



Founded 1926

HISTORY WEST

PUBLISHED BY THE ROYAL WESTERN AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

April 2020

Important notice to all members To discourage the spread of COVID-19

The Society has resolved that all general meetings, community talks, council meetings, events & group visits are cancelled until the end of April. This includes the cancelling/deferring of the secondhand book sale.

Stirling House remains open to staff and volunteers, and members who are involved with the work of the Society. You are welcome to drop in individually if you need some purchase or assistance.

We hope that you will agree that our decision is in the best interests of all. It is taken with regret because we were all looking forward to the upcoming public program. Be assured that we will endeavour to re-schedule events if at all possible after the crisis is past.

President & Councillors, RWAHS

Congratulations to Dr Dorothy Erickson

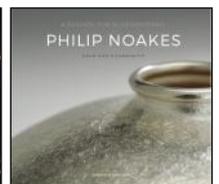
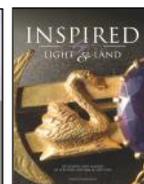
*Member Dorothy Erickson has been honoured by being inducted into the **Design Institute of Australia Hall of Fame**. This tribute recognises Dorothy's lifelong work as a jeweller, curator and design historian. We are indeed fortunate at the Society to have such an expert on hand to advise us on various items in the collection and speak to members on interesting topics where her knowledge is great. Don't forget to congratulate her when you next see her! Dorothy's citation reads:*

Dorothy Erickson is an artist-jeweller, historian, curator and author. Exhibiting since 1972, her career includes forty solo and over 350 group exhibitions worldwide. She is represented in many collections including the National Gallery of Australia, Victoria & Albert Museum, Swiss National Museum, Dallas Art Museum, Schmuckmuseum (Jewellery Museum) in Pforzheim Germany, Powerhouse Museum and the Art Galleries of Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland.

Growing up on a farm with a grandfather who had a goldmine and her mother, the eminent naturalist, wildflower painter and author Rica Erickson DLitt AM, has influenced her career. Many pieces of jewellery are kinetic with recent work inspired by Western Australia's unique flora. Few pieces are literal translations; instead they evoke the colour, form or habit of individual species moving with the body in a joyous twinkling movement of colour, light and dark.

Dorothy first obtained a teaching degree and then others in art and design, including a doctorate in art history from the University of WA in 1992. She has developed a multi-faceted career as an independent art historian, author, critic, curator and lecturer with associated practices in interior and garden design, and heritage.

She is a significant researcher, writer, editor and art critic, committed particularly to documenting and promoting Western Australia's art, craft and design history, and Australian jewellery internationally, touring exhibitions and contributing to many journals. Her books include *Art & Design in Western Australia: Perth Technical College 1900-2000*; *A Joy Forever: The Story of Kings Park*; *Gold & Silversmithing in Western Australia: A History*; *Inspired by Light & Land: Designers and Makers in Western Australia 1829-1969* (shortlisted for the Premier's Book Award 2016) and in 2019 *A Passion for Silversmithing: Philip Noakes gold and silversmith*. She has won prizes for writing and was awarded the Western Australian Heritage Award for Individual Voluntary Contribution in 2017.



Council News

At its meeting on 13 February Council

• welcomed new members – Ms Kate Akerman, Jenny De Marchi, Heather Hunwick, Mrs Wendy Lee, Hon. Michael Mischin MLC, Mrs Emma Withers

- co-opted Mrs Joyce Young to fill a Council vacancy
- welcomed new volunteers Anne Bloemen & Christine Johnson (bookshop), Daniel Killick & Dietrich Myles (museum), Tracey Warner (library), & June Rolf (mailout team).

At its meeting on 12 March Council

• welcomed new members – Mr Michael Creedy, Mr Peter Foley, Mr John & Mrs Betty Foster, Mr Howard Haselhurst, Dr Uys Lourens, Mrs Natalie Richards, Mr Kim Roberts, & new affiliate Swan River Pioneers (Lyn Coy, president)

- welcomed new volunteers Megan Ewing & Alexander McClure (library), & Natalie Richards (museum)
- endorsed the creation of an education portal on the website
- received a report moving the Society closer to launching a fundraising appeal for a new building.

