



HISTORY WEST™

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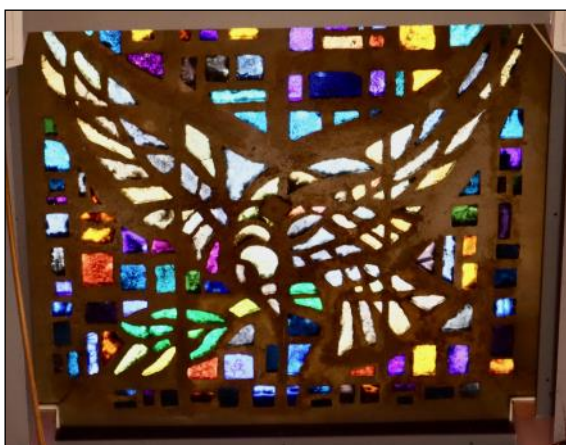
GENERAL MEETING

The monthly general meeting at Stirling House is on Wednesday 21 June at 6pm when Dr Fiona Bush will present a talk on 'Gowers and Brown Stained Glass Studio: The development of concrete and glass windows'.

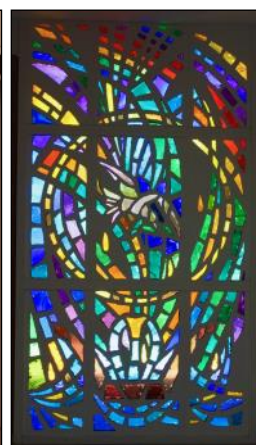
Refreshments available from 5.30pm; Bookshop open until 6pm.



Trinity College



St Lawrence



Riverton



St Francis

Everyone is familiar with stained glass windows. These windows use colourful pieces of glass that are embellished with paint to enhance the design. The glass pieces are held in place with lead comes. Plainer, coloured lead glass windows also feature intricate designs but the coloured glass has no painted embellishment. There is also another type of 'stained glass,' and this is concrete and glass, or as it is known in Europe, *dalle de verre*. The term refers to the thick slabs of faceted glass that are held in place in a concrete matrix. The development of *dalle de verre* in Europe coincided with the rise of modern ecclesiastical architecture.

Englishmen Ted Gowers and Albert Brown migrated to Perth in 1954 and quickly established a stained glass studio. In the 1960s and 1970s WA's economy was booming, enabling the construction of numerous churches in the country and Perth metropolitan areas. These churches favoured modern architectural designs, which the Studio considered were better suited to concrete and glass windows.

They began experimenting in this new technique and during the 1960s and early 1970s installed concrete and glass windows in churches and cathedrals as well as private commissions. Unfortunately, the technique perfected by the Studio died with Ted and Albert.

Dr Fiona Bush has worked as a building archaeologist for over 30 years. Much of her work has focussed on buildings and industrial heritage. Whilst working on a conservation plan for a small church in Darlington, she noticed a pair of concrete and glass windows in the sanctuary. She has spent the last eight years researching the Studio that made the church's concrete and glass and stained glass windows. This research has uncovered the pioneering work of the Studio, particularly in concrete and glass windows. A book about the Studio is currently being written.

Society's new website is live!

Visit our new website at histwest.org.au and explore its riches. You can purchase books online and pay for events and talks. All the result of a Lotterywest grant of \$49,615 plus our own monetary contribution and many hours of work by volunteers. You will hear more in the July issue of *History West*.

Early Days

Have you remembered to let the Society know your wishes? **Do you want a print or electronic copy or both or neither?** Please contact Lesley — 9386 3841, admin@histwest.org.au or Nick — 0409 290 895, nickdrew@bigpond.com.au

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Community Talk

Life stories: giving refugees a voice

The Society was delighted to welcome **Rosemary Sayer** to speak at our April talk. Rosemary has spent the last fifteen years researching and writing about, and providing support for refugees who come to Australia. She highlights the challenges that those from a refugee background face in escaping persecution and making a new home here, and she is determined to do what she can to assist them. Rosemary reminds us of the scale of the international problem — there are 103,000,000 displaced persons worldwide, the majority fleeing Syria, Venezuela, Ukraine, Afghanistan, South Sudan and Burma. Australia has taken in 950,000 refugees since World War II, a respectable total but demand is massive.

Rosemary's talk focused on the personal stories of individual refugees; for instance, Fauzia Sufizada and her husband Farid, Tajik refugees who fled Afghanistan, and Paul Kyaw, a Karen refugee who fled Myanmar/Burma. It is by understanding these individual stories that we see behind the huge 'refugee' label to the desperate individual people.

If you would like to know more about Rosemary, visit her website — <http://www.rosemarysayer.com>

Rosemary's book *More to the Story – conversations with refugees* was published in 2015. If you are interested in reading more of her stories you will find the book available online as an e-book.



Welcome to new members!

John & Sally Levitzke, Natalie Peters,
Marlene Donovan

Holding a book launch at RWAHS?

The Society is happy to host a book launch for any member who is publishing a book on WA history. Please ask Lesley at the Office for the information sheet — 9386 3841 or admin@histwest.org.au

RWAHS Writing Group

This Group meets once a month on a Monday morning, 10.15am-12 noon. This month we had two sessions on self-publishing. Next month we will be providing feedback for two members of the group on their writing as well as looking at a range of published books to discuss preferences for self-publishing based on what we learned this month.

Our next meeting is on **Monday 19 June** and new members are welcome. If you are thinking of coming along, please let the office know beforehand so we can prepare a welcome pack of information for you.

