



HISTORY WEST

PUBLISHED BY THE ROYAL WESTERN AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

January-February 2018

GENERAL MEETING

**The next meeting at Stirling House is on Wednesday 21 February at 6pm
when Brendan Kelly will present a paper on 'Francis Hart'.
Refreshments available from 5.30pm; Bookshop open until 6pm.**



Between 1879 and 1896 the prodigious talent and outspoken personality of Francis Jerome Ernest Hart made him an individual of note in Western Australian society. As a newspaper journalist and editor he possessed the perfect platform to express his frequently forthright opinions. As one contemporary observed, Hart's chief failing was "his impetuosity and liability to write on the spur of the moment things which, after calm reflection, he would fain erase". An energetic self-starter, Hart was also an actor, playwright, composer, librettist, musician, singer, public speaker, raconteur, press agent, punter and born organiser. He was an impresario who procured the energy and the money of a wide circle of Western Australian men and women – friends, enemies, honest folk and spivs, the rich and powerful, racehorse owners, barmaids and milkmen, the newspaper boy in the street. He was sometimes dishonest, always scheming, often brilliant, but at all times busy. Hart cultivated connections across government and administrative classes, as his publicity machine churned out tens of thousands of words in newspapers, journals and handbooks, praising friends and scaring enemies, but always promoting the Colony. Francis Hart was a showman, publicist and opportunist, an advertising man whose star burned brightly, singeing more than a few.

Brendan Kelly is a Bunbury City Councillor, Patron of the Bunbury Oral History Group and Chair of the Bunbury Heritage Advisory Committee. His interest in history stems from a lifelong reading habit, particularly historical biography. He began researching and writing about his own family's past after he relocated to his paternal hometown of Bunbury in 1992. Subsequently he has taken a broader interest in Western Australian social history, particularly what he describes as the 'B'-side stories. These are the 'untold' stories of Western Australians who had a fleeting glimpse of fame but then disappeared into forgotten history.



100 up for *Early Days*

Western Australia's oldest historical society has reached another milestone with the publication of the 100th issue of its journal. *Early Days* first appeared in 1927 – in some years there have been two issues and it has been published annually since 1946.

The 100th issue was launched on Friday 17 November at Stirling House by local MLA and history buff Bill Marmion.



From left: Lenore Layman (author), Nick Drew (councillor), Bob Nicholson (president), Pamela Statham Drew (councillor), Alan Smith (Rio Tinto), Jennie Carter (designer), Steve Errington (editor), Lareesa Lynch (Rio Tinto), Bill Marmion MLA and Peter Ellery (author).

As usual, it contains written versions of the monthly talks given in the previous year. This year they include articles on early Dutch immigrants, the Lovegrove family of doctors, American whalers off our coast, the beginnings of the iron ore industry, and the unusual life of WA's first clergyman.

The Society began when there was no State Records Office, Batty Library of WA History or National Trust and the WA Museum was interested only in natural history. With the Society's centenary not far off, former president Dr Lenore Layman contributed a paper outlining some eye-opening achievements of the early decades.

This year *Early Days* appears in a bigger, easier to read format, and is fully indexed. These changes were made possible by a grant from the Rio Tinto Community Investment program which also enabled us to print in colour for the first time.

Our thanks to editor Dr Steve Errington who has done such an excellent job. This is his last issue.



Government of Western Australia
Department of Culture and the Arts



At its meeting held on 14 December business included the following where Council

- welcomed new members – Mr Bill Burdett, Mr Rex Edmondson, Dr Trisha Kotai-Ewers (re-joined), Ms Margaret Pollett, Mr Thomas Styles, Mrs Joyce Young;

