



THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

**Report on Archaeological Survey of the
Fremantle Prison Women's Prison,
conducted September 2013.**

By Kate Robertson and Alyce Haast

University of Western Australia

Discipline of Archaeology

Fremantle Women's Prison Survey | 2013

Alyce Haast and Kate Robertson

INTRODUCTION

This is a preliminary report on the survey of the Women's Prison conducted during the University of Western Australia Undergraduate Field School in 2013. The survey assessed the state of the prison's floors in respect to the archaeological potential of underfloor deposits and also briefly recorded the presence of graffiti for future investigation.

HISTORY

The women's Prison complex was built in the 1850s as part of the Fremantle Convict Establishment and originally included a cookhouse, a bakehouse and a laundry. In 1886, the Convict Establishment became the Fremantle Prison. A wall was built around the service buildings and they were converted to accommodate women Prisoners. With population increase the Women's Prison was extended in the 1890s and again in the 1910s continued to be used as a women's Prison until 1970. From 1970 until the Prison was decommissioned in 1991, the area was used as an education and assessment centre. In 1996, Women's Prison was linked to the West Workshops to form an extensive art and design facility which was used as the Western Australia School of Art, Design and Media - TAFE until mid-2010. The premises is scheduled to be leased to YHA Australia and the City of Fremantle and Heritage Council of Western Australia have approved plans for the facility's converted into tourist accommodation.



Figure 1: Main Entrance to the Women's Prison

METHODS

It was hypothesised that the underfloor space of a Prison cell has the potential to act as a time capsule, preserving evidence of cell conditions, inmate activities and how inmates interacted with the material world to cope with Prison life. This hypothesis was tested on the main cell block of Fremantle Prison by Mein (2012) resulting in the development of a hierarchy of cells with highest potential for in floor deposits.

The survey of the Women's Prison for areas of high archaeological potential followed the methodology established by Mein (2012). Cells were surveyed for graffiti levels as well as the prevalence of original floorboards and ceilings in order to access the potential of archaeological remains to be found within the floor cavity and the archaeological potential of the graffiti present.

In Mein's assessment of the underfloor deposits in Fremantle Prison's Main Cell Block (2012), the presence of graffiti reduced the archaeological potential of a cell because the conservation priority already given to cells with significant graffiti restricted access to their underfloor deposits.

Cells within the Women's Prison do not have the same conservation plan as the Main Cell Block, therefore, in the Women's Prison survey Mein's methods were adapted to include graffiti and underfloor deposits as separate criteria for archaeological potential.

UNDERFLOOR DEPOSITS:

Areas of high archaeological potential for underfloor deposits were identified based on the following characteristics:

1. High percentage of original floorboards present
2. Presence of wide gaps between floorboards and/or holes in the boards
3. High probability of an original ceiling in corresponding cell below
4. Ability to remove floorboards with minimal damage to building fabric

GRAFFITI:

Although graffiti was considered, it was not the primary focus of this survey. As an initial assessment only minimal recording was conducted recording Graffiti on a five point scale ranging from no graffiti to very high graffiti. This scale was subsequently reduced to a four point scale ranging by combining the low and none categories of potential. An extensive analysis of graffiti within the prison will be the subject of a future targeted survey.

