



HISTORY WEST

October 2026

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The next meeting at 109 Stirling Hwy Nedlands is on Wednesday 21 October at 6pm
Refreshments available from 5.30pm; Bookshop open until 6pm

AGENDA

1. Welcome & Apologies
2. Confirmation of minutes of AGM, 15 October 2025
3. Business arising from the minutes
4. President & Chairperson's Annual Report on Society's Activities
5. Treasurer's Report and presentation of Annual Accounts
6. Annual Membership fees
7. Appointment of Returning Officer
8. Election of President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary for one year term
9. Election of four Councillors for two-year terms
10. Confirmation of Patron
11. Endorsement of Honorary Advisors recommended by Council
12. Announcement of winner of Williams- Lee Steere publication prize
13. General Business

Meeting Closes



Affectionate memories of Father Ted Doncaster OAM

With fond memories we farewell Father Ted who was a long-time member, supporter and volunteer at the Society. He joined us in 1969 and was an important part of the Society's life for half a century. His Honorary Life Membership recognised the significant contribution he made. We remember Father Ted officiating so well at many Pioneer Memorial Services at East Perth Cemeteries and presenting research papers on aspects of religious history at general meetings. He was always ready with a warm greeting and a light-hearted comment; for instance, when he gave a Community Talk on Bishop Hale to a large audience in 2019 he commented that he wasn't used to having people in the front pews!

Father Edward (Ted) Doncaster (1931-2026) was an Anglican priest, archdeacon and canon who ministered to congregations around the State. His interest in history began early – in 1952 he compiled an index of those buried in more than 1,000 graves in the Anglican portion of the East Perth Cemeteries. This interest continued throughout his life as he researched and wrote the histories of many of WA's Anglican parishes and biographies of key figures in the Anglican Church. He was the first archivist of the Anglican Diocese of Perth. Altogether Father Ted made an important contribution to the collection, preservation and understanding of the State's history.

In a tribute he would greatly appreciate, the bells of St Georges Cathedral rang out in celebration of his service.



Buston photograph album — calling descendants

The library holds a small and attractive photograph album measuring 16x11cm and inscribed with the words: 'Buston family, Sydney & England, 1861'. Its photographs feature the Buston family in England and Sydney during the 19th century. Sam and Sarah Buston died in White Gum Valley/Hamilton Hill in the early 1970s and Lois Barrowcliff Buston died in South Perth in 2000. The album was likely donated in 1990. As the photographs have no Western Australian provenance, History West is seeking a new home for the album. We are hoping that there is a Buston relative who would love to have it. Please let the library volunteers know if you would like to respond to this appeal — library@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



Follow the dream partnership for success

Alison Gibbs

**Citiplace Community Centre, Upper-Level
Perth Railway Station Concourse**

Wednesday 7 October, 2pm

Alison Gibbs, an experienced teacher in the Graham Polly Farmer Foundation program, brings an enlightening talk about aspiring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their success gained through participation in the programs.

The Follow the Dream Partnerships for Success: Culture – Classroom – Leadership programs span primary, secondary and tertiary students across Australia.

Entry \$10.00 at the door.
Bookings not required

COMMUNITY TALK



Porongurup – its past, place, and people

Kingsley Faulkner

**History West Centre
109 Stirling Hwy, Nedlands**

Tuesday 27 October, 10 for 10.30am

Porongurup is a place of great beauty and rich history. Learn about the long history of this ancient mountain range and Great Southern community – its geology and cultural significance for Noongar inhabitants, colonial settlement, tourism, biodiversity, conservation and its future.

Bookings essential
Cost \$10 Members/\$15 Non Members
Please ring the office: 9386 3841
Or click on the link

<https://square.link/u/1DW7qB8m>



Join us for a roaring evening of festive cheer, good company and Christmas celebrations!
More details on the party and raffle to come - mark your calendar!

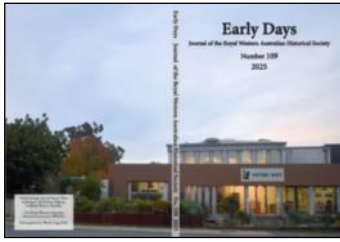
Welcome to new members!

Pamela & Gordon Bagworth, Pamela Buselich,
Northam Army Camp Heritage Assn (Affiliate),
Lachlan & Jenny Walker

Affiliates Newsletter

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

Launch of *EARLY DAYS*, no.109, 2025



A full house celebrated the launch of this year's issue of the Society's journal, *Early Days*. As is customary, this issue records the research papers presented at last year's general meetings. Members who have indicated their desire for a copy should have received one and there are additional copies available for sale in the Bookshop. All who attended greatly appreciated deceased member Michael Nind's generosity in ensuring we could toast the authors and the completion of another issue of the journal – the 109th. We also toasted Michael himself and remembered his thoughtfulness.

There is something for everyone in *Early Days* 2025.



Annie Medley, 'Matrons, nurses, mothers and a doctor at the York Hospital Heritage Precinct in Western Australia'.

Annie uses this fragile dress, once worn by Mildred Groser, to explore her life and the early years of maternity care at York Hospital.



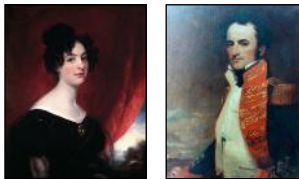
Emily Lanman, 'Recovering convict voices from the margins: women and convictism within WA 1829-1868'.

Emily demonstrates that our understanding of convictism is too narrow, failing to recognise the women who were convicted and sentenced in the colony, citing the cases of Keziah Lockyer, Mary Trubee and Louisa Garrett.



Bernice Barry, 'The Capel conundrum'.

