



Founded 1926

# HISTORY WEST™

PUBLISHED BY THE ROYAL WESTERN AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

October 2024

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**The next meeting at Stirling House is on Wednesday 16 October at 6pm.  
Refreshments available from 5.30pm; Bookshop open until 6pm.**

### AGENDA

1. Welcome & Apologies by President/Chair of Council.
  2. Confirmation of minutes of AGM, 20 September 2023.
  3. Business arising from the minutes.
  4. Treasurer's Report and presentation of Annual Accounts.
  5. President & Chairperson's Annual Report.
  6. Proposed constitutional amendments - presentation of special resolution.
  7. Appointment of Returning Officer/Chair.
  8. Vote on Special Resolution.
  9. Motion re the election of councillors and the constitutional amendments.
  10. Election and declaration of elected members to Council.
  11. Elected President takes the chair.
  12. Confirmation of Patron (and Vice-Patrons).
  13. Approval of Honorary Advisors recommended by Council.
  14. General Business.
- Meeting closes.

### Proposed amendments to the Constitution

That the members of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society (Inc) approve by special resolution alterations to its Constitution (adopted on 15 May 2019) to:

- correct a small number of typographical errors;
- reduce the minimum number of Council members by removing the requirement to include the Immediate Past-President and reducing the number of –
  - Vice-Presidents from two (2) to one (1),
  - Ordinary Council members from ten (10) to eight (8), and
  - Affiliated Societies Committee representatives from two (2) to one (1).
- increase the maximum number of consecutive years for which the President is allowed to be elected to the office of President from three (3) to five (5) years;
- include in the powers, duties and responsibilities of the Executive of the Society, wording that expressly mentions finances as part of the day to day administration and finances of the Society; and
- remove the annual requirement to invite the Governor, Premier and Leader of the Opposition to be Patron and Vice-Patrons of the Society and open the way for other suitable persons to be invited.

Following the meeting, the President will take pleasure in presenting the winner of the **A E Williams/Lee Steere Book Prize for 2024** as well as any special commendations. The winner will be invited to respond & we will all take the opportunity for congratulations!

## Good News from Lotterywest

The Society has been successful in its grant variation application with the outcome being \$1.7m towards the purchase of 109 Stirling Hwy, Nedlands. We thank Lotterywest for this generous support. An offer has only been possible through our donors' generous support too. Of course, we do not know if our offer will be accepted but we need to keep you, our members, informed. If successful we will hold a presentation and information meeting for you all.

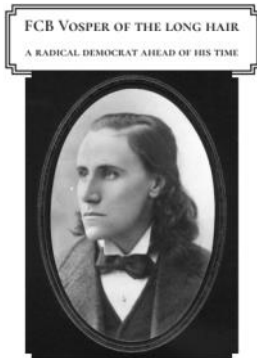
**Sally Anne Hasluck, Chair HWCC & Richard Offen, President**

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# Forthcoming Events — Don't forget to book!

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

## HISTORY IN THE CITY



Citiplace Conference Room, Perth Rwy Station Concourse

Wednesday 2 October, 2pm

**F C B Vosper of the long hair – A radical democrat ahead of his time**

**Chris Holyday**

‘Apart from the Premier, Sir John Forrest, no public figure was more widely known in the West Australian gold rush of the 1890s than F C B Vosper. Street-corner agitator, vitriolic newspaper editor and state politician, he achieved remarkable prominence while still in his twenties’. [Prof. E Jaggard]

Entry \$10 at the door  
Includes afternoon tea

## COMMUNITY TALK



Marion Kickett



Janet Millett

**Two York women reflect on York Aboriginal and settler women's lives**

**Carol Littlefair & Marion Kickett**

Wednesday 30 October,

10 for 10.30-11.30am

Dr Marion Kickett Is a Balardong -Whadjuk woman of the Noongar Nation will tell of her life on the York Native Reserve.

Carol Littlefair's subject is Janet Millett, author of *An Australian Parsonage* (1872) and wife of Edward Millett, colonial chaplain to Holy Trinity Church in York (1864-1869).

