



HISTORY WEST

May 2026

GENERAL MEETING

The next meeting is on **Wednesday 20 May at 6pm** when **Robert French** will present a talk titled **‘One Damned Thing After Another – Why Does History Matter?’**
History West Centre, 109 Stirling Hwy Nedlands
Refreshments available from 5.30pm



The definition of history as ‘Just one damned thing after another’ appeared in Alan Bennett’s play, *The History Boys*. History in the making today may seem to answer that description. Recorded history serves a variety of purposes. Ernest Renan famously wrote in 1882: ‘Forgetfulness and I would say even historical error are essential to the creation of a nation’. At a national level, history matters. It matters at many other levels to families, communities large and small, institutions public and private, to the arts and culture, and to the law and sciences.

History informs the understanding and interpretation of our constitutions, Commonwealth and State, the common law and our statute laws. It matters to our understanding of scientific knowledge, how it got to be where it is and how it may progress. The talk will touch on how history matters to the law and sciences in particular – whether it be right or wrong – and how the continuing scrutiny and review of recorded history are essential.

Robert French is a graduate of the University of Western Australia in science and law. He served as a Federal Court judge (1986-2008) and as Chief Justice of Australia (2008-2017). He was the inaugural president of the National Native Title Tribunal (1994-1998). He currently serves on international commercial appellate courts in Dubai and Singapore and is a visiting judge of the Supreme Court of Fiji. He represents the International Science Council on the UNESCO World Commission on Ethics in Science and Technology. He was inaugural chancellor of ECU (1991-1996) and Chancellor of UWA (2017-2024). He is Chair of the Constitution Education Fund Australia dedicated to civics education in Australia.

JUMBO Second-Hand Booksale

A History West tradition
Carpark, History West Centre
109 Stirling Hwy, Nedlands, corner Baird Ave
Saturday 1 August

This year it will be mostly a collectors’ sale because several of our bibliophiles have downsized their libraries which mainly consist of WA history books.

Loads of bargain history books from \$2.
Something for everyone.

Remember to put the date in your diary.



Call to all members!

Search for a new Council Secretary

Our current much-valued secretary Fiona Bush will not be re-nominating as Secretary at the October AGM and we will be in urgent need of a replacement.

Can you help?

The Secretary’s role is crucial and entails compiling Council and Executive Committee agendas, taking Council and Executive minutes and relaying Council decisions back to the Community Officer and the Society’s committees as required.

The task is not onerous but it does help if you have access to Adobe to compile Agenda papers!

For further information on this role please contact Fiona —

secretary@histwest.org.au

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

TELEPHONE: (08) 9386 3841 | EMAIL: admin@westnet.org.au

FACEBOOK: [facebook.com/histwest](https://www.facebook.com/histwest) | WEB: www.histwest.org.au | ABN: 43 607 110 473

LIBRARY EMAIL: library@histwest.org.au | MUSEUM EMAIL: museum@histwest.org.au

Forthcoming Events — Don't forget to book online!

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

HISTORY IN THE CITY



MV Perth: a boat with a story

Greg Browne

Citiplace Community Centre, Upper-Level
Perth Railway Station Concourse

Wednesday 6 May, 2pm

MV Perth was a pine and jarrah ferry, built by A E Brown in Fremantle to ply the Swan River. Beginning with its maiden voyage in December 1914, it provided an important service for patrons until the opening of the Narrows Bridge resulted in a decline in demand.

It is one of the oldest wooden boats still in existence in WA but, sadly, is now in dry dock waiting to be restored to its former glory.

Greg Browne is looking forward to telling you more about his family connection with this unique piece of WA's history and its restoration plan.

HISTORY WEST CENTENARY LECTURE



Perth in the 1920s

Richard Offen & Malcolm Quekett

UWA Club Auditorium

Wednesday 6 May, 6 for 6.30pm

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>

COMMUNITY TALK



Collectors & their Collections Sequins & Songs: memorabilia from two creative parents

Wendy Lugg

History West Centre
109 Stirling Hwy, Nedlands

Wednesday 27 May, 10 for 10.30am

Wendy is an incurable collector but her most precious collection enables her parents' lives to be placed within the context of WA's broader social history. Her mother was employed in the workroom above Shirley's exclusive city frock shop, adding beading and embroidery to designer gowns. Her father was a musician with his own three-piece orchestra.

Cost \$10 Members/\$15 Non Members

Bookings essential. Tel: 9386 3841

Email: admin@histwest.org.au

Click on the link or scan the QR code
<https://square.link/u/2hAf0dbd>



GARDEN ISLAND TOUR



A step back into WA's past

Tuesday 2 June, 8.15 for 8.30am start,
returning approx. 3.30pm

If you enjoy friendly company, good food and learning more about our history then why not join the Society's guided bus tour to Garden Island.

By 7 June 1829 Lieut. Governor Stirling had established his headquarters on the island at Cliff Head, a place we will explore as part of our tour.

We will also learn about the island's rich environmental history and why it became a major naval facility, now known as HMAS Stirling.

After lunch at The Anchorage we will visit the Navy's Museum.

Cost: \$70 members, \$75 non-members.

