



Founded 1926

HISTORY WEST

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April 2021

GENERAL MEETING

The next meeting at Stirling House is on Wednesday 21 April at 6pm when Don Poynton will present a paper on ‘The Forgotten Story of the World’s First Offshore Oil Wells – Princess Royal Harbour, Albany, 1906’. Refreshments available from 5.30pm; Bookshop open until 6pm.



Today, there are approximately 500 oil rigs drilling for oil or gas in oceans around the world, at a cost of more than a quarter of a billion dollars a day. But how many people know that this global industry had its humble and unfortunately fatal beginnings in Princess Royal Harbour, Albany, 115 years ago? During the dredging of the harbour between 1901-04, ‘a great flow of oil came up’. New Zealand-born mining engineer, Charles E Watkins, took out a prospecting licence over the area and, in 1906, formed the Princess Royal Harbour Mineral and Oil Company NL. One of the conditions set by the Mining Warden was that ‘all boring operations are to be carried out from a floating punt and not from a fixed staging’. Long forgotten government files, newspaper articles and family archives reveal that these were the first wells in the world to be drilled from a floating

vessel. You will discover why oil was thought to be present, what the Government Geologist had to say, how the venture led to the world’s first offshore fatality and the widow’s prolonged fight for a workers’ compensation payout. The Provisional Directors of the company were respected Albany and Perth gentlemen of various backgrounds and it wouldn’t be Western Australia without the involvement of a colourful character or two, or rivalry between Perth and Fremantle – and we might even find a connection to the RWAHS. Don’t be put off by the title or subject - this is not a technical talk.

Don Poynton is a retired petroleum geologist who continues his involvement in the Australian petroleum industry by researching its history. Don graduated with Honours in Science (Geology) from the Australian National University in 1971. He then spent the next 42 years working on most of Australia’s sedimentary basins for BOC of Australia, Woodside, Mesa Petroleum, Western Mining Corporation’s Petroleum Division and, at the time of his retirement, was Manager of Exploration and Environment for Strike Energy. He received the Petroleum Exploration Society of Australia’s Meritorious Service Award in 2016. Since his retirement Don has taken an active role in coastal rehabilitation and natural history organisations.



Appeal for Second Hand Book Storage space

Can you help? The Book Sale team is desperately seeking storage for its books. The sale is the Society’s major form of fundraising but without storage there can be no sale. If you or anyone you know has an empty garage or shed we could use for a year please let us know — we would be thrilled!

Please let us know by phoning the Office on 9386 3841 or emailing admin@histwest.org.au



RWAHS giant second hand Book Sale on Saturday 17 & Sunday 18 April

Visit the Society and pick up some wonderful reading. There is choice for everyone, children and adults - history books, including West Australian writings, fiction and non-fiction, paperbacks and hardbacks, serials and reference works
Thousands of books at give-away prices!

Pay us a visit, nab some bargains and support your Society.

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METALS CONSERVATION WORKSHOP

Saturday 5 June 2021 10am – 4pm
at the Royal Western Australian Historical Society
49 Broadway Nedlands 6009



Cost: \$100

Cleaning materials supplied for use on the day

Morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea provided. Please indicate any dietary restrictions.

Presenters: Dr Ian MacLeod and Vanessa Wiggin, two of WA's most experienced conservators.

Topics include:

- Causes of corrosion
- Handling metals
- Storage and display materials
- Environmental factors
- Cleaning metals
- Protective coatings

The workshop will include an illustrated talk and a practical workshop on cleaning techniques. Participants are encouraged to bring along small metal items for discussion and practical component.

Dr Ian MacLeod has been a practising conservator for more than 40 years, most of that time spent with the WA Museum Materials Conservation Dept. He has treated many items from the history collections of the WA Museum and community-based museums around WA.

Vanessa Wiggin has a background as an objects and metals conservator, and has worked for a number of major institutions, including the Art Gallery of WA and the WA Museum. Her business, Museumly (formerly ArtWorks Conservation), undertakes conservation treatments for objects large and small, as well as providing conservation training and consultancy services. Vanessa also works as a Local History Officer for the City of Kwinana, and is the Curator of the Royal WA Historical Society.

Workshop bookings: contact admin@histwest.com.au Telephone 9386 3841
Numbers limited, so book soon!