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APPEAL FOR SHOE BOXES

Dear Readers

We are trying to re-organise our back-copies of *Early Days* which are currently stored in a variety of boxes when they could be tidily shelved in shoe boxes. If you have even one such box lying around could you bring it into Stirling House please — marked 'for Nick'.

many thanks in anticipation, Pamela & Nick Drew

History in the City

Rachel Roe

Trish Woodman's passion for Boer War history was most evident in her presentation. Trish has spent considerable time on field trips to South Africa along with her partner, the late Midge Carter. Midge had wandered the battlefields and cemeteries for over 60 years – always with a camera in hand. It was Trish who wrote the book, *We Wander the Battlefields*, and there is a copy of this unique publication in our reference library.

We heard many personal stories, such as that of Alexander Forrest's son Anthony, who was the first Hale School boy to be killed on active service. When Trish read the letter a young Australian nurse wrote to the family of another young man she nursed in his dying days, we were moved to tears. Poetry encapsulated the conflict while visual maps conveyed a sense of place.

A highlight of the talk was the presence of two ladies who are custodians of autograph books their great aunt created when nursing near the battlegrounds. What a treasure the books are – containing signatures and exquisitely beautiful paintings and drawings by patients.

Our next talk is on Wednesday 7 June at 2pm at Citiplace when John Viska will speak about Hyde Park – its history and conservation. Available for purchase will be the newly-published book *Historic Gardens of Perth – European settlement to Modernism*.



South African War Memorial, Kings Park



Mystery Photograph — Nor'west Gentlemen

Hilaire Natt



P1999.3230

Five Nor'West gentlemen are relaxing with a dog on the steps of a building, possibly the Star Hotel, in Broome in 1900. The photograph comes from Album 39 (No. 9988-233d), a fascinating collection of high-quality images depicting life in Broome at the turn of the 19th century. The donor is unknown.

Another photograph in the album shows a similar group, wearing pith helmets, playing a outdoor game, perhaps cricket. White was the uniform commonly worn in the tropics by pearling masters and other wealthy Europeans who had servants to cope with the laundry. It was a mark of status and possibly a cooler colour to wear. A shabbier version was sometimes worn by servants and divers.

If you have any information about the identity of these gentlemen, please contact the library at — library@histwest.net.au or (08)9386 3841.

A short history article?

Have you written a short history article (850-900 words) you would be happy to publish that you think would be of interest to *History West* readers?

If so, please contact the editor.
Lenore Layman — layman@westnet.com.au

What's in a picture?

The two lives of a Claremont landmark

Julie Taylor

This month Julie takes us back to the glamorous but short-lived life of the Osborne Hotel.



Loreto Convent, Osborne WA. P2013.1

Members of the Society might remember the grand building in this photograph from the collection. For almost 70 years it stood on the cliff top in Claremont overlooking the river from where it afforded splendid views of the ocean, coast and islands. The photograph was taken around 1920 and, as the caption states, we are looking at Loreto Convent and School. The Loreto Sisters bought the property in 1901 and used it for many decades until it was demolished in 1963.

Before the sisters bought the building it had a vastly different life – as the Osborne Hotel. Built in 1894 by the entrepreneur James Grave, the Osborne Hotel was a luxury resort that was the place to be seen. It was frequented by high society and was the venue for lavish parties. The hotel sported a private swimming pool in the river below and was surrounded by two acres of beautifully landscaped

gardens. In March 1898 Grave chartered a steam launch to ferry patrons to the hotel, making five trips a day.

The Osborne was well ahead of its time – it had its own electric power generation plant, a waterworks with a deep bore, and even supplied electricity and water to neighbouring properties. With his own electricity supply, Grave apparently saw no reason for restraint when it came to lighting his hotel and gardens. On top of the hotel's flagpole he installed a white arc lamp of 3,000cp and there were an additional four lamps totalling 12,000cp in the grounds. These were all fixed white lights. The lamp on the flagpole was about 250ft above sea level.

Concerns had been raised about the Osborne lights. In the 'Public Opinion Declares' column in the *West Australian Sunday Times* in February 1898 the following warning appeared: 'the great electric light at the Osborne Hotel may some day lure a fine ship to ruin'. As is so often the case, it takes an incident for decisive action to be taken and that is what happened two months later.

On Tuesday 19 April, the Norddeutscher Lloyd mail steamer *Stuttgart* was due at Fremantle for the first time. Neither Captain Köhlenbeck nor any of his officers had been to Fremantle before.

The *Stuttgart* picked up the Rottnest lighthouse at 9pm, about 25 miles out from the island. The port guide described the Arthur Head lighthouse* as a bright fixed light so, when Captain Köhlenbeck saw a bright white fixed light an hour later, he concluded that it was the lighthouse. Twenty minutes later Köhlenbeck spotted the real Arthur Head lighthouse and realised his mistake. He was now several miles off course and, had visibility been poor, the ship may have gone ashore near Cottesloe Beach. Köhlenbeck corrected his course and made it safely to Fremantle, but naturally enough he complained to the Harbour Master, Captain Russell, about the false light.

This incident caused a sensation in the press. *The Evening Star* ran the dramatic headline 'Hotel as Wrecker'. Harbour Master Russell and Mr Grave had been corresponding about the hotel's lights in the months before the *Stuttgart* was led astray. Grave claimed that he had initially written to the Harbour Master in January but had received no reply. Russell said he had asked Grave to screen the topmost light to seaward or change it to a ruby lamp. Grave stood his ground for a while. He said he would be happy to have his light gazetted as a lighthouse if the government would agree to maintain it! A week after the incident, on 26 April, the Premier announced that the government was seeking advice from the Crown Law Office. By the end of the month Grave had been persuaded to enclose the light in a screen and the newspapers reported that the hotel was displaying a red light. A gushing advertorial in *The Western Mail* at the end of the year described the lights at the hotel as 'a thousand points of coloured light...seen from the bay far below, or from the coast, the soft tropical sky is spangled with jewels. High aloft hangs a huge ruby...'