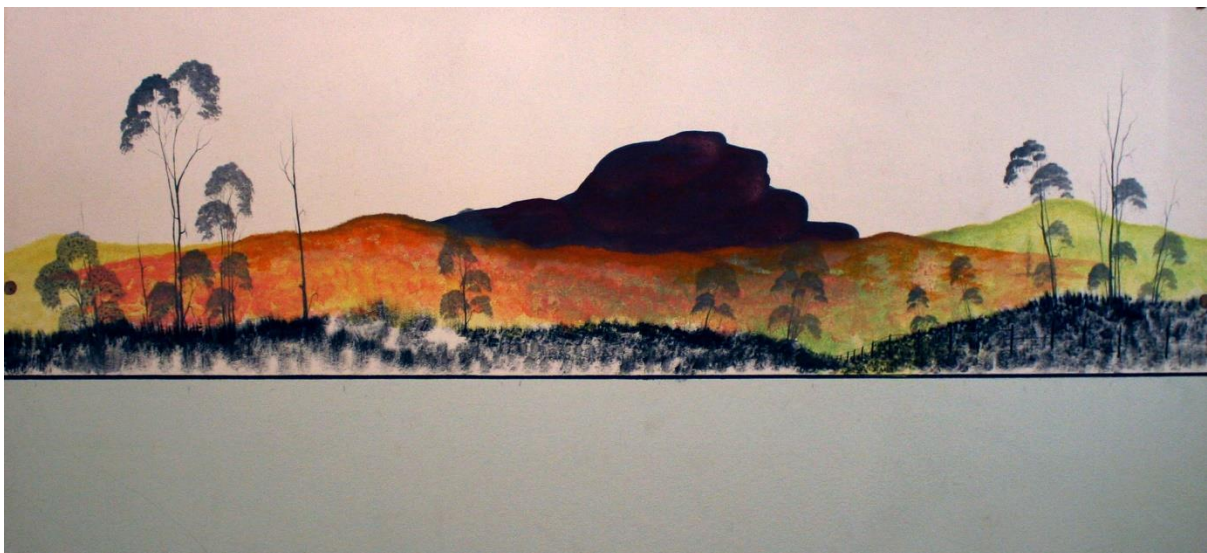


Figure 2: Example of Graffiti within the Prison's Cells

LIMITATIONS:

In comparison to the survey of the main cell block there were several limitations in the survey of the women's prison. As the survey was completed primarily as a training exercise with the 2013 UWA Archaeology Field School a large number of student recorders were used over the survey portion. This has led inevitably to a level of inconsistency within the recording standards. Based on this factor analysis has focused on highlighting areas of the highest potential on a broad scale as illustrated in the results and recommendations listed below.

Survey data recorded for 'F Cell blocks' were extremely ambiguous and as such omitted from the archaeological potential analysis. A general observation can be discerned from the data of an overall low significance however this acknowledgement should not be considered an official recommendation for archaeological potential.

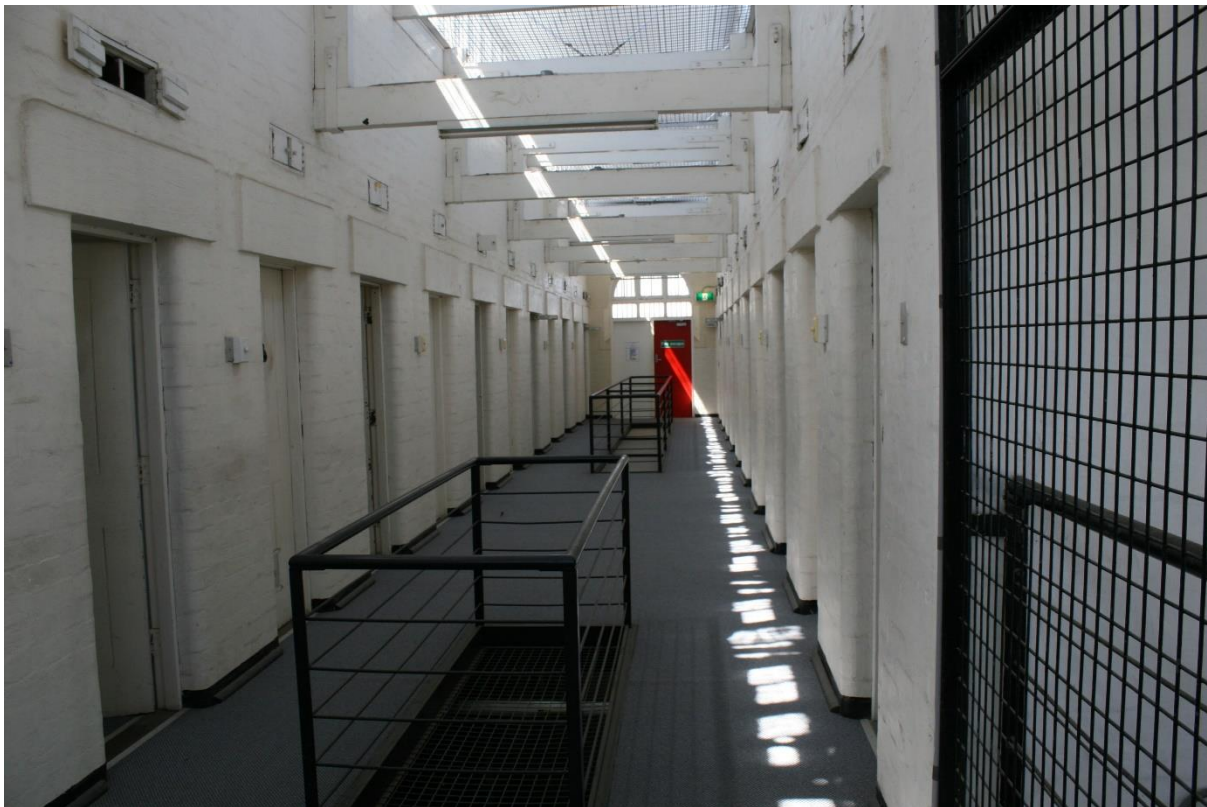


Figure 3: Division 3 – the Cells on the Left form the 'F Cell Block' that were excluded in this analysis