Bernice traces the sad life of Capel Carter who, although she never visited WA, was closely connected to the Bussell family at the Vasse, which explains how the Capel River and district came to be re-named in the early years of the colony.



Pamela Statham Drew, 'The story of Ellen Stirling's family – the Mangles'.

Pamela focuses on Ellen Stirling's brothers, Frederick and Captain Charles, who ran the family's large shipping and ship chandlery business. By funding and organising an annual visit by a cargo ship, the brothers ensured a life-saving link to Britain in the critical early years of the colony.



J M R Cameron, 'The rise and fall of the Port Gregory convict hiring depot'.

Jim explains the rise and fall of the depot as part of the story of WA's mining and convict past. He also regrets the largely unrecognised significance of the heritage value of the site.



Elizabeth Eaton, 'Robin Haig: a life in ballet'.

Elizabeth tells the wonderful story of Robin Haig who made dance her life's work. With the aid of a Royal Academy of Dancing scholarship, she furthered her studies in London and danced with Dame Margot in Russia and the USA, and as a soloist with the Australian Ballet Company. She joined ballet companies in WA as dancer, choreographer, director and artistic director.



Jenny Gregory, '“A curious notion of collaboration”: Mollie Skinner's role in *The Boy from the Bush*'.

Jenny explores the letters from controversial English novelist D H Lawrence to Perth writer Mollie Skinner relating to their collaboration on the novel *The Boy in the Bush*, published in 1924. She argues that Mollie Skinner's 'writing was foundational in shaping their joint novel'.



Helen Henderson, 'The development of medical and hospital government services, Bridgetown 1829-1920: a case study'.

Helen traces the development of Bridgetown's medical and hospital services from 1829 to 1920, showing that it wasn't only the medical staff and governments who ensured the services were developed and maintained; the efforts of the whole community were also crucial.

CENTENARY STORIES

Barbara R Harris

The eighth decade: Displays and Exhibitions

A key objective of the WA Historical Society at its foundation in 1926 was to promote interest in the State's forthcoming centenary, and the embryonic Society played a prominent role in several public celebrations to mark the first centenary of the City of Perth and the establishment of the Swan River colony in 1829. Of particular significance was the Society's Centenary Exhibition held in the Perth Town Hall in September 1929. A public appeal for the donation or loan of items for display produced many objects of 'historic interest' – the parchment commission issued by the College of Heralds to Sir Richard Spencer, first Resident Magistrate at Albany; an old note book belonging to Mr Alfred Hillman, who arrived in 1831 and surveyed Perth, and a collection of pressed wildflowers made by him in 1832; two pictures worked in wool by Mrs Molloy, wife of Colonel John Molloy, first Government Resident at Augusta and the Vasse; leaves from Mrs Molloy's diary at Augusta; and numerous photographs and portraits. This was the first of the Society's successful exhibitions.

Until the Society established itself in its Stirling House premises in 1965 it did not have a home of its own in which to present displays but volunteers were not defeated by this difficulty. Instead general meetings held at a variety of venues regularly displayed the latest donations of 'historical relics' together with items that were loaned only for the single meeting. In November 1934, for instance, the *Daily News* reported a very temporary display of 'Old-Time Toys and Needlework' loaned for the event.

An exquisite toy horse carved by a French prisoner in Napoleon's days was on view The needlework was exquisite, including baby's clothes, a remarkable child's silk dress of the sixties, and equally remarkable samplers of diverse kinds. The books varied from Master Charles Clay's gift book, with inscription to him in 1846 to educational Greek primers from Bishop Hale's college in 1861, together with later boys' school magazines, and books of 30 years ago in Victorian style. There was also an original edition of Kate Greenaway and an edition-de-luxe of Ida Rentoul's fairy tales. [*Daily News*, 1 Nov 1934.]

Installing an exhibition for a few days or more required finding a hall or other display space. In August 1948 Dorothy Henderson, a pharmacy dispenser as well as Society volunteer, created an exhibition at the Perth Public Library to interest those visiting for a medical congress. It consisted of remedies dispensed by a Perth chemist in the 1830s.

Samples were dispensed by Miss Henderson according to the diary's directions, and the remedies were displayed with cards showing their contents. One remedy for gout, known as Chelsea Pensioner, originated from the Crimean War and included powdered rhubarb root and sulphur. Strangely enough, it is still asked for and is available. Most amusing is 'a plaster for the ague' with the following directions for making: 'Black soap, tobacco, gunpowder, brandy; take of each equal parts, mix well together and make into a plaster; this to be spread on linen and tied on the wrist of the patient three hours before the fit is expected'. [*Kalgoorlie Miner*, 13 Aug 1948.]

Burt Memorial Hall was utilised in 1951 for a week-long 'Back to the 1890s' display. Featured was a goldfields 'boneshaker' bicycle.

In typical pioneering style it is improvised of odd pieces of wood held together with wire and string ... The stage in the hall has been transformed into an 1890 drawing-room, complete with furniture, curtains, wall brackets and knickknacks of that period, and also photos of some of the State's pioneers. [*Daily News*, 22 Aug 1951.]

The biggest of these early exhibitions by the Society was the Lord Forrest Centennial exhibition held in the Perth Town Hall in August 1947.

Schoolchildren are attending the Forrest Centennial exhibition in the Perth Town Hall in increasing numbers and it is expected that before next Friday most of the pupils of metropolitan schools will have witnessed the exhibition. Among the features of the display are a working model of Mundaring Weir. A miniature of the Fremantle harbour works and a representation of a room in Lord Forrest home known as The Bungalow. The room contains carved furniture, library books and water-colour paintings. [*West Australian*, 13 Aug 1947.]