History in the City

Our year has begun well with Alan Naber's interesting talk on the history of cycling in WA. He is a life-long cycling enthusiast, and traced for us the growth in cycling's popularity from the last decades of the nineteenth century. Cycling clubs were formed and, on longer trips, staying at a coach inn became popular. Women were keen to be involved and so split skirts became popular. Bicycles were handy for mining communities and many cyclists used camel tracks. The sending of messages by cycle, particularly by the Coolgardie Cycle Express Company, was an important part of communication on the far-flung goldfields. Alan told us of one Methodist minister in the country who often travelled on his bicycle 200 kms a day. Eventually the cycling era gave way to motor transport and the car took over as people's main mode of private transport.

Renewed *Western Land* exhibition unveiled

On 25 February President, Dr Steve Errington, officially unveiled the extensive changes that have been made to the exhibition's display cabinets. For the past months, under the convenorship of Sally Anne Hasluck, members of the museum and library teams (Val Hutch, Wendy Lugg, Hilaire Natt, Sue Clarke, Bruce Hoar and Zoe Newby) have selected items from the collection which have a story to tell about the development of our State —its transformation from a



tiny colonial outpost struggling to gain a foothold on Noongar land and beginning an ongoing engagement with traditional owners, to the benefits of convictism, the gradual moves towards a more democratic polity, women's move into public life, and the growth of a more diverse and multicultural society.

There have been complete changes to some of the cabinets which have given us an opportunity to include items not previously displayed. Several of our larger display boards were rewritten and edited by Lenore Layman, and Wendy Lugg was responsible for photographing items where the original cannot be displayed. Malcolm Traill generously provided text and images about group settlement. Thanks also to John Davies who was responsible for the display design, and Ian Lugg who was his willing assistant. All in all, it has been a great team effort!

To enhance the stories, a monthly **Community Talks** program has been arranged, the topics, speakers and dates of which are contained on the Calendar included in March's *History West*. These morning talks (with morning tea to follow) will be held at 10.30am.

A new initiative, **Tuesday Treasures**, will be held on the first Tuesday of each month at 10.30am when an item of interest from the exhibition will be selected and a brief description of that item, and perhaps other relevant items from our collection, will draw your attention or develop your curiosity. These will be informal get togethers and interactive chat sessions.

We do hope when you are visiting the Society you will allow time to have a look at our museum exhibition, and you and your friends will enjoy what has been interesting and fun for those of us who have been working behind the scenes.



Museum volunteers Zoe Newby & Gabby Inglis

Economic History Summit

Economic historian, retired UWA staff member and Convenor of the Society's R&P committee, Dr Pamela Statham Drew, provided the interesting and well-received introductory speech for this summit. Below Pamela tells us of the events of the day.

The summit held at UWA on 6 February this year was a memorable event. Economic history has been in the doldrums for some time as students have left the humanities in favour of business degrees. But now business itself is resurrecting economic history.

David Gilchrist, an accounting professor and economic historian, has worked with local and international colleagues to use a statistical model to evaluate the effects of significant historical events on the economy concerned. The method uses synthetic control analysis to develop a counter-factual approach; that is, what might have happened if this event had not occurred. This process allows the researcher to identify key questions associated with economic and institutional growth while looking to isolate causes.

Professor Gilchrist's interests are shared by A/ Professor Rok Spruk of Ljubljana University, Slovenia, who has developed the synthetic growth analysis that attracted Gilchrist. The research team has applied the model to many countries and many events, and is now looking at Western Australia.

Both scholars believe that WA is unique in its isolation and in the way its development path differs from those of the eastern states. A critical difference they think occurred from a break point in 1975. On a time line of GDP/capita there is a clear divergence from trend in that year and a faster upwards trajectory from that date than might have been expected. The date marks the beginning of Sir Charles Court's era of industrial development. Much discussion followed this revelation which was backed and amplified by Tom Emery, a research fellow at UWA.

