



HISTORY WEST™

PUBLISHED BY THE ROYAL WESTERN AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

December 2022



**We wish you joyful festivities
and a wonderful summertime!**



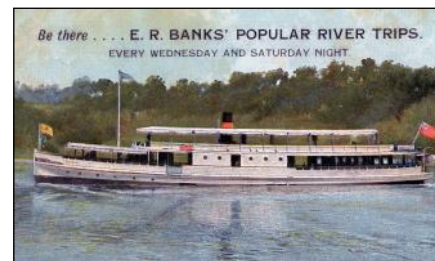
Our thanks to everyone who helped with *History West* in 2022



Crawley Baths, 1910s. P2016.195



Cottesloe Beach & Jetty 1912. P1999.4846



SS *Zephyr* running on Swan River, between Fremantle & Perth, 1910s. P2016.69



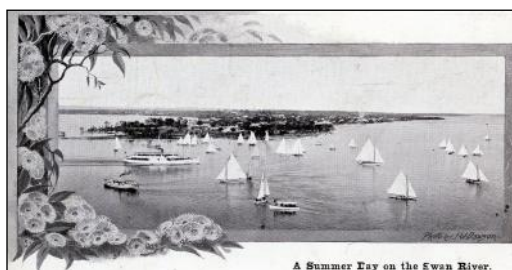
Gibson Sweet factory – Picnic 1889.
P1999.1321



Picnic, Canning Bridge 1919.
P2014.455



Boobaroo Band, North Dandalup
1957. P2014.228



A Summer Day on the Swan 1910s. P2013.2429

**These photographs of happy
occasions in Western
Australia's past are just a few
in the Society's collection**

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The Society's new Patron

**His Excellency the Hon. Chris Dawson
APM, Governor of Western Australia**



We are delighted that WA's new Governor has agreed to be Patron of the RWAHS. The Dawson family has been part of WA since the Governor's great-great-grandparents, Elijah and Anne Dawson, arrived in the Swan River Colony in 1830. Great-great-grandson Christopher John Dawson APM was educated at Perth Modern School before joining the WA

Police Force in 1976, serving for 46 years in law enforcement. He worked in country and metropolitan positions, criminal investigation, training and senior roles, and was awarded the Australian Police Medal for distinguished service in 2002. After ten years as Deputy Commissioner, he moved to a national role in Canberra (2014-17) as Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Crime Commission, amalgamating several agencies into the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission. He also worked as Director of the Australian Institute of Criminology during this period. He was appointed Commissioner of the WA Police Force in August 2017, serving until July 2022. During the period of the COVID-19 global pandemic, Commissioner Dawson coordinated the state of emergency and the vaccine program. He is married to Darrilyn Dawson, education consultant, with two married children and five grandchildren.

Lennie McCall and Helen Henderson leave Council

At the Society's recent AGM we saw the close of two dedicated Councillors' long service to the Society's Council. Both Lennie McCall and Helen Henderson decided not to re-nominate for Council, that it was time to retire from the active roles they have played in running the Society over the last three decades. This is therefore a sad occasion but also one where we say — **thank you so much for everything you have done!**

In her professional life **Lennie McCall** was a librarian, and from 1995 to 1998 Director of the J S Battye Library of WA History. She brought her professional skills as well as her vast network of friends, colleagues and contacts to help advance the Society. Lennie has been an active member of the Society for half a century, joining in 1973 and becoming a Councillor in 1991. From 1992 to the present (excluding 1998) she has been a Vice-President, and was Chair of Council for most of that time. She has led the Society and helped guide us in making essential changes to keep



the Society prospering. Her contribution to the forward planning, management and promotion of the Society has been substantial. Finance has always been a challenge and in 1991 Lennie organised the first comprehensive second-hand book sale as a fundraiser. She was one of the two RWAHS delegates to the Federation of Australian Historical Societies (2001-10) and its Honorary Secretary (2003-08). She was made an Honorary Life Member of the RWAHS in 2008 and a Fellow in 2011.

Helen Henderson gained a doctorate in Anthropology from UWA in 1981 and had a successful professional career in the WA Health Dept from which she retired in 1997. She joined the Society in 1993 and has been a member of Council continuously since 1996, for most of that time serving as Vice-Chairperson of Council and Convenor of the Technology Committee. The Society has greatly benefitted from Helen's exceptional capacity to draft effective business, technology and strategic plans as well as grant applications. She has also played a pre-eminent role in the Federation of Australian Historical Societies, of which she was President (2004-08), having been Vice-President (2002-04). She has also been the delegate for the RWAHS since 2001. Helen was made a Fellow of the Society in 2013. With her husband Bill, she published a fine biography of the 19th century botanical collector Augustus Frederick Oldfield.

We will miss their counsel and their commitment and enormous hard work but you can expect to meet them at the Society for many more years!

A DATE TO SAVE IN YOUR 2023 DIARY

A special fundraising function at Samson's Cellars in Fremantle courtesy of the family

26 March 2023 5-8 pm

Sunday Supper at Samson Cellars with old Fremantle films, Samson family museum – archives and memorabilia in the 1850s building. Then enjoy a supper spread with Plantagenet wines in the great atmosphere of the cellars.

