



HISTORY WEST

March 2026

GENERAL MEETING

The next meeting is on Wednesday 18 March at 6pm when Prof. Jane Lydon will present a talk titled 'Progress, Depression, and Exclusion. Four Views of the Western Australian Centenary: George Pitt Morison, John Kirwan, Edward Shann and William Harris'

History West Centre, 109 Stirling Hwy Nedlands
Refreshments available from 5.30pm



Detail from Pitt Morison
The Foundation of Perth.
SROWA



Tableaux dramatising Pitt Morison's painting. SROWA



'First Colonists' float, Centenary Pageant,
October 1929. SROWA



Proposed centenary
stamp design. SROWA

The Western Australian Historical Society (Inc) was founded in September 1926 to 'raise interest in' WA's forthcoming centenary of 1829. Commemorating the Society's centenary is inseparable from that of the former colony of Swan River. In this talk I examine several perspectives on WA identity and history, focusing on the lead-up to the centennial year: what do these views tell us about contemporary ideas about history? The Society's participation in centenary events was represented widely through George Pitt Morison's landmark history painting, which emphasised colonial progress and prosperity. Goldfields newspaperman and politician John Kirwan also spruiked the State in a glittering, boosterish vision of expansion. By contrast, economic historian Edward Shann warned of economic disaster at just this time, predicting what we now term the Great Depression. Just as critical, First Nations civil rights leader William Harris and the Native Union demanded equal rights, arguing that 'educated natives were punished under the British law, but otherwise they were treated like wild blackfellows'. I conclude by reflecting on some of the key changes the discipline has seen since the 1920s.

Professor Jane Lydon is the Wesfarmers Chair of Australian History at UWA. Her research centres on Australia's colonial past and its legacies in the present. In particular, she is concerned with the history of Australia's engagement with anti-slavery, humanitarianism and human rights. Her most recent books include *Imperial Emotions: The Politics of Empathy across the British Empire* (CUP, 2020) and *Anti-slavery and Australia: No Slavery in a Free Land?* (Routledge, 2021).



History West Centre – renovation in progress

Downstairs in the carpark a dedicated clean collection store is being constructed with an insulated prefabricated wall and sliding entrance door across the front. This adjustment to the carpark will give us essential storage space.

Welcome to new members

Shire of Ashburton, Helen Atkinson,
Carrie Coogan, Susan Croudace, Frances
Hammond, Maritime Archaeological
Assn WA, Anthony Pilditch,
Susan Sondalini, Shane Ward

Forthcoming Events — Don't forget to book online!

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

HISTORY IN THE CITY



Edith Dircksey Cowan
Hilary Silbert

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

Wednesday 4 March, 2pm

Hilary Silbert, after being appointed Corporate Events Manager at the newly formed Edith Cowan University (1991), realised that the remarkable achievements of Edith Dircksey Cowan were virtually unknown.

It became Hilary's mission to tell the world about the many ways Edith contributed to the improvement of women's and children's rights and social reform, before and after her election as Australia's first woman parliamentarian.

COMMUNITY TALK



Collectors & their Collections

Small treasures: Victorian greeting cards and WA glass

Rhuwina Griffiths & Kit Griffiths

History West Centre
109 Stirling Hwy, Nedlands

Friday 27 March, 10 for 10.30am

Collecting is one of those activities we rarely get the chance to share, yet it sits at the intersection of memory, identity and history, telling powerful stories about who we are.

Please join us for this inaugural *Collector's Talk*.

Bookings essential

Cost: members \$10, non-members \$15

Click on link or scan QR code

<https://square.link/u/5Fqnoh0n>



HISTORY WEST CENTENARY LECTURE

SAVE THE DATE — 6 MAY

Members' Early Bird price of \$30
from 2-31 March



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

Thanks to support of PEET Ltd this to be a special occasion with a celebratory drink after the lecture



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

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

Xmas Party 2025

Subdued lighting, beautifully decorated Christmas trees, a well-stocked bar and friendly catering staff serving finger foods greeted seventy members and friends who attended the party, our first in the Wright Family Community Hall. Tours and Events Committee, with professional assistance from Stephen Dill-Macky, was determined to create a Christmas wonderland to celebrate this inaugural event. ‘Delightful’, ‘lovely’, ‘how special’, ‘great atmosphere’ were some of the comments on the evening. The traditional Christmas raffle was as stunning as usual, thanks to Judy Dill-Macky’s expertise. Our President, Richard Offen, expressed pride in what had been achieved by the Society’s volunteers in moving to our new premises under the leadership of Sally Anne Hasluck in a very busy year. He also gave special thanks to our Community Officer Lesley Burnett for her exceptional work in the transition from our old to our new building.



* * * * *

Memento

**History West Exhibition at
Boorloo Festival
Perth Town Hall – from 9 April
WA history reimaged through
contemporary fashion**



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 are sparking the imagination of a new generation.

Fifteen students recently visited the Society and, after a talk by exhibition curator Wendy Lugg about how personal mementoes can connect with broader WA social history, the students viewed a selection of collection ‘mementoes’. Each student chose one that held personal appeal. They are now busy developing an imagined narrative for their chosen memento, researching the fashions of the era it represents, exploring its appearance using 3D software and using this combined material as the basis for creating their garments.

Do pay a visit to the Town Hall in April to enjoy this imaginative exhibition.

Free tours of the History West Centre

On Wednesdays volunteer Jim Barns is conducting tours of our new premises. Many thanks to Jim.



