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HISTORY WEST

PUBLISHED BY THE ROYAL WESTERN AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

April 2018

GENERAL MEETING

**The next meeting at Stirling House is on Wednesday 18 April at 6pm
when Ronald Bodycoat will present a paper on 'Art and Architecture in Perth:
A personal view of the decay of an ancient partnership'.
Refreshments available from 5.30pm; Bookshop open until 6pm.**



Opinions vary in the context of Art and Architecture. The aesthetic status of both is a challenge today where both are degraded, in the view of the author. The ancient partnership has been overlooked, more often than not. Artists and architects pursue the whims of their own fantasies, sometimes creating beautiful works but often bypassing the long-established principles of good design. The outcome has become 'anything goes' in an environment where the community is not consulted, and appears to have no voice in urban design nor in 'Street Art'. This talk explores the problems of a perceived neglect of order and discipline and the now common separation of Art and Architecture.

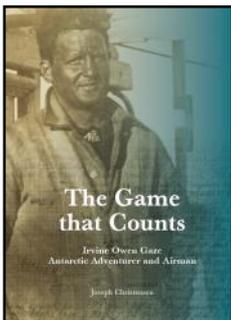
Ronald Bodycoat is an architect in private practice with extensive experience in conservation and heritage in the built environment throughout Western Australia. He is well-versed in the historical development of architecture in the State, is an artist himself and has strong views about the relationship between Art and Architecture. Ronald is a Life Fellow of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects and a past State and National President of that Institute; a Member of the Order of Australia and



recipient of a Centenary Medal, both for Services to Conservation and Heritage; an Honorary Life Member and Past President of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society during a membership of forty years. He is a Life Member of the National Trust of Australia (WA); an Honorary Freeman of the Town of Claremont; a member of Convocation at the University of Western Australia, and a Past President of the UWA Historical Society. He is currently Heritage Consultant to the University of Western Australia.

Book Launch Wed 18 April at 4.30pm at Stirling House

Joseph Christensen, *The Game that Counts. Irvine Owen Gaze Antarctic Adventurer and Airman*
(Centre for Western Australian History at The University of Western Australia, 2018)



All members are invited to hear the Hon. R D Nicholson launch this study of a man who went in search of adventure. Come and hear about an interesting life! 'Irvine Gaze's great-niece, Vivienne Stewart, is to be congratulated on her initiative in commissioning this book', writes Margaret Medcalf in her Foreword.

The book concentrates on Gaze's time from 1914 to 1917 as part of the Ross Sea Shore Party which was responsible for establishing supply depots to sustain Ernest Shackleton and his party on their proposed but ill-fated expedition to cross the Antarctic continent from the Weddell Sea. Gaze wrote a diary of his time in the Antarctic and it is used to good effect to tell this story of a man who grew up in Western Australia.

At its meeting held on 8 March business included the following where Council

• welcomed new members – Brendan Kelly, Lisa Rickert, Ronald Wilkie;

- expressed thanks for February's total of 1050 volunteer hours of work;
- welcomed a report from the Chair of Council of the successful visit to the Society of the Hon. D Templeman MLA, Minister for Local Government, Heritage, Culture and the Arts;
- thanked Lorraine Clarke, Vice-Chair of Council, for organising the series of popular talks to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the last convict transport, the *Hougoumont*;
- endorsed a submission on the City of Nedlands Draft Local Planning Scheme No.3 and thanked Neil Foley for his drafting and ongoing advice on the matter;
- welcomed the participation of 19 attendees at the successful Skills Development Seminar on 24-25 February and thanked Lorraine Clarke for her organisation;
- noted the progress of the Bequest Strategy Development;
- warmly endorsed the appointment of Maria Gillman – Principal Architect, Bos Architects – as the Society's Honorary Architect;
- agreed that the planning committee name 'Community History Centre' be changed to 'History West Community Centre';
- discussed the ongoing search for suitable premises in the vicinity of Stirling House to accommodate some of the Society's activities;
- subject to the agreement of Albie Williams, endorsed the proposal to open the A E Williams and Lee Steere publication prize to the general community;
- endorsed the revised RWAHS State History Conference of Affiliated Societies guidelines as prepared by the Affiliates Committee.

