



HISTORY WEST

PUBLISHED BY THE ROYAL WESTERN AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

October 2015

GENERAL MEETING

The next meeting at Stirling House is on Wednesday 21 October at 6pm. **Isla Macphail** will present a paper entitled **Not such a 'delinquent laggard': a re-examination of Western Australia's political development in the context of nineteenth-century liberalism.**

Refreshments available from 5.30pm; Bookshop open until 6pm



Walter Hartwell James

Western Australia is often portrayed in historical studies as 'a delinquent laggard on a recognised path of development', as historian Stuart Macintyre has put it, and a politically backward, apathetic and ultra-conservative laggard at that (according to many other historians). My talk will argue that these interpretations of Western Australian political history are largely unsupported by evidence and are misleading, if not mischievous. I will discuss the policy arguments which Western Australia's colonial legislators used to discriminate between the constitutional and electoral models provided by the mother country and the alternative, and quasi-Chartist, models on offer in the sister colonies, and suggest that Western Australia's political development was far from a belated and derivative imitation of the eastern colonies.

Indeed, with respect to a number of electoral reform milestones, Western Australia was in advance of most of the eastern colonies – but, at all times, Western Australia's legislators worked within a framework of cautious, and often constrained, liberalism.

Isla Macphail holds a BA (Hons) and an MPhil from the University of Western Australia, with majors in English Literature. Isla has worked at the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library as a researcher and oral historian, and at the Western Australian Electoral Commission, where she completed an electoral history: *Highest Privilege and Bounden Duty: A Study of Western Australian Parliamentary Elections 1829-1901*. Isla is currently working at the Parliament of Western Australia as the Sergeant-at-Arms and Principal Research Officer to the Procedure and Privileges Committee, and is about to submit her PhD on colonial Western Australian constitutional and electoral history.

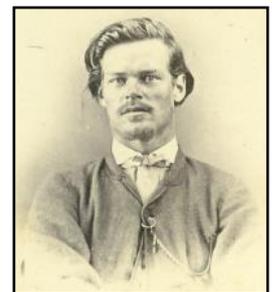


Mystery Photos

Two more photographs from the **Bird Family** album. If you can identify either of these ladies, please phone and ask for the Library, on 9386 3841, or email library@histwest.org.au

A mystery no more

Barbara Sewell has identified August's mystery photo as Frederick Parker. His photo can be found in Barbara's book, *The House of Northbourne Parkers*, 1983, p. 73.



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Culture and the Arts**



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Council News

At its meeting held on 10 September items of business included the following where Council

welcomed new members: Dr Fred Affleck, Tim Caporn, Loraine Coates, Gay Eivers, Ned Overton, Georgina Pearce, Christopher Pidd, Catherine Plowman, Nicola Wright, the Prahran Mechanics' Institute Library;

- congratulated Rita Stinson and the Geraldton Historical Society on hosting a highly successful 51st State History Conference of Affiliated Societies;
- accepted with delight the donation from the Geraldton Historical Society of a dress and cloak belonging to one of the Society's founders, Mary Farrelly;
- endorsed with sadness the tribute read to Conference by President Sally Anne Hasluck in honour of Vice-Patron and Fellow, Professor Geoffrey Bolton;
- thanked Treasurer Julia Hedley for her invaluable work in preparing the Society's annual accounts for the AGM;
- was delighted to re-appoint the Hon. Artist in Residence, Wendy Lugg, for a further three-year term, congratulated her on the State Library's website launch of *Mapping Memory Online Exhibition* and thanked her for her photographic assistance to the Society;
- agreed to prepare a submission in response to the Heritage Bill (Exposure Draft);
- re-nominated Dr Steve Errington as its representative on the Council of the National Trust of WA;
- noted with thanks that volunteer hours totaled 1022 in August;
- re-nominated Dr Fiona Bush as a member of The City of Gosnells' History and Heritage Advisory Group;
- noted the submission of two applications to the WA History Foundation's 2015 grant round;
- expressed thanks to President Sally Anne Hasluck for her ongoing leadership of the Community History Centre Building Planning Project.

Lennie McCall

History in the City

At our September meeting John Bissett spoke about Victoria Park and the First World War. He began his talk with the first shot fired after war was declared. At the time a German cargo ship was visiting Port Phillip Bay. It was commanded to stop when it tried to leave the bay but failed to do so. A shot fired from a six-inch gun caused the German ship to turn around and it was arrested.