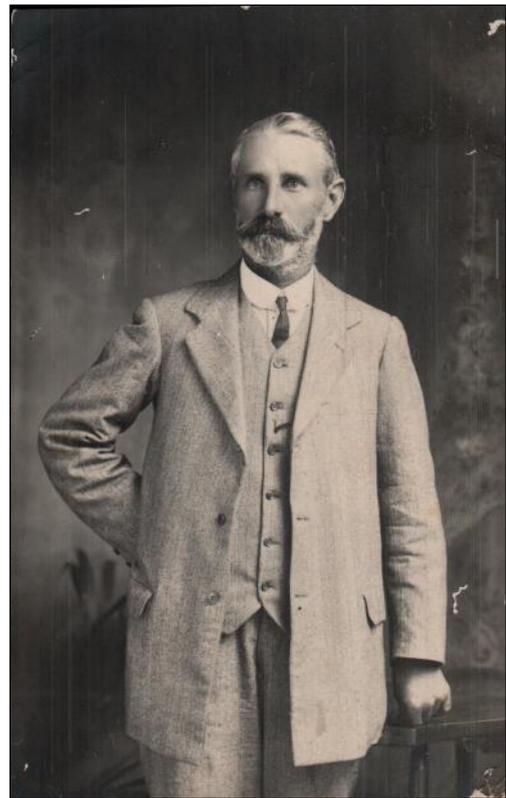
After this, papers became less controversial, looking at WA's regional growth before the goldrushes, co-operative institutions, WA's port history and finally the life of Claude de Bernales, entrepreneur extraordinaire. All were interesting and proved that, in its inter-disciplinary approach, economic history has much to offer its parent disciplines – history and economics – and affords students the chance in fields of potential employment not otherwise covered in their degrees.

Dr Pamela Statham Drew

Library News

Mystery Photo — solved

In the June issue and again in the December issue of *History West* we published a mystery photograph of a man who was then variously identified as the artist James W R Linton; possibly another John/James



Linton, a landowner in Rockingham; or an early partner silversmith Arthur Cross.

Now Rodney Gifford has contacted *History West* to advise that the gentleman pictured is the youngest son of William, named Walter, Lawrence, who lived from 1865 to 1926. The life and times of William Lawrence Snr have been told by Peter Birch in his book *Poverty, Boats & Gold: The Story of William Lawrence Snr: An American-Australian Pioneer*. Reference is made in the book, albeit briefly, to the birth of Walter Lawrence. It is indeed a coincidence that in the same issue in which a book review was published, there was also this mystery photo inquiry, in a completely different context, dealing with one of his sons.

Rodney writes —

With respect to Walter Lawrence, I confirm that I hold a photograph of him which was obviously taken in the same studio and at the same time as the mystery photo. A copy of the photo is attached. I know it to be of Walter Lawrence because I was so advised some forty years ago by my grandmother, who was a niece of Walter, and who knew him well. I also hold a record confirming that he died on 25 March 1926. I have no record however of his occupation, so I am unable to confirm that he was a silversmith, or of him having had any connection with James W R Linton. I can confirm though that he lived for a period at 197 South Terrace, South Fremantle, with his wife Lillian.

Rodney is happy to assist with any further inquiries on the matter and *History West* is most appreciative of his assistance. Please contact the editor if you wish to consult Rodney.

