



# HISTORY WEST

PUBLISHED BY THE ROYAL WESTERN AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

## GENERAL MEETING

January-February 2017

**The next meeting at Stirling House is on Wednesday 15 February at 5pm when Fred Chaney of *Chaney Architecture* will speak on the Community History House Plans.**

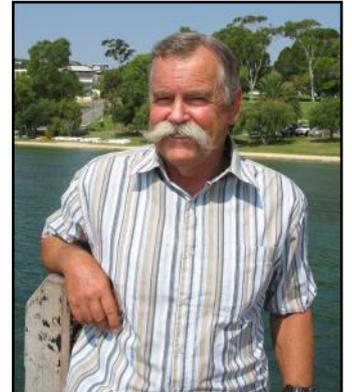
**This talk will be followed at 6pm by Graeme Henderson who will present a paper on 'The *Fortuyn* and Other Lost Dutch Shipwrecks'. Refreshments available from 5.30pm; Bookshop open until 6pm.**



The discoveries of four Dutch shipwrecks have brought great benefit to Western Australia, including the creation and development of the Maritime Museum with its exhibitions and research facility, closer ties between Australia and the Netherlands, and a broader sense of identity. But the *Batavia*, *Vergulde Draeck*, *Zuytdorp* and *Zeewijk* were all found by 1964. We Australians have had 50 years to sequentially explore, protect, preserve, exhibit, analyse and re-analyse these wrecks. Now, in 2017 we could do with a couple more stimulating discoveries, to energise the next 50 years.

The Dutch Ambassador's call for projects relating to the 2016 Dirk Hartog Commemoration inspired the formation of the not-for-profit group Wreck Check to search for still-missing Dutch spice-trade ships in the eastern part of the Indian Ocean. Graeme Henderson saw the outward bound *Fortuyn* (1724) and *Agtekerke* (1726), lost between the Cape of Good Hope and Batavia, as prime candidates for a review of the historical records, for clues as to location. In 1727 survivors from the *Zeewijk* saw wreckage on the Abrolhos Islands that they claimed might have been from the *Fortuyn* or *Agtekerke*. But for Graeme, the evidence pointed elsewhere.

Graeme Henderson's interest in maritime history was sparked in 1963 when, at the age of 16, he was the first to discover a 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch shipwreck on the Australian coast. It was the *Vergulde Draeck* (or *Gilt Dragon*), wrecked in 1656, some 70 miles north of Perth. He won the Historical Society's Essay Prize that year with an account of his experiences. Later, as the first Director of the Maritime Museum, Graeme lobbied for the return of the yacht *Australia II*, oversaw the development of the new harbourside museum facility, and played a lead role in the development of UNESCO's *Convention for the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage*



## Mystery Photo Identified

Thank you to Janet Hocken from the Parliamentary Library who identified October's mystery photo as the military procession at the Fremantle War Memorial on Anzac Day 1928, and thank you also to Kris Bizzaca who added that the ceremony marked the laying of the foundation stone of the Fremantle War Memorial on that day.

## Another Mystery

Who are these four boys? Can anyone help identify them? If you have any information, please phone and ask for the Library, on 9386 3841, or email [library@histwest.org.au](mailto:library@histwest.org.au)



