

Affiliated Societies

of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society

Newsletter

September 2026

2026-32

2026 Merit Award Winner

Narembeen Historical Society – Emu Hill Townsite Project

The Narembeen Historical Society is pleased to nominate its Emu Hill Townsite Project for a Merit Award in recognition of the Society's commitment to preserving, interpreting and celebrating the rich history of the Narembeen district.

Commencing in 2025 and successfully completed at the beginning of 2026, the Emu Hill Information Bay represents the Society's third heritage interpretation project, following the successful establishment of Information Bays at the former townsites of South Kuminin and Billericay. Together, these projects ensure that significant local history is preserved and made accessible for both residents and visitors.

Located approximately four kilometres south of the Narembeen townsite at the former Emu Hill townsite, the Information Bay was developed to provide an informative and welcoming place where visitors can rest while discovering the historical importance of one of the district's earliest and most significant communities.

The completed Information Bay features a purpose-built shelter with table and seating, complemented by professionally designed interpretive signage that tells the story of Emu Hill and the pioneering families who established the district. The project was delivered in partnership with the Shire of Narembeen, whose support in obtaining approvals and assisting with site preparation was instrumental to its success. This collaboration reflects a shared commitment to preserving the heritage of the Narembeen district.

The historical significance of Emu Hill cannot be overstated. During the 1920s it was the largest community in the region. As recently as 1917, the township of Narembeen did not exist, and even after the arrival of the railway in 1920, Narembeen was little more than a railway siding serving Emu Hill. Despite its vital role in the establishment and development of the district, Emu Hill's contribution has largely remained untold. This project ensures that this important chapter of local history is now preserved and available for future generations.

The Information Bay has achieved all the objectives established at the commencement of the project. It provides an engaging educational resource that brings together historical research, photographs and stories to showcase Emu Hill's role in shaping the district. It offers residents and visitors the opportunity to better understand the area's heritage while fostering a stronger sense of community identity, connection and pride.

Next Affiliates Committee
Meeting will be held on the
15th October 2026

Did you know the RWAHS Book Shop have more WA History books for sale, than any other Book Shop.

Open Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm, situated at 109 Stirling Hwy (corner Baird St), Nedlands. WA 6010.

www.histwest.org.au under services, History West Shop or for any queries please see the contact details below.

If you have a book or know of a book that you would like the Book Shop to stock please contact the Book Shop - bookshop@histwest.org.au or 9386 3841.

Please send all queries and submissions relating to the newsletter to
Rosie Stroud at the Eastern Goldfields Historical Society.
eo@kalgoorliehistory.org.au or
phone 9093 3360.

2026 Affiliated Societies State History Conference

**Looking for a place to stay during the
A generous member of the RWAHS has a room available if you need somewhere to stay for the two nights.
Please contact Lesley Community Officer at History West for more information.**

Your Committee Members

An Affiliated Societies Committee is elected each year at the Annual State History Conference of Affiliated Societies. This Committee acts in the interests of Affiliated Societies and is represented on the Society's Council of management. Representatives for 2025-26 are below:

- Nick Drew – **Convenor** (RWAHS- Council Rep) - nickdrew@bigpond.com
- Fiona Bush - Minute Secretary (Mundaring & Hills) - fiona.bush@icloud.com
- Ashleigh Murch (Denmark) - ashleigh.murch@gmail.com
- Marilyn Gazeley (Cervantes) - cervantes50th@hotmail.com
- Lyn O'Hara (South Perth) - lynn@eon.net.au
- Rosie Stroud (Eastern Goldfields) - eo@kalgoorliehistory.org.au
- Richard Offen (President RWAHS) - richardoofen@outlook.com
- Jacqui Huntley (Wanneroo & Districts) - huntleyjacqui@gmail.com
- Trish Parker (Irwin Districts Historical Society) - Trishpark@bigpond.com
- Wendy Garstone (Bayswater Historical Society) - wendygarstone@gmail.com
- Elizabeth Craigie (Busselton Historical Society) - secretary@busseltonhistoricalsociety.org.au

Please feel free to contact anyone on the committee if you have a query or concern.

2026 Merit Award Winner continued

Through carefully researched historical content and professionally presented interpretive displays, the Information Bay creates an immersive experience that allows visitors to appreciate the people, industries and events that shaped the district. Travellers now have an attractive location to stop, rest and gain a deeper understanding of the heritage that underpins the Narembreen community.