Freshwater Bay excursion

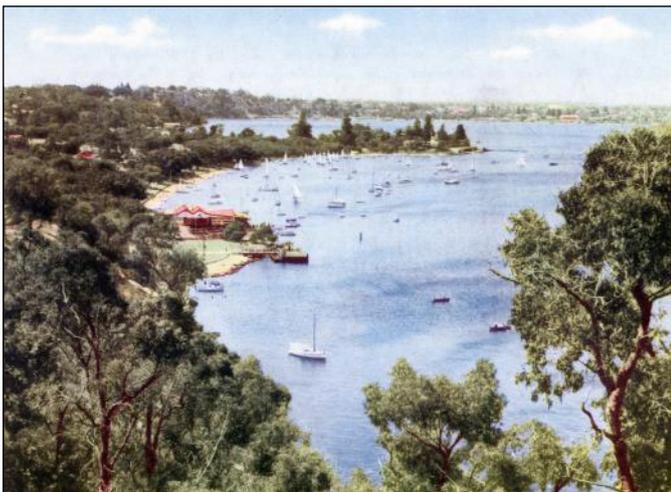
With stunning views across Swan River, Keane's Point, crowned by the stately Royal Freshwater Bay Yacht Club, has had an interesting past. Our Tours & Events members Basil and Jenny Twine have been responsible for the Yacht Club archives for twenty years, and Basil was our guide for this excursion. An added attraction on the day was lunch for thirty of us in a dining room with its sweeping views of the river and clusters of boats. But getting back to earlier times.

Naming Freshwater Bay

It was a place where there was plenty of fresh water to be seen with three fresh water streams gushing into the bay. Can you believe that one emerged from the land where the Claremont Quarter shopping centre is located today and trickled down into the bay? Another washed down from where the Claremont Museum (originally built as a school in 1862) is situated. The third one, about where Keane St is located, is now a bore still providing water for the gardens around the Yacht Club. Wild brumbies that roamed the area would paw the turf to reach the fresh water.

The Dutch explorer Willem de Vlamingh, who explored the area in 1697 and walked from coast to river, observed fresh water oozing from the sands. As well, a prominent Perth resident Henry Prinsep had a holiday cottage on the bay and said that it reminded him of Freshwater Bay on the Isle of Wight.

Colonial beginnings — John and Anne Butler
Colonist John Butler arrived in 1830 keen to join the scramble for a place in this 'promised land' so praised by Captain Stirling. Butler and his family travelled on his own ship *Skerne*, packed with farming equipment, seeds, vines and animals, ready to start farming. In 1830 he was granted 250 acres of land around Freshwater Bay including a high point overlooking the river that came to be known as Butler's Hump. It was later given the more elegant name of Keane's Point.



Keane's Point 1950s P2014.822

Butler also bought with him 20 gallons of rum and 20 gallons of brandy, perhaps prompting him to open a tavern halfway along the Fremantle to Perth road. The tavern became a popular halfway house for weary travellers and is now the site of the Albion Hotel. Butler established a farm and named it Prospect Place. But it was also traditional Aboriginal land where people hunted plentiful wild fowl and fish, and found ample fresh water. Many of Claremont's major roads



Osborne Steps - Freshwater Bay. c1900 P1999.1489

such as Stirling Hwy, Princess Rd, Gugerri St and Victoria Ave closely follow traditional Aboriginal tracks. The last of the Aboriginal camping sites was removed in 1951.

An 'on-off' relationship between traditional owners and new arrivals deteriorated rapidly when one of Butler's farm workers was speared and died. Butler's biggest problem, however, was his fiery personality. He managed to quarrel with anyone in authority, mainly because he wanted more land. Matters came to a head in 1835 and he left the colony disgusted, never to return. However his widow Anne returned to Prospect Place and lived there until she died in 1886.

Edward Keane

A man of many talents, Edward Keane was a successful civil engineer and builder. Arriving in 1882 he quickly made his mark, taking charge of the building of the land grant railway extending north from Midland almost to Geraldton. Much of it built at his own expense, he was rewarded with appointment as general manager of the Midland Railway Co. As well, he built St George's Cathedral and Fremantle Town Hall. A prominent 1890s colonial politician, he even found time to be Mayor of Perth. Keane took up eight and a half acres of the Butler land (which included Butler's Hump) and in 1896 built a handsome limestone house with extensive gardens, jetty and boathouse. Named Cappel House after Edward and Lilla Keane's hometown in Ireland, it was a district showpiece. He did not enjoy it for long, however, dying in 1904.

Freshwater Bay Boating Club 1896

Led by Edward Keane and Aubrey Sherwood, Colonial Collector of Customs, eighteen residents met at Sherwood's home to discuss the formation of a boating club. Edward Keane was named its first captain. Jetties and boathouses were built; there was even a swimming baths for the 'ladies, wives and children'. The club flourished although its home remained at Sherwood's house at the bottom of Irvine St.