Jim Barns, Jeanette Longwood (librarian), Merriene Scott, Linda Rooney (treasurer of our Affiliate Toodyay Historical Society), Catie Robins (new library volunteer)



Marie Françoise Scott (volunteer bookshop), Richard Ranshaw, Tim Dawe, Kevin Jackson, Jim Barns, Annette Sellers

CENTENNIAL STORIES

Barbara Harris

The first decade

In early 1926, Ivor Birtwhistle, editor of the *Western Mail*, met with Edith Cowan and Mary Farrelly and proposed the creation of the Western Australian Historical Society to preserve and promote Western Australia's history, particularly in view of the approaching centenary in 1929. Their response was enthusiastic. A preliminary planning meeting of approximately twenty people was followed by the Society's successful inaugural meeting held on 10 September 1926. Memberships and attendances in the early months hovered around 100-150 people. A history society was established and enthusiasm abounded.

Marking the past: memorial plaques

From the outset, the Society decided that marking historic sites and erecting memorials would be one of its major programs. The centennial year focused this work and the Memorials Committee, constituted in 1929, vigorously advocated for brass plaques to be placed at significant places. Included in the first fourteen sites were Governor Stirling House at Woodbridge; the cottage formerly occupied by John Septimus Roe in Adelaide Terrace; Bishop Hale's School; Chipper's Leap at Greenmount; and Lockyer's Landing at Albany. The Memorials Committee was active in erecting memorials itself as well as lobbying government, local authorities and private persons to erect others. One notable example is a slab commemorating the foundation of Perth in 1829 that was set by the Perth City Council in the footpath in Barrack Street at the prompting of the Society.



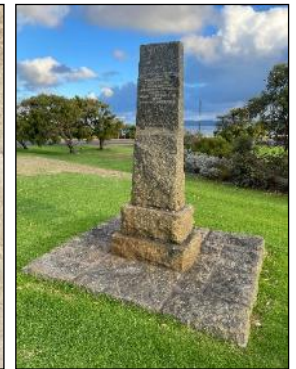
Bishop Hale School



Chipper's Leap, Greenmount



Fremantle Whaling Tunnel



Lockyer's Albany Landing

Remembering Half-Way Tree

Again, in response to the Society's petitioning, in 1936 the Postal Department erected an old-style 1868 letterbox at a site in Stirling Hwy, Claremont (on the south side, opposite Vaucluse St) where a Tuart tree, known as the Half-Way Tree, had stood. The tree was a grand landmark occupying a prominent position on the crest of a hill. It was so named because it marked the half-way point between Perth and Fremantle, on a narrow track that was known to Nyungar people as Katabberup and would later become Stirling Highway. The inscription on the plaque recorded how, at that spot, mailmen from Perth and Fremantle had met and exchanged their mails from the earliest days of the colony to the mid-1860s.

When the colony was founded, a daily mail service was initiated, with Nyungar runners employed to carry correspondence between Perth and Fremantle. The quality of the road was so poor in places that the Perth mailman was said to remove his boots and wear them around his neck rather than damage such a valuable item on the rough road. After a few years, the practice of transferring mail between runners at the Half-Way Tree was introduced, allowing the runners to return to their homes in daylight. This practice continued for thirty years until a new service was established to convey mail directly between Perth and Fremantle, using horse drawn vehicles, and the old tree ceased to be a mail exchange point. It did, however, still occupy an important place in Perth society for at least another twenty years. The elite who could afford a carriage and pair made it the turning point for their afternoon drives; others used the tree as a resting place for their horses; and friends used the site as a meeting place. It was then called 'the six-mile tree' but also known as the Governor's Tree because the Governor would often take a Sunday morning drive there before returning to Government House.

The Half-Way Tree gathered further historical associations. Convicts repairing the road using limestone from the nearby quarry were camped nearby at the convict depot and would take breaks in the shade of the tree; and John Forrest and his exploring party camped under the tree on the first night of their journey from Perth to Adelaide in 1870. In addition, in the late 19th century, the tree was the traditional site for Nyungar get-togethers.

In the early 20th century, fearing that the site was becoming a hindrance to the growing road traffic and the safety of the electric lights, the tree's branches were lopped so severely that the tree never recovered and only the dead stump remained in 1935. The stump was finally uprooted by the Tramway authorities in 1935 when the road was widened but only after a campaign against its removal by local residents who appreciated its historic significance and attached protest notes to the tree trunk. At this time, the Society lobbied the Postmaster-General's Department to mark the historic spot.



Half-Way Tree at its last P1999.2743



Chip from the stump of the Half-Way Tree MA1936.67

On 14 October 1936, an 1868 letterbox, with an inscription plate that was supplied by the Society, was unveiled in a ceremony conducted on the site of the old Half-Way Tree. Canon Burton, a vice-president of the Society, presided at the function; the Deputy-Director of Ports and Telegraphs performed the unveiling; and G P Stevens, an early postal worker and resident of Claremont for forty years, recounted the history of the tree.

In 1984, to commemorate the 175th anniversary of Australia Post, two postmen walked from Fremantle and Perth, meeting each other at the site of the Half-Way Tree. One was attired in pre-Federation uniform while the other wore current uniform. They both gave away special first-day cover envelopes along the route and a special party was held at the 1868 postbox on Stirling Hwy.

