

HISTORY

PUBLISHED BY THE ROYAL WESTERN AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

August 2025

GENERAL MEETING

The next meeting is on Wednesday 20 August at 6pm when Annie Medley will present a talk titled 'Matrons, Nurses, Mothers and the York Hospital Heritage Precinct'
109 Stirling Hwy Nedlands
Refreshments available from 5.30pm



Somerville Davis with York nurses c1915. Courtesy: Stephen Groser



Detail of Mildred Groser's dress with signature. Courtesy: York Residency Museum



Annie Medley at Residency Museum

In 2024 a handmade silk dress, long forgotten in an attic in Bridgetown, made its way to Faversham House where it was presented as a donation to the Residency Museum.

This fragile dress, once worn by Mildred Groser, was a thread that led back to stories and images surrounding the family of the well-respected Dr Somerville Boulnois Davis. In 1896, Davis assumed the role of Resident Medical Officer at the Government Hospital, now fondly known as the Old York Hospital. Mildred's older sister Edith married Somerville and Mildred visited them often. With the discovery of Mildred's dress a rich narrative of domestic and medical life in early 20th century York began to be researched.

This presentation explores the significance of the dress, other objects, photographs and archaeological discoveries, relating to the hospital precinct. It shares the stories of women associated with the site when it was an active medical hub. How did maternal care evolve for mothers and their babies, leading to the opening of the Edith Cowan Maternity Wing in 1925? By piecing together these fragments of the past, we illuminate the often overlooked stories of the women who shaped and were shaped by York's medical history.

Annie Q Medley's career path began with a fascination for the past, including family heirlooms, timeworn photographs and the stories they carried. This curiosity blossomed into a lifelong exploration of memory and meaning through art and history. A graduate of Claremont Art School (1982) and holder of a master's degree in Cultural Heritage from Deakin University (2017), Annie brings her background in art, heritage and history to her work practice. Now based in York, she balances her role as a museum curator with her life as a visual artist.



Don't forget to book for the State History conference

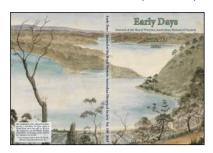
https://www.cockburn.wa.gov.au/City-and-Council/Events-and-News/Events-and-Workshops/Culture/ROYALS-Conference-Faces-and-Spaces-of-Cockburn

You need to register for each separate section of the conference Once you click to register, the Megatix page will open up with more details

Forthcoming Events — Don't forget to book!

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

LAUNCH OF EARLY DAYS, NO. 108, 2024



109 Stirling Hwy, Nedlands Friday 1 August, 5.30pm Nibbles and drinks from 5pm

Please join us in celebrating the publication of the Society's annual journal

The authors featured in *Early Days* 108 will give three-minute talks about their topics followed by a short Q&A opportunity Copies available to members for collection as

well as extra ones for purchase

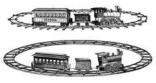
Please ring: 9386 3841 or email:
 admin@histwest.org.au
 or click on the link:
https://www.trybooking.com/DCNUE

COMMUNITY TALKS









Sharing your collection

Do you have a passion for collecting? We invite members who have a collecting hobby to tell us about it.

We plan to hold a Community Talk at which 2 or 3 members talk about their collecting passion and show some examples from their collection (10 minute talks with 5 minute Q & A).

If you are a collector and are interested in sharing your story, please email us with a short explanation of your collection.

We would love to hear from you.

Lenore Layman (on behalf of Community Talks team) admin@histwest.org.au

HISTORY IN THE CITY



Citiplace Community Centre, Upper-Level
City Railway Station Complex
Wednesday 6 August, 2pm start
The what, how and why of Western
Australia's convicts 1850-1868
Pamela Statham Drew

The arrival of the *Hougoumont* in 1868 with its cargo of convicts and Pensioner Guards marked the end of transportation worldwide. Nearly 10,000 convicts arrived in the Swan River Colony during the seventeen years of transportation. What conditions did they work under, what did they eat, how did they end up and finally why did they stop coming?