The project represented an investment of just over \$9,000 and was made possible through a combination of successful grant funding secured by the Narembreen Historical Society, generous community donations, and a financial contribution from the Society itself. This collaborative funding approach demonstrated the Society's initiative, sound planning and responsible financial management, enabling the project to be delivered while minimising reliance on local resources and creating a lasting asset for the community.

Community collaboration was central to the success of the project. Narembreen Engineering designed and installed the shelter, Historical Society members undertook extensive historical research and prepared the interpretive content, the signage was professionally designed by a graphic artist and produced by Connelly Images in Corrigin, and the park furniture was supplied by Felton Industries. The project stands as an excellent example of local businesses, volunteers and local government working together to preserve the district's history.

The dedication of the Society's volunteers was fundamental to the project's success. Members devoted countless hours to researching historical records, sourcing photographs and stories, writing interpretive material, preparing grant applications, coordinating contractors and suppliers, liaising with the Shire of Narembreen and assisting with the installation of the Information Bay. Their commitment and expertise transformed the project from concept to completion.

DISCLAIMER

Accuracy of facts or the opinions expressed in any of the articles of this newsletter, are not necessarily those of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society and the Society cannot accept responsibility of any action taken as a result of statements contained within.



2026 Merit Award Winner continued

The Emu Hill Information Bay is much more than a roadside rest area. It is a place of learning, reflection and community pride that strengthens local identity while enhancing heritage tourism throughout the district. By recognising and preserving the importance of Emu Hill, the Society has ensured that an essential part of Narembeen's history will continue to educate and inspire future generations. An official opening ceremony is planned for later this year to recognise the contributions of all those involved in delivering the project and to welcome the community to the site, celebrating the completion of this significant community asset.

Through vision, collaboration, effective project management and a strong commitment to heritage conservation, the Narembeen Historical Society has successfully delivered a lasting community asset. The Emu Hill Townsite Project demonstrates the value of volunteer-led heritage preservation and is respectfully submitted as a worthy recipient of a Merit Award.



EMU HILL TOWNSITE A Historic Landmark

Emu Hill - The Beginning

In the 1920's, Emu Hill emerged as the most populous community in the region. It is a well known fact that as late as 1917, the township of Narembeen was non-existent. Even in 1920, following the arrival of the railway line, Narembeen remained little more than a siding for Emu Hill.

Opposition to a hotel

When the prospect of constructing a hotel at Emu Hill arose, considerable opposition was expressed, with the locals of Emu Hill suggesting a coffee palace or temperance hotel.

On 22 June 1922, prominent citizens of Emu Hill published an advertisement in the local newspaper announcing their application for a provisional certificate to establish hotel premises in King Street, Emu Hill.

Recognising the opportunity to sell alcohol at the railway siding of Narembeen, Perth Lawyer Henry Hale and Publican Paddy Connolly purchased 30 acres of land with plans to construct a hotel. This enabled the private town of Narembeen to be established in 1922 (5kms north of this site).

What ensued was a contest between the two towns for a hotel licence, during which the courts denied both applications.

Eventually, Narembeen succeeded in its application through the York Licensing Court. Emu Hill's application was dismissed due to their failure to appear in person.

Narembeen - The Beginning

When the news reached Narembeen there was immense jubilation, as the construction of such a facility, costing around 5,000 pounds would offer spacious and beneficial accommodation as well as addressing the social needs of the district.

Following the establishment of the hotel and private town of Narembeen, Emu Hill struggled to thrive. By 1927, the bank branch in Emu Hill had closed, leading to further decline in the town's fortunes.

As is the case with most important developments within towns, Narembeen's good fortune was not merely a twist of fate, but rather the product of political power and money.

Narembeen, just a short distance away, has continued to grow and evolve, but the story of Emu Hill serves as a testament to the transient nature of communities and the enduring connection between people and the land.

The Legacy

Emu Hill may no longer be a bustling town, but its legacy lives on in the hearts of those who remember it and in the stories passed down through generations.

The November 1922 Edition of the Local Newspaper quoted:

"Business is brisk around the Hill these days. Local Plumber Foster has sent for an assistant. Mrs McCaskill is extending her Boarding House to cope with increased trade. Mark Potts is doing very well with his hired car—three trips to Bruce Rock and one to Narrogin this week. SS Wylie has been out from Bruce Rock demonstrating the new Chevrolet"

Interesting Fact

There was an Emu Hill Race Course that was described as being "unmatched by any outside the metropolitan area".

At the heart of this story are two of Narembeen's pioneers:
Charles Latham and Tom Savage.