In the 1990s, the letterbox was creating a traffic hazard and had to be removed. It was relocated a short distance away at the corner of John Street. It is no longer in use but is classified as a historical monument by the National Trust and listed in the register of the National Estate of the Australian Heritage Commission. A plaque in the pavement now marks the former site of the Half-Way Tree.

Further Reading

I T Birtwistle, Royal WA Historical Society: Recollections of its first decade, *Early Days*, 7 (2) 1970
G P Stevens, Quarto Collation, H/S Series 280

FOUNDERS & VOLUNTEERS

Ivor Treharne Birtwistle (1892-1976)

Ed Jaggard



Ivor Birtwistle, journalist, was born in Victoria, moving to WA as a child and then returning in 1908. There he became a clerk on the staff of the Melbourne *Age*. Following a short sojourn as a Presbyterian minister Birtwistle enlisted in the 1st AIF, seeing action at Gallipoli and in France, before injury led to his discharge in 1917. Back in Melbourne he joined several organisations including the YMCA before moving back to Perth in 1920 when offered a position as police reporter on the *West Australian*. Promotion soon followed: in 1924 Birtwistle became editor of the paper's *Western Mail*, a weekly that reported on local community affairs including historical topics as well as matters of wider interest. By then the diminutive Birtwistle was becoming a well-known Perth identity. Married in 1925 and a man of great personal charm, he was always polite and dressed immaculately. He gave energetic

support to numerous community organisations, among them the YMCA, Legacy, RSL, surf lifesaving and, most notably after 1926, the Western Australian Historical Society.

Birtwistle, then aged 34, was a founder of the Society. He joined the small group of like-minded people who met to form a society modelled on the Sydney-based Royal Australian Historical Society. It was Birtwistle who obtained information from that body which he tabled for guidance at the meeting and it was he who took on the crucial administrative role of its first Secretary.

In 1929 he succeeded the Society's first Chairman, Professor Shann, remaining in that role for 22 years (1929-51). He was known as a 'most competent' chairman and 'master diplomat'. As with other bodies, such as the WA Surf Lifesaving Association (President 1929-37, 1946-47), Birtwistle provided firm leadership. He finally served two terms as the Society's President (1952-57, 1960-64). Throughout, until his retirement in 1957 he continued in various senior positions on the *West Australian* while also actively assisting numerous non-government bodies. A Cottesloe resident, Birtwistle also served on the Town Council.

In 1963 he moved to Roleystone and almost immediately was elected to the Shire Council (1964-69). During these years he was the driving force behind the formation of the Armadale-Kelmscott Historical Society, using his position as President to encourage widespread interest in the Shire's past. Later, because of his success in overcoming opposition, the Shire provided land for building History House at Armadale. It incorporated a museum with Birtwistle becoming the first curator of the Shire's archives. He died two months after the building's opening.

It was fitting that at Ivor Birtwistle's funeral Paul Hasluck who, like him had been present at the 1926 inaugural meeting, paid a tribute to his 'active and enthusiastic colleague' who did so much ensure the success of the WA Historical Society and the preservation of WA's history.

Collectors and their Collections

Some introductory thoughts

Rhuwina Griffiths

Is there anyone reading this who has not, at some point in their life, been a collector? If so, you are in the minority, because for most of us collecting seems to be hard-wired into our DNA. If you think back to your childhood, do you remember the excitement of adding something new to your collection?

Perhaps you collected Lego, model trains or toy cars. Or maybe you had a doll collection. And as for stamp collections, I still have mine, along with my father's and my children's. All those stamps, carefully sorted and arranged in albums, were great fun to assemble at the time. But, as I look at the pile today, all I can think is, *what am I going to do with them?*

If, like me, you caught the collecting bug early in life, you've probably worked your way through several collecting phases. Growing up in the UK in the early 1960s, I was an ideal candidate for Brooke Bond tea cards. Launched in 1954, each packet of tea contained a collector's card tucked neatly inside. Early series featured wildlife, with an image on one side and information on the reverse. If you were lucky, and your family drank a lot of tea, you could fill an album without leaving a single blank space. Mine didn't, so I resorted to swapping cards in the school playground. If that failed, I'd send off a postal order (remember those?) to Brooke Bond, wiping out my pocket money for the month. By my early twenties, I'd collected stamps, seashells, shawls and spoons - and that was just the S's.

So why do we love collecting? Often it begins with something quite insignificant. You might be given an object, perhaps a piece of pottery or glass and, when you grow to like it, you buy another by the same artist. Thanks to the internet, you can research from the comfort of your home and soon discover that 'your' artist is highly respected. You may also learn that the pieces you own are early examples and sought after by other collectors. This is the moment to pause and ask yourself: do I really want to start another collection, or should I be sensible and content with owning just two pieces? A true collector knows the answer instantly. You dive in and start looking for more.

And what we collect is almost limitless. Art, ceramics, glass, coins, books, postcards, maps, textiles, tools, toys, watches, natural specimens: the list goes on. Even within a single category, the range is astonishing.

Many of the world's great museums began not as institutions but as personal collections. What started as private passion became public legacy, as collectors preserved material that might otherwise have been lost. Here in Perth, the Berndt Museum at UWA, named after anthropologists Ronald and Catherine Berndt, houses a fine collection of Australian Indigenous art and artefacts. During years of fieldwork in remote parts of Australia and PNG, the Berndts acquired a significant collection, which they later donated to the University, forming the basis of the museum. Closer to home, important collections relating to Western Australian history have been built at the Society through the generosity of members and the dedication of volunteer curators.