Hon Life and Life Members' Morning Tea

On the morning of Tuesday 9 March the Society welcomed its Life Members to a special event to acknowledge their importance in the ongoing life of the Society and to thank them for their continuing support. President Steve Errington welcomed the members, presenting each with a new magnetic name badge. After an enjoyable morning tea, Immediate Past President Robert Nicholson talked briefly about importance of our Life Members and Hon. Life Members, and updated them on progress towards building a new home for the Society. Then three floor talks introduced recent and significant donations to the Museum and Library collections: Librarian/ Archivist Carol Leigh showcased the John Forrest Archive, Library Volunteer Evalyn Beaumont spoke about Charlotte Bussell's Store Book 1864 while Museum Convenor Val Hutch displayed the rabbit-skin rug and lace collars donated by Ruth Phelps, a Victorian travelling case, a journalist's typewriter and a scrapbook. And finally the Community Officer Lesley Burnett distributed a thank-you memento to guests as they departed. Altogether an enjoyable morning.



Tuesday Treasures Ring a Bell

The Society's collection of bells was given an airing at our December meeting last year and those attending had fun ringing them and hearing their intriguing stories. What a varied collection they are!

One is a brass doorbell from the residence of colonist George Fletcher Moore at 210 Adelaide Tce, Perth. Moore, an Irish lawyer, came to the Swan River Colony in 1830 and held a number of key official positions, including Advocate General and Colonial Secretary. The house in Adelaide Tce was his city home; he also owned properties in the Avon Valley and 'Millendon' in Upper Swan. This bell (the one closest to Bruce in the photograph) was possibly used as his front door bell, although it appears to have been adapted from a servants' bell. It was excavated from the site, most likely following the demolition of the Yellow Cabs garage in the 1950s.



Presenter Bruce Hoar with an assortment of bells

A familiar sight and sound to us all is the school bell and Galena Primary School bell was donated by Margery de Groot, wife of Rolf de Groot, the last teacher/headmaster at the school when it closed in 1963. Rolf was a Dutch immigrant who arrived in WA as an eighteen year old in 1950 and trained as a teacher. From 1920 to 1958 Galena was the site of a lead mine and is located on the northwest coastal highway, 113kms north of Geraldton. When the school closed in 1961 Mr de Groot took the bell to his next school posting. However, it was not needed as the new school already had a bell in better condition and the Education Department did not want it returned because it was cracked. So it was kept by the family and rung to call the headmaster home for meals when he was working at the school after hours.

Then there are the animal bells. In the 19th century when vast areas of land were unfenced, the bullock team was the only means of heavy transport to the newly settled areas. Bullock bells were therefore a necessity to enable the teamster to locate his bullocks when they strayed; the greater the carrying sound of the bell (some believed to be up to 10kms), the better. Sam Jones, a blacksmith at Condamine (Qld) in the late 1860s-1870s made the most successful and popular bell of the time. The Bullfrog or Jones bell, as it was first known, became famous as the Condamine bell, and the Society has one in its collection.

Warburton's camel bell was believed to be for a camel from an overland expedition led by South Australian Peter Egerton-Warburton from Adelaide to Alice

Springs and then across to the Pilbara coast in 1873-74. They nearly didn't make it, having to eat most of the camels along the way. This bell was found on a camel on the Pilbara coast at Condon and passed on to Mrs Lewis, the owner of nearby Warrawagine Station, who donated it to the Society in 1980.

Another camel bell in the collection was found on the skeleton of a dead camel by explorer Alfred Canning in 1907 when he was surveying the Canning Stock Route. This brass-coated camel bell is thought to have come from an 1896 expedition led by Lawrence Wells who had sailed from Adelaide to Geraldton and then crossed country to Wiluna before heading north to the Fitzroy River. Canning gave the bell to his friend H B Curlewis, the WA Government astronomer and meteorologist, who passed it on to his grandson Richard Maslin who donated it in 2019.

In contrast to the loud ring of the metal bells, the fine bone china bell made for Western Australia's 150th anniversary produces a softer sound. Francesca China Ltd made 150 of these commemorative bells and the parents of well-known Society member Wendy Lugg purchased Bell No. 55, which Wendy donated in 2018. It is colourfully decorated on four sides with Australian flowers – kangaroo paw, red flowering gum, leschenaultia and primrose orchid.

Bruce Hoar

Affiliates and other news

Have you noted the date of the State History Conference 2021 in your diary? It's Friday 3 – Sunday 5 September; to be hosted by the **Eastern Goldfields Historical Society** at an historic venue — Boulder Town Hall.