- issued an invitation to the Special Collections Interest Group, Convenor Deanne Barrett Librarian Manager Special Collections & Archives UWA, to visit the Society's Museum and Library collections on Wednesday 7 February;
- received a report from the Affiliated Societies committee that plans are underway for the Annual RWAHS State History Conference of Affiliated Societies to be hosted by Cervantes in 2018 and South Perth in 2019;
- applauded the RWAHS Auxiliary's President Lorraine Tholet and members of the committee for hosting the successful 2017 program *History in the City* and presenting a generous donation of \$1,000 towards conservation of Museum artefacts;
- opened a new 'Western Land – a journey through our collection' with the assistance of members and funds raised to revamp the 2016-17 exhibition to highlight treasures of the Museum and Library collections;
- accepted the generous offer from Bill Marwick Wanneroo Historical Society for offsite storage in Wangara Wanneroo and noted thanks to the Volunteers who organised the relocation;
- thanked the immediate past Editor of *Early Days*, Dr Steve Errington, and noted that the 2018 *Early Days* Editors will be Ian Berryman, Jennie Carter and Dr Pamela Statham Drew;
- recorded appreciation to Marie Louise and David Wordsworth as generous hosts of the Members Christmas Party and thanked Nick Drew and Ally Drake-Brockman who coordinated the arrangements.

Lennie McCall Chairperson

History in the City

Our final talk for the year was given by Trevor Tough on Outback Graves. Kevin and his team are dedicated to preserving these graves and their outback history. Not only is he interested in recording their existence, but he and his helpers are restoring and, where possible, identifying the graves and telling the stories of the people who rest there. This is no simple task. The team needed posts, tools and plaques so that the graves, once found, will be recognised as part of our history.

Trevor and his team of volunteers at first concentrated on the Kimberley district, but they are hoping that, with more volunteer helpers, they can cover a much wider area and eventually restore and record all lonely graves. He showed us a photograph of a tree on Fossil Downs Station. It had five plaques on it, each bearing the details of a person buried on the station. He mentioned many of the pioneers of the Kimberley and it brought home to us the harsh living conditions of that time in the far north. It was sad to hear of the children and young adults who perished.

We should all be grateful to Trevor and his ex-school friend who met again at a 50-year school reunion. They found they shared a love of history and of our wide spaces and decided on this journey to find the lonely graves of our pioneers. There are many stories to tell of our outback, not only concerning well-known pioneer families but also the people who worked on the outback properties and their families.

History in the City is held on the first Wednesday of each month from March to December. Our first talk for 2018 will be on 7 March and given by Roy Stall on the 'West Australian Navy – HMAS *Diamantina* – the contribution of the ship to the State'. Join us at 2pm at the Citiplace Community Centre on Perth Railway Concourse. Donation \$5 with afternoon tea; all welcome.

Lorraine Tholet

Re-dedication of the Jewish Memorial Cemetery, East Perth Cemeteries



Jewish Memorial Cemetery, East Perth

Members of the Royal WA Historical Society were pleased to attend the re-dedication of the Jewish Memorial Cemetery at East Perth Cemeteries led by Rabbi Dovid Freilich of the Perth Hebrew Congregation on 10 December last year. The cemetery is on the corner of Plain and Wickham Streets, East Perth. The Jewish Historical and Genealogical Society undertook research to construct a more complete list of those of the faith buried in the cemetery and an updated plaque listing 32 names was dedicated. Descendants and relatives of the deceased attended to remember those buried between 1867 and 1899. Our thanks to Michelle Urban OAM for all her good work on the Jewish history of WA.



Descendants



Lennie McCall, Sally Anne Hasluck, Bob Nicholson, Steve Errington at the service

Booked in for a Cuppa Christmas Edition

Held on Friday 1 December and chaired by Patrick Cornish, the happy gathering was a great start to the Christmas season. Feedback from the capacity audience was positive and we sold a record number of books after the presentations.

Three books were highlighted – Lydia Edwards’ *How to Read a Dress. A Guide to Changing Fashion from the 16th to the 20th Century* (a book enhanced by colourful images of the dresses under discussion), Glen Foreman’s *The Legend From Bruce Rock* (a biography of Glen’s father, Wally Foreman) and Malcolm Allbrook & Mary Anne Jebb’s *Carlotta’s Perth* (a beautifully illustrated history of Carlotta Prinsep’s girlhood in colonial Perth in the second half of the 19th century). You will find reviews of all three books in *History West* in 2018.