Bookings essential.
Book early – max of 40
See flyer for more details
Please click on the link
or scan the QR code

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



Celebrating Western Australian Fashion

An invitation to an industry evening at History West

Thurs 21 May, 5pm-6pm
History West Centre,
109 Stirling Hwy, Nedlands

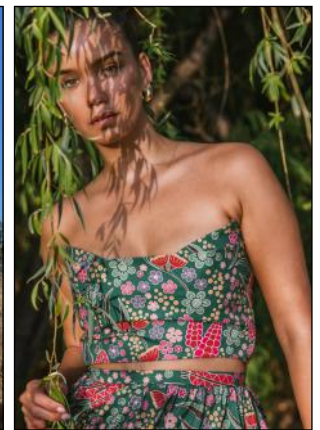
In collaboration with History West, the recently launched Fashion Narratives Project invites members of the Western Australian fashion community and broader public to join us for a special industry evening celebrating the stories, makers and designers who have shaped WA's distinctive fashion identity.



Anne Farren wearing a Sark jacket and shirt and Influential People (designers Maggie Baxter & Debra Summers) skirt, c 1980s. Photo: Greg Woodward



Emily Craig wearing a Zuhair Kuvan-Mills designed dress, Noogolark Series, Green Embassy label, using recycled materials, 2018. Photo Credit: Unknown



Tahlia Glasson modelling a design from Amanda Healey's Kirrikin label. This label highlights the creative work of Australian indigenous artists. Evoke Collection, 2024. Photo: Carlia Knowles

This evening forms part of the *Fashion Narratives: Western Australian Contemporary Designer Fashion Project* – an exciting research, publication and archival initiative documenting the history of contemporary WA designer fashion from the 1960s to the present day. Led by Dr Anne Farren and conducted in partnership with History West, the project brings together designers, industry professionals and creatives to ensure that Western Australia's rich fashion heritage is recorded, preserved and celebrated for future generations. Contributing authors include Maggie Baxter, Zuhair Kuvan-Mills, Sheree Dornan, Amanda Healy, Suzette Worden and Pip Christmass.

The project will result in three significant outcomes: a book profiling the stories of WA fashion designers and makers, a curated exhibition to be held at History West in early 2027 and a publicly accessible archive to be permanently housed at History West, ensuring these histories remain available to researchers, students and the community long into the future.

The industry evening on 21 May offers a wonderful opportunity to connect with fellow members of WA's fashion community and to learn more about the project. Whether you are a designer, collector, retailer, fashion educator or simply someone with a deep appreciation for the creative culture that WA fashion represents, we would love to have you attend.

Western Australia has a fashion story that is distinctly its own which has been shaped by our climate, geography, multicultural communities and a spirit of creative independence that has produced remarkable talent over more than six decades. From the emergence of boutique culture in the late 1960s through the innovation of the 1980s designer scene to the sustainable and First Nations-led fashion practices of today, this project is working to capture the story.

Attendance is free and all are welcome. Tea and coffee will be provided.
To register your interest or for further information, please register for a free ticket:
<https://events.humanitix.com/industry-night-one-wa-fashion-project>

We look forward to welcoming you on the evening.
Fashion Narratives Project is proudly supported by the WA Government.

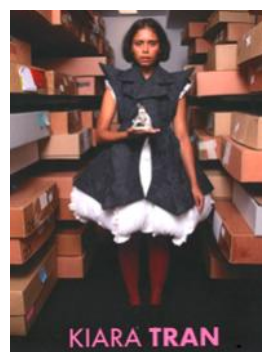
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Memento WA history reimagined through contemporary fashion

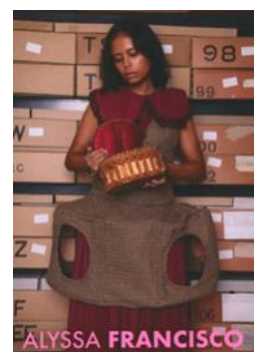
Congratulations to History West's museum team as well as to North Metropolitan TAFE fashion students and staff for the wonderful exhibition housed in Perth Town Hall's undercroft through April. The exhibition launch was a great success with a packed crowd, mostly of young students, several short speeches and afternoon tea while everyone studied the showcases displaying the museum mementos which inspired the student's creativity, the texts they wrote concerning their selected object and finally the striking new fashion garments which drew their inspiration from the chosen mementos. It was an impressive exhibition!



PERSIE TOINDEPI



KIARA TRAN



ALYSSA FRANCISCO

CENTENARY STORIES

Barbara Harris

The third decade: Campaigning for the establishment of a State Archives

A key objective that drove the establishment of the WA Historical Society was a belief in the urgent need to save and preserve the historical records of Western Australia, both public and private.

In 1903 the government had set up a committee under the chairmanship of James Sykes Battye (first librarian of the State Public Library) charged with preserving important government records but there was limited interest in collecting non-government records. That task was to fall to the new Society. Professor Shann, the Society's first chairman of Council, and Foundation Professor of History and Economics at UWA, argued that the Society should be concerned with documents relating to private and social history as well as more official public ones. From the beginning, private records from families with colonial connections were collected, borrowed and copied, and from 1930 the Society established the important position of Keeper of Records to take responsibility for the ever-growing accumulation, appointing Dircksey Cowan to that onerous role. However the Society always insisted that the task of preserving government records was the role of government itself.

Therefore, as early as 1928-1929, the Society began campaigning for the establishment of a State Archives, providing the government with detailed reports about other state archives and arguing that it would be a good way to celebrate the 1929 centenary. Lobbying continued in the 1930s. Council member F I Bray, both a Society councillor and clerk in charge of the Colonial Secretary's Office, was seriously concerned that ad-hoc storage arrangements meant that WA's official records were not secure, and he worked tirelessly towards establishing State Archives. Other prominent members of the Society – Paul Hasluck, Alfred Carson, Revd P U Henn and Canon Burton – helped to lead the campaign.