Disclaimer:

*The information presented on this signage is based on historical records and sources deemed reliable at the time of publication -
Narembeen Historical Society 2025.*



The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Swan River Pioneers 1829–1838 Inc. At All Saints Church

The oldest church in WA still operating since 1841



DATE: Sunday afternoon, 17th October 2025 -Time: TBA

SPEAKER: Chris Harris, President, FamilyHistoryWA, "The People of Western Australia's Ghost Towns" Bicentenary Project

Linda Harper will also give family history information about the area
Parish Warden, Greg Fawell, will guide us on a tour of the grounds

VENUE: Inside All Saints Church, Henry Street, Henley Brook 6055

Please RSVP for catering purposes to: info@swanriverpioneers.com



Submitted by Kim Edwards

WA 2029 Bicentenary Survey

The year 2029 will mark 200 years since the establishment of the Swan River Colony - a defining moment in Western Australia's history, but not the beginning of our story. This milestone holds different meanings for Western Australians and sits within a much longer story beginning with Aboriginal people's ancient and enduring connection to country.

As we look ahead to 2029, we have an opportunity to reflect on Western Australia's complex history, recognise the many people and stories that have shaped our State, and consider the future we want to build together.

The WA Government has developed [Objectives of the 2029 Bicentenary](#) to guide consultation and planning for an inclusive commemorative program. We value your input on how these objectives can be brought to life.

Your feedback will help shape a statewide program of initiatives and activities leading into, and throughout, 2029.

Narembreen Historical Society

Year 1 Students Step Back in Time at the History and Machinery Museums.

The Narembreen Historical Society was delighted to be invited to be part of the Year 1 students' History curriculum once again this year at Narembreen District High School. The students visited our History Museum, where they explored the many objects donated by local residents over the years. The collection includes schoolbooks, typewriters, kitchen items, farming tools, medical equipment and many other reminders of life in earlier times.

One of the highlights was the display of musical instruments from Narembreen's brass band, which was a prominent part of the community in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The children were fascinated to see these instruments up close. The collection of birds' eggs, collected in the early 1950s, also attracted plenty of attention, particularly the emu eggs.

As part of their studies, the students were asked to choose an object and compare it with what we use today, looking at how its design and materials have changed. Objects chosen included a Bakelite dial-up telephone, flat iron, pump fly sprayer, biscuit tin, homemade potato masher and butter churn with butter pats. The students were fascinated by the Coolgardie meat safe and the old kerosene refrigerator used to keep food cool in years gone by. They were particularly amused by the size of the old ice-cream freezer and found it hard to imagine that it could hold only a very small amount of ice cream compared with today's servings!

The typewriters also proved popular, although the students discovered that the keys were much harder to press than the soft touch keyboards they are familiar with today. The school borrowed several museum items to display in their own "museum" at their Open Night, giving many parents the opportunity to see these objects for the first time.

A special thank you goes to Historical Society volunteers Lorraine Lethlean and Rhonda Cole, who helped make the visit to the History Museum an enjoyable and informative experience for the students. Their knowledge and enthusiasm helped bring the stories behind the museum's collection to life. The students also enjoyed an interesting visit to the Machinery Museum, where they discussed the differences between farming in the past and farming today. There was plenty of discussion about how farming equipment, technology and methods have changed over the years.

The carefully restored vehicles and machinery were a particular highlight, with the students excited to be allowed to sit on some of the vehicles. It certainly helped bring the history of farming to life and gave the students a better understanding of what farming was like for earlier generations. A big thank you goes to Historical Society volunteers Chris Bray, Ian Forbes and Maurie Harper for giving their time and providing such an informative and enjoyable afternoon for the students. Their knowledge and enthusiasm helped make the visit a memorable experience.

