



# HISTORY WEST

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August 2016

## GENERAL MEETING

The next meeting at Stirling House is on Wednesday 17 August at 6pm. **Professor Jane Lydon** will present a paper on **'Aboriginal Transformations of the Photographic Archive'**. Refreshments available from 5.30pm; Bookshop open until 6pm.

Photographs of Australian Aboriginal people are powerful objects. Produced from the 1840s, when the camera first arrived in the continent's nascent white settlements, such images are now invested with new meanings, becoming a rich resource for Indigenous families, history-making and culture. The intersection of imperialism, science and popular curiosity generated a vast body of imagery of Indigenous peoples now held within the archive. This talk assesses Australian Aboriginal photographic archives as an instrument of past power inequalities, but also explores whether such archives might nevertheless be 'democratized' in the present. I first trace the production and circulation of such images – beginning during the nineteenth century – before turning to their more recent transformations in the hands of Aboriginal people, examining the Indigenous significance of historical photographs as revealed through research with relatives and descendants of the images' subjects. I conclude by exploring the ways that Aboriginal photo-media artists have engaged with this rich and vast archive.

**Jane Lydon** holds the Wesfarmers Chair of Australian History at the University of Western Australia. Her research centres on Australia's colonial past and its legacies in the present. Her books include *Eye Contact: Photographing Indigenous Australians* (2005), *The Flash of Recognition: Photography and the emergence of Indigenous rights* (2012) and (ed.) *Calling the Shots: Aboriginal Photographies* (2014) which brings together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars to explore the Indigenous meanings of the photographic archive. She currently leads the Australian Research Council-funded project 'Globalization, Photography, and Race: the Circulation and Return of Aboriginal Photographs in Europe', which collaborates with four European museums to historicise their collections of Australian photographs and return them to Aboriginal descendants. *Photography, Humanitarianism, Empire* will be published this year.



## Western Land: another lively exhibition talk



An evening talk on 6 July drew a full house. **Dr Nonja Peters** of Curtin University and a Councillor of the Society spoke of the 'Human Legacy from Dutch VOC shipwreck survivors', suggesting some intriguing possibilities for us to consider. At the core of her talk was the proposition that 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century mariners 'spread their DNA' as they encountered Indigenous societies on the other side of the world from their own. Nonja is a member of a team of researchers who are collecting evidence from communities in South Africa and Kisar off the coast of East Timor as well as central coastal Western Australia who may be linked genetically to these mariners through long-ago cohabitation. Are there 'forgotten children of the Dutch East India Company'?

Up to 200 potential survivors were stranded by four VOC shipwrecks off the WA coast – *Batavia* (1629), *Vergulde Draeck* (1656), *Zuytdorp* (1712) and *Zeewijk* (1727). The many artefacts on display in the WA



people and leave a human inheritance behind? Nonja cited a range of evidence to suggest that they might have – archeological inscriptions, excerpts from explorers' diaries, the growing of yams by Aboriginal people, medical indicators, early colonial newspaper reports, colonists' observations and a well-developed folklore.

Nonja's group is collecting Indigenous oral histories in three countries, creating people's portraits and assembling the materials to mount an exhibition. The firm belief of these communities in their Dutch inheritance is most moving and it is an exhibition to look forward to.

Maritime Museum's shipwreck gallery are evidence of their presence, either alive or dead, on the coast. The key question remains – did they cohabit with Aboriginal



Government of Western Australia  
Department of Culture and the Arts



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At its meeting held on 14 July items of business included the following where Council

• welcomed new members –Evelyn Botman, Jenny Edgecombe, Catherine Fletcher, Joan Meston, Max & Susan Page and Tjorn Sibma;