[Click here to book](#) or scan the QR code



## PERTH WALKING TOUR



**Discovering Perth's oldest buildings**

**Richard Offen**

**Saturday 2 November, 10.15am assembly for 10.30am start**

**Starting from the undercroft of Perth Town Hall**

**Duration: Approximately an hour**

Join the Society's President for a relaxed, friendly and informative walking tour. See the oldest section of brick wall in Perth and learn about the history and stories of the construction of some of the city's earliest buildings. Discover central Perth's oldest standing residence, church and building.

Cost \$20. Bookings essential

Only 25 places available

[Click here to book](#) or scan the QR code



## HISTORY MYSTERY MONDAY



**Monday 21 October, 10am-Noon**  
**Stirling House, 49 Broadway, Nedlands**

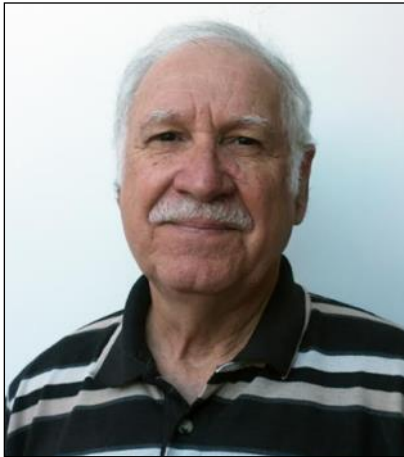
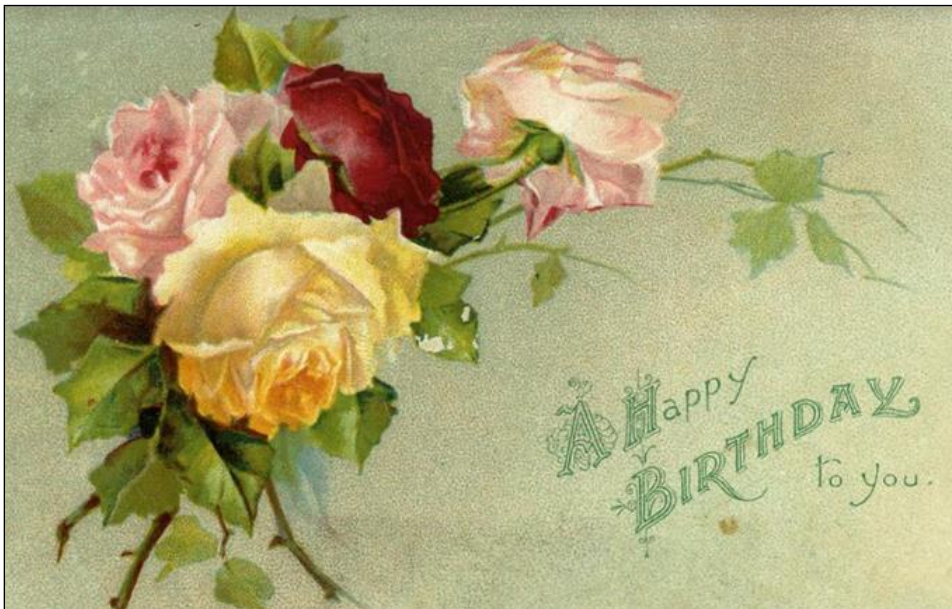
**A Mystery photo in the Library**  
**A Mystery artefact in the Museum**

**A Bookshop mystery revealed by**  
**Chris Holyday Author of**  
***Margaret Forrest, A Premier Position***

**Free entry, everyone welcome**



Enjoy a free cuppa, courtesy of Daniel Ranshaw of Realmark, from the onsite coffee van



John Viska

### Auxiliary's fund-raising morning tea

A very happy August morning was spent when members and friends enjoyed the story of roses together with much conversation and a sumptuous morning tea. John Viska, chairman of the WA branch of the Australian Garden History Society, explored the history of roses in WA, beginning with early colonial settlement through to the present day. The door prize was won by member Frances Morrell.



Lauris Grose & Caroline Bray



Helen Hussey, John Viska & Dorothy Boyd



Auxiliary members Alison Fyfe & Jenny Wildy



Robert Nicholson, Pamela Statham  
Drew & Lynne Nicholson



Jan Eastman & Elizabeth Dutton



Jill Paterson, Jack Vercoe  
& Pamela Bordman

# Celebrating the publication of Early Days, No. 107, 2023.

There is much to enjoy reading in this year's issue.  
Our thanks and congratulations to the two editors – Jennie Carter & Heather Campbell  
– for a wonderful job and for continuing a tradition which stretches back to 1927.