Kitty Woodman



Margaret Love P2017.47



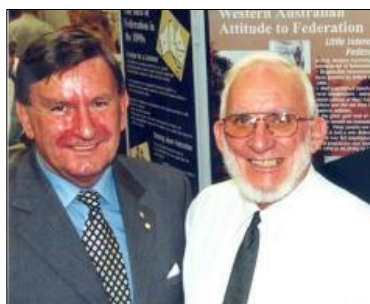
Kitty Woodman & Tatiana de Fircks 1990
P2009.243

After 1965 in their own premises for the first time, museum volunteers at Stirling House assiduously mounted and rotated displays to showcase the Society's collection but they also faced great challenges because of the inadequate documentation, conservation and storage of the large and valuable collection. The challenge was taken up by a succession of talented and committed women. They began tackling the backlog in recording crucial information on the provenance of many of the donations as well as the pressing necessity to improve both the conservation of garments and their storage conditions. In 1979 Kitty Woodman became the new Keeper of the Records and worked steadily on improving the records until she retired in 2002 when Jennifer Wright took over (2002-2008). The latter's generous bequest of \$226,000 has greatly assisted the task of costume preservation. Eva Braid was another who led the re-organisation of the costume collection as did Tatiana de Fircks who was an expert in the restoration and display of textiles and garments. Tatiana also researched the clothes worn in the colony's first decades, insisting that 'costume is always a mirror of the age in which it is worn'. Her article in *Early Days* in 1988 on the subject remains a fine tribute to her talents and her contribution to the museum's work. [*Early Days*, 9 (6) 1988.]

In the Society's eighth decade (1996-2006), Margaret Love was convenor of the museum committee and oversaw a number of displays, including 'Early settlers' afternoon dresses and accessories' (1996), a display of christening gowns (1998), an exhibition of 'Ladies' Underwear from the Past' which included several pairs of rather lethal-looking corsets, and a 'Dolls of Yesteryear' display of Victorian and Edwardian dolls and their accessories (2003). A display of some of the Society's collection of wedding gowns and accessories dating from the early days of Perth and, in many instances, worn by some of Perth's most prestigious ladies (2000) was enriched with an illustrated talk by Tatiana de Fircks.

In 2001, to celebrate the centenary of Federation, the Society launched the ambitious Centenary of Federation Project with Lyall Hunt as manager. The project was made possible through a grant from the National Council for the Centenary of Federation and included publication of *Towards Federation. Why Western Australia joined the Australian Federation* and a colourful and informative travelling exhibition which toured WA for twelve months.

The travelling exhibition was made possible because of sponsorship provided by Wesfarmers Transport and Niteroad. It was launched in January at the Constitutional Centre in Perth by the Chief Justice David Malcolm, then presented at metropolitan locations. Following these presentations, it travelled throughout 2001 to fifteen regional centres, including Kalgoorlie, Karratha, Esperance and Albany, and it finished its tour at the Rockingham Regional Campus Community Library on 5 December.



Launch of *Towards Federation* David Malcolm & Lyall Hunt P2005.877



Part of travelling exhibition P2002.638



Val Hutch P2002.637



Wendy Lugg

The Society has often collaborated with other community groups. For example, members of the Embroiderers Guild of WA visited Stirling House in 2001 to view the display of exquisite embroidery, 'Stitches in Time', and discussed items in the exhibition. These included a magnificent historic appliquéd patchwork bedspread, a hand-beaded evening bag made in France c1920, a 1920s pair of cream crepe-de-chine embroidered pajamas, and a cape which had been hand-embroidered with gold metallic cord and worn by Mrs Fred Jacoby to the Perth Garden Party of 1901, given to mark the visit of the Duke and Duchess of York.

In 2003 Val Hutch joined the museum team and later assumed the role of convenor, overseeing themed displays. In 2006 a Lotterywest grant enabled the Society to purchase display cabinets that allowed for items from the museum collection to be better showcased. Work on the costume collection continued with Jo Pearson assuming responsibility for its curation as well as researching and presenting talks and displays on fashion history.

In 2009 Wendy Lugg was appointed Artist in Residence at the Society and in 2011, in this role, curated the award-winning exhibition 'Mapping Memory' which was displayed at the State Library of WA (and later remounted online). In 'Mapping Memory' Wendy used historical documents and artefacts, juxtaposed with her own contemporary artworks inspired by her family's stories, to give insight into everyday life in Western Australia in the first half of the 20th century, through one family's perspective. 'Mapping Memory' was the first of some more large-scale, and off-site, exhibitions undertaken by the Society under Wendy's direction, and sometimes involving other interested parties.

In 2015 Wendy explored the personal impact of World War I on WA families in the on-site exhibition 'Beyond the Battlefields...humble objects, powerful stories'. This exhibition, marking the centenary of the Gallipoli campaign, took over every space at Stirling House and included items that were borrowed: a bugle (from the WA Museum), a Red Cross flag, and items from the WA Army Museum.

In recent years the Society has produced several impressive exhibitions to share WA history, at Stirling House and off site: 'Western Land - a journey of discovery and rediscovery' (Stirling House, 2016); 'Going to Town' (Town Hall, London Court, Trinity Arcade and shopfronts in King Street, 2024) and 'Memento' (Town Hall); the latter two exhibitions created in collaboration with North Metropolitan TAFE students. After many years leading the Museum and overseeing displays and exhibitions, Val Hutch has handed over to Wendy Lugg and Natalie Richards as co-convenors of the museum committee.

Community Talk

First Nations languages as carriers of history and heritage



August's Community Talk was given by **Sue Hanson** who is senior linguist at the Goldfields Aboriginal Language Centre Aboriginal Corporation (GALCAC) with headquarters in the old Boulder Railway Station. GALCAC is an Indigenous research organisation which works with goldfields First Nations people to record, analyse, archive and thus preserve the twelve endemic languages of the goldfields region. Some of these languages are more in danger of disappearing than others but all of them require active work to preserve them because their use is caught up with and overtaken by the use of English. Western Australia has approximately 85 First Nations languages and it is increasingly recognised that they should not be lost. If they are to survive, however, active steps must be taken now. That is GALCAC's mission on the goldfields.