Lennie McCall Chairperson

History in the City

Our first talk for the year was given by James de Leo on Western Australia's military sites. (Roy Stall, who had been scheduled to speak, was indisposed but will present later in the year). James' talk took us on an interesting journey. In addition to those in the metropolitan area, WA had a number of military sites in the regions; for example, in Cunderdin and Albany. As early as 1862, WA had a convict-built rifle range on what later became King's Park.

When the Boer War broke out, the Australian colonies, as part of the British Empire, offered troops for the war. The Australians were recognised as excellent horsemen and it was during the Boer War that the slouch hat became part of our history. Rottneest was used for military training until World War I and then provided camps for German and Austrian internees and for prisoners of war. Following that war, there was a feeling that WA should increase its defences. In 1935 Rottneest became the site of a main link in a series of gun placements. Many of those present remembered the events of World War II – Pearl Harbour, guns at Leighton, the Catalina flying boats, US submarines and the increasing part played by our women in defence.

James also spent a few minutes talking about Anzac Cottage, built in a day in Mt Hawthorn in 1915 and given as a gift to a wounded veteran. It was a memorial to soldiers who died in the Gallipoli campaign.

History in the City is held on the first Wednesday of each month from March to December. Our talk for May 2018 will be held on 2 May when Tammy-Rae Schaper and Janet McCallum will speak on 'The Young Australia League: the past, present and future of the oldest youth organisation in Australia'. Join us at 2pm at the Citiplace Community Centre on Perth Railway Concourse. Donation \$5 with afternoon tea, all welcome.

Lorraine Tholet

KATANNING TOUR 6-9 August 2018 Register your expression of interest!

Travel down on Monday 6 August; return to Perth Thursday 9 August. Self-drive or TransWA bus. 3 nights accommodation with tours of many interesting agricultural and other historical sites. Full Itinerary & Cost TBA in June *History West*. Numbers for the tour are not limited at this stage, but please register your interest so that we can proceed with planning.

Tel. +61 89 386 3841
Email: admin@histwest.org.au

Diary Dates

Sun 6 May: RWAHS Open Day

Fri 25 May: Booked in for a Cuppa

Sun 3 June: Pioneers Memorial Service East Perth Cemeteries



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Commemorating the 150th anniversary of convict transportation's end in 1868



Councillor and Fellow of the Society Dr Pamela Statham Drew drew an over-capacity crowd to hear her talk on convictism in Western Australia on Sunday 11 February. Here Pamela provides us with a taste, focusing on why transportation ended.

Three reasons are usually given for the decision to end transportation to WA in 1868.

Firstly, English attitudes to transportation had become negative, partly because of the influence of the anti-slavery campaigns, and partly because of the shortage of labour for English infrastructure projects. For example, in 1864 the Director of the Public Works Department told the Colonial Office that 'In the extensive works proposed at Portsmouth dockyard there is ample work for the number of men currently transported for years to come'. [British Parliamentary Papers 1865 Discontinuance of Transportation, p. 45.]

The second reason was that people in both WA and England were horrified at the revelations in the 1867 Inquiry into Governor Hampton's treatment of convicts. This showed that both the Governor and his son George (appointed Comptroller of Prisons by his father) had used excessively harsh treatment of the convicts under their care. For example, the number of lashes assigned for various offences was double that which the law allowed; the instrument (the cat-of-nine-tails) used to inflict them was illegal; and men had been kept in solitary confinement and irons for more than nine months, which was also illegal.

And the third reason was the threatened trade boycott by the eastern colonies if Britain did not cease transportation to the west. These colonies complained bitterly from about 1860 that ex-convicts from WA were arriving and ruining their reputations. A strong Anti-Transportation League was formed which sent voluminous petitions to London demanding that transportation be stopped. The League, with backing from the Victorian Legislative Council, also strongly

encouraged the other colonies to join them in refusing to allow any ship that had docked in WA to land. If successful, this would have amounted to a trade boycott, which would have lowered Britain's revenue from duties. In the event, the colonies could not agree to conditions of the boycott so it never eventuated, but the threat had definitely had effect, as the Secretary of State for Colonies admitted that 'the interests and feelings of the neighbouring communities has weighed materially' in the decision to discontinue transportation.

