



## **Robben Island and Leprosy Historical Sites**



**Number:** 30

**Name:** Cemetery

**Description**

Below Minto's Hill is the old staff burial ground with graves dating from the 1860's. It is surrounded by a rough stone wall. (Bassett, B.W. & Rudner, J., Robben Island: An annotated survey of buildings and sites of architectural, historical and contextual importance, and recommendations concerning a conservation policy for the island. January 1986. NMC)

**Chronology**

1858 -1923 In use from 1858 –1923 (Riley 1993) (Hart, T., Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)

**Significance**

Significant as area where people who staffed the island during much of the Leprosy Settlement and Convict Station period were buried. Memorials contain the identities, ages and sex of these people, and are a potential starting point in writing their histories. (Tim Hart, Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)

**Number:** 48

**Name:** Guest House

**Description**

This building was erected in 1894 for the resident Dutch Reformed Church chaplain, a post which had become necessary with the increase in leprosy patients because of the promulgation of the Leprosy Repression Act in 1891.

**Chronology**

1890-1893 Rev TF Dreyer, visiting chaplain of DRC from 1890-3. (, Page 402)  
1893 RI parsonage plans (, CO 7585, folio 903)  
1893 New resident DRC minister has not yet moved in. (, Annual Report 1893: Page 90)  
1893 92 out of 200 male lepers were DRC when he left in August 1893. Dreyer now replaced by Rev Mr Morgan (, CCP 4/10/3/1, G10-94, Page 398)  
1893 Anonymous letter regarding resignation of Rev Morgan, in Dutch: [Lepers?] complain that the opziener is a great drunkard [Mr Fitch], and that Rev Morgan told the English minister [his minister] who said he has complained repeatedly to no effect. The government officials in charge of the patients behave very badly. If Mr Fitch does not resign, Mr Morgan will. (, CO 4285, A55: 14 Nov 1893)  
1894 DRC Parsonage built. (, RI 206: PWD Correspondence)  
1896 DRC Services: Rev Morgan (resident minister) resigned in November (, Annual Report  
1899 Rev Hugo of DRC resident (, Annual Report 1899, Page 90)  
1904 Piers to Janisch: Complains about the lack of attention paid by DRC minister Hugo to the lepers and lun, the Anglican minister performs nearly half the DRC burials for him (, RI 29, 28 April 1904)  
1905 Chabaud to UCS: Refers to memo of duties of DRC minister to lepers, Rev Hugo, on RI compiled by a Committee appointed by the Presbytery to investigate claims against Rev Hugo, by Piers and others, of neglect of duty in 1903 in not visiting the leper wards on 201 days. Piers and Hugo did not get on, although Piers was friendly to most people (, CO 8010, RI Chaplains 1904-1911: 18 May 1905)  
1910 DRC minister on leave, and replacement minister, who is supposed to come on Sundays, didn't arrive last Sunday when 3 burials [1 eur and 2 col lep] were awaiting his attention.



1926

Two of the lepers performed the service instead, and feel the state of affairs is "scandalous", "utterly neglected" and "that their souls are of no use to anybody": this can cause admin trouble on the island. Many of the lepers are DRC. Also, for a while now, the white DRC lepers have had greiviances against their minister: most refuse to enter the church, and they petitioned the Col Sec to no effect. They were rebuffed by the DRC Authorities in CT as well. This indifference is jeopardizing their souls, says Magennis (, RI Rev Louw: October 1926: Saturday boat has been stopped by Govt., so the minister goes on Friday and comes back on Monday or even Tuesday. The Govt recently re-opened the Island to lepers from the Cape so the numbers rose from under 120 to 137, 21 whites. Brother Malan takes the service when the leeraar is on the mainland. Visits to the leper compound much appreciated. 90 lepers belong to the DRC (, RA 1/12, DRC Verslagen,

**Number: 49**

**Name: Residency**

**Description**

Home of the Commissioner to Robben Island since 1895, the building was later to become the Officers' mess hall in WW2. It is a 'Victorian style' single storey building of dressed stone, sourced from the Island quarries, with a short wing on the left and a pitched corrugated iron roof.

**Chronology**

1895

Built as a residence for the Commissioner of the Island, who was brought in as an administrator when the surgeon-superintendent of the hospital had difficulties quelling violence and dissatisfaction among the leprosy patients regarding their forced residence on the Island after the Leprosy Repression Act of 1891 was enforced in 1892. (Deacon, H., A history of the medical institutions on Robben Island, Cape Colony, 1846-1910. Doctoral thesis at the University of Cambridge, 1994)

**Number: 63**

**Name: Faure Jetty**

**Description**

Faura Jetty was built in 1896, below the Residency, to replace the jetty below the old Convict Station which was destroyed by storms.