COMMUNITY TALK



109 Stirling Hwy, Nedlands
Thursday 28 August, 10 for 10.30-11.30am
Instilling a love of nature: The Western
Australian Naturalists' Club
Dr Sue Graham-Taylor

Sue will talk about her centennial history research — maybe you have memories or photographs that can be shared?

The Club evolved from earlier nature-based organisations with a commitment to educating children. The 1962 purchase of a Congregational Hall in Merriwa Street saw huge growth in numbers of Junior Naturalists and social activities such as the annual Town Hall Wild Life Shows.

Cost \$15 Bookings essential Click on the link or scan the QR code https://square.link/u/WqMPMwbA











Free raffle & best welcome ever



Drawing the raffle winner!

2025 Annual Lecture Weaving history into film making Paul Barron

Today much popular history is produced in the visual media – in film, television, documentary videos and such like. This powerful form of history-telling is consumed with interest and enjoyment by a large public. The Society was therefore delighted to have film and television writer and producer, Paul Barron, deliver our 2025 annual lecture on his experience of weaving history into his film making.

A Canadian by birth, Paul came to Australia in 1972 as a postgraduate student interested in the visual arts and drama, especially the ways migrant Australians saw their new country and sought to picture it and tells its stories. He had moved to WA by the early 1980s and was director of the Perth Institute of Film and Television. Paul set up his company Barron Films in 1981 and began producing films and telling Western Australia's stories. More than forty years later he has an enviable record of productions, snippets of which he shared with us to explain how history telling has been woven into his productions.

He explained his story-telling techniques — finding an entertaining story to tell, one with interesting characters and action. Also clear is Paul's commitment to his preliminary research to ensure that he has a good understanding of the history he is planning to present. He screened several powerful clips from 'Kings in Grass Castles' to show how characters and their interactions make an emotional impact on viewers. A scene featuring pastoralist Patsy Durack and his Aboriginal worker and 'brother' Pumpkin (whose correct name was Burrakin) made powerful viewing as the aging pastoralist grieved his aging and losses and Burrakin called on him to find his country. Neither man lived and died near his birth country and the scene captured the nostalgia and sadness that often accompanies aging, and perhaps especially on hard frontier country.

Paul showed another (and more contentious) scene from 'Kings in Grass Castles' featuring a bloody massacre of an entire family group of Miriwoong/Gajerrong people. He explained that, although the particular scene depicted did not happen, it was representative of a numerous of killings on this remote WA/NT border as the frontier was 'settled'. As such, it captured a crucial aspect of the frontier experience for those who lived (and died) on it.

Scenes from 'Serangoon Road' set in Singapore on the mid-1960s when inter-racial conflict was intense were also thought-provoking as Paul explained the historical background and the cultural sensitivities of potential audiences. He made the point that emotions too have a history to be understood and presented to contemporary audiences who bring their own presentist perspectives to their viewing.

Paul concluded by discussing his enjoyment to be producing his 'Such was Life' project, for which he has now completed two series. These re-tellings of regional histories in film bring these communities to life at particular points in time. If you are interested in exploring further, go to https://visitwanderland.com.au/journal/such-was-life-season-2



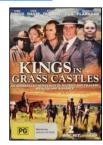
Richard Offen opening the lecture



Paul Barron



Serangoon Road



Kings in Grass Castles



Cate Paterson, winner of a double pass to the Windsor Cinema



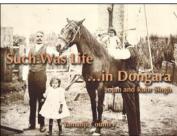
Anne Bloemen & Lynne Nicholson



Lennie McCall, Margaret Medcalf & Suzanne John



Bob Nicholson & Jack Honnibal



Such Was Life

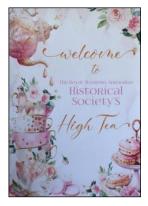
Tours & Events High Tea at Sea View Golf Club