However there was a fourth reason, never before mentioned, for the decision. And it is found in a letter from the Secretary of State for Colonies to George Grey, the Governor of New Zealand, in November 1864 stating that 'the immediate occasion for this decision [to end transportation] has been the necessity for the issue of regulations for the disposal of Crown Lands in the newly explored district of WA'. This district in the northwest Kimberley around Brecknock Harbour was believed to contain 5.5 million acres of good land capable of carrying 3.5 million sheep. Governor Hampton wanted to throw the new land open and begged for appropriate regulations. As Crown Land was then selling in the northern parts of South Australia and other colonies for 7 shillings and 6 pence, the Colonial Office could see a very profitable venture occurring but, given prevailing attitudes, only if it was free of convicts. As no colony could have two opposing systems operating at the same time, transportation to WA had to cease.

Slowly all the government procedures were gone through until the last convict ship left England to arrive in WA on 9 January 1868. This was the *Hougoumont*. On board were 279 convicts and 108 passengers, most of whom were pensioner guards and their families. Amongst the convicts were 62 Fenian political prisoners, transported for their part in the Fenian Rising of 1867.

But remember that the convicts who disembarked from this ship were only starting their sentences – and the shortest sentence was some seven years. Many faced a life sentence – though this could always be remitted for good behaviour. So there were convicts in the system for 20 or more years after the *Hougoumont* reached our shores. According to Gillian O'Mara, the last transported convict died in 1939. Clearly convictism did not stop in 1868.

All in all Western Australia's convicts left a very positive legacy – the large brick buildings they constructed – the Town Hall and Government House plus the remnant of the Barracks – will stand for ever, giving Perth its character. They helped to make the colony a viable entity, providing the capital and labour the colony needed to thrive. So we honour them all – craftsmen and larrikins, drunkards and thieves, rogues and recidivists, and real pioneers – they helped make us who we are!

Dr Pamela Statham Drew

Museum News – from the Costume Collection

The Secret Life of the Handkerchief

The perfectly ordinary old-fashioned handkerchief never wins prizes in the fashion stakes, never attains star ranking and is not expensive to buy. But by having us believe its single purpose is for nose blowing, it hides an amazing history. In recent years made virtually redundant by boxes of disposable tissues with fancy aromatic names, the genuine hanky, not so easily disposed of, has survived, earning itself a mention in fashion's history.

In the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, men squandered their estate's revenue to buy new clothes and accessories like lace handkerchiefs, making fashion statements to impress others at court. A man of means would display his decorative lace handkerchief (never used for blowing) prominently in a special pocket suspended from his girdle, signifying his wealth and status.



A century later, and more commercially aware, society was printing street maps of England on large silk handkerchiefs with details of towns and their market days. These were essential aids for chapmen and hawkers who walked miles to sell their wares to poorer village people. Businesses quick to recognise their advertising power, printed moralistic tales titled

“industry and idleness” onto cotton handkerchiefs and distributed them around work places, with pictures chronicling the lives of industrious workers like William Goodchild, comparing him to lazy servants like Jack Idle.

The handkerchief's survival depended on its ability to adapt to society's changes. With the rise of snuff taking in the 18th century, it became essential for wiping faces, moustaches and hands after sniffing. It is said that Queen Charlotte, nicknamed Snuffy Charlotte, took such enormous quantities from her gold snuff box that her nose quivered; she had one room at Windsor Castle devoted entirely to her stock of snuff. As snuff's popularity rose, so too did the size, design and price of the handkerchief, four shillings for silk or patterned, two shillings with initials or one shilling for plain. Snuff stained the handkerchief's silk or linen fabric, so coloured circular centres were inserted into the squares with busy borders, which helped to disguise brown marks.

The fashionable way of men dangling their handkerchiefs from coat pockets was irresistible to pickpockets. James Daley was hanged at Sydney Cove in 1788 for stealing one from a fellow convict and many others were transported for seven years, or life, depending on the size and quality of the stolen hanky. In 1830, two young men were hanged at the Old Bailey for stealing silk handkerchiefs worth three shillings each.

