

MEDIA RELEASE

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FREMANTLE PRISON
The Convict Establishment

Convict Cellar Discovered

Fremantle Prison is currently undertaking works to redevelop the building at number 14 The Terrace into a convict themed visitor centre.

As part of these works sections of the concrete floor were removed, uncovering a cellar built by convicts in the 1850's.

'The cellar is an incredible find of exceptional historical significance. It tells us a lot about how the prison staff lived during the convict-era as well as construction techniques and materials used at the time' said Fremantle Prison's Interpretation Manager Mr Luke Donegan.

This area was originally a backyard attached to the Chief Warden's and Deputy Superintendent's residences. Plans from 1855 show steps in the backyard leading down to a small cellar.

'The cellar could have been used as a cold storage area for prison staff living in number 14 The Terrace and would have stored perishable goods such as vegetables, salted meats etc.' said Mr Donegan.

In the 1960s this area was converted into a dining room for warders – the cellar was in-filled and the floor concreted over.

Before demolition works began on the space, two channels were cut in the concrete floor in an attempt to locate the cellar stairs. This was successful but the cellar was far more extensive than the original plans showed.

Eureka Archaeologists were contracted to excavate the cellar.

Twenty square metres of sand were dug out to reveal the original convict-era cellar in almost perfect condition, including steps carved into the limestone bedrock, reinforced with brick and jarrah toe boards, walls rendered in lime wash, plus a barrel-vault ceiling constructed from brick.

'After conservation work to preserve the original jarrah and limestone fabric has been completed, the cellar will be revealed to the public as the centre piece of Fremantle Prison's new Convict Depot visitor centre' said Mr Donegan.

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Photo and interviews with archaeologist and Interpretation Manager available.

Media Contacts

Paula Nelson
Marketing Manager
P – (08) 9336 9224
M – 0417 964 709
E – marketing@fremantleprison.com.au

Luke Donegan
Interpretation Manager
P – (08) 9336 9215
M – 0423 827 523
E – luke.donegan@fremantleprison.com.au