- noted the success of Dr Nonja Peters' talk to a capacity audience in the *Western Land* Exhibition Community Talks Program and thanked Dr Peters most warmly for her involvement;
- agreed that the 2017 Pioneers Memorial Service will commemorate George Braithwaite Phillips and the 2018 Service the Carr/Guilfoyle families;
- resolved to hold a workshop in 2017 led by Dr Nonja Peters to engage a range of multicultural communities in discussions about the recording and presentation of their histories;
- endorsed F. Chaney, Chaney Architecture's proposal for a Development Assessment Scope for the Community History Centre project and approved payment of \$15,000, noting F. Chaney's significant *pro bono* contribution to this stage of the proposal;
- thanked Vice President Steve Errington for his offer of a Society's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday cake to be cut at the State History Conference of Affiliated Societies to be held at Armadale in September;
- endorsed Dr Helen Henderson and Dr Pamela Statham Drew as RWAHS delegates to the State History Conference;
- recorded its disappointment at the lack of submissions for the A.E. Williams History Essay Prize and resolved to await suggestions about addressing the lack of interest;
- welcomed the report that volunteer hours for June totalled 1115 hours.

Lennie McCall

## Historic Panoramas of Perth and Fremantle at [www.historicalpanoramas.com.au](http://www.historicalpanoramas.com.au)

A visually fascinating online production has just been unveiled. The result of collaboration between Curtin University HIVE and the State Library, it offers a virtual tour around Perth and Fremantle dating as far back as 1860 through a series of panoramas. It is well worth a visit sitting at your computer or using a mobile device.

The centrepiece of the tour, and the starting point, is a near 360° view from the Perth Town Hall in 1885, 1906, 1925 and 2016. Zoom in on fine details, zoom out to see the big picture, pan around to explore, jump between panorama locations and fade between different years. Click on Fremantle and enjoy the port city's panoramas.



## Exhibition at Wireless Hill Museum, 15 May-31 August **RADIOSONIC! The First 50 Years of the Wireless and Gramophone in WA**



The period from the late 19<sup>th</sup> to mid 20<sup>th</sup> centuries saw unprecedented changes in technology causing a revolution in the way the world communicated. Radio and Morse technology evolved rapidly as one discovery led to another.

A new exhibition in partnership with the Vintage Gramophone & Wireless Club of WA showcases radios and other objects from both collections and also tells the story of Wireless Hill's role in the history of this loved form of communication.



Opened in 1912, Applecross Wireless Station encompassed an era in technology from the establishment of wireless telegraphy communications through to the introduction of satellite communication. It provided one of the important links between Australia and the rest of the world at a time when these links were significant to a

relatively small community in one of the most remote cities in the world.

**Sunday Radio Talks:** *Radiosonic!* is accompanied by a series of free Sunday Radio Talks at 2pm in Wireless Hill Museum.

For more information, call 9364 0158 or email [Wireless.Hill@melville.wa.gov.au](mailto:Wireless.Hill@melville.wa.gov.au)

This amazing tour contains the work of many people and organisations over time, allowing historic photography to be used in a new medium. The producers acknowledge the work of historical photographers Alfred Stone, James Manning, E.G. Rome, A.G. Sands, Reg Lambert, Melvin Vaniman, Nixon & Merilees, and Stuart Gore in capturing Perth and Fremantle so long ago in such vivid detail.

Friends of the Battye Library are proud of their role in ensuring the conservation of eight of the ten panoramas used in this amazing project.

### Panoramas in the Society's Collection

The Society holds a small number of panorama photographs, featuring Albany Harbour, Perth, Greenough, Fremantle and the Goldfields. One of them marks the memorable occasion of the departure of our troop ships carrying the Australian contingent from Albany in 1915.

## Congratulations Marlene!

Library volunteer Marlene Anderson recently published *Ledge Point: A Town of Innovation and Achievement*. It is a valuable history book and the high quality of its research has now been recognised in its short-listing for the 2016 Margaret Medcalf Award. The annual award has been presented since 2003 and rewards excellence in research and referencing using the State Archives Collection. Well-done Marlene!