It is about 130m long and constructed of about 20 square, bracket concrete supports with concrete slabs on top. There is also a railing. At the end is a small pumphouse and from it runs a funnel on the left side of the jetty for the purpose of leading a pipe line to the shore. This jetty could only serve small ships with shallow draughts. (Bassett, B.W. & Rudner, J., Robben Island: An annotated survey of buildings and sites of architectural, historical and contextual importance, and recommendations concerning a conservation policy for the island. January 1986. NMC)

The earlier jetties were positioned further north than the Faure Jetty. (Deacon, H., RIM 2000)

There were three jetties in the village area during the nineteenth century: an early one of stone built in the 1820s, another built in the 1860s and the Faure jetty built in the 1890s. (Deacon, H., RIM 2000)

**Chronology**

1853

Surgeon's permission needed for all landing of boats on the Island except in emergency. (Wm Hope, CO, to Sec Col.MC, MC 10, 17 June 1853)

1855

Leper overseer has charge of surf boat and landing of stores (, 1855 Commission, A37-55)



- 1861 Difficulties such as access, inconvenient and uncomfortable passage, landing passengers in the surf were overlooked in the 1840s. But they soon were noticed, and "for the last eight years have caused the site of the infirmary to be generally regarded [in Govt reports and by the current Commissioners] as objectionable. (Deacon, H., RIM 2000)
- 1861 Some visitors get "precipitated into the water" on landing. (Deacon, H., 1861 Commission, p. 43, RIM 2000)
- 1861 The Lunatic Square patients are mostly white men, and speak English. They work more than the asylum men, at boating work and jetty construction. They are obliged to work, but do not like working in the water. If they refuse, their tea (not dinner) ration, or their tobacco is stopped. Those excused from work don't get tobacco either. N.P. Nutt: Takes the Lun Square and asylum men down to gather stones for the jetty after breakfast. (Deacon, H., 1861 Commission, p.98, RIM 2000)
- 1871 Necessity for a jetty: visitors have to be landed on the beach. (, Report for 1871, Page 12)
- 1873 So many visitors, sometimes over 100, come to RI on the GNU that the boat cannot return at 3pm as landing and re-loading passengers and cargo takes so much time. Biccard wants to restrict the number of passengers to 30 p.d. (, CO 972, 1 August 1873)
- 1898-9? "A small steam tug leaves the Alfred Docks 2 or 3 times a week". Permission to visit the island can be got from the Colonial Office. "the tug returns the same night". There are plenty of rabbits on RI, and "shooting parties go over to the island for a day's sport" "Boats now land passengers at a small jetty erected a year or 2 ago". (, MSC-1904, pp.165-66)
- 1904 Under Col Sec's visit to RI re unrest among the lepers: Five patients in a deputation from the whole coloured leper section (namely, Kobra Rajab, E Paulse, Annie Potgieter, S Tima and S Isaacs) interviewed Janisch. They wanted the same freedom as the white patients to come and go out of the compound as they like. Common area to be between the cemetery and the two compounds and an area at the back of the compound. Hours 9-1 and 2-5pm. Extra clothing. Wanted to go to the jetty to meet friends as the white patients did. Explained that the white patients were not allowed to do this, except once, when permission was given. (, CO 8053, 1 June 1904)

**Number: 124**

**Name: Anglican church / garrison church**

- 1891 The Rev. Watkins is the Anglican priest on the island. The Rev. Watkins is said to have drunk from the same cup as the lepers during holy communion. (Weintraub, Jill; Senzela, Lindisipho; Magadzike, Blessed., Robben Island Training Programme. Site register and Conservation Management Plan for the Garrison church and the Anglican parsonage, p5. May 2002.)
- 1899 The church of England in conjunction with the Dutch Reformed Church conducts classes for the lepers on the island. (Weintraub, Jill; Senzela, Lindisipho; Magadzike, Blessed., Robben Island Training Programme. Site register and Conservation Management Plan for the Garrison church and the Anglican parsonage, p5. May 2002)

### **Chronology**

1875-1900: Many lepers are brought to the island. It is also when the Church of the Good Shepherd for the lepers is built, in one of the many attempts to separate those with leprosy from those who didn't have the disease.