York Society has adopted a WikiYork project which aims to put entries for all of 'York's remarkable buildings and people' on the Wikipedia site. Numerous researchers and writers have volunteered their services and the result will greatly benefit both historical knowledge and the district's tourism. Bill Duperouzel has let the Society know that he has been busy on the Wikipedia article for Janet Millett. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Janet_Millett
Bill points out that the task has been completed in time for the 200th anniversary of Janet's birth on 17 July 2021; as well as for January 2022, which will be the 150th anniversary of the publication of her book, *An Australian Parsonage*. Let's join Bill in hoping that these anniversaries might be used 'to promote Janet's wonderful legacy to the people of Western Australia'.

News of the History Writers Group

February's meeting of the History Writers group, aka 'Royal Writers', was devoted to a review of our modus operandi to inform our plans for 2021. We now have 14 active members with a range of writing genres. While family history is common to quite a few of us, we also have writers pursuing historical fiction, local area history and historical narrative. While the emphasis remains on writing, we also provide a forum for discussion of the research that forms the basis of a project, where this suits members.

Community Talk

Philippa O'Brien, The colony through the eyes of convict artists



Philippa O'Brien

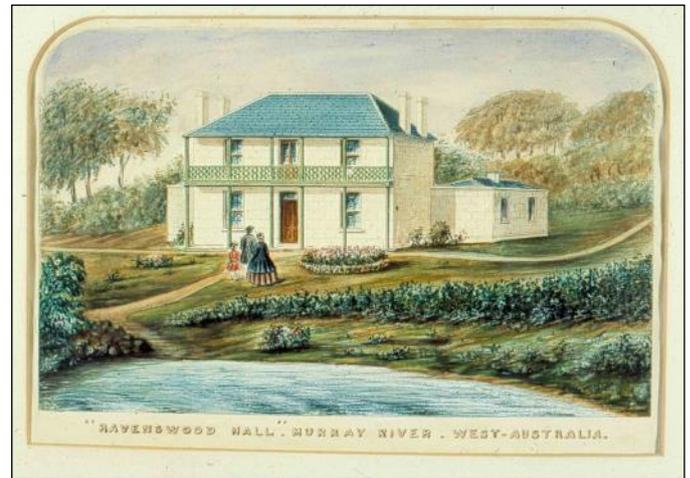
Welcoming the speaker, Vice President Sally Anne Hasluck reminded the audience of Philippa's varied skills — as artist, sculptor, writer, and interpreter of the environment and history of Western Australia — and the passion she brings to all these roles. Her University comrades recall her posters for theatre productions, a talent that later extended into Festival of Perth advertising posters. The residents of Ellenbrook live

and breathe her sculptures located throughout the township, interpreting the history and native flora of the district. Visitors to King's Park enjoy her sculpted seat benches and the flora represented in pavement mosaics. At the same time Philippa has continued with paintings and works on paper based in her studio in Darlington. She has also written four art catalogues as well as two substantial books — one on Robert Juniper in 1992 and the other on Margaret Priest in 2009.

Philippa's Community Talk introduced us to a small part of her current project, which is a major book on West Australian colonial art held in private and public collections. The talk focused particularly on artworks by two convicts — Thomas Browne and James Walsh. Philippa reminded us that convicts made a major contribution to the development of the colony but were poorly rewarded for their efforts and frozen out of society. In the cases of Browne and Walsh, no matter their individual attempts to prosper and integrate, the prejudice of their fellow free-settler colonists helped to bring both struggling artists down.

Convictism introduced to Western Australia two groups different from existing settler society — young professional men, well-trained and practical, such as Edmund Henderson, Henry Wray, and Edmund du Cane, who were mostly officers of the Royal Engineers Corps, as well as the convicts themselves. Both groups were outsiders and had different perspectives on the colony from the settlers. Some new arrivals were competent artists who recorded what they observed of this colonial rural microcosm and created valuable images, a number of which Philippa explored in her talk.