## Affiliates News

**City of South Perth Historical Society** newsletter has reproduced a sketch by Margaret Smith of the Mends St area in the 1920s. Sue Clarke was the writer/researcher. The accompanying key compiled by Pat Morrison names the homeowners, businesses, government offices and recreation areas together with short reminiscences about many of them. 'Bags of peanuts destined to be shared between the children and the Zoo's monkeys were a good seller. Mrs Sprunt Jr also had a steady demand for her home-churned icecream'. 'The Chinese were very friendly to the young and gave us jars of ginger at Christmas'. The sketch with its key is a very effective way to present the landscape of the urban past.

On 2 September **Geraldton Historical Society** will celebrate the 50th Anniversary of operation of a heritage museum with a photographic exhibition of the district's early pioneers. Descendants will be invited to visit the Lighthouse Cottage Museum and provide their details. The team hopes to gather lots of information which will be useful for people looking for family history and give an insight into the pioneers' descendants.

**WA Police Historical Society's** *Peelers Gazette* tells the story of a twelve-week police patrol mounted in 1931 to travel from Laverton to the Rawlinson Ranges to investigate reports of the deaths by spearing of a young South Australian man named Brown and his companion. The police party consisted of four police officers, three horses and twelve camels pulling a dray and carrying supplies. After three camels died and with water growing increasingly scarce, the fruitless search was abandoned. The patrol is noteworthy for its early police use of mobile wireless communication over a very long distance. The article is brought to life by some wonderful images.

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July's **Friends of Battye** newsletter contains interesting information about Reg Lambert (1896-1995). He established Lambert & Son photographic studio in Kalgoorlie and another in Bunbury, and became well known for his panoramic photographs. If you are interested, Battye Library holds his oral history (OH294) and a collection of his panoramas. Over a long and productive life, he became one of Western Australia's significant commercial photographers.

**WAGS** has introduced its new look, full-colour journal *Western Ancestor* and it is a splendid production, very appealing to read. You might find interesting Peter Conole's article on 'The Stormy

Petrel – Edmund Du Cane of the Royal Engineers'. Du Cane was indeed a lively and over-confident fellow! At the other end of the class structure in 19<sup>th</sup> century English society was the Spratt family whose story has been pieced together by a descendant, Jane Hutchison. Using the resources of Ancestry and convict records, Jane uncovers something of the family's 'rogues and vagabonds'.

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## Remembering Them – New Norcia launches its exhibition



*Kind Lord, look down on grieving hearts,  
Hear sorrow's plaintive wail,  
In mercy, Thou Who rulest all,  
Let Right, not Might, prevail.  
Soon may bright Victory's angel,  
Above the troubled world,  
Proclaim the cruel sword insheathed,  
The flag of Peace unfurled.*

St Ildephonsus' College, Aug. 1915.



In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, after more than fifty years as a bush mission for Aboriginal people under Rosendo Salvado's leadership, New Norcia began a new era as a small

European-style town providing secondary boarding education for country students and pastoral care for the surrounding rural parishes. Work with Aboriginal people continued but was now principally institutional care for children. Economically these were difficult years for New Norcia; building costs had left the cupboard bare and, as a result of a huge reduction in leased landholdings, income had fallen significantly.



This interesting exhibition explores the impact of World War I on the four communities making up New Norcia at that time – the monastic community; the sisters and

Aboriginal children in St Mary's and St Joseph's, and the Aboriginal people in the old mission cottages; the school community at St Gertrude's and St Ildephonsus' Colleges; and the surrounding farming community of the Victoria Plains.

A trip to New Norcia promises an informative and enjoyable experience. Do pay a visit!

**Museum Hours:** Open 9.30am-4.30pm daily.



Our next **Second Hand Book Sale** will be held on 1-2 April 2017. Please bring any books you no longer want to Stirling House or call the Office on 9386 3841 to arrange a pick up. Many thanks in anticipation.