Only available to first 60 persons.
Booking and other details in the Jan/Feb newsletter.

Congratulations to our new Hon. Life Members

The Society's AGM was delighted to confer honorary life memberships on four of our most active and long-serving volunteers without whom the Society's life would be much depleted. *History West* warmly thanks these wonderful members!



Evalyn Beaumont joined the Society in 2006 and has worked continuously in the Society's Library as *de facto* deputy librarian. She was responsible for cataloguing and digitising a significant proportion of the Library's historical

photographs, a project which took many years to complete. She also played an important role in the original digitising of the Library collection and again in the transfer of records from the original system – Mosaic – to a new online system – Collective Access.



Sally Anne Hasluck has taken an invaluable leadership role in the Society's life for a decade, dedicating much of her time to working for us. She has served as President (2014-2016) and Immediate Past President (2016-2019), and then as Vice-President (2019 to the

present). To all these positions Sally Anne has brought her high community profile, particularly in museum practice, as well as her lifetime of knowledge and wisdom in the Australian cultural world. She provides support for the work of the museum team in particular. In her most recent role initiating and convening the community-focused History West Planning Committee Sally Anne's leadership and dedication have been crucial. She recognises that public outreach is essential both for the Society's goal of building new premises and for its survival and growth in the 21st century. Sally Anne plays a key role in our continuing life.



Valerie Krantz joined the Society in 2004 and has been a member of the Library team from this time. Val took responsibility for selection and ordering new publications and has used her library skills and knowledge of WA history to keep the

Library abreast of publications on WA history. This has ensured that a quality collection has been maintained on a limited budget. Val has also made a

significant contribution to the information service provided by the Library, using her knowledge of WA history and her library information and research skills. She has also contributed numerous interesting articles to *History West*. The Society and, in particular, the Library have benefitted greatly from Val's wisdom and experience in planning, problem-solving and daily Library operation.



Hilaire Natt joined the Society in 2003 and has made important contributions to the Society, and the Library in particular. Hilaire has been responsible for the Mystery Photo project that advertises photographs in the collection which cannot

be identified. The project has brought some success in allowing us to tell these stories and add some provenance to these photographs in our collection. She is also a skilled writer who has contributed eighteen interesting articles to the Society's newsletter, *History West*. In 2019 she joined the Writing Group and has enjoyed the group's involvement in bringing two of her historical research projects to fruition. Hilaire has contributed to the Society's exhibitions in recent years, selecting and documenting material from the Library. In addition to her contribution to the Society and the Library with all the above, we have all valued Hilaire's ability to come up with innovative solutions to many of the problems which we have faced over the years.

Our new Treasurer: Ms Klara Haselhurst BEc MPA CG(affiliated)



A number of you may not yet have met Klara. We are so lucky to have her join us and welcome her most warmly! Klara is re-assessing all aspects of the Society's finances, ensuring that all financial reporting is up to the minute and introducing

new processes to enable us to function better and more economically in an online world. Klara explains that we must thank her father for her voluntary work with us:

I was introduced to the Society by my late father Howard who was an avid reader of history books. I developed an interest in history during my school years at PLC and later from traveling. As an experienced treasurer, with a Masters in Accounting I am thrilled to take on the role, along with the many wonderful people who contribute and work with the committees to manage the Society.

Welcome Klara!

Touring York

Georgina Wigley, Convenor Tours & Events



A perfect spring day greeted 45 lively participants as they boarded the bus bound for York. The historic town of York in the Avon Valley is located on land originally inhabited by the Ballardong Nyungar people. For millennia the Ballardong people used fire as a land management tool to minimise undergrowth and promote grass growth to provide grazing for kangaroos and other animals they hunted for food. The first Europeans to sight this land enthused over its 'excellent pasture' and 'park-like' landscape. Settlement followed rapidly and by 1835 York townsite was established.

Trade in sheep, wheat and sandalwood fuelled the early growth of York. The opening of the rail link between York and Guildford in 1885 was a further stimulus. However it was the 1888 discovery of gold at Southern Cross that propelled rapid population growth. As York was the closest railhead to Southern Cross, prospectors flocked to the town, ready to walk or ride in a coach to stake their claim. A building flurry followed and manufacturing outlets mushroomed to service the miners. Following more gold discoveries, the colonial government proposed that a railway be built from Perth to Southern Cross. This proposal sparked a heated debate between the ruling elites of York and Northam as whichever town won the railhead would prosper at the expense of the other. Skilful manoeuvring saw Northam triumph, its success partly attributable to George Throssell's close friendship with the Premier Sir John Forrest and the fact that the outspoken S H Parker of York was Forrest's major leadership rival. Northam became a major manufacturing centre for the goldfields whilst York declined. York's streetscape largely remained 19th century. Today its architectural treasures are well preserved and an important drawcard for visitors. Maybe in the long run York was victorious after all?