Most collections, however, remain private. They grow gradually alongside a collector's life, accompanying moves, changing circumstances and shifting priorities. Over time, they become entwined with personal identity. A collection can represent years of learning, searching and research. Eventually, every collection reaches a turning point. Sometimes a collector chooses to disperse or rehome parts of it. At other times, these decisions are made by family members or executors, often under pressure and without the benefit of the collector's knowledge. Questions arise: what is valuable, what should be kept together and what can go?

What happens next varies widely. Some collections are absorbed into museums or public institutions. Others are sold piece by piece through auctions or private sales, their original coherence lost but their individual stories continuing elsewhere. Some are passed down within families, though not always with the same enthusiasm or understanding that created them. In every case, the transition marks the end of one chapter and the beginning of another.

For those who collect, this raises interesting questions. Is the purpose of a collection to endure intact or is its value fulfilled by the act of assembling it? Does meaning lie in permanence, or in the attention and care given along the way? There are no universal answers. But reflecting on these questions deepens our understanding of collecting as a human practice rather than a purely material one.

Ultimately, collecting is a way of engaging with time. It connects past and present, personal taste and collective history. Whether modest or extensive, a collection is a record of choices made and meanings assigned. It reminds us that history is not only written in books and archives but also assembled quietly in homes and display cabinets across the world.

Collecting is one of those activities we rarely get the chance to share, yet it sits at the intersection of memory, identity and history, telling a powerful story about who we are. On March 27, please join me for the inaugural *Collector's Talk*. I'll show some Victorian greeting cards and explain why I'm so passionate about these fragile pieces of ephemera. I'll be joined by another passionate collector talking about Western Australian Studio Glass.

And if you are a collector, or once were, would you like to share your own collecting story? If so, we'd love to hear about your collection.



M1999.6477

What's in a picture? New Derby Hospital 1924 Julie Taylor

This photograph from the collection shows the newly completed Derby hospital which opened in August 1924 on Loch Street near the centre of town. The hospital was the result of years of lobbying, the *Nor-West Echo* reporting that the people of Derby had been promised a new hospital for fifteen years.

The building was built in a style typical of the northwest in the early 20th century, of timber and corrugated iron on tall concrete stumps. On three sides the rooms were enclosed by large louvres for cross ventilation. A

remarkable feature were the large ventilators on the roof that were of a shape more usually seen on ships. Photographs from the mid-1930s show that they had been replaced by smaller, more conventional vents.

This photograph was taken by Joe Faulkner, husband of Louise Faulkner, the first matron of the new hospital. There are two further images by Joe Faulkner in the collection, one of which shows the Faulknors in the garden of their home in Derby. It could be Louise standing on the left at the top of the stairs in this photograph of the hospital.

Originally from Hampshire, the Faulknors had spent nine years in Moora, where Louise was matron of that hospital and Joe served as secretary of the Moora District Hospital Committee. Louise left the Moora hospital in May 1920 and the couple departed for a holiday but returned to the district to live. In August 1924 the *Geraldton Express* reported that the Faulknors had left for Derby where Louise had been appointed to the new hospital. The *Midlands Advertiser* noted that 'Derby is to be congratulated in obtaining the services of such an efficient matron'.

The new hospital was under construction by October 1923 but delay followed. The concrete stumps had been built and the other building materials were expected with the next arrival of the Stateship *Bambra*. When the ship arrived, it was discovered that there was nothing for the floor – only materials for the walls and roof! Work was at a standstill until the *Bambra*'s next visit.

In May 1924 the *Nor-West Echo* reported that the hospital was nearing completion. When it finally opened the paper described it as well furnished, but without further comment added, 'the equipment is far from what it should be'.

The new hospital was only for white patients. The *Nor-West Echo* reported in one sentence in April 1926 that a 'small Native hospital has recently been completed in Derby'; this was the old hospital repurposed. The old hospital stood on the north-eastern edge of the town within 90 metres of the Residency, a dilapidated old building that was used to accommodate patients with leprosy. At that time the townspeople were gripped by fear of the disease. The Residency was not secure and patients were known to come and go and mix with others. This situation had only added to public pressure for a new hospital.

Imagine the feeling in the town when it became known that the yet-to-be-commissioned operating theatre in the new hospital was being used to assess suspected cases of leprosy! As part of attempts to prevent the spread of the disease, all of Derby's leprosy patients were moved to Cossack in 1925 and the Residency was condemned.

The 'new' Derby hospital is long since demolished and the site is now a vacant lot.

Thank you to Tracy Fraser from the Derby Library for additional information.

A change of Honorary Solicitor

Only those members with very long memories will remember when Denis McLeod wasn't our Honorary Solicitor. Denis took up the role in March 1989 and has advised us as needed for 36 years. We thank him most warmly for his valuable help over the decades and wish him a well-earned retirement.

At the same time we sincerely welcome Paul Summers B.Jurs., LLB to take on the honorary role for us.

March 1926 Almanac

The Regent Theatre, Guildford (now the Natural History Museum), opened. The 700-seater cinema was commissioned by George Hall as a low-budget operation during a time of relative economic hardship.

Plans were announced for the construction of Point Heathcote Reception Centre. The new facility was needed because Claremont Lunatic Asylum was overcrowded and the enclosed surroundings made it unsuitable for mental ill-health patients.

Replacement of the Fremantle and Canning bridges was advocated.