SURVEY RESULTS:

The survey recorded 52 rooms within the confines of the women's prison compound. 5 rooms were omitted due to data corruption or ambiguity and 7 rooms were not recorded during survey. The survey included a variety of rooms with an assortment of original uses including cells, hallways, offices and facilities. The majority of rooms reflect distinct use by either the staff or inmates of the prison with several common spaces in which both populations would have had significant access to and use. As such within these areas there is the potential for remains relating to both distinct entities as well as areas in

which both groups and the interaction between them is expected to have contributed significantly to any material culture that may be preserved within the underfloor deposits or graffiti.

Of the rooms surveyed by the field school teams 29 cells recorded graffiti of which 5 rooms were recorded as having high to very high levels based on significance or volume. Each of these rooms was designated as a cell and were found within the original (1850's) division of the women's prison. In addition to the significance of the graffiti in these cells the original floor boards were both exposed and consist of mostly intact original surfaces. This trend is seen in the majority of the original division with 7 of the 11 floor surfaces consisting of original or repaired timber boards. The other rooms were a combination of carpet and concrete resulting in low potential for archaeological deposits.

Overall the ceiling surfaces of the survey area reported an altered ceiling cavity resulting from the addition and removal of services ranging from ceiling fans to lights as well as vents. These changes would have impacted the integrity of the in floor cavity in the rooms above them and as such reduced the significance of deposits within the first floor rooms. All rooms on level one consisting of the entirety of division 3 as well as some of division 2 were carpeted and despite several cells recording significant gaps between skirting boards and the carpet the combination of carpeting and altered fabric of the ceiling surfaces in the cells immediately below result in the rooms within the first floor as having low archaeological potential.