One painting, held by the Society, was Thomas Browne's watercolour 'Ravenswood Hall, Murray River, Western Australia'. Browne painted an idyllic scene, exactly what enterprising colonists hoped and worked to create in a new land — a grand homestead surrounded by well-tended gardens near an appealing watercourse under a sunny sky. A successful settler family admires their home. It is a fine painting testifying to Browne's skill, particularly in creating the desired image — a scene of colonial accomplishment. Browne was an architect and civil engineer, transported for forgery. He was talented and hard working, spending some time as a rural schoolteacher. He struggled to re-establish himself in business, but had no long-term success, suiciding in prison in 1882 following a further criminal conviction, this time for



Thomas Browne, 'Ravenswood Hall, Murray River, West Australia', water colour, c1859. RWAHS.

illegal land transactions. Philippa described the 'impenetrable barriers' to respectability and acceptance that he and other ex-convicts faced.

Fellow convict James Walsh was a clerk and jeweller, convicted of forgery. Like Browne, Walsh had a difficult time making good, being convicted of further forgery in the colony. In Fremantle Prison he decorated his cell wall with classical portraits, which were whitewashed over and have only recently been re-discovered. Out of prison he recorded scenes of settler life, particularly images of groups of Aboriginal people, which together record a process of dispossession. One image which Philippa examined closely comes from the New Norcia collection — 'View from Mount Eliza' by James Walsh, painted in 1864.



James Walsh, 'View from Mount Eliza', water colour, 1864. Collection of the Benedictine Abbey, New Norcia.

Philippa noted the popularity of paintings of the vista from Mt Eliza and showed how, over time, the picture changed from an apparently unsettled landscape to a settled town — neat and domestic with houses, gardens and the river. In Walsh's painting a settler couple out for a stroll encounter a group of Aboriginal people who by the 1860s are living as fringe dwellers around settler society. It is a beautiful image but one with a powerful meaning. Philippa's talk suggested that pictures need to be explored to discover their layers of meaning — as art works, historical sources and heritage artefacts.

The audience stayed afterwards for an enjoyable morning tea, courtesy of Val Hutch and her team. Altogether a great start to our 2021 Community Talks program.

Stories from the Storerooms A Lincolnshire Farmer - John Wall Hardey and 'Grove Farm'



MA 2004.29

This elegant oval-lidded gravy dish made by the Staffordshire pottery Ridgeways once graced the table at 'Grove Park' in Belmont, one of the homes of John Wall Hardey and his wife Elizabeth née Davey. They were among the Methodist families who charted the *Tranby* on which they arrived in the colony in 1830. The gravy dish passed to Robert Hardey, son of J W and Elizabeth, and then to his daughter Emma Louise who married Henry George Hampton. They had a son Guy, and Mrs Guy Hampton donated the dish to the Society in 2004.



Mrs Elizabeth Hardey in 1838, oil on canvas, Acc No OAR 304, 1964; at Tranby House.



John Wall Hardey in 1838, oil on canvas, Acc No OAR 303, 1964; now at Tranby House

Both painted by Hannah Maria Hudson (Mrs Hardey b. UK 1810-1865)

'Grove Park' was on the opposite side of the river to his younger brother's farm 'Tranby' on the Maylands peninsula where the portraits painted by Hannah Hudson now reside.

The *Tranby* left Hull in England on 9 September 1829 with 37 passengers, 14 crew and a farmyard of stock. On board were Michael and James Clarkson and the Hardey brothers – John, Joseph and William – sons of Robert Hardey and his wife Ann Wall. John and Elizabeth had married four days earlier in Ulceby, Lincolnshire. William, the youngest of the Hardey brothers, died on the voyage out.

We read a lot about Joseph but little appears about his elder brother John and his wife Elizabeth, who were substantial citizens. The family was an important part of the Methodist community and John held responsible positions until his death in 1885. They had eight children between 1832 and 1859 but not all survived.

John Wall Hardey acquired Loc. 33 that he named 'Grove Farm' in 1835, which was to be of significance to the future of the Belmont district. However, it appears he resided first on the Maylands Peninsula where his

brother Joseph remained and then, after exploring 'over the hills', on 'Mt Hardey' at York until 1843 when he built 'Grove Farm' house, one of the finest houses in the early years of the colony. Laurie Cummings drew the house for the *Western Mail* in 1940.

The house had two storeys and was built of brick with four rooms on the upper floor and four at ground level, plus a kitchen and bathroom. Horse stalls and a number of other buildings were nearby. John bought the adjoining Belmont Farm, Lot 34, in 1854. A pit sawmill was reputedly located on the property in the early days.



