



# HISTORY WEST

April 2026

## GENERAL MEETING

The next meeting is on Wednesday 15 April at 6pm when Steve Errington will present a talk titled 'Eucalyptus, boronia and sandalwood oil production – the story of a fragrant WA industry'.

History West Centre, 109 Stirling Hwy Nedlands

Refreshments available from 5.30pm



Plaimar's 1930s office and works in West Perth, still standing in Plaistowe Mews.

These oils are what are known as 'natural products', complicated chemicals produced by nature. After commencing in 1887 with a eucalyptus oil distillery in Pinjarra, Western Australia has had a natural products industry, with short breaks, ever since. The backbone of the industry was the Plaimar factory in West Perth which produced all three oils in the period from 1919 to 1975.

There are also sandalwood oil connections with Albany, Fremantle and Kalgoorlie; with eucalyptus oil at Dangin, Pindar and modern-day Kalannie; and with boronia flower collecting in Denmark, Manjimup, Margaret River and Mount Barker. This last town, with Byford and Yarloop, also had a role in production of peppermint oil.

The talk brings together both parts of **Steve Errington's** professional life. He is a Fellow of the Royal Australian Chemical Institute and a Fellow of the Royal WA Historical Society. After completing a PhD in natural products chemistry at UWA he

spent his working life teaching organic chemistry at WAIT/Curtin, including an annual lecture series on the chemistry of natural products. He joined the RWAHS in 1963 and has since served as a Councillor, Editor of *Early Days* and President (2019-2021). He has written seven books on aspects of WA history, the most recent being for the centenary of Northcliffe, his hometown.



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## WILLIAMS / LEE STEERE PUBLICATION PRIZE 2026



The Society is offering a prize of \$1000 for a non-fiction publication, either in print or electronic (pdf) form, on Western Australian history, published between June 2024 and June 2026. Entries must be publications over 20,000 words in length.

Possible topics include a biography of a West Australian, family history, local or community history or any aspect of WA history the author chooses. Self-published entries are welcome.

Only non-fiction entries are eligible; historical fiction is not eligible.

Two copies of entries are required: one is retained and placed in History West's library. For e-books, no printout is needed but two USB drives carrying the book are required.

Winner will be announced at History West's Annual General Meeting

Closing date for applications: 26 June 2026

Entries must be submitted to the History West office, 109 Stirling Hwy, Nedlands WA 6009

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

## Welcome to new members

Shire of Ashburton Local History, Alana Buck, Fred Chaney, Peter Ellery, Russell Hamilton, Kevin & Jan Jackson, Emma Lamb, Jennifer Liu, Julie Martin, Ian Passmore, Yonna Sunderland, Jeanette Wheatley, Western Australian Fishers' Lost at Sea Memorial Association

The History West Centre | 109 Stirling Highway | NEDLANDS Western Australia 6009

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LIBRARY EMAIL: [library@histwest.org.au](mailto:library@histwest.org.au) | MUSEUM EMAIL: [museum@histwest.org.au](mailto:museum@histwest.org.au)

# Forthcoming Events — Don't forget to book online!

Or ring the office 9386 3841 [admin@histwest.org.au](mailto:admin@histwest.org.au)

## HISTORY IN THE CITY



### Death Behind the Wire: Internees and Spanish Influenza 1919

Dr Criena Fitzgerald OAM

Citiplace Community Centre, Upper-Level  
Perth City Railway Station Complex

Wednesday 1 April, 2pm

During World War I Australia interned over 6,000 'aliens', most of German and 'Austrian' (in fact mostly Croatian) origins. They were regarded as 'enemy aliens'. With the declaration of peace, the internees expected to be released but instead faced deportation with their families. At the end of May 1919, the deportation process began. However unfortunately infection had begun to spread to the boarding passengers. Many passengers died on board and were buried at sea.

Dr Fitzgerald will explore the experience of the internees who have been forgotten victims of the Spanish flu.

## COMMUNITY TALK



### Heroes, Villains and Vagabonds

Richard Offen

The History West Centre  
109 Stirling Highway Nedlands

Wednesday 22 April, 10 for 10.30am

Perth's history is littered with wonderful characters who shaped the city in a multitude of ways. This talk tells the story of some of those most prominent in our history. Eliza Shaw was an early settler whose diaries show just how tough life was in the Swan River settlement; William Hayes endeared himself to Perth and Fremantle society, but in reality was a very nasty piece of work; and Thomas Malloy, sometime Mayor of Perth, often found himself in court either as the plaintiff or the accused!

Bookings essential via the office 9386 3841

Or click the link or scan the QR code

<https://square.link/u/y2ZlySGN>



## HISTORY WEST CENTENARY LECTURE



UWA Club Auditorium

Wednesday 6 May, 6 for 6.30pm

Perth in the 1920s

Richard Offen & Malcolm Quekett

Come and hear our speakers reflect on life and times in Perth a century ago as they explore the built landscape and social scene

Cost: \$40

Courtesy of PEET Ltd this will be a special occasion with a celebratory drink after the lecture



<https://www.trybooking.com/DITLT>

## HISTORY WEST EXHIBITION AT BOORLOO FESTIVAL



### Memento

WA history reimaged through contemporary fashion

Perth Town Hall

9-24 April, Mon-Sat 10am-4pm

We will exhibit objects from the collection alongside garments made in response by North Metropolitan TAFE fashion design students. Originally cherished for their personal associations, these mementoes have sparked the imagination of a new generation. Students have developed an imagined narrative for their chosen memento and using this as the basis for creating their garments. Do pay a visit to the Town Hall to enjoy this imaginative exhibition

# Official Opening of the History West Centre



We are delighted to report that on 5 March the Society's Patron, His Excellency the Governor, Christopher Dawson AC APM, accompanied by Mrs Darrilyn Dawson, officially opened the new History West Centre at 109 Stirling Highway, Nedlands.