Figure 4: The Original Division looking from the Main Entrance

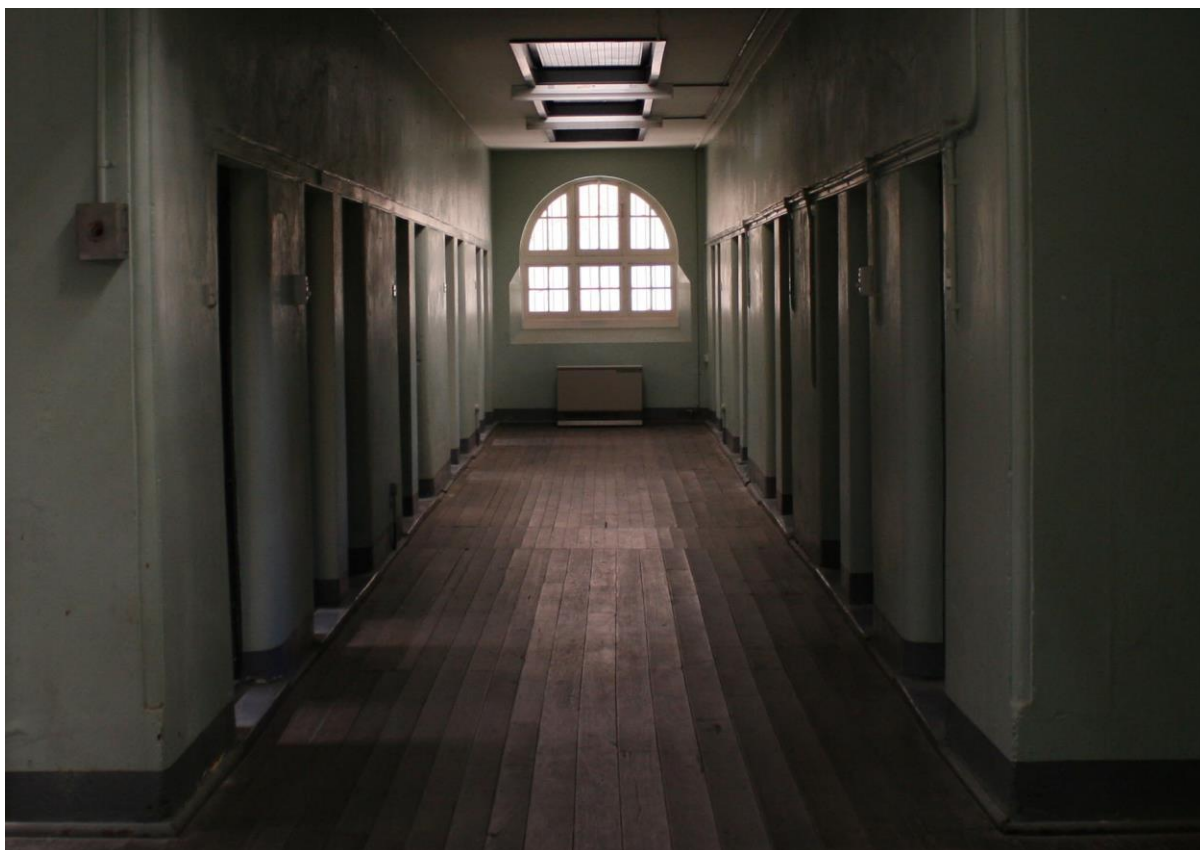


Figure 5: Division 2 Cells

The ground floor of the later construction phase contains the warden's quarters and the Portions of Division 2 cell block. The rooms as such are a combination of cells and office and administration spaces. The administration spaces are dominated by Carpet, Concrete and Linoleum. This is especially prevalent in the matrons quarters in which none of the floor surfaces are timber boards. The combination of low potential for below floor deposits and low graffiti coverage results in these rooms having very low archaeological potential. The cells in this area relating to division 2 consist of portions of original and replaced or repaired boards. The combination of high proportion of repair within the boards and absence of large gaps or holes within the boards limit the archaeological potential of the underfloor deposits in these areas in combination with the low level of graffiti resulting in an overall low archaeological potential for the cells in division 2.

This information combined allows a priority of significance to be formed using the following scale adapted from Mein (2012)

UNDER FLOOR DEPOSIT POTENTIAL

1. High Potential –Original division cells, specifically cells with high proportions (>60%) of original floorboards and/or highly significant graffiti.
2. Medium Potential –Rooms of division 2, unless otherwise stated, due to the later construction period of the building itself, or lower proportion of original boards (60-30%)

3. Low Potential – Rooms with low levels of original floor boards (<30%), or floor boards in poor condition.
4. Very Low Potential – Firstly areas relating to the wardens quarters and associated offices. These areas consist of inappropriate flooring for the development of in floor deposits. Secondly, rooms relating the 1st floor given the integrity of the ceiling spaces and inappropriate floor coverings
5. Unassessed Potential – Several rooms were unable to be accessed during the survey, while some rooms were accessed in an extremely ambiguous manner. These rooms were not included with in the assessment of potential and as such are shown as white and pink respectively within figures 6 to 8.

COMBINED POTENTIAL

Underfloor deposit potential was combined with levels of graffiti to provide an overall significance level of each room. Both features were weighted equally as so to not impose a value judgement of the significance of underfloor deposits compared to graffiti and combined in order to provide a general overview of areas of high significance on both scales.