'Grove Farm', pen and ink, 24 x44cm. A1996.50m (Cummings box 3)
Artist: Douglas Laurie Cummings (1897-1972)

John Hardey's interest in stock breeding led to the holding of the first thoroughbred race meeting at 'Grove Farm' in 1848 and the area soon became Perth's permanent racecourse with the racing industry growing up around it. Part of the farm was purchased for Ascot Racecourse.

Most transport was by river at this time as the mudflats at the causeway were difficult to navigate. This did not suit John and, when the family returned to Perth in 1843, he became chairman of the General Road Trust and was responsible for the building of the Causeway. He was nominated MLC in 1849, serving for several terms. An obituary described John Wall Hardey as 'a thoroughly practical man [who] bestowed much attention upon stock-breeding, wheat-growing, and viticulture'.



The family at Grove Farm. P2006.885. Courtesy: City of Belmont.

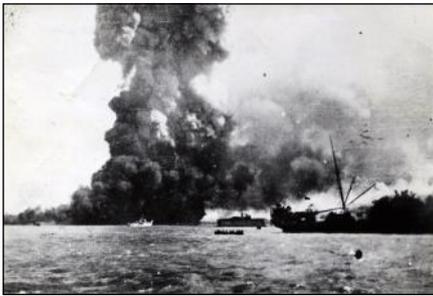
The Hardeys' daughter Mary Ann became Mrs E G Barrett-Lennard and inherited the portraits whilst the only surviving son Robert Davey inherited the properties and apparently the china service. Robert enlarged the holding with the purchase of Locs 30, 31 & 32. This brought the Belmont holdings to 7,000 acres, nearly the whole of today's City of Belmont. The land produced good crops of vegetables, fruit, even some tobacco and Robert enjoyed great success with his grape production and resulting wines. The winemaking was carried out in partnership with his cousin Richard Hardey of Tranby. Cellars were dug from the riverbank under Belmont House, built by Richard in 1880. After his father's death Richard returned to Grove Farm and rented out Belmont House, which became the Sandringham Hotel in 1901. From 1900 to 1908 the Royal Perth Golf Club also used part of Grove Farm before the Club made its permanent home in South Perth.

Dr Dorothy Erickson

Censorship Wars during World War II

This is an abridged version of the censorship wars of the war period as detailed in the history of *West Australian Newspapers 1939-1984* by **Griff Richards**, former editor-in-chief of *The West Australian*. The history is available online from the RWAHS library and the State Library catalogue.

From the early days of World War II, Australia's major newspapers were locked in disputes with the federal government over censorship. They all agreed that some censorship was necessary in wartime – but there were massive disagreements over the way the censors used their power. The dispute came to a head in 1944, when political suppression reached a point where the newspapers combined to test the government's emergency powers in the High Court. They won a complete victory in Australia's greatest test of freedom of the press.



The bombing of Darwin.
Courtesy: NT library

Early in 1942 the excessive censorship of news and comment in the cause of 'public morale' was illustrated by the extraordinary delay in releasing news of the Japanese bombing of Darwin and

Broome. On 19 February 1942, Darwin was devastated by two air raids which killed more than 240 people, wounded 350 and did great damage to shipping, aircraft, wharves and buildings. The war cabinet hushed up the magnitude of the disaster, telling the public that there were only 17 deaths, 24 wounded and 'some damage'.

As information leaked out, *The West Australian* gradually pieced together a story of unprecedented death and destruction, but could not get permission to print it. The news was still bottled up officially when at the end of 1942 *The West Australian* discovered an account of the raids in an army publication, *Soldiering On*, a book consisting mainly of stories and pictures from men on active service. *The West* seized on this as a way to beat the censor. It gained permission to publish a review of the book in which it quoted at length from the story about Darwin. Though the review was published nearly a year after the event – on 26 January 1943 – it was still one of the big stories of the year.

Japanese bombers hit Broome on 3 March 1942, killing 70 people and destroying 24 buildings. In a second attack on 20 March one man was killed and an aircraft was destroyed. Derby was bombed on the same day and Wyndham on 23 March, but there were no casualties. A war correspondent's story about the Broome bombing was held up for ten months before the censor allowed an abbreviated version to be published in *The West Australian* on 19 January 1943.