On 12 November 1942, a public meeting (including the university, schools, press, churches and parliamentarians) made a pledge to support a State Archives although the war effort took precedence at that time. In October 1943, however, the government decided in principle to establish Archives but to delay doing so until after the war. The Society pressed the urgency of the matter and the State Treasurer, Frank Wise (a member of the Society) conceded, announcing funding for an Archives Branch of the Public Library in September 1944. It wasn't a full public records office (which the Society sought) but it was a first step – and a major achievement for the Society.

In March 1945, Molly Lukis was appointed the first State Archivist overseeing the development of WA's archival collections, a position that she held for 25 years. She was invited to advise the Society on the management of its collection and was co-opted to the Society's Council. Molly had a close and cooperative relationship with the Society and the two organisations functioned well alongside each other. This relationship was maintained when Margaret Medcalf became the second State Archivist (and Principal Librarian of the Battye Library) between 1971 and 1989.



F I 'Son' Bray



J S Battye



Molly Lukis



Margaret Medcalf

In 1946, when the Society was required to vacate its rooms in the Treasury Building where much of its collection was stored, and after unsuccessful appeals to the government for replacement space, it was reluctantly decided that the documentary, book and photographic records would be stored at the new Archives Department with the Society's collection kept separate and distinct, under the Society's control and in its legal possession.

In 1955, Dircksey Cowan and other Society members requested the development of a clearer policy on the future of the Society collections which were stored in the State Archives. The Society confirmed that the items were 'on loan' because the State Archives could provide greater security and easier access. In 1958, the State Library notified the Society that, given shortage of space, the Society's records would need to be removed. However, with nowhere to store them, the Society had to hand over its collection of manuscripts, photographs, monograms and pamphlets, to the State Archives which had become part of the J.S. Battye Library of West Australian History when it was opened in 1956. Under the terms of this agreement these documents could be transferred back to RWAHS once it acquired a permanent headquarters suitable for the repository of this material and a qualified staff for the material's proper servicing.

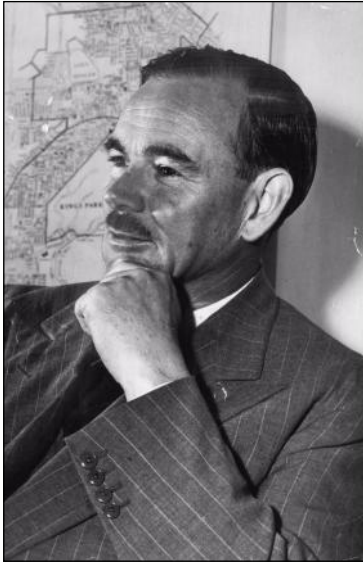
When the Society's first premises, Stirling House, opened in 1965, the book collection was returned, but it was agreed that documentary and photographic collections should remain with the Battye Library. Since then, the possession of these items has been, at times, a contentious issue but it is generally agreed that the State Library provides the best protection and servicing of this material.

With the passing of the *State Records Act* in 2000, the State Archives split from Battye Library and became an independent agency managed by the State Records Office. Its collection consists of colonial, state and local government records from 1829 through to current times; whilst non-government records remain in Battye Library's Archives collection. Thus it took until the close of the 20th century, 70 years after the Society began its lobbying for a State Records Office, for that goal to be achieved.

FOUNDERS & VOLUNTEERS

Paul Hasluck (1905–1993)

Nicholas Hasluck



Paul Hasluck 1951

Paul Hasluck was one of a small group who met in 1926 in a bare university classroom with an unshaded bulb hovering overhead as steps were taken to establish what became the Royal Historical Society of Western Australia. Born in Fremantle, educated at Perth Modern School, Paul was at that time a young journalist on *The West Australian* newspaper. He was known also as the author of various articles on local history. A little later, on 10 September, a formal occasion to constitute the Society was held at the Karrakatta Club lecture hall, a site for meetings until the Premier, Sir James Mitchell, gave a helping hand by setting aside a room in the Lands Department. In the meantime, he had been drafted as the Society's Honorary Research Secretary, a means of drawing readily on the memories of early settlers.

Talks at meetings often included reference to papers donated or lent to the Society or to family treasures brought along to illustrate the subject under discussion. When the name of a pioneer or old colonist was mentioned Paul would arrange to see them. He recorded a conversation with James Kennedy who was on one of John Forrest's expeditions. He yarned with Ted Lewington, who had gone up to the northwest settlement at Cossack with the first party. He interviewed descendants of prominent families and officeholders. Having become Honorary Secretary of the Society, he edited the Society's journal from 1928 to 1932, a role that gave him his basic training in historical research.

Encounters along the way led to some unexpected but enduring ties. He made friends with Jesse Hammond, a lively-minded old colonist with a manuscript recording his interactions with Aboriginal people in the southwest. Paul gave this careful editorial attention. Published as *Winjan's People*, a story told 'plainly and honestly', it gave a first-hand account of things as they appeared to the author which anthropologists would be able 'to evaluate as they deem fit.' He then took an ongoing interest in Aboriginal welfare, including his coverage of the Moseley Royal Commission's inquiry in the mid-1930s. This led to the publication of his book, *Black Australians: A Survey of Native Policy in Western Australia 1829-1897*, a work based on his MA thesis.