In the meantime the Keane family's handsome home fell on difficult times. The house sank into disrepair, its gardens neglected. Lilla Keane decided in 1916 to subdivide the land into residential sites but that plan was halted with its purchase by an influential group of men who wished to see the site in public hands. It became a convalescent hospital, leased to the Repatriation Department for Permanently Disabled Returned Soldiers. Then the State Gardens Board leased the house for several years from 1930 as a rest home and refreshment rooms, and the area became a popular camping ground. Finally it was leased in 1936 to the Royal Freshwater Bay Yacht Club, and there its headquarters (in extended buildings) remain today.

Gillian Flecker

Museum News

Stories from the Storerooms

Sailing for the Swan in 1829 — Matilda Roe's porcelain



Porcelain serving dish MA2004.207

This beautiful porcelain serving dish that journeyed to Australia with Matilda Roe was given to the Society by her great-great-granddaughters Susan Terwin and Anne Merryweather.

Matilda Bennett (c1808-1870) of the Isle of Man had but a few short weeks to prepare for her marriage and emigration to help establish a new colony on the west coast of New Holland. Her husband John Septimus Roe (1797-1878) had wooed his Matilda with ardour and pestered officials so that they could marry in the short time between his appointment as the Swan River Colony's first Surveyor-General and the departure of the *Parmelia*. He had returned to England late in 1827 after a three-year voyage where his service on the India Station had affected his health. He was working in the Hydrographic Office recuperating from a severe illness when offered the post of Surveyor-General in the new colony.

The handsome officer must have swept twenty-one-year-old Matilda off her feet. He had already been to the Great South Land, which must have been reassuring for her as she prepared to leave everything she knew behind. Matilda had much besides her trousseau to arrange for the great adventure. Their quarters on the ship had to be equipped by the emigrants with furniture, china, cutlery and linen as well as supplies of everything needed for the first

years in the new colony. These included items such as bolts of fabric to make clothes and furnishings for themselves and any future children.

One of Matilda's treasures was her beautiful china dinner service possibly made by Flight Barr & Barr in Worcester. This serving dish is one she is reputed to have used on the voyage. Given the size of the ship, the cramped conditions on board and the stormy seas encountered she would have locked it securely in the plate chest when it was not in service and perhaps brought it out only when in calm waters.



Matilda Roe P1999.2640

The Roes' first child Sophia was born soon after they arrived at Swan River and they went on to have a large family of twelve children, born at quite regular intervals between 1829 and 1859. Altogether Matilda gave birth to fourteen children but two of them did not survive infancy. Constant childbearing and rearing occupied most of her time. In time however the family's home on Adelaide Terrace reaching down to the river became a social centre for many of the young colonists as Matilda's six daughters needed to meet eligible young men if they were to marry. Their mother was ambitious for them, encouraging the young folk to come in the evenings to make music or read and have discussions.

The dish would have seen many festivities. It has been treasured and passed down the family and eventually given to the Society in 2004.

Dorothy Erickson

Learn how to turn your family history research into an engaging story

This could be the opportunity you've been waiting for.

You've researched your family history; now it's time to turn this into stories for others to enjoy.

As part of Heritage Week, the City of Canning is hosting a one-day free workshop on 29 April at the Church with a Chimney on Woodloes Homestead, Cannington.

The workshop includes: tuition, learning materials and individual activities.

For further information and to register, contact: geoff.moor@canning.wa.gov.au

Spotlight on Members' Research — Lesley & Michael Brooker

Flowers and Gatherers of the Albany to Eucla Coastline

Many thanks to member Lesley Brooker for sharing the results of her research with us. It is a valuable project from several perspectives — historical, environmental and aesthetic — and one some of you will be delighted to explore online.

Flowers and Gatherers of the Albany to Eucla Coastline is an interactive pdf document containing the results of a project undertaken by my husband, Michael, and myself over the last five years. Part 1 (The Flowers) comprises photographs of over 900 wildflower species, while Part 2 (The Gatherers) gives short biographical accounts of some of the plant collectors who visited or lived along the south coast of Western Australia in the nineteenth century.

