



HISTORY WEST

PUBLISHED BY THE ROYAL WESTERN AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

March 2024

GENERAL MEETING

The next meeting at Stirling House is on Wednesday 20 March at 6pm when Dr Bobbie Oliver will present a talk on 'Against the Draft – Western Australians who resisted military conscription and Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War'.

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



Gary Cook speaking at an anti-war rally in Perth, 1971.

'The treatment was brutal. I was there only seven days. [Gary] was there for 18 months'.

'In solitary [where Mike was sent for refusing to call a prison officer "sir"] there was a bucket, a mattress on the floor and a Holy Bible. I got to read the Song of Solomon and the Book of Job'.

'I never regained any trust in society'.

Mike Payne, Gary Cook and Bill Thomas were each imprisoned for refusing to register for National Service, and to be conscripted with the prospect of serving in the Vietnam War, where more than 19,000 of their fellow conscripts went and 414 of them died.

In the context of the 'birthday ballot' by which young men were conscripted for military service from 1964 to 1972, my paper relates the stories of five Western Australians. One enlisted but later sought exemption

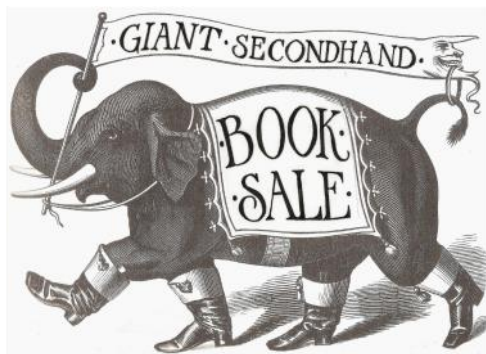
after finding he could not continue with the brutal training. Three refused to comply with National Service and spent periods of time underground and in prison; one was sentenced for a violent crime. Their experiences reveal the grim reality of what it was like for a 20-year-old man, who could not yet vote, to have to make choices that would impact the remainder of his life.

Bobbie Oliver is an honorary research fellow in humanities at UWA. Her publications on resistance to military conscription include *Hell No! We Won't Go! Resistance to conscription in postwar Australia* (Interventions, 2022) and *Peacemongers. Conscientious Objectors to Military Service in Australia* (Fremantle, 1997).



RWAHS giant second hand Book Sale

Friday 5 April 4-6pm — Saturday 6 April 9am-5pm — Sunday 7 April 9am-4pm



Make a note in your diary to visit our sale bonanza and pick up some wonderful reading.

There will be choice for everyone, children and adults history books, including West Australian writings, fiction and non-fiction, paperbacks and hardbacks, serials and reference works.

Thousands of books at give-away prices!

Pay us a visit, nab some bargains and support your Society. This is our biggest fundraising event of the year & you can help.

If you have any books to add to the sale, please deliver or we will collect them.

9386 3841 or admin@histwest.org.au

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Forthcoming Events — Don't forget to book!

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



Stirling House, Nedlands

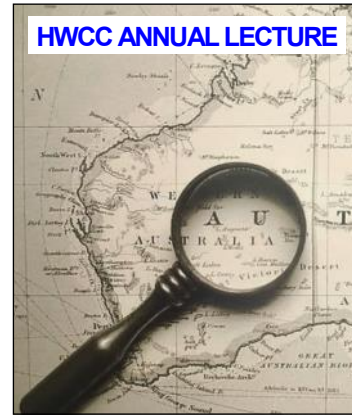
Tuesday 19 March, 10 for 10.30-11.30am

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](#)



SAVE THE DATE!

HISTORY WEST ANNUAL LECTURE

UWA Club Auditorium

Thursday 6 June, 5.30 for 6pm

People's stories making Australian history

Australia today is shaped by three epic stories -
our ancient heritage, British inheritance and
multicultural transformation

A panel of three speakers will explore our storied
past in Western Australia

Please don't forget to tell your diary
Booking details in April



Stirling House, Nedlands

Saturday 20 April, 8.30 for 9am start

**Exploring Perth's expanding Northern
Corridor to Yanchep National Park**

Join the tour to experience history in the making as
we visit the Ocean Reef Marina, ride the train to
Butler and discover new suburban areas such as
Alkimos. Enjoy a two course lunch at Yanchep
Lavender Farm then add a touch of nostalgia as we
step back in time to explore Yanchep National Park.