## Of gold, plague and coffee palaces

Tearooms and coffee shops we know ... but coffee palaces? What were these exotic establishments and how did they fit into the local Perth scene? A request for information about coffee palaces in Perth between 1890 and 1930 arrived recently at the Library.

The clue, I discovered, was ‘temperance hotels’. Originally established by the temperance movement in England in the 1830s, coffee palaces were alcohol-free places of relaxation for the working classes – an alternative to the pub. Soon they included accommodation.

Coffee palaces arrived in Australia with the gold rushes, most impressively as grand Victorian temperance hotels in Marvellous Melbourne in the 1870s and in Perth in the 1890s. Here, although they included large hotels such as the **Britannia** in William Street, they were mostly residential boarding houses for the crowds of gold seekers, mainly single men from Victoria and South Australia. Many were Wesleyans and Methodists for whom alcohol-free coffee palaces were a cheaper and more acceptable alternative to hotels. They were also popular with families.

In 1904 Wise’s Post Office Directory lists 21 entries under the heading ‘Coffee Palaces’ in WA. Only five (in Perth and Fremantle) were specifically titled ‘Coffee Palace’; the rest, listed under the proprietor’s name, were probably boarding houses. Many were built in suburbs and country towns, including mining towns and coastal holiday resorts.

The *Western Mail* reported that the foundation stone of the two-storey **Rechabite Coffee Palace**, one of the first in Perth, was laid with great ceremony in Murray Street in August 1892 by the Independent Order of Rechabites. They were supported by the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and the Salvation Army, and many of the large crowd wore the regalia of their temperance societies.



The Rechabite Coffee Palace, next to Boan Bros in Wellington Street in 1911. P1999.6408

Other popular Perth coffee palaces included the **Railway Coffee Palace** on the other side of Boans in Wellington Street and the **Royal Coffee Palace** in Murray Street.



Royal Coffee Palace, 165-7 Murray Street, 1911. The Australia Hotel is next door. P1999.2790.

Not all the ‘palaces’, however, lived up to their name or the hopes of City of Perth’s Health Department, which licensed them under the general heading of ‘common lodging house’. While some were satisfactorily run and moderately priced (according to their advertisements at least), there were also lurid stories in the press and debates about the difference between coffee palaces and doss houses.



Britannia Hotel, 245-265 William Street, formerly the Britannia Coffee Palace. Photo: Glynn Standring. M2012\_693.jpg

The **Beatrice Coffee Palace** in Murray Street, Perth, hit the headlines on 18 April 1901 when two cases of bubonic plague were found there – a child Laura Genge (4),

daughter of proprietor CW Genge, and a contact, cook Henry Cuthbert. The patients were promptly removed by rail and road to the quarantine station at Woodman’s Point. ‘Owing to the large number of people living in the coffee palace, and the very insanitary condition in which it was found to be, Dr Black decided that all ‘contacts’ [forty in all] should be forthwith sent to the quarantine station’, the *Daily News* reported. The Coffee Palace building was isolated and fully fumigated.

Surviving former coffee palaces include the federation **Britannia Hotel** (now a backpackers’ hostel) in William St, built in 1897 by Chapman and Finch. A third storey and the iconic corner turret were added in 1903.



Sproules, formerly Sproules Coffee Palace, Stirling Highway, Cottesloe, built 1903-4. Photo: Hilaire Natt.

Another is **Sproule’s Coffee Palace** on Stirling Highway, Cottesloe. Originally the site of a restaurant opened by Elizabeth Sproule for the workers on the Perth-Fremantle railway, a temperance hotel was built there in 1903-4 by owner/

builder Francis Sproule. Although the interior has been extensively altered, the exterior remains close to the original. It is heritage-listed as an important Federation Free style commercial building.

By the 1930s the demand for temperance accommodation had declined and some coffee palaces became licensed hotels.