Delicately patterned china, beautifully set tables and colourful flower arrangements greeted 40 Society members and friends as they arrived to enjoy a specially organised high tea at the Seaview Golf Club in Cottesloe. From the Club's lounge the magnificent vistas of a sparkling Indian Ocean added to the event's ambience. President Richard Offen opened the occasion with a talk highlighting key aspects of Cottesloe's rich history. He traced the story from the area's importance to the Whadjuk Noongar people through its colonial days to its development into today's well-loved seaside locality. After a brief Q & A session Jenny Gloza, the Club's Venue Manager, and her team headed to the awaiting guests carrying tiered cake stands loaded with scrumptious foods. Against a backdrop of animated chatter, participants treated themselves to a wide array of goodies, including finger sandwiches, mini quiches and sausage rolls, scones, jam and cream, macarons and petit fours. The happy atmosphere generated by the attendees was a highlight of the event and a testament to the behind-the-scenes work of Judy Dill-Macky who worked tirelessly to ensure all participants enjoyed this historic high tea.

Georgina Wigley







Member Iris Bristow on her 100th birthday



Iris Bristow

Congratulations, Iris, on reaching a century! Iris's family had an open house at the Narembeen Recreation Centre on 24 June and a happy time was had by all. Iris had been interviewed by GWN and was on the news that night. The Narembeen Police arrested her and took her in the paddy wagon around town via the school where all the **students** lined the fence and sang 'Happy Birthday' to her. Her first ride in a police car! She had a fabulous day with most of her family in attendance, several missing school for the occasion. History West adds its belated but sincere good wishes. Enjoy life Iris!

If you are interested in Narembeen's history, we suggest that you consult none other than Iris who has published two histories of Narembeen and its people — *Pioneers of Narembeen: their personal stories* (1984) and *Seedtime & Harvest: A History of the Narembeen District 1888-1988* (1988).

Thank you Maria!



Honorary Architect Maria Gilman displays her 'THANK YOU' hamper – given with gratitude for all her essential work as we shifted to new premises. Much happy eating!

President's welcome to our new premises



A capacity crowd of members in the meeting hall





John Jens with Vice President Sally Anne Hasluck

On Wednesday 9 July President Richard Offen welcomed a full house of members to celebrate the start of life at our new premises. It was a very happy evening as members toured the building to see for the first time the museum, library, bookshop, reception and meeting rooms as well as the work rooms behind the scene. Richard concentrated in his speech on the many thank yous to everyone who made this achievement possible and *History West* has provided a detailed list of donors. We thank you all.

We were able to raise our glasses in celebration because of the generosity of Jan Jens from Lamont Wines which provided a generous array of fine whites, reds and bubblies to lift the spirits. Our grateful thanks to Lamont Wines. Many thanks also to the splendid crew of volunteers who provided copious nibbles.



Raffle winner Hilary Silbert



Members of the catering crew at work

Thank you to everyone who helped the move to new premises

History West Community Centre Planning Committee

It has been a long ten-year journey for the History West Community Centre Planning Committee which undertook architectural and business plans plus fundraising from the membership, foundations and corporates while also organising fundraising events. Much was achieved with over \$1.4m being raised.

The Society thanks the committee members for their dedication to the task through many ups and downs. They all brought their particular expertise to the table.

Members: Sally Anne Hasluck (chair); Richard Offen, Bob Nicholson, Lennie McCall, Nick Drew, Kevin Skipworth, Ian MacLeod, John Shepherd and Klara Haselhurst (treasurer).

Pro bono work as part of their professional support from Chaney Architecture, Michael Croudace and then Maria Gillman (Hon Architect) with advice and reports from Peter Farr, Hamish Beck and Susie Jackson were all critical to our success. Lotterywest supported the process throughout

Members contributed through donations and attendance at events often with family and friends. These were interrupted by COVID but here are some highlights.