Sue's talk was fascinating, giving her audience an understanding of the crucial role of language in the survival of culture and therefore the survival of individuals and their communities. Linguicide (forced loss of language) leads to loss of identity and to disempowerment. Language revival assists the recovery of identity, confidence and motivation. It is a way forward.

Languages are not just the words people use; they are the mouth of culture, identity, connection to specific country and a method of storing history and events. Australian Indigenous societies, without written systems, use languages as verbal libraries with songlines mapping country and stories recording history. First Nations languages are libraries of knowledge. To lose a language is to lose that library.

History is encoded in language so a language is an historical library. Stories are held by many people: in the case of creation stories individuals hold a piece of the story. 'Singing the country' creates a songline which maps the country. Language is thus an oral road map. In this way language, country and culture are inextricably intertwined.

One area of GALCAC's work involves providing books and other materials to help parents pass on language in the crucial 0-2 years of early childhood. If language is to survive it needs to be embedded for a child before he or she is 4 years old. So written materials to assist parents are crucial.

GALCAC's focus is wide, not only on education but also on the opportunities that are needed to embed First Nations' people in regional economies. Sue's talk engaged her audience and gave us a much clearer understanding of the crucial importance of language revival and survival for First Nations Australians.

Mercy Care Group Visit

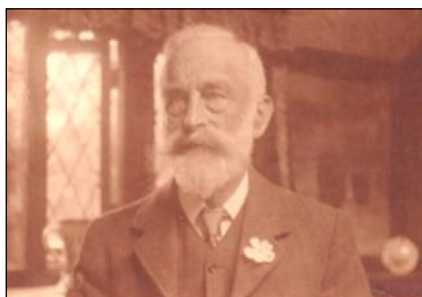
It was an absolute pleasure to welcome a group from Mercy Care to tour our premises at 109. Many thanks to the Museum Committee for hosting this visit



Emile Clement

Ethnographic and natural history collector – among other enterprises

History West's June issue contained a review of Nicola Froggatt's new book, Colonial Ambitions and Collecting Anxieties. Aboriginal Objects and Western Australian Frontiers, 1828-1914. The book explored the topic of WA Aboriginal artefacts to be found in British and Irish museums and we learnt that Emile Clement provided the largest number of extant items. Yet he is almost unknown to West Australians today. Who was he? He seems to have been one of numerous educated, enterprising and opportunistic Europeans attracted to the potential for enrichment in the colonial world; not to settle there but to visit and extract benefit in some form or another. He was not a charlatan although his educational qualifications remain uncertain. He was certainly an entrepreneur who made the most of every financial opportunity. Thanks to museum researcher Bruce Hoar for uncovering his WA story.



Emile Clement

Emile Louis Bruno Clement was born in Prussia in 1844 and died in Sussex, England, in 1928. He lived the life of a polymath, presenting himself and earning his living variously as a teacher, archaeologist, mining engineer, ethnographer and naturalist. Primarily he was a collector who prospered from his sales.

During early adulthood Clement taught at schools in Germany and northern England. In the 1870s and 1880s he was involved in excavating Bronze Age archaeological sites in Prussia, selling artefacts from those sites to museums. This appears to have been his first venture into collecting for sale.

Clement was attracted to WA in the 1890s by the lure of gold and promised wealth. He made three trips – in 1895, 1896-1898 and 1899-1900 – working as a mining engineer in the northwest establishing and managing several gold mines on the West Pilbara goldfields, firstly for the Towranna Gold Mines of WA Ltd about 45kms southeast of Roebourne and then for the Lydia Exploration Syndicate on the Lower Nickol goldfield northwest of Roebourne. Because of his scientific credentials (self-described Doctor of Science) he was called back in England to provide his (optimistic) opinions on the geological promise of the northwest goldfields.

These mines did not flourish but Clement did develop a profitable business collecting Aboriginal artefacts and natural history specimens for European (mostly British and German) museums. A report in Perth's *Inquirer & Commercial News* in December 1896 provides a glimpse of his activities in these years.

Dr Clement, who is interested largely in mining at Towranna, has returned to the Nor'West after a trip to the old country. He has been requested by the British Museum authorities to collect details concerning the aboriginals, their customs, rites, and language, and to secure as many native weapons as possible. He has also been requested to study their corporeal characteristics, and has been furnished with instruments for measuring their skulls, & c. The doctor, who is a doctor of science, is also well known as an entomologist. He took to England on his last trip a large collection of Nor'West moths and intends on this occasion to increase his collection. Many of the species discovered are entirely new to entomologists, and several of them have been named and classified by the doctor.



'A native in the act of spearing a dugong or turtle. North West Australia'

It is estimated that Clement sold over 1,600 WA Aboriginal artefacts to 26 European museums. Initially these were items he collected himself in the 1890s, with the help of his son Alphonse, supplemented in 1910s and 1920s by items from his network of WA collectors. Most of this material came from the northwest, from the Ngarluma, Yindjibarndi and Nyamal peoples, and comprised a wide variety of material culture – weapons and working tools, ceremonial items, clothing and domestic items, and botanical and geological specimens – samples of seeds, fruits and minerals (for instance, ochre).

These objects were most often exchanged by Aboriginal people for tobacco, flour, sugar, blankets, metal tools and other valued commodities. Clement also collected botanical specimens from the northwest for donation to herbaria in Kew, Leiden and Berlin, and a number of species were named in his honour, as were three zoological species. His collecting was enhanced by his skills as a

photographer although a cyclone destroyed most of his Towranna collection.

