



HISTORY WEST

PUBLISHED BY THE ROYAL WESTERN AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

January-February 2024

GENERAL MEETING

The next meeting at Stirling House is on Wednesday 21 February at 6pm when Catherine Clark, CEO and State Librarian, State Library of WA, will present a talk on 'Old acquisitions, new meanings: unanticipated uses for State Library collections'. Refreshments available from 5.30pm; Bookshop open until 6pm.



Lucia Serventy (left) and another woman at the National Park, Swan View, September 1934. SLWA 226847PD.

The State Library's collections of West Australian material continue to reveal new perspectives on history. Catherine Clark will describe the importance of the J S Battye Library of West Australian History for the contemporary community in the reckoning of past injustice, truth telling and for the writing of new historiography. Catherine will share the new strategic directions for the State Library, current challenges, and the opportunities as we navigate our way towards commemorating 200 years of colonisation in Albany and Perth in 2026 and 2029 respectively.

After moving to Australia from Scotland as a teenager, **Catherine Clark** commenced her professional career in public libraries and, following experience in school and special libraries in the UK, worked in academic libraries in Western Australia for over twenty years at both the University of WA and Curtin University. Catherine commenced as CEO and State Librarian at the State Library of WA in April 2022, a role she is cherishing for its ability to reach and support the breadth and diversity of the entire Western Australian community.



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History in the City



Following President Richard Offen's interesting December talk, the Auxiliary presented a cheque for \$4,000 towards the costs of the 2026 issue of *Early Days* marking the Society's centenary. It is a wonderful gift!

All members extend a warm welcome to our new Auxiliary President Susan Hall and wish her every success.

HITC looks forward to your company in 2024 on the first Wednesday of the month (Mar to Dec) at Citiplace Community Centre, Perth Railway Concourse at 2pm; \$10 entry includes afternoon tea.

Our first talk for 2024 will be:
6 March: Lynn O'Hara – May Gibbs, her life and work.

Affiliates Newsletter

Congratulations to the Affiliates Committee and to Rosie Stroud (Eastern Goldfields Historical Society) for creating a monthly Affiliates newsletter to report on Affiliates' upcoming events, grants received, awards gained and grants available.

A wonderful initiative to keep everyone well informed.

Welcome to new members

James & Jeanette Grehan, Mark Hemery, Patrick Hughes, Glen McLaren, M R Somasunderam

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Forthcoming Events — Don't forget to book!

Or ring the office 9386 3841 admin@histwest.org.au

WORKSHOP



Stirling House, Nedlands

**Friday 23 February, 10am to 12.30
with 30 mins morning tea in middle**

Rhuwina Griffiths

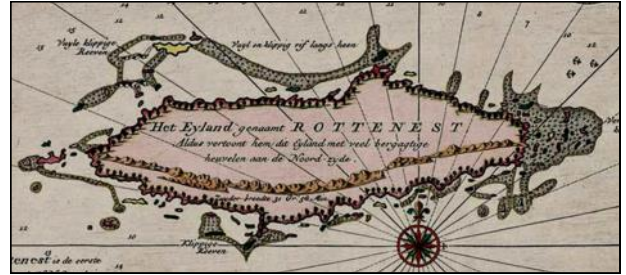
**Transform your family history research
into a book**

**A hands-on workshop exploring
the art of storytelling**

[Click here to book](#)



COMMUNITY TALK



Stirling House, Nedlands

Wednesday 28 February, 10 for 10.30-11.30am

Helena Johnstone

**Reefs, Wrecks and Daring Sailors:
maritime stories from Rottneest Island**

Some tales of the men and women who have been
connected to Rottneest Island since its discovery by
Dutch explorers.

[Click here to book](#)



Stirling House, Nedlands

Tuesday 19 March, 10 for 10.30-11.30am

Greg Branson

**Life on the trail with
James Sweeney's diary of the
1874 Forrest expedition**

Exploring the diary and re-tracing the journey

[Click here to book](#)



History in the City Talks March, April and May 2024

Why not come to Perth,
hear something of WA's history,
have a marvellous afternoon tea
and do some shopping?