Before exploring York's built heritage the tour group was introduced to the diversity of plants native to York and the wheatbelt. Within the confines of what was once a clay pit, the Bushland Garden is home to over 300 species. York's Bushland Garden is maintained by a team of dedicated volunteers under the auspices of the Wildflower Society of WA. Volunteers warmly welcomed us. Roger Underwood's talk focused on the Avon River. The Avon's catchment is huge, covering over 120,000 sq km. In its original state the Avon consisted of braided channels interspersed with deep pools. It was part of the Ballardong people's spiritual world and a rich source of food. However European settlement, with its focus on land clearing and grazing, precipitated change along the river's banks and catchment area and the once balanced ecosystem was disrupted. The Avon's water became saline, siltation occurred and flooding increased leading to successive governments trying to 'train' the river. The effort continues.

Our next stop was the recently refurbished Residency Museum located in a 1850s heritage building. Originally housing the Superintendent of the Convict Depot, later it became home to a succession of Resident Magistrates and later still was part of the Old York Hospital. By 1972 it was the municipal museum run by the Shire with the assistance of volunteers. The exhibitions within this museum are artfully arranged and provided our tour group with detailed insights into York's varied past. The exuberant commentary from our guide added a further dimension to the experience. He was keen to show the ebony and ivory beauty tools used by 19th century women to apply boiled mutton fat and lemon to their faces and arms. One can only imagine what less wealthy women used!

Lunch was at the Castle Hotel built in 1853 using convict labour. In 1905 a two-storeyed Federation-style wing was added. As we lunched, Pamela Statham Drew talked about the Avon Valley's sandalwood. Today, grown

in plantations, it still features in York's economy. Basil Twine also entertained the group with colourful stories of York personalities drawn from his memories of growing up there.

After a hearty country-style lunch participants could select to visit one or more of York's many attractions depending on their interests. Many opted for the majestic Town Hall, built in 1911, to view the York Society's 2022 exhibition of art and craft entries, including awardees. Another popular activity was the demonstration of woollen sock manufacture at the Sock Factory whilst others explored York's architectural treasures using the booklet prepared by Ron Bodycoat. There is so much to do in York.

Too soon we were back on the bus ready to share our impressions of the day. As one participant commented, 'Roll on the next trip please'.

Community Talks

Hiding in the records: a tale of two convicts

Bevan Carter

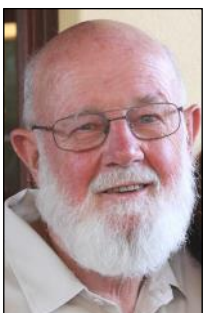
Bevan entertained his audience with the life stories of two very dissimilar Western Australian convicts — William Lyon and John Goodenough.



Courtesy Lyon family

subject, and fought and won a battle for his daughters to be educated at the local boys' school because he believed it offered a better education than did the local girls' school. He died aged 94 in 1924 to warm obituaries and without mention that he had arrived as a convict. What was hidden in the records was the fact that he is recorded in the convict records as William Lyon White who arrived in WA on the *Sea Park*, under the name William White. He had been convicted, aged 18, of house breaking and spent three years on a hulk at Woolwich before transportation. He resumed his real name, William Lyon, at Northam, enabling him to avoid the convict stigma. And, of course, he led a respectable life as well!

John Williams alias John Goodenough from Surrey was a very different character! He was a habitual burglar 'smooth spoken and artful' who managed to be acquitted on numerous occasions. He continued to rob in the colony and then fled from the Vasse in a whaling ship, returned to England and resumed life as a 'notorious burglar'. Charged again, he insisted his name be recorded as John Smith and, under that name, was sentenced to 14 years gaol. As John Smith he is re-transported to WA in 1867, escaped Fremantle Prison a second time, this time disguised as a warder. He went back to Williams and in 1867 was thought to have drowned in the Murray River. But some are not quite sure!



For Bevan and other researchers, finding the men who have hidden in the records is a fascinating challenge.

Lyon arrived in Northam as a 25 year old and lived there for the rest of his life. He prospered and became well respected in the local community, involved in the Mechanics Institute and the temperance movement. He felt strongly about good education for girls, writing 'letters to the editor' on the

Life After Death: Chinese burials at the East Perth Cemeteries

Kaylene Poon



Kaylene is a third-generation Chinese Australian and has been documenting early Chinese history in WA since 1986. She recalled for her audience her memories of growing up in her parents' shop in Northbridge amid Chinese life in the city.

Old Chinese men who had been market gardeners, hawkers, laundrymen, tradesmen and such like gathered there for quiet get-togethers and Kaylene's parents assisted them with their business transactions and, most importantly, with the necessary arrangements to return home to China to their families in old age.



Chinese memorial, EPC 1994.

In 1994 the Chung Wah Association erected a monument at the East Perth Cemeteries dedicated to all Chinese burials in WA, whilst the RWAHS placed a plaque closer to the burials' site in Bronte St. Interest by the Chinese in the cemetery waned until 2019 when the new owners of the Bronte St site contacted Kaylene to discuss the existence of Chinese records. Working with the Metropolitan Cemetery Board the local Chinese

community rallied to ensure the Chinese burials were re-interred with traditional customs observed. The findings of the exhumation process and of the archaeologists have revealed new details previously unknown, and now research is ongoing to solve some of these anomalies. From the Chinese viewpoint the community has been very happy to see that Chinese burials have finally been given the respect not received in the past.