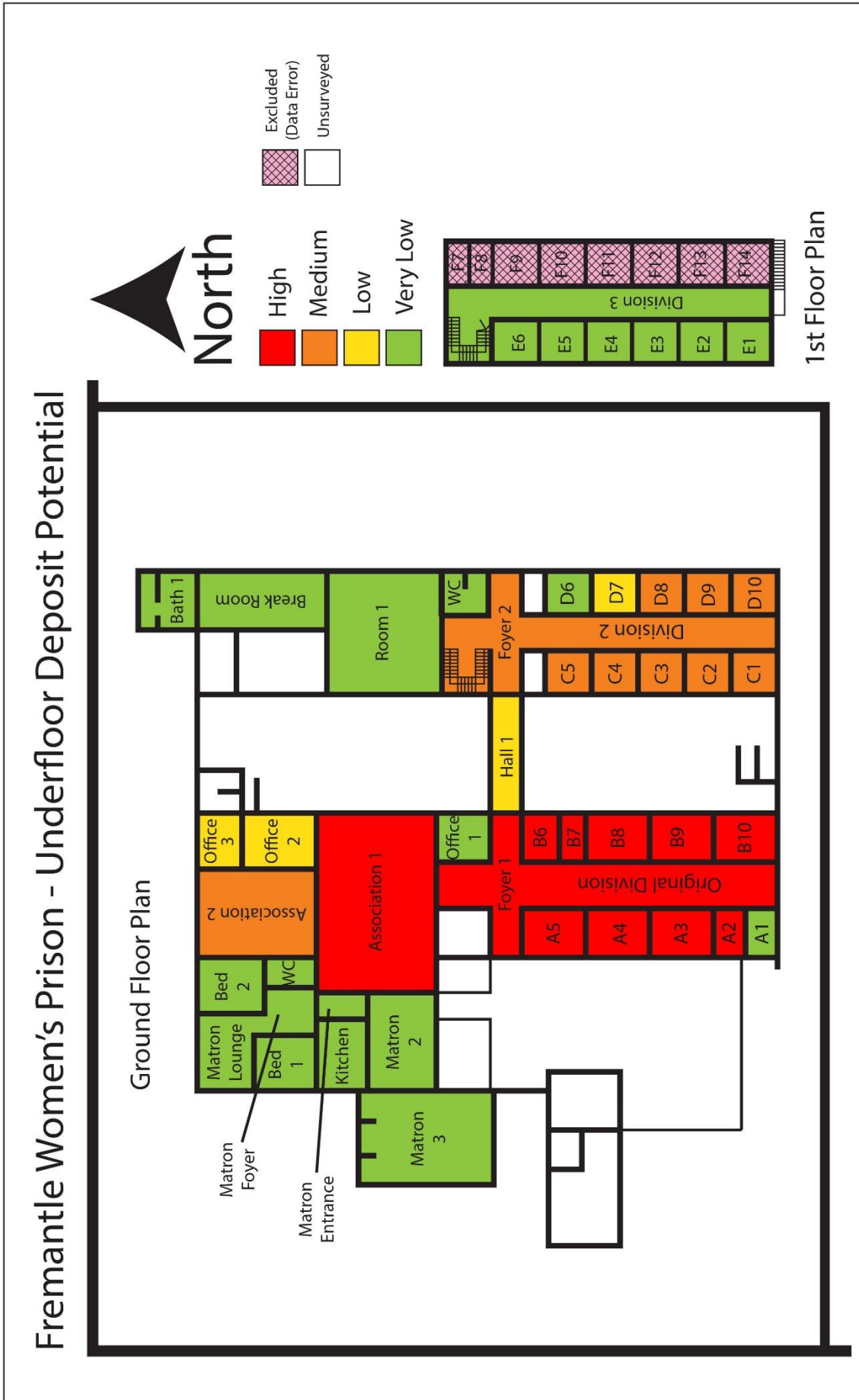


Figure 6: Floor Plan of the Fremantle Women's Prison Complex showing degrees of archaeological potential regarding underfloor deposits.