Swan River Colony's settlers in 1833 bought their snuff in canisters from the boats: “snuff boxes of

superior quality”, black, silk, cotton, and pocket size handkerchiefs, and bottles of lavender water and eau-de-cologne. In 1846, a silver snuff box cost £5 and good quality handkerchiefs around four shillings each. Swan River colonial Gerald de Courcey Lefroy wrote that he'd treated himself to “3 white handkerchiefs and some scent” – expensive treats!



The handkerchief's shape changed again from large to pocket size, and colonial ladies busied themselves embroidering them with designs similar to these from a paper pattern book (c1819) in the Society's Library.

The costume collection holds many fine examples of handkerchiefs decorated with silks and laces, one commemorating Queen Victoria's Jubilee.

Fern designs were popular, reflecting the Victorian craze for ferneries and conservatories, the cool green silk thread thought appropriate for ladies to use, calming to their nerves, unlike erotic reds and yellows.

One large cream silk handkerchief has an Australian story to tell with immense power to move. Embroidered with his initials, it belonged to jockey Horace Dawes.

Horace, young and unassuming, brought up in a horseracing dynasty, won the Port of Adelaide Cup at just twelve years old. In 1894, still only seventeen years old, he rode his horse ‘Patron’ in the Melbourne Cup before a huge crowd cheering wildly for the favorite ‘Ruenalf’.

Against all odds, Horace, ‘Patron’ and trainer Richard Bradfield snatched the Cup in



an historic victory, making Australian turf history by beating the shortest priced favorite on record. Never before had the public bet so heavily on the wrong horse.

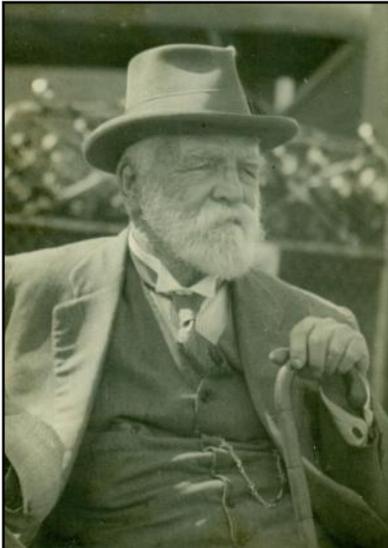
At the height of this fame, ‘Patron’ was sold as a stud to the German army to sire their cavalry horses, leaving a lingering possibility that several German mounts encountered by allied troops in World War 1 were descendants of the Melbourne Cup winner. In March 1900, Melbourne's *Argus* newspaper reported Horace Dawes death from brain concussion after a race fall. He was 23 years old.

His great nephew John Coleman gave his handkerchief to the RWHS collection in 1997.

Jo Pearson

Spotlight on Members' Research

Member **Dr Peter Gifford** will be known to many members as a well-published historian who explores the painful historical terrain of Aboriginal-settler relations. Perhaps you have read *Black and white and in between: Arthur Dimer and the Nullarbor* (2002). Peter has also undertaken extensive research on Mardie Station and here he shares with us his knowledge of A R Richardson, pastoralist and politician.



Alexander Robert Richardson (1847-1931) grew up in Victoria but came to the Pilbara as a young man, one of its earliest European settlers. His interest in Mardie Station spanned more than 30 years, during which he also invested in Oakabella, Yarra, Tallering and Boodarrie stations. He represented the

North of Western Australia in the Legislative Council from 1887 to 1890, and De Grey in the Legislative Assembly from 1890 to 1897, also being appointed Commissioner of Crown Lands in 1894.

Richardson was the author in the 1880s of comments about the Ngarluma and other Pilbara Indigenous people in E M Curr's pioneering four-volume work of Australian ethnology, *The Australian Race: Its Origins, Languages and Customs*. Richardson's own *Early Memories Of The Great Nor-West* was published in Perth in 1914. The South Australian Museum ethnologist Norman Tindale regarded Richardson as one of Curr's better contributors. As Tindale's biographer Dr Philip Jones of the SA Museum has noted, Tindale's tribal map of Australia, first published in 1940 and revised in 1974 together with his encyclopaedia of Aboriginal tribal groups, was radical in its fundamental implication that Australia was not *terra nullius* – decades before the Mabo judgement made it a national issue. In June 1953, while conducting fieldwork at Roebourne, Tindale commented:

Curr's Australian Race volume 1...checked... with present day Ngaluma. It matches. Most of the errors in it are of two kinds (a) mistakes in reading or proof-reading e.g. Markand River an obvious error for Maitland River and (b) errors due to the deficiencies in Curr's phonetic

vehicle or rather that of his informant, as rewritten by Curr.