**Number: 206**

**Name: Site of Leper Wards (Male)**

**Description**

Cement foundation, support and step covered in rubble and vegetation. Other cement floors are visible nearby. Also present is a long walkway (covered corridor), as well as cobbled landscape features. {Note Tim Hart used a different site numbering system in his report. RIM 206 -> Tim Hart 42-43} (Hart, T., Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)

Floors of leprosy wards, and walkways linking buildings that have survived after demolition of the above ground structures. {Note different site IDs were used by Tim Hart. RIM 206 -> Tim Hart 42-43} (Hart, T., Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)

A site inspection showed ample evidence of wall foundations, and cement floors. It would appear that a variety of materials were used in the buildings ranging from wood and corrugated iron to stone and brick. (, Archeological Baseline study, 1998)

In 1846 the first lepers were moved from Hemel en Aarde (near Hermanus) to Robben Island. At first they were housed in existing buildings until the female leper block was built to the north of Murray Harbour in 1887. A new male wing was built in 1891 occupying an extensive tract of land between the village and the leper cemetery south of Murray Bay. (, Map of Robben Island, 1897 - Archeological Baseline study, 1998) The lepers were housed in a complex of bungalows equipped with bathrooms, recreation halls and a church (the Church of Good Shepherd built in 1895). In 1930 the lepers were moved from the island and the buildings of the leper colony (apart from the church) were burned and demolished in 1931. (Deacon, H., 1996, The Island, p.78)

All buildings except for the Church of the Good Shepherd were destroyed, but some gardens and foundations remain. (Deacon, H., 2000)

**Chronology**

- 1889 If the Leprosy Repression Act is promulgated, better accommodation for the male lepers will be necessary along the lines of the cottage system. (Smyth to Knutsford, PRO CO 48/518, 18 Oct 1889, Enclosure: Report of the Committee appointed to assess the validity of the Blackwoods article)
- 1890 Blackwoods Magazine reports that new leper buildings are being constructed out of RI stone by convict labour. One of the proposed buildings is considered 'especially advantageous for [treating] this nature of malady'. (, Blackwoods Magazine, December 1890)
- 1890 New building for male lepers being built. (, Report for 1890, p.3)
- 1890 A hospital for lepers opened. (, Report for 1890, p.26-7)
- 1891 New leper pavilion I complete; II being built. (, Report for 1891, p.18)
- 1891 OFS leper hospital being built. (, Report for 1891, p.19)
- 1891 Six male lepers moved to their new building. (, Chaplain's Diary, 6 July 1891)
- 1891 25 more [male lepers] moved to new ward, but still some in old wards. (, Chaplain's Diary, 15 July 1891)
- 1891 Patients from old thatched ward (2 houses) moved to the new hospital. (, Report for 1891, p.20)
- 1895 Male leper DRC church built and lockup proposed. (, RI 206)
- 1895 Ward 5 burnt down after a fire broke out in a small room off the day room where food was served – no-one was hurt. (, Chaplain's Diary, 15 Oct 1895)
- 1896 Three dormitories for Leper Police. (, RI 206)
- 1897 Building of a lab and a post-mortem room for leprosy investigations. (R. Sinclair Black, SAMJ, Oct 1898, 'Observations on Leprosy', pp.130-36)
- 1901 Leper lunatic buildings are the smallest wards in the leper settlements – doctor requests larger buildings. (, RI 61, 21 March 1901)
- 1904 The other wards are a bit crowded, but clean. (, )
- 1904 Quarters for white male lepers near the English church [could this be the old leper wards?] who pay for their own care, and each have two rooms and a personal servant. (, De Goede