By this time Paul had met and married a fellow member of the University Dramatic Society who was destined to become a well-known historian in her own right, Alexandra Hasluck. Her works include *Unwilling Emigrants*, based on tattered letters found in a kangaroo-skin pouch during the pulling down of old police buildings at Toodyay, letters to a convict from his wife in England. Some members of the Society said they should be destroyed because they were private papers but, in Paul's opinion, they cast light on the convict period and should be preserved.

While Paul was away in the northwest with the Moseley Commission, it fell to Alexandra to defend his position. She recalled doing so in a small room lit by a pale electric bulb where 'argument raged fiercely.' These were loving letters, she insisted, valued by the convict in question, kept carefully in a special pouch, and thus entrusted to the people who found them. Twenty years later, she drew upon these letters to illustrate some of the anguish underlying the convict system, another facet of colonial hardship in a far corner of the world.

The coming of World War II interrupted the Haslucks' involvement with the Society. Paul was seconded to the Department of External Affairs in Canberra and was then commissioned to write *The Government and the People 1939-1945*, a work forming part of the official war history. Elected to the federal parliament in 1949, he became Minister for Territories in the Menzies government, a role enabling him, in the light of his pre-war experience in the west, to insist that Aboriginal people be treated as equal members of the Australian community, as set out in his book *Shades of Darkness*. He went on to serve as Governor-General from 1969 to 1974.

In later years, in addition to other books, both he and Alexandra completed their respective autobiographies, in his case *Mucking About*, followed by Alexandra's *Portrait in a Mirror*. By this time the Society had for many years been housed in premises at 49 Broadway, Nedlands, premises then in need of refurbishment. This was accomplished in 1978 as detailed on a bronze plaque installed close to the red pillar postal boxes by the entrance. It showed that the additions to Stirling House were opened by the Rt Hon Sir Paul Hasluck, a Fellow of the Society, and also 'the only living member of the small group who formed the Society in 1926'.

Sir Paul described his pleasure in being a member of the Society as follows:

One of the privileges it brought to me was getting to know so many old colonists and to enter into the home and family life of so many of those who had been associated in one way or another with the early settlement of this part of Australia. This gave me a depth of experience of the old colonial days that could not have been gained in any other way.

One can easily imagine Paul and Alexandra Hasluck's pleasure if they had been able to witness the Society's recent move to new premises at 109 Stirling Highway on the eve of its centenary year, a far cry from some of the rooms in times past that paved the way to the modern, fit-for-purpose facilities suited to the Society's needs in times to come.

A KEY EARLY VOLUNTEER

Dircksey Cowan, first Keeper of Records (1930-1952)



Dircksey Cowan, aged 26.
P1999.1189

While early members of the Memorials Committee were busy saving colonial buildings and placing memorial tablets at places of historical significance, another group of equally busy volunteers were soliciting, saving and storing records of WA's past. These records form the basis of the valuable cultural heritage collection the Society now holds a century later. The initial collection work was no mean feat as the Society did not have a home of its own until 1964, so the challenge of storage was constant.

This work was led by two volunteers whose title was the Keeper of Records – Dircksey Cowan, first Keeper of Records (1930-1952) followed by Dorothy (Dorrie) Henderson, second Keeper of Records (1952-1964).

Dircksey Constance Cowan (1880-1956), daughter of Edith Cowan, was a foundation member of the Society and a volunteer from the start, first as Assistant Secretary before she took on the task of growing and managing the collection. Private records were most sought. In the first years many diaries, journals and letters were loaned for copying and, after careful typing, returned to their family owners. A small torrent of donations also flowed in: photographs and early newspaper issues, albums, research notes and typescripts, maps, booklets and books, letters, journals and diaries, government documents, drawings and paintings, guns and other arms, coins and medals, dresses and other clothing, china, needlework and furniture, official souvenirs and other ephemera.

A start on accessioning was made in 1930 when a system of classifying and indexing was initiated, while the items themselves were stored at the homes of Council members. For particularly valuable documentary items temporary safe storage had been found in the Supreme Court vault in 1928. The situation was relieved in September 1931 when the government (led by the Society's President Mitchell) made available a room rent-free in the Treasury building. Here Dircksey Cowan oversaw the collection. Not only did she accept and accession new donations she also actively sought out items that she believed would enhance the growing collection. For example, she solicited from artist and member Muriel Southern sketches of women's fashions in 19th and 20th century race wear and evening wear for an exhibition the Society was staging at the time. These striking sketches, watercolours on paper, are now valued items in the art collection. [Three are shown on the right of this page and the fourth on the following page.]

Dircksey not only cared for the growing collection but she was also responsible for answering public queries and this task also grew as the years passed. In 1938 a policy on handling public enquiries was put in place but by the early 1940s, with growing numbers of schools seeking historical information from the Society, demands on the Keeper of Records became overwhelming. 'I have done all I can for some time to aid in such queries but they are taking more time than can be spared and recording suffers', Dircksey explained in April 1945 concerning a request for assistance from Norseman state school. Access to the collection proved increasingly difficult as the small room became so overcrowded that 'little room is left in which to move about'. In 1944 she reported the room 'filled to capacity'.

Then in 1946 the government required the Society to vacate its room. It was a crisis. The documentary, photographic and book collections were moved into care at the newly created State Archives while the 'relics' (museum) collection was scattered, to the Public Library, old Perth Gaol, Dircksey's own home, and subsequently to the Round House and Government Printing Works.