Government of Western Australia  
Department of Culture and the Arts



At its meeting held on 6 December business included the following where Council

- welcomed new members – George & Ruth Barrett, Fiona Harris, Marian Hillam, Bill Kerns, Darren O’Connell, Ann Renshaw, Sandra Stock;
- resolved that, because of the financial situation following legal advice, the position of Administrative Officer will be terminated with effect from 30 December and that Council will need to rely on the limited hours of the Assistant AO position supplemented by dedicated volunteers to take over some duties, e.g. property management. IT management; minutes, agendas, business arising and email management;
- congratulated the President R Nicholson, Immediate Past President SA Hasluck, and Chairperson of Council L McCall on achieving a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Culture and the Arts, WA Museum and State Library WA to collaborate on public programs; and noted that this new approach offers opportunity for ongoing co-operation;
- heard reports from Sally Anne Hasluck on the ongoing work of the Community History Centre (CHC) Planning Committee relating to gaining Nedlands City Council’s support for the building concept on site and on the submission of a grant application to the federal *Catalyst Arts & Culture Fund* for funds to appoint a project manager;
- received Mark Williams Director, Donorcentricity Pty Ltd’s draft feasibility viability report and resolved that recommendations from the report will be carefully considered before the next steps are taken;
- endorsed urgent repairs be made to the Library’s ceiling, recommended by the Hon Architect, Alice Steedman, and be completed during the close-down period in January;
- resolved that the Society’s Community History Centre Raffle 2017 will commence in March and be drawn in June on WA Day;
- applauded the RWAHS Auxiliary for its generous donation of \$1000 to go towards conservation of Catherine MacKay’s wedding gown from the north west;
- resolved that, as of 9 January 2017, the Society will be open from 10am–4pm each week day;
- agreed that the Society will upgrade from a listed member of Volunteering WA to a Tier 2 member for greater access to support and volunteer placement;
- noted the formation of a new historical society – Midland and Districts Historical Society;
- thanked Marlene Anderson, Library Volunteer, most sincerely for her contribution as the Council’s representative over several years on the National Archives of Australia (Perth) Consultative Committee and welcomed Kerry Smith’s interest in taking her place;
- heard a report from Helen Henderson on the bedding down of the new website that an upgrade of *Collective Access* software has caused many problems with some of these problems fixed and others still being worked on by GAIA Resources;
- received a report from Fiona Bush on the ongoing planning for the State Heritage & History Conference ‘Connections’ to be held in May 2017.

**Lennie McCall**

## History in The City

Our last talk for 2016 was given by Dr Nonja Peters on ‘The Dutch Presence in WA since 1616’. Nonja herself arrived in Australia in 1949, her father having come a few months earlier. She has maintained a strong interest in her history and is committed to the preservation of migrant heritage in Australia.

There was a large Dutch evacuation to Western Australia from the Dutch East Indies after the defeat of the Japanese in 1945. However Nonja took us back to a much earlier era. At first the ships arrived by accident because many were blown off-course on their way to the spice islands. When Dirk Hartog in the *Eendracht* went off course in October 1616 and landed on an island in Shark Bay, it was the first recorded European landing on the west coast. The crew attached a plate to a wooden post to commemorate the occasion.

One of the mysteries surrounding this early history was the disappearance of sailors left on the shore. After one shipwreck, 68 sailors were left on shore while the rest of the crew went for help. When they returned they could not find any of those who had remained behind. This was not an isolated occurrence and there have been many stories of what could have happened. It seems clear that there was some interaction between the Dutch sailors and Aboriginal people.

The Dutch connection with WA continued and Nonja told us of many Dutch family names that are now part of our history.

**History in the City** commences in 2017 on Wednesday 1 March. Our March talk will be given by Bernice Barry on ‘Georgiana Molloy: The Mind that Shines’. Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month at 2pm at the Citiplace Community Centre on the Perth Railway Concourse. Donation \$5 entry includes afternoon tea, all welcome.

**Lorraine Tholet**

## A farewell and thank you to Lynn



Councillors, members, volunteers and friends joined the President Bob Nicholson on Wednesday 21 December at morning tea to thank Lynn O’Hara Administrative Officer for her contribution to the management of the Society during the past two and a half years in this role and to wish

her well. The cessation of an Administrative Grant from the Department of Culture and the Arts has made it necessary for the position to be terminated and to re-organise duties and manage with the part-time limited hours worked by Lesley Burnett with additional volunteers taking on new roles. Thank you Lynn and our very best wishes!

## A happy Christmas party

Marie Louise and David Wordsworth again generously invited the Society to hold our party in their garden. Many thanks indeed to them both. Approximately 100 members and guests mingled, talked, met old friends, and ate and drank to wind up a busy year and celebrate Christmas. A relaxed and enjoyable time was had by all.

Grateful thanks to the many volunteers who made the evening such a success and particular thanks to Ally Drake Brockman who worked very hard again on all aspects of the evening, organising a major raffle and donating the first prize. Our thanks also to Voyager Estate who donated a prize. In total, 323 tickets were sold and \$2,325.00 was raised. Rob O'Connor won the first prize, a cashmere rug, while Jill Dobson won second prize and Alison Melsom third.



## Illustrators and Explorers: Western Land exhibition talk



Baines, Kangaroo hunting

The last of the exhibition talks for 2016 was given jointly by Chris Coggin and Lenore Layman, speaking about artists who accompanied nineteenth-century exploration expeditions.