Happy reading!



Jennie Carter - Editor



Heather Campbell—Editor



Bernice Barry:  
Poor Mrs Bull



John Ralph: Swan River Colony  
music 1829-1839



Malcolm Truill:  
The Spencer Daughters



Fiona Bush: Gowers & Brown –  
concrete and glass windows in WA



Robert Nicholson: Capt. Robert  
Laurie & maritime Fremantle



Brendan Kelly:  
'Cora' – presswoman of repute



Bevan Carter: Land usurpation, native  
title & colonisation at Swan River



Tom Goode:  
The Garrick Theatre Club

# from Ship to Shore

## A Castor Oil Bottle

Bruce Hoar

A castor oil bottle, currently displayed in the maritime exhibit in the Society's museum is believed to be from the shipwreck of the *Carlisle Castle*. On the night of 12 July 1899 during a fierce north-westerly gale the *Carlisle Castle*, sailing from Glasgow, ran aground on Coventry Reef off Safety Bay, the reef having little protection from the swell and wind. The ship had a crew of 22 and was carrying a cargo of spirits, ales, preserved fruit and fish, hardware, iron, chemicals and locking bars for the Goldfields Water Supply project. The Captain and his crew drowned and two damaged lifeboats, some of the cargo and personal belongings were washed up on beaches around Rockingham and Safety Bay. The terrible storm, poor visibility and navigational miscalculation were determined as the causes of her loss.



MA2015.32  
Donor: Lindsay Peet



**Carlisle Castle**  
Hand-tinted lithograph: c1868  
Royal Museums Greenwich, London (PAH0692)  
<https://www.19thcenturyshipportraitsinprints.com/lptgd-bf.html>



**Shipwreck Memorial, Fremantle Cemetery**  
<https://monumentaustralia.org.au/themes/disaster/maritime/display/60511-shipwreck-memorial>

The *Carlisle Castle* was one of the finest iron-hulled ships built in London. With a registered tonnage of 1458 tons the ship was 230ft long by 38ft wide, carried double top sails and could set five headsails. It carried passengers/migrants and cargo (especially wool) between England and Australia for many years and was renowned for its seaworthiness, dryness, comfort, safety and reliable fast passage.

Another ship, the *City of York*, was also wrecked on the same night in waters off Rottnest with the loss of the Captain and 11 of its 26 crew.

Soon after these two shipwrecks, a relief fund was set up – the *Carlisle Castle* and *City of York* Relief Fund – and a memorial was erected in the Fremantle cemetery in 1900. On the front it reads — ‘This monument is erected by the people of Western Australia in memory of those mariners on board the *Carlisle Castle* and *City of York*, who perished in a violent storm off Fremantle on the 12th July 1899. The sea shall give up her dead’. On the north side — ‘Ship *Carlisle Castle* lost with all hands, 22, officers and crew’. On the east side: ‘Ship *City of York*, officers and men lost 11, number of survivors 15’.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Jack Honniball's 90th birthday



### Welcome to new members

Dandaragan Heritage & Cultural Centre,  
Delia Hendrie, Susanna Iuliano,  
Kingsley Lewis, David McNight,  
Ian Murchison, John Norman,  
Rowan Stokes.

Congratulations and all good wishes! Jack has been a member of 64 years.

# The Dreamtime: its origins in translation to Australian English

## Peter Gifford

*History West* welcomes Peter Gifford's exploration of the origin of the terms 'dreamtime' and 'dreaming' as applied to Aboriginal culture. There were and are many different words for these terms in the great number of Aboriginal languages. Frank Gillen was working with Arrernte people in their language when he made the translations which have since become generally used.

Most Australians these days who care at all about Aboriginal culture will be familiar with the terms 'dreamtime' and 'dreaming', which can loosely be interpreted as describing all Aboriginal belief systems. By one definition, these words represent the time when ancestral spirits moved over the land, creating life and important physical geographic formations and sites. Put another way, Aboriginal philosophy is known as the 'dreaming' and is based on the inter-relation of all people and all things.