As well, our wonderful Sue Clarke delighted the audience with a show-and-tell of recent children’s books, making everyone in the audience wish for children of appropriate ages to gift them to.

Thank you Lesley, from all of us who are readers for organising another year of most enjoyable ‘Booked in...’ occasions.



A personal response from our Museum Convenor

Lydia Edwards’ presentation of *How to Read a Dress* was a wonderful kick-start to our December ‘Booked in for a Cuppa’.

A two-page spread in the *West Magazine* paid tribute to Lydia’s publication and it was from this that our Community Officer, Lesley Burnett, was inspired to contact Lydia to give us the chance to hear more about her research. Her illustrated presentation showed examples of authentic period costumes and their adaption to a film version of the same period – with changes from the historically correct to what looked good on screen!

Lydia’s clear photographs illustrated how many of the gowns were adapted with a hitch at the back, on the way to the bustle fashion, or lace inserts in the neckline

or on the sleeves, to allow the gown to adapt to the occasion or latest fashion. As a volunteer with the Swan Guildford Historical Society, Lydia drew on that collection for research and illustration. Also researched and photographed are gowns from the Australian Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, and international museums including Paris, Montreal, Pennsylvania, Los Angeles and, in the UK, the Victoria and Albert and Bath museums.

Following all the presentations we had the opportunity to tell Lydia about our own valuable Costume Collection and she is most interested in visiting us to research for her second publication, and the third, which is also in the pipeline. I am sure the Society’s collection will feature in her future research. We will certainly look forward to learning from her and working with her.

Val Hutch

Binding *Early Days*

Members who are interested in having the four parts of Vol. 14 or the five parts of Vol 13 bound should contact the Office.

Farewell to Snorre Enevoldsen

A Danish visitor, Snorre has made a valuable contribution as a volunteer for several months, especially for the Museum. He was a popular addition to the Museum team and will be missed. Our grateful thanks and good wishes for the future.



Our next **Second Hand Book Sale** will be held on 7-8 April 2018. 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.

Don’t forget the Skills Development Workshop – Sat-Sun 24 & 25 February

It’s not too late to enrol! Contact the Office on 9386 3841 or admin@histwest.org.au

Affiliates & Other News

Save the Date on **Sunday 11 March** because Busselton’s old Butter Factory (housing the Busselton Historical Museum) will be celebrating its centenary! **Busselton Historical Society** is planning a Grand Open Day with entertainment, demonstrations of old skills (butter making, spinning, blacksmithing), a display by the Vintage Car Club, coffee, food stalls and historical displays.

The Little Bottler, newsletter of the **Colonial Bottle & Collectors Club**, contains an interesting memoir of the Golden Mile Aerated Water Company by Joan Kay (nee Kirkwood). She recalls her father making the cool drinks from his own recipes recorded in a large exercise book! Her memories of growing up next door to the factory make entertaining reading.

Congratulations to Pam Gaunt, awarded life membership of the **Maylands Historical & Peninsula Association**. Pam was active in the Peninsula Association as Treasurer from its establishment when concerned citizens formed an action group and saved the Peninsula Hotel. When the Maylands Historical Society was set up in 1992, Pam became Treasurer and was Treasurer of both Associations. These two Associations eventually merged and Pam continued as Treasurer until the end of 2016, totalling over 20 years of voluntary service to the Maylands community.

Fremantle History Society’s September 2017 meeting was a tour of the 1902 Dalgety building, now the offices of the Mediterranean Shipping Company, one of the world’s largest shipping lines. The building on the corner of Cliff and Phillimore Streets was designed by J J Talbot Hobbs when Dalgety & Co. was a prosperous stock and station agency. By 1962 Dalgety had formed the largest pastoral house in Australasia, having ridden the pastoral era to its completion. It is pleasing to see a major 21st century multinational company valuing this heritage and imaginatively re-using it.

Kalamunda & Districts Historical Society together with the Pickering Brook Heritage Group held a successful gathering at the old Carmel Public School Building and has published an excerpt from the oral history of a former student, the late Grace Earp (nee Wallis), who remembered (among other things) each school day beginning with an inspection of hands and fingernails and a round of mental arithmetic!