Explorers' accounts and artists' sketches are currently being examined with new eyes in order to learn more about the natural environment that existed at the time and the indigenous people who were met along the way. Chris introduced Thomas Baines about whom he has written in his 2014 e-book, *The Empire Sketcher*, and Lenore presented William Walker Hodgson, who provided numerous lively sketches for Calvert's fourth expedition in WA in 1895.

Keep a look out for more of these interesting talks when the Society's 2017 program commences.



Hodgson, Somebody's Freak

## Booked in for a Cuppa - Xmas Edition

Smiles and sales marked the latest successful get together, held on 2 December as a lead-up to the season of goodwill and good reading. The convivial atmosphere was testament to the success of what has become a regular Society 'open house' occasion. Several members brought friends along.

This time editors/authors Perpetua Durack Clancy (*Art and Life*), Richard Offen (*Perth Then and Now*) and Nicholas Hasluck (*The Bradshaw Case*) gave lively summaries of their new books, all with strong historical elements. Sue Clarke gave enthusiastic endorsements of three children's books, showing how text and pictures engage young minds. All the books are on sale through the Bookshop.



With thanks to our speakers – Sue Clarke, Richard Offen, Perpetua Durack Clancy, Nick Hasluck.

**Albany Historical Society's** Spring magazine is brim full of news. Judith Swain surveys the history of the port with its fine harbour and succession of faulty infrastructure; Roger Cunnington examines Matthew Flinders' survey of King George Sound in 1801; while Lorraine Middleton reports on Denmark's beaches and Wilson Inlet, each with 'its own character, aspect, rip and weather conditions'. Colour photographs of each beach complement Lorraine's interesting article. Congratulations Albany, on a substantial and attractive newsletter!

**Busselton Historical Society** newsletter regularly contains interesting oral history stories. The latest issue records Keith Forrest's recollections as a ten-year-old accompanying his father and uncle as they took the Lieutenant Governor, Sir James Mitchell, fishing and hunting at Ludlow and Wonnerup.

In partnership with the North Midlands Project **Carnamah Historical Society & Museum** recently created an index of all WA motor vehicle registrations for 1917-18 and a number of years across the 1920s. Each of the 80,155 entries contains the name of the owner, his/her address, the make of the vehicle, its number/licence plate and the local authority that registered it. The index can be searched by surname or keyword – such as town, suburb or other address. A number of new online exhibitions have also been added to the Virtual Museum, with thanks to support from the Department of Culture and the Arts. Two in particular, 'Before Electricity' and the more lighthearted 'Books' have proved highly popular. The motor vehicle index and new exhibitions can be found on Carnamah's fascinating website at [www.carnamah.com.au](http://www.carnamah.com.au)

**Fremantle History Society** reports that the Fremantle History Centre has just acquired a deep freezer that will be used to fumigate donations to the collection in order to ensure that pests are not imported with the new arrived items. If you would like to know more about Lionel Holdsworth, WA's most successful convict, see Bob Reece's article in the newsletter.

*The Walpolian* reports that the **Walpole, Nornalup and District Historical Society** has had a productive year – with a successful 85th birthday October weekend, re-location of the Society's home (named The Homestead) and considerable work completed to order and document the collections. Do browse the Society's interesting website at – <http://www.walpolenornaluphistory.org>

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**Northcliffe Pioneer Museum's** Archive Room has arrived at last, only the second Archive Room in the southwest. There are over 30 boxes of archive material stacked inside the research room ready to be stored. Most of the documents in those boxes have been filed in acid-free sleeves and everything needed has been

supplied by RWAHS. A roof will be constructed to fit over the container to prevent any possibility of future puddling in wet weather. The container, especially modified to meet heat and humidity standards, sits at the rear of the museum. The Museum's 2017 project is to secure its large photograph library which has been assessed as having national significance.

The historic **Sunset Heritage Precinct** in Dalkeith has officially opened to the public for the first time in more than twenty years. The site was formerly the Claremont Old Men's Home and was renamed Sunset Hospital in 1941. Women were accommodated at Sunset in 1965 and it was classed as a public hospital, until it closed in 1995. The State Heritage-listed site will be transferred to the National Trust of Australia (WA).