Clement certainly showed interest in Indigenous cultural knowledge. In 1899 he published a 'Vocabulary of the Gulluma tribe inhabiting the plains between the Yule and the Fortescue rivers' in the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* and in 1903 'Ethnographical Notes on the Western-Australian Aborigines' in the *Publications of the Royal Ethnographical Museum, Leiden*.

In 2019 AIATSIS successfully negotiated with the Manchester Museum for the return to the Nyamal people of 43 sacred and ceremonial objects collected by Clement. This repatriation is important for the Nyamal because handling and using the feather ornaments in renewed cultural practices keeps history, stories and spirit alive. More returns from other European museums are planned.

Reference

If you might enjoy a YouTube podcast on the subject, see 'A package collection: Emile Clement and Western Australia' at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tItqNhayVts>

A recent donation to the museum collection

Red Cross Letters from World War II

Sandy Detz & Bruce Hoar

A few short letters from the Australian Red Cross donated by Sandy Detz have revealed the story of a caring primary school girl and her family from Bassendean doing their bit for the soldiers during World War II despite their own hardships.



Sandy tells us that her mother Patricia Mary Scudds (née Dunt) was born in 1931, the first of three children to Edith and James (Jim) Dunt. Life was hard growing up. Patricia's father Jim had had a shocking accident in 1926 while working with explosives in a quarry in Gosnells. His right arm was amputated at the shoulder and he lost all but one finger on his left hand. As he had been in the country for only a few years he wasn't eligible for an invalid pension. The local community, with the help of the Commercial Travellers Club, fundraised to give him enough money to buy the Maple Tea Rooms & Deli in Bassendean. However during the 1930s Depression his generosity – allowing people to pay with IOUs – ultimately led to him losing the business.

It was at the tea rooms he met Edith who had come there to buy tobacco for her uncle. During Patricia's childhood, Jim had various odd jobs despite his severe handicap. These included working on the gates at Bassendean Oval and driving a small delivery truck even though he didn't have a licence and could not change gears, so only drove in first gear and was regularly stopped by the police! He was also the caretaker for the Local Masonic Lodge just down the street.

Jim had a generous nature and was always helping others. On one occasion he gave a returned soldier his mechanical hand, saying that the man deserved it more. Because of Jim's injuries Patricia's mother Edith had to take paid work to help support their three children. She often worked as a cleaner, earning just ten shillings a day for scrubbing and polishing wooden floors on her hands and knees. She also did people's washing and was known locally as the 'washerwoman'. Patricia frequently attended church with her mother because often other parishioners would not talk or sit with her.

Growing up in this poor but big-hearted household, Patricia went around Wilson Street and nearby streets in Bassendean collecting items from neighbours – things people no longer wanted such as vases, plates and clothes. Together she and her mother would bake cakes, sew various items and then hold jumble sales and raffles at the Masonic Hall. Patricia donated the money raised to the Red Cross and continued doing this throughout the war. She was very proud of the thank-you letters she received from the Red Cross.

One such letter she received read:

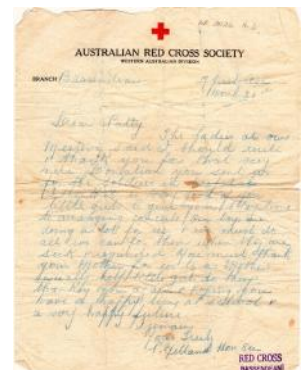
Dear Patty

The ladies at our meeting said I should write to thank you for that very nice donation you sent us for the soldiers in hospital. I think its very good of you little girls to give your play time to arranging concerts. Our boys are doing a lot for us and we must do all we can for them when they are sick and wounded. You must thank your Mother for us too as Mothers usually help little girls do things. Thanking you again and hoping you have a happy time at school and a very happy future.

I remain

Yours Truly

P. Yelland, Hon Sec Red Cross Bassendean.



Bassendean was a tight-knit working-class community and was heavily mobilised during the war. Bassendean Oval was requisitioned by the Army and a military unit incorporated the sports oval's grandstands as its official headquarters. Many of the locals worked at Hadfield's Foundry, CSBP's fertiliser plant and the nearby Midland Railway Workshops which expanded their operations during the war to manufacture munitions, tools and military equipment. Local men, who were not sent overseas or who worked in such industries, joined the Volunteer Defence Corps (VDC) to secure the homefront. Many Perth residents built air-raid shelters in their backyards, dug trenches near roads and participated in strict blackout drills to protect against potential air attacks.

Sandy explained that her mother Patricia, who attended Bassendean Primary School when the war began, remembered carrying a calico bag over her shoulder to school with food in it along with a helmet. Trenches were dug in a zigzag pattern along one side of the school playing field. Children practised drills, running out in their helmets and getting down into the trenches. Patricia said she didn't remember feeling scared – they thought it was all a bit of fun.

Patricia's generous and caring nature continued throughout her life. She told the following story:

Every Sunday, Dad would go for a walk down to the river, and I would sometimes go with him. He would always buy Mum flowers. I would take the old bunch out of the vase, pick out the ones that were still nice and make a small bunch to take to Mrs Skeels, an elderly lady a few houses up the street. She loved receiving them and never knew they were from the previous week.

During the last years of her life, Patricia would visit lonely elderly patients in nursing homes even on Christmas Day. For many years she took in sewing and alterations, accepting only a gold coin donation. Over time, she donated more than \$10,000 to many charities, including the Red Cross.

Little church casts a long shadow

Darren Foster



This modest church in the southwest town of Dardanup is easily overlooked by passers-by but in the 19th century it was a hotbed of political intrigue and social activism. Now approaching its 170th year the neo-Gothic former Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception was the first Catholic Church in the Swan River colony built outside Perth. It became the ecclesiastical headquarters of southwest Catholicism. Since 1979 it has been named Thomas Little Memorial Hall in honour of its benefactor.