On the whole I am very impressed with the standards of accuracy that this informant [Richardson] attained, and the value of this near century old parallel to data obtainable today.

John Forrest, former surveyor and explorer, led a government throughout the 1890s which was not party-based in any formal sense, but in which he could count on the support of his brother Alexander, the editor of the *West Australian*, Sir John Hackett, and old pastoralist friends such as Richardson and E T Hooley. Richardson in fact was expected to succeed Forrest as premier in 1897, but stood aside after a disagreement with Forrest over land policy.

Although originally a Victorian himself, Richardson and some of his fellow settlers from the east had by the 1890s become entrenched in the pastoralist elite of the western colony, and had no time for 'the spirit that more frequently moves our more up-to-date politicians – to deal out short shrift and little quarter to all and sundry who may belong to the class of settlers considered to be pastoralists.'

By 'up-to-date politicians', Richardson was referring to the then newly-formed Australian Labor Party, whose foundations in Western Australia were among more recent arrivals from the east during the gold rushes of the 1890s, and who brought with them notions of democracy and trade unionism anathema to the pastoralist hegemony which they challenged. Such men included the Irish nationalist goldfields newspaper editor Hugh Mahon, and John Scaddan, the South Australian-born son of a Cornish miner. Scaddan came to Kalgoorlie in 1896 and became in 1911 the first man to lead a state Labor government with a substantial majority. Richardson's reflections were published during a period when Labor had already held power briefly both nationally and in Western Australia. Despite the rancour in these reflections, he was correct in one point at least, that

Whatever the terms and privileges were that the government of the country [WA] offered to any and all who would go out and occupy and stock up these lands, *these offers were open to all*. There was no privileged class among the people to whom the offers or terms of the leases were confined; anyone who cared or dared to go could claim the privileges by complying with the conditions.

Anyone, that is, apart from the Aboriginal people whose land it had been for thousands of years. Despite his undoubtedly expert knowledge of Aboriginal people and their culture, that irony was entirely lost on Richardson.

Dr Peter Gifford

Affiliates & Other News

On Australia Day this year the **Brookton and Districts Historical Society** received the Community Event Award for its Remembering Them Exhibition. The award is given to a group of four or more people who conduct an event, project or activity that promotes Brookton and/or raises money for a community charity, event or project. Community members are encouraged to nominate organisations or people for the award. The Historical Society, which manages the Brookton Museum and Heritage Centre, participated in the Remembering Them project and launched the exhibition on Australia Day 2017. On the day 120 people signed the visitors book, with many descendants of those from Brookton who enlisted in World War I travelling from all over the State to attend. Throughout 2017 the Museum continued to receive visitors to view the exhibition, with many leaving positive and encouraging comments. We were honoured to receive visitors from South Africa and England who had changed their travel itinerary to Western Australia especially to visit Brookton and Remembering Them. This is the Historical Society's second Community Event Award, the first was for the Centenary Celebrations of our Museum building, the original Police Station and Quarters built in 1913. As well the Brookton and Districts Historical Society would like to congratulate the Brookton Country Club Golf, who also received a Community Event Award this year for the State Sand Greens Golf Competition they held in August 2017.



Back Left to Right: Jackie Allington, Tricia Stewart, Suzanne Turner and Jan Eva.
Front Left to Right: Ross Parrick, Katrina Crute, Ellen Parrick, Carol Bond and Lyn Young.
Photographer Judith Williams

Bridgetown Historical Society is holding an exhibition of photographs of Bridgetown men who died serving in World War I to commemorate their memory at the 100th anniversary of the end of the war. The exhibition will run until June. The Society will also hold an exhibition celebrating 150 years since Bridgetown's gazettal in 1868. This photographic exhibition at the Bridgetown Police Station Museum

will lead visitors through the decades, showing how the town and its people have evolved into the current, vibrant town, and will display maps of the town site to show its rapid growth. This exhibition coincides with the Bridgetown-Greenbushes Shire full day event: *From Geegelup to Bridgetown – 150 years – Our Home*, which will be celebrated on 9 June.