Dircksey did not live to see the collection she fostered gathered together again and in a permanent home. In 1952 at the age of 72 she passed her responsibilities as Keeper of Records on to Dorothy Henderson, dying four years later in 1956. In her 22 years as Keeper of Records she made an immense contribution to development of the Society's collection.



Race Wear 1829. A2007.184a



Race Wear 1894. A2007.184b

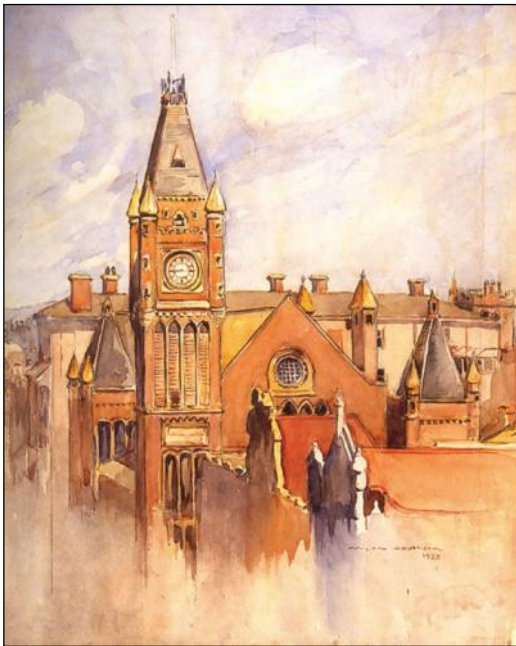


Evening Dress 1831.
A2007.184c

Stories from the Storerooms

Muriel Southern – artist, art teacher, craft worker

Dorothy Erickson



Town Hall Perth by Muriel Southern (Mrs Meikle 1890-1969), 1933, watercolour. A1949.11m

One of the treasures of the Society's art collection is a delightful watercolour of Perth Town Hall by member Muriel Southern who was active in the Society's early years. The painting, together with a Darbyshire etching, was the gift in 1949 of Mrs A J (Nettie) Hope, wife of the Society's long-time Treasurer (1931-1946).

Southern was a talented artist, art teacher and craft worker. From 1921 to 1934, following the death of her father, she was co-owner with her mother of The Studio of Arts and Crafts (referred to by many as the arts and crafts depot) at 623 Hay Street, in the Royal/McNess Arcade above Book Lovers' Library. They advertised as 'A centre for Buyers and Sellers. Please make enquiries' and held 'At Homes' here after exhibitions of Muriel's work in the Book Lovers' Library below.

Born in Bismark, Tasmania, Muriel came to Western Australia in 1908 with her English-born mother Mary née Shephard (1867-1955) to join her father who had taken up a position as a science teacher at Guildford Grammar School. Her uncle was the sculptor Benjamin Shephard. Muriel and her siblings were educated at the Friends School in Hobart. She later studied at Midland Technical School in 1910 under Flora Landells and then with Elioth Gruner at Julian Ashton's school in Sydney. She joined the WA Historical Society and was a keen participant in amateur dramatics, an interest she shared with Edmund Clifton. They are both depicted in a painting, *The Letter Home* by F V Hall, that the Society also owns.

Muriel taught art and design at Fremantle Technical School from c1919 to c1934 and at Guildford Grammar and St Mary's in the 1920s. She painted easel paintings in oils and watercolour, especially wildflowers, drew posters and book plates, and undertook china painting, barbola and leatherwork. Leather comb cases were painted with Leschenaultia and Sturt Peas.



Racewear 1901 fashion drawing by Muriel Southern, 1930s, watercolour on paper. A2007.184d

She had a busy social life and was the Honorary Secretary of the WA Society of Arts in 1927-1928. In 1933-1934 she shared a studio in Irwin Street that was part of the old University buildings with F V Hall and Portia Bennett, and in 1935 with Hall in the WA Chambers. Muriel exhibited in the *Perth Town Hall* with the newly formed WA Society of Artists in 1934. The critic Chares Lemon wrote that 'Muriel Southern deserves praise for her watercolour study of Daffodils' and for her astute handling of the 'Town Hall Perth'. In 1935 Muriel organised the successful Perth Arts and Crafts Exhibition after which the West Australian Women Painters and Applied Arts Society was formed. In 1936 she was located at 104 St Georges Terrace, home of the Perth Arts and Crafts Studio.

Muriel gave many drawings to Dircksey Cowan who was Keeper of Records at the Society. The fashion illustration depicted here was one of four completed for an exhibition organised by the Society. The lovely sketch exaggerates the posture required to carry the fashions at the turn of the 20th century. The bustle is gone but the tortured waistline needing whalebone stays is still apparent. The bias cut allows the fabric to fall more softly than preceding fashions. One wonders what the hem would look like after a day in the red dust at the popular Kalgoorlie races.

Amid numerous send-off parties Southern moved to Adelaide in 1938 to live and marry George Meikle.

References

D Erickson, *Inspired by Light and Land: Designers and Makers in Western Australia 1829-1969*
J Gooding, *West Australian Art and Artists 1900-1950*

Recent donation to the museum collection

Gruesome Double Murder in Roebourne

Bruce Hoar

In the early morning of 13 January 1885 at the Union Bank in Roebourne, the bank manager Thomas Anketell and the bank's accountant Henry Burrup were brutally murdered whilst sleeping. This woodblock engraving showing the town of Roebourne, the bank building and Mr Anketell was recently purchased at the David and Marie Louise Wordsworth home contents auction and donated to the Society by Vice President Sally Ann Hasluck.