[Click here to book](#)



Stirling House, Nedlands

Wednesday 24 April, 10 for 10.30-11.30am

Criena Fitzgerald

**The life and times of Faiz Mahomet,
'Afghan' cameleer/businessman
and entrepreneur**

[Click here to book](#)



New premises update for members

Many of you have attended meetings at the Society about the proposed purchase of a property at 186 Hay Street, Subiaco. We thank you for your interest and support.

A letter was received from Lotterywest on 22 December saying we were successful in our application for a grant of \$1.2m for refurbishment of 186 Hay Street. This was great news and a breakthrough which enabled us, in January, to enter further negotiations to purchase the property. We had also found a purchaser for our present premises.

Unfortunately, in the meantime, the vendors had let more lease contracts that made the property no longer suitable for our purchase. We required vacant possession to undertake refurbishment and occupation. As a result, we have withdrawn from all further negotiations. This is a great disappointment and means that the search for new premises has to continue, as does our fundraising.

We thank Lotterywest for their support and are in discussion with them on the future of the grant.

Richard Offen and Sally Anne Hasluck

WILLIAMS / LEE STEERE PUBLICATION PRIZE 2024

\$1000

The Society is offering a prize for a non-fiction publication, either in print or electronic (pdf) form, on Western Australian history, published between 1 June 2023 and 31 March 2024. Entries must be over 20,000 words in length.

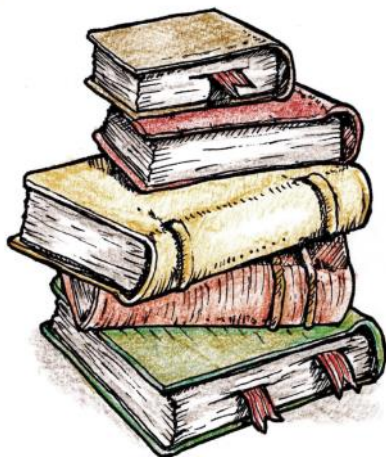
Possible topics include a biography of a West Australian, family history, local or community history. Self-published entries are welcome. Two copies of entries are required: one is retained and placed in the Society's library. For e-books, no printout is needed but two USB drives carrying the book are required.

Winner will be announced at the Society's Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 16 October 2024.

Closing date: 28 June 2024, the last Friday.

Entries must be submitted to the Society office:
Royal Western Australian Historical Society 49
Broadway, Nedlands WA 6009

Tel (08) 9386 3841 Email: admin@histwest.org.au



History in the City

First talk of the year — **Wed 6 March 2pm**

**Citiplace Conference Room,
Perth Rwy Station Concourse**

Behind the Gumnuts: the legacy of May Gibbs

Lynn O'Hara, Chair of the May Gibbs Trust,
South Perth



Cecilia May Gibbs MBE
(1877-1969)

May Gibbs, artist, author, illustrator, cartoonist and mother of the Gum-Nut Babies and iconic Snugglepoot and Cuddlepie characters, left a remarkable legacy through her generous bequest to children's charity groups; her repeated calls for greater care of the environment; her quirky sense of humour that has pervaded her irresistible interpretation of our bush flora and fauna, all of which continues to weave through our lives.

Welcome to new members

Meredith Wilkes, Lefki Kailis, Christine Haines, Helen McQuie, Helen Foley, Lindsay Rollo, Larry Graham, David Cox, Lesley Williams, Myalup Community Assoc, Partho Goldney

ADVERTISEMENT

Why History?

It promotes the understanding of societies, events, movements and developments that have shaped humanity from earliest times.

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Mystery Photographs

Dancing and footy in the Southwest

Hilaire Natt

Two group photographs recently donated to the Library celebrate social life in the southwest.

The first shows a large, elegantly dressed crowd at the Firemen's Ball in Katanning in the 1930s. The donor, Marilyn Gazeley, from Cervantes Historical Society, identifies her Aunt Joy McNamara as 'the first lady from the left standing'. Seated on the ground are eight firemen in uniform with helmets on the ground in front of them, while the first row (seated) includes several members of the band in formal attire. The photographer is J R Taylor, Katanning Studio, and the location may be the Katanning Town Hall.

The second photograph is of a sporting team of approximately 30 young men formally dressed in blazers with a crest on the pocket and matching ties. They stand next to a bus parked beside what looks like the Horseshoe Bridge in Perth, probably in the 1950s. The crest (which is unclear) may be SFC and above it the league, indicating a country football club, probably in Perth for Country Week.

Any information or clues for identification would be most welcome. Please contact the Library on library@histwest.gov.au or phone 9386 3841.