**Hilaire Natt, Library Volunteer**

*In each month's issue of History West members read about History in the City's interesting historical talks organised by the Auxiliary. But what do you know of the Auxiliary and its contribution to the life of the Society? Here is the Auxiliary's story told by its President Lorraine Tholet.*



Mrs Pat Shears, Auxiliary President 1972-1998  
P1999\_6747

The Auxiliary has not always been known by this name. It began in 1928 with the creation of a Ladies' Social Committee with Mrs Minnie Eggleston as its energetic secretary. For two decades until her death in 1954 she ensured the committee kept busy and productive. Social activities over the years included many fundraising events: fashion parades,

Foundation Day parties and informal afternoon-tea meetings at Boan's tearooms, with talks about pioneering days. Miss Dircksey Cowan, Miss Aileen Harper, Mrs Helen Hall and Mrs G. Barrett-Lennard led these gatherings.

With the purchase of Stirling House, the Women's Auxiliary was formally constituted in 1964. It was authorised to manage its own affairs and to hold social events to attract women members and raise funds for the Society's new headquarters. It still doubled as the Society's social committee, providing suppers for monthly general meetings and special occasions. Mrs Ray Oldham became the first president with Miss Edith Pearse secretary.

Auxiliary members immediately got busy. A bridge party was followed by a social afternoon at which embroidery from the museum collection was displayed and an Embroidery Guild member explained the making of a 19<sup>th</sup> century quilt. A film evening was also held. These fundraising efforts equipped Stirling House kitchen to cater for 60 people, a very useful achievement.

In 1972 Mrs Pat Shears became president and led the Auxiliary for 26 years until her death in 1998 with Mrs Mary Mellor as secretary from 1977 to 1999. In the 1970s large social functions were held at the Parmelia and Sheraton hotels as well as monthly 'at homes' and a sesquicentenary ball in 1979.

In 1999, Mrs Win Cann was nominated for president and accepted, stating that she would give a maximum of two years to the position. In fact she remained for fifteen years. Mrs Cann continued with the successful monthly 'at homes' as well as other events, all contributing to the preservation of our heritage. Meetings were held at the May Holman Centre at 32 St George's Terrace, then moving in 1991 to the Concourse at Perth Railway Station. Reaction from the

public was positive and the more central venue proved very popular.

For some time, however, members had felt that the people might consider that the talks were for women only, as they were held under the auspices of the Women's Auxiliary. A change of title was needed; so, in March 2007, the first monthly meeting was held under the banner of History in the City. The Auxiliary also holds an annual morning tea, usually in August, at Stirling House in Nedlands and attracts a wide audience.

Over the years, the topics of monthly talks have covered a wide range of subjects and have explored the contributions of many of those who have come to Western Australia, either willingly or not, or who have been born here. Talks recognise the contribution made by the original owners, the Aboriginal community, as well as people from many other countries, who have become part of Western Australian history. The broad mix of subjects has extended our knowledge of the development of our State, and has given us an insight into the struggles as well as the successes of the very diverse population which makes up WA. And delicious afternoon teas always wind up proceedings happily.

After serving as president for fifteen years, Mrs Cann handed the banner to Mrs Lorraine Tholet in 2014. Mrs Cann has maintained her interest in the Auxiliary and in History in the City, and attends all the talks, where she is always welcomed by longstanding members of the audience. In November 2013, the Society held a 'thank you' lunch for Win, which was attended by all members of the committee and other Society members.

For over nine decades the Auxiliary's fundraising has contributed substantially to support furnishings and amenities at Stirling House as well as the restoration of historic items in the Museum and Library collection.

Would you like to assist the Auxiliary by helping with monthly activities? You would be most welcome. We have an active committee but more hands are always needed. Contact the Office on 9386 3841 if you would like to find out more.

