

**MORTUARY SLAB AND TABLE, LOVEDAY INTERNMENT CAMP
WHATELEY ROAD, LOVEDAY**

Mortuary

The Loveday Internment Camp Mortuary was located on the southern side of Camp 14 and was most likely similar to the many other huts built at the Internment Camp, namely a gable-roofed, timber-framed, corrugated-iron-clad structure, with timber-framed windows and doors. The mortuary was built on a concrete slab featuring a central drainage point. A reinforced concrete table, also with inset drainage hole, was sited in the middle of and was an integral component of the slab.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

064831

Example of the huts at the Loveday Internment Camp Complex

Source: Australian War Memorial no. 064831

During the operation of the Loveday Internment Camp, 134 internees and 1 POW died while detained, while 2 POWs were killed during an escape attempt from the transport train on route to Loveday. Most of the deaths were a result of illness and infirmities due to old age that were likely exacerbated by internment, however, some were also due to suicide.¹

¹ Austral Archaeology (1992), *Loveday Internment Group Archaeological Survey*, (State Heritage Branch Department of Environment and Planning), p.15.

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The mortuary structure, like most of the less permanent buildings at the internment camp, was sold and relocated in the years immediately after the end of the war. The table was damaged in the c.1980s when it was broken at the base and pushed over. The current owner has stated that it was still *in situ* when they purchased the property, however, before moving into the property, the table was removed without their permission and relocated to the Cobdogla Irrigation and Steam Museum (the Museum) by Mrs Rosemary Gower. The table was placed in the grounds of the Museum without the permission of the Museum Committee, however, they now view it as a part of the Museum collection (pers. com.). The table has been broken in two as a result of its relocation from the mortuary slab (see image).



Mortuary Table, at Cobdogla Irrigation and Steam Museum

Source: DEW Files 30 October 2020



Concrete slab for the Mortuary, Loveday Internment Camp Complex, note central drainage point and additional drain to side of slab.

Source: DEW Files 29 October 2020

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The relationship between the Museum Committee and Mrs Gower has deteriorated over the years, and is now so acrimonious that the Museum Committee has changed the locks at the Museum to prevent Mrs Gower from accessing the site without authorisation. This action was taken to prevent Mrs Gower from relocating items to, taking items from, and interfering with the exhibits at the Museum.

Comparative Analysis – Mortuary Facilities

There are six State Heritage Places in the South Australian Heritage Register (the Register) that are mortuaries or contain a mortuary as a part of the listing and have facilities associated with the care of the dead prior to their burial. They are:

- Morgue - former Dead House Dwelling, Adelaide Botanic Garden North Terrace, Adelaide (SHP 13641)
- Old Mortuary, Glenside Hospital (former Parkside Lunatic Asylum), 226 Fullarton Road, Glenside (SHP 25054)
- Shop (former Morgue), 36 Main Street, Hahndorf (SHP 10506)
- Kadina Cemetery, including the Mortuary and Wall, Drain Road, Kadina (SHP 11165)
- Hillcrest Hospital (former Northfield Mental Hospital) - former Mortuary, Hilltop Drive, Oakden (SHP 25912)
- Torrens Island Quarantine Station Complex, including Jetty, Cemetery & Mortuary, Torrens Island, Port Adelaide (SHP 13931)



**Mortuary Torrens Island
Quarantine Station (SHP 13931)**

Dew Files 20 January 2021



**Mortuary table and slab, Torrens Island Quarantine
Station (SHP 13931)**

DEW Files 20 January 2021

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Mortuary Table Old Mortuary, Glenside Hospital (former Parkside Lunatic Asylum) (SHP 20254)

Source: Dew Files ND

Consideration of Heritage Values

There are currently two State Heritage Places associated with the Loveday Internment Camp Complex, a further site that is being considered by the Council for provisional entry in the Register at this meeting, and two cell blocks that are likely to meet a number of the criteria once a site visit can take place, these places are:

- Piggery Breeding Pens, Loveday Internment Camp Complex (SHP 26509), listed under criteria (a) and (b) and demonstrates some of the agricultural activities undertaken by detainees at the camp.
- Loveday Internment Camp Site – General Headquarters Site (SHP 13761) listed under the South Australian Heritage Act 1978, for its historical importance to the State and demonstrates Australian Army association with the camp.
- Detention Cell Block, Camp 10, Loveday Internment Camp Complex, being considered by the Council for listing at this meeting and most likely to fulfil criteria (a) and (b). Demonstrates detainee experiences of further incarceration.
- Western Detention Cell Block, Camp 14, Loveday Internment Camp Complex assessed by DASH Architects and recommended as fulfilling criteria (a), (b), and (f). Demonstrates detainee experiences of further incarceration.
- Eastern Detention Cell Block, Camp 14, Loveday Internment Camp Complex, not assessed but has a similar history to the Western Detention Cell Block, Camp 14 and is also likely to meet criteria (a), (b), and (f). Demonstrates detainee experiences of further incarceration.

The Loveday Internment Camp Complex is rare as it was the only purpose-built internment camp in South Australia during the Second World War and demonstrates a way of life, social customs and land use that is of exceptional historical interest. It is an important part of South Australia's wartime history. If the mortuary had remained intact, then the recommendation to the Council would have been to provisionally enter it on the Register under criterion (a), (b) and possibly (f). If the slab and table had remained together, it is also likely that the place would have met the threshold for State-heritage listing.

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However, the removal of the table from the slab has diminished the integrity of the place and created some additional factors that need to be taken into consideration. The slab and table are now two separate entities, and while the slab is fixed and can be listed as a State Heritage Place, the table is a moveable item and would need to be considered as an Object if it is to be State Heritage listed. It is highly questionable that a concrete slab demonstrates the experiences of the civilian internees and POWs of detainment in a Second World War internment camp or the care of the dead prior to burial (see comparison of other mortuaries listed as State Heritage Places in the Register).

On 1 August 2019, during consideration of the Loveday Internment Camp Complex Agenda paper, the Council considered the remains of each of the camps including structures (sullage treatment works), concrete slabs, piggery, and cell blocks, and approved the recommendation to assess only those places that retained more built fabric than a concrete slab. There are numerous concrete slabs spread across Loveday that were the footings for Internment Camp buildings, some are already State Heritage listed as a part of the General Headquarters site, however, most remain unlisted.

At the time, only a desktop assessment had taken place, and the aerial imagery available had insufficient resolution to show whether or not the mortuary table remained with its slab or if the table had been relocated to a museum as recommended in 1992 by Austral Archaeology. If it had been clear at that time that the table had been removed, the Council would not have progressed the mortuary slab to assessment.

Conclusion

It is recommended that the Mortuary slab does not have sufficient integrity to meet any of the s16 criteria in the *Heritage Places Act 1993* (the Act) for listing as a State Heritage Place.

Regarding consideration as a State Hhe Mortuary table can only be listed as an Object if it is intrinsically related to the heritage significance of a State Heritage Place. Only the Piggery Breeding Pens and if provisionally entered at this meeting, the Detention Cell Block, Camp 10 currently have Statements of Significance. The General Headquarters site was listed prior to the current Act and a Statement of Significance was not prepared for it at that time. While the Mortuary Table could be considered to be broadly related to the collective heritage significance of the other State Heritage Places from the Loveday Internment Camp Complex, it is not of sufficient quality or integrity to be considered intrinsically related, that is essential or belonging naturally to, the significance of any of those individual State Heritage Places.

Although the Mortuary Table is not being particularly well-appreciated or interpreted at the Cobdogla Irrigation and Steam Museum, it is still relatively safe and being cared for. In the future it could feature in an exhibition about the Loveday Internment Camp

Complex at the Museum or with the permission of the Museum Committee at the Barmera Visitor Centre in the Loveday Internment Camp Exhibition located there.



A small selection of the artefacts dug up by Leah Mudge.

Source: DEW Files 29 October 2020

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