Thomas Little, born in Ireland, was employed as manager of Charles Prinsep's estate at 'Belvidere', Leschenault Peninsula, and acquired land at Dardanup in the 1840s. He and his wife Eliza set about attracting tenant farmers on their land to establish a Catholic community. Irish free settlers, ticket-of-leave men (former convicts) and 'bride ship' women were welcomed.

In 1852 Thomas Little donated 50 acres of land, as well as bricks and calcimine, for a church, monastery and school to strengthen the Catholic enclave. In 1854 Bishop Salvado laid the foundation stone for the Church which was completed in 1856 and

officially opened in 1857. Thomas Little left Prinsep's employ and settled on his own handsome property 'Dardanup Park' in the mid-1850s.

Historian Ruth McGrath noted that in the census of 1848 there were only 31 Catholics in the Wellington district (including Bunbury, Dardanup and the Vasse) but by 1854 the number had jumped to 249. She attributes the higher proportion of Catholics to Thomas Little's success in attracting Catholic settlers to Dardanup. [Ruth McGrath, 'Thomas Little at Dardanup', 1986, SLWA.

The first resident priest was Spanish, Father Peter Aragon OSB, followed by another Spanish Benedictine monk, Father Venancio Garrido. Because of the slow construction of the building Father Garrido implemented a system of interest-free loans with Thomas Little, James Hertnan, John Maguire, James Maguire, Michael Lyons, Richard Dillon and Edward Dowdell as subscribers. He also required Catholic farmers in the district to give part of their harvest to support the church and pastor [Conservation Plan for Thomas Little Memorial Hall, 1996]. Garrido's parish returns (1858) indicated 100 people usually attended Sunday Mass [<https://bunburycatholic.org.au/dardanupboyanup/>].

It was one of Little's Dardanup settlers, a fellow Irish migrant James Maguire, together with Dardanup priest Father Patrick McCabe who mobilised the Catholic community and organised the escape of Fenian convict John Boyle O'Reilly from WA in 1869.

Nearly a decade later, in 1876-77, several hundred Western Australians signed a petition to Queen Victoria seeking the extension of civil and political rights to former convicts. Orchestrated by the Catholic Bishop of Perth, Martin Griver, the petition was supported by a wide cross-section of society, from servants to shipowners, saddlers and graziers [Governor's Correspondence, 1876-1878, Cons 392, Box 62, Item 278A, SROWA]. Residents of Bunbury and Dardanup were among the signatories, including Thomas Little JP and James Maguire.

The church was the heart of the local community with regular fundraising drives – such as for building repairs, replacing the shingle roof with galvanised iron, acquiring a harmonium and organ, and building a cottage for the priest. The parish priests were influential figures. The diaries of local parishioner George Fee noted in 1886:

A meeting was held ... this morning after Mass to arrange about collecting for the 'Record' Irish Parliamentary Fund. The Rev Father Brady presided and explained the object of the meeting. It was unanimously agreed to fall in line with other places throughout the colony and the sum of £9-16-6 was taken up in the room.

Father Brady admonished the congregation in 1895

The Reverend Father Brady in the course of his sermon to the congregation stated that it had come to his knowledge that the people of Dardanup were not keeping up the Lenten Regulations in the way they should do. In effect he had heard they had even indulged in dancing since the hay season commenced. He expressed himself as astonished and annoyed at this conduct and said it was a very bad example...

In the early 20th century a wave of Italian migrants settled in the district and boosted the congregation. A new, larger church was opened in 1937 to replace the original one which was used for other parish purposes. It was battered by Cyclone Albany in 1978, triggering a major repair effort.

In 1998 the former church was added to the State Register of Heritage Places. In 2019 the historical importance of this former church to the Dardanup community was recognised with a \$500,000 State government funding injection which – along with local fundraising – saw its complete refurbishment. The 2020 opening was attended by an Irish government representative who spoke in Gaelic to the gathering. The event made the news in Ireland.

For those interested to know more of Thomas Little and Dardanup's history see:

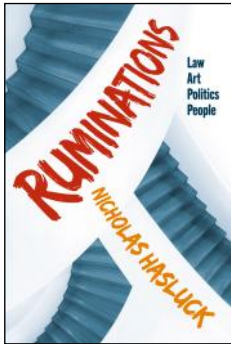
Stephen Lally, Thomas and Eliza Little, Irish pioneers in India and Western Australia 1797-1877, self-published, 2022.

N Flynn (ed.), Fee's Dardanup Diaries: George Alexander Fee 1886-1942 of Roseland, Dardanup, Milligan House., 2002.

Book Reviews

Nicholas Hasluck, *Ruminations. Law, Art, Politics, People*, Arcadia, 2025. In Library & Bookshop \$40.

Reviewer: Ed Jaggard



Those who set out to record their life story, or aspects of it, often do so under headings such as reflections or memories. In this instance Nicholas Hasluck has chosen ruminations, meaning prolonged thought about interesting subjects – books, people and events. To understand his choice of subjects, it is helpful to glimpse the man, lawyer and writer.

One of Australia's well known writers Nicholas Hasluck was born and educated in WA, graduating from the UWA Law School followed by a year at Oxford University. His career in the law culminated in his appointment as a Judge of the WA Supreme Court. He has published novels, collections of poetry and short stories, and for some years contributed to the monthly magazine *Quadrant*. Following the example of his parents it seems he was born to write. Among other achievements both were accomplished historians. Hasluck emulated their habit of making regular notes of interesting events and people, those and diary entries sometimes providing material for his novels.