Kerry Stokes Gallery 2016

Raffle – supported by Kailis Pearls 2016

Government House Appeal Launch 2021

Morning Tea – members launch Nedland Yacht Club + Raffle 2021

Sir William Heseltine interview 2021

History West Annual Lectures 2022, 2023, 2024

Samson Cellars Supper 2023 – venue courtesy of member Jill Anderson & Samson family Orange Grove Afternoon Tea 2023 – venue courtesy of member Denis & Lynette McLeod

Many members were generous with initial pledges and donations that enabled the building fund to become a reality. The final amount required to purchase and fit out 109 Stirling Hwy would not have been possible without the support of a Lotterywest grant and two significant donations. As well we sold our former premises at 49 Broadway, which the Society owned.

The Society thanks all donors to the Building Fund from 2016 and the Furniture Fit out Fund from January 2025.

Donors: to building fund & fit out

Major Donors

MJW Foundation (Wright sisters Alexandra Burt and Leonie Baldock)

Margaret Medcalf

Lottery West grant

In recognition of our two major private donors the Society has named the meeting/ board room on the ground floor the 'Margaret Medcalf Room' and the hall on the first floor the 'The Wright Family Community Hall'.

Donors

Anderson	Jill	Calder	Elizabeth
Anonymous	X 3	Cann	Win
Ayers	Dr Marie-Louise	Carney	Joan
&	Russell	Carroll	Mary
Baxter	Jim	Chinnery	Robin
Beardmore	Lexie	Creswell	Robin
Bedo	Gabo	Cusack	Wendy
Berryman	Ian	Davies	Jenny
Birch	Helen	de Burgh Norman	Mr J
Bloemen	Antoine & Anne	Doncaster	Yvonne & Fr Ted
Brandenburg	Sylvia	Durack Clancy	Perpetua
Brassington	John	Drew	Nick
Brigg	Don	Drew	Pamela Statham
Brinsden	Margaret	Ellery	Jim
Bunbury	Bill & Jenny	Errington	Steve
Burvill	Mandy	Fairweather	Jenny
Bush	Fiona	Farr	Peter and Karen

Bridget McCann Fave Philip & Felicity Fitzgerald Margaret McDonald Kim Forbes Elizabeth McGlew Elizabeth Foulkes Taylor Family **McGuiness** Darrel Galvin Mike McGurk Kate Gordon Steve McNabb Peter Graham Taylor Sue (AGHS WA) Sue Medalia Grant Carole Meecham Gillian Green Elizabeth Miller Rhonda Griffiths Pat Mitchell Peter Hall Susan Mitchell Charles Arthur Hall Linden Morrell Frances Hall Dr J R Muir Janet Hamory Gabor & Jean Mulcahy Clem Harwood Hilaire James Natt Haslam Nicholson Robert & Lynne Jenny Haselhurst Howard Nind Michael Sally Anne Mr Fred Hasluck Nowman Nicholas Robert Hasluck O'Connor Henderson Helen Peet Julian Kandy-Jane & Peet **Family Trust** Henderson Graeme Phelps Ruth Cynthia Henry Tony Playford Heseltine Sir William Peter Potter Hiller Pritchard Joan Frank Diana & Ben Hobson Sue Quintero and Patton Hope Graham Reynolds William Howlett Logan Roche **Palsy** Hunter Rosemary Roe Rachel Hutch Val Jim & Annette Rowlands Barbara **RWAHS** Auxiliary Susan Hall Hurst Sewell James Rhonda Barbara Silbert James Barbara Hilary Singleton Beverley Johnston Claire John Skipworth Kevin & Edi Kalamunda Historical Soc Smargiassi Franco Kings Lynne Gillian Stannard Ian Lavman Jennifer Lenore Stewart Lewis Dina Stewart Vivienne Warren & Gillian Lilleyman Syme Elizabeth Treloar Lodge Jane Elizabeth Margaret Twine Long Basil & Jenny Loton Howard Uhe Fay Mandy van der Schaaf Agatha Loton Dr Frederick & Vercoe Jack Lovegrove Vicich Valerie Carol Lynch Tony Vile Phil Jan and John Vinnicombe Lyon Elizabeth Lycopodium Foundation Wanneroo Historical Society MacLeod Ward Ian Lynley Diana Elisabeth Warnock Marris