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Stories from the Storerooms

The Mysterious Pilgrim Bottles

Dr Dorothy Erickson



MA1949.11 k & l

The Society owns a pair of painted pilgrim bottles donated by Annette Agnes Hope née Ford (1861-1955) whose parents arrived on the *Mary Harrison* in 1862. We do not know whether the family brought these bottles with them or acquired them in WA. They are vessels with a body varying from an almost full circle, flattened, to a pear shape with a short neck, a spreading foot, and, generally, two loops on the shoulders. A chain or a cord was passed through the loops to carry the bottle or hold the stopper in place. They are fascinating decorative objects the form of which has a long history.

Pilgrim bottles date to ancient Roman times in the West and to seventh century China in the East. They were made in a wide range of materials, including earthenware, porcelain, silver, and glass, and in more perishable materials such as leather. Travellers may originally have carried them but those that have survived are so sumptuous that their function was probably ornamental.

These bottles have impressed on the base 'L W' indicating that Lewis Woolf made them in Knottingley near Ferrybridge in West Riding. He was a London china merchant who leased a pottery there in 1851 and then purchased it, building a new pottery next door to cater for the Australian market. The complex became known as Ferrybridge and Australian Potteries. It was a time of industrial expansion and the venture was profitable. One son went into parliament, and the works were run by managers and eventually sold in 1883.

Annette 'Nettie' Hope's parents, William and Sarah Agnes Ford, lived in Middlesex before migrating and are thought to have brought this pair of bottles with them. Perhaps they saw them at the 1862 exhibition in London and, because they were migrating to Australia, thought to take 'Pilgrim Bottles' from the Australian Potteries with them.

William Ford was a carpenter who became a miller in Guildford, and we have previously heard of them in the story of the Belleek china (September 2019) and again in the story of the Hope locket (September 2021). Nettie was only one year old when they set off from London in 1862. This was the second half of the nineteenth century, the time of the great exhibitions when nations appeared to be battling for world supremacy not with war but with a trade war fought by holding grand exhibitions of the works of all nations. The French held some smaller industrial exhibitions in the first half of the century, but Prince Albert had the idea to hold the first of the 'World Fairs' in Britain in 1851, building Crystal Palace designed by Paxton in Hyde Park. This started a trend and was followed in 1855 by Paris, 1862 again in London, 1876 in Philadelphia, 1889 again in Paris, 1893 the Columbian in San Francisco, 1897 in Brussels, 1900 Paris, 1902 Glasgow and the last of the great exhibitions in 1904 in St Louis, USA.



1862 exhibition building

Sarah and William would have enjoyed the 1862 exhibits. Opened by Queen Victoria the exhibition was held on the site of what is now the Natural History Museum in South Kensington. The complex held an enormous array of goods mostly showing industrial advances made since the 1851 exhibition. Whether painted pilgrim bottles were part of the exhibition is not known. If they were, would they have been exhibited as technical advances in decorated pottery or in the arts section? This would have been a debated point for art schools had been established in South Kensington and other parts of the country to skill young working-class women in the art of painting on porcelain for the nearby potteries. Others had been opened catering to distressed gentlewomen who were forced to earn a living as governesses.

This time was the height of the Romantic Movement when artists and writers rediscovered the Middle Ages. Wild landscapes and nature were popular subjects as artists reacted against the calm rationalism of the 18th century Enlightenment. Our pilgrim bottles have a romantic flavour with the shapes harking back to the Canterbury Tales of Chaucer and painted scenes of apparently untouched landscapes. It is entirely possible that Sarah was one of these young painter women. Alternatively, it is possible they were a treasured wedding present, for the couple had not long married and had a baby daughter when they boarded ship for Australia; or they could be treasures purchased to take with them as pilgrims on their voyage to the romantic wilds of WA. Sadly, this will probably remain a mystery forever. What we do know is that their daughter lovingly treasured the objects as she grew up and married herself. In later life she donated them to the Society without documentation.

References

<http://therootsofmyfamilytree.ca/>

John Tribe: an interesting West Australian artist

Recently **Graham Ringer** made contact with *History West* to ask if anyone knew anything of this painter or of a particular painting by the artist that Graham owns. This watercolour, reproduced here, is of East Perth Power Station in 1956. It is framed in a blondewood by Quarrell's of James St, Perth, and was given to Graham by a friend around 2009. On the back is a pencilled price of \$4.50.



East Perth Power Station

The power station, which dominates the painting, also dominated East Perth's landscape (together with the gasometer) for most of the 20th century at a time when East Perth was Perth's main industrial area. The station, commissioned in 1916 and decommissioned in 1981, was the 'Central Generating Station ... for supplying Electrical Energy to the whole of the Metropolitan Area and Surrounding Districts', according to its 1916 commemorative plaque. It was the first in Australia to service an entire metropolitan area – industrial, commercial, civic and residential users – and continued this task single-handed until joined by South Fremantle Power Station in 1951. Rapid postwar growth in demand and the spread of the electricity grid beyond the metropolitan area to the southwest resulted in the commissioning of more new stations: Bunbury (1957), Muja (1966), Kwinana (1970), Collie (1999) and, from 1989, a number of gas turbine stations. From 1916

to the mid-1950s East Perth supplied all Perth's electricity needs with a peak load of not more than 80Mw. Today the South West Integrated System has a capacity of 4,500Mw to meet demand.