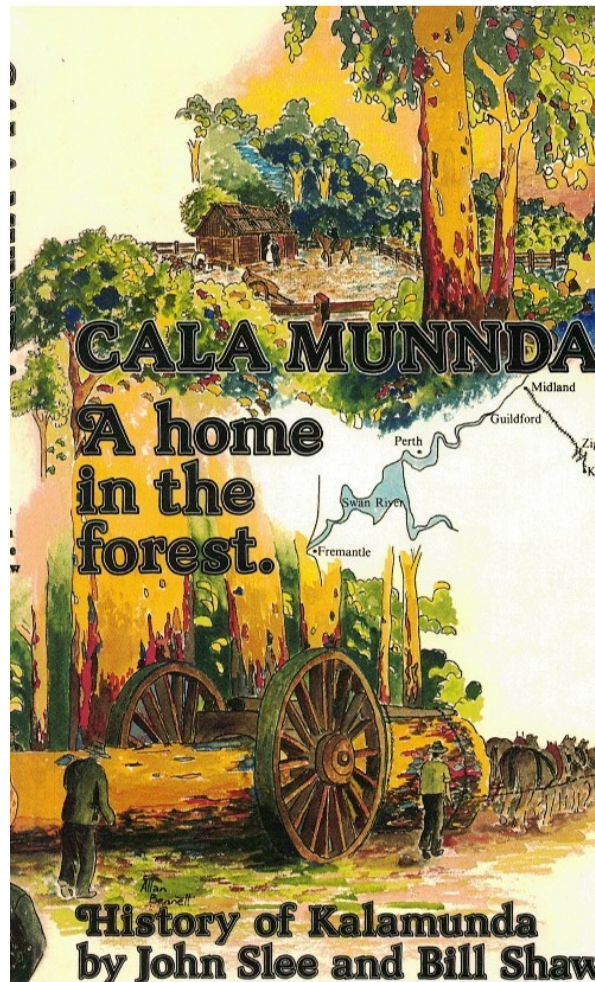
We are very fortunate to have Mrs Lucy Lines - Teacher, who is passionate about teaching the students about objects from the past and their uses. The students were inquisitive, well behaved and certainly not short of questions! Keeping up with their enthusiasm was a challenge for our members, but it was wonderful to see their genuine interest in our local history.

It is a pleasure to engage these young students with the history of our town and to see them so interested in how much life has changed over the years. And finally, one little boy was disappointed to discover that there was no dinosaur in our museum—but the emu eggs seemed to go some way towards making up for it!

Submitted by Kellie Mortimore



The Kalamunda & Districts Historical Society proudly presents a
reprint of
“Cala Munnda; A Home in the Forest”



This book was first published in 1979, the 150th Anniversary of European settlement,
and is our no1 reference book.

Now republished in time for the 200th anniversary in 2029.

Now available at the Kalamunda History Village.

\$25.00

Northern Army Camp Heritage Association

Hidden histories of war, forced labour and migration to be shared at Northam Army Camp

On Saturday **22 August 2026**, the Northam Army Camp will once again become a place of arrival—not for refugees, but for the descendants of those whose lives were forever changed by war, displacement and migration.

The **Northam Army Camp Heritage Association (NACHA)**, in collaboration with the **Department of Defence** and the **John Curtin Institute of Public Policy (JCIPP)** at **Curtin University**, will present **Memory, Place and Belonging**, a unique storytelling event exploring the experiences of post-war migrants whose first Australian home was the Northam Army Camp or the nearby Holden Accommodation Centre.

For thousands of displaced persons from Eastern, Central and Western Europe and the Baltic States, Northam represented their first encounter with Australia after surviving war, forced labour under Nazi or Soviet regimes, family separation and years in refugee camps. Yet many never spoke of these experiences.



Speaker Ben Errington. Photo by Nick Drew.

More than seventy-five years later, their children and grandchildren are reclaiming those silenced histories. Historian and anthropologist **JCIPP Adjunct Research Fellow Nonja Peters** said the event is about restoring voices that were lost during decades of Australia's strict post-war assimilation policy. "Many migrant families believed survival depended on silence. Parents rarely spoke about forced labour, displacement or trauma. Today their descendants are uncovering those histories through archives, family research and storytelling."

The program brings together historians, researchers and descendants from Dutch, Polish, Ukrainian, Latvian, Slovak and Czech backgrounds, each sharing deeply personal family stories alongside historical context. Among the presenters are journalist **Joseph Poprzeczny**, actor **Matt Dyktynski**, retired archivist **Marjorie Bly**, researcher **Amanda Lovitt**, historian **Ernie Polis**, military historian **Murray MacDonald**, educator **Benjamin Errington**, and Ukrainian researcher **Lesa Melnychuk Morgan**.

The event also highlights the importance of preserving migrant heritage as many wartime and migration records are now becoming digitally accessible, enabling families to reconnect with lost chapters of their history. Held on the original Northam Army Camp site, the event provides visitors with a rare opportunity to experience the landscape where thousands of migrants first began rebuilding their lives in Australia. More than a history event, **Memory, Place and Belonging** invites the wider community to reflect on resilience, identity and belonging, and to recognise the lasting contribution of post-war migrants to Western Australia.