Fremantle History Society pays warm tribute to David Hutchison (1927-2017). A man of many skills, David was inaugural curator of history at the WA Museum. He had wide cultural interests – sketching and painting, researching and writing – and enjoyed a long and productive life. He will be greatly missed in Fremantle, and by all of us.

Congratulations to the Secretary of the **Maylands Historical & Peninsula Association**, Roger Tomlins, who was awarded the Senior Citizen of the Year by the City of Bayswater. The Association has begun its busy year in 2018; one task being undertaken is to make a submission regarding the future of the Maylands Brickworks.

Rockingham District Historical Society reports on several donations to its museum collection, one being a piece of embroidery by Jack Hymus done while he was convalescing from Great War injuries. It depicts the Australian and British flags with a bulldog in the middle. This donation reminds us of the popularity of embroidery as a convalescent activity in military hospitals during and after the war.

* * * * *

Two **Australian-Irish Heritage Association** events scheduled for April will interest Society members. First, the *Catalpa* Commemoration at the *Catalpa* Memorial, Rockingham Beach, at 11am on Easter Monday, 2 April. (Bookings recommended 9592 8881) Second, the Mary Durack Lecture at the Irish Club Theatre Subiaco on Sunday 22 April at 3pm. Peter Conole will speak on 'Charles Fitzgerald in colonial Western Australia' and there will be live music.

Enderslea Farm will be the venue for three performances of 'Sarah of Enderslea Farm' (by director Jenny Davis and producer Diane Pope) on 18, 19 and 20 May. Sarah and Henry Morley arrived in Swan River Colony in January 1830 while their future son-in-law arrived on the convict transport *Mindan* in 1851. Early bookings recommended. See <http://www.endersleafarm.com>

The **Shire of York's Residency Museum** will be holding a major World War 1 exhibition in the historic York Town Hall, part of the Remembering Them program commemorating a centenary of service. The exhibition will run from ANZAC Day, 25 April, until 25 July and will have free entry. It has a strong focus on the human stories of the war, particularly focusing on the viewpoint of the people of York. It will be well worth a visit.

‘Spring Clean Your Collection’ Museum Workshop

Many thanks to the busy President of Brookton and Districts Historical Society, Ellen Parrick, for taking the time to tell us all about the two-day museum skills development seminar organised by Councillor Lorraine Clarke.

On the weekend of 24 and 25 February, approximately 22 people from as far away as Port Hedland, Newman, Cunderdin, Albany and all points between gathered at Stirling House for this workshop. Natalie Evans, Culture with a K - Museum Consultant, presented a very lively and informative program.



The aim was to demonstrate how to use the National Standards for Museums and Galleries to the best advantage when reviewing your Museum’s policies, procedures and plans, whether it is managed by paid or unpaid staff. A range of policies was discussed, including mission statement, collection, acquisition, interpretation, de-accession and disposal, storage, transport, and the legal aspects and importance of having policies in place in a museum.



Natalie presented a concise version of the National Standards that enabled everyone to understand the importance of collection governance. This assists when developing policies and procedures relating to all aspects of managing museums and collections – from a mission statement that answers the question about why we exist to setting goals about what we want to achieve; strategies on how we are going to do it; and

what resources, people, time and materials are required. The RWAHS kindly agreed to the use of its mission statement as an example for everyone to read and make comment on.

The collection policy was identified as one of the important documents required by a museum. Other policies follow under that policy by taking headings from the collection policy and further developing them into separate policies.

On Sunday Wendy Lugg and Val Hutch took us on a tour of the RWAHS Collection. We discovered that they too have storage problems and are working under very trying conditions, just like so many museums across the State. The interaction between the participants brought out the willingness within the museums industry to share knowledge and skills, which doesn’t happen in so many other areas.

The RWAHS volunteers provided morning and afternoon tea along with a scrumptious lunch on both days. After the close of the workshop on Saturday many participants adjourned to Steve’s in Nedlands for a drink, a social catch-up and the all-important networking. On Sunday we were invited to stay and have a farewell drink and nibbles with the RWAHS volunteers and continue networking.