- 1908 Hoop, 'Robben Eiland' June 1904, p.233
- 1908 The ORC government paid £4,000 towards the ORC leper buildings on RI, and now wants some of that money back to build their own leper asylum. (, OFS Archive, CO 516, 96/16, 10 Oct 1908)
- 1908 They [ORC government] agreed on half that amount, which was still not paid by 1910. (, OFS Archive, CO 516, 96/16, 23 April 1910)
- 1908 Large refuse bins scattered around the leper wards and near the Pondoks: bins used for bandages and vegetable peelings, and much rubbish surrounds them. Refuse and night soil removed to tip on NE corner of Island, where night soil and some bandages are thrown into the sea. The number of scrap iron and wood pondoks has increased greatly in recent years. There are now 84 inside the female leper compound, 60 outside it in the 'neutral area', and 80 behind the male wards. Those in the female compound and behind the male wards are clean, arranged in rows with hen roosts ('hokkies') at the back – the lepers keep about 4,000 hens in all. Female lepers keep 15 donkeys for drawing private trolleys between the male and female wards and the 'neutral area'. Male leper settlement is kept clean of vegetable peelings by the pigs. (, MOH 348, folio L121G, 13 July 1908)
- 1913 Because of long uncertainty as to where the lepers would be placed, buildings have been made of corrugated iron and wood instead of stone or brick. Poor condition of buildings on RI at present. (, Report of the Research Bacteriologist, UG 24-13)
- 1930 'Leper Hospital buildings ... are greatly in excess of present requirements.' Their condition is 'unsatisfactory from the point of saleability', their 'asset value is negligible', as they are old and [some are] built of wood and iron. They can be disinfected before removal and reused but 'considerable sentiment might easily be aroused' because of their use by lepers. The removal cost outweighs their resale cost or value – recommends destruction on the Island [by fire – (, [undated minute by Sec for Public Works] (Conference on Closing Down RI, 6.11.1930, in Ross Collection)
- 1930-1931 About 90 of the structures for the male and female lepers were demolished, marking the closure of the island as a leper colony. (, )
- 1930 Some of the Leper Buildings are made of stone and could be used by Railways and Harbours if they take over the Island – this means that most of the buildings could be destroyed, but not all. (Willmot to Staten, 7.11.1930 in Ross Collection)
- 1957 Webb says that 'Haylett' told him it was the fact that a relative (Mr Malan) of Dr Malan was on RI as a leper that resulted in the decision to remove the patients to the mainland. (HF Webb to E Witt, 12.10.57 in MSC 35, possibly box 5 – Ross collection)
- Late 19th - early 20th century Late 19th - early 20th century. (Hart, T., Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)

### **Context**

### **Linkages**

Internal roads and access routes covered by vegetation and rubble. Walkway leads from close to what is now the vehicle maintenance area. (Tim Hart, Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)

### **Significance**

The archaeological footprint of the male leprosy wards represents an important physical remnant of the period in the island's history. (Tim Hart, Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)

### **Vulnerability**

No acute impacts. (Tim Hart, Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)

Excavations for the services in this area will damage archaeological remains relating to the leper colony. For that reason such activities should be avoided. (Deacon, H., RIM 2000)

The site is not suffering any direct impacts at present, but the invasion of alien plant species will slowly damage buried foundations and floors. (Deacon, H., RIM 2000)

The area that was once the male leper colony is currently underdeveloped but has been taken over in places by thickets of alien vegetation. (Deacon, H., RIM 2000)



### Further research

The potential exists for both archaeological research and public archeology in this site. Foundations could be exposed for display purposes while the artefactual material associated with the site will provide potentially interesting social and medical information (Baseline Archaeological survey, 1998). (I. Stepney, An excellent prospect for archaeological excavation and public interpretation facility. (Tim Hart, Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)

**Number: 231**

**Name: Church of the Good Shepherd**

### Description

The church named "Church of the Good Shepherd" which was designed by Sir Herbert Baker and built by the lepers in 1895 is in fact one of the few reminders of the leper era on Robben Island.

This is a fine church, the property of the Church of the Province of South Africa, with a high, distinctly constructed roof and timbering. It has a rounded pentagonal apse and a wooden porch on the road side. At the rear is a small vestry. The entrance is slightly arched with a double door. The high wooden windows are arched with fanlights for ventilation. They have simple plaster surrounds. The roof is hipped and of corrugated iron. The church has no pews. The Rev. W.V. Watkins paid for the Leper Church and also purchased a wood carving of the Good Shepherd in Germany. (Bassett, B.W. & Rudner, J., Robben Island: An annotated survey of buildings and sites of architectural, historical and contextual importance, and recommendations concerning a conservation policy for the island. January 1986. NMC)