Midland and Districts Historical Society

MIDLAND TOWN HALL AND RAILWAY WORKSHOPS A GREAT SUCCESS - Midland and Districts Historical Society in partnership with the City of Swan over the past two years have offered free tours of the Midland Town Hall and Western Australian Government Railways Workshops in Midland on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month.

Midland Town Hall tours have been headed by Mark Johnston and Don Butler with assistance from Matthew Pavlinovich and Judy Schulze and the Western Australian Government Railways Workshops tours have been headed by Matthew Pavlinovich and Don Butler with assistance from Geoff Wood.

When the idea came about these tours, our Society wanted to not only educate visitors about our local history but we wanted to bring people back to Midland through activation.

Visitors from across Perth have attended the tours and we have around a 90% attendance rate for those who have booked through the City of Swan humanitix site.

Feedback has been very positive from the majority of attendees with many enjoying the experiences. Society Secretary, Don Butler and Mark Johnston have been working particularly hard with the tours and been the main drivers and we would like to thank them both for all their efforts and the City of Swan for their continued support.

Submitted by Matthew Pavlinovich



Eastern Goldfields Historical Society

Vale John Rees -27 April 1940 – 9 September 2026

John Rees was a much-loved and distinctive member of the Kalgoorlie-Boulder community whose life was defined by service, curiosity, enterprise and an enduring commitment to the Goldfields.

Born on 27 April 1940, John came to Kalgoorlie in 1972 and soon became deeply woven into the life of Boulder and the wider Goldfields. In 1974 he purchased the pharmacy on Burt Street, continuing a family tradition in pharmacy that had begun with his grandfather and father. He remained associated with the pharmacy until his retirement in 2010, after almost four decades serving generations of local residents.

For John, the pharmacy was much more than a business. In 1993 he established the Pharmacy Museum, preserving the equipment, medicines, advertisements and other artefacts associated with the profession and with the history of Boulder. The museum documented the history of the Boulder Pharmacy, which dated back to 1899, while also telling a broader story of the town and its people. John's belief that the methods, tools and traditions of earlier pharmacists should be remembered ensured that an important part of Goldfields history was preserved for future generations. The Eastern Goldfields Historical Society is honoured to be able to continue this legacy with his collection.

John's contribution to the community extended far beyond pharmacy. He served as a councillor for eight years with the Boulder Shire and for a further ten years with the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder. He was also involved in an extraordinary range of community, cultural, sporting, historical and social organisations.

Among them were the Eastern Goldfields Historical Society (Life Member), where he served as Vice President, Treasurer, Curator and a general committee member; the Hash House Harriers; Stage Left; the Repertory Club; KBLUG; the Naturalist Club (Life Member); the Two Up Two Down Choir; the Loopline Rail Society; the Goldfields Aboriginal Language Centre; Kalgoorlie Boulder Chamber of Commerce and Industry; the Goldfields Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation service; and Parkrun.

He was also a long-standing member and supporter of the Boulder Promotion and Development Association, later becoming a Life Member. His contribution to Boulder's business and community development was recognised in 2002 when he received the Western Australian Seniors Award for Business Leadership. The award recognised his work as a founder and chairperson of the Boulder Promotion and Development Association, his involvement with the Kalgoorlie-Boulder Tourism Centre, and his efforts to promote business, tourism, sport, recreation and community life in the region.

John's involvement in community life was never confined to formal positions. He was someone who saw things that needed doing and became involved. He served on committees, supported local organisations, promoted Boulder, preserved its history and contributed to initiatives involving tourism, recreation, multicultural communities and Aboriginal groups.



Eastern Goldfields Historical Society

His love of activity and adventure was another defining characteristic. A 2010 profile described him as an avid cyclist who rode to work for decades and as someone with an eclectic range of interests. He travelled widely, including journeys along the Silk Road, through Thailand and down the Danube and into Eastern Europe. He also had a memorable adventurous streak: during the floods following Cyclone Bobby in 1995, John and a friend sailed a small boat from near Leonora towards Mt Remarkable Station, only to have the boat sink within sight of the homestead before they were rescued.

In later years, John embraced Parkrun with the same enthusiasm he had brought to so many other pursuits. He became one of Kalgoorlie-Boulder's original Parkrun participants.