Maritime Heritage Association Journal recognises the 150th anniversary of the *Hougoumont’s* arrival and re-tells the story of the Fenians and their *Catalpa* escape. The *Hougoumont* was built in Burma for the London-India route. It was chartered to bring the last shipload of convicts to WA.

Can You Help? – Member **David Davies** is planning a book titled *The Lonely Miner* exploring the life of his grandfather, Rolf Reinholdtsen, a Norwegian merchant trader and mining engineer, who was involved in numerous mining projects from the 1920s to the 1960s. David is seeking information and photographs concerning – lead mining in the Northampton district 1920-1929 and 1946-1953; gold mining in Kalgoorlie, Murchison, Meekatharra districts 1927-1937; iron ore mining at Yampi Sound 1938-1943: Cumming Smith, Bassendean, 1944-1946; tantalite, copper, tin mining in the Pilbara and Kimberley 1953-1958; mineral sands at Capel/Busselton 1958-1964; tin mining in the Pilbara 1964-1970; and alunite mining (Lake Chandler) 1970+. Any assistance would be greatly appreciated. Contact – megaflora@optusnet.com.au

The **State Record Office of WA’s** Geoffrey Bolton Lecture for 2017 was titled *From Bolshevism to Populism: Australia in a Century of Global Transformation* and delivered by Professor Stuart Macintyre. The text can be found online at: <http://www.sro.wa.gov.au/events/geoffrey-bolton-lecture>. It will also be broadcast and podcast by ABC Radio National's Big Ideas series on 23 January.

Please note change of date

Dr Pamela Statham Drew’s talk – ‘WA Convicts: their lives and influence on the colony’ – has been re-scheduled to Sunday 11 February at 10.30am. Don’t miss it.

Help Wanted

The Society is seeking an expression of interest from a Member Volunteer to help the Community Officer Lesley Burnett with some monthly contacts and administrative tasks on Membership records. This voluntary work will be in addition to Mrs Christine Foulkes Taylor's welcoming role for the new members. Do call in for a chat or email; admin@histwest.org.au Lesley Burnett or Lennie McCall

Diary Dates

Sat/Sun 24 & 25 Feb: Skills Development Program -*Spring Clean your Collection*

Fri 16 Mar: Gallop House Talk L Brass

Sat/Sun 7 & 8 Apr: Annual Second-hand Book Sale

The 11th Battalion AIF and the Gallipoli Trench Project

Based in Geraldton, the 11th Battalion Living History Unit has undertaken a major project to recreate a living Gallipoli Trench complete with sound systems, actors and all the paraphernalia of war to make the experience for visitors as real as possible. The trench is a replica of a captured Turkish trench as taken by the 11th on the night of 31 July 1915 and named for the commander who led the attack, Capt. R L Leane. Here is the story of how Leane's Trench was created.



In April 2011, Tim Rust directed and performed in the R C Sherriff play, 'Journeys End', set in a bunker in 1918 on the Western Front, and based largely on Sherriff's own experiences, and he became interested in re-creating a trench to provide people today with a sense of trench life in that war.

Amended to represent an Australian sector over the same period, great attention was paid to the detail, from authentic maps to matchboxes, cigarettes, newspapers and bottle labels. Authentic uniforms completed the ensemble supported by a cast and crew who treated the subject matter with amazing reverence.

Ensuing appearances in authentic Great War uniforms at shopping centres and the annual Military Day led to recognition of people's great interest in Australia's wartime heritage. Many were overwhelmed by the stories of what their fathers and grandfathers had been through and felt closer to them just by being able to see what they wore, to touch the uniforms, as if gaining some first-hand experience.

Enter Stuart Adamson. He had seen the play and Tim had frivolously discussed constructing a trench as an attraction for the Military Fair. There the idea lay as Tim concentrated on starting up the 11th Battalion Commemorative Living History Unit. Like Tim, Stuart is a driver and a doer. More importantly, he possessed a large and necessary resource – land – and the same mad dream of bringing a little of Gallipoli's history directly to our shores in a way never before presented. And so the project began in earnest: two middle-aged men and a brilliantly insane idea.