At the end of 1898 Grave found himself financially overextended and sold the hotel. By then its popularity was waning and a gossip column in November 1898 noted that 'the last Osborne dance was, like the former one, characterised by the absence of any of the notable and numerous branches of the Six Families'. The writer consoled him or herself with the thought that 'it is a pleasure not to have the same faces repeating themselves every time'.

The Osborne had burned brightly but briefly.

*A lighthouse on Arthur Head first showed a light in June 1851. The Arthur Head light was discontinued in August 1902 and the stone tower was demolished in 1905 to make way for the Arthur Head battery.

Talking of by-elections

Dr Peter Gifford

On 1 April this year the people of Aston, a federal electorate in Melbourne's east, did something almost unprecedented in the history of Australian federal politics – they voted in a member of the ruling party in a by-election for what had been for many years a seat held by the Opposition. It was the national lead news story for several days but, while most media outlets reported that this was the first time such a thing had happened in 103 years, only one to my knowledge – the electronic news and comment site Crikey – bothered to mention the circumstances of the by-election of 1920 in Western Australia.

What happened then was that the incumbent Labor Member for Kalgoorlie in the House of Representatives, Hugh Mahon, was defeated by a Nationalist challenger named George Foley. Mahon, an Irishman with strong republican views, was an original member of the House of Representatives in 1901 and had held office in four Labor governments. He had previously been a journalist and editor of newspapers in the WA goldfields, and had served the Labor cause vigorously along with fellow t'othersiders, including two future premiers, John Scaddan and Philip Collier. Such men had united the goldminers and other working class people against the pastoralist and agricultural interests led by Sir John Forrest.



Hugh Mahon



George Foley

Mahon was expelled from federal parliament by the Nationalist Prime Minister, W M 'Billy' Hughes, ostensibly for referring to 'this bloody and accursed [British] empire' in a fiery speech on the Yarra bank in Melbourne following the death in a hunger strike of the Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence MacSwiney. It happened at the height of the brutal Anglo-Irish war of independence, in which Irish republicans were fighting British forces such as the notorious Black and Tans. The electorate of Kalgoorlie was won at the by-election by an ex-ALP Nationalist, a goldfields local with an Irish name but who didn't share Mahon's fervent Irish republican views.

The fact that about 60,000 Australians, many of Irish descent, had died fighting for that same empire in the worst war the world had experienced, may have helped sway the result. Mahon also was

not personally popular – his bitter invective as a journalist and editor in earlier days had caused the *Westralian Worker* newspaper to describe him as 'professedly ... a democrat whose snobbish coldness of demeanour would make a snake shudder'. In short, he suffered the Irish curse of being in the situation where 'many had benefited from his work, but his advanced views and outspokenness had not made him widely loved'.

He was one of those, including Collier, who had stayed in the official Labor party in WA following the conscription split in 1916; while Hughes and other pro-conscriptionists including Scaddan, Foley and the Defence Minister, Senator George Pearce, went over to the conservatives, who became known collectively as Nationalists. This, according to the long-serving Clerk of the House of Representatives, Frank Green, was the real reason for Mahon's expulsion – Hughes, a renowned grudge-bearer, 'was now having his revenge'. Mahon remains the only member of Federal Parliament to have been expelled.

Frank Green, who saw at first hand the events in question, said the expulsion should never have been allowed to take place – that Mahon had in effect been denied natural justice. Green's view was that, if a case to answer existed against Mahon, he should have been brought before the courts. Green maintained that: 'Parliament has the power to expel, but to exercise that power is not justice when the ordinary processes of the law are available'.

In a sense, the actual by-election held in December 1920 was something of an anti-climax, despite its unprecedented result. Foley polled 8,382 votes, or 51.4 per cent of the total, to Mahon's 7,939 (48.6 per cent) – a swing of 3.5 per cent to the Nationalist. Foley proceeded to the backbench in Melbourne – then the national capital – and was hardly heard of again before losing the seat two years later to a popular Goldfields Labor figure, A E 'Texas' Green, who held it for many years. The defeat meant political oblivion for Foley, who died in Perth in 1945.

Mahon fared little better. With the return of Labor to power federally in 1929, he sought to have his expulsion from parliament rescinded, but could not attract the necessary support in caucus for this to happen – probably again a legacy of his personal unpopularity. His parliamentary career was over, and he died in Melbourne in 1931 at the age of 74, leaving a wife and four children. Another divisive figure in Australia for much of the 20th century, Archbishop Daniel Mannix of Melbourne, said of him: 'The late Mr Hugh Mahon was [my] personal and honoured friend. ... a good Irishman, a good Australian and an exemplary Catholic'.

Three embroidered Georgian Dresses

Jo Pearson

In the mid-18th century during the reign of one of Britain's most cultured monarchs George III, public interest grew in the natural sciences - butterflies, plants, flowers and botanical collections. In 1772 the King inherited Kew Botanical Gardens from his mother and added it to his Richmond Park estate. The timing was appropriate; over-crowded cities were dirty and air quality unhealthy because of increasing industrial activity and, while the wealthy could escape to the country, the majority of people could not. An idealistic vision of a natural world could be experienced in the Royal parks, soothing the harsher realities of city life, and influencing arts and fashions.

A modern leading pattern designer of the day, Anna-Maria Garthwaite, decided to include botanical naturalism in her latest home-ware designs, with emphasis on plants and flowers. Commercially successful, she changed her designs every two years so that discerning eyes could detect whether patterns on bed hangings and furniture in aristocratic homes were old ones or her very latest designs.