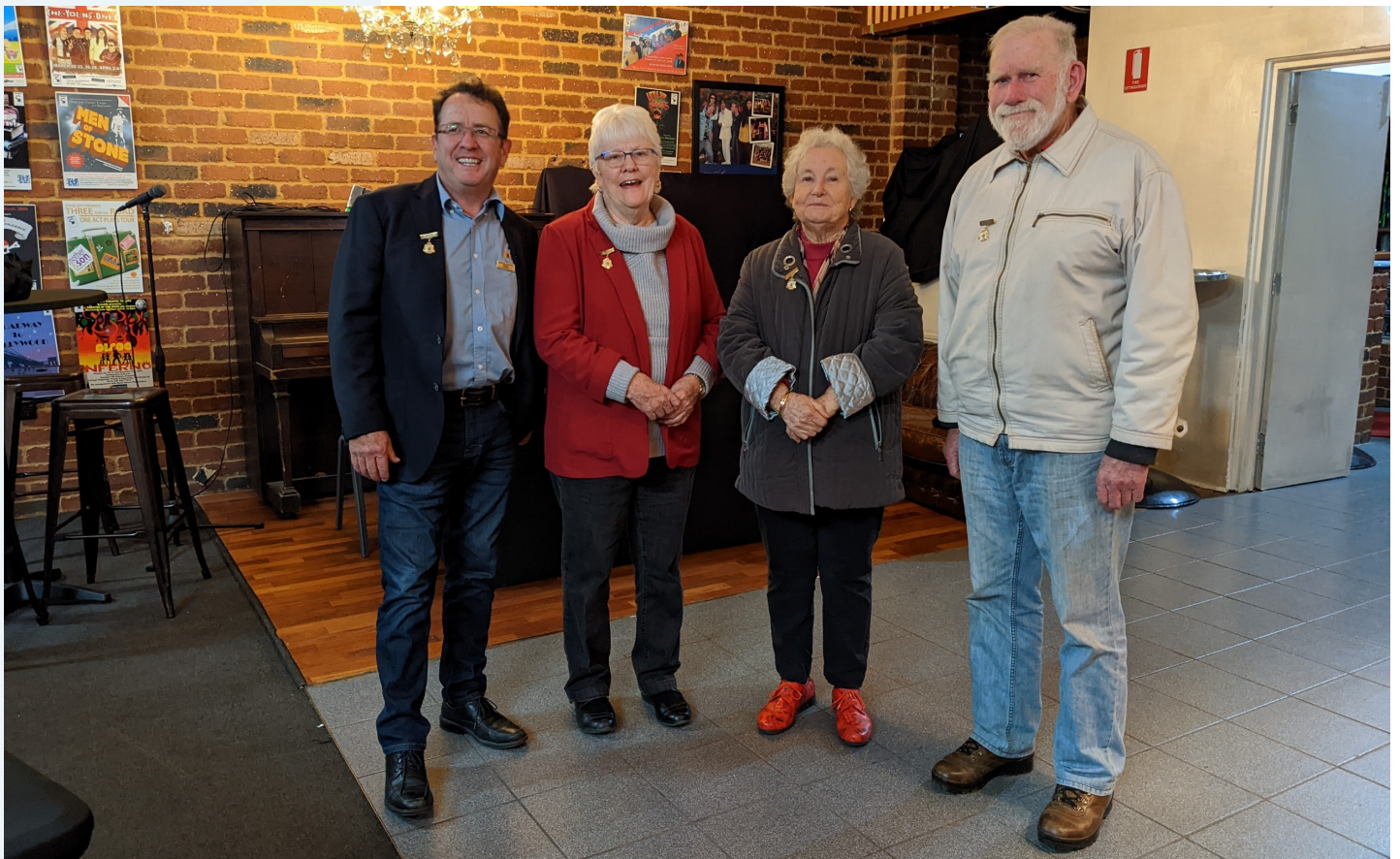
John's contribution to the community was formally recognised again when he was named Senior Citizen of the Year in 2023.

Those who knew John will remember not only the positions he held or the organisations he supported, but the breadth of his interests and the sheer number of ways in which he contributed. He was a pharmacist, historian, curator, councillor, community advocate, traveller, cyclist, walker, performer, naturalist and enthusiastic participant in local life.

Above all, John Rees was a Goldfields character in the truest sense: independent-minded, curious, energetic and deeply committed to the place he called home.

Through the pharmacy and its museum, his years in local government, his many community organisations and the countless committees and causes to which he gave his time, John leaves a lasting legacy in Kalgoorlie-Boulder. His was a life lived with purpose, curiosity and service — and the Goldfields is richer for having had him in it.

Rosie Stroud, Executive Officer



Above - 2022 - Life Members of the EGHS. L-R. W. Scott Wilson, Robin Bowden, Jan Lamont and John Rees.