EVERYONE WELCOME!

WHERE: Citiplace Conference Room
Perth Railway Station Concourse

WHEN: 2pm, 1st Wednesday of the month
March to December
Entry \$10.00 at the door
Bookings not required

Wed 6 Mar Lynn O'Hara, Chair,
May Gibbs Trust, South Perth
Behind the Gumnuts: a talk on
May Gibbs

Wed 3 Apr Eve White, Kings Park volunteer
Monuments & Statues in Kings Park

Wed 1 May Chris Holyday, author & historian
Lady Margaret Elvire Forrest
1844 – 1929: A Premier Position

Christmas Party



Poinsettias, baubles and tinsel decorated the tables at the Mosman Park Bowling Club where our party was held. President Richard donned his Santa hat to add to the festive atmosphere as he welcomed guests on arrival. Barman Nick poured the first drinks, and Pamela and Jo made sure everyone had the chance to win one of three magnificent Christmas hamper baskets before the raffle tickets were drawn.

The three lucky winners were all delighted they had supported the Society by buying a ticket (or five)!

A short formality during the evening was the presentation of a Fellowship to Helen Henderson for her exceptional contribution to the work of the Federation of Australian Historical Societies. Helen served in the capacities of President, Vice President and Secretary over many years and this acknowledgement on her retirement was a fitting thank you.

Three recently retired long-standing leaders of the RWAHS Council were nominated to receive an Award of Distinction in recognition for their outstanding service to the Society. Before Helen left the podium, she was presented with her Award. Her fellow awardees – Lennie McCall and Bob Nicholson – were unable to attend the Christmas party and will be presented with their awards at an appropriate time in 2024.

With formalities over and thank yous made, it was time for the President to wish everyone a Jolly Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Special thanks from all Society members to Convenor Georgina Wigley and the Tours & Events Committee for a very happy gathering which ended our year excellently!



T&E Convenor Georgina Wigley



Our President, Secretary & Treasurer



Helen Henderson presented with her FAHS Award by Nick Drew



Raffle winner Fiona Harris



Community Talk

A shoe box, a love affair and the Great War exhibitions



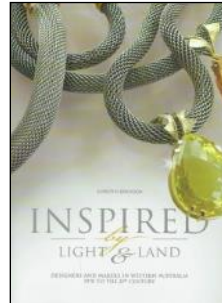
November's audience was delighted to hear our speaker and Artist-in-Residence **Wendy Lugg** recount the story of a visitor arriving at the Society carrying a shoe box overflowing with letters, photographs from World War I and some 1920s exhibition catalogues. It was an intriguing collection and set Wendy on a long research trail across Australia. Her talk was a rich summing up of her research findings. The treasures in the shoebox were a mixed collection, some items to be repatriated to the UK, others deposited in the Army Museum and the bulk forming the basis for the history Wendy re-constructed.

On a personal level the letters revealed a love affair between Bruce Newham who fought on the Western Front and Winifred Brooker, but it was a relationship not destined to survive in the long term because Newham was already married and then, after his divorce, in difficult financial circumstances. He worked as a stage manager in the arts industry after the war and was employed by Victoria Cross winner William Donovan Joynt to manage the postwar exhibition of unofficial war photographs that toured Australia alongside the official exhibition in 1920-21. These competing tours of spectacular enlargements of Great War photographs criss-crossed the nation, one telling the official story and the other painting a less censored picture of the conflict. During the war photography at the front was heavily controlled but cameras smuggled onto the battlefields in soldiers' pockets managed to record a more complete picture of diggers' lives and battles waged. However, after the war these two accounts rapidly merged with official and unofficial photographs being presented in both exhibitions. As well the war photographs (especially those enlarged and coloured) were sold to raise funds for the War Museum/War Memorial, resulting in the two sets of photographs becoming even more intertwined! It was a fascinating story at both personal and public levels, a fitting end to our Community Talks series for 2023. Many thanks to Wendy!