Paul & Karen William (Bill)

Jill

Elizabeth

Lennie

Waugh

Withers

Stephen

Shirlev

Marshall and Moller

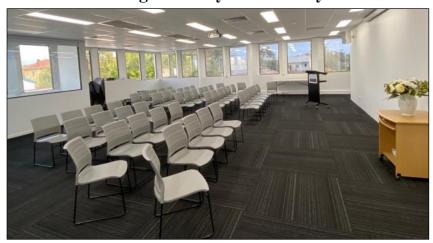
Marwick Maughan

McAuliffe

McCall

Room Namings

The Wright Family Community Hall



Our large hall on the first floor which will host monthly General Meetings, Community Talks and other large events to which the public will be invited has been named in recognition of the generosity of the MJW Foundation (formerly from The Dutch East India Benevolent Fund, established by the late Michael Wright and now administered by his daughters, Leonie Baldock and Alexandra Burt).

This generous donation, to assist both the purchase and fit out of the building, was made in memory of Michael Wright's love of history, particularly the VOC (*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* – Dutch East India Company). Michael died in 2012. Jennifer Wright, mother of Leonie and Alexandra, left a bequest to the Society in 2017. Jennifer was a valued volunteer in the textile collection at the Society and the bequest was initially directed to the costume and textile collection. In 2016 the family loaned historical VOC artefacts for the display at the Society commemorating the 400th anniversary of the landing of Dirk Hartog at Shark Bay. When offered the naming of the Community Hall space in recognition of the significant and generous donation to the Society Building Fund the family requested that the room be named to encompass all the family's support and interest in history and their appreciation of the work of the Society.

Margaret Medcalf Room







Writers' Group meets for the first time in the Margaret Medcalf room

The meeting/ board room on the ground floor has been named in gratitude for the generosity of longstanding member and volunteer Margaret Medcalf. Margaret has been a member of the Society for almost 60 years, joining in 1966. On retirement from her senior public service position as State Archivist and Principal Librarian of the J S Battye Library of Western Australian History in 1989, Margaret became active in the Society's administrative life. She served as President from 1989 to 1992, Chairperson of Council from 1989 to 1994, was made a Fellow of the Society in 1995 and remained a member of Council until 1998. She was also an active committee and working party member, helping with book sales, writing book reviews and articles, and organising the Society's archives. Retirement from the Disaster Preparedness Committee in 2022 ended 33 years of service to the workings of the Society. Margaret remains one of the most active supporters of the Society, attending all manner of functions and is a much admired and appreciated presence at the grand age of 99.

Our new premises: 109 Stirling Hwy, Nedlands Corner Baird Ave

Very visibly situated on Stirling Hwy just south of Dalkeith Rd and almost opposite the Windsor Cinema, we are easy to find and readily accessible by bus or car. Our new premises are fresh and modern, built in 1980 and now customised for our best use. Do drop in and enjoy seeing everything the premises have to offer - reception, bookshop (specialising in Western Australian history), museum, library, meeting rooms and helpful volunteers.

Open 10am – 4pm Mon to Fri.

Here is a visual tour of the highlights.

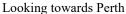




From Stirling Hwy









Foyer



Tearoom



Foyer lift in action



Reception area



In the Bookshop with author Allan Graham & volunteer Billy Hawes



Margaret Medcalf Meeting Room



The Wright Family Community Hall



Museum volunteers Wendy & Sylvana at work



Museum displays



Museum displays



Museum displays



Library with librarian Jeanette & Heather, Evalyn & Jack



Main lift – from basement to top floor

Message from the President Marketing Strategy & Brand Refreshment

The big picture

The Society's Council wishes to see how we, as 'History West' (The Royal Western Australian Historical Society), can better engage with existing members, yet-to-be members, the merely curious and the public at large. By understanding the sort of things that these different groups are looking for in their interaction with us, we shall be able to communicate with them even more effectively than we do at present.

How will this be managed?