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Welcome to new volunteers



Library volunteer
Carol Newton-Smith



Welcome to **Joan Carney** (long-time member but new volunteer with the museum team.) Joan is researching information for the Australian Dress Register and Collections WA which we hope can be uploaded soon.

Joan has introduced her granddaughter **Emma Carney** who is currently updating the records of unframed artworks stored in boxes in the Tranby Room. With her quick computer skills, Emma will be a great asset to the team.

UNESCO Convention on Underwater Cultural Heritage: Western Australia's crucial role

Graeme Henderson AM, CitWA

Our thanks to member Graeme Henderson for this fascinating overview.

Since early settlement days, West Australians have taken a strong interest in our maritime heritage. Dutch mariners stumbled upon the west coast before James Cook's explorations on the east, and we have evidence that ancestors of present-day Aboriginal Australians migrated here by sea 50,000 years ago.

Our museums and literature reflect this interest. It seems fitting that local initiatives led to UNESCO's adoption of an international treaty: the *Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage*, 2001. The Convention provides principles, rules and standards to protect underwater cultural heritage, and promotes cooperation among States, international organisations, and other stakeholders. It needs to be ratified by the Australian Government, inviting a more expansive leadership role in developing Australia's network of underwater cultural heritage (UCH). Here is how it began, and developed.

It has been a personal journey for me. On Easter Sunday 1963, I had just turned 16 when I found the 1656 *Vergulde Draeck* – the first Australian-waters discovery of a 17th century Dutch East India Company shipwreck site. My name appears in the State's *Maritime Archaeology Amendment Act*, 1997, as 'primary discoverer'. I joined the WA Museum in 1969, becoming the first Director of the WA Maritime Museum in 1992.

Back in 1963, WA Museum Director David Ride was contemplating expanding the scope of his natural science museum to include 'human studies', particularly maritime archaeology. In December we (the four divers in the water when I found the wreck) completed a Deed of Assignment, transferring our rights as finders to the Museum.

Our motive was to inspire site protection and management. We succeeded extraordinarily. The gift was the catalyst for the world's first protective legislation for post-classical era shipwrecks, the creation of the WA Maritime Museum and the initiation of UNESCO's 2001 Convention, a multilateral treaty of international law protecting the UCH of signatory States.

The Commonwealth's Acts acknowledged the *Australia Netherlands Committee on Old Dutch Shipwrecks (ANCODS) Agreement* of 1972, whereby the Dutch government, as heirs to the *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC)*, transferred to Australia their rights to UCH in Australian waters.

The Australian public was fed up with the destructive activities of treasure hunters, and record Shipwrecks Museum visitation levels showed that people were impressed with our research, excavation and exhibition programs. However, looting activities were fast developing on UCH sites of many other countries, and Australia was called upon for help.

In 1988 Australia ICOMOS member Jon Womersley, wrote to UNESCO about an Australian company issuing a prospectus for shares in a treasure salvage company to plunder sites overseas. He urged UNESCO to develop an international convention for their protection.

UNESCO advised Australia ICOMOS to establish the International Committee on Underwater Cultural Heritage (ICUCH), and to identify a suitable person (an Australian in the first instance) as Chair, together with a specialist institution prepared to provide administrative support. The WA Museum agreed to provide administrative support, allowed Australia ICOMOS to propose me as Chair, and named the Maritime Museum as administrative focus.

ICUCH's object is to promote international cooperation in identification, protection and conservation of sites, and to advise ICOMOS on development of programs in this field. The Museum provided support from a Commonwealth grant, and I brought together UCH experts from twenty countries as members.

Our UCH developments attracted the support of Australian legal experts Patrick O'Keefe and Lyndel Prott, who saw the need for a partnered approach between legal and heritage experts. The International Law Association's Cultural Heritage Law Committee, chaired by O'Keefe, prepared a draft convention on the UCH, collaborating with Prott, UNESCO's Chief of International Standards Section.

ICUCH assisted O'Keefe in preparing a set of principles for attachment to the Draft Convention as a Charter: so that States could judge whether what archaeologists had done on sites was acceptable. From these principles, we developed the *International Charter on the Protection and Management of Underwater Cultural Heritage*, adopted by ICOMOS in 1996. Intergovernmental negotiations produced the text of the 2001 Convention, Australia playing a key role. A modified form of the Charter was incorporated as the Annex Rules.

In September 2022 the Convention had been ratified by 72 countries. Sadly, Australia has not yet ratified. The Convention has transformed approaches to the UCH throughout the Atlantic rim.