### Chronology

- 1890-1900 His grandfather built the church. (Luden, Ian, Mr., Interview by Deacon, H. & Ramoupi, N. Robben Island, 25 March 2001)
- 1896-1920s The DRC minister had most of his flock in the leper compounds. The Leper DRC churches were built before the Anglican ones. The latter were built in 1894/5 out of the private purse of W Watkins, the chaplain. The stone for the Church of the Good Shepherd was quarried on the Island and the ground under the church was acquired for the Diocese. It was consecrated in the Easter week of 1895. A carved figure of the Good Shepherd, purchased at Oberammergau, graced the porch. (Webb, Harold, Reminiscences 1960, SAPL MSC 35, 7(3))
- n.d. 'It was Mr. King, a real craftsman, who designed and made the beautifully-wrought iron candlesticks for the Church of the Good Shepherd...' (Notes by E. Witt on, Robben Island Letters, MSC 35, 4(7) SAPL)
- 1892 The leper church is to be freehold, but not its land (, Chaplain's Diary, 27 March 1892)
- 1893 The 'Kafirs' in ward 4 see 'the church building as a trap to keep them here [on RI] and were, some of them, very angry it is hard ti naje rgen believe that it has nothing to do with the question of their staying or going'. (, Chaplain's Diary, 20 October 1893)
- 1948 The front portal, leading to the main entrance, is made of dark wood with a zinc roof (red) and tall windows down the side. (Mehnert, A., The Moodie Family home video. Robben Island, Spring 1948)
- E.20TH C The Leper Church [under Engleheart] 'is a small clean sanctuary, with bright pictures on the walls, a nice altar and many benches. Near the entrance are two large scriptural verses in Dutch ... Outside a trellis of morning glories was doing its utmost to make the place cheerful.' (, A Woman's Winter in Africa, pp.191-192)
- 1931 It was knocked down when the island closed in 1931. (Speaking of the "Swiss Cottage" Which was built to the right of the church). (Luden, Ian, Mr., Interview by Deacon, H & Ramoupi, N. Robben Island, 25 March 2001.)
- 1942 The old leper church, the Church of the Good Shepherd was renovated, and the bishop of Cape Town made a special journey to R.I. to re-consecrate this Anglican Church. While



- stepping onto the jetty at Murray's Bay the bottom half of the Bishop's crook fell into the sea and was never recovered. (Laver, M.P.H., Sailor-women, sea-women, SWANS. A history of the South African Women's auxiliary naval service: 1943-1949. Swans History Publication Fund, Simonstown. 1986. p.68.)
- 1967 {/Mrs Cillie remembers that the children had their Judo lessons in the Leper Church in the evenings and that she had to go and fetch them in the dark. She remembers that the children were afraid of ghosts and she suggested that they sing songs as they walked home. It was very dark because there were no street lights./} (Cillie, Sussie, Mrs., Interview by Victor, M. & Stephney, I. De Kelders, 22 September 2001.)
- 7/11/1974 Die Anglikaanse Kerk: 'n Perseel van 23vk roede, 128 vk voet waarop die kerk staan. Die kerk hou die kaart en transport van die perseel (2).  
<The Anglican Church: A plot of 23 x 128 square metre on which the church stands. The church holds the map and title-deed of the plot.> (, RI CS 50. File no. 4/1/3/R-6. Memorandum to the Minister of Prisons. 7/11/1974.)

**Number: 264**

**Name: Leper Graveyard**

**Description**

A small portion of the leper cemetery was maintained and fenced off by the prison authorities. This enclosure surrounds only those graves, which are easily identifiable and have formal headstones. In reality, the leper cemetery contains thousands of graves, most of them are unmarked. The sequence and patterns of burials are poorly understood. It is quite possible that the original VOC burial ground was the starting point of the lepers' cemetery, which grew very rapidly during the 19th and early 20th centuries. A site inspection has shown that the cemetery is extensive, occupying a large portion of land between the existing logistics offices extending as far as the prison and possibly as far as the Kramat. Waypoints 22 -38 represent the most outer identified graves of the leprosy settlement. Outlier graves have also been found in the vacant land to the south of the prison. The vast majority of graves are unmarked while many others are marked with simple shale headstones without any inscriptions. Apart from the small area set aside by Department of Correctional Services, most of the site is densely overgrown with alien vegetation. Despite this, it is still possible to distinguish formal paths and features that show that the cemetery was once well maintained and landscaped. The 1985 aerial photograph shows that a hedge (Manitoca) marked the outer boundary of the cemetery. Alien vegetation has since grown out of control spreading throughout the cemetery and its environs. {Note Tim Hart used a different site numbering system in his report. RIM 264 -> Tim Hart 22-38} (Hart, T., Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)

Burial ground that served that the leprosy settlement is extensive, however many graves have been "lost" or the headstones demolished by prison authorities. {Note different site IDs were used by Tim Hart. RIM 264 -> Tim Hart 22-38} (Hart, T., Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)

A small portion of the leper cemetery was maintained and fenced off by the prison authorities. This enclosure surrounds only those graves, which are easily identifiable and have formal headstones. In reality, the leper cemetery contains thousands of graves, most of them are unmarked. The sequence and patterns of burials are poorly understood. It is quite possible that the original VOC burial ground was the starting point of the leper cemetery, which grew very rapidly during the 19th and early 20th centuries. A site inspection has shown that the cemetery is extensive, occupying a large portion of land between the existing logistics offices extending. (Hart, T. Mr., Base Line Archaeological Assessment of Robben Island. ACO, 1998.)