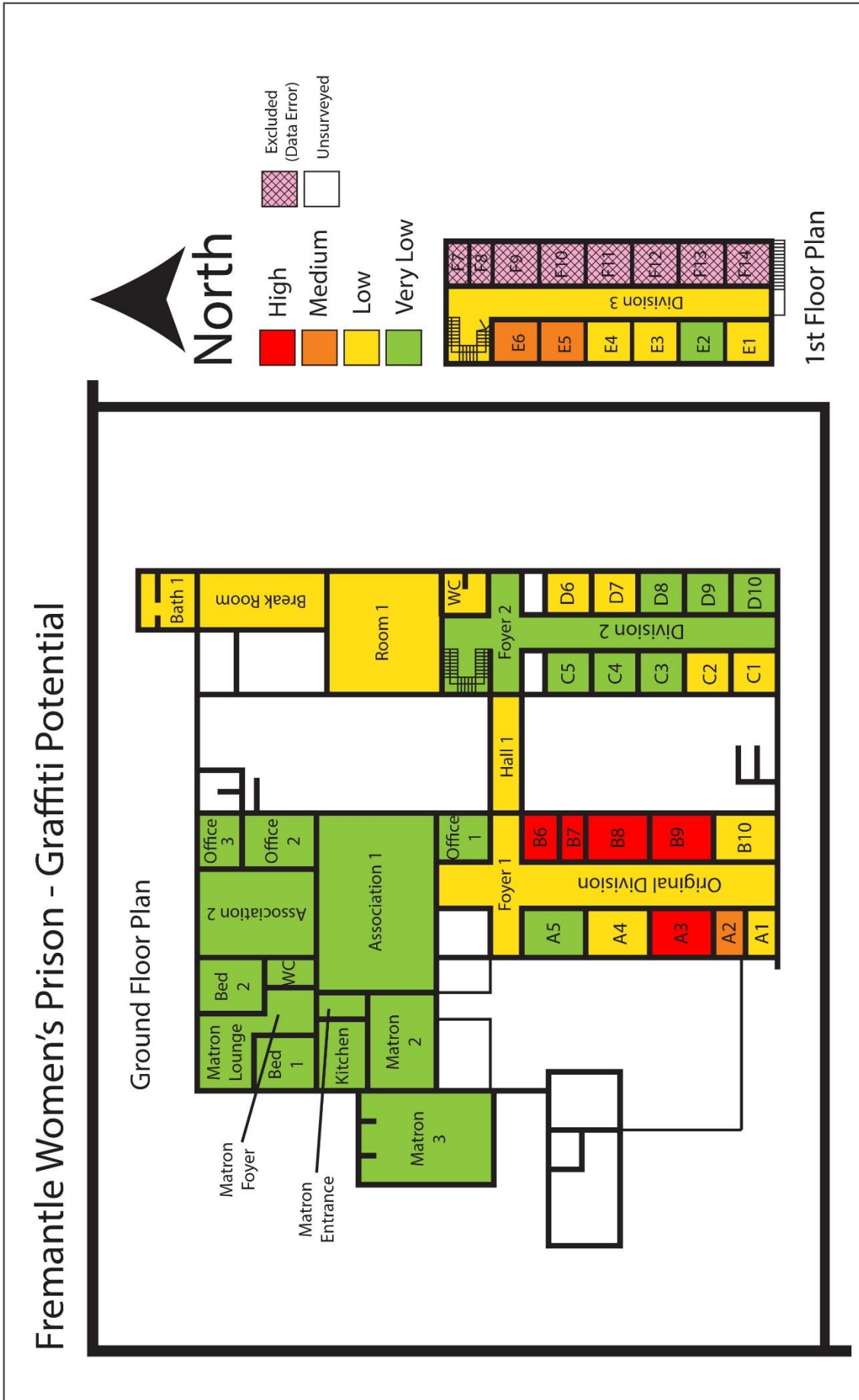


Figure 7: Floor Plan of the Fremantle Women's Prison Complex showing degrees of archaeological potential regarding graffiti.