The engraving is from the Melbourne newspaper *The Australasian Sketcher with Pen and Pencil* published with some background information on the murders on 8 April 1885.

This prominent illustrated newspaper was published in Melbourne from 1873 to 1889 and provided an important pictorial record of 19th century colonial life around Australia and New Zealand featuring detailed wood-block engravings, news, literature and social commentary before the widespread use of photography.

Thomas Anketell (aged 38) and Henry Burrup (aged 23) were violently murdered in their beds, struck by what was believed to have been a tomahawk or pick axe. Anketell slept on a stretcher on the front verandah of the bank to escape the heat and Burrup occupied a bedroom at the rear of the bank building. Both victims

were struck several times in the head, implying some degree of anger by the murderer or murderers. Strangely there was no indication of a bank robbery and no personal possessions of the deceased were taken.

Both Anketell and Burrup were well liked in the local community. Anketell had been in Roebourne nearly three years. He came from a prominent family in Victoria and was also a Justice of the Peace and a church warden in the town. His brother William later travelled from Victoria to exhume his body so a funeral and burial could be held back in his family hometown of Coburg. Burrup had arrived in the colony from England in 1883, serving as a bank clerk in Perth and Fremantle before transferring to Roebourne as the bank's accountant in 1884. While Anketell was soon forgotten after his death, Burrup was remembered when, in August 1885, the Government Surveyor F S Brockman named the highest hill on Dampier Island Mt Burrup in his honour. Dampier Island was later connected to the mainland by a causeway and was renamed the Burrup Peninsula in 1979.

Three men were ultimately charged with the murder of Thomas Anketell and went to trial in the Supreme Court in Perth in front of the Chief Justice Sir Alexander Onslow. After a six-day trial with more than 30 witnesses, they were found not guilty due to lack of evidence and were released. No one was ever charged with the murder of Henry Burrup.

The three accused were Frederick Bevan, Charles Warburton and San Qui. Bevan and Warburton worked together in a Roebourne quarry and San Qui worked for a butcher in the town. Bevan was a freed convict who, some years after the trial, was sentenced to ten years' gaol for attempting to murder his wife. Warburton was well liked in Roebourne and, after the trial, married in Fremantle, had six children and worked for many years as a miner in Greenbushes until his death in 1935. Little is known of San Qui other than that he worked for the local butcher in Roebourne at the time of the murders.

The motive for the murders remains a mystery. As mentioned, robbery looks unlikely as it appears nothing was taken. Was the murder investigation bungled by the police? In a remote town like Roebourne, there was minimal police and forensic expertise. There were suggestions of some class prejudice with some of the more prominent members of the community not being scrutinised as thoroughly as others. In particular, a wealthy local Roderick McRae, who was drinking and gambling with Anketell the night before his murder, was suspected of being involved. The brutality of the murders certainly suggests someone had a major grievance.

If you are interested in more detail on this fascinating story, Fran Yeoh has done an enormous amount of research and put it all together on her website: <https://roebournebankmurders.com/>



Community Talk Collectors & their Collections

Small treasures: Victorian greeting cards & WA studio glass

Our March talk attracted a group of enthusiastic collectors who enjoyed hearing Rhuwina Griffiths and Kit Goodridge speak about their collections as well as display many individual items. We happily engaged in a 'show and tell' as objects were presented on-screen or passed around for assessment, and albums were displayed. Lots of questions and discussion ensued.



Rhuwina began by suggesting that the desire to collect is a human instinct, and collections accumulate everywhere. Some collectors (she cited Georgiana Molloy) collect to pass items on to others who take responsibility for storage, research and presentation. Others (like Alistair McAlpine) revel in collecting, sorting, researching and displaying before losing interest and moving on to their next collecting passion. Do you remember his delight in early WA hand-crafted furniture and his renowned if short-lived zoo in Broome (1984-1991)? Other collectors develop a life-long passion for their collection and become experts in their subject. And often these private collections have found their eventual home in public collections where they become more widely accessible.



Rhu's long-standing collecting passion is for Victorian era greetings cards of all sorts. Her talk concentrated on Christmas cards which have been with us for almost two centuries, the first commercial Xmas card being produced in 1843. Their rise was dependent on the development of the envelope, cheap postage (Penny Post), high quality printing and the development of chromolithography producing affordable and colourful prints. Card designers and card manufacturers established flourishing businesses.



Rhu demonstrated how Xmas card collections contain recurring images, most of them happy, idealised pictures of flowers, children, plants, animals (especially cats and dogs). They convey good wishes and good cheer but, more than that, carry messages in the selection of the plant and flower species, and sometimes these messages can be sad and melancholy. They can also be quirky, venturing into the macabre and the deadly. It proved a fascinating topic.

Are we now in the midst of the demise of the annual Xmas card? Is this a tradition which is ending?



Kit Goodridge's passion is WA studio glass which he searches out, collects, assesses and then retains or on-sells to sustain his collecting. He is at the beginning of his collecting journey, developing strategies for sustaining his engagement with studio glass while developing his knowledge of WA's glass blowers – Gene Polt, Alan Fox, Gerry Reilly, Kent le Grande, Peter Reynolds and such. It was interesting and unusual to hear from a young collector starting out on a collecting path; more commonly, we see collectors and their collections towards or at the close of their collecting journey.