This event marked a milestone in the Society's history, leading us into our second century. In his speech the Governor focused on the importance of the work of volunteers in the life of civil society and his words were especially apt for the occasion. History West runs on its volunteers; it depends on its members; and is especially grateful to all its donors. Together a new home fit for the times and our needs has been achieved. Thank you to everyone who made this day possible!



The Governor's speech



Unveiling the plaque



Michelle Birkholtz (Lycopodium) & Peter Farr with Richard Offen



The Governor & Mrs Dawson with History West secretary Fiona Bush, vice president Sally Anne Hasluck, treasurer Klara Haselhurst and president Richard Offen



Bishop David Murray pipes the arrival of the Governor



Aide-de-Camp Superintendent Geoff Regan APM talking to members Jack Honniball & Bevan Carter



Cutting the cake by the Governor & former president and donor Margaret Metcalf who turned 100 later in the month. Our thanks to Zach from Darrington's Pastry in Burswood for the splendid cake and to a former president Steve Errington for arranging its creation



The Governor with Lotterywest representatives – Karen Brown, Chair Lotterywest (left) and Jenna Dodge, Director of Grants Development (far right), with Parliamentary Secretary, Cassie Rowe MLA



Linda Bush & Klara Haselhurst with Jenna Dodge & Jan Stewart



Leonie Baldock, MJW Foundation, & Tim Baldock in the Wright Family Community Hall



Vice President Sally Anne Hasluck welcomes everyone



## CENTENARY STORIES

Barbara Harris

### The second decade: preserving the past

One of the major aims of the new Society was advocating for the preservation of colonial buildings and natural sites of historic significance; and the oldest colonial building in the State – the Round House at Fremantle – was one of the first to attract the Society’s attention. In 1926, when the Society was formed, the Round House was in a state of disrepair; and for years the Society, led by the Memorials Committee that included F I (Son) Bray, Paul Hasluck, P E C (Phillips) De Mouncey and Dr Cyril Bryan, tried to ensure its upkeep by writing to the Minister for Works and approaching different agencies. The fact that the building is today intact and preserved is largely because of the activism of the Society and the personal efforts and dedication of a later member of the Memorials Committee, Joseph Sewell.

In the early years, it was difficult to win public support for the preservation of particular buildings but Society members campaigned relentlessly, successfully saving several sites that are now recognised for their architectural value and historical significance, including Gwalla Cemetery, Northampton; Aboriginal archeological relics; Jayes Hall, Boyup Brook; Strawberry Hill, Albany; and the Royal Perth Hospital Heritage Precinct.



The Round House, Fremantle



The Barracks, Perth



Royal Perth Hospital  
Precinct



Gwalla Cemetery

In 1965, when an Act of Parliament established the National Trust in WA, historic properties were vested under its responsibility, but the Society continued to support campaigns to save significant historical sites.

### Miller’s Pool and the Old Mill, South Perth

In 1937, the Society strongly protested the infill of Miller’s Inlet at Mill Point, known as Miller’s Pool, as part of a reclamation scheme to straighten the Swan River foreshore. The natural pool, located close to Richardson Park and Como Beach, was considered a valuable natural landmark because of its associations with the Old Mill and the milling operation that William Kernot Shenton undertook there (hence its name). It was then deep enough to provide mooring for small boats servicing the Mill. The Pool was a place of significance for other reasons too: referred to as Goorgygoogup by the Noongar people, it was important because it was a site for women to safely give birth while being protected and cooled by the tall rushes and clean water flowing in from the river; and, in 1896, it became a wildlife sanctuary. Worried that the black swan was becoming extinct, the colonial government built a fence around the pool and offered a bounty: any healthy swan presented to Constable Rewell of the Water Police was worth a guinea. The Society’s appeals to save the site were unsuccessful, however, and the Pool was finally destroyed in 1938, filled in with silt taken from dredging ferry channels through the Narrows.

In 1938, the Society first expressed concern at the derelict state of the Old Mill situated on the promontory of Point Belches in South Perth and, over the years, members petitioned for its upkeep. In the 1950s, Joe Sewell, who lived nearby, led the Society’s campaign to save the Old Mill as plans to construct the Narrows Bridge and Kwinana Freeway threatened its demolition. He fought doggedly through the mid-1950s, writing letters and constantly lobbying. The mill was eventually saved in 1956 when brick and tile manufacturer Brisbane & Wunderlich saw its potential as a tourist attraction. They undertook the restoration in return for the opportunity to display their tiles there.



Miller’s Pool, South Perth 1940s  
P1999.1171



The Old Mill 1939  
P1999.6744



The Old Mill, restored 1965  
P2008.30

The Old Mill has a varied and colourful history. It is one of the most visible of WA’s heritage sites and one of the few reminders of the Swan River settlement that have survived. It has historic value as one of the first wind-driven flour mills in the State and because of its association with early settlers and landowners; including William Kernot Shenton who had trained as an engineer and arrived in the colony from England in 1829.