WA Newspapers had an early brush with the censors on 19 January 1940, when the first troopship convoy, carrying 6000 Australians and New Zealanders, came to Fremantle. The city swarmed with soldiers; but, although their presence was known to friend and foe, the newspapers could not refer to them, even *quietly*. The next convoy caused great excitement. The *Queen*

Mary came to Fremantle on 12 April 1940 and WAN staff members were allowed to go to see her. The weekly *Western Mail* published pictures but, to satisfy the censor, made no reference to Australia. Then some of the biggest ships in the world came to Fremantle together – the *Queen Mary*, *Aquitania*, *Mauritania*, *Empress of Canada*, *Empress of Japan*, *Andes* and three others, all requisitioned as troopships. They made a magnificent sight as they left Fremantle in line ahead on 12 May 1940.

Shipping news and advertisements and weather reports were all barred from the newspapers to keep the information from the enemy. On 16 February 1940 the police notified WAN that it would no longer be allowed to use any medical advertisement relating to contraception.

In August 1940 the Government amended the censorship regulation to make it more acceptable to the press. By the end of 1941, censorship of news from the fighting fronts was scarcely apparent at *The West Australian*. Political censorship on the home front was a different matter. The Sydney newspapers in particular had continuing trouble with the suppression of domestic news and comment. The federal authorities applied as their criterion the elastic term 'national morale' and were touchy to the point of blanket censorship about references to industrial disputes – notably, chronic trouble which plagued the New South Wales coalfields. Early in 1943 *The West Australian* was in trouble with the censor for an item about officers drinking in hotels, although their conduct was the talk of the town.



Arthur Calwell,
Minister for Information.
Courtesy: Parliamentary
Archives

When Arthur Calwell took office as Minister for Information in September 1943, he broadened the interpretation of 'morale' to embrace suppression of political information, stories of industrial troubles and bad news generally. This brought a sharp reaction from the Sydney newspapers in particular.

One rule was that a newspaper could not indicate that any of its reports had been censored. It was on this prohibition that issue was finally joined on 15

April 1944, when *The Daily Telegraph* was published with white spaces where the censor had made cuts. Federal police stopped the presses and impounded all undistributed copies of the paper.

The heads of all the Sydney newspapers met with nine barristers and decided to test the legality of the censorship regulations. On 17 April the Full Bench of the High Court granted the newspapers an injunction restraining the federal government from preventing publication of the banned items. After a full hearing between 22 April and 5 May the Chief Justice, Sir John Latham, suggested a conference as the best way of resolving the difficulties.

The outcome was a code of censorship principles which laid down that 'censorship shall not be imposed merely for the maintenance of morale or the prevention of despondency or alarm...Censorship shall not prevent the reporting of industrial disputes or stoppages...Criticism and complaint, however strongly expressed, shall not be a ground for censorship.'

The newspapers had won.

Griff Richards, as abridged by Margot Lang



Jarrah chest of drawers, c1850-60.
Of Australind design



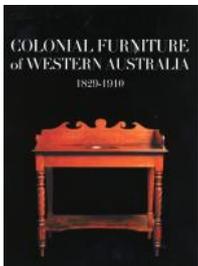
Jarrah chair c1855-65



Jarrah card table c1870-80

A valuable new donation to the Library collection

Timothy Harris, *Colonial Furniture of Western Australia 1829-1910*, Colonial Jarrah Enterprises, 550pp.



Dr Pamela Statham Drew, convenor of Readings & Publications Committee, and Nick Drew, Assistant Treasurer, have made this most generous donation to the Library collection. Launched in November last year, the book is the comprehensive and authoritative reference work as well as a beautifully illustrated publication. Expert author, Tim Harris, is a restorer as well as advisor, researcher and cataloguer, and his book is the result of 23 years of work and includes more than a thousand images.

The book looks at early furniture makers and their contemporary technologies. Imported British furniture is featured along with furniture from New Norcia and the southwest, and the role of convict wood workers is also documented. A furniture makers' directory contains the names of more than 500 cabinetmakers, retailers, carpenters, wheelwrights and wood workers. Images of colonial furniture in full colour bring the items to life.

On behalf of all members, *History West* warmly thanks Pamela and Nick for such a wonderful gift. It will be consulted by everyone wanting to know anything about colonial furniture and is an invaluable addition to our reference library.