The Victoria Park memorial lists the 410 soldiers who enlisted from the district, when they did so and, if applicable, their date of death. The men spanned a wide age range – 16 to 45. One fifth of these soldiers were killed in action.

John has been long involved in local government and is currently a Town of Victoria Park Councillor, so he also told us something of the history of the town. It grew to become a major transit route, with the Causeway bridge opening in 1843 and the building of the railway from Perth to Pinjarra in 1893. Then, from 1905, for many years the town was connected to the city by tram. These public works brought a surge in population to what was considered a 'working man's district'.

We have a very different topic for our talk on 4 November. Dr Leigh Straw will speak on *Drunks, Pests and Harlots*. Criminal Women in Perth and Fremantle 1900-1939.

Lorraine Tholet

Exhibiting at a hobbies exhibition

The RWAHS answered a request from the University of the 3rd Age for a display at a hobbies exhibition at Bedford Bowling Club on 18 July. As this was an inaugural event, the organisers were uncertain of attendance numbers, so we took a smaller than usual photo display and one bookstand. This was just as well because our unloading point was quite a distance from our allotted space inside the hall.

Fortunately there was a good turn-up, which resulted in book sales and much interest in the photos. It is always difficult to know which book titles to take to an exhibition but I have noticed that people often buy books relating to their personal experiences of life and the places they have lived as much as to learn more of WA history generally. Hence we try to engage visitors in conversation to guide them to books that may interest them. Dave Melvin, as many people know, is interested in everyone's history, so does a great job in getting people talking.

All in all, a successful day ended with a nice compliment from the organiser who stated that we would be the first people she would ask if the event is repeated next year.

Kerry Eivers

The Auxiliary's Morning Tea: food for brain and body!

The August morning tea is an annual event in the Auxiliary's calendar, in addition to the monthly History in the City talks held from March to December.



On this occasion Stephen Anstey, Curator of History at the Western Australian Museum, spoke about researching and telling the stories of servicemen and women in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) in the First World War. He gave us a fascinating insight into the training and lives on active service of six men who all had a link with 'home' through postcards sent to a nurse living in Boulder. She received over 100 postcards in answer to her messages.

Stephen outlined a simple step-by-step method of researching the wartime experiences of AIF servicemen and women, providing suggestions about telling the stories with colour, interest and gravitas. He told us it is best to start with basic information – name (avoiding shortened forms), number, rank, unit and embarkation details. He drew on exhibitions about the First World War that he has recently curated where the stories of previously unknown soldiers were researched and presented in an emotional and compelling manner. These included the recently opened National Anzac Centre in Albany, the *One Hundred Postcards* travelling exhibition and the Defence Gallery exhibit in the Western Australian Museum's Albany Branch.



We all came away better informed as well as very well fed.

Lorraine Tholet

Many thanks to Wendy Lugg for the photographs

Booked in for a Cuppa



*'Twas the 26th of August, at Stirling House,
Guests were having a cuppa, no sign of a mouse;
No stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
Instead history books and authors were there;
The stories were nestled in WA,
And we all enjoyed glimpses of yesterday.*

Our latest **Booked in for a Cuppa** held on Wednesday 26 August drew a crowd of approximately 70. The four speakers were engaging and inspired lively conversations afterwards, resulting in one author selling out of all his book supply on the day.

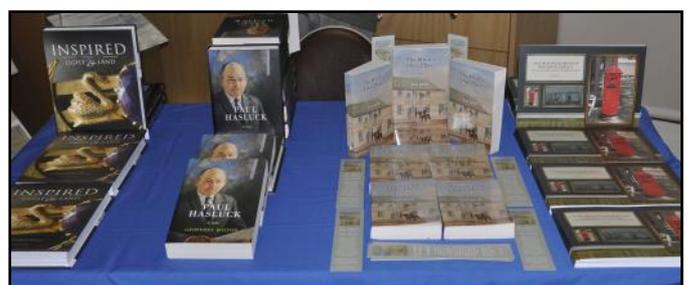
So, needless to say, the Bookshop had a very successful morning's trade, selling 42 books and attracting a new country member to the Society. As well, Sue Clarke's delicious donated jams and chutneys enticed many donations.



Grateful thanks to our four speakers: Sue Hobson, *Cast Iron Pillar Boxes of Western Australia*; Dorothy Erickson, *Inspired by Light and Land*; Ian Reid, *Mind's Own Place*; Sally Anne Hasluck, *Paul Hasluck: A Life*; and MC Lenore Layman.