Grain and flour were vital for the new colony as bread was the staple food and many of the early settlers grew their own wheat and hand-milled it using a quern. William Shenton recognised the need for a more efficient method of milling and he became the first builder of flour mills in the colony. He first built a horse-powered mill in Fremantle and later constructed a wooden windmill at Point Belches (Mill Point). The Old Mill, a stone mill which was then known as the Shenton Mill, was the second mill built by him on land granted to him in April 1833. Its location at Point Belches was ideal: exposed to prevailing winds, halfway between Fremantle and the agricultural areas of the Upper Swan and accessible to Canning River. The little lake that existed there was also a perfect miller's pool.

The present Mill was built in 1835 by millwrights Paul and James Lockyer, and was operated by miller William Rolf Steel, the business partner of William Shenton. At its peak, the wind-driven mill produced 680kg of flour per day. For a time, William also worked in the Surveyor-General's Department and his cousin George ran the mill. William Shenton sold the mill in 1840 to Edward Hamersley and the mill continued to operate under lease. Tragically William Shenton drowned at sea on his way from Perth to Bunbury in 1842.

The Mill did not prove profitable and ceased production in 1859. During this period a small brick cottage was built to the north of the Mill. One of the more significant characters associated with the mill was a lessee, Thomas Brown, known as 'Satan Brown'. He was an architect and convicted forger who arrived in the colony in 1865. In 1870 he took out a lease on the mill. He added a balcony and viewing platform and named it the Alta Gardens Hotel. Edward Hamersley died in 1874 and bequeathed the Old Mill to his daughter Margaret who married John Forrest in 1876. She continued to lease the site to Brown. After initial success, Brown's business venture failed and in 1880 he was charged with stealing money after a client sued him for a debt. He was found guilty and taken to Fremantle Gaol to be sentenced the following morning. He wrote a letter blaming his wife for his troubles and then took poison which he had concealed on himself and died before sentencing.

The Mill site was later used as a residence for the Water Police, a meeting place for the Wilgie Sketch Club, a wine saloon and a poultry farm, until it was resumed by the government in 1929 to mark the centenary of Foundation.

Despite this resumption, little effort was made to conserve it until 1957. In that year, H L Brisbane and Wunderlich (later Bristile) agreed to take up a long lease for the site from the State Government, and restored and repaired the mill and miller's cottage, creating a folk museum as well as their brick and tile display.

The Old Mill was vested to the National Trust in 1992 after the running costs of the site became too large for Bristile. Restoration work was carried out on the mill in the 1990s and today the Old Mill comes under the auspices of the City of South Perth. In 1994-95, the Old Mill was restored to a close approximation of its appearance in the 1830s: the verandahs surrounding the mill were removed and the cottage's corrugated iron roof cladding was replaced with shingles.

In February 2017, the reinstated Miller's Pool was opened by the City of South Perth Mayor. The project was part of a wider strategy of foreshore works with a strong focus on sustainable design and Indigenous associations with the site.

## FOUNDERS & VOLUNTEERS

### Mary Farrelly

Mary Farrelly (1866-1943) was a founder of the Society and a pillar of the organisation from its establishment until her death in 1943, serving as a Vice President and member of Council for all that time. She was a memorable woman in many ways but, for the Society, most memorable was her constant membership campaigning. Chair of Council Ivor Birtwistle described her as a 'a membership campaign in herself'.

As well as being a leader of WA's early 20th century feminist movement, Mary was a crusader for the consumption of wholemeal flour, believing that it had helped her overcome ill health. To adopt a healthy diet, she published a booklet titled *How to Cook Wheat: Some Wholesome, Nutritious, Appetising and Economical Dishes*, which she sold for 6d. Rica Erickson vividly described her manner of operation:

Train travel meant loss of sleep and infrequent meals, but she fortified herself with a seemingly inexhaustible supply of puffed wheat, carried in her well-worn large handbag, along with pamphlets, recipe books and nomination forms. She munched, even while talking animatedly, and her listeners grew prepared to be wary of the shower which fell their way.

Reminiscing in 1976, Sir Paul Hasluck recalled that her handbag was the largest of all women's handbags of the time and

its bulging contents always included a bundle of nomination forms for membership of the Historical Society and several handfuls of wheat. She was likely to press one or other on anyone who showed the slightest interest in either history or food.

It is pleasing to read in Rica Erickson's short biography that:

Towards the end of her life her work was recognized at a reception at Government House when friends presented her with a large new handbag and a purse filled with much-needed sovereigns.

#### Reference

Rica Erickson, 'Farrelly, Mary Martha (1866–1943)', *ADB*, vol 8, 1981



Mary Farrelly wore this 1840s gown at the 1939 Foundation Day ball.

*West Australian*, 2 June 1939, p.6  
Photo courtesy: Geraldton Historical Society 2608

## A display of items from the costume and textile collection focusing on embellishments, such as beading, lace and embroidery

The museum committee set up this display in February for separate visits by the Quilt Textile Study Group, and fashion tutors and students from South Metro TAFE. It was also viewed by the WA branches of the Australian Museums and Galleries Association and the Australian Society of Archivists who came to explore our new home.

All who saw the display were fascinated by the beauty and intricacy of the pieces and the skills they embodied. This positive response has encouraged Wendy Lugg and her team of museum volunteers to plan follow-ups for the future. Here is just a glimpse of the display, the images capturing only a small part of the fascinating quality of these items.