Behind the male leper church is the vast leper cemetery. It is overgrown and a part of it is now covered by the security prison. There are a great number of graves and most of them had small headstones or wooden crosses. Every headstone had a small plate with the name and date of birth and death of the deceased on it. Many of the headstones have disappeared. In part of the cemetery there are a number of larger headstones with names of European lepers on them, mostly from about 1910. There are also several children's graves.





(Bassett, B.W. & Rudner, J., Robben Island: An annotated survey of buildings and sites of architectural, historical and contextual importance, and recommendations concerning a conservation policy for the island. January 1986. NMC)

### **Chronology**

Late 19th-early 20th century. (Hart, T., Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)  
20th century

### **Linkages**

Within the burial ground, pathways hidden under thick vegetation, linked aspects of the site. Murray Bay road connected the burial ground with the church. The burial ground served as a barrier between the male and female leprosy settlements. (Tim Hart, Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)

### **Significance**

A highly significant site where inhabitants of the island, who died isolated from their next of kin and homes on the mainland were laid to rest. (Tim Hart, Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)

### **Vulnerability**

Deterioration of grave markers, disturbance by vegetation, overgrown paths, un-marked burials disturbed by services excavations. (Tim Hart, Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)

### **Further research**

Archaeology baseline 1998? Is it the same? Then the date is correct. (Tim Hart, Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)  
Exhumation for research purposes is not encouraged unless under exceptional circumstances. Grave marker sequence study could indicate how the burial area was used, and who was buried where according to race class or other factors. (, )

**Number: 361**

**Name: Site of Female Leper Settlement, after 1887**

### **Description**

Archaeological remains of the Female Leprosy Settlement. 228: Foundations of a stone and cement building hidden in thick bush. A narrow structure with several rooms and a set of cement stairs added to one of the openings. 229: A pile of debris in thick bush that appears to be the collapsed remains of a stone building. Adjacent to it is a linear clearing in the bush, which may be an old road alignment. 230: Concrete foundations and building bases, many stone and cement building ruins, steel drums, old iron buckets, stoneware jar. 231: A shale and cement wall. 232: Many walls and bases, foundations of temporary structures. 233: Collapsed shale walls, remains of an antique galvanized bucket. {Note Tim Hart used a different site numbering system in his report. RIM 361 -> Tim Hart 228-233} (Hart, T., Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)

Collapsed remains of Female Leprosy Settlement demolished in 1930's, thereafter lost in thick bush. {Note different site IDs were used by Tim Hart. RIM 361 -> Tim Hart 228-233} (Hart, T., Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)

### **Chronology**

1885            Chaplain inspects the site for female lepers at Murray's Bay, at the end of the new burial ground. (, Chaplain's Diary 2 Oct 1885)  
1886            Chaplain and Dr Ross oppose female lepers being brought to RI because of the intercourse between male and female lepers. (, Chaplain's Diary, 13 March 1886)  
1886            The wards are described as 'wooden cottages' near Murray's Bay. (, RI Times, vol5 (60), 5 April 1886)  
1887            A hospital near the Waterfront had housed the female lepers for nearly twenty years before they were sent back to Robben Island in 1887. The female leper hospital was built near