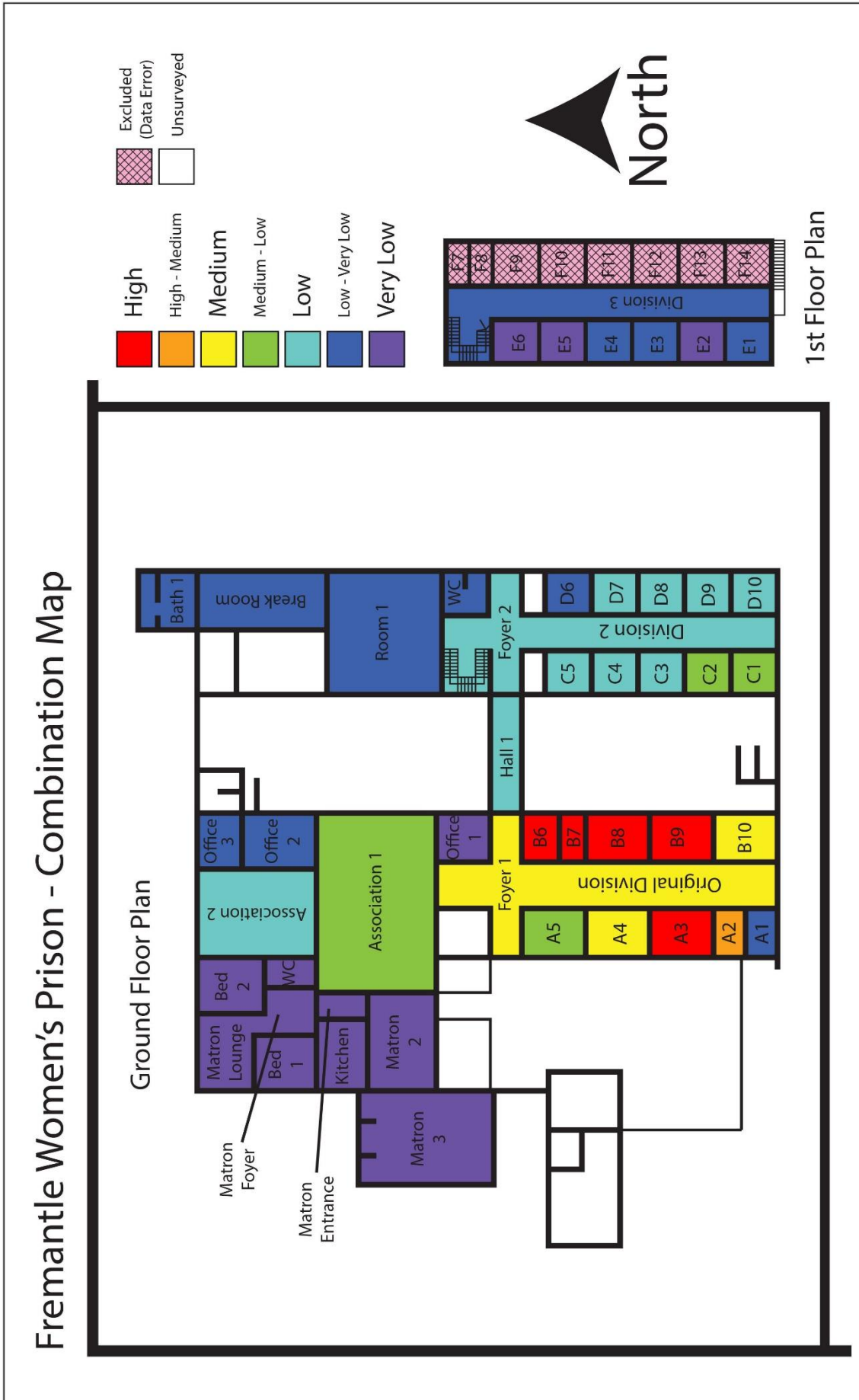


Figure 8: Floor Plan of the Fremantle Women's Prison Complex showing combined (underfloor deposits and graffiti) degrees of archaeological potential.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Areas with the highest archaeological potential for their underfloor deposits are the rooms with the original, intact, floorboards. The most critical of these are designated as high or medium significance floor plan in fig. 6. To maintain the integrity of these areas for future archaeological investigation it is recommended that:

- 1) No floorboards be removed or altered.
- 2) All floors be covered in a manner that preserves the fabric of the original floors and the integrity of the underfloor deposits. For example, carpet laid without being fixed to the boards beneath.
- 3) If any renovation/alteration is to be done in these areas, then the floors must be fully covered and protected.
- 4) If alteration of the original floors is necessary (i.e. for repairs or legal compliance) then surrounding floors should be protected during alteration processes and where possible the underfloor deposits immediately below the area should be maintained as they are.
- 5) Particular attention should be paid to protecting both the floorboards and under floor deposits of the original cell block. These deposits have a high level of integrity and capacity of provide evidence of 19th century occupation

Initial assessment of the graffiti has shown the wide variety of graffiti types with varying significance. While much of the graffiti within the prison was small and largely insignificant, some graffiti was highlighted within the survey as pertaining specifically to occupation throughout the use of the building as a women's prison and as such highly significant. It is recommended that this Graffiti, specifically the graffiti relating to rooms B7, E5, E2 and F13 be protected if possible. Secondly, it is recommended that a more comprehensive survey be undertaken to fully assess the potential of these items.

While there are no specific recommendations in relation to conservation for the areas of the women's prison considered to have low archaeological potential any development work is instructed to consult with the Fremantle Prison Conservation management plan (2010). While this site has had numerous compatible uses throughout its uses, measures should be taken as far as possible to ensure that further designated use of the site maintains the integrity and fabric of the original use as much as possible.

REFERENCES

Department of Treasury and Finance [DTF] - Building Management and Works Division 2010
Fremantle Prison Conservation and Management Plan.

Mein, E 2012, Inmate Coping Strategies in Fremantle Prison, Western Australia, Honours thesis,
University of Western Australia.

Cell Identifiers					Graffiti	Flooring				Ceiling			
Cell	Floor	Division	Size	Function	Significance	Type	Gaps	Holes/Breakage	Notes	Type	Features	Condition	Notes
A1	G	Original	S, O	Other	Low	Concrete				Plasterboard	V, S, O	Sm	
A2	G	Original	S, O	Cell	Med	Repaired	Medium		10% repaired	Timber	S	Sm	
A3	G	Original	D, E	Cell	Very High	Repaired			40% repaired, 2 repair patches N and S	Timber	S	Sm	
A4	G	Original	D, E	Cell	Low	Repaired				Timber	S	Sm	
A5	G	Original	D, E	Cell	None	Repaired				Plasterboard	S	Sm	
Assc 1	G			Other	None	Repaired	Wide	Medium	20% replaced to near east door		V, S		No ceiling only rafters, served as common room
Assc 2	G			Other	None	Replaced Boards	Narrow	Small	2 cut out service squares		S		No Ceiling only rafters
B10	G	Original	D, O	Office	Low	Repaired				Timber	S	Sm	
B6	G	Original	S, O	Cell	High	Repaired	Wide	Large	10% Repaired	Removed			Ceiling removed
B7	G	Original	S, O	Cell	High	Repaired	Wide	Medium	5% Repaired	Timber	S	Sm	Reinforcements
B8	G	Original	D, E		High	Replaced				Timber	S	Sm	
B9	G	Original	D, E	Cell	Very High	Repaired	Flush		Trap door	Timber	S	Sm	Water damage
Bathroom	G	2		Other	Low	Concrete/Tiles			Raised part of slab potential shower		S		Termite damage to rafters