**Lorraine Tholet**



**The Auxiliary Committee 2013**

L to R: Ann Willis, Val Carlson, Jill Simon, Win Cann, Lorraine Tholet, Jennifer Wildy, Alison Fyfe, Diana Quintero

## Debunking some myths

Many of us have enjoyed reading Gillian Lilleyman's previous histories – [A Garden on the Margaret](#) and (with George Seddon) [A Landscape for Learning, a history of the grounds of UWA](#). Gillian is currently annotating the diary of Frances Louisa (Fanny) Brockman. Come along on Tuesday 23 August to the Auxiliary's morning tea to hear her speak on this interesting subject. Gillian has found a number of stories that are almost certainly myths. Here she tells us of two of them.

Two mythic stories entrenched in the early history of Margaret River concern Aboriginal identities **Samuel Isaacs and Ngilgi** and how they first arrived at the Bussell property, Ellensbrook: Ngilgi abandoned as a baby when her mother was frightened away from the potato patch; and Samuel Isaacs a small curly-haired boy upset over losing Colonel John Molloy's pigs.

According to an unpublished manuscript in the Battye Library these scenarios are embellishments. The manuscript, 'This Green Corner', was written in the 1940s by Athol Fergusson Stewart, a great-grandson of Ellen and Alfred Bussell. Stewart did not cite his references, beyond that he drew upon family letters, a letter book and three family diaries; but judging from the time span his narrative covers, his most important source was a diary which Ellen Bussell kept between 1857 and 1865.

Most of what is known about Ngilgi is based on the records of Daisy Bates, who befriended Ngilgi in the early 1900s when she was living on an Aboriginal reserve on the outskirts of Perth. Impressed by her knowledge of English customs and language, Bates questioned Ngilgi about her background, and recorded that Ngilgi was born in a settler's potato field just as her mother, Wooragan, was about to be arrested for potato stealing, whereupon mother and baby were taken in and cared for by the settler's wife. Even though Bates located the field elsewhere, the story was further romanticised and it became the potato patch at Ellensbrook.



Ngilgi and companions ca1900  
Courtesy: State Library of WA 009482PD

Athol Stewart described Ngilgi as a tribal Aboriginal girl whom Ellen took in to help with the dairying when Mary Smith left to be married in 1860. As Ellen complained of Ngilgi neglecting the cows to go

off seeking edible roots and bardiies in the bush, she was more likely at least ten years old when she joined Ellen's household. Despite her shortcomings Ngilgi remained at Ellensbrook until around 1866, when she was employed by Charlotte Bussell at Cattle Chosen. By then Ngilgi, whose aptitude for work Charlotte also sometimes found wanting, was living with George Blechynden, or 'Whitey-brown George' as Ngilgi called her husband.

In her diary Fanny Brockman described 'old Nilgy too, nice old fat black thing' slowly following the sheep with George on Alfred Bussell's run at Donnelly River in 1870. Ngilgi and George later worked for Fanny and John Brockman at Ellensbrook, mostly shepherding down at Boranup. They are mentioned frequently in Fanny's diary until mid-1873, when they seem to have left; Fanny noting in August that John Brockman had settled up with George.

More has been documented about Samuel Isaacs because of his role in the *Georgette* rescue and the fact that he stayed living in the south-west, where he featured prominently in Fanny's diary. According to Athol Stewart, Samuel Isaacs was first mentioned in Ellen Bussell's diary in August 1859, when he accompanied Mary Smith to town to report the death of the Bussells' old servant, William Cheesewell. Sam was returning to his employer Vernon Bussell's property, Reinscourt, after delivering a mob of Vernon's cattle to be agisted at Ellensbrook. On another occasion Ellen noted that Vernon's stockmen stayed to mind his cattle.

Samuel Isaacs may well have been looking for Colonel Molloy's pigs when he arrived at a Bussell homestead. Given that Sam worked for Vernon, however, the homestead was not Ellensbrook, but Reinscourt; and it was Vernon's wife, Mary, who took him in, not Ellen. Vernon Bussell died in 1860 and Mary leased Reinscourt and returned to Adelaide. It was probably then that Sam began working at Ellensbrook.