- the present boardwalk in the late 1880s. By then, doctors were keen to separate the sexes both on and off the island because they were worried that too many leper children would be born if male and female lepers were kept together. Actually, leprosy is not that contagious at all, although a susceptibility to the disease can be inherited. The leper patients felt that it was unfair to restrict their social lives and were angry that men and Female leper wards at Murray's Bay marked on map (PWD 2/1/17) show a rectangular fenced structure, with two wards, Matron's quarters, kitchen, bathroom and well in middle of yard. (, Map (PWD 2/1/17))
- 1890
- 1891 Matters became worse when, in 1891, the law forced all people suffering from leprosy to leave their homes and enter 'leprosy hospitals' run by the government. At the Robben Island leprosy hospital, stricter rules now meant that visits to the mainland were prohibited, husbands and wives could not visit each other on the Island and marriages between lepers were forbidden. (, )
- 1894 Stronger fence constructed around female leper compound. (, (RI 206))
- 1895 Cottage for white lepers Mrs Steyn and Mrs Kitty Durr. Blinds for Mrs Loubser's paying quarters. (, (RI 206))
- 1900s? Unused well marked in front of the Female Leper Settlement, almost on the shore (Map of RI possibly by Elsa Witt or Jack Keet, MSC 35 Box 7(11))
- 1902 Three of 13 wood and iron huts from the Plague Department reallocated to children in the leper wards. (, RI 29, 17 March 1902)
- 1904 Female lepers want a RC chapel as they have nowhere to hold services. (, RI 64, 3 Feb 1904)
- 1908 Large refuse bins scattered around the leper wards and near the pondoks: bins used for bandages and vegetable peelings, and much rubbish surrounds them. Refuse and night soil removed to tip on NE corner of Island, where night soil and some bandages are thrown into the sea. The number of scrap iron and wood pondoks has increased greatly in recent years. There are now 84 inside the female leper compound, 60 outside it in the 'neutral area', and 80 behind the male wards. Those in the female compound and behind the male wards are clean, arranged in rows with hen roosts ('hokkies') at the back – the lepers keep about 4,000 hens in all. Female lepers keep 15 donkeys for drawing private trolleys between the male and female wards and the 'neutral area. (, MOH 348, folio L121G, 13
- 1913 A visitor to the Island, Charlotte Cameron, wrote in 1913, 'We visited the tin house of Maggie. ... She is a brown girl of about twenty. A peculiarity about Maggie is that she is engaged. Her intended was visiting her, a Jew leper brought from London Hospital where he had been for seven years. .... Of course Maggie and Turog will not be allowed to marry.' Attitudes towards lepers were often racist. Again our visitor: 'The lepers are all shades of brown, and of mixed race. I wonder if this loathsome disease comes from the mingling of blood! It might be possible. There were three European sufferers. Two of these were Dutch and the other, although white, an alien of some sort.' (Cameron, Charlotte, RI
- 1930 'Leprosy Hospital buildings ... are greatly in excess of present requirements.' Their condition is 'unsatisfactory from the point of saleability', their 'asset value is negligible', as they are old and [some are] built of wood and iron. They can be disinfected before removal and reused but 'considerable sentiment might easily be aroused' because of their use by lepers. The removal cost outweighs their resale cost or value – recommends destruction on the Island [by fire – (undated minute by Sec for Public Works, Conference on Closing Down RI, 6.11.1930, in Ross Collection)
- 1930 Some of the Leprosy Buildings are made of stone and could be used by Railways and Harbours if they take over the Island – this means that most of the buildings could be destroyed, but not all. (Willmot to Staten, 7 November 1930 in Ross Collection)
- 1931 The female leper hospital was destroyed when the leper patients were transferred to Westfort hospital in Pretoria in 1931. (, see CPSA (Archbishops) Robben Island File 1, 1930)
- 1892- circa 1931 Female lepers separated after legislation in 1892, and housed and guarded. The Female Leprosy Settlement was demolished circa 1931. (Hart, T., Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)



**Linkages**

No linkages are currently visible. Geographically close to Cornelia Battery and Rubbish Dump. (Tim Hart, Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)

**Significance**

A highly significant site in the history of the island as this is where female Lepers were accommodated. Furthermore, the archaeology of the Leprosy Settlement is extensive representing nearly every aspect of the leprosy settlement in a sub-surface context. This provides for a potential opportunity for public archaeology interpretive centers. (Tim Hart, Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)

**Vulnerability**

A very well hidden site in thick bush; is currently impacted by natural decay, especially tree growth and root movement. (Tim Hart, Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)

**Further research**

Well researched from documents, however sites is ideally suited to program of archaeological excavation, and follow up display interpretation. (Tim Hart, Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)

**Number: 435**

**Name: Leper Swimming Pool**

**Description**

A small walled dam popularly known as the "lepers pool". The dam is built of cement with shell inclusions, and in places, steel reinforcing. Although the dam takes the form of a tidal pool set among rocks on the shoreline, it is unlikely to have been influenced by seawater apart from at high spring tide and northwesterly storms. The dam was probably built to catch water from a fresh water seepage that flowed into the sea at this point. {Note Tim Hart used a different site numbering system in his report. RIM 435 -> Tim Hart 158} (Hart, T., Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)