To move this project forward, Council set up a working party consisting of John Lukin, Keith Cundale and me to ensure that the administrative, logistical and contractual issues associated with the project are managed effectively.

This Steering Committee will also initiate and maintain regular communications with members (and others) – starting with this update!

The first step in this process was an initial workshop where, working with an external consultant, a small representative group of members, volunteers and staff collected information, shared ideas and explored some possible new approaches.

Workshop outcomes and next steps

Gabe Mach, the lead consultant for this stage of the project, has taken away the notes and comments from the workshop and will use them to develop a draft marketing strategy. Once this has been reviewed and accepted by Council, our other consultant, Pip Wilsie, will develop some options to refresh (not replace) our branding: logos, typeface, use of colours, newsletter layouts etc. This will give our branding a consistent look and improve public recognition.

How will decisions and choices be made?

At all stages of the project, Council will be kept informed and will be responsible for making any major decisions affecting the Society. Staff, volunteers and members who have experience of these kinds of projects will be consulted whenever alternative approaches are possible or choices need to be made. Examples might be choosing amongst a short list of refreshed logos, colour schemes or layouts, typefaces, etc. Ultimately Council will need to decide on these matters also.

Summary

Our overall goal is to support the exciting move to our new premises with a clear marketing strategy, refreshed branding and a variety of new ways to engage with familiar and new audiences during our Centenary year and beyond.

If you have any questions about the project, please feel free to contact me, John or Keith.

Richard Offen

Make sure to visit the special exhibition at the State History Conference

Passion and Protest, Cockburn Community Speaks Up!

July's Affiliated Societies Newsletter reminds us to visit this exhibition which tells a history of protest in the City of Cockburn. Campaigns of passion and protest have taken many forms since Nyungar leader *Midgegooroo* resisted European colonialisation threatening Beeliar land and community in the early 1830s.

Some campaigns have been for a better outcome, like the *Jandakot Railway League* Campaign (1902), and market gardener *Tony Galati's* campaign against the Potato Marketing Board (1998-2017).

In the 1980s many people supported anti-nuclear protests, including 400 women from all over Australia, who were concerned at the growing US military presence in Cockburn Sound. They camped outside the gates of HMAS Stirling for the 1984 *Cockburn Sound Women's Peace Camp*.

Other protests galvanised local residents around coastal areas. These included the *Coogee Coastal Action Coalition* (2002) and the *Save Naval Base Shacks* group (2010).

Two campaigns were efforts to protect the precious bushland environment of the area. The *Farrington Road protest* (1984) and the *Save Beeliar Wetlands/Roe 8 protest* (2000-2017) involved hundreds of people who literally put their bodies on the line in protest actions.

Other protests occurred in response to government actions to resume land. Residents of Bibra Lake formed the *Resumptions Protest Federation* to fight for land resumed for State Housing in 1954. Another group formed in Wattleup and Hope Valley (KABZ), to advocate for fair compensation when their entire town and rural areas were resumed for an industrial estate in 1997. Finally, Cockburn residents rejected government plans for forced amalgamations in 2015 with their *Hands Off Cockburn Protest*.



Affiliates Newsletter

If you would like to read about Affiliates' activities, please visit https://histwest.org.au/affiliates-news/

A museum offer



Bridgetown Historical Society has a large piece of orcharding equipment that is now too big to accommodate and is seeking a historical society or museum that would like the Lightening apple sorter.

Please contact Mary Edgar 0487 592 704 or email bridgetownhistory@iinet.net.au for more information.

. Enjoy a day learning about how and why our

 Discover our fantastic family history library and research centre

Meet our wonderful volunteers
 Relax with a lovely morning or afternoon tea
 10:30am - 3:00pm, Saturday 2 August 2025

FamilyHistoryWA Meeting Room 48 May St Bayswater

forebears came to our beautiful state
• Explore the display
• Listen to the short talks

Your generosity has been overwhelming – thank you all

We have all the books we need except for Western Australian titles and good children's books

Book Sale Convenors Pamela & Nick Drew nickdrew@bigpond.com 0409 290 895

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

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

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