All present enjoyed the workshop and felt empowered to return to their institutions and either review or begin writing their mission statement and policies. The RWAHS advised that they are planning to hold further personal development workshops in 2018, news which was received positively by all present.

Ellen Parrick, Brookton Historical Society

Our grateful thanks to two volunteers who are leaving us (temporarily we hope!)

Other pressing demands on their time have led two of our busy volunteers to decide that they cannot continue volunteering with us at present.

Glenda Bye cannot continue in her role as Bookshop Officer given her increased paid work this year. Glenda’s role in leading the Bookshop team, coordinating its activities and ordering stock has been invaluable, and we will miss her greatly. Our gratitude and good wishes, Glenda.

Graham Grundy is also in demand, particularly as President of the Irwin Districts Historical Society, and therefore cannot continue volunteering at the Society on the Museum Committee and representing the Affiliates on Council. Thank you, Graham, for the many things you have done in the time you have been with us.

We hope to see them both return in the future if their life trajectories bend our way.

Little Athletics Western Australia

Little Athletics Western Australia has been a part of the lives of thousands of families for 50 years. The Association celebrated this milestone at a function and exhibition on 24 February supported by equipment from the Royal Western Australian Historical Society.

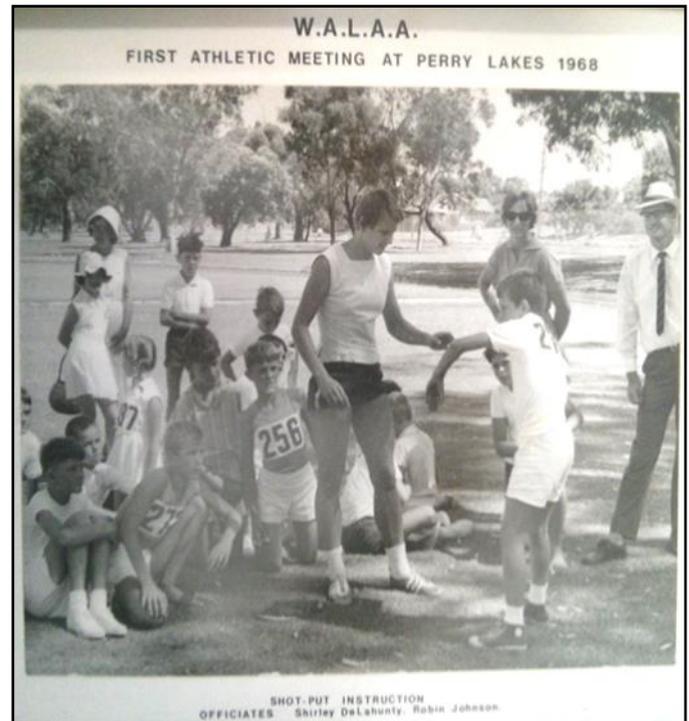
Many will have fond memories of their days “at the track” on a hot Saturday morning. Whether you were an athlete running from one event to another, laughing with your friends; or a parent timing races, or raking pits; or a dedicated volunteer organising events and officials, we all have a story to tell. Some participated for short periods, while others continued their family involvement across several generations. There is no doubt that the concept of adapting a sport to meet the needs of children through the use of modified equipment and rules is one still enjoyed by thousands of children across our state and beyond.

Under the leadership of Robin Johnson, and with the assistance of Shirley de la Hunty, the first Little Athletics competition in WA was held on 17 February 1968 at Perry Lakes Stadium. On that day 200 young athletes attended. Fifty years later, Little Athletics Western Australia has grown to over 9000 young athletes aged between 5 and 17 participating weekly at one of 36 centres established throughout metropolitan and regional Western Australia.

The importance of providing a foundation sport, developing the fundamentals of “run, jump, throw” remains an essential activity, particularly in an

increasingly technology-dependent society. The future challenge is to adapt to this lifestyle, and ensure that the philosophy of “family, fun, fitness” remains a primary focus. The social, emotional and life skill development experienced through participation, builds confidence, resilience, lasting memories and lifelong friendships.

Ros Currie, Museum Committee



Community Officer: Lesley Burnett
Editor *History West*: Dr Lenore Layman

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