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New security system to stop vandals wrecking Broome cemetery

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Fed up with repeated attacks on Broome's historic Japanese cemetery, the town's Shire Council has spent more than \$25,000 on a sophisticated CCTV system to catch would-be offenders in the act.

Many of the pioneers of the Broome pearling industry are buried in the heritage-listed Japanese, Chinese and Muslim parts of the cemetery, which is highly valued by locals and tourists alike for its cultural and aesthetic appeal.

However, the Japanese section — the last resting place of the brave Japanese pearl divers lost to occupational hazards such as the bends and inle-

ment weather — has sustained repeated attacks, costing the Broome community thousands of dollars in repairs.

Most recently, security guards were appointed and the cemetery gates locked after its headstones were damaged and papered with anti-Japanese slogans following the furore over Broome's sister-city relationship with the Japanese town of Taiji, where an annual dolphin slaughter is carried out each year.

In another major attack in 2005, 36 headstones were kicked over and 48 damaged. A year later, 133 headstones — including some just replaced — were again smashed.

Pearl Hamaguchi, whose husband

was buried in the Japanese cemetery and grandmother and grandfather, one of the first pearlers, in the Chinese part, said she couldn't believe the mentality of people who would damage such a sacred and important place. She said the CCTV system was long overdue.

"It's 150 years of history — it's something significant for Broome," she said. "We were taught by our parents that a cemetery is reverent and never even walked over graves."

The new, 24-hour system has sweeping night vision cameras which transmit footage wirelessly to a secure offsite location. The cemetery will also be checked weekly by shire workers for evidence of vandalism.



New security: Headstones damaged by vandals at Broome's Japanese cemetery.