**Wedding Dress 1927**

This dropped-waist, cream georgette wedding dress has a straight loose silhouette and is beaded and ribboned with a design of rosettes of flowers and leaves. The detachable train hooks onto the gown at the shoulder and is apricot in colour. An accompanying tiara-style cirlet of imitation orange blossom completes the bridal outfit. It was worn by Florence May Kerr for her marriage to Leonard Charles Hawke on 28 September 1927 at St George's Cathedral, Perth. The couple's daughter, Betty Hawke, donated this special dress to the Society in 1987. C1987.153a-c



Mrs Leonard Hawke (formerly Miss Florence Kerr), of Mount Lawley, and her bridesmaids, Miss Mildred Hawke and Miss Edna Anneal. *Western Mail*, 8 December 1927, p.20



# Community Talk

## Highlights of WA's theatre history

### Ron Banks

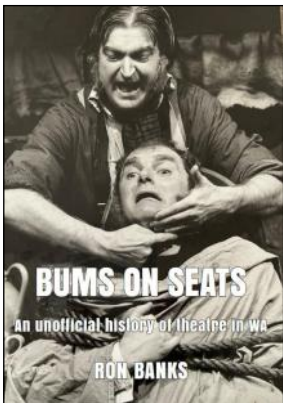


Linda Bush, Bookshop manager, with author Ron Banks

Our morning talks program for the year was launched in fine style in February by Ron Banks, long-time arts editor and theatre reviewer for the *West Australian* newspaper. Ron is well-known to everyone who has been a regular Perth theatregoer over the last three decades and he drew a full house of approximately 80 to hear his talk. In fact the morning became something of a group reminiscence as audience members recalled the plays and actors Ron was naming, reminding him occasionally when he missed a play or a name. A very engaged audience thoroughly enjoyed the occasion!

Ron took us on a Perth theatrical journey back to 1839 when a 'musical farce – a petite comedy in two acts' was performed in a St Georges Terrace hotel and was reviewed by George Fletcher Moore. It was the first of many amateur theatricals in which women performed alongside men only after 1869. Commercial theatre arrived with the 20th century to accompany a flourishing amateur scene.

Ron's talk was drawn from his new book *Bums On Seats. An unofficial history of theatre in WA* which is available for sale for \$30 at the History West Bookshop (as well as other bookshops).



While authorship of the book lies largely with Ron, he did invite members of 'the acting community' to tell their own stories should they wish to do so and quite a number took up his offer – Joan Pope, Leith Taylor, Jenny Davis, Ivan King, Michael Loney and Bill McCluskey among others. In this way Part 2 of his book reminds us of many actors whose performances we have enjoyed.

In addition to Western Australia's actors, its writers, directors and venues also signpost the book. For instance, there are reminders of the Perth Repertory Club, the Workers' Art Guild, the Playhouse and Hole in the Wall, the importance of the University Dramatic Society and the WA Academy of Performing Arts. The emergence of Indigenous theatre and Black Swan marks another transition in the State's theatre history. The book is an entertaining trawl through Perth's theatrical past with a focus on the decades from the 1950s to the present.

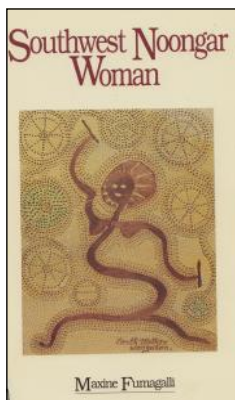
Our thanks to Ron for reminding us of many memorable performances and much enjoyment.

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## Recent donations to the Library

The Library has received donations from former president Steve Errington who is downsizing his library. The Library is pleased to accept some items which it doesn't already hold but would like to do so. These donations cover a variety of topics in WA's history. Thanks to Steve for his generosity.

Among the various items are two booklets, both women's memoirs, which provide a vivid sense of two 20th century lives sustained by personal commitments to family heritage and personal faith.

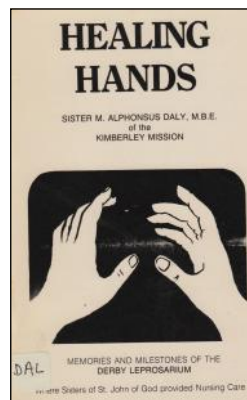


### Maxine Fumagalli, *Southwest Noongar woman*, Denmark Environment Centre, 1992

This memoir is a celebration of the author's Noongar culture and heritage. Born in 1939 in Wagin, Maxine's childhood was spent moving with her family around their country from Wagin to Cuballing to Woodanilling. She recalls the many family members who were part of this early life and the stories told of country and

Dreamtime. She adds her poetry to these stories to call for better acceptance of Noongar people and culture.

Oh, Dreamtime land of dreams fulfilling,  
you're the reason why we all exist.  
I could never take you for granted,  
I will regenerate all you have missed.



### Sister M Alphonsus Daly MBE of the Kimberley Mission, *Healing Hands: memories and milestones of the Derby Leprosarium*, Health Dept WA, c1986

Sr Alphonsus (1893-1980) joined the Sisters of St John of God at Broome as a nineteen-year-old and spent most of her life in the Kimberley, after 1944 at Derby Leprosarium. Writing always in the first-person plural (indicating her collective identity as a Sister of St John of God), she tells of her life and some of the Aboriginal patients she remembers.

... we lived out our every-dayness convinced that we were there to do God's work – to be His eyes, His ears, His hands, His feet...