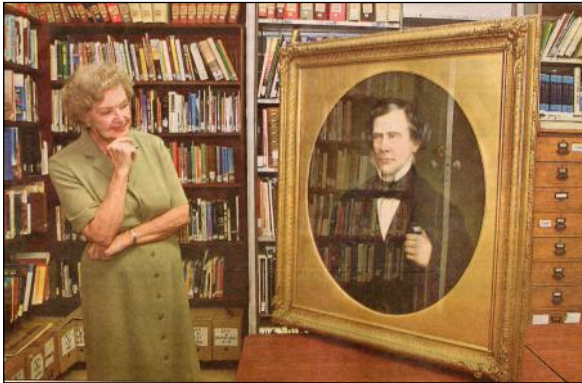
'Small treasures' furnished the audience with glimpses into two engaging collections and at the same time introduced us to the captivation which grips the collectors.



Remembering two valued volunteers

June Shenton-Turner

Val Hutch



On 24 February, at the invitation of Jeff and June's children – Martin, Andrew and Gillian – a small group gathered at the Shenton family gravesite for a service to inter the ashes of their parents, John 'Jeff' Turner (1925-2020) and June Ada Turner (1926-2025). Prayers were led by the Revd Michele Yuen from St George's Cathedral where they had been members of the congregation.

June was born and educated in Perth and trained as a nurse at both the Perth Children's Hospital and Royal Perth Hospital. Her career took her to the eastern states then to London where she met Jeff. They were married in Melbourne before returning to Jeff's family farm in Sussex. In 1956 his career as an agricultural supervisor took them to Northern Rhodesia (Zambia after Independence in 1964) on a remote bush station

in the northeast of the country, before returning to the UK in 1969.

While living overseas, June, a great granddaughter of George Shenton who arrived in WA in 1833, began researching her family, culminating in the 2019 publication of *The Shentons – A family of consequence in Western Australia*. June's eldest son Martin helped thread the story together and research sources and references.

June joined the Society in 1992 and became an active and interested volunteer and researcher. In 2001 she joined the museum committee and was elected to Council (2001-2005). She was a regular contributor to *History West* with discoveries she had made in the museum collection. Two articles were published in *Early Days*, 'George Shenton, the elder, 1811-1867' (vol 11, 1997) and 'Arthur Shenton: gentle defender' (vol 13, 2011). June's smiling face became a regular attraction in articles published in local newspapers, the *Chronicle*, *Post*, *Western Suburbs Weekly* & *West Australian*.

I have fond memories of June and am often reminded of her contribution. She remained an active member until, following Jeff's death, she moved to Sydney where Andrew and Gillian reside, and closer to Martin in Melbourne. It was fitting that the couple's ashes were interred in the family grave alongside several of this pioneering family whom June respected and of whose achievements she was proud. One legacy is the life-sized portrait of her great-grandfather, George Shenton, which her late cousin bequeathed the Society in 2002.

Martin is now working on a sequel to June's book, entitled *A Family Connection – The Shentons and the Waddingtons*, which he hopes to publish later this year.

Dave Melvin



All History West's volunteers were much saddened to hear of Dave's death in March this year. Dave was an admired and ever-helpful volunteer, invariably busy and cheerful. It was always good to see him and we greatly appreciated his hard work, competence and kindness.

Dave was part of a wonderful Travelling Photographic Exhibitions team, consisting of Dave and his wife Barbara together with Kerry Eivers and Marsha Sullivan. They achieved wonders – selecting suitable photographs from the collection, enlarging them to exhibition size, mounting them and then taking them to various community events around Perth. Between 'bumping in' and 'bumping out' again (as they always said), the team set up their photographic exhibitions and then tended visitors as they came and went. Each exhibition was an excellent showcase of WA's visual past, evoking lively memories among the public who recognised elements of their own past in the images. The Royal Agricultural Society WA's annual show, Government House open days, Guildford heritage festival and primary school centenaries were just some of the community events which hosted the Society's travelling exhibitions.

Dave was also a stalwart of our annual second-hand book sales, assisting with the vital setting up and dismantling.

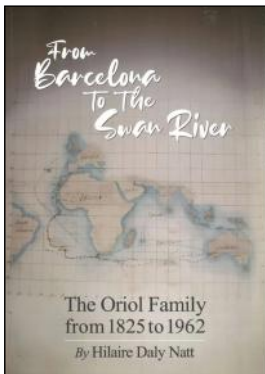
We all remember Dave with appreciation and affection and extend our sympathy to Barbara and all the family.



Book Review

Hilaire Daly Natt, *From Barcelona to the Swan River: The Oriol Family from 1825 to 1962*, H D Natt, 2026. In Library & Bookshop \$35

Reviewer: Tom Stephens



Hilaire Daly Natt's keenly awaited *From Barcelona to the Swan River: The Oriol Family from 1825 to 1962* has arrived to deliver so much of interest. It is a meticulously researched family history illuminating a story of migration, religion and identity in WA.

Hilaire's volume stands as part of the wider valuable project that she has championed and pioneered, delivering stories of the men who arrived in WA as

Benedictine missionaries – postulants and lay-brothers – who did not persevere to become professed monks. Until recently this was somewhat of a blank page; now several of these stories have landed in quick succession and our history is richer for it.