During the eighteenth century it became fashionable in Europe to espouse an interest in natural history and to develop gardens filled with exotic plants from around the world. Botanical scientists and commercial nurserymen were in competition to be the first to receive, propagate and describe 'new' species of plants. As a result, almost all expeditions of discovery at that time carried either a botanist or at least an educated gentleman capable of gathering, annotating, pressing and storing plant specimens, sometimes for several years, until the expedition returned to home port.

The first of those known to have gathered plants along the southern coastline of New Holland (as WA was then known) was Archibald Menzies, a Royal Navy surgeon acting as naturalist on board George Vancouver's *Discovery* (not Cook's *Discovery* but a later ship). In September-October 1791 Menzies spent 12 days collecting more than 130 plant specimens at 'yet to be named' King George Sound. His observations of the vegetation and countryside, made prior to any European modification, are informative.

The west side of [the sound] in particular was pleasantly diversified with groves of trees, hills and valleys forming a rich and picturesque prospect but the inland country seemd coverd with one continuous forest of trees... The thickest of these trees did not exceed 9 or 10 feet in circumference of their stems and many of them had the marks of fire round their bottoms with notches in their bark ... we seldom met with these trees or the other gum plants anywhere about this sound without observing their stems burnt or scorched with fire.

Following Menzies came many more international scientific gentlemen—Jacques Labillardière sailed with d'Entrecasteaux who had been sent from France to search for Comte de Lapérouse, Robert Brown with

Matthew Flinders whose remit was to survey the Australian coastline, Jean-Baptiste Leschenault with the French expedition under Nicolas Baudin, Pierre Lesson with Dumont d'Urville; and Sydney-based botanists—Allan Cunningham and William Baxter; and then the south coast visitors and settlers—James Drummond, George Maxwell, Andrew Dempster, the Brooks family, Henry Stuart Carey, the Taylors, the Webbs and Jack Batt. Most of the specimens they collected were sent to Europe, those from British expeditions and James Drummond to the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew; and toward the end of the nineteenth century to Ferdinand Mueller, then director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Victoria.

Not all the collectors had an educated, scientific background. English gardener William Baxter was sent to Australia by nurserymen from the Upper Clapton Nursery, north of London, to collect seeds and live plants on a commercial basis. His activities were frowned upon by the scientific establishment who considered that all 'new' plants should be directed in the first instance to Kew Gardens and definitely not for monetary reward. Of course, this attitude ignored the fact that Kew Gardens itself employed collectors (Allan Cunningham included) to travel to all parts of the world to collect material which they were absolutely forbidden to sell to any third party. Nonetheless William Baxter turned out to be one of the most prolific and successful collectors of his time, and he worked extremely hard for his employers. In 1824 he walked, with only a dog for company, all the way from Point Malcolm to Lucky Bay, collecting as he went. That would have been at least 160 km, carrying his specimens on his back, through virgin scrub.

As my previous research interests have been to follow the routes taken by some of the early WA land explorers (*Explorers Routes Revisited* series), it seemed a logical extension of that work to attempt to photograph as many plant species as had been collected by the early botanists, visitors and settlers between Albany and Eucla. Starting in 2015 Michael and I have made 24 visits so far to Albany, Jerramungup, Ravensthorpe, Esperance, Point Culver, Eyre, Eucla and surrounding areas, usually in spring, but at other times of year also. Between trips, I researched the activities of our 'gatherers' or plant collectors. While the first five years of the project have been documented, it is ongoing, as one benefit of publishing in digital format is that new material can be added as the opportunity arises, errors and omissions can be corrected, and taxonomic changes can be kept up-to-date.

Please feel free to download the latest update of *Flowers and Gatherers of the Albany to Eucla Coastline* from our website at <https://lesmikebrooker.com.au/flowers-and-gatherers.php>. The document can be saved to your own device (computer, smart phone or tablet).