Mrs Mary Delany's collage work c1770s



Queen Charlotte's embroidered purse



The collection's oldest gown c1760. C2008.54a-e

Another new floral art form was created by Mrs Mary Delany, who moulded true-to-life collages of flowers and plants from thousands of pieces of coloured paper cut into strips and shapes. Her work was popular with the public, admired by botanists like Sir Joseph Banks, and still exhibited in the British Museum. She established a friendship with the new Queen Charlotte, an avid embroiderer, and received a royal gift of a needlework pocket book embroidered with flowers sewn by the Queen in exchange for a small book of Delany's floral collage work.

Following the popular trend, embroidery designs also changed from heavy bejeweled artifice to natural motifs. The earliest dress in the Society's costume collection is 263 years old. It is made from pale green silk damask and has a detachable stomacher, or insert, embroidered with sprays of flowers in green, gold and pink/red threads. Sewn in c1760 for an ancestor of Miss Grace Muriel Bostock, (her family later donated the gown to the Society), it is an example of a formal dress in a style called a saque, usually made in heavy brocades and silks and worn by upper and middle-class Georgian women. Its fashionable but extremely wide skirt was held erect across the hips with whalebone hoops or panniers measuring up to two metres wide. Originally, the dress would have had replacement sets of both embroidered stomachers,

petticoats, under sleeves and hand-sewn lace flounces. These were detachable and interchangeable, making it economical to change the gown's 'look' for different occasions.

Three decades later, after the French Revolution, all luxuries had disappeared. It was not considered safe to wear anything suggestive of the old regime, and fashion as it had been gave way to 'modern dress' based on a simple shift. Adapted from working class clothing, the dress was made from thin tamboured embroidered cotton muslin, and worn with flat, heelless shoes meant for walking, not carriage riding. It became known as the empire dress and remained high fashion for decades. The fabric's transparency was a revolution in itself, revealing more of the female body than any fashion had ever done before. Worn without corsets, petticoats or drawers, the dress was a firm favourite with young women who would dampen their muslins for a see-through effect, and wear pink stockings underneath to suggest bare flesh. The 1803 edition of the *Ladies Monthly Magazine*,



The Graces in a high wind – a Scene taken from Nature, in Kensington Gardens. Artist: James Gillray. Satirical Print 1810.



Gown belonging to Miss Gertrude Bostock of Winchester, c1806. C1951.28a-b



Gown belonging to Miss Vittoria Meares c1829 C2005.34

reported on the flimsy muslin dresses: 'a party of high bred young ladies – dressed or rather undressed in all the nakedness of the mode'. Critics considered it 'bed wear' and 'a trespass against female modesty', suggesting that ladies should at least wear drawers. However proper ladies considered drawers fast and racy, and preferred not to wear any at all.

To illustrate muslin's popularity, the *Juliana* arrived in Sydney Cove in 1789 with 242 female convicts on board, 5% of the women sentenced (some even to death) for stealing muslin, often in bolts of ten and twenty yards. At the time, the value of one bolt was £6, whereas one silver watch cost just £5.

The museum collection has a fine example of an embroidered Georgian muslin dress. It is 216 years old, in perfect condition and once belonged to Miss Gertrude Bostock of Winchester. Dating from 1806 and at the height of fashion, white thread tamboured hand embroidered flower sprigs cover the muslin gown overall, and a panel of white-on-white chain stitch trails from the high bust line, down the centre front opening and around its wide hemline. More circumspect than some muslin dresses, it has a shaped voile under-dress with a hand-made lace insert.

The last of the three embroidered Georgian dresses in the collection, arrived in family luggage in 1829. Records state the dress belonged to seventeen-year-old Vittoria Ellen Jane Meares, daughter of genteel York settlers and donated to the society by her daughter Maria Burges decades later. It is doubtful however, that a wealthy settler's teenage daughter would have worn an old-fashioned white muslin dress in 1829. The style of the dress, stitched in tamboured floral muslin, with high waistline, short sleeves and fluted cuffs was fashionable during the early years of the 1800s, before Vittoria was born. This suggests the dress may have belonged to her mother Eleanor Seymour (who married Captain Meares in 1808) and not to the young Vittoria.

Fashion styles had changed between the year of Napoleon's defeat in 1815 and settlement at the Swan River. The graceful classic lines of white embroidered muslin empire dresses had long given way to showy taffetas and satins with wide full skirts, corsets and billowing sleeves. In her diary, Georgiana Molloy described the dress of young fellow-settler, Mrs Matilda Byrne, who was wearing 'ankle length, bouncy, bustle-type with huge flouncy sleeves - unquiet with bustle-petticoats in the air and two very pretty legs and feet protruding beyond them'.

Floral embroidery designs were easier to sew on Indian cotton muslin than heavier fabric, but needed skilled embroiderers. In 1770 Queen Charlotte helped establish embroidery schools with her personal embroiderer Mrs Phoebe Wright, an embroidery shop owner in central London. The Queen subscribed £500 annually for the next fifty years to support the schools to train young women as professional embroiderers, enabling them to earn their own living 'in an appropriate manner'. Decades of successful schooling turned out brilliant female embroiderers and pattern designers, many setting up independent embroidery schools and businesses.

An example can be found in the Rare Books section of the Society's Library, where a brown leather jacket workbook dated 1819, has numerous patterns of dress trim designs, hand drawn in gallnut ink on rare Ruse and Turner paper. Each page is filled with embroidery designs, floral sprigs, acorns, ivy, berries and intertwining leaves, used for tambour work on regency gowns, lace caps, shawls, sleeves and accessories. Sometimes an odd word or phrase is added in French.

There is no recorded donor of the book to the Library, but there are two signatures inside the front jacket revealing the female pattern designers who owned and worked from it. They were 'Margaret Duncan, Parkhill, April 5th 1819' – this sealed with a red wax stamp indicating a change of ownership – and then 'Christine Taylor 1829'. Nothing more.



