

# John Septimus Roe



John Septimus  
Roe, 1824

John Septimus Roe, the first surveyor-general in Western Australia, was born in 1797. John Septimus Roe was the son of a minister, the Reverend James Roe, Vicar of the Newbury Parish Church in England.

Roe arrived in Western Australia on 1 June 1829 aboard the *Parmelia*. His first task in the new colony was to take preliminary surveys of the harbour, river and surrounding land. From these surveys he recommended that the area currently known as Perth be the site for the capital and Fremantle the port. Roe also had responsibility for planning the layout of the two towns.

Roe was involved in a large number of explorations throughout the state of Western Australia including the following:

- The Swan and Canning Rivers
- The country around the Leschenault, Collie, Ferguson and Preston Rivers
- Cape Naturaliste and Geographe Bay
- The area around Albany, Doubtful Island Bay, Torbay, Wilsons Inlet and Kojonup
- Pinjarra and Bunbury
- The Hay and Sleeman Rivers
- The Great Southern Expedition in October and November 1835 where the country between Perth and Albany was explored by two different routes in order to decide the best route between the two towns
- The discovery and initial survey of the Peel Harbour and Warnbro Sound

He also established the historic Sandalford Winery in the Swan Valley which is still in existence today.

Roe also inspired a number of people to explore Western Australia such as John Forrest, Robert Dale and Francis Gregory which has earned him the title of 'father of Australian explorers' by many.



John Septimus  
Roe, 1870

The conservation of Kings Park can initially be attributed to Roe as he refused requests to cut down timber below Mt Eliza as early as December 1830. Roe's successors, Malcolm Fraser and John Forrest, were the most instrumental in establishing Kings Park but he can be attributed as initially setting aside the park.

John Septimus Roe retired in 1871 at age 73 after serving the colony for over 57 years. He died on 28 May 1878, five years after his retirement.

Roe has been used to name a wide range of things in Western Australia including the following:

- Mount Roe
- The Roe River
- The Roe Highway
- Roe poison, a poisonous weed found near Muntadgin. Named after Roe as he had previously found it near York.
- Roe Street, Perth



John Septimus  
Roe, 1850s

Many of Roe's descendants are still living in Western Australia and a statue to commemorate Roe's contribution to Western Australia is situated on the corner of Victoria Avenue and Adelaide Terrace in Perth.