Lesley Brooker



A deserted Indian village in King George III Sound, New Holland, drawing based on sketch by J Sykes and included in Vancouver's *A Voyage of Discovery to the north Pacific Ocean, and around the world*.

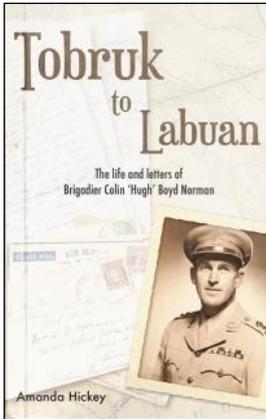
Banksia repens published by Labillardière in *Voyage in search of La Pérouse* in 1800

Portion of d'Entrecasteaux's *Map of the Archipelago of the Recherche*, showing Esperance Bay, Observatory Island, Cape le Grand and Mondrain Island. National Library of Australia, MAP Ra 82 (Copy 1) Plate 14, online at <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-230811677/view>.

Book Reviews

Amanda Hickey (ed.), *Tobruk to Labuan. The life and letters of Brigadier Colin 'Hugh' Boyd Norman, Longueville Media, Haberfield NSW, 2018. In Library.*

Reviewer: G M (Mike) Galvin



The Australian community is indebted to the family of Hugh Norman that they asked Amanda Hickey to record the life and letters of this amazing Australian citizen soldier and administrator before the collection was committed to the Australian War Memorial where it would become 'archives' but rarely see the light of day. This book ensures that Brigadier Norman's

dedication and skill are readily available for future generations to read about.

A brief synopsis of the early life of this man gives some indication of why he was so successful in both his military role and later as an administrator of an Australian off-shore Territory. He was born in Sydney, had his early education in Scotland and then Perth (Hale School) followed by higher education at Hawkesbury Agricultural College. He also became an expert wool classer and specialist in animal health. He married in 1929 and devotion to his wife and his religion remained the foundations of his life. Importantly, he took over a grazing property at Beverley in 1926 but the financial depression of the 1930s forced him off the land and he used his skills in agriculture and animal health to become a buyer for the export lamb market. In the latter occupation he continued to sharpen his skills in written communication.

After the Great War Australia relied on a citizen army as the cornerstone of defence. Hugh Norman was a member of the Citizens Military Force (CMF) from 1922 and was commissioned in 1939. He became a Lieutenant in 2/28 Battalion in 1940 and his name will for all time be associated with that Unit. He was seconded to command the anti-tank regiment linked to the Battalion, and later became the second-in-command and finally commander of that Unit in the New Guinea and Borneo campaigns.

Norman was a great letter writer to his wife and the families of the soldiers of his Battalion who died on active service. The collected letters are touching and reveal his strong religious beliefs and love of his wife. They constitute a 'third person' diary of the military campaigns in which he participated. The great bulk of military diaries are in essence *aides* to the writer that might allow reconstruction of experiences for postwar writing. These letters are different as they are a record of an observer of events as they occurred for transmission to loved ones and are therefore quite

unique. He experienced and recorded the most difficult times in the Battalion and had to oversee the reformation of the Unit after catastrophic losses of soldiers, killed, wounded or taken prisoner of war.

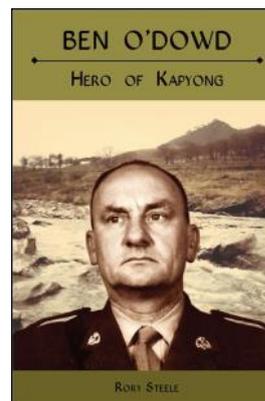
The Australian government recognised, from experience after the Great War, that it was vitally important to appoint highly respected, decorated officers to oversee the transition of hundreds of thousands of serving members to civilian life and just days before the end of the war he relinquished command of his Battalion and became the West Australian Controller of Demobilisation. He went on to serve as ADC to the Governor General and later as a highly successful Administrator of Norfolk Island.

Ethel Norman to whom so many of his letters were addressed passed away in 1980 and Hugh died in 1996. He had contributed greatly to Australia in peace and war in a number of fields.