Perhaps there was nothing more to be said. By 1829, the Industrial Revolution was looming, machines were already making cheaper embroidery paper patterns, threads, fabrics and lace; there was no further need for skilled embroiderers and pattern designer books.

The workbook is a timeless testament to the skills of two female regency embroiderers, and their designs and comments will continue to speak out through its 87 pages of embroidery designs.

Rare Book of embroidery patterns, 1819-1829.

Bunbury - What? No Town Hall?

Brendan Kelly

Early in 1871 local government instrumentalities were established in WA. There were 25 of them across WA, municipalities and road boards. Each district took pride in its locality and it was usual for a town hall to be built as the major civic building in the district. But not in Bunbury.

The City of Bunbury has never enjoyed the heartbeat of a town hall. Once upon a time, as a safe seaport servicing the hinterland, an important rail link, and a town that bred three State Premiers, Bunbury had attained elevated status, which it revelled in. However, the matter of being the town without a town hall became a fabled descriptor for Bunbury.

It has to be said, as we travel down the time tunnel that, if the State Premier could not get Bunbury a town hall, no one could. In springtime 1893, as John Forrest prepared to visit his hometown and parliamentary electorate, a public meeting was held to discuss a deputation to ask the Premier to procure a suitable town hall site. Bunbury civic leaders thought it only required being brought to the notice of the Premier for it to be built. No such fortune. John Forrest was Premier from 1890 to 1901 and it is an enduring mystery why Bunbury did not get its town hall while he was in the top job. Forrest was awash with cash from the great gold discoveries and surely his own seat would have been a prime candidate. Or was it that a town hall, coming behind railways, water supply and port expansion, simply slipped out of the budget?

In October 1901, a specially convened public meeting was held in the Mechanics' Institute Hall, for the purpose of discussing the site for a town hall. The Mayor, Newton Moore, greeted an assembly of about seventy ratepayers, who thought that the Council intended to proceed with the erection of a hall on the site of the existing municipal chambers. As it turned out, the Federation year meeting set the pace for getting nowhere. The requisitionists did not come prepared with a motion, under the misunderstanding that the meeting was called to give the municipal building the go-ahead. It was pointed out that the Council had not even discussed the building of a town hall, but instead had presented a design for the new Mechanics' Institute.

By 1914, just before the outbreak of the Great War, the good people of Bunbury had become converts to the opinion that there should be a town hall. However community debate descended into irresolution and war was declared, sinking the idea.

The issue of a hall site dominated arguments for and against the design and construction of a civic centre. One side argued that the Chambers should be central, amidst other public buildings, already belonging to the town. The counter argument was that it would be bad policy to erect a commodious hall and suite of municipal offices in a locality where an architectural feature of town would be lost. Alternative arguments zigzagged to and fro over half a century. Fast forward to June 1948, the *South Western Times* carried a piece that led 'Town Hall for Bunbury - But When?' The *Times* reiterated that Bunbury was probably the only town of any importance in the State without a town hall, or for that matter a civic centre in keeping with the importance of the community.

Possibly this letter to the editor of the *South Western Times* in February 1951 sums it up:

Sir, The article referring to the need for a town hall in Bunbury recalls the lack of initiative or foresight, whichever is applicable, shown by the ratepayers of Bunbury a few years ago, when a majority voted against the project at a referendum... Perhaps it is not correct to compare other towns with Bunbury, by citing town halls in those centres. Each place has only one hall and thus when building it was possible to concentrate effort and money into something worthwhile. Bunbury has several halls, all too small. I think the old bugbear, vested interests, has had something to do with Bunbury lacking a town hall. Yours etc. L.H.

In May 1953 Town Planning and Local Government Minister Gilbert Fraser visited Bunbury, noting that in recent years 'the town had grown on lines visualised many years ago'. Stressing the need for planning in Bunbury, Fraser said that the town had grown 'like Topsy'. Topsy without a hall. This is not to say that Bunbury should seek a town hall in the internet age. Matters have moved on; it is marinas, a rock pool and the Bunbury bypass road that cause more discussion nowadays.

Having a cultural centre, or any centre for that matter, has always been a problem for Bunbury. People shrug at the idea of something being done quickly, or at all. It's good enough. In the old days a town hall was the heart of a town. Perhaps lacking a hall is a modern day lesson. If there is to be progress there must be a heartbeat.

References

- WA Record*, 29 Sept 1893, p.7
- Western Mail*, 12 Oct 1901, p.74
- Southern Times*, 23 May 1914, p.2
- West Australian*, 11 May 1935, p.11
- South Western Times*, 8 Feb 1951, p.5

Affiliates & other news

Irwin Districts Historical Society Jottings, *On the Verandah*, has published a coronation special which looks at the ways the district has commemorated earlier coronations.

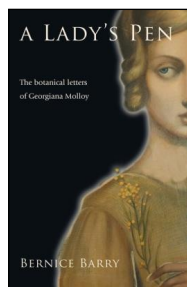
The people of Irwin have celebrated coronations in 1902, 1911, 1937 and 1953 and now 2023 is before us. These events have not always been held on the actual coronation day, and other coronation events have also taken place.

Coronations have played a role in popularising new technologies such as electric lighting, radio and film, and in 1953 were central to inaugurating our 'gleaming' new town hall. WA wildflowers have been favoured coronation decorations, and sports carnivals, dancing, feasting and dressing-up have been popular ways to celebrate. Coronation events have all been planned and managed within local communities. WA's sovereigns have included two queens and now six kings, but queenly reigns have spanned 134 years and kings just 62. Yet in 196 years we have only had one woman appointed as governor.