**'Children in need: why records are central to identity and justice': The State Records Office of Western Australia's 2016 Geoffrey Bolton Lecture.**

Commissioner Andrew Murray, from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, spoke powerfully on this painful and challenging topic and on the crucial role played by historical records in either assisting or hampering survivors in their search for identity and family. The lecture is available on the SRO's website at: <http://www.sro.wa.gov.au/events/geoffrey-bolton-lecture>

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*History News*, Issue 326, from the **Royal Historical Society of Victoria** contains an informative account by Prof. Graeme Davison of the history of Victoria's local history societies. He begins by pointing to a puzzle.

Since the Second World War the institutions of civil society have been in steep decline. People, it seems, just don't join churches, trade unions and political parties any more... Yet remarkably those years have also been the heyday of Victorian local history... Only twenty of the 323 historical associations affiliated with the RHSV were founded before 1960, and only 84 (26%) before 1970; all the rest are creations of the past 45 years.

The same pattern is clearly evident in WA. Despite continual encouragement by the (Royal) WA Historical Society, almost no local branches or affiliate bodies were formed and none flourished until the late 1960s. Before that just three local societies were successfully established (although they did not have a continuous existence) – Katanning, Eastern Goldfields (led by Spencer Compton) and Albany (led by Robert Stephens). The first annual conference of WA's Affiliated Societies did not take place until 1974.

Why was each of WA's local historical societies formed? When and by whom? How important are heritage issues in local activities? Have the concerns and major activities of local societies changed over the decades since formation? Are societies waxing or waning and why? These are some of interesting questions to reflect on.

## A Pair of Spanish Eyes: The Life and Times of Miguel Mackinlay (Michael McKinlay)

Member **Dorothy Erickson** is busy on a number of fronts, researching the lives of women artists in Western Australia prior to World War I, completing a dictionary of artists and artisans to 1950 and revising her manuscript for part II of *Inspired by Light and Land* from 1960-2000, but the area engaging most of her attention at present is the life and art of Miguel Mackinlay. Here she tells us a little of this artist.

Miguel, known as Michael when he lived in Western Australia, was claimed by J.W.R. Linton as the most successful student to graduate from his art classes at Perth Technical School. Born in Spain in 1895 to a Spanish mother and Scottish father he arrived in Western Australia in 1906 with his father, brothers and sisters.



Stan Cross's cartoon of himself, Gus Dunn and Miguel arriving in London. *Smith's Weekly* 25 Dec. 1937, p. 16.

Miguel had an exceptional facility in figure drawing and portraiture, and exhibited with the WA Society of Arts from 1911 to 1914. He also won several poster competitions, including a national one in the Victorian Chamber of Manufactures' *Great All Australian Exhibition* in 1914. His entry was called "The Wanderer". Before he left to undertake further study in England in 1914 he had a major exhibition in St George's Hall in Perth with the cartoonist Stan Cross. As yet none of these works has been traced.



'A French Post, Château-Thierry', Champagne 1918, pen & wash 29 x 32cm.

In London Miguel painted a large panorama for the newly opened Savoy House, the headquarters of the WA Agent General in the Strand. He was caught up in the war, drawing some surprisingly delightful sketches of his time in the trenches.

He married his artists' model, made a good living as an illustrator for major publishing companies, showed regularly at the Royal Academy and was prestigiously 'hung on the line' (the most important placement). He became the 'talk of the town' in the very competitive art world of 1920s-1930s London. He moved to live in the artists' colony of Bushey just out of London in Hertfordshire and died in 1959. His illustrative work led to him being described on the *Antiques Roadshow* c2006 as England's Norman Rockwell.



'Tête-à-tête', oil on canvas, 207 x 237cm was 'hung on the line' in the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in 1930; now on loan to Bushey Museum and Art Gallery

This project was commissioned by the artist's grandson based in Bahrain to co-ordinate a team of researchers, genealogists and photographers in Spain, Scotland, England and the USA to piece his life together, document it and produce a catalogue raisonné of his output. The result will be a website, a hardcover book and exhibitions in England, hopefully also in Australia and possibly also in the USA.