For senior Australian linguist Dr Christine Nicholls, the terms 'dreamtime' and 'dreaming' are "grossly inadequate – they carry significant baggage and erase the complexities of the original concepts." But while that is no doubt true, the fact remains that the terms have become part of 'white' Australian language, and what is intended here is to explore how that came about. In short, it is largely due to an Irish-Australian telegraphist and self-taught ethnologist named Frank Gillen, who came to know and befriend many Arrernte people of central Australia during his time as Postmaster on the Overland Telegraph Station at Alice Springs.

Francis James Gillen (1855-1912) was born at Little Para, near Adelaide, the second son of Thomas and Bridget Gillen, both from the County Cavan in Ireland. His parents had migrated to Australia in the year of his birth, and later settled at Clare, then an Irish enclave in the mid-north of South Australia. Frank joined the public service there at the age of twelve as a postal messenger, and was transferred to Adelaide in 1871.

He was posted to Alice Springs three years later and soon became interested in the local Arrernte people, making friends with them and learning their language. By 1892 he had been promoted to Post and Telegraph Master in Alice Springs, and was married. His wife Amelia lived with him at Alice Springs from 1891 to 1899, and shared his interest in matters ethnological. She had two Arrernte women as domestic helpers and, largely from them, likewise learnt Arrernte language.

Gillen's senior public service appointment carried with it the positions of Special Magistrate and Sub-protector of Aboriginal people. This is one major reason why Arrernte people remember him with respect; they knew at first hand that he was serious about protecting them from pastoralists who sought to 'disperse' – meaning murder – them over access rights to land and water for stock.

It is not known precisely when Gillen first produced the expressions 'dreamtime' and 'dreaming' as translations of the Arrernte word-complex 'alcheringa', their system of religious belief. He was certainly using them by 1894 when he first met his future ethnographic collaborator, the English-born zoologist (Sir) Walter Baldwin Spencer, when Spencer was Gillen's guest in Alice Springs after the departure of the Horn scientific expedition. The university-trained theorist and the self-taught practical ethnographer instantly hit it off, with Spencer having the good sense immediately to recognise that Gillen was sitting on a wealth of information which needed only to be channelled in the right direction to achieve lasting recognition for them both. As part of that process, Spencer almost certainly helped introduce the world of academia to Gillen's rendering of 'dreaming' and 'dreamtime' from the Arrernte language.

What is certain is that by 1938 another pioneer Australian anthropologist, Professor A P Elkin of Sydney University, had begun using the terms interchangeably in his book *The Australian Aborigines: How to Understand Them*. This led in turn to much wider recognition through the work of Elkin's erstwhile pupil W E H (Bill) Stanner, particularly in his 1968 ABC Boyer lectures published as a widely-read booklet. According to the historian and pioneer Australian archaeologist D J Mulvaney:

Stanner's frequently republished 1968 Boyer lectures, 'After the Dreaming'—in which he coined the phrase the 'great Australian silence'—were a clarion call, proclaiming the humanity, forlorn history and research needs of Aboriginal Australians ... The Boyer lectures elevated him as a public figure and mentor.

Stanner, as a trained Australian anthropologist, would have been well aware of the pioneering work of Spencer and Gillen in Central Australia. As editor of the Horn expedition volumes, Spencer had encouraged Gillen to contribute to them, and then to seek greater publication of his work. In return Gillen arranged for Spencer to view performances of complex Aboriginal ceremonies when Spencer returned to Alice Springs in the summer of 1896-7. Their pioneering collaborative work, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, was published in 1899 to international acclaim.

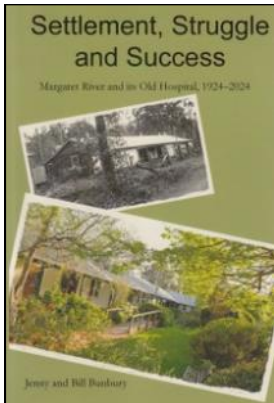
In all of this, success had depended initially on Gillen's authority and acceptance by senior Arrernte people; in return Spencer adapted Gillen's discursive material and encouraged him to cross-check and supplement his work. A total of four titles were published jointly, but Spencer was actually sole author and the theory likewise was his. More than 150 extended letters from Gillen to Spencer are now held by the Pitt-Rivers Museum at Oxford University, while Gillen's ethnographic photographs are in the South Australian Museum in Adelaide.