Book Launch

Dorothy Erickson, *Inspired by Light and Land – Designers and Makers in Western Australia 1970 to the 21st Century*, WA Museum, 2024. In Library.

Val Hutch



The Society was delighted to hold a book launch for Dorothy Erickson's recent publication *Inspired by Light and Land – Designers and Makers in Western Australia 1970 to the 21st Century*. This is a second part to her *Inspired by Light and Land – Designers and Makers in Western Australia 1829-1969*, published by the WA Museum in 2015.

Dorothy's research has spanned over twenty years and she was congratulated in gaining funding through difficult times to bring this book to fruition. It is a weighty tome of some 3 kg and 699 pages, covering the work of all the Western Australian artists in the field. The book is fully referenced, with colour plates throughout, a bibliography and an extensive 43-page index.



David Smith, former chair of the WA chapter of the Design Institute of Australia, congratulated Dorothy for her Induction into the DIA Hall of Fame in 2020. Only three jewellery designers and writers

have been recognised in this field, and Dorothy is the only one from WA. It is recognised as an Award of National Significance for leaders in the field.

Catriona Gregg, current chair of the Design Institute of Australia WA, explained that, because of the isolation of our city and state, many of the 50 artisans featured in the book have had to travel widely to contribute in both national and international exhibitions to achieve recognition and become leaders in their field. This effort began as early as 1851 when Western Australia sent exhibits to the Crystal Palace Exhibition in London.

President Richard Offen thanked the speakers and congratulated Dorothy on this fine contribution to the designers and makers culture in WA and declared the publication officially launched.

Books were available for purchase and signing by the author, and light refreshments served both before and after the launch made this a very pleasant social occasion.



Book Launch

Barry Leithhead, *A vision for Australia's Health: Dr Cecil Cook at Work*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, North Melbourne, 2019.



With Nicholas Hasluck presiding, Paul Genoni launched this interesting book at the Society last year. It follows the career of public health physician and administrator, Cecil Evelyn Aufreere Cook CBE.

Here are some excerpts from Paul Genoni's insightful speech which highlighted Cook's importance in the history of Australia's public health.

Paul Genoni

Western Australia was twice to be Cecil Cook's workplace, the first spanning 1924 to 1926, when he produced a groundbreaking report on the incidence, impact, treatment and prevention of leprosy. It was important work in itself, but it was also important to Cook in that it established his reputation and shaped his future career options. His choice was to dedicate his working life to the planning and management of public health and shaping the health and well-being of populations.

Where this ambition took him next was arguably the most fascinating part of his career, when in late 1926 he accepted the joint roles of Chief Health Officer and Chief Inspector of Aborigines in the Northern Territory. This blending of responsibilities precisely suited Cook's ambitions. In the NT he was confronted by huge challenges: firstly, of a small non-Indigenous population adjusting to the unique health challenges associated with tropical life; and secondly, a much larger Indigenous population confronted by the many health and social issues resulting from colonial settlement.

Being so far from Canberra and the sorts of scrutiny that would incur proved to be both a blessing and a curse. Cook was undoubtedly confident in his own intelligence, education, experience and judgment, and as a result was a passionate advocate of his own opinions and his preferred approach to the challenges he faced. No doubt he developed a reputation for being strident, even pugilistic. But he needed to be, as he frequently found himself standing astride the fault-line of local and national politics at a time when the two were often poles apart.

On the contentious matter of Indigenous welfare and 'Aboriginal protection' as it was then known, Cook appears to have done as well as possible. Certainly, he dodged nothing – be it Indigenous health, housing, criminal justice, inter-racial marriage, child removal, reserve lands, the role of missions, employment, wages. He tackled them all, not only because it was within his remit, but also because he saw these matters as inextricably linked to health outcomes. These years furthered his belief that a wholistic approach to community health should be the foundation for the administration of both health and Indigenous affairs. It was a belief that stayed with him for the rest of his career.