Tradition has it those members of the Leprosy Settlement came to the dam to bathe. In reality the dam was probably built in an attempt to capture fresh water. {Note different site IDs were used by Tim Hart. RIM 435 -> Tim Hart 158} (Hart, T., Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)

**Chronology**

Late 19th-early 20th century. (Hart, T., Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)  
20th century

**Linkages**

The site is very close to Perimeter Road. (Tim Hart, Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)

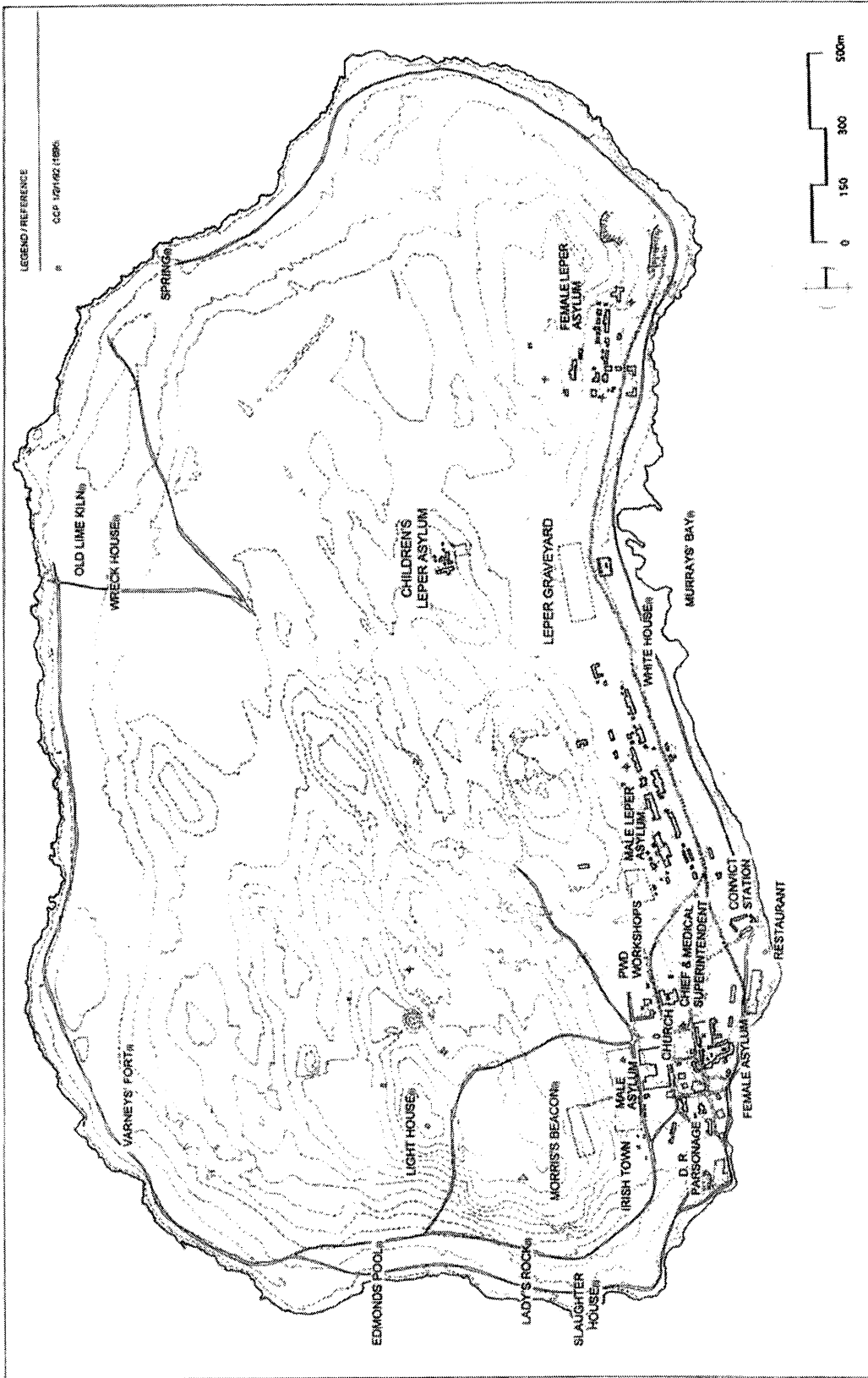
**Significance**

The sites significance lies mainly in its traditional association with the Leprosy Settlement. (Tim Hart, Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)

**Vulnerability**

Natural deterioration and weathering. (Tim Hart, Phase 1 survey, ACO 2001)





Hospital Period (1891 - 1930)

