Visit series was initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic when Rottnest Island was closed to the public due to social distancing restrictions and periods of use for quarantine from March to June 2020.*

*The intent was to maintain a connection to the Island by exploring stories of interest and offering links for self discovery.*

*Now that the Island is once again open to visitors and guiding services are being gradually re-established, these Virtual Visits have been retained as part of an archival record for future reference and enjoyment.*

### THE UBIQUITOUS P1 HUT



The Second World War presented a huge logistical problem for Australian defence planners. The solution they arrived at for personnel accommodation requirements was neat and inexpensive – the P1 hut. Using readily available building materials and easily understood building techniques, tens of thousands of these huts were built by civil contractors across Australia in the period 1939-1945. Although designed as temporary accommodation their adaptability and inherent strength made them the backbone of military accommodation for 50 years and many are still in use today. Artillery Camp below Oliver Hill shows a variety of hut configurations. Two standard pattern P Huts are in the foreground.

## HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Australian 'P' series of huts was designed to cover all the personnel accommodation requirements of the military. The series was centred around a basic module - the P1 sleeping or stores hut, which was then modified to produce messes, guard huts, canteens, medical aid posts, dental surgeries, recreation huts, classrooms, and offices. Further modifications produced ablutions, showers, latrines, laundries, offices and stores.

Unlike the Nissen/Quonset huts which were factory prefabricated, the P1 was designed for construction by civilian contractors using freely available local materials and in a style familiar to all Australian builders. The contractors operated from a site plan which nominated the location of the various types around the camps, and from a set of standard construction plans for each type.

Although a variety of wooden frame former military buildings remain on Rottnest including the Cinema and some staff accommodation bungalows, there does not appear to be an example of the standard wartime P1 Hut remaining.



A standard configuration P1 hut still in use at Northam Army Camp in 1980



A variety of P1 Huts repurposed and reconfigured as the Rottnest Tea Rooms roughly on the site of the current Dome Coffee Shop



Interior view of a P1 Hut with larger windows in use as a camp recreation hall



Wartime P1 hut on Rottnest Island – location not confirmed