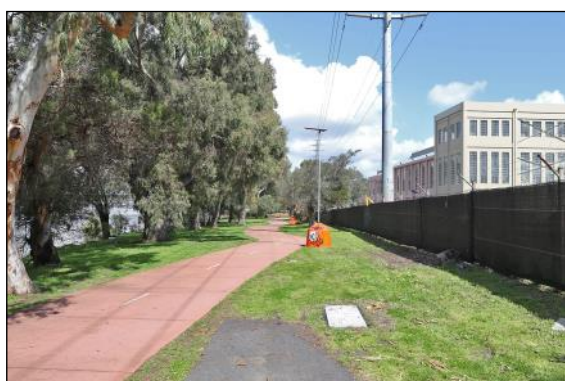
East Perth Power Station workers knew they were employed in an essential industry dependent on one workplace until the 1950s. If the station could not meet demand then Perth stopped – trams, industry, commerce, retail and, to a lesser extent, household life. Station workers were proud of the skilled work they did. These men were mostly manpowered during World War II and, as well as keeping the lights on when the station often ran at overload, they did war work repairing naval shipping.

Electricity transformed people's lives in the 20th century, not only in industry but also in offices and homes. For housewives good lighting held great appeal as did the new electrical appliances of the 1940s/1950s. They were clean, modern and attractive, and reduced the constant labour of housework.

After decommissioning, East Perth Power Station site became derelict, its buildings unused and vandalised. From 2003 the site was remediated with major industrial contaminants (asbestos lagging, oil impregnated soils and residue heaps) removed. The government has announced that private interests will re-develop the site. All Perthites look forward to this renewal.

John Tribe and his painting

Graham visited Banks Reserve in East Perth and took two photographs. One shows the river taken at the likely location, where Walter Brook enters the river, from which Tribe painted. Tree growth in the intervening years now entirely obscures the power station from this vantage point. The other, of the power station today, shows how heavily treed the riverbank is now.



According to *Art & Design Australia Online*, John E Tribe (1904-1974) was a WA painter as well as a designer and modeller of ceramics of some note. He was born in England, arriving in Western Australia in 1925. He worked as a jackaroo, spray painter, photo-retoucher and designer of neon signs.

Tribe was sent to Wooroloo Sanatorium to treat his tuberculosis and here he was provided with art therapy under Guy Grey Smith. He subsequently won the Claude Hotchin Art Prize twice and modelled ceramics for Brisbane & Wunderlich. He held fourteen solo exhibitions between 1953 and 1973. Well-regarded as the producer of good-quality Wembley Ware pieces, he modelled some of the best-known pieces — the koala, kookaburra, owl, magpie and dhufish.

Perhaps there are readers who also own a piece of Tribe's work? If so, do let *History West* know.

References

Art & Design Australia Online - <https://www.daao.org.au/bio/john-e-tribe/>
John G Thomson, *Calyx, Wembley Ware and Bristle China*

Explaining the death of John Baxter: alternative histories

Dr Peter Gifford

In the August issue Peter wrote of his recent visit to the Nullarbor with senior Ngadju man Danny Graham to assist with the recording of heritage sites. This article is an extension of that story.

Our visit to John Baxter's monument, on the cliffs also bearing his name in the remote Nuytsland Nature Reserve on the WA side of the Nullarbor plain, took place in April this year as part of an expedition to record Indigenous heritage sites. The area is part of traditional Ngadju country, and the expedition was guided by Mr J W 'Danny' Graham, a senior Ngadju man who was principal claimant in the Ngadju native title claim upheld by the Federal Court in 2016.

While not an Aboriginal heritage site as such, the concrete memorial to John Baxter, overseer to Edward John Eyre on his overland trek of 1841 from Fowler's Bay in South Australia to King George Sound, is a place of considerable significance to Danny Graham and the Ngadju and neighbouring Mirning people. The memorial was constructed by the original J W Graham – a 'white' man who grew up at the nearby Eyre Overland Telegraph Station – and Danny Graham's Aboriginal father, Didla Graham. It bears a metal plaque, which reads:

JOHN BAXTER
EXPLORER
THE COMPANION OF
EDWARD JOHN EYRE
WAS KILLED HERE BY NATIVES
APRIL 29TH 1841.
ERECTED BY THE
WESTERN AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
1930.