Several of Mackinlay's artworks are in Princeton University Art Museum, a few pieces remain with his Western Australian relatives. One is in the Art Gallery of WA but the majority of his artworks are in the UK with family or on display in regional collections in Bushey and Leamington Spa. Some must surely be hanging on walls or stored in cupboards in Western Australia. They would be signed M. McKinlay. **If you have one on display or lurking in storage Dorothy would like to hear from you at –** [dorothyerickson@ozemail.com.au](mailto:dorothyerickson@ozemail.com.au)

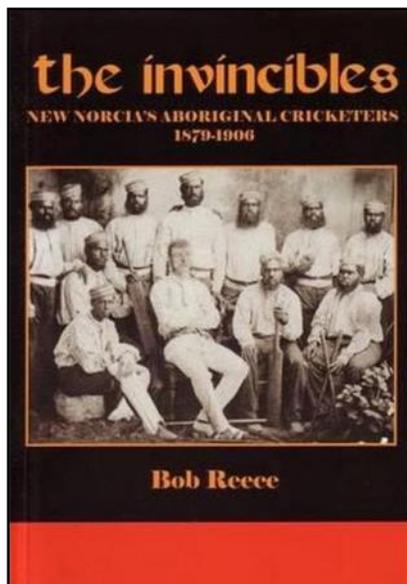
**Dorothy Erickson**



'Summer', 1933, oil on canvas 166 x 199cm, on loan to Bushey Museum.

**Bob Reece, *The Invincibles: New Norcia's Aboriginal Cricketers*, Histrionics, Fremantle, 2014. In Library. SP \$35 MP \$33.**

**Reviewer: Steve Errington**



Anyone with an interest in WA cricket would know of the New Norcia Aboriginal elevens who regularly defeated Perth and Fremantle teams in the period 1879-82. These were the formative years of cricket in Western Australia.

Even after the Perth clubs formed the West Australian Cricketing

Association in November 1885 they fared no better. In February 1886 the powerful Metropolitan CC was dismissed for thirteen runs when New Norcia's opening bowler Johnny Maher took six wickets for two runs. A few days later the Union CC eleven managed only twenty runs. In each case the New Norcians had solid first innings leads but the city sides hung on for technical draws.

Maher was one of several useful New Norcia all-rounders and became the first Aboriginal to play first-grade WACA cricket when he appeared for the I Zingari CC in the 1887-88 season. Readers will want the story of his possible meeting with his European half-brother to be true (pp. 113-14).

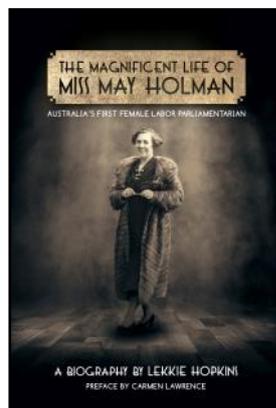
The first two New Norcia teams were coached, selected and captained by Henry Lefroy of Walebing (WA Premier 1917-19), but his on-field contributions were modest. Lefroy was unable to continue after 1886 and it was nearly twenty years before the New Norcians again visited the city.

The full story of all three New Norcia teams has been thoroughly documented by Bob Reece who has published widely on Aboriginal history, including several papers in *New Norcia Studies* journal. For this well-illustrated paperback Bob has compiled a list of all fixtures played as well as brief biographies of most of the star cricketers. Sadly, he found that few avoided ending their lives dependent on government rations and blankets.

He also raises an important question: given the outstanding skills demonstrated by these pioneers, why did Aboriginal men and boys not continue in the sport and produce the equivalent of star AFL footballers?

**Lekkie Hopkins, *The Magnificent Life of Miss May Holman: Australia's First Female Labor Parliamentarian*. Fremantle Press, Fremantle, 2016. In Library. SP \$28.**

**Reviewer: Ian Abbott**



The book begins with a tendentious foreword by a prominent Labor Party identity. I thus commenced reading this biography with misgivings, expecting a partisan account of a person of whom I was only vaguely aware. However, I found the narrative to be engaging, the prose easy to read, and the tone not at all adulatory.

The appellation 'magnificent' of the book's title is merited, because the contribution of May Holman (1893-1939) to family life, the lives of others (through legislation), and to women's interests was far-reaching. First-born daughter of a respected politician father and of a mother who became alcohol-dependent, Holman was possessed of a high level of emotional intelligence and intellectual capacity. She was elected to the WA Legislative Assembly in 1925 (at 31 years of age), the third woman to be elected to an Australian parliament (in WA, after Edith Cowan) and the first Labor woman to be so elected. Holman was in parliament for fourteen years until her untimely death (in her mid 40s), caused by a car accident.