Reserve your seat early for our next *Booked in for a Cuppa* Christmas edition on Thursday 3 December.

Lesley Burnett & Glenda Bye



Walking around historic Fremantle

The weather gods were smiling on Thursday 27 August when our vice president, and Fremantle devotee, Steve Errington, took a group of members and friends on a walking tour of early Fremantle. Beforehand, some of us congregated at Fremantle icon Cicerello's for a pre-tour fish-n-chips lunch to build up our strength for climbing the steps to the Round House, our first call.

In 1998 the voluntary guides at the Round House re-introduced the old ceremony of firing the one o'clock gun and dropping the black timeball. This was once a vital service for sea captains who needed their chronometers to be accurate so that longitude could be calculated. The ball would be raised a few minutes early and the chief mate would be told to 'keep your eye on the ball'. Diane McPherson answered the call for a volunteer to fire the cannon and pushing the button at 1 o'clock sharp produced a startling explosion, earning Diane an Honorary Gunner's certificate.



Building a gaol was a top priority for Fremantle, and the Round House was opened for business in January 1831 (the first church building wasn't opened until 1842). It is now Western Australia's oldest surviving public building. Until 1849 there were stocks for public humiliation on the roadway below the gaol, and there is a replica inside the gaol in the form of a sit-down version of a pillory. No one volunteered to go in the stocks, the threat of a photograph appearing in *History West* clearly being too great a disincentive.



We then descended from Arthur Head to the plain which was once a very narrow neck of land where, in August 1829, John Septimus Roe had hastily marked out Fremantle's first five streets. In Cliff Street we were privileged to visit the two-

storey Fanny Samson's Cottage which Jacqueline Wisdom kindly opened for us. It houses the Samson family museum of which Jacqueline is the curator. Her ancestor Lionel Samson and his brother William were among the first private settlers to arrive, on the *Calista*, in August 1829. The cottage is reputed to date from 1830. Exhibits included 1840s newspapers and an even older order book listing supplies delivered to Charles Darwin's former ship HMS *Beagle* in 1841.

The genealogists in the group were transfixed by the Samson family tree which Jacqueline also had on display, a tree which included three former Mayors of Fremantle.

Cliff Street once ended at the South Bay where the early settlers disembarked but the bay was reclaimed in the 1890s to make the Esplanade Reserve. We walked along the old beach line past the Shipwreck Galleries (the convict Commissariat store of 1852) and on to the tunnel under the Round House. This was completed in January 1838 and connected High Street to Bathers Beach. In the days before kerosene was discovered and houses were lit by whale oil lamps, Bathers Beach was home to the tryworks, station house and jetty of the Fremantle Whaling Company. Here we concluded our walk.

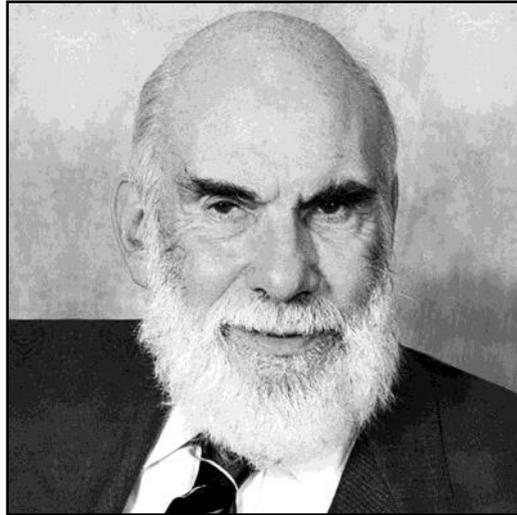
Many thanks to photographer Christine Curry

Congratulations to the Irwin District Historical Society

Irwin District won this year's **Merit Award** with a presentation at the recent State History Conference in Geraldton. The Affiliated Societies Committee chose Irwin District because the Society has been extremely active during the past year. They have achieved high visitor numbers to their museum and have set up a 'pop up museum' at several local functions such as the Easter Market Day, Anzac and Remembrance Days at the National Australia Bank, the Healthy Living Expo and the Lobster festival. The presentation of History Medals to students from Dongara District High School was also considered to be an innovative way to engender interest in local history. Members attended this year's Museum Australia's State and National Conferences and their President, Mrs Anne Jefferys, was a presenter at the state conference. Irwin District Historical Society was also a finalist in the 2014 State Heritage Awards. Currently the Society is preparing for the exhibition *Remembering Them* for 2017 with biographies of Dongara men who died in World War I being researched and published.