Baxter's fate was first disputed in 1997 by the late Arthur Dimer, a Ngadju-Mirning man who maintained – in a version now accepted by the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (ADB) – that Baxter had actually been killed by Eyre himself, in a fit of rage at finding Baxter drunk. By Arthur Dimer's account, which he said was passed on to him by Mirning old men when he was a child in the 1920s, the two Aboriginal men from South Australia whom Eyre claimed were responsible for the death of Baxter had actually been appalled by Eyre's action and had fled into the bush where, as intruders, they were subsequently speared by Mirning men who had been observing the exploring party of which the two had been members. By this account the Noongar man Wylie, who was the other member of the party, had stayed with Eyre because he recognised that Eyre's presence afforded him protection which would be lost if he too abandoned the white man – seen as a *djanga* or spirit by the Indigenous people of the area. Wylie was also motivated by the fact that Eyre was travelling towards Wylie's home at King George Sound, whereas the two South Australians had been moving away from their own country and were anxious to return there.

Danny Graham, however, maintains it is Ngadju tradition that Baxter actually took his own life, using a musket while drunk, having consumed alcohol to try to relieve the pain from a poisoned, gangrenous leg. The two South Australian men had nothing to do with the death but, as Mr Dimer claimed, fled into the bush in fright and were never heard of again. Wylie stayed with Eyre out of self-interest, as maintained by Arthur Dimer.

Danny Graham also maintains that his father's part in finding the place and then helping build the memorial has never been properly acknowledged. He and his family members are agreed that another plaque should be attached to the memorial, stating clearly the Ngadju tradition about Baxter's death along with proper acknowledgement of Didla Graham's role in both finding the site and helping erect the memorial.

As for Eyre, his journal entry for 29 April 1841 says he was absent from the camp that night, guarding the hobbled horses as they roamed through the bush searching for feed. He was about a quarter of a mile from the camp when he saw a flash and heard the report of a gun. By the time he reached the camp Baxter was 'lying on the ground, weltering in his blood, and in the last agonies of death'. He had been 'shot through the left breast', the two South Australian 'boys' were gone, and the camp had been plundered. Eyre says nothing about Baxter being drunk, nor is there any hint in preceding pages that Baxter had an alcohol problem or that he was suffering from a poisoned leg – but, on the other hand, the alcohol reference exists elsewhere, and Eyre does allow that Baxter disagreed with him about continuing their awful journey along the cliffs.

Eyre may have edited his journal as he went along, or he may even have rewritten the whole section in question later on (possible but unlikely). It may actually be that Baxter did in fact shoot himself and that the 'boys' fled in panic, taking what they could with them. Suicide, or 'self murder' was regarded with abhorrence in Christian society in those days, the penalty being that burial of the corpse in hallowed ground was forbidden – not that, in Baxter's case, there was any chance of burial at all in the rocky terrain of the cliffs. By Eyre's account Baxter had served him well and faithfully for years; it could be that Eyre concocted the story about the 'natives' shooting Baxter to spare his relatives the shame of hearing that he had in fact killed himself – or even indeed that Eyre himself had shot him, in the circumstances described by Arthur Dimer.



Map of site of Baxter's memorial, Nullarbor



Baxter Memorial



Mr Danny Graham

Despite Eyre's good record with Aboriginal people elsewhere (as official Protector at Moorundie on the River Murray in South Australia, for example), he was certainly capable of ruthlessness and brutality, as he demonstrated later while governor of Jamaica. It was for that reason that Geoffrey Dutton – the author of a biography of Eyre as well as his original ADB entry – entitled the biography *The Hero as Murderer*.

And so there are now three versions on the record of what happened to John Baxter on 29 April 1841, and Eyre's is but one of them. An additional plaque is now needed at the site to advise travellers of these different histories.

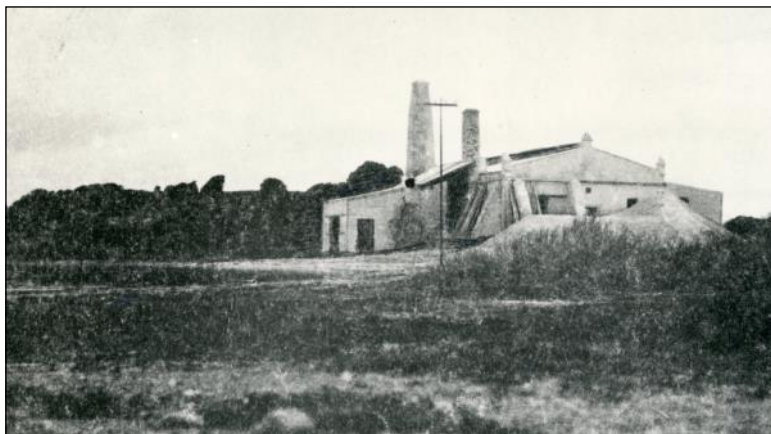
All photographs courtesy Clive Taylor ACS

A Treasure Trove of Photographs

Rottnest Saltworks

Julie Taylor

Julie's exploration of the Society's photograph collection has led her to Rottnest.



Photographer unknown, c1910. P1999.1062.