## The Writers' Group looks back at 1926

The Writers' Group has resolved to recognise the Society's centenary year by exploring some of the significant goings-on in Western Australia a century ago and contributing articles to *History West* about events at that time. *History West* welcomes this interesting initiative and looks forward to learning more about the State when our founders committed themselves to establishing the WA Historical Society. Elizabeth Eaton's story of Beryl Mills marks a lively start to the various stories to follow.

### Miss Beryl Mills, inaugural Miss Australia, 1926

Elizabeth Eaton

*Miss Beryl Mills will come to the [Brisbane] Wintergarden on Monday next straight from an eleven weeks season at the Crystal Palace, Sydney where she made 198 appearances. She will tell how she won The Daily Guardian 1926 contest and will appear in some gorgeous frocks which were presented to her abroad.*

[*Queensland Figaro & Punch*, 16 Apr 1927]



Miss Australia 1926  
Beryl Mills.  
Photographer: E L  
Mitchell. P2003.977

In 1926 Miss Westralia, Beryl Lucy Mills, won the inaugural Miss Australia competition. The contest was organised by the Sydney-based Smith's Weekly Ltd, owner of *The Daily Guardian*, in conjunction with Union Theatres Ltd. Among the selection criteria were educational success, sporting ability and feminine poise. Beryl's winnings included two cars, a promotional speaking tour of the USA and substantial spending money. Publicity was intense and photographs of the nineteen-year-old accompanied numerous newspaper reports celebrating her success. She became instantly famous.

Born on 3 January 1907 to a pastoral family at Walkaway, Beryl began high school in Geraldton and then transferred to Perth Modern School. She won a scholarship to UWA where she studied English and French before beginning training at Claremont Teachers College.

In the USA Beryl was feted. With her travelling companions – her mother Kitty, Claude McKay of Smith's Weekly Ltd and a teenage Frank Packer – Beryl attended balls and civic receptions and made speeches, gave swimming exhibitions, and visited Hollywood and Atlantic City.

On her return she became a popular public speaker, her contract with contest co-sponsor Union Theatres being renewed five times. At Sydney's Crystal Palace she made 198 appearances and, in another theatre, 'she appeared three times daily for thirteen weeks and the crowd still came'. [*Geraldton Guardian*, 13 Sept 1927] On a quick trip to Geraldton after her win, the Mayor proclaimed her 'Geraldton's finest daughter'. [*Geraldton: 150 years, 150 lives, Geraldton Regional Library, 2001*]

Beryl married Frank Davison in March 1928. He was a 29-year-old war veteran who worked on *The Daily Guardian* as a journalist. In that year, too, Beryl established the Beryl Mills Advertising Service in Sydney's Culwalla Chambers. In the early 1930s the couple moved to Melbourne when Frank was engaged by *The Herald* and their daughter Judith was born in 1935.

By 1941 Beryl was single once more and living in Sydney again where she worked as a librarian at Consolidated Press. Here she met American Major Leslie Caulder. They married in Virginia after the war ended. In the USA, Beryl became a busy member of her community, joining the American National Red Cross, teaching first aid and playing sport. She continued to promote Australia, especially to schoolchildren with a toy koala alongside her. [*M Brooke & B Griffen-Foley, 'Beryl Lucy Mills (1907–1977)', ADB, vol 15, 2000*]

Beryl and Leslie retired to Florida where Beryl died on 13 July 1977. In 2019, her story became the source for a two-act musical titled *Miss Westralia* which toured WA. The show has since been renamed *Tall Poppy: A New Australian Musical*. In this way her story has been introduced to younger generations of Western Australians.

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## Sharing the 'new' with keepers of the 'old'!

We loved showing members of the Australian Society of Archivists WA Branch around our new History West headquarters on Wednesday 25 February.

From our new bookshop to the museum's breathtaking display of costume and textile embellishments, to the quiet sanctuary of our library collections, it was a pleasure to introduce these spaces and some of our volunteers to colleagues.



## Dardanup chancers aim for gold

### Darren Foster

Western Australia was in the grip of a gold rush in the mid-1890s, with newspaper headlines trumpeting the discovery of rich finds in Coolgardie and elsewhere in the Yilgarn region. For twenty months from July 1894, Southern Cross – itself a centre of gold mining – was in a pivotal economic position as the last train station before the overland trek to the rich finds in Coolgardie. The railway extension to Coolgardie was completed in March 1896.

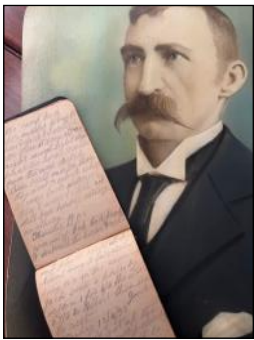
In late 1894, the *Central Districts Advertiser and Agriculture and Mining Journal* noted:

The recent phenomenal gold discoveries is beginning to attract people from the other colonies, and lately, every train from Northam brings a full complement of passengers. During the past week, the arrivals by sea have exceeded one thousand.

In the farming district of Dardanup there was a steady flow of newspaper stories in the local *Bunbury Herald and Southern Times* describing the events in the gold fields. One headline in January 1895 stated:

Another Rich Gold Discovery Found by Recent Arrivals. Stones Richly Impregnated with Gold. Splendid Reef. Great Excitement at Coolgardie.