Honouring Professor Geoffrey Bolton AO (5 November 1931 – 4 September 2015)



President Sally Anne Hasluck paid tribute to Professor Bolton at the State History Conference on Saturday 5 September, the day following his death.

This tribute was endorsed with sadness at the Council meeting of 10 September.

Geoffrey was a Vice-Patron and Fellow of The Royal Western Australian Historical Society for nearly thirty years, since 1986, and his ongoing contribution will be sadly missed. His public voice for Western Australian history and his own historical knowledge were boundless. Above all he was an eminent Australian author. He will be remembered as an inspirational teacher, author and mentor. We have all benefited from his keen interest in the preservation of moveable heritage and his advocacy and staunch support of WA history.

His book that became known to us all was *A Fine Country to Starve In* – telling of the depression years in WA. I think the one he had most joy in writing was *Daphne Street*, reflecting on his childhood street. Many of us have personal memories of working with Geoffrey; my own were on his book about the History of Claremont and on his last book – the biography of Paul Hasluck.

I would like the minutes of this RWAHS and Affiliates State History Conference at Geraldton to record our appreciation of Geoffrey's contribution to The Society and his friendship. Our condolences are extended to Carol his wife, and family. Geoffrey has left a fine legacy to us all.

Remembering with affection a fine scholar, teacher and friend

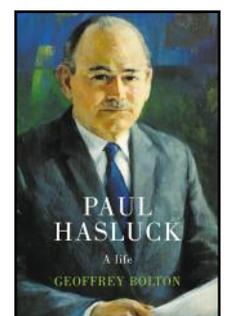
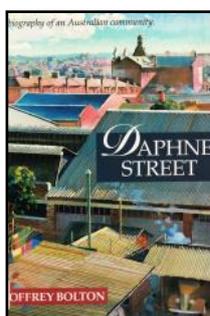
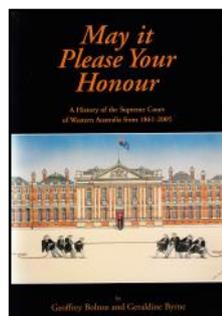
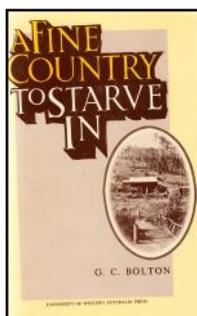
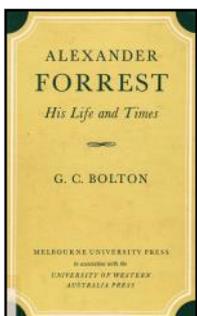
... they will maintain the fabric of the world;
And in the handiwork of their craft is their prayer.

Ecclesiasticus 38

Geoff had an illustrious academic career. After first class honours and an MA degree at the University of WA, he won a Hackett Studentship to Balliol College, Oxford, where he completed his doctorate. He returned to Australia to take up a research fellowship at the Australian National University, followed by a senior lecturership at the newly established Monash University before being appointed to his first Chair of History at the University of Western Australia in 1966. He took up the Foundation Chair of History at Murdoch University in 1973, later becoming head of the Australian Studies Centre at the University of London, Professor of Australian History at the University of Queensland and then Professor of History at Edith Cowan University. In retirement he served as Chancellor of Murdoch University and in 2006 was named WA Australian of the Year.

Geoff devoted his life to history. It was of unceasing interest to him and, in turn, many histories flowed from him in books, articles, interviews and talks – at least fifteen books as well as a great many other publications of all sizes in which he assisted. His output was abundant and continued until his death, with his authoritative biography of Paul Hasluck (2014) his last major work. Few scholars could claim such a prolific

Sally Anne Hasluck



and varied output, one that testified to his intellectual ability, energy and dedication.

Like other leading historians of his generation he spanned imperial and Australian history, a man of wide knowledge which he always wore lightly and with wit. He has been Western Australia's leading historian of his time and will be sorely missed.