Photographer A N Marchant 1935. P1999.3232

The Rottnest saltworks stood at the western end of the causeway that runs between Herschel and Government House lakes. Erected in 1869, the building was a landmark for around 90 years and appeared in many artworks and photographs as a picturesque feature that belied the realities of prison labour. These photographs show the saltworks as an industrial building in decline. The first, taken around 1910, shows the building in use but probably not as a refinery. A large pile of crude salt can be seen in front of the building. Adjacent to the salt is a telegraph pole, part of the island's first telephone service, which connected the lighthouse on Wadjemup Hill to the pilot station at Thomson Bay. The second photograph, taken around 1935, shows the building in a dilapidated state. Parts have been demolished, including the shorter chimney and timber bracing is clearly visible even on the buttresses. The saltworks was built in a style that is identifiably Rottnest – a simple building of limestone quarried on the island with a parapet that partially concealed the roof from view, and a finial on each corner and one in the middle on top of the gable.

Robert Thomson, after whom Thomson Bay is named, is believed to be the first person to harvest salt on Rottnest. When the water in the lakes receded in the summer months, the salt was collected and sent to the mainland. In 1838 a prison for Aboriginal men was established on Rottnest. The prisoners worked at various forms of agricultural production and salt harvesting in an attempt to make the prison self-supporting.

At first the prisoners gathered the salt from the shores of the island's salt lakes as Thomson and other settlers had done. In December 1868 A H (Henri) Courderot was appointed to oversee salt production. In 1869 work began on the saltworks, an enterprise that would refine the salt before delivering it to the mainland where it was sold. In 1869 a tender was advertised for 'one iron boiler, one iron pan and one wooden tank' and in the following year two further evaporating pans were procured.

An analysis in 1871 showed that the Rottnest refined salt was almost 96% pure sodium chloride. The quality of the salt was further proven in 1873 when Courderot was awarded a medal in the condiments section of the Metropolitan Intercolonial Exhibition in Sydney. Initially, wood from the island was used to fire the boiler but it burnt too quickly, so jarrah and other timber was imported from the mainland. For the ten years until 1882 the saltworks made a modest profit but eventually the cost of buying timber proved uneconomic.

Courderot retired in 1893. It seems that little maintenance was done after the 1880s; and the building and its operations went into decline. In 1895 the Public Works Department drew up plans to revitalise salt production but Frederick Pearse, the prison superintendent, reported in 1899 that the works was in an advanced state of dilapidation. 'The walls are held together by a band of iron and through bolts, and are partly propped up from an adjoining rock'. In the previous five years the saltworks had made a loss of £800, but Pearse believed that 'under a different system of management the result might be very much better'.

In his 1900 report Pearse praised the work of prisoner James Donovan who, through his knowledge of chemistry, had considerably improved the system of salt manufacture. Some new equipment had been purchased and the building 'patched up'. The salt was shown to be 98% pure. However, this improvement was short-lived as the prison closed in 1903 and so did the saltworks as its source of labour had gone.

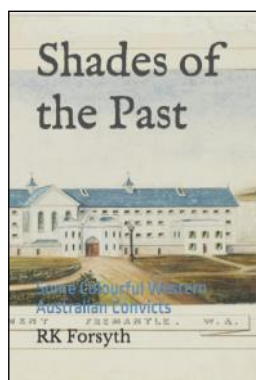
Early in 1904 'good conduct' prisoners from Fremantle were on the island, some of whom were collecting crude salt from the lakes. However it's not clear whether refining ever re-commenced. After World War I the harvesting of salt was let to various private companies. In 1954 a Mr Reilly took out a five-year lease of the saltworks. He employed six men to dig and bag the salt so it could be taken to the mainland for refining into table salt. The season was only nine weeks long and Reilly expected to collect 800 tons in that time, according to an article in *The Daily News*.

The remaining chimney was demolished in 1947 and by the late 1950s the entire building was considered unsafe and it was demolished in 1959. All that remains are the outline of the buildings cut into the surrounding rock and some bricks and other demolition rubble.

Book Reviews

R K Forsyth, *Shades of the Past: Some Colourful Western Australian Convicts*, Sydney, 2021. In Library.

Reviewer: Pamela Statham Drew



This 245-page book has a most attractive cover — a painting of the Convict Establishment at Fremantle, dated 1866, by T H J Brown (convict 7340). In his introduction the author admits that the thirty or so ‘colourful characters’ he describes were either his own ancestors or their friends and compatriots. What makes the book stand out is that Forsyth has followed these men (and recall that WA received no

female convicts) to the end of their lives, not leaving them when their term expired or stopping when they left WA, as some writers have been wont to do. The book is well referenced with quotes liberally scattered throughout chapters and marked by boxes and italics. Chapters are well written.

Most of the convicts Forsyth describes took the opportunities offered and did well. The author does point out in his informative introduction, however, that that WA was never as egalitarian as supposed and the dark past was buried and never spoken of once gold discoveries initiated an influx of t’othersiders. Citing just one of the men, convict Welby (convict 9608) — he was quite remarkable in that he was a bank robber sentenced to ten years’ transportation who became a successful jeweller in Fremantle and Northam with a reputation for fixing clocks. He was even called on to assay gold ore from the Kimberley and Yilgarn fields in 1888.