This book is highly recommended and any scholar of the 2/28 Battalion should have it alongside the unofficial history of the Unit written by Philip Masel (1961).

Rory Steele, *Ben O'Dowd: Hero of Kapyong*, Hesperian Press, Carlisle, WA, 2019. In Library.

Reviewer: Peter Gifford



This has been a difficult book to review. On the one hand, there is the late Ben O'Dowd, grandson of the poet Bernard O'Dowd, deliberately styled 'hero of Kapyong' by the author in his book title. On the other is O'Dowd's commanding officer during the Battle of Kapyong, Lieutenant Colonel Bruce Ferguson, described by the author as a 'brave and competent professional', but

by O'Dowd himself as a man whose actions during the battle amounted to 'nothing short of cowardice'. Whether O'Dowd's judgment is fair must be assessed by the reader on the basis of the facts outlined in this well-written, thoroughly researched account by a former Australian diplomat.

As to Kapyong, this action during the Korean War in April 1951 is nothing like as well known to most Australians as, for example, Gallipoli and Villers Bretonneux during the First World War, or Tobruk, El Alamein and Kokoda in the Second World War. However that is nothing to do with those who actually took part at Kapyong. The battle concerned only a few hundred Australians – the 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR) – in a largely 'forgotten war', but was actually as heroic as any involving Australian soldiers in the nation's entire military history.

The Korean conflict began in June 1950 when the Communist North Korean army invaded the south of

the Korean peninsula, which caused the then newly-formed United Nations, led by the United States but including Australia, to come to the aid of the South Korean regime. After American provocation, Chinese Communist forces joined in the fighting, and were pushing south in large numbers when they encountered the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade at Kapyong, near the former demilitarised zone. Supported by a New Zealand artillery battery, the heavily outnumbered Australians and a Canadian battalion managed to stop the Chinese and put an end to the southward offensive.

For their efforts, the Australians and Canadians were awarded a US Presidential unit citation, and 3RAR's Commanding Officer, Lieut-Col Ferguson, received the Distinguished Service Order – even though he had been at his ill-chosen headquarters, far behind the actual fighting, in which 3RAR's rifle companies were led from the front by the then Major O'Dowd. His heroism went unrecognised by Ferguson and higher authority, although a 3RAR signals sergeant, Jack Gallaway, wrote of that unit in 1994 that 'Nothing ... could ever make them more proud than they were to have stood shoulder to shoulder with Ben O'Dowd at Kapyong'.

Hero Of Kapyong is actually a biography, of a man who rose from the ranks in Western Australia's 2/11th Battalion during the Second World War, fighting in the Middle East and winning a field commission in New Guinea. Even so, he had still to overcome his lack of formal education in achieving success as a staff and senior officer. Unsurprisingly, the author's tone throughout is one of admiration, but the work is not hagiographical. This was a man who as it happens was born in Western Australia, but of whom all Australians can feel proud.

Exploring treasures



Tuesday Treasures is a gathering for members who would like to take a closer look at particular exhibits and learn about their provenance and the stories around them. It is held on the morning of the first Tuesday of each month.

Our first treasure was a beautiful display of mother of pearl and we took the lid off to see it close up. Lovely shells and a beautiful pearl necklace, once owned by Lady Hasluck, were brought in from home and also admired.

Susan Clarke gathered books and pictures from the

library and bookshop to show our wider resources on the subject, and gave a short talk on the history of pearl shelling and pearling in WA, and some of the stories that swirl around this fascinating subject.

We finished with questions and contributions from the audience on points of interest and enjoyed a cup of tea and a chat. Altogether a very pleasant and relaxed way to spend a morning.

April's topic is *Timber Tales* and will be held on Tuesday 7 April.

Community Officer: Lesley Burnett
Editor *History West*: Dr Lenore Layman
Copy editor: Heather Campbell

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

If you're a member who receives this newsletter in hard copy by post, and you're happy to receive it by email, please contact us (9386 3841 or admin@histwest.org.au with your email address, and save money and trees by receiving it online!