Her most important contribution to parliamentary debate was in 1926, when she spoke for more than two hours to deliver her second reading speech for the Timber Industry Regulation Bill.

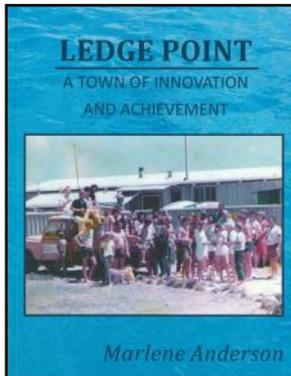
Holman had highly developed musical skills (voice and piano) and held the highest qualifications available at the time in Australia. She could easily have established a career as a concert performer. An entire chapter is devoted to her abilities to entertain people, a most welcome part of the biography.

It appears that Holman had an impulsive nature, for she married in secret an unsuitable man. Her father discovered this act two months later at May's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday party and was so enraged that he ran amok with an axe. Fortunately his wild behaviour was not directed at anyone.

She did not keep a diary and left few private papers. Most of the people who knew her had died before oral history became fashionable. The author has therefore on occasion had to conjecture about events not recorded in newspapers. These departures from ascertained facts seem reasonable to me. The endnotes are comprehensive, reinforcing the author's sound scholarship. The only disappointment is the lack of an index.

**Marlene Anderson, *Ledge Point. A Town of Innovation and Achievement*, Marlene Anderson, Perth, 2015. In Library. SP \$30 MP 28.50.**

**Reviewer: Sally Hincks**



The name Ledge Point is thought to have been given to this area of rocky sea and land ledges by the explorer J.W. Gregory in the late 1840s when he was master of the craft *Thetis*. In the 1920s-1930s Ledge Point was a calm and safe anchorage for occasional overnight stops for small fishing vessels from

Fremantle, and camping sites, gazetted in 1937, came before the establishment of the townsite.

Squatters built shacks, huts and cottages in the 1950s and by 1953 there was concern about the illegal construction of these buildings on the Recreation and Camping Reserve, so the government decided to subdivide an area for a townsite. In 1954 work started, the original public auction in August 1955 producing prices varying from £190 to £390.

Marlene provides much good information on the early residents, with stories about the early fishermen – and some who arrived later – as well as thumbnail sketches of local women identities. Before 1955 very few women lived at Ledge Point. They were the wives of fishermen and endured difficult living conditions. Dawn Brown recalled that their ‘shack had a friendly dugite snake that lived under the icebox’. The book contains some excellent early photos of the area and its people.

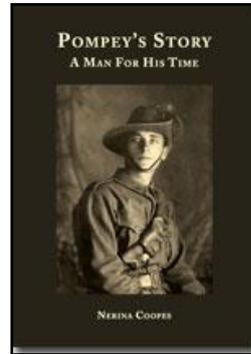
Electricity was connected to the town only in 1977 and before that kerosene and oil were used. Water was another problem – residents had rainwater tanks and wells, but more was needed, so in 1971 tenders were called for the construction of a 40,000-gallon tank on a 40-foot stand.

In the shipwrecks chapter are stories about the *Gilt Dragon* (wrecked in 1656), the *SS Venus*, the *JP Webb*, the drilling rig *Key Biscayne* and the fishing boat *Palermo*, and the *Classic*, a crayfishing boat which ended up in Mozambique.

In the 1970s more than 30 boats fished at Ledge Point in the height of the season, with rock lobsters the main catch. Concern was raised about the illegal practice of taking undersized lobsters and also the scrubbing of eggs off female crayfish, so a royal commission was held. ‘The people of Ledge Point should be proud that important changes needed for the long-term benefit to the rock lobster fishing industry originated in their town’, the author writes.

**Nerina Coopes, *Pompey's Story – A Man For His Time*, Hesperian Press, Victoria Park, 2015. In Library. SP \$35.**

**Reviewer: Heather Campbell**



Hearing stories at her father's knee of the Kimberley, the heyday of Broome pearling and the First World War led author, Nerina Coopes, on a journey not only physically to London, Cairo, Jerusalem, Damascus and Saudi Arabia but also through family memories, war diaries, and the records of the Australian War Museum, National Archives of Australia and Imperial War Museum.