Against this backdrop, six men from the Dardanup district decided to undertake the epic 34-day journey on horseback to Southern Cross in the Yilgarn gold fields. They were Richard Dillon (aged 19), John Harris (30), Albert Sampey (19), Robert Lowrie (34), Joseph Flynn (27) and Daniel Slattery (30). All were first generation Australians, except Lowrie, a Scottish migrant.



Daniel Slattery & his handwritten diary

The journey was diarised by Daniel Slattery in daily entries totalling 3,700 words and transcribed in 2002 by Bunbury historian Norm Flynn, a relative of Joseph Flynn. The diary is notable for its lack of grammar and its phonetic spelling, reflecting the basic education Slattery received. For example:

Capton dillon & rob in the lead through countrary timbered with Jam & mallow thickets gimblut wood sandelwood & samon gum...

In his notes accompanying the transcript, Flynn discusses whether the phonetic spelling also reflects an inherited Irish brogue from Slattery's upbringing in the tightly knit Irish-Catholic community of Dardanup.

Slattery was born in Dardanup in 1865, one of ten children of County Kerry-born former convict Patrick Slattery and his wife Rose Hanlon, who arrived on a 'bride ship' from County Tyrone.

The journey was mentioned in the *Bunbury Herald* in January 1895.

The party organised for prospecting in the Yilgarn gold fields...were entertained at the Dardanup Inn a few days before their departure by a number of their friends and relations to bid them good-bye and God-speed on their journey.

The party set out on 26 March 1895, reaching Williams by day five.

Slattery's diary entries describe the scenery and daily routine of finding and sometimes digging for water, watering the horses, catching and slaughtering sheep and salting the meat for rations, making damper, camping for the night and playing cards.

Camped at Cullingup had dinner and started through splendid Jam and black buoys land with nice farmes dotted here and there. [29 March]

Nearby towns provided the opportunity for a visit to the pub.

Jack rob Albert & myself went up to the gorden hotel [Hordern Hotel, Narrogin] where we rote some letters had a drink or 2 fetched a bottle for Capton Dillon he would not have any whiskey he stayed at home to make some puddings and pastery which we enjoyed for our Sunday supper. [31 March]

There were occasional encounters with others on the road.

The next we met was a black man with 5 spers and two possoms had a word or two with him & went onn to where we came across another man clearing a road had a few words with him & went onn to where we Camped at a dry well. [2 April]

On 7 April Robert Lowrie fell ill and they made little progress for a few days, eventually deciding to camp at Mount Cramphorne, southeast of Merredin, for Lowrie and the horses to rest. Mount Cramphorne was close to the Parker's Range mining operations. While there, John Harris sold two horses.

On 14 April Slattery notes in his diary:

there was two men 1 cart horse from Coolgardie came at the well and ... told us there was not mutch water on the roads to the fields. [14 April]

A week later Robert Lowrie and Dan Slattery arrived in Southern Cross and sold four more horses. By 27 April, the rest of the party and horses were in Southern Cross where they unsuccessfully tried to sell an additional four horses. Slattery notes they:

Staid inn town that night and had some funn.[27 April]

For reasons not explained in the diary, Joseph Flynn and Daniel Slattery decided to return to Dardanup, presumably by train, while the others proceeded to Coolgardie. His last entry on 28 April 1895 says:

Joe & I said god buoy to them & they started promising to rite to us & dick told us that he would do all in his power for us & we thanked him & wished when we meet him again that he will be a millener [millionaire]. Joe & I returned to the club hotel & packed up for home. [28 April]

Lowrie, Dillon, Harris, Sampey and another man R Cain went on to become joint owners of the Wellington mine, 48 kilometres northeast of Kanowna. [*Coolgardie Miner*, 26 Nov 1895] In 1896, another Dardanup diarist George Fee noted that Harris, Lowrie and Flynn were about to embark on a second visit to Coolgardie. [N Flynn (ed.), *Fee's Dardanup Diaries 1886-1942*, Vol 1, p.111]

Daniel Slattery returned to farming in Dardanup, never married, and died in 1955.

## Book Reviews

**Louise Higham, *Kojonup for King and Country*, Vivid Publishing, 2024. In Library & Bookshop \$60**

**Reviewer: Barbara Harris**



*Kojonup For King and Country* is the fourth book written by Louise Higham that records the service details of men and women from a specific Western Australian locality; in this instance, the district of Kojonup. The book contains 370 profiles of Kojonup citizens who served on the frontline overseas and on mainland Australia in World War II. Their experiences were diverse

but they shared a commitment to defend Australia and resist the aggression of Germany and Japan.

Most were ordinary people – farmers, farm hands, shearers, stock agents, butchers, bakers, clerks, mechanics, shop assistants, teachers, nurses – but they were often thrust into extraordinary situations which required acts of heroism and endurance. Several were captured in North Africa and on Crete and interned in German camps for almost four years. Others became prisoners of the Japanese when Singapore fell and endured appalling privations. Some died, including on the notorious Burma railway and on the Sandakan death march, and many were afflicted by malaria and other illnesses.

Louise Higham comes from a family with a long history of distinguished military service. Born and educated in Tasmania, she graduated from the University of Tasmania with Bachelor of Arts, Diploma of Education and Graduate Diploma in Librarianship. She is a contributing author for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Her first book, *On Active Service: A biographical dictionary of Williams*, was published in 2016; followed by *On Active Service II: A biographical dictionary of West Arthur*, published in 2019, and *From Woodanilling to War*, published in 2022.