Hasluck's selected ruminations appear here in a variety of forms: book reviews, toasts, interviews, eulogies, after-dinner speeches and personal musings. In a long public life he has encountered people from many walks of life, thus present in these pages are Lord Tennyson, Gough Whitlam, artist Margaret Benoit, local WA writer Glen Phillips among others. There are more than forty pieces grouped under five headings: Art, Law, Politics, People and Literature, although the last is curiously omitted from the book's cover and title page.

Introducing the collection is a short chapter in which the nexus between literature and the law is discussed. Hasluck ponders the significance of his 1976 meeting with the 97-year-old Charles Tennyson, grandson of the famous poet whose words, 'At the end of the day, we are who we are' left him ruminating about modes of thinking embracing both the law and literature. Of the five categories of ruminations the largest is People. Some are acquaintances of the author, others known by reputation.

One tribute is to his good friend, poet Bill Grono. It outlines his life from birth to death: schoolteacher, university academic, poet, raconteur and stalwart member of the WA branch of the Fellowship of Writers. He and Hasluck shared literary interests as well as enjoying each other's company. While there is a sense of familiarity with Grono's quintessential West Australian life, that of Sir Maurice Bowra, Warden of Oxford's Wadham College and known to Hasluck because of his residence there, was very different – living among convivial male company, enjoying almost daily contact with highly intelligent students, regular European sojourns and enjoyment from taking regular potshots at the University's administration, a pastime in which the irreverent Grono also excelled.

Among the selections are several that reveal Hasluck's interest in government and politics in different countries. Illustrating this is his review of the diaries of Sir Owen Dixon, former Chief Justice of Australia's High Court. Of particular interest to Hasluck are the entries covering the years when Dixon was Australia's Ambassador to the USA during World War II. Revelations about President Roosevelt and Secretary of State Dean Acheson appear together with Dixon's observations of tensions within John Curtin's cabinet.

Given Hasluck's interest in high politics and the law, it is reassuring to find there is space for women among the ruminations. One who features is controversial novelist Katharine Susannah Prichard. Another is the flamboyant Maie Casey. Hasluck reviews the latter's biography *Glittering Surfaces. A Life of Maie Casey* by Diane Longmore, leaving in the reader's mind a portrait of a vivacious woman who was the ideal hostess wife for husband R G [later Lord] Casey, diplomat and one-time Governor of Bengal. Together they were the diplomatic couple *par excellence*.

Another couple who inadvertently provide some of the book's wry humour are Dorothy Hewett, lifetime friend, playwright and rabble-rousing public speaker, and husband Merv Lilley. In a diary entry for 5 March 2010, Hasluck described the arrival of the pair at the Adelaide Writers' Festival: '...a car pulled up and liberated two massive passengers'. Then it was found that Hewett's wheelchair had a flat tyre and had to be forcefully pushed across the grass by Hasluck and John Kinsella with the occupant muttering and cursing. There was more drama when chair and occupant began to slide backwards off the stage, with a sweating Hasluck again to the rescue. From time to time after the Festival, when he was asked about the greatest achievement of his three-year term as Chair of the Literature Board, he was inclined to say it was saving Dorothy Hewett from disaster at Adelaide Writers' Week!

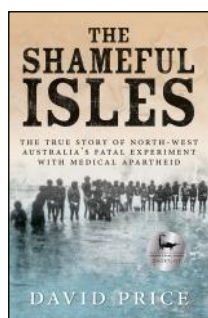
Several of the pieces have a Western Australian or Perth setting and elsewhere there are occasional mentions of familiar people and places: Randolph Stow, Joan Pope, Patricia Kotai-Ewers and others, many of whom appear in the context of the Fellowship of Writers or UWA's Dolphin Theatre. Tom Collins House, the once well-known beachfront eatery Van Eileen, and even Butler's Swamp (now Lake Claremont) bring a sense of place to the writing.

There are many more ruminations that occupy Hasluck, among them H V Evatt's unhappy political career, the controversial Orr case that disrupted the University of Tasmania, a quirky piece on Oxford's influence on Australian politics being some of them. He has least to say about art.

Hasluck adopts a crisp, clear tone in his prose. Every now and then a brief shaft of wry humour appears, and he is invariably generous in his judgements of others, whether they be lawyers or adventurers. The periodic inclusion of diary entries adds interest for these convey a sense of the author spontaneously dropping his guard. He is willing to share friendships, bringing to the ruminations a balance that makes this pleasurable reading. We should be grateful that the diversity of his selections is so appealing.

David Price, *The Shameful Isles: the true story of north-west Australia's fatal experiment with medical apartheid*, Fremantle Press, 2025. In Library.

Reviewer: Jennie Carter



David Price grew up in Carnarvon and his first book, *Dark Tales from the Long River*, explored incidents in the history of the Gascoyne and Murchison districts. His latest publication is an examination of the lock hospitals scheme for the isolation, incarceration and treatment of venereal disease only in Aboriginal people in northwest Australia.

Spurred by the Roth Royal Commission and the subsequent *Aborigines Act 1905*, measures were urged to deal with the perceived threat of a disease 'that has become a menace to white people'. Established on the two wind-swept and inhospitable Bernier and Dorre Islands, 58km from the Carnarvon coast, the lock hospitals were run by the State government during the period 1908-1919. It was an overtly race-based system as non-Aboriginal people suffering from possible venereal diseases were left free from any form of control despite the passing of the *Contagious Diseases Act* in 1915.

The larger island, Dorre, was used to keep women, and often the healthy babies and children they brought with them, separate from the men who were sent to Bernier Island. The inmates were initially required to build their own shelters and source much of their own food from hunting and gardening. The often agonising surgeries and medical treatments that the patients were compelled to endure proved largely ineffectual. It was also likely that some of the people were suffering from complaints other than venereal disease and so the attempted 'cures' would have been painfully pointless.