Open-minded and ever alert to new approaches to history, Geoff pioneered many new areas in Western Australian historical writing. His 1953 MA thesis, 'A survey of the Kimberley pastoral industry from 1885 to the present', and his first book, *Alexander Forrest. His Life and Times* (1958), were path-breaking regional and biographical studies. *A Fine Country To Starve In* (1972) tackled the devastating impact of the 1930s depression on a primarily agricultural state, drawing on oral interviews to capture the personal experience of the catastrophe. He became an early practitioner and leader of the oral history movement. *Spoils and Spoilers: Australians Make Their Environment, 1788 to 1981* (1981) introduced environmental history. *Daphne Street* (1997), his close-grained biography of the street where he grew up, was another departure into new (and personal) territory. He wrote on Aboriginal-settler relations with sensitivity. His biographical studies, both lengthy and brief, captured the characters and influence of a multitude of past West Australians. He was central to the life of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, writing 86 entries over the years. He made major contributions to the State's political history, notably in the form of collaborative biographical dictionaries. Following in the footsteps of Kimberly, Battye and Crowley, his brilliantly-titled *Land of Vision and Mirage: Western Australia since 1826* (2008) was his endeavour 'to summarise and interpret the history of Western Australia since British occupation and settlement' for his generation. In all these ways he shaped the understanding of WA history.

Geoff was a brilliant lecturer with such an encyclopaedic knowledge and prodigious memory that he could step into any breach at the last minute and deliver an erudite and entertaining talk. Some amazing talks were delivered from the back of an envelope! He rarely said no to the continuous flood of requests for lectures, book launch speeches, interviews on diverse topics, after-dinner speeches, committee memberships or charring, and so forth. He seemed to enjoy making himself available and giving his time and considerable authority to worthwhile enterprises. If his support could help, he provided it. His intellect and the speed of his mind enabled him to undertake far more than others could. He collaborated on so many projects at the same time that it would have been difficult for anyone else to keep track!

He mostly had admirers, but listened carefully to those who occasionally disagreed and was always a kind and supportive senior historian. Geoff was not only respected but also held in great affection. He was warm and friendly, a favourite with students. His histories are widely read because he could engage his readers with knowledge, charm and a splendid turn of phrase.

Although Geoff was already in his 80s, he had

numerous histories in the planning stage in his head and intended to keep writing. We will never learn about these topics, alas, or read the fascinating memoirs he planned. And there will be no more interesting talks or endless flow of anecdotes and aphorisms; no more nuggets of information instantly recalled and appropriate to the occasion. It is very hard to believe that such a wealth of knowledge and such a lively mind have gone. We will miss him so much!

Lenore Layman

51st State History Conference of Affiliated Societies, Geraldton, 4-6 September

Some 160 people from all over the State attended this year's conference which had the theme *Take Another Look at the Mid-West*. Friday night's reception was held in The Residency, a wonderful old building on Marine Terrace. Our hostess, Rita Stinson, welcomed delegates on behalf of the Geraldton Historical Society and introduced Councillor Bob Hall who gave the official City welcome and Ross Barden, President of the History of Geraldton Cultural Trust. The CWA put on a generous spread, which we all enjoyed.

On Saturday, the Wintersun Hotel saw us gather in the large function room. RWAHS President Sally Anne Hasluck began with a heartfelt notification of Geoffrey Bolton's passing. Nick Drew took us through the roll call of the 37 societies present, apologies and the remembrance list of deceased members, in his customary style.



The first paper, by Marty and Connie Winch-Buist, was titled *Sandalwood – Old Industry to Modern Food*. They described the challenges in establishing their sandalwood plantation at Greenhills, near York. Realising that the valuable wood from their trees would not be ready for

harvesting for 20-30 years, they have concentrated on commercialising the nuts which the trees shed in profusion each year, and are now producing Sandalwood Biscuits and Chocolate.

Father Robert Cross then spoke about *Monsignor John Cyril Hawes, Architect, Labourer, Missionary, Jockey Priest and finally Hermit*. As architect of Geraldton's St Francis Xavier's Cathedral and thirteen other churches, Hawes' work is better known than the man. Father Cross outlined Hawes' childhood and education, and his extensive travels through Europe which created his life-long love of hidden meanings and symbolism. It also influenced his conversion from High Anglican to Catholic. Hawes arrived in Fremantle in 1915 and



was sent to Mt Magnet – quite a shock – then to Geraldton to work on the cathedral which was completed in 1938. After that, he built other churches and related buildings throughout the Mid-West. He left Australia at the end of the decade to become a monk in the Bahamas, though continuing to draw and plan churches. He died in 1956.

Our 3rd speaker was Dr Howard Gray, a well-known historian of the region whose topic was *Champion Bay Geraldton – from Beach Landing to Port City*, a history told mainly in pictures. He began with the Yamaji people and then traced the Dutch, French and English explorers, Grey's disastrous expedition and the voyage of the Colonial Schooner *Champion* after which the Bay around Geraldton is named. The growth of the port and the town up to the 1930s followed. We were urged to see the local Museum for the rest of the story.