For Western Australian readers of this book, Cook's exercise of his powers in the Northern Territory will bring to mind the work of WA's own Chief Protector of Aborigines of the period, Auber Octavius Neville. The high regard in which Neville was then held, as compared with the scorn and even vitriol which his name now attracts, are a harsh reminder of how history has distanced itself from the then prevailing values. While Cook certainly hasn't escaped such criticism, what should be said is that he remained true to his ideals and principled belief that the long-term health benefit of the entire population was of paramount importance. During this period he fought both battles and wars over health and Indigenous issues, within the Territory and with the Commonwealth. He had wins and losses, but he also achieved widespread respect from his peers.

This section of the book is also enhanced by the appearance of some familiar figures. These include ethnologists and anthropologists Baldwin Spencer, A P Elkin and Ted Strehlow, the erratic Xavier Herbert, and the guillotining Federal Minister John 'Black Jack' McEwen, who finally brought Cook's role in the Territory to an end in 1939.

Having been dispatched from a role he loved in Darwin, the war probably came at the right time for Cook. He enlisted early and found himself for a short while in Ceylon, but as the focus turned to the Pacific and the defence of Australia his specialty in tropical medicine was in great demand. He now had a new population to protect—the men and women of the 2nd AIF. Malaria and typhus were his enemies as much as the Japanese, and by war's end, Lieut-Colonel Cook was the Army's senior ranking field medical officer. There is little doubt that, in circumstances where malaria could kill and debilitate at a greater rate than enemy action, Cook's expertise was an important contribution to Australia's success in New Guinea and the Pacific.

Shortly after being demobilised, Cook accepted the role for which he is best remembered in WA, when he became Commissioner of Public Health, the State's senior health officer. As Barry Leithhead's book establishes, Cook inherited this crucial arm of policy and practice at a time when it was unfit for purpose, and he single-mindedly set out to create for WA the nation's best public health system. Although his time in Perth was bedeviled with bureaucratic entanglements, his legacy on WA health was profoundly beneficial and continues to this day.

A subsequent move to Canberra in 1949 led to the final and most influential stage of Cook's public life. Suffice to say, he continued to engage with his great passions of tropical health and disease, Indigenous health, and disease prevention — while embracing a new raft of health challenges, and restructuring the Canberra health bureaucracy. At retirement in 1962 he had been a health administrator for four decades, most of it in senior roles where he never baulked from wielding his influence. It isn't too farfetched to say that by the time his career was over, there were few Australians who hadn't been directly touched by his work.

	King George's Sound to Cham- pion Bay.	About New Norcia: viz., 82 miles north from Perth, Western Australia.*	Eastern Districts.	Native Language used at and about Albany, King George's Sound, Western Australia.	Bunbury, Busselton, and along the Coast.	Blackwood, W.A.	Champion Bay, Victoria District, Western Australia.	Esperance, Shark Bay.
Karrakatta Ongkwa	Yow-art. Yow-gar. Yow-ard. Goo-mal Goo-mal. Wy-on-cho. Poot. Oot. Oot.	(Male) Yow-gar. (Female) Oot. (Male) Oot. (Female) Waa. Poot. Oot. Oot.	Yon-gar Goo-mal	(Male) Yungar. (Female) Wona. (Male) Gung. (Female) Gung. Poot. Oot. Oot.	Yonggar (male) ... Goonal ... Poot ...	Dug. (male) Wona. Poot. Gung. Gung. (Poot, Nung). Hil-ter.	Yow-t-ah. Woo-ah. Hil-ter.	Wonggar. Wonggar. Wonggar.
Bay Black Duck Goonan	Walgoo. Walgo. Kally-as ... Ngoo-noma. Goo-boo. Ngoo-noma Goonan	Walgoo. Walgoo. Kally-as ... Ngoo-noma. Goo-boo. Ngoo-noma Goonan	Wagoo Wagoo Goonan	Walgoo Walgoo Goonan	Wage Wage Goonan	Walgoo Walgoo Goonan	Walgoo Walgoo Goonan	Talleroo. Goonan (Hil-ter).

West Australian, 25 August 1904, p. 5.