It is estimated that of around 800 First Nations people incarcerated on the islands more than 200 died, and the majority of those not from venereal disease but other sicknesses, frailty, exposure to the elements, poor nutrition, invasive and toxic medical treatments, and suicide. Many more never found their way back to their home country.

Price makes it clear from the outset that his is 'a work of narrative non-fiction sourced from an array of historical and contemporary sources' and that, 'While all the major events depicted in this narrative did take place, I have occasionally exercised creative licence in their description so as to bring them to life for the reader and to do justice to their impact'. There are many recreated conversations throughout the book that are based on statements and views that had been published previously in the press.

The book is well-written and evocative and the reader is swept up in the persuasiveness of David Price's writing. An example is his impression of Lt George Gray's expedition which used Bernier as a base while exploring the coast from NW Cape and Gantheaume Bay.

'... the groaning of the masts, the smacking of water on wood, the slap of wind in a loose sail'.

Is *The Shameful Isles* polemical? Maybe but the lock hospitals' experiment is one that really cannot be dissected dispassionately. The bare facts themselves elicit horror and shame. David Price eloquently demonstrates that good intentions by medical, nursing and support staff towards the people brought unwillingly to the islands is clear but indifferent, penny-pinching, administrative cruelty is an over-arching theme.

The Shameful Isles has numerous endnotes and the bibliography is a sound listing of mainly published sources.

James Paratore, *Salt in their Veins: from Capo D'Orlando to Fremantle*, Blue Seas Press, 2026. In Library.

Reviewer: Heather Campbell



A book about Western Australia's fishing industry with its 'inextricably woven' threads of Sicilian migration could have no better author than James Paratore, a fifth-generation fisherman who continues to work alongside his father Joe in the industry.

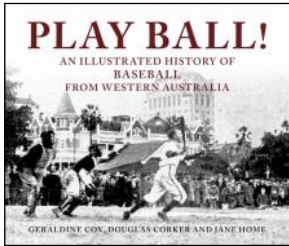
The chronological approach begins with a chapter on 'The Ancient Call of Sicilian Waters' and follows the lives of generations of fishermen to 'explain how Sicilian migrants from Capo D'Orlando – families who tasted poverty and dreamed of plenty – found themselves casting nets in Western Australian waters'. These migrants and their families had a profound impact on the WA fishing industry and brought 'Mediterranean wisdom' and 'applied it to Southern Ocean waters'. The author however covers much more than this with chapters on innovation and entrepreneurship, cultural bridges, women's contribution and migrants' role as technological pioneers.

Woven throughout the narrative are the generations of families involved in the industry – names familiar in the fishing industry today – and this gives the reader a glimpse into the family lives of migrants and the impact of a depression and two world wars on their lives. Their life through these years 'tested their resilience and community solidarity' and was a journey of 'transformation – of individuals becoming Australian while remaining Italian ... and with courage and community, extraordinary achievements became possible'. As James Paratore concludes, the story 'keeps unfolding and each tide brings new challenges and opportunities to shores they made their home'.

A small book but an absorbing and interesting read that will make you appreciate a meal of crayfish even more!

Geraldine Cox, Douglas Croker, Jane Home, *Play Ball! An Illustrated History of Baseball from Western Australia*, coxcorhome, Fremantle, 2026. In Library.

Reviewer: Ed Jaggard



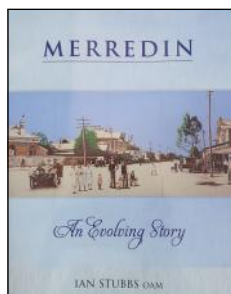
Beginning in Fremantle in 1892-1893, the story of WA baseball's fluctuating popularity is a fascinating one. In this attractively produced history – essentially an interesting scrapbook of newspaper articles, scorecards, action portraits and team photographs – we see many of the records accumulated over a lifetime by Douglas Croker, onetime player and administrator. The material is arranged in ten chapters, each spanning a decade to 2010, with a great number of photographs enlivening the pages. This detailed documentation is impressive. It is a large book.

From its beginning in WA there was a curious relationship with cricket, baseball being seen by many cricketers as an off-season adjunct. The American influence was always present too. Interstate and international dimensions are also examined.

This is a book particularly for baseball fans with wider appeal to other passionate sports followers.

Ian Stubbs, *Merredin, An Evolving Story*, self-published, 2025. In Library.

Reviewer: Jeanette Longwood



The author has extensively researched the history, development and community of Merredin and the districts surrounding it, his sources appearing as appreciations in a separate chapter. Ian has a close association with Merredin having attended school there. He then obtained work straight from school and was subsequently employed in local government and, after retirement, served as a local councillor and mayor in the southwest.

Chapters provide wide coverage, including Indigenous history, early European settlement, economic development, sporting life and community identities. Merredin became a hub following the gold boom of the late 1890s and development of the railway network. Insight is gained into the enthusiasm of the local community in initiating and maintaining a sense of community across the decades. Problems encountered included floods, droughts, economic depression, rabbits and insufficient schools for the rapidly growing population. The development of services provided in the town including ambulance, hospital, and senior citizen care was largely the result of local initiative and relied on local fundraising. Merredin as a military base during World War II is another aspect to its varied history. Details about the wide variety of sports played and local identities who went on to represent the State and Australia are provided. Current solar and wind developments feed into the southwest grid.

This is a fascinating and comprehensive coverage of the social, economic and historical life of Merredin. As the title suggests, Stubbs shows life in Merredin to be continually evolving.

Community Officer:	Lesley Burnett	Opinions expressed in <i>History West</i> are not necessarily those of the Royal WA Historical Society (Inc.).
Editor <i>History West</i>:	Dr Lenore Layman	