Frank Gillen died in Adelaide in 1912 from a brain condition exacerbated through depression caused by the death of his eldest son in a shooting accident. Even during his final illness, however, he may well have been consoled by the knowledge that he and Spencer had contributed significantly to raising the consciousness of 'white' people regarding the ancient beliefs and traditions of their Indigenous fellow Australians. In particular, though the terms 'dreaming' and 'dreamtime' do not completely explain Aboriginal belief systems, the words as translated by Gillen do at least carry with them the realisation that Aboriginal people had such systems in the first place; that they were not simply the ignorant, culture-free wandering savages that many 'white' people still took them for – and in some cases, unfortunately, still do.

## Book Reviews

**Jenny and Bill Bunbury, *Settlement, Struggle and Success: Margaret River and its Old Hospital, 1924-2024*, UWAP, Nedlands, with assistance from Charles and Joy Staples South West Publications Fund, 397pp. In Library.**

**Reviewer: Gillian Lilleyman**



This book was written to commemorate the centenary of the old Margaret River hospital, the town's first publicly funded building. Now the Margaret River Community Centre, the hospital was listed on the State Register of Heritage Places in 1996. As the authors explain, they produced an audio documentary for the Community Centre's 30th birthday celebrations that told how the building was saved

after the hospital closed in 1990. Writing a history of the building to celebrate its centenary presented an opportunity to tell the story in the context of the town and district's development.

First chapters cover pre-European and early European settlement, beginning with the practices and beliefs of the region's first inhabitants, the Wadandi people. Here, as well as contemporary Wadandi accounts, the authors tap into notebooks on Wadandi culture and language compiled by Alfred John Bussell, whose parents, Ellen and Alfred Bussell, settled near the Margaret River in 1857. Doctors called out from Busselton to their fledgling settlement, a four-hour journey in all weathers, sometimes had to stay overnight. After Maurice Coleman Davies established his timber industry, a doctor and small medical facility was located at Karridale. This was still three hours away, however, and had closed by the time the Group Settlement Scheme, which necessitated the hospital, began in 1921.

A continuing theme through the book is a situation many rural hospitals face—inadequate funding. Jenny Bunbury has said she waded through 21 files of correspondence between the hospital's administrators and the Health Department on this issue at the State Records Office. Funding requests to upgrade the hospital reflect not only the district's development but advances in medicine. For example, long stays in hospital before antibiotics and vaccinations were readily available meant more beds were needed. Outbreaks of diphtheria and scarlet fever required an isolation ward.

Group Settlement brought an influx of families, necessitating maternity facilities. Expectant mothers often travelled long distances to reach these. Hence the special story of the Margaret Cecil Rest House erected by the Margarets of Great Britain. Funds to build accommodation for women awaiting their confinement were raised after Alicia, Lady Cecil, and her daughter Margaret visited the Margaret River area with the British Empire delegation in 1926. The building opened in 1929, the year that the Sisters of the Anglican Order of St. Elizabeth arrived. Although not attached to the hospital, the nuns were to afford

comfort to its patients for nearly thirty years.

Bill Bunbury's long career with ABC radio recording oral histories comes to the fore in the quotations liberally interspersed throughout the text. Sourced from archived and contemporary interviews (listed in the bibliography), these firsthand accounts give immediacy to the story, a sense of 'being there'.

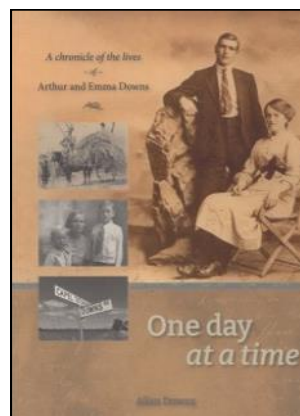
People recollect the idiosyncrasies of the town's first medical officer Dr William Rigby, appointed in 1923, who filled the roles of dentist and pharmacist; popular Dr Ewen Tunbridge, whose tenure (1937-48) was one of the longest, a section of Wallcliffe Road being renamed in his honour; and husband and wife Drs John Lagan and Eithne Sheridan, who came from Ireland in answer to an international advertisement when the absence of a town doctor threatened the hospital with closure in the mid-1960s. On their retirement thirty years later, the couple established Xanadu winery. Dr Sheridan was interviewed for the book and was on hand to cut the centenary cake and spade the first soil to plant the centenary tree in May.