What a fascinating story Ronda Jamieson tells in the March **Friends of Battye** newsletter. It is an account of the oral history of **Mervyn Limon** (1910-1994) OH514. Mervyn was invited to Geraldton in 1932 by his uncle, Sydney Fong, to work in the Fong store. He tells of his eight years working there before enlisting in the RAAF in 1940. Fong's was a general store which sold everything and we are given a wonderful description of the store's stock and its place in the local community.

The bacon they sold came from the eastern states, and Mervyn recalled having to learn how to "bone a side of bacon" to prepare it for slicing. Then there was being able to "open a ball or a wheel of cheese" so it could be cut to weigh exactly what the customer asked for. If it was slightly over, the customer "would scowl if you cut a little off".... Included in the store's stock were items for farmers such as sheep dip, blow fly oil and kerosene. For boat crews, linseed oil was in demand, plus lead paints, turpentine and kerosene. Tomato gardeners were another group that needed special things bought for them.... Crockery, pots and pans could stay on the shelves for long periods. Petrol was sold by the drum, as was kerosene. Hardware sold well as did fishing hooks and lines, which came from the UK. Then there was always the standard items such as jams and sauces, most of which came from the eastern states.... There were quite a lot of farmers that used to deal with Sydney Fong who wouldn't deal anywhere else ... because during those years he carried them with food when things were really bad ... Round about once a year, Mr Fong looked through the books. I said, "Oh what are we going to do, we keep sending a bill out?" "Oh, write it off, bad debt". He was very, very human. He was in his own time a kind of a legend.

Book Launch at the Society



A Lady's Pen. The botanical letters of Georgiana Molloy

In April the Society was pleased to host the Perth launch of Bernice Barry's new book *A Lady's Pen*, which has at its core the first full, published transcriptions of what survives of Georgiana Molloy's letters to James Mangles in London.

Dr Alex George, one of Australia's foremost taxonomic botanists, launched the book and commented in part:

From a botanical angle we have yet to understand all the plants mentioned – some are given botanical names in the letters, others are described in various ways, and of these some are easy to identify but others remain obscure. Botanically, Georgiana is significant as the first resident collector in the localities where she lived, around Augusta, then the Vasse. Many of her discoveries led to their introduction into British gardens. We cannot be sure of the number of specimens that she gathered, pressed and sent to England but it was probably fewer than 200. The list in Bernice's book totals 176. No herbarium—a herbarium being a plant museum where dried, pressed specimens are kept—has a full set. The best is at Cambridge University. Several have smaller holdings, and in recent years it has been learnt that the Harvard University Herbaria in Boston hold quite a few that had been unknown here, and we are waiting to find out how many, how they complement those in European herbaria, and especially whether they include the collection numbers that are virtually missing from the latter. Some day, when all herbaria have databased their collections, we will be able to compile a list of all that survive.

Attendees greatly enjoyed Alex's informative introduction and the subsequent lively exchange between author Bernice Barry and her collaborator Mike Rumble. This question-and-answer helped the audience see how the book took shape. Subsequently a good number of books were sold and Bernice was kept busy signing.



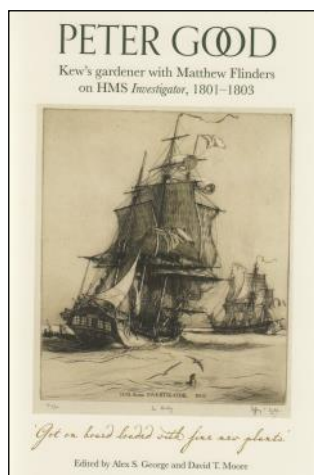
Book Launch

L to R: Bernice Barry, Vice President Sally Anne Hasluck, Dr Alex George, Mike Rumble

Book Reviews

Alex George and David Moore (eds.), *Peter Good. Kew's gardener with Matthew Flinders on HMS Investigator, 1801–1803*, Four Gables Press, Kardinya, 2022. In Library & Bookshop \$55.

Reviewer: Ed Jaggard



When HMS *Investigator*, captained by Matthew Flinders, sailed from Plymouth on 8 July 1801, the ship's complement included a naturalist, Robert Brown, and his assistant, Peter Good. Flinders, Brown and Good shared a common link: Joseph Banks, one of the great scientific patrons of the Enlightenment, influenced all their appointments. Flinders' career is well known. On

the other hand the botanical discoveries made by Brown and Good in particular are rarely mentioned.

A young Scot, Good was one of the scientific party, the others being Brown (naturalist and botanist), Ferdinand Bauer (natural history artist), William Westall (landscape artist), and John Allen (general assistant and labourer). Geological and zoological material was to be collected, as well as botanical specimens. 'Good's job on the voyage was to press and dry the plant gatherings for Sir Joseph Banks' herbarium, collect and care for living plants to be delivered to Kew and, not least, to collect and care for seeds of Australian plants to be grown at Kew' (p.7).

Why then does someone in Good's apparently subordinate position deserve to be the subject of a beautifully produced paperback volume, meticulously edited by WA botanist Alex George and the late David Moore of the British Museum? The answer lies in the records Good left of his two years on the *Investigator*. Firstly a daily journal of the voyage reveals that he was a sharp-eyed observer of shipboard life, such as the sailing of the ship including wind direction and strength, daily weather and sea conditions. Officers and seamen and the daily tasks they performed drew his attention too, and also their behaviour.

However a record of far greater importance was Good's unique contribution to Australia's botanical history through the plants and seeds that he sent to England, plus the lists that he compiled, providing an invaluable record for botanists both of his collections while in Australia, and the additions to the gardens at Kew. In what is clearly a labour of love the editors have reprinted the two records, including previously omitted material, besides adding detailed supporting explanatory notes, illustrations and maps.