The 4th speaker was retired police constable and councillor Bob Hall who titled his talk *Descended from a Convict*. He proudly told us that his father's grandfather was Robert Wilmott, convicted in Britain for assaulting a policeman with a brush! He was transported to WA, arriving at Champion Bay in 1854, and was sent to work for Major Logue,

obtaining his Conditional Pardon and some land; but he then stole some sheep. Later he married an Irish lass Mary who arrived in 1857 and was also employed by Logue. They had eight children, the youngest Ellen being Bob's grandmother.

The business session followed lunch, led by a brief talk from Don Garden, President of the Federation of Australian Historical Societies. Don noted that the Federation represented over 100,000 members, and the value of our national contribution was some \$100 million a year, which had persuaded Minister Greg Hunt to grant the Federation \$80,000 to support an Online Outreach Officer.



RWAHS Council Chairperson Lennie McCall then outlined the achievements of the Affiliated Societies committee over the past year, the *Remembering Them - A Centenary of Service* project, the completion of the Lotterywest grant to digitise some 6,000 significant historical images in the Library's photographic collection, and a grant for a publication of a booklet about the 400th anniversary of Dirk Hartog's 1616 visit in 2016, a year which will also mark the RWAHS's 90th Anniversary.

Fiona Bush, Convenor of the Affiliates Committee, announced the 2015 Merit Award winner – Irwin District Historical Society – and Mrs Anne Jefferys accepted the award. Susan Hall then gave a presentation to entice delegates to Armadale for next year's conference. Offers were called for the 2017 conference and Wanneroo expressed interest.

Two more speakers followed. First, our hostess Rita Stinson talked about *Catherine Chesson*, a pioneer whose story she came upon by accident. Catherine's son James was attracted from Victoria to the Cue goldfields in 1893 and two years later sent for his parents. Catherine and her husband, children and a ten-month old baby came by ship to Albany and rail to Mullewa where their finances ran out, so they walked on to Cue. When they arrived they lived in a tent, with beds made of mulga poles and chaff bags. Catherine cooked in camp ovens – all foreign to her previous life. Eventually her husband built a house and more children were born. They did well and the family began to build up assets. A wonderful pioneering story indeed!

Finally Gavin Treasure, CEO of the Mid-West Development Commission, spoke on *Midwest Moving Forward*. He acknowledged the importance of the Royalties for Regions program which has seen so much infrastructure development in the country. Now the emphasis is on attracting more people into regional WA. Ideas to make the region more attractive include a sky walk over Kalbarri gorge, a geopark on the Murchison, opening up old pastoral properties in government hands



for wildflower tours and moving the fishermen from Beacon Is (Abrolhos) to free it up for tourists.

Altogether, it was a fascinating day, ending with a successful conference dinner. Congratulations to the RWAHS volunteers who raised \$1,151 in bookshop sales on the day.

On Sunday morning buses took members to view the Sydney Memorial, where guides were waiting to explain its five parts – the wall of names, the dome and memorial centre-piece, the huge standing obelisk representing the bow of the ship, the waiting woman and the fountain where the wing-tip of the last of the 645 seagulls, which represent the souls of the lost sailors, points to the location of the sunken ship. Buses then did a tour of the Geraldton with guide Stan Gratte (a legend in the district – pioneer pastoralist, sandalwooder and supporter of all things historical). We stopped again at the Cathedral where Father Cross explained plans for an interpretive centre and coffee lounge, and the many symbols decorating the Cathedral itself.

Buses took us on to the RSL Birdwood House where Barry Stinson welcomed us to view the museum and have lunch. Finally Rita called us all to order for the last event of the conference – the handover to Susan Hall for our next conference in Armadale. So ended a most interesting and enjoyable weekend.

Pamela Statham Drew

Diary Dates

Sun 18 October 2015: Government House Open Day – Look for the RWAHS Outside Exhibit Team's display.

Sun 1 Nov: Ellenbrook Coach Tour – Philippa O'Brien's Guided Sculpture Tour and Dorothy Erickson's *Her Mother's Daughter* Exhibition.

Thurs 3 Dec: Booked in for a Cuppa Christmas Edition. Contact the office to reserve your seat early.

Fri 11 Dec: Members' Christmas Party.

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Editor *History West*: Dr Lenore Layman

Opinions expressed in *History West* are not necessarily those of the Royal WA Historical Society (Inc.)

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