Dealing with day-to-day exigencies, nursing staff recall the arrival of the surfers in the 1950s, the alternative life stylers in the 1960s, and the wineries in the 1970s. Then, as the population grew in the 1980s, the inadequacy of the existing hospital and the political machinations to acquire a new one. Acting matron in 1990 Judy Wake oversaw the closure of the old hospital and the move to the new hospital. Her photographs of the changeover are among the many illustrations in the book.

The final chapter describes how the old wooden hospital buildings were saved and repurposed to become the town and district's community centre. Widely researched and meticulously referenced, *Settlement, Struggle and Success* more than fulfills its charter as a history of this community.

**Allan Downs, *One day at a time: a chronicle of the lives of Arthur and Emma Downs*, 2023, 86 pp. In Library.**

**Reviewer: Steve Errington**



The lack of curiosity about lives of previous generations – even of grandparents – which is regularly revealed by the subjects of programs such as 'Who do you think you are?' is staggering. Every family has a unique story that deserves to be recorded even if it is only for descendants who realise too late that they should have quizzed their grandparents about 'the olden days'.

If families are lucky they have an individual who collects the documents and asks questions about the people in the old photos. In the case of group settlers Arthur and Emma Downs it was their youngest son.

Arthur and Emma grew up in the Lancashire town of Horwich. Arthur left school at twelve to become a farm worker, Emma at thirteen to work at the local weaving

mill and they met when Emma switched to the local Methodist church. In January 1915 Arthur joined the army, waiting till his uniform was issued and then wearing it to break the news to Emma.

Despite serving at Gallipoli and on the Western front he was wounded only once, recuperated at a hospital near Horwich. He married Emma in July 1918 and immediately returned to France for the last weeks of fighting. After the armistice they lived in a terrace house in Horwich with an allotment, and Arthur worked in a coal mine until the big strike of 1921. In passing we learn that during the strike Arthur earned money by singing and tap-dancing in the local music hall.

But the couple didn't approve of the strike and migrated to WA in 1922 when Arthur couldn't find alternative work. Once here, they were accepted into the Group Settlement scheme and joined Group 32 near Busselton, surviving the grim conditions of dairy-farming pioneers, enjoying home-made entertainments and raising three handsome children. There are wonderful snippets. A favourite: the schoolteacher who owned a shortwave radio and, during the Battle of Britain, called the children in early to hear the chimes of Big Ben and the BBC News.

Both Arthur and Emma later joined the Bunbury Historical Society. Arthur died in 1966 but would have been delighted to see this little book; his manuscript describing his farming life until illness forced him to leave the farm in 1949 has been lost. His 1959 paper giving their early story and his gleanings of the early days of the Bussells, Laymans and Molloyes of Busselton and Wonnerup is reproduced here as an appendix. The information he provided State Archivist Mollie Lukis concerning the beginnings of Tutunup and Ruabon is also included. Emma lived well past 100, watching the growth of the family she and Arthur had planted in Western Australia to our benefit.

## Affiliates Newsletter

If you would like to read about Affiliates' activities, please visit—

<https://histwest.org.au/affiliates-news/>

## Cathedral Guides

Expressions of interest sought

Could you help us offer free guided tours around the magnificent St George's Cathedral?

Are you interested in architecture, heritage, design, history, story-telling, and people?

Do you regularly have a spare morning or afternoon?

Please email your expression of interest to [guides@perthcathedral.org](mailto:guides@perthcathedral.org)

ADVERTISEMENT

Free barista coffee, free entry, everyone welcome!

History Mystery Monday 21<sup>st</sup> October.

A mystery photo in the library.

A mystery artifact in the museum.

A mystery presented by Chris Holyday, author of *Margaret Forrest, A Premier Position*. in the bookshop.



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