The brief biographies (from half a page to two pages) are organised alphabetically (by surname) and individuals are identified by their Service numbers and military roles. As well as details about military service (enlistment, postings, actions), the biographies provide an overview of each person's life; including their parents' background, and their schooling, occupations, marriage, family and life in the years after the war. In this regard, the book is more than a record of military service, it is a social history of a rural community.

The detailed biographies are testament to the meticulous research undertaken by the author. She has drawn extensively from the official records of the National Archives and the Australian War Memorial as well as from Trove newspapers and a range of state and local publications.

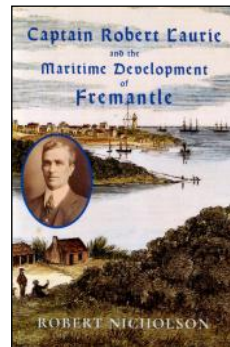
The book includes, at the end, several very useful appendices which list individuals who received honours,

those who were prisoners of war, and those who were recipients of the War Service Land Settlement Scheme.

In their totality the entries provide a significant picture of the impact of war on a small country community where a quarter of the population served in the armed forces in World War II, and the book achieves Louise Higham's stated purpose of recording the patriotic service of these men and women 'before it vanishes into otherwise forgotten history.'

**Robert Nicholson, *Captain Robert Laurie and the Maritime Development of Fremantle*, Hesperian Press, 2025. In Library & Bookshop \$25**

**Reviewer: Heather Campbell**



The author provides a brief history of Fremantle Harbour in order that the important contribution to its development by his great-grandfather, Captain Robert Laurie, can be fully appreciated. Born in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1855, Robert Laurie was only fifteen years old and already a sailor when he migrated to Australia to join the Adelaide Steamship Company. Over the

next few years Robert's sailing experience increased, with the certificates awarded to him highlighting his growing expertise. In 1880 the company transferred him to Fremantle to open an office and by 1882 he had fulfilled all his commitments to the various vessels he had been working on and had married Margaret Armstrong. The couple had three daughters. He continued to work for the company, serving on company vessels as necessary until forming a family stevedoring company in 1891. With his extensive maritime experience he fought to achieve proper marine standards at the port, which would then encourage the patronage of international shipping.

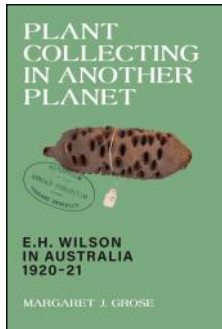
The following years saw the loss of his wife and his remarriage, and service on the Fremantle Municipal Council and as a Member of State Parliament. Not surprisingly with the establishment of the Fremantle Harbour Trust, Laurie was appointed chairman of Commissioners, remaining in that position until 1907 and carrying on with his stevedoring business. He also continued to hold his seat for Fremantle West Electorate until 1912, always contributing when maritime issues of relevance to the Fremantle Harbour Trust were discussed.

After detailing Captain Laurie's public life, the author, focuses on the family. This section, interspersed with contemporary photographs of family members, provides insight into Laurie as a family man with private interests as opposed to the public figure.

This is a delightful little book. It is an engaging read as it includes some of the bigger issues of the time, for instance in government, but also includes a human element with stories and images of family members and events, which maintain the reader's interest.

**Margaret J Grose, *Plant Collecting in Another Planet: E H Wilson in Australia 1920–21*, UWAP, 2025. In Library**

**Reviewer: Alex S George**



This book is a fine addition to the literature on Australia’s flora, filling a gap with an account of a collector who previously has been little acknowledged here. Ernest Henry Wilson (1876–1930) is well known for his plant explorations in China (earning the nickname ‘Chinese’ Wilson) but, curiously, his travels in Australia and New Zealand have largely been

overlooked. Margaret Grose gives us an account of her journeys to discover Wilson’s time here, including research at the Arnold Arboretum, Harvard, Wilson’s ‘home’ institution. She became intrigued that so little appeared to be known about the Australian travels of an otherwise world-famous plant collector.

Wilson’s primary interest was trees. In October 1920, he travelled around the southwest of WA to see the forests of Karri, Jarrah, Marri and Tuart. He visited the central wheatbelt where he saw such species as Wandoo, Salmon Gum, York Gum, Jam and Sheoak. But he also commented on other matters, for example being impressed by the Goldfields pipeline.

Throughout the book, to complement his observations Margaret Grose weaves much information about the habits and biology of Australian trees and other plants, and detours into a discussion on the reasons for Australia’s distinct flora and the role of continental drift in its evolution.

A proper diary by Wilson exists for one trip in WA, from Perth to Westonia. A transcript is provided here, sprinkled with gaps for missing words or where the writing was too hard to interpret. It includes lists of the specimens collected. For his other trips to the southwest (Big Brook, Busselton, Albany and Denmark, around Perth, Coolgardie and Widgiemooltha), the diary contains only lists of specimens. From Kalgoorlie he went east by train (complaining at having to change three times due to the different gauge of the lines between States).

After WA, his travels have been constructed from data on labels of his specimens, annotations on his photographs, and press reports. He visited all States, inspecting both native forests and plantations. He was interviewed for many major and regional papers keen to hear his views on Australia and why he was here, and he was not afraid to speak his mind, especially regarding the destruction of native forests.