To the caves by air

Gillian Lilleyman

Margaret River is a 'tourist hotspot', two airlines offering direct flights to the district, but this is nothing new. Tourist flights to the caves site commenced in 1927 and, although they had a short life, the flights were a highlight of tourism in the decade.

The State government created a Tourist and Publicity Bureau in 1921, administered by the Premier's Department, and appointed as director Seybert Hayward. One initiative of Hayward's bureau was *The Western Australian Tourist Guide and Hotel and Boarding House Directory*. First published in 1921, the directory listed towns alphabetically with information on what to see, where to stay and how to get there. It was updated annually and distributed to local, interstate and overseas shipping and tourist agencies well into the 1940s.

Extended coverage of the southwest caves and Western Australian Airways in the Directory's 1926-1927 issue presaged a little-recorded link. Since Norman Brearley formed the company (also in 1921), Western Australian Airways had operated a mail and flying doctor and passenger service to the northwest. With tourist agencies and the press extolling southwest attractions, such was the region's popularity that in November 1926 Brearley announced he was introducing flights to Yallingup. Local farmer Aubrey House provided an area on his property, 'Glenmore' near Cave House, for a landing ground. De Havilland 50s would fly the new route; one, two or three machines requisitioned as required. Flights would be offered as bookings were made, the fare £5 each way.

In December, a survey flight carried a representative from the *Daily News*, the description of birdseye views ensuring advance publicity. In January the newspaper announced that adjustments had been made to the landing ground and all was now ready for the first passenger flight.



West Australian Airways - de Havilland DH50 plane, c1924.
SLWA

On 25 January Brearley and four passengers left Maylands aerodrome at 9am, touching down before excited onlookers at 10.45am. From 'Glenmore', Aubrey House had arranged motor transport for the three-mile drive to Cave House for a gala reception at 11am. Brearley told the gathering that the service had been inspired by interstate and overseas visitors voicing regrets that they hadn't time to see WA's world-famed caves. Businessmen and travellers could now enjoy three and a half hours comfortable travel and five or six hours at the caves in one day. While the plane waited at Yallingup, people would have the opportunity to take sightseeing flights for £1/1/-. Brearley said he hoped the service would become permanent and thanked J R Campbell of the State Hotels Department and Seybert Hayward for their assistance.

At Brearley's invitation, Hayward flew to Yallingup on a scheduled flight in February. Hayward's glowing account of the experience, 'one of the most delightful and memorable' of his life, was circulated widely. Thanks to Brearley, WA was the first State to establish an air service to its caves, Hayward wrote. Adding to his enjoyment, flying alongside the De Havilland 50 was Hereward de Havilland, the aircraft founder's brother, piloting his White Moth. De Havilland was enroute to establish a factory to manufacture Moths in Melbourne and wanted to see the caves while stopping over in Perth.

One morning, Bunbury residents watched the two planes fly south but saw only the Moth return. Landing from a sightseeing flight, Brearley's plane punctured a tyre and damaged its undercarriage and propellor. No-one was injured but the plane was railed to Maylands for repairs. In November, the Tourist and Publicity Bureau announced that West Australian Airways was recommencing its service to the Yallingup caves on 7 December. Flights would run every Wednesday and be maintained throughout the season. The 'modern method of transport' was attracting tourists, reported the *Daily News* in 1928. The journey took less than two hours and passengers could admire the coastal scenery on the way. Yallingup had become a mecca for holidaymakers. Many took advantage of the Bureau's coupon scheme that offered one-way travel by plane, one way by rail and motor, and one week's accommodation at Cave House for an inclusive charge of £10.

West Australian Airways operated weekly flights to Yallingup for at least two summers. But by 1930, the service was no longer advertised: the Tourist and Publicity Bureau now promoted West Australian Airways' 14-seater Hercules flights to Adelaide. Having secured an interstate mail contract, Brearley was concentrating on his east-west service.

The 1929 stock market crash and ensuing Depression affected high-end holiday travel. Compounding this, in December 1930 fire destroyed much of the old wing of Cave House. The dining room, hall, staircase, two drawing rooms and six bedrooms were burnt and the kitchen, bar and nearby bedrooms damaged. Management reassured the hundred holidaymakers who had bookings that Cave House was still open for business: the billiard room had been converted to a dining room and a large marquee plus cosy tents erected in the grounds. Visitors could enjoy an outdoor holiday.

Cave House was repaired but as the decade wore on complaints increased: the repairs were rudimentary and the bedroom wing added in 1912 was outdated and run down. The State Hotels Department carried out only essential administration and focussed on Yanchep. This perception led to the formation of the South West Tourist Association (which successfully lobbied for Cave House to be rebuilt in 1938) and the establishment of tourist bureaus at Margaret River and Busselton and other regional centres later, something Seybert Hayward always intended should happen.

References

J Selwood, 'Seybert Hayward and the Development of Tourism in WA', *Early Days*, 12 (2) 2002.
The Western Australian Tourist Guide and Hotel and Boarding House Directory, 1921-1930.
Digitised newspapers on Trove.

Ted Egan & ‘Sayonara Nakamura’

Peter Gifford

Ted Egan, folklorist, author and former Northern Territory Administrator (2003-2007) died in December last year at the age of 93. Born in 1932 in Melbourne, Egan grew up with a strong interest in folk music and oral history. At age sixteen he moved to the Northern Territory, which shaped the direction of his life and work. He became a patrol officer, then teacher and administrator in remote Aboriginal communities. Through this work he developed a strong respect for Indigenous culture and languages and became an advocate for recognising Aboriginal history and voices. He maintained a lifelong passion for collecting songs, stories and historical accounts which might otherwise have been lost.