Ratification will not create onerous red tape. Since enactment of the Convention the Australian Government's *Underwater Cultural Heritage Act*, 2018, has been constructed with all necessary amendments to enable ratification. The experiences of ratified nations have not shown examples of regulatory difficulties for economic projects and development. Rather, ratification creates benefits for participants and collaboration between nations.

Now there are no barriers to ratification. Australia can demonstrate its commitment to the Convention and assert its role as world leader in the management of the UCH. Recommendation 2 of the Parliament of Australia's Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, Report 207 (March 2023) reads: 'The Committee supports the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage and recommends that binding treaty action be taken'.

References

J Domicelj, Letter to J Bannister, Director, WA Museum, 23 April 1991.

P O'Keefe, *Shipwrecked Heritage, a commentary on the UNESCO Convention on Underwater Cultural Heritage*, 2nd edn, Institute of Art & Law, Great Britain, 2014.

P Playford, *Carpet of Silver. The Wreck of the Zuytdorp*. UWAP, Nedlands, 1996.

J Womersley, manager, State Heritage Branch, to A Raidl, Director Cultural Heritage Division, UNESCO, Paris, 15 Jan 1988.

Percy Black: ‘The greatest fighting soldier in the AIF’

Dr Peter Gifford



Percy Black is one of only a handful of soldiers for whom a personal monument has been erected in their honour on a battlefield. The monument stands close to the ‘jumping-off point’ for 16th Bn on the morning of 11 April 1917 at Bullecourt.

Courtesy of member Dr G M (Mike) Galvin AM RFD.
(Mike is photographed paying his respects).

The First World War began in Australia, as in Britain itself and throughout most of the Empire, with great enthusiasm for the Imperial cause, reflected by the numbers of young men who volunteered for military service abroad. This enthusiasm began to wane, however, as the casualty figures started coming in – in Australia’s case, first from the Gallipoli campaign and then from the killing grounds in France and Belgium. The waning enthusiasm also helped inflame latent sectarianism in Australia, as the Irish Roman Catholic minority learned of the savage British reprisals following the 1916 Easter Rebellion in Dublin. Men of Irish descent had formed about one third of all volunteers for the First Australian Imperial Force (AIF), and they continued to fight bravely on the Western Front. But at home in Australia those of Irish descent were prominent among people who began to question the government’s efforts to introduce conscription for the British cause. Their leader, Archbishop Daniel Mannix of Melbourne, had been indifferent to Irish nationalism before the war, but is said to have wept at the news that the English were shooting Irishmen yet again in Dublin. Mannix became thereafter a leader of the fight against conscription, which was defeated ultimately by plebiscites of the Australian people in 1916 and again the following year, by a greater majority. Both campaigns

were bitter, with those against – including the Roman Catholic Irish – being accused by many in the Protestant majority of disloyalty to the Empire and the war effort.

By contrast however, the mood among the fighting men in the AIF is said by military historians to have been ecumenical. Bravery was all that mattered, hence the award of a Distinguished Service Order to the Catholic padre of WA’s 11th Bn, Father John Fahey, for his efforts at Gallipoli and in France, and a Victoria Cross to another Irish-born volunteer, Private Martin O’Meara of the 16th Bn, mainly for saving life at Pozieres. Another soldier of Irish descent in the 16th, Percy Black, received a DSO for his efforts at Pozieres, to complement the Distinguished Conduct Medal, mention in despatches and field commission he had been awarded on Gallipoli. Black, however, came from a different Irish tradition.

Like O’Meara, Black had enlisted as a private soldier at Blackboy Hill camp on Perth’s outskirts. Both men were unmarried, and had been working in rural occupations in WA before the war, O’Meara as a railway sleeper-cutter near Collie, and Black on the goldfields. Percy Black (1877-1917) was born at Beremboke, Victoria, eleventh child of William John Black, farmer, and his wife Ann, née Longmore; both parents were natives of the Glens of Antrim in Protestant Northern Ireland. He became a carpenter before going prospecting on WA’s goldfields. In 1901-13 he worked claims at Black Range and Sandstone and was mining at Mount Jackson when war was declared.