Gallipoli is an event lodged deep in the Australian psyche but people lack comprehension of what, at a basic level, Gallipoli really was to the soldiers who

fought there. What we wanted to show is that the Anzacs fought not for Australia, nor for the King or Mother Country, nor even an ideal; they fought for each other, for their mates. The patch of ground they fought over was their home, mateship their only possession.

We cannot dispel long-held myths, but we can give people a real sense of what a trench in Gallipoli was like, a tangible walk through history that no photograph or book, or even the shallow remains of the battlefield, can ever provide. Gallipoli is rightly required study in the school curriculum, but how many children will ever get a chance to feel what it was like in those crude, hard fought for, trenches? Our trench gives them that chance.

The capture of Leane's Trench was a wholly Western Australian enterprise, and the 11th battalion a wholly Western Australian unit who were the first on the beaches of Gallipoli, engaged in the first raid made by Australians in World War I and ultimately, one of the last units to come home from France in 1919.

Across the world today re-created trenches are springing up but to date only one that we know of represents Gallipoli, so often overshadowed by the Western Front. But Gallipoli had its own horrors and it is important to us that the visitor can get a real sense of what trench warfare on that peninsula was like. Of course we can visit the trenches of Gallipoli and the Western Front. But these have lost the sense of what went on there – empty, sterile shallow dips in the ground, long worn by the endless traipsing of pilgrims eager to find something that is no longer there.

The real worth in this project is in its movie-set ambition, creating something that is alive, panting after days of close quarter violence, with tired occupants ready to impart pieces of information to the reinforcements and move them on up the line. It is in the scattered cans of snatched meals, the noise of battle still close by, the immediacy of death waiting around every corner. Visitors will not be able to loiter as tourists but will be pushed through to emerge, unscathed, but not quite getting to grips with what it is they have just been through. And that is how it should be.

Chris Cox

Leane's Trench is open every third Saturday of the month and is well worth a visit. Do seize this opportunity for an amazing experience if you get the chance.

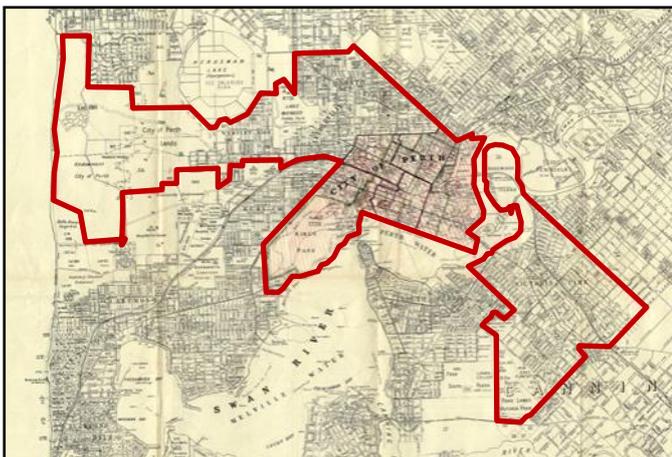
*For more information go to
<http://www.11thbattalionaif.com/home>*



From the State Archives Collection – Perth’s Native Exclusion Zone

On 9 March 1927, a proclamation made under Section 39 of the *Aborigines Act 1905* (WA) was published in the *Government Gazette*, declaring the City of Perth to be an area where it was unlawful for Aboriginal people, not in lawful employment, to be or remain.

The boundaries of the ‘Native Prohibited Area’ were not explicitly stated in the 1927 proclamation. The lack of definable borders meant that there was a degree of ambiguity written into the regulation, where the term ‘City of Perth’ could be construed to mean every municipality within the greater Perth region. To an extent, this occurred as the Native Prohibited Area extended far beyond Perth’s central business district and included North Perth, Leederville, Victoria Park, Kings Park, Wembley and the lands west of Wembley stretching to the ocean. Some published sources have incorrectly focussed on the Perth CBD area as the extent of the exclusion zone. The true extent of the initial exclusion zone can be seen outlined in the plan below.