Ted wrote and recorded numerous songs that reflect Australian history, frontier life and social change, often but not exclusively focusing on the Northern Territory. His music, blending folk traditions with historical narrative, has been used as an educational tool and has helped make Australian history accessible to a wide audience. He also collected and preserved Australian folk songs, many now held by the National Library of Australia.

Through music, education and leadership, Ted Egan helped Australians better understand their history and identity, ensuring that diverse voices and experiences are remembered and valued. His compassion and vision were wide-ranging.

For West Australians probably his most memorable song is ‘Sayonara Nakamura’, which tells of the short life and agonising death from the ‘bends’ of a Japanese diver in the heyday of the Broome pearl fishery. A good version can be accessed online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0aYNILHW>

When the luggers all sailed away
from Roebuck Bay on that fateful day
The diver on the B19 was Nakamura
Not yet 21 from the land of the rising sun
His homeland was the island Okinawa
....

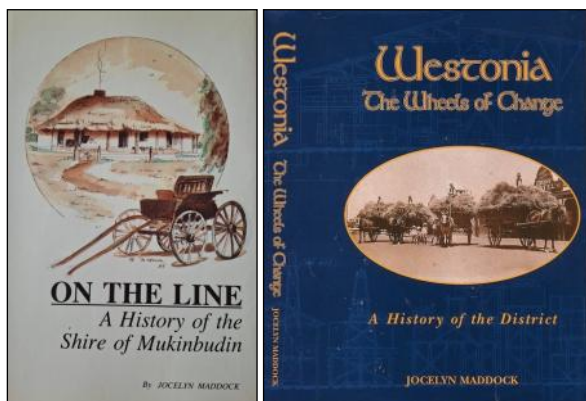
But it's goodbye now farewell
Say goodbye to Okinawa
For today they'll bury you in West Australia
You will never be as one
With the land of the rising sun
Sayonara Sayonara Nakamura

From the West came a tropical squall
And the mercury began to fall
40 fathoms deep was Nakamura
Set sail no time to stage
For the storm began to rage
So they dragged to the surface
the boy from Okinawa
....

You will find online information about the Broome Japanese Cemetery, often referred to as the Pearling Cemetery. It reminds us of the 919 Japanese divers and sailors who lost their lives during the peak decades of Broome's pearling industry (1890s-1930s).

<https://www.westernaustralia.com/au/attraction/japanese-cemetery/56b2669d2880253d74c4eba9>

Remembering historian Jocelyn Maddock



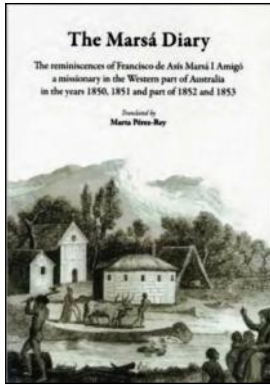
We remember with gratitude the life and contribution to our understanding of Western Australia's rural history of long-time Society member Jocelyn Maddock who died in November last year at the age of 91. Jocelyn published two histories of the eastern central wheatbelt – *Westonia: The Wheels of Change: A History of the District* (Shire of Westonia, 1998) and *On the line: A history of the Shire of Mukinbudin* (Shire of Mukinbudin, 2020). Both histories trace the development of these wheatbelt districts across a century of rural change. Jocelyn also contributed a significant article to *Studies in Western Australian History* (Vol 11, 1990) titled ‘Marginalised: the rural workforce in a marginal area farming district in the interwar years’. It is a closely researched article which tells movingly of a rural labour force during years of depression

when farmers themselves were struggling to survive and their itinerant rural workers, both Aboriginal and recent European migrants, endured harsh conditions on heavy land clearing work. Lives were bleak indeed. It is a reminder of past struggles in working and living conditions that few could endure today.

Book Reviews

Marta Pérez-Rey, translator, *The Marsá Diary: The reminiscences of Francisco de Asis Marsá I Amigo a missionary in the Western part of Australia in the years 1850, 1851 and part of 1852 and 1853*, Abbey Press, New Norcia, 2025. In Library

Reviewer: Hilaire Natt



There has always been a whiff of the miraculous about the discovery of this diary, written by Francisco de Asis Marsá, a Benedictine postulant who arrived at Fremantle with Bishop Serra and the first large group of Catalan and Spanish missionaries in 1849. How else to explain the diary's remarkable journey, in perfect condition, from a Barcelona

antiquarian's shop after Marsa's death in Barcelona, as a 75-year-old priest in 1890, to the USA where a food and wine connoisseur with a New Norcia connection, purchased it and donated it to the monastery in WA over a century later?

Francisco de Asis Marsa I Amigo wrote his 260-page diary while serving as a missionary between 1850 and 1853. It was a famously turbulent period in the history of the Catholic Church in the colony, marked by religious schisms and serious conflict between the mainly Irish Catholic inhabitants and the newly arrived Spanish and Catalan missionary group of forty priests and monks. The diary, with details of Marsa's experience and his first-hand observations of the events and personalities involved, gives us a rare opportunity to read a reliable first-hand account of what actually happened as well as detailed information about members of the group.