Hilaire's story of her great-grandfather, Isidor Salvio y Juan Oriol (1825-1912), is of a young cabinetmaker who left his family in Catalonia to join Bishop Salvado amongst the second large group of missionary recruits to leave via Barcelona to Cadiz and on to Fremantle, arriving on board the *John Panter* in 1853. Such stories of the 'no persevero' [those who did not continue in the Order] from Subiaco and New Norcia shine light on what became a Catalan enclave at the 'Spanish end of town' in the streets surrounding the Catholic Cathedrals – first St John the Evangelist and then St Mary's – at the eastern end of Perth's business district.

As anticipated, Hilaire's professional academic background has ensured the successful recovery and presentation of so much valuable material. Through the lens of family history and biographical material, this book is of wide appeal with its successful depiction of the social history of these early times in Perth and beyond, not by finding a single biographic voice but rather by delivering a wide-angle explanation of context, connection, history and change. And that is what this book does so well.

Unsurprisingly, many of these men married Irish women who had arrived in WA on one or other of the 'brideships' of the era. The records of their marriage ceremonies and the sacramental records of family baptisms detail an ongoing interconnection between these families with surnames from Catalonia. The evidence presented is of a pattern of inter-related families which persisted well into the next century: these same surnames are linked through school records, social gatherings and eventually the obituaries of so many of these early Benedictine missionaries to WA. Still today these interconnections persist and fresh discoveries made of parallel stories and journeys.

It is surprising that it took so long for the stories to be told in books like this one about the Oriol family. Oriol, Boladeras, Perejuan and Rodoreda are just some of the surnames of these 'no persevero' whose stories add a distinct texture to the WA immigration narrative and much more. Recent visitors to Catalonia have marvelled at finding on the region's contemporary

sporting fields these same surnames that are part of this interconnected new world of WA.

More material emerges about the Benedictine monastery near Herdsman Lake and the establishment of the New Subiaco monastery from which the monks eventually moved to New Norcia. Oriol is recorded moving between the various centres of Catholic construction projects - New Subiaco, Perth Cathedrals and Fremantle – where his skills were well deployed.

Leaving the Benedictines would have been a challenging step for Oriol, testimony to how difficult the monastic circumstances had become so far removed from the original intention of working with the Aboriginal people of New Norcia. His transition from religious life to secular craftsmanship is documented with nuance. Hilaire traces his involvement in key construction projects, including the Bishop's House, St Mary's Cathedral on Victoria Square, and various government works, demonstrating how religious artisanship translated into civic contribution.

In time such skilled artisans prospered in the small Perth community and this skilled cabinetmaker was kept busy, justifying his decision to set up a workshop, initially on Howick (later Hay) Street. With marriage in 1861 to Mary Leahy, the Oriol household was soon relocated to nearby Goderich (Murray) Street and saw the arrival of children. Hilaire closes the circle with the brief genealogical material recorded as an appendix that reinforces her narrative: a family's journey from Catalonia to Perth, from religious aspiration to enduring artisan legacy.

Interwoven into this family history are the complex dynamics within WA's Catholic community, including the interpersonal conflict between its three Bishops – Brady, Serra and Salvado – and the tensions between the largely Irish laity and the Spanish-speaking monks.

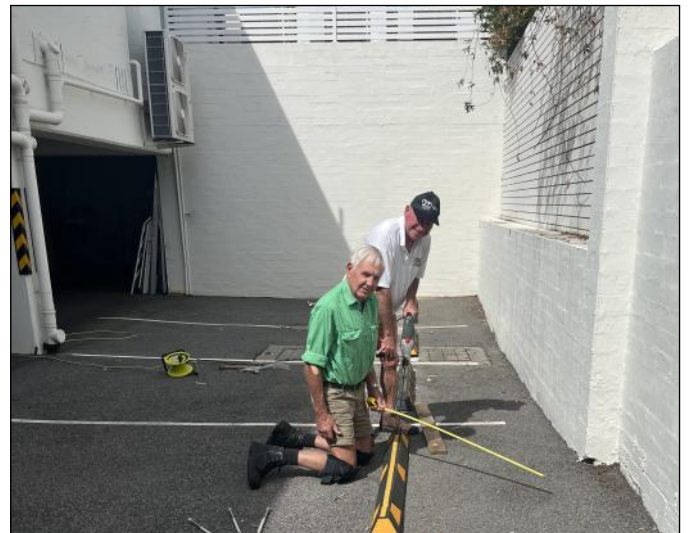
From Barcelona to the Swan River stands as both a family history and a work of broader cultural recovery, scholarly, readable and illuminating. The book successfully combines genealogical research, archival interpretation and contextual analysis to produce a narrative that situates family biography within broader social processes, showing how transnational movements shaped the cultural infrastructure of the early colony.



Author, Society member & long-time library volunteer, Hilaire Natt, donates a copy of her new book to the library. Hilaire is pictured with library volunteers Evalyn Beaumont & Linda Edwards



Welcome to new museum volunteer Judith McGowan



109 car park improvements

Many thanks to Adrian, chairman of the Building Committee, and president Richard for making our car park safer by installing car stops and high visibility safety strips on the concrete columns.



Welcome to new museum volunteer Hannah Roxby who is helping develop our social media. Her first task is documenting our 'Memento' exhibition

1926 Almanac — May

Group Settler Herbert John 'Jack' Limmer established a tobacco plantation at Dixvale, Manjimup, where the first tobacco curing kiln in the State was built.

Quarter acre blocks in Nedlands sold for between £65 and £100.

Welcome to new members!

Brenda Bannon, Roger Cooper, Trish Harmer, Diana Johnson, Bill Leadbetter, Ross Ledger, Jasmin Leutholo, David MacKinlay, Lars Wang

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.).