Black enlisted as a private on 13 September 1914 and sailed for Egypt from Albany on 31 December. He first saw action at the Gallipoli landing on 25 April 1915 when his unit took over the Pope’s Hill zone. Within a week Lance Corporal Black, who headed one of the machine-gun crews, had been highly commended by his commanding officer. Though wounded, he refused to leave his post until his weapon had been rendered unworkable by Turkish bullets. On 2 May he mounted a machine-gun beyond Gully Ridge; his only companion was shot dead but Black, surrounded by Turks and without any assistance, fired into the enemy lines until his ammunition was exhausted. For this action he received the DCM and five days later was commissioned second lieutenant. He was mentioned in despatches on 5 August, promoted temporary captain four days later, and remained at Gallipoli until the evacuation. The official historian, Charles Bean, later described Black and his No. 2 gunner H W Murray (later lieutenant colonel, VC, DSO and Bar, DCM, Croix de Guerre) as ‘men of no ordinary determination’ and their ‘magnificent’ machine-gun section as ‘possibly the finest unit that ever existed in the A.I.F.’. Bean, who saw all the major actions involving Australian soldiers at Gallipoli and in France, considered Black ‘the greatest fighting soldier in the A.I.F.’. Black had had no military experience at all before the war.

After the Gallipoli evacuation, the Australian infantry units were deployed to the Western Front. Black—promoted to major—was deployed to fight in the trenches at Pozieres. Many a Digger said, ‘If there was a hell on earth, then Pozieres was it’; O’Meara and Black would have concurred. Black’s dauntless leadership against incredible odds bolstered his illustrious reputation. At Mouquet Farm, he was badly wounded in the neck while immobilising a German machine gun. The severity of the wound required specialist treatment in London. While on day leave from hospital, Black and a friend went sightseeing. As they crossed Piccadilly Circus, dodging the double-decker buses, Black said to his friend, ‘I’ll be glad to get back to the battalion, mate. A man’s not safe here’.

His next engagement was the first battle of Bullecourt on 11 April 1917. Tanks failed to reach their objective, the artillery was mismanaged and the infantry found themselves facing intense machine-gun fire along an unbroken barbed wire entanglement. Black led his men through a ‘hurricane fusillade’, captured the first trenches and pressed on towards the support-line, but was then shot through the head; he was one of 640 casualties in the 16th Battalion that day. He has no known grave and his name is commemorated in France on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial and on memorials in Bullecourt. The action in which he died is depicted in a diorama in the Australian War Memorial; a nearby painting by Charles Wheeler DCM is entitled ‘Death of Major Black’. In 1917 his returned 16th Bn comrades also installed a memorial plaque to him still in place in St George’s Cathedral in Perth.

What's in a picture?

Strawberry Rock Road School

Julie Taylor

This little building is the Strawberry Rock Road School, which served a mining settlement in the Yilgarn for eight years until 1937. The photograph, taken in 1932, is one of a series in the collection taken by Evelyn Lehman (née Faul) who was a teacher at the school. The other photographs show the rear of the building and as many as 18 pupils posing in front of the school or in various theatrical costumes.



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Gold was discovered in the Yilgarn in 1887 and the district experienced a gold rush until 1920.

In the 1920s the western part of the district was opened up for agriculture – at first wheat, then sheep and eventually back to wheat in the 1960s. There was a renewal in mining in the 1930s. Small, often single-teacher, schools opened and closed with the fortunes of the settlements they served.

The Strawberry Rock Road School building had previously been at Golden Ridge – tenders were called for its removal to Strawberry Rock Road in 1929.

The Strawberry Rock itself is a large, flat expanse of granite that is often compared to a pancake. It is approximately 25 km to the southwest of Southern Cross, the principal town in the Yilgarn.

A newspaper article in 1929 claimed that Strawberry Rock was so named because of a tin of strawberry jam that was stolen by a surveyor from a wagon left unattended nearby. There are two wells near the rock – travellers relied on the wells for watering their donkeys, camels and bullocks. In the early years, the area around the rock was also a popular spot for recreation for nearby communities.

Confusingly, there was also a Strawberry Rock School, which was established near the rock and later re-named Troy school after the surrounding locality. This school served the agricultural community in the Troy district.

A lively inter-school sports carnival featured on the local calendar. Ten schools competed in 1931 and 14 in 1936, including Strawberry Rock Road whose colours were red and gold.

Evelyn Lehman was interviewed in the early 1980s about her life in the Yilgarn. She had fond memories of the Strawberry Rock Road School. She said it 'was the best school I ever taught in as far as the building was concerned'. The building was clad in corrugated iron – it is not hard to imagine how cold it would have been on winter mornings, and how stifling in the summer. She described the schoolroom as being 24 feet square with a jarrah dado up to five feet, and the rest of the room lined with plaster. She mentions that it had a ceiling in it (!) and praised the 'lovely old fashioned windows' and brick fireplace, saying that the brick fireplace was much better than the old iron fireplaces in other schools.