This fine translation by Marta Perez-Rey makes available a wealth of new information. Rey's skill as a translator also helps to bring out the personality of the diarist as he tells his story. She comments: 'The diary contains hilarious moments and nearly every page has examples of Marsa's wit and irony'. Also important is the comprehensive foreword by Tom Stephens making use of Spanish sources and newspapers as he sets the scene for the earlier conflict between the Spanish government and the Catholic Church, as well as the subsequent conflict between Irish and Spanish groups in the Swan River colony.

The diarist was one of forty Benedictine missionaries who left Cadiz in Spain on the Spanish warship *Ferrolana*, provided by Queen Isabella II, in October 1849, and arrived in Fremantle 84 days later on 29 December 1849. Captain Quesada announced his arrival with an eighteen-gun salute which initially shocked the small, unarmed British colony.

The diary records vivid details of the sailing ship's journey as well as the dramatic conflict that occurred between the clerical leaders during the next few years after their arrival. From the beginning Marsa and his

fellow lay brothers endured continuous hardship, such as lack of proper food and accommodation, as well as the insecurity of their position as 'pawns' in the struggle between Bishop Serra and Irish Bishop Brady and his 'Administrator', the aggressive Irish Trappist monk Dominic Urquhart.

In late January 1850 the group walked 80 miles with their bullock wagons through the hot summer bush to their goal, the New Norcia mission. There they laboured digging a well, planting vegetables and building huts. Two months later they were expelled from the mission at gun point by Urquhart's men, and sent (walking again), with any possessions they could carry, to Guildford where Serra had rented three small houses. Nine months later they were uprooted once more to begin working as artisans or labourers on Bishop Serra's monastic building projects. And so it went on. As Marsa wrote in his diary on 20 May 1850:

The truth is we are not doing anything we thought we were going to do when we left Spain, and we have found that almost everything is different from what we have been told.

This all took its toll on the missionary group, now scattered between New Norcia, Guildford, Subiaco and Perth and led to the departure of several members, unhappy with the lack of monastic life and the absence of missionary opportunities with the Aboriginal people.

Details of Marsa's personal experiences (such as his pangs of seasickness, soothed by a swig of the Bishop's brandy) bring the diary to life. We get to know Marsa as likeable, co-operative and willing to help the temperamental Bishop Serra, although his attitude changes over time. He is a witty and observant guide to the dramatic events unfolding and vividly describes the hard physical work involved in moving flocks of lambs between New Norcia and Guildford, or of travelling with the bullock wagons between locations. The bullocks, released into the bush each night to feed, were constantly getting lost or bogged – or dying.

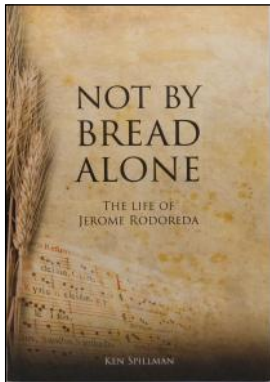
On 24 July 1850, after some months at New Norcia, where 'we live like *Selvajes* [bush people] ... without Mass or sacraments and stuck among English people without understanding them', Marsa decides that he had enough and informs Serra that he wishes to leave the community.

A skilled printer he finds work with Arthur Shenton's newspaper *The Perth Gazette* and saves his fare to return to Spain. He continues his diary until he leaves the colony eighteen months later on 23 February 1853, on the *Fanny Fisher* via Mauritius, escorting two emus sent by Bishop Serra to Queen Isabella. What happens to Marsa (and the emus) is revealed in the Epilogue and footnotes by New Norcia archivist Peter Hocking.

This diary is one of a group of new publications to emerge about this 'difficult' period of New Norcia's history, 1850 to 1853. Historian Ken Spillman has written a biography of one of the missionaries, ex-brother and baker Jerome Rodoreda, *Not by Bread Alone*, which includes extensive research by descendent Gillian Rodoreda. The latest issue of *New Norcia Studies*, No 29, 2025, also includes related articles about the warship *Ferrolana* on the first stage of its circumnavigation of the globe, and gives further details of Jerome Rodoreda and other brothers who arrived during this period of New Norcia's history.

Ken Spillman, *Not by Bread Alone. The life of Jerome Rodoreda*, Abbey Press, New Norcia, 2025. In Library

Reviewer: Ed Jaggard



In 1829 the British government finally conceded Catholic Emancipation and Catholics gained equal status with their Anglican counterparts not only in Britain but also in its colonies.

Consequently, a Catholic religious and administrative hierarchy was established and grew in British territories, including the Swan River colony. The

Spanish Benedictines, led by Bishops Serra and Salvado, first arrived in the colony in 1846 and regularly sought others to join them in their missionary endeavours.

One young Spanish man who considered a future overseas as a missionary was Jeroni Rodoreda, born in 1831 in the small town of Granollers, close to Barcelona. He had served an apprenticeship as a baker, had musical training and was an organist – all useful attributes for a likely missionary. Serra successfully appealed to him to travel to Swan River along with 39 others of varied social background, one of them Rodoreda's lifelong friend from the same town, Martin (later Bishop) Griver.

At this point the question arises, 'Why did these young men board ship and set sail for Fremantle?' The reasoning behind this first turning point in Rodoreda's life can only be guessed at, as with another two significant changes of his life's direction in the years ahead. *Not By Bread Alone* is a successful attempt to re-construct a life with an impressive range of sources. However rarely does Rodoreda 'speak' to the reader, despite the efforts of the author and his co-contributors.