This book traces the life of Arthur Wilfred Gull, known as Pompey, from his birth in 1890. After an idyllic childhood at the family property on the banks of the Swan River at Guildford, at 19 he became a master pearler in Broome. When war was declared he was swift to enlist.

War service was to impact on the rest of his life and the greater part of the book tells the story of his army career. At Gallipoli he fought in the disastrous Battle of the Nek. From there it was back to Egypt and transfer to the Imperial Camel Corps and subsequently the 14<sup>th</sup> Light Horse. He was involved in a special mission to Aqaba and the Battle of Beersheba; he rode with Lawrence of Arabia and assisted in the taking of Damascus in September 1918. Here he showed ‘cool resolute courage’ and ‘great gallantry, zeal and devotion to duty’, winning the Military Medal. The war did not end for Pompey in 1918. Awaiting embarkation, mounted divisions were called to assist in quelling the Egyptian uprising in early 1919. He finally returned to Australia in July of that year.

Post-war life began with a return to pearling in Broome. There was a slump in the price of pearl shell and Pompey moved on, but not before playing a leading role in controlling the Japanese riots of 1920. Two daughters followed his marriage to Nita Thew in 1928, Robin in 1929 and Nerina in 1941. Ill-health related to war service plagued him through the 1920s and 1930s and he developed a restlessness that saw the family moving frequently. He enlisted promptly in World War II, aged 50, serving at Rottneest before being invalided out with the rank of captain in 1943. He was awarded a TPI pension in 1959 and died in 1964.

Nerina Coopes' esteem and affection for her father are evident throughout. Some doubted the authenticity of the family's memories. She has answered these doubts with years of confirming research evident in the endnotes to each chapter, a full bibliography and the inclusion of maps, photographs and documents.

**Jan-Feb Members' discount code for eShop: Huttaa1**

## Laurie Sinclair and his horse 'Norseman'

Library volunteer **Marlene Anderson** has recently spent some time in Norseman and has come back with this interesting piece of history to share with us.



*The statue of the horse 'Norseman' welcomes visitors to the town*

There are many towns scattered across Australia that have as their own special icon something that identifies a unique aspect of their locale. The town of **Norseman** has as its icon a horse of the same name.

Popular legend has it that the owner of the horse named Norseman, Laurie Sinclair, was proud of his Shetland Islands 'Norseman' heritage, and had named his horse accordingly. A number of versions are recorded of how Laurie Sinclair discovered the gold that led to the creation of the town of Norseman.

One version describes the horse Norseman having a gold nugget embedded in his shoe causing him to become lame and Laurie Sinclair to investigate the nugget's source. The second version describes the horse Norseman pawing at the ground in the early morning sun to reveal a chunk of gold reef.

A more mundane version that has nothing to do with Laurie Sinclair's horse, tells of Laurie returning to Esperance in 1894 after an unsuccessful prospecting trip to the new goldfield at Coolgardie. On his return journey to Esperance he stopped to visit his brother

George and his brother's friend, Jack Allsop, who were prospecting near another new goldfield at Dundas. While staying with the two men, Laurie Sinclair found a few specks of gold in a small gully. When he investigated the ridge above the gully he found the rich reef that he named in honour of his favourite horse.

Whether Laurie Sinclair's horse's actions were the reason for gold being discovered at Norseman cannot be proven. Even though Laurie Sinclair did not stay prospecting for very long after registering his discovery of gold at Norseman, what can be proven is that the mine he named the Norseman Reward went on to become one of the richest reefs ever mined in Australia.

There is a Sinclair Street in Norseman to acknowledge the part Laurie Sinclair played in the discovery of gold in the town. When approaching the town centre a life-size statue of his horse, Norseman, stands at the main roundabout. It is a popular photo-shot for tourists and a detailed interpretive panel describes the history of Laurie Sinclair and his horse named Norseman.

**Marlene Anderson**

### References

G Spencer Compton, 'The history of Norseman', *Early Days*, 4(4) 72-75.

JR Cook, *Notes on Albert Tapper and his wife, Mary, nee Sinclair*.

*Welcome to Norseman 2016-2017: Gateway to Western Australia & the Nullarbor*.

EED Petersen, *Our first ten years, 1894-1904*.

*Laurie Sinclair and his horse 'Hardy-Norseman'*, Norseman Tourist Information Centre.

Rose Palcic, Chairperson of Norseman Historical Museum.

AD Trotter, *A short history of Norseman & districts*.

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