Booked in for a Cuppa – Xmas Edition 2023



The Society's festive morning in December for booklovers and those searching for Christmas presents was a busy and happy event. Our MC, Patrick Cornish, presided over the gathering in lively style and the audience was entertained by a variety of new books, indeed something for everyone. Malcolm Quekett, journalist at the *West Australian*, set the ball rolling with an introduction to his widely read column, 'The Untold History of WA'. He roamed widely before settling on Marjorie Lyon's history, *These are my Wartime Diaries—Sumatra 1942-1945*. A medical doctor in the Malayan medical service, Marjorie was swept up in the Japanese advance in World War II and ended up a prisoner of war in Sumatra for over three years. Malcolm also highlighted the detailed research done by author Wes Olson to produce a new definitive history of *The Eleventh: the history of the 11th Australian Infantry Battalion, 1914-1919: Vol. 1: Gallipoli*.

WA Chairman of the Australian Garden History Society, John Viska, followed and led us through his new book (with Lisa Williams), *Historic Gardens of Perth: European settlement to Modernism*. It is a delightful publication full of wonderful photographs of historic gardens. Michael Thomas then introduced us to *Map of William*, reading interesting excerpts from this historical fiction story of fifteen-year-old William who in 1909 embarks on the journey of a lifetime through the northwest of WA. It becomes a battle for survival. Unfortunately Dr Jordan Goetze, marine ecologist and fisher, was ill on the day and could not join us to discuss his joint (with Paul Iskov) publication *Scale to Tail*. However we discovered that the cookbook promotes the sustainable eating of Australian seafood and offers many recipes to ensure that fish are eaten from head to tail, nothing wasted. Soups and stocks are added to the more expected recipes. Stop filleting fish and throwing the rest away; don't be a 'picky' eater! This is a cookbook with a message.

The morning concluded with our in-house expert on children's books, Natalie Richards, displaying a selection of children's books, all promising to make well-received Christmas presents.

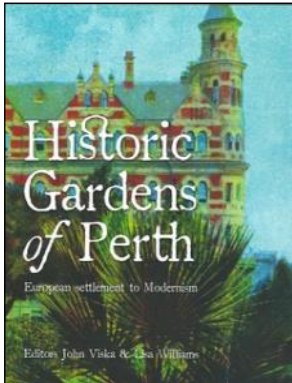
Many thanks to **Common Bakery** for the scrumptious morning teacakes as well as to the team of volunteers who attended happily to everyone's needs. Congratulations to those who won the spot prizes and thank you to those who organised the gifts.



Book Review

John Viska & Lisa Williams (eds), *Historic Gardens of Perth: European settlement to Modernism*, Scott Print, Perth, 2023. In Library.

Reviewer: Pamela Statham Drew



This handsome book of 202 pages is the first to tell the story of Perth's gardens from colonisation to the present. It has its origins in two garden history exhibitions: the first *Historic Gardens of Perth* in 2011 and the second *Historic Gardens of Perth – Western Suburbs* in 2018. The latter was held at the Cottesloe Civic Centre, itself a historic

garden dating from the early 1900s. Unlike previous garden histories that have focussed on the horticultural aspects of gardens, this versatile publication takes a broader approach encompassing pleasure as well as productive gardens and includes the influence of personalities and societies on garden evolution.

In a series of chronological garden 'episodes', the reader is treated to intriguing glimpses of Perth's past – including the pines at Cottesloe, Queens Gardens, Hyde Park, Mount Street and Gallop House. Early nurseries are introduced, including their influence on garden design and plant choice. The latter, it is suggested, often featured 'disabled plants,' as

gardeners are susceptible to differences in plants, and these are usually variations or mutations of wild plants!

Included is a comprehensive index and list of selected further reading. However the great strength of this publication is its extensive use of excellent photographs, in both black-and-white and colour. These are detailed in two pages of references. Much of the textual analysis focuses on the early photographs, an immense pleasure for garden historians.

The book presents well, and will not disappoint readers.

Call for books for the Giant Second Hand Book Sale 5-7 April 2024



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.

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