While the biography is attributed to Ken Spillman, there are another two co-contributors: Gillian Rodoreda, great-great-granddaughter of Jerome, and Tom Stephens, a family relative by marriage. The three in their different ways delve into Rodoreda's life. Spillman, a historian and prolific author, does an excellent job of identifying contextual information and finding Rodoreda in census data, shipping records and contemporary newspapers. Beginning while holidaying in Barcelona in 2003 Gillian Rodoreda pursued family background information in Spain. Tom Stephens contributes three valuable Appendices, one painstakingly identifying those Benedictines who arrived at Swan River with Rodoreda and Griver.

Rodoreda arrived in Fremantle aboard the Spanish frigate *Ferrolana* in December 1849 and immediately found himself caught up in the rivalries of the local Church dignitaries. Within days of landing he and many of the Benedictines were staggering over the sand plain north to what was to become New Norcia. Soon after Bishop Serra

ordered them to move to Guildford, then to Herdsman-Mongers Lake where they grew vegetables, olives and other fruit trees, the first steps in building the 'New Subiaco'. Several of Rodoreda's fellow missionaries soon abandoned their spiritual lives, some seeking employment in Perth, others leaving for the newly discovered goldfields in Victoria and NSW. Less than three years after arriving Rodoreda joined the exodus, the second turning point in his life, finding employment with Dalton's, a central Perth bakery. Beforehand, to improve his opportunities he anglicised his name, becoming Jerome, and improved his spoken English.

From this time forward Rodoreda was never without employment as a baker. After several moves, by 1856 he was leasing premises and trading under the name of 'Western Australian Bakery', selling breads and groceries. Over the next 30 years Rodoreda built several profitable bakeries, became an employer rather than an employee, and married Mary Ann Hynes, a milliner. Together they had nine children, six of whom reached adulthood. By this time the family's bakery and residence were close to the newly constructed St Mary's Cathedral. Not surprisingly Rodoreda retained strong ties to the Church, and was choir master and organist, while his bakeries enjoyed the vice-regal patronage of Governors Hampton and Weld.

Besides appearing to have enjoyed regular participation in community affairs, Rodoreda was widely regarded as a successful businessman. He frequently attended public meetings, contributed to charities, and in 1871 became a naturalised British subject. Ten years later he became a widower, Mary Anne's death causing him to consider his future, especially as it became clear that his eldest daughter, Isabella, suffered from bipolar disorder. That resulted in the third turning point in Rodoreda's life – leaving Perth.

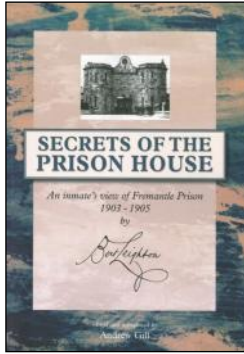
Concerned that Isabella's crude medical treatment typical of the day would lead to her long-term placement in Fremantle Lunatic Asylum (where she was placed for several months late in 1888) he arranged for her discharge, then he and his daughter moved to Melbourne, seeking alternative treatment. As her primary carer he moved her to several 'Asylums' before she died in September 1909, Rodoreda following her six months later.

Amid his concern for Isabella he finally relinquished his bakery interests to his son Charles who had a grocery business. Sadly for Jerome, after the transfer difficulty in finding a suitable buyer led to the bakery passing out of family hands, ending almost 40 years of association with bread-making.

Biographies of small businessmen are rare, one obvious reason being the difficulty of recovering details of their lives. With the assistance of an Abbot Placid Spearitt Scholarship and access to New Norcia's archives Ken Spillman has taken us into the world of mid-nineteenth century Perth where an industrious one-time Benedictine provided a comfortable life for himself. In addition, the world was revealed by the persistence and good fortune of Gillian Rodoreda when visiting Spain, as well as the Appendices compiled by Tom Stephens. Together their efforts have produced an enjoyable biography.

Bert Leighton with Andrew Gill (ed.), *Secrets of the Prison House: an inmate's view of Fremantle Prison 1903-1905*, Blatellae Books, Osborne Park, 2025. In Library & Bookshop \$40

Reviewer: Heather Campbell



On his release from Fremantle Prison after serving three years for receiving stolen banknotes Bert Leighton, a travelling entertainer, wrote seventeen articles for the *Sporting Life* describing his experiences and those of his fellow inmates. He insisted that WA's 'convict era' still flourished within the prison despite the recommendations of the Penal Commission of 1898-1899.

This volume has a comprehensive contents list providing detail of the 17 articles which appear individually in numerical order followed by helpful endnotes. Andrew Gill's introduction sets the scene and provides helpful background information on Leighton and the circumstances of his 'crime', giving the reader a deeper understanding of the content of the articles. Included are appendices, pertinent illustrations and contemporary verse as well as a detailed index.

Leighton paints a grim picture of life in Fremantle Prison, a world of starvation and hardship, overseen by ignorant, unsympathetic and often cruel staff, complemented by visiting 'specialists' such as the doctor and men of religion who exacerbated rather than eased the plight of the inmates. It was a place where human waste was emptied in the prison yards, where no water was provided for personal washing and where the visiting doctor's usual treatment for illness of any description, including mental illness, was bath and

battery, where the 'patient' was 'put in a bath and electric brushes applied' for as long as the presiding warden wished. Not surprisingly no serious attempts were made to reform or educate prisoners and Leighton was critical of the content of, and limited access to, the prison library.

Though shocking, this book is compelling reading, supported by thorough research - what more could one ask of a book on such an important aspect of WA's history?

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