These alternative scenarios assume that Stewart stayed true to his primary sources. That so much of his detailed narrative can be corroborated strongly suggests he did. Unfortunately, the two references which could confirm this, Ellen Bussell's diary and a letter book of Alfred's from the same period, have disappeared. They were catalogued by the Battye Library in 1961 but are now listed as missing. Hopefully these valuable records will resurface one day to finally debunk these and other myths about the settlement of this green corner of Western Australia.

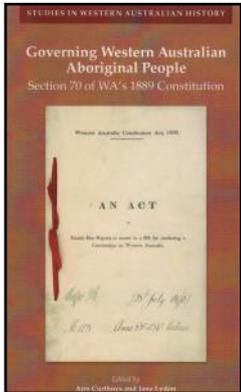
### References:

- M. Allbrook, *Henry Prinsep's Empire*, ANU ePress, ch. 5.
- Diary of Frances Louisa (Fanny) Brockman (née Bussell) 1872-1905, BL Acc. 938A.
- D. Bates, 'The Adventures of Ngilgian', MSS 572.994 B32t series 2. 4, library.adelaide.edu.au
- D. Bates, 'An Aboriginal's Adventures', *Western Mail*, 8 Feb. 1908, p. 44.
- Ellen Bussell's journal (22 Apr 1857-22 Nov 1864) was lent to the Battye Library for copying by Henrietta (Mrs Geoffrey) Drake-Brockman and restricted in 1961. The copy (MN586 Acc.1008A) is now listed as missing.
- A.F. Stewart, 'This Green Corner', BL MN 5068A/1. Athol Fergusson Stewart (b.1906) was the second son of James Edmund Fergusson Stewart and Enid Vernon Drake-Brockman, Grace Bussell's daughter.
- A.F. Stewart, 'Western Sussex', *Early Days*, 3 (10) 1948, p. 32.

Gillian Lilleyman

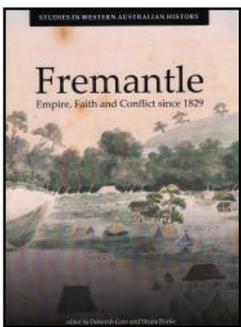
Two issues of the journal *Studies in Western Australian History* have recently been published with articles which may be of interest.

**Ann Curthoys & Jane Lydon (eds), *Governing Western Australian Aboriginal People. Section 70 of WA's 1889 Constitution. Studies in Western Australian History*, 30, 2016.**



The journal contains ten articles all relating to Section 70 of WA's 1889 Constitution which required that £5,000, and subsequently no less than 1% of gross revenue, 'be appropriated for the welfare of the Aboriginal Natives, and expended in providing them with food and clothing when they would otherwise be destitute, in promoting the education of Aboriginal children (including half-castes), and in assisting the preservation and well-being of the Aborigines'.

generally to promote the preservation and well-being of the Aborigines'.



**Deborah Gare & Shane Burke (eds), *Fremantle. Empire, Faith and Conflict since 1829. Studies in Western Australian History*, 31, 2016.**

The eleven articles in this issue are all concerned with aspects of the fabric of Fremantle's history from colonisation to the present.

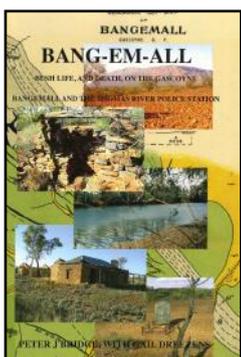
If you are interested in earlier volumes of *Studies in Western Australian History*, you will find most of them available in our Bookshop.