Reference

<https://colonialjarrahenterprises.com.au>



Jarrah wardrobe c1860.
Attributed to Isidro Oriol



Jarrah chaise longue c1860-70

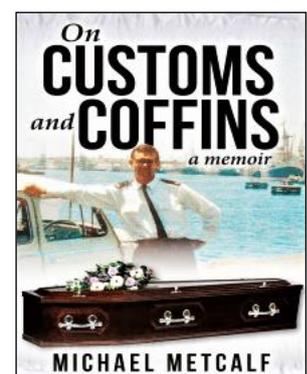


Jarrah staircase, c1876.
Sisters of Mercy Convent

Book Note

Michael Metcalf, *On Customs and Coffins: a memoir*, e-book. In Library.

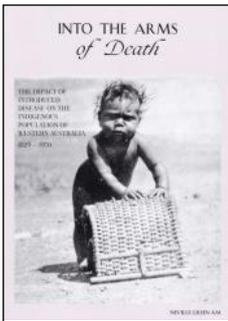
This ebook is a personal memoir of Michael Metcalf's working life, initially in the Customs Service for thirty years (1961-1989) and subsequently in the funeral industry (1989-c2009). His story is an interesting one, with the growth of the Pilbara's iron ore ports and the busyness of Darwin airport during the Vietnam War. Subsequently he established a small funeral company in Perth and we are introduced to the daily operations of a sad but essential business.



Book Review

Neville Green, *Into the Arms of Death: The Impact of Introduced Disease on the Indigenous Population of Western Australia 1829-1970*, Hesperian Press, Carlisle, 2020.

Reviewer: Dr Ian Abbott



In 1984, Neville Green published *Broken Spears. Aboriginals and Europeans in the Southwest of Australia*. Included as an appendix of that book are two pages listing major epidemics and illnesses occurring in Western Australia from 1829 to 1895. This list is reproduced in his new book.

Green's new book is, however, a massive expansion – to 173 pp. It demonstrates impressive acquaintance with archival

sources and newspapers (much of the latter extracted before the existence of Trove!) The information has been organised chronologically in relation to the northern and southern parts of WA. This is not, however, a book that one reads from cover to cover (apart from this reviewer). Its structure does make it easy to retrieve information.

The current COVID-19 pandemic confronts us with, and reminds us of, the misery that disease can inflict on humans. In the 1800s, medical understanding of the causes of disease and the protective measures needed were limited. I found the contemporary accounts of suffering by Aborigines distressing to read. By 1854 the authorities began to vaccinate Aborigines close to towns against smallpox, and it is comforting to see the humanity of their response.

Disease was first brought to WA (Albany) by ships from Britain and later from ports all around the world. Influenza (1830) and whooping cough (1833) killed both Aboriginal and settlers' children. Then came sexually transmitted diseases, smallpox, and measles. Aboriginal encounter with disease was amplified in

towns, resulting in greater mortality in Perth, Fremantle, and Albany. Ships from Batavia brought diseases such as leprosy to Roebourne from the 1860s. Measles swept part of the deserts in 1942 and 1966.

Aboriginal populations declined rapidly post-contact and it looked as if extinction would ensue. As expected, however, evolutionary change via the process of natural selection took place, with those genotypes persisting that conferred immunity to the various diseases. Aboriginal populations then gradually increased during the 1900s.

The author discusses the influence of Aboriginal culture on exacerbating the impact of disease. As Aborigines died from disease, payback operated because of an animistic belief that evil beings (and not natural entities and factors) had caused these deaths. These demons had to be appeased by killing other Aborigines suspected to have been involved and presumed without evidence to be guilty (*Lex talionis*). Killings triggered a chain of payback deaths. Deaths from disease itself and consequent payback killings led to demographic collapse, with birth rates plummeting. The secretive nature of these killings meant that it is not possible to estimate the number of Aboriginal people killed, but it is likely to have been large.

The subtext of the book is ill-founded criticism of the tabulation in Green's 1984 book by just one academic. For the most part this is confronted objectively, assessed in depth, and definitively rejected. This book demonstrates incontrovertibly the role played by disease in colonial society.

My only criticism of this book is the lack of maps. Maps would have effectively summarised its detailed data about entry points and spread of diseases. By 'joining the dots', rates of spread for each disease could have been calculated.

On a recent visit to the new museum, I viewed a map showing locations of (unauthorised) Aboriginal homicides caused by colonists ('massacres'). If there were a map showing locations of disease impacts, I missed it. Those responsible will find Green's book invaluable in providing a more balanced presentation.

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| Copy editor: | Heather Campbell |

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

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