Break Room	G	2		Other	Low	Carpet/ Lino			Skirting boards	Plasterboard	V, S		With Batons and Cornices
C1	G	2	D, E	Cell	Low	Repaired	Flush	Small	15% repaired, worn edge, room centre	Trowel		Sm	
C2	G	2	D, E	Cell	Low	Repaired	Flush	Small	10% repaired	Trowel	S	Sm	
C3	G	2	D, E	Cell	None	Repaired	None	None	15% repaired	Trowel	S	Sm	Stepped area from previous wall
C4	G	2	D, E	Cell	None	Replaced	Flush		Possible water damage	Trowel	S	Sm	
C5	G	2	S, O	Cell	None	Original	Flush	Small	Worn edge, against wall	Trowel	S	Sm	
Corridor	1	3	-	Hallway	Low	Carpet	Med				V,S		No Ceiling
D10	G	2	D, E	Cell	None			Small	Sharp Break/ Room Centre	Trowel	S	Sm	Stepped area from previous wall
D6	G	2	S, O	Other	Low	Lino				Timber	S	Sm	
D7	G	2	D, E	Cell	Low	Repaired	Flush	Large	75% Repaired	Timber/ Trowel	S	Sm	
D8	G	2	D, E		None	Repaired	Medium		10% repaired	Trowel	S	Sm	No stepped area where wall was previous
D9	G	2	D, E	Cell	None	Replaced	Flush	Large	Cut Marks NE corner	Trowel	S	Sm	Stepped area from previous wall
E1	1	3	D, E	Dining	Low	Carpet		Small	Skirting board broken at edge	Trowel	V,S	Sm,F, H	Boarded at previous fan location
E2	1	3	D, E	Office	None	Carpet	Narrow	Small		CGI	V,S	Sm, H	With Plaster
E3	1	3	D, E	Cell	Low	Carpet	Wide	Small	Against Doorway	CGI	V,S	H	Cracking around edge
E4	1	3	D, E	Cell	Low	Carpet	Med	Small	Against Doorway	CGI	V,S	H, F,	Cracking around edge, water damage

E5	1	3	D, E	Cell	Med	Carpet	Med	Small	Worn edge	CGI	V, S	F	Cracked ceiling
E6	1	3	S, O	Cell	Med	Carpet	Med		Very loose	CGI	V,S	F, H	
F1	1	3	D, E	Cell	None	Carpet				CGI	S	F	Cracks between wall and ceiling
F2	1	3	D, E	Cell	Low	Carpet				CGI	S		Some cracks on east wall
F3	1	3	D, E	Cell	Low	Carpet					S	F	Some flaking at ceiling/ wall joint
F4	1	3	D, E	Cell	None	Carpet				CGI	S	F	Cracks In walls on east and west side
F5	1	3	D, E	Cell	None	Carpet				CGI	V, S	Sm	Cracks East/West wall around lintels
Foyer 1	G	Original			Low	Repaired	Wide	Large	25% Repaired, Loose boards	None	S		Reasonably good condition
Foyer 2	G	2		Other	None	Repaired	Flush	Small	85% repaired	Timber/ Trowel		Sm	
Hall	G	2		Other	None	Repaired	Narrow		Breakage against wall	Timber/ Trowel	V, S	Sm	
Matron 2	G			Other	None	Carpet/ Concrete					S		Only roof
Matron 3	G			Other	None	Carpet			Concrete floor beneath carpet	Plasterboard	S	Sm	Crossbeams exposed filled with plasterboard
Matrons Bedroom 1	G		O	Other	None	Carpet				Plasterboard	S	Sm, Sa	Some long cracks
Matrons Bedroom 2	G			Other	None	Carpet				Plasterboard	S, O	Sm	Small hole near SW corner
Matrons Entrance	G			Other	None	Carpet/Timber			Hole against SW Wall Plaster skirting board	Skylight	S	Sm	Shaft to skylight is cloud in CGI
Matrons kitchen	G			Other	None	Lino/ Concrete			Original Floor covered	Plasterboard	V,S, O	Sm, F	Water damage SW corner

Matrons lounge	G			Office	None	Carpet/ Hearth concrete				Plasterboard	V, S		Heat damage on plasterboard
Office 1	G	Original	O		None	Carpet				Other	V,S	Sm	
Office 2	G			Office	None	Carpet			Skirting boards	Plasterboard	S	Sm, Sa	Plasterboard with batons
Office 3	G			Office	None	Carpet			Skirting boards	Plasterboard	S	Sm	Small hole near SE corner
Room 1	G	2		Other	Low	Carpet			Skirting board cut out at east wall	Plasterboard	S	Sm	
Toilet - F	G	2		Other	Low	Lino			Drains present	Timber/Trowel	S	Sa	
Toilet - M	G	2		Other	Low	Replaced	Flush	Small	Hole is drain	Timber/ Trowel		Sm	

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