## Book Review

**Peter J. Bridge & Gail Dreezens, *Bang-em-all: Bush Life, and Death, on the Gascoyne*, Hesperian Press, 2013. In Library.**

**Peter J Bridge, *Top Camp, Soldiers Secret and the Ashburton Gold Rush*, Hesperian Press, 2015), 222 pages, Illustrated, Indexed. In Library.**

**Reviewer: Stephen Bartley**

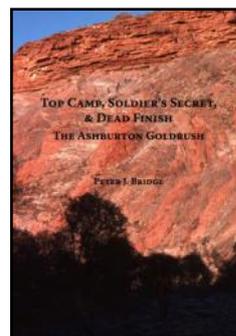


In the 1890s and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Bang-em-all, 290 km ENE of Carnarvon, was one of a number of localities in WA's northwest where prospectors searched for gold. The authors are upfront that the historical record is frustratingly incomplete but the use of first-hand narratives, sourced mostly from newspapers and police records, gives a sense of the times and the people.

The places we as readers are taken to, the Gascoyne and Ashburton interiors, are unvisited by large numbers of people, even in the modern era, not because of a lack of beauty or attraction but simply the land's remoteness and hazards. In the 1890s it was a waiting death for anyone but the most experienced bushmen, and even they, as we all too frequently read, perished trying to find the elusive 'reef'. As one local put it, 'Bangemall was not the end of the earth, but if you stood on the veranda you could see it'.

Themes that are repeated in first-hand accounts are the constant search for water, fires, flash floods, illness, lack of amusement, pining for mothers, wives and letters from home, heroic horses, high living expenses, frustration with bureaucracy, lack of government assistance, difficulties with Aboriginal people, and the nefarious ways of certain pastoral families.

The difficulty in policing the country is illuminated in the story of a Constable Hume, an ex-stockman of the old breed, who engaged in a duel of rat-cunning with a wily villain called Robinson. The felon's many sins, which included larceny, robbery under arms, shooting, escaping custody and horse stealing, had given Robinson a lifetime of experience in eluding the law. Hume soon realised he was up against a criminal who 'knew every trick in the book'. For weeks, the two men waged one of Australia's great epic chases that took the two master-bushmen across hundreds of miles of scrubby windswept country. When Hume finally brought Robinson to the lockup both men were burnt black, with wild shaggy beards, and covered in filth with bloodshot eyes. Hume, despite his astonishing efforts, was barely recognised by officialdom. In time he became as lost in the pages of history as the places that he and the old timers traversed.



*Bang-em-all* and its companion book, and others like it, give long overdue attention to this land and the era. It must have been a bittersweet place, where a lonely grave or a big strike could be just an hour away. Peter Bridge has trawled through the archives and delivered two books that give an intriguing insight into this rich and still somewhat uncharted history.

## Diary Dates

**Tue 23 Aug:** RWAHS Auxiliary Morning Tea Fundraiser with speaker Gillian Lilleyman *Dipping into a Diary: The journal of Frances Louisa Brockman*

**Fri / Sun 2-4 Sep:** RWAHS 52nd Annual State History Conference of Affiliated Societies hosted by the City of Armadale

## History in the City

Steve Howell gave our July talk, speaking about the history of the State Library, which began in 1889 with the opening of the Victoria Public Library. Steve took us on an interesting journey over 125 years. The library was originally named in honour of Queen Victoria's Silver Jubilee but the name was later changed to avoid confusion. The first building was in St George's Terrace. Initially there was a separate section for women visitors, and children were banned!

In 1894 James Sykes Battye was appointed as Chief Librarian. It was a strange setup from our contemporary point of view, with the main library upstairs and his house as part of the library building, and only one telephone servicing the entire building. Dr Battye stayed in the position for one month short of sixty years and died while negotiating the terms of his retirement.

Some of the complaints over the years concerned the lack of books for women, the concrete floors, which made the building very cold, and lack of staff to give assistance. Steve's talk was certainly a tour through library times.

Join us at 2pm on Wednesday 7 September at the Citiplace Community Centre on Perth Railway Concourse when Clare Menck will speak on '100 years of government in Western Australia'. Donation \$5 with afternoon tea, all welcome.

Lorraine Tholet



A group from Parkland Village, Booragoon, enjoyed a visit to the *Western Land* exhibition. Photograph by RWAHS Volunteer Jeremy Smith

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