Wherever *Investigator* anchored off the coast Brown and Good went ashore. Their sojourn at King George

Sound from 8 December 1801 until 4 January 1802 illustrates the way they employed their time. They spent almost every day investigating and collecting. Good was a conscientious collector, identifier and recorder so the King George Sound list of seeds contains dozens of entries such as: '*M(elaleuca) nordosa* a dwarf shrub on sides of hills particularly near Bald head sandy soil producing plenty of pink coloured flowers in Dec.' (p.134). Apart from *Melaleuca*, seeds of genera such as *Banksia*, *Dryandra*, *Hakea*, *Eucalypt*, *Acacia*, *Hardenbergia* and *Grevillea* were collected, sorted, labelled and boxed. Separately, some seeds were collected and sent to England for Banks so the botanical diversity of southern WA began to be opened to the world. Previously Vancouver (1791), d'Entrecasteaux (1792), and Baudin (1801) had examined sections of the south coast, but none with the forensic botanical eye of Good and Brown.

During the stay at King George Sound Good and others on the *Investigator* had contact with the indigenous people of the area. Good mentioned several occasions in his diary, the first on 14 December when a small party from the ship had peaceful contact with an Aboriginal family. The next morning two Aboriginals renewed the contact. A later meeting led to the collection of several Aboriginal words. Overall Good's diary contains fascinating descriptions of the Albany area before European settlement.

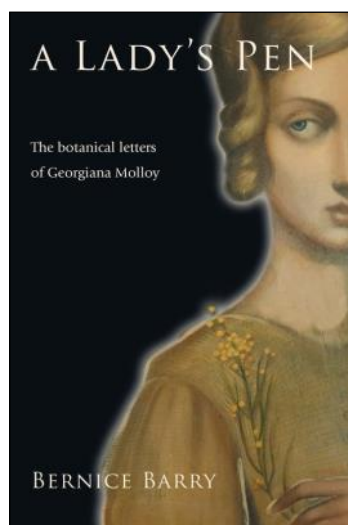
The botanical forays in WA, at Albany and further east in the Esperance area were replicated as Flinders sailed east on the New Holland coast, then north to Sydney, and eventually to the Gulf of Carpentaria. The members of the scientific party were assiduous in their work, however while in the Gulf *Investigator* was found to be unseaworthy. Before returning to Sydney for repairs Flinders decided to sail to Timor for fresh fruit and vegetables to combat scurvy. While there Good contracted the disease which ended his life in June 1803. At that time with Flinders attempting to return to England in the *Porpoise*, then being wrecked on the Great Barrier Reef the scientific party broke up with its members making their own way home, over time.

George and Moore have now rescued Peter Good from comparative botanic obscurity, publishing records which had previously been dispersed. They suggest that, although Brown was the principal botanist, it was Good who was very likely the primary collector. Brown told Banks, 'I shall often have to regret the loss of Peter Good, who was not only an experienced cultivator, but an acute observer and indefatigable collector'. (p.9)

At Kew Gardens a decade or so after Good's death 116 species from Australia had been introduced, and there was a tradition of growing Australian plants in a designated facility. Today he is commemorated by the genus *Goodia*, of which there are six species recognised in southern and eastern Australia, together with several landmarks. More importantly, Good's contribution to botanical history can now be better understood.

Bernice Barry, *A Lady's Pen: The botanical letters of Georgiana Molloy*, Redgate Consultants, Witchcliffe, 2023. In Library & Bookshop \$40.

Reviewer: Gillian Lilleyman



'You, – I doubt not have often heard of the inexhaustible properties of a Lady's Pen ...', Georgiana Molloy wrote to London-based plant collector James Mangles in 1838. Her words inspire the title of Bernice Barry's new book about Western Australian settler Georgiana Molloy.

In her biography, *Georgiana Molloy: The Mind That Shines*,

Barry drew on her heroine's wider correspondence to set her life against a backdrop of early southwest history. In *A Lady's Pen*, Barry, who admits it was difficult to part with Georgiana after writing her biography, affirms Georgiana's place in the field of 19th century scientific endeavour as the first woman in Western Australia to become internationally successful as a botanical collector. The focus is therefore on her letters to James Mangles about the plants she was sending him.

Living roughly mid-way between Augusta and Busselton, Barry is well placed to observe in season the species that Georgiana collected and the habitats and locations she described. Photographs of these are amongst the 32 colour plates in the book. Of special interest are the images of Georgiana's meticulously mounted pressed specimens, many still studied in world herbariums, some with original field notes and collection numbers in her handwriting. The first comprehensive list of the species that Georgiana forwarded to England is included as an indexed appendix, thanks to Barry's meticulous research.

Readers gain a clearer picture of James Mangles. His family's Western Australian connections are known — his cousin Ellen was married to Sir James Stirling, and the State's floral emblem *Anigozanthos manglesii* is named after his brother, Robert, who grew the first type specimen of the red and green kangaroo paw in his London garden. James Mangles however has until now remained a shadowy figure. The State Library WA catalogue entry for his two letter-books, the main reference source for *A Lady's Pen*, wrongly describes him as Lady Stirling's brother.

Barry covers Mangles' naval service, his collecting tours and publications, and his friendship with Charles Irby, giving readers a sense of Mangles' sensitivity; a

quality that undoubtedly endeared him to Georgiana Molloy. Of interest to garden historians will be Mangles' network of plant enthusiasts, luminaries such as John Lindley, whose collection Cambridge University later acquired; horticulturalists and writers Jane and John Claudius Loudon; Joseph Paxton at Chatsworth House and orchid collector George Wailes, who wrote to Mangles when Georgiana died that she had 'been very ungallantly overlooked by all the describers of her collections'. James Drummond paid Georgiana the greatest tribute. Although Mangles dismissed the colony's government botanist as his preferred collector, Drummond continued a long association with William Hooker at Kew Gardens. Drummond's proposal to Hooker to name the black kangaroo paw (*Macropidia fulginosa*), which his son had recently discovered, *Anigozanthus Molloyiae* in her honour was sadly not accepted. A boronia collected by Drummond was renamed *Boronia molloyae*, but over a century later.