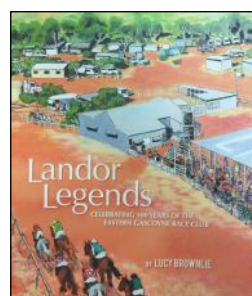
Thomas Fisher (convict 5521) was included because the author sympathised with the sentiment of a poem he had written and had published in the *Sunday Times* on 5 March 1908, each verse beginning ‘Land of the Swan’. It was a tale of misery, of the ‘Mount Eliza Old Mens Home where dead beats live so sad and lone’. Some detective work was needed to find the author of these lines but they eventually fitted Thomas Fisher who arrived on the *Edwin Fox* in February 1869.

This is a lively, interesting and rewarding book for all interested in Western Australian history; enjoyment guaranteed.

Lucy Brownlie, *Landor Legends. Celebrating 100 years of the Eastern Gascoyne Race Club*, self-published, 2022. In Library.

Reviewer: Jeanette Longwood

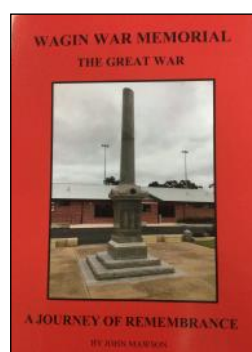
This book traces the development of horse racing in the Gascoyne region from 1922, together with its associated families. Many of the original race committees were members of the Light Horse Brigade, and it is interesting to read about how their horse skills and



organisational abilities continued to be very well utilised over the succeeding decades. The text contains chapters on the many events that were developed, including the Mount Augustus Maiden, the Mt Clere Handicap, and the Landor Cup. It is supplemented by photographs of horse races, the mounts used in various Cups and the people instrumental in the events covered. Appendixes provide details of the various winners, leading riders, leading trainers, and others involved with this annual event. This well-researched book has an engaging style and illuminates perhaps less well-known aspects of people and life in the Gascoyne area from the 1920s onwards.

John Mawson, *Wagin War Memorial: A journey of remembrance*, self-published, 2022. In Library.

Reviewer: Mike Taylor

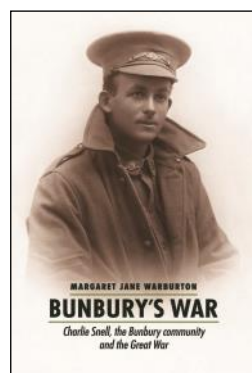


This 200-page book focuses on the 66 Australian soldiers from World War I whose names appear on the Wagin War Memorial. For each soldier, there is a story collating photographs, service history and memorial details. Rather than listing the soldiers in alphabetical order, the stories are grouped by the battles in which the Australians

participated, starting with Gallipoli in 1915. For each battle the author provides a short summary of the involvement of the Australians to provide a setting, invariably sad, for each individual’s sacrifice. For individual soldiers, there is an alphabetical list of names. We learn of the author’s trips to the battle and memorial sites and there is even material on hotel recommendations for a reader who might wish to make the same journey.

Margaret Jane Warburton, *Bunbury’s war. Charlie Snell, the Bunbury community and the Great War*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2021. In Library.

Reviewer: Jeanette Longwood



This book uncovers stories of men who fought in World War I, their experiences and the communities from which they came and to which they returned. Particular focus is directed to the Wellington District, and fascinating information is woven together regarding families, living conditions and the roles of women.

Container Clean Up & Clean Out



How many members have noticed the container tucked against the back fence at the Society's headquarters? If you assumed that it housed the overflow and surplus items of a busy organisation you would be correct; and you might also guess that 'stuff' accumulates there until it is bursting! Such has recently happened. Action was needed.

Everyone's thanks to the team of volunteers, mostly from the museum, who devoted a recent Saturday to tackling the problem. Many thanks to Tony Bagshaw and Bruce Hoar who sorted the educational collection and chose some additional items that will be useful for the Schools Project and Memory Boxes. Vanessa Roth and Nat Richards checked the records of accessioned items, and photographed unaccessioned items. Nat's husband Mike unstacked and restacked items. Some items will be stored at Wangara for future use.

The container was swept and room made for the

storage of the *Early Days*, and items for April's Book Sale. Many thanks to Nick and Pamela Drew for their work on this.

Overall — approximately 30 hours of voluntary time for a long overdue sort-out and clearance. Without all our volunteers the Society couldn't function!

Have you thought about volunteering? You'd be very welcome.



Call for books for the 2023 Giant Second Hand Book Sale 1/2 April 2023

Donate any books you no longer want to a good cause.

Bring them to Stirling House
or call 9386 3841 to arrange a pick up.

All books, except textbooks
and encyclopedias, are wanted.

Many thanks from us all.

Holiday Closure

From Thurs 22 December 2022 at 4pm
to Mon 9 January 2023 at 10 am

Community Officer: Lesley Burnett
Editor *History West*: Dr Lenore Layman

Opinions expressed in *History West* are not necessarily those of the Royal WA Historical Society (Inc.).

If you're a member who receives this newsletter in hard copy by post, and you're happy to receive it by email, please contact 9386 3841 or admin@histwest.org.au with your email address, and save money and trees by receiving it online!