He continually made a plea for better education of the public about trees and better conservation. A quote used for the heading for chapter 7 sums up his view: ‘Stop making havoc of your heritage of natural forests’. He would be dismayed to know that we have not heeded his advice. A plea for a national forestry school was taken up, however, when the Australian Government approved its establishment in Canberra in 1925.

All his eastern Australian specimens and glass-plate photographic negatives were lost when the ship carrying them, SS *Canastota*, disappeared after leaving Sydney on 13 June 1921. Wilson was aware of the risks of sea travel and packed his collections in two consignments intended to go on separate ships, but all were loaded onto the *Canastota*.

The title of the book reflects how different Australia appeared to those from the northern hemisphere. A comment after his visit to Fraser Island sums this up: ‘Everything is wrong but there it is’.

An intriguing aspect of his published writings is that he never wrote about his dismay at the extensive destruction of trees that he saw in many parts of the world – the latter was reserved for his association with the press. After returning home, he was silent on this. His own account in *Plant Hunting* (1927) is mainly a book of his travels to a number of countries and includes less detail about botanising.

The book is copiously illustrated with reproductions of photographs by himself, often with a field companion such as Desmond Herbert, for scale. The dress code was a little different in those days—a photograph on p. [vi] shows Wilson in the forest in Queensland, dressed in waistcoat and tie! There is a selection of photographs of living plants that caught his attention, while images of some of his herbarium specimens show well how they can be artistic objects as well as subjects for scientific study now and in the future.

Appendices (of interest particularly to botanists) give lists of his surviving collections in the Harvard Herbaria (524 sheets) and in the Western Australian Herbarium (220 sheets)

There are copious endnotes for each chapter and a bibliography of the major works on Wilson and others relevant to his story. A comprehensive index rounds out a fine book.

### Almanac – April 1926

In a speech by E A Evans (Chief Mechanical Engineer at Midland Railway Workshops) at Midland Junction Technical School in 1926 parents were warned not to give their boys too much pocket money which they might spend at the local entertainments.

The scheme for a new Sanctuary and east end for St Mary’s Catholic Cathedral was approved in 1924, and the foundation stone laid on 25 April 1926.

South Fremantle FC defeated East Fremantle FC by a goal.

In April 1926, Inspector John Walsh & Sergeant Alexander Pitman of the Gold Stealing Detective Squad were murdered while investigating gold theft.

### Affiliates Newsletter

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

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

**DON'T MISS!**  
**Birrundudu Drawings**  
**Stories of desert cultural knowledge**  
**At the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, UWA**  
**Last day on 4 April**

In 1945, sixteen Aboriginal men working at Birrundudu Station on the NT/WA border (at that time a Vestey-run station) created 810 crayon drawings, commissioned by visiting anthropologists Ronald and Catherine Berndt. Using this unfamiliar medium, the men documented their extensive knowledge of Country, ancestral creation, history and ceremonies. The exhibition showcases over 100 of these works on paper, none of which has been exhibited before.

The exhibition is the result of years of active re-engagement with descendants and communities connected to the original artists, who have helped bring the stories and cultural significance of these drawings back to life. The research team visited the communities of Balgo, Billiluna, Halls Creek, Kalkarindji (Wave Hill), Lajamanu, Yuendumu and Mparntwe (Alice Springs) to share the collection with descendants of the artists and others connected to its cultural significance. This exhibition also marks the 50th anniversary of the Berndt Museum.

**Western Australian History**  
**Foundation grants round 2026**

<http://www.wahistoryfoundation.org.au/>

See guidelines for applicants  
Grants round opens on 1 April 2026  
& closes on 1 July 2026

The Secretary is available to answer any further questions by email or phone (on request).  
Lucy Hair (Secretary) [lucy@radiam.com.au](mailto:lucy@radiam.com.au)

**Perth Anti-Conscription Campaign**  
**History Walk**

The Perth Anti-Conscription Campaign History Walk is a free mobile phone app designed for secondary school students, but available to everyone. The walk is 1.5 kms in length, starting opposite the Trades Hall building in Beaufort Street, Perth (now the CFMEU office) and going via the former office of the *Westralian Worker* (now Metronet office) in Stirling Street, over the bridge to the Town Hall, past the Weld Club and ending at Perth Esplanade. The walk was funded by a grant from the WA History Foundation and recorded in Creative Space at UWA.

For more details see: <https://soundtrails.com.au/perth-anti-conscription-history/>

You can download the app from the App store on your Smart phone.

**Historical Interactive Digital map –**  
**Mt Lawley Society**

[www.mountlawleysociety.org.au/interactive-map](http://www.mountlawleysociety.org.au/interactive-map)

Congratulations to the Mount Lawley Society for developing a digital map to fill with places significant in the history of the suburbs of Mt Lawley, Menora & Inglewood.

As a start, 126 entries have been added in eight sections. Here is a taste:

1. Properties & Streets – Woodsome Street named after Woodsome Hall in West Yorkshire.
2. People – Former WA Premiers John Scaddan & Philip Collier, developer of the original Mt Lawley Estates Samuel Copley & Olympic swimmer Frank Schryver.
3. Places of Worship – Forrest Park Methodist Church & St Giles Anglican Church.
4. Clubs, parks & theatres – Macaulay Park in Inglewood & the Menora Picture Gardens.
5. Educational Places – Mt Lawley & St Mary's Primary Schools.
6. Hospitals & Nursing homes – Nurse Harvey's Hospital & St John of God, Mt Lawley.

**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.).