Barry excitedly discovered, contrary to prior assumptions, that W G Pickering's paper in the *RWAHS Journal and Proceedings* in 1929 is not the first time Georgiana's writing appeared in print. Ninety years earlier, Mangles had published an extract from one of her letters in his 'The Floral Calendar', a copy of which he sent to Georgiana during her lifetime.

Over the course of their correspondence, from receiving his first request for plants in December 1836 until her death in April 1843, Georgiana wrote ten letters to Captain Mangles. Barry has published these unedited. But, as she points out, the original letters, which no longer exist, have already been edited, firstly by Mangles selecting what he wanted copied into his letter-books; and then by the accuracy of his amanuenses' transcriptions of what were possibly cross-written letters.

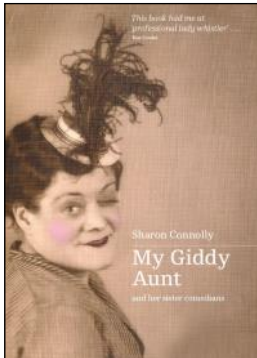
Reading the letters chronologically we see Georgiana's dedication to and growing confidence in her task. We sense her frustration at the infrequency of visiting ships, her urgency to compile material and finish letters in time to dispatch when a ship does call, and later her dismay when failing health prevents her fulfilling her 'dear friend' Mangles' requests, particularly for the seeds of the parasitic *Nuytsia floribunda*, a challenge for horticulturalists to propagate still.

Barry's presentation of Georgiana's words as closely as possible to their original form demonstrates her deep affection for their writer. It also reinforces the importance of contemporary documents for historical integrity, especially when history can be distorted to push a certain agenda.

Written in a clear elegant style, with generous annotations and end-notes sequentially numbered for easy reference, and a striking cover designed by southwest artist Lauren Wilhelm, *A Lady's Pen* is a most worthy addition to the body of work about this fascinating self-taught botanist.

Sharon Connolly, *My Giddy Aunt*, Upswell Publishing, Perth 2022. In Library & Bookshop \$30.

Reviewer: Patrick Cornish



‘A whistling maid and a crowing hen
Are liked by neither gods nor men’

Why is whistling seen as a male thing? Women, girls – either on stage or elsewhere – can be just as proficient at this musical lips trick as females who fly passenger jets or design railway tunnels. The little verse about maids and hens is among the gems in *My Giddy Aunt*, Sharon Connolly’s tribute to a great-aunt she never knew but did admire enormously in absentia.

‘Giddy aunt’, the phrase has rather lapsed as an expression of the mildest surprise, but my heavy-duty dictionary defines ‘giddy’ as ‘silly - light-hearted - dizzy’. This aunt, Gladys Shaw, was not silly. She was extremely entertaining, by all accounts. ‘An expert siffleur (whistler)’, we are told in the book’s foreword by historian Ann Curthoys. I like that gratifying and uplifting use of French, as with elevating ‘driver’ to ‘chauffeur’. Photographs of the ‘giddy’ performer include one of her in 1926, wearing a necktie and top hat, of course. The caption describes her as a flapper, which required another delve of confirmation into my dictionary. It is a ‘young woman especially of the 1920s who shows bold freedom from conventions in conduct and dress’.

Aha. Gladys, as well as ‘her sister comedians’, a subtitle mentioned on the cover, was definitely and laudably anti-conventional. This book is therefore much more than a gleeful portrayal of ladies who propagated a lot of fun. There’s serious discussion of how some women had the courage to take the stage, both literally and figuratively. Miss Shaw’s personal vision was as far as possible from the cliché-bound

woman as wife-mother-maker-of-scones.

In the early to mid-1930s – the very pit of the Great Depression – she did a remarkable job of lifting spirits in Australia. If the cricketer Donald Bradman batted his way out of the nation’s despond, Gladys excelled with a different sort of athleticism. If there were any eyebrows still unraised, as to how a lady of 39 should behave, they might have been raised on learning that in 1934 she married a man 14 years younger and continued to prove herself a mistress of possibilities.

My Giddy Aunt includes a family tree, which helps us appreciate the zigzag of generational ties that bind author to titular heroine. Connolly makes clear that though, generally speaking, marriage often ended the careers of female performers, ‘a wedding wouldn’t lower the curtain on Gladys’s performing life’. One of the indefatigable whistler’s nephews recalled that her wedding ring was in the shape of a question mark. Make of that what you will.

Connolly ensures that we understand the social context of why live performers were so important a century or so ago. Flappers like Gladys were whistling, drumming, singing and generally strutting their stuff before advent of the ‘talkies’. Films in 1926 were still ‘silents’, which is why theatres then employed musicians to play organs, pianos and other instruments. The great ‘sonic boom’ for cinemas was only a year away, with Al Jolson’s famous ‘The Jazz Singer’. Dialogue would then be full on, though in Australia the talkies era did not arrive till late 1928, this book reveals.

She died in 1960 and was buried at Karrakatta, not far from her brother Keith, who had killed himself. This man and his sad exit are another story that flutters in this thoroughly lively book.

What an opportunity her 65 years offered an obituarist of the more vivacious kind. Among the show turns of this ‘gladly aunt’, as we could perhaps perceive her, pun intended, was dancing the hesitation waltz with a woman. The only surprise is that Gladys ever hesitated at anything.

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