The side of the school not seen in this photograph had an enclosed porch with washbasins at the end of it.

Miss Faul's tenure at the school ended in 1933 when she was transferred to Bruce Rock.

The school building was on the move again in 1938. After the school closed, the building was advertised for sale and removal by public tender in June of that year. A note attached to the photograph collection says that the building was moved to Southern Cross where it served as the Anglican Church hall until it was demolished in 1982.

Reference

Lyall Hunt (ed.), *Yilgarn: Good country for hardy people: landscape and people of the Yilgarn Shire, Western Australia*, 1988.

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Book Reviews

Noel Nannup & Francesca Robertson,
Aboriginal Journey Ways: How ancient trails shaped our roads, ECU & Main Roads WA, 2022. In Library.

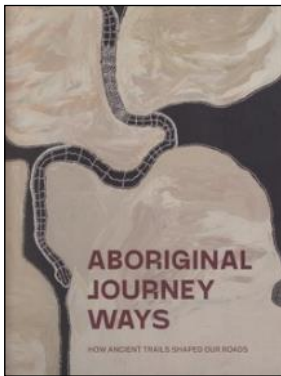
Reviewer: Lenore Layman

Aboriginal Journey Ways is a visually beautiful book, containing a great number of paintings by prominent Aboriginal artists together with spectacular photographs of WA landscapes — all in colour. This combination produces a stunning large format book

which draws the eye and invites browsing.

The book is structured around sketch maps of traditional Aboriginal travel routes, the likely first paths of WA's roads today. The book is mostly stories of places along the way. Elders recount Dreaming stories that carry songlines across the country and these stories are linked to the deep archeological past when cyclones, tsunamis, floods and tectonic shifts transformed the land.

The more historical section of the book is titled 'Resistance, resilience and a series of daring escapes' and focuses on the damage done by colonisation to



Aboriginal people, telling of massacres, the impact of pastoralism, mission life and child removal. Contemporary Elders explain the damage done. The stories of various places around WA are touched on; for instance, Noonkanbah’s story is vividly told in text and photographs.

The book challenges historians to look more closely at the early colonial roads and the extent to which they overlay the existing walking trails. It is mostly assumed the roads followed the tracks but mapping and documentation remains to be done.

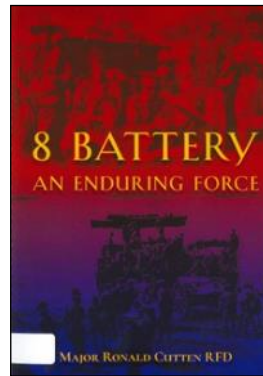
Aboriginal Journey Ways would be a splendid book to accompany travellers in their cars as they visit far-flung parts of the State, an addition to the printed and digital maps travellers carry with them as they explore.

* * * * *

Major Ronald Cutten RFD, *8 Battery : an enduring force*, Hesperian Press, Victoria Park, 2023. In Library & Bookshop \$66.

Reviewer: Jeanette Longwood

Cutten’s well written book focuses on the service of the men in the wholly Western Australian artillery battery – 8 Battery, 3rd Australian Field Artillery Brigade – which formed at the outbreak of World War I. The author draws on the war dairies of the troops, official war dairies, newspaper articles, photographs



and maps. He shows that there was a continuous chain of service by artillery men in the various artillery units from the formation of the first artillery unit in WA in 1872.

The book explores the artillery unit’s campaigns in World War I at Gallipoli and the Western Front. Cutten provides amazing information about its activities, including

how the artillery was manhandled into gullies at ANZAC, and in the Somme, including at Polygon Wood and Ypres. He includes excerpts from men’s war dairies, recording the daily events as they happened, and skilfully weaves these diary narratives with the more formal information from the official unit dairies. He uses maps to demonstrate where the men were posted during battles. Photographs of men and artillery in action provide vivid visual images of events.

Additionally, there is information on militia in WA from the formation of the Swan River Colony, and an extensive coverage of artillery units that were formed after World War I to the present day. He emphasises the camaraderie among men who served in these artillery units, and the Artillery Association. Cutten was in school cadets and later undertook national service. He joined the 3rd Field Regiment as a gunner, rising through the ranks to become its Battery Commander.

The striking cover of this book uses the colours of the regiment and the book includes a significant bibliography and index. It is well presented and celebrates the service of WA artillery men.

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

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