The Native Prohibited Area was enforced between 1927 and 1954 and required Aboriginal people to always carry a permit or ‘Native Pass’ on their person, which was to be immediately produced when questioned by authorities. If the individual in question was unable to produce a valid pass justifying their presence within the City of Perth, they were told to vacate the prohibited area at once. Should this move-on notice be ignored, the person could be arrested.

The enforcement of the pass system and prohibited area for Aboriginal people was of utmost importance for A O Neville, the Chief Protector of Aborigines, who advocated more rigid control and regulation of Aboriginal lives within the State throughout his tenure. Neville wrote to the Superintendent of the Moore River Native Settlement in March 1927 that it was “necessary to take this action in order to prevent natives from frequenting [amusement establishments like] ‘White City’ ... [as they were] generally behaving themselves in an undesirable manner”, which could not be tolerated.

Neville argued that it “is in the best interest of the natives” and that they needed to be protected from themselves. However, after a particularly heated piece of correspondence with the Commissioner of Police in

March 1928, Neville revealed what could have been his true motivations for supporting the prohibited area, where he stated his “desire that neither half-caste or Aborigines be permitted to frequent the ‘White City’ [or similar such establishments]...[as] it simply debases the natives and lowers the status of the whites in their eyes...and will invariably lead to the ruin of blacks”.

While Neville’s rhetoric would be considered outlandish today, he did have the support of many of his contemporaries, which resulted in the active enforcement of the prohibited area and the arrest of many Aboriginal people. Figures from the Central Police Station for the period between July 1949 and February 1950 show that 78 Aboriginal people were charged for being within the zone, with many facing multiple charges (a total of 130 charges are recorded for this period). If these figures are extrapolated across each station within the zone, for the duration the prohibited area was in force, a much larger reality comes into focus, with many in the Aboriginal community either being arrested themselves or knowing someone who had.

Perth was not the only location in which such a prohibited area was established. Prohibited areas were set up in many regional towns across the State in the 1930s and 1940s, as a number of files in the State Archives Collection document.

Cases such as those of Charlie Mingo and George Morrison, who were arrested during this period, exemplified how indiscriminate and at times ineffective the policy was as their charges for being within the prohibited area without a pass were later dismissed because they were found to be gainfully employed and only lacking the required pass at the time. Concerns were raised in a report by Constable Brown who stated: “arresting well-mannered natives is somewhat unfair as they would have a pass if they were able to and that their inability to gain access to passes should not be reflected in their arrest”.

In 1947, the Native Prohibited Area came under review as continued queries from Police Constables revealed an administrative oversight with the 1927 proclamation, where the lack of definite boundaries and responsibilities for enforcement resulted in jurisdiction and funding problems. It is possible that, when Neville conceived the idea of the prohibited zone, he did not realise the extent of the City of Perth boundaries as his main focus was on the central area of Perth.

Upon completion of the 1947 review, the prohibited area was found to be untenable as it was too large an area to enforce. As a result it was reduced to encompass only the central business district of Perth. The prohibited area was subsequently abolished in 1954.

References: SROWA, Cons 993, Item 1927/0038

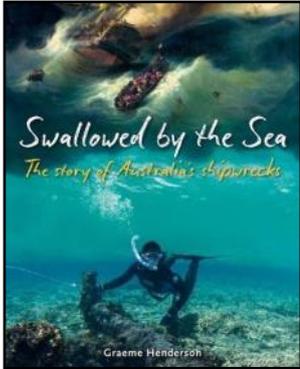
**Duane Kelly, Aboriginal Cadet Officer
State Records Office of Western Australia**

*This is just one of the many thousands of stories waiting to be told from the State archives collection. Many thanks to **Senior Archivist Damien Hassan**. We are delighted that he is willing to share these stories with us. And many thanks to the State Records Office.*

BOOK REVIEWS

Graeme Henderson, *Swallowed by the Sea – The Story of Australia’s Shipwrecks*, National Library of Australia Publishing in collaboration with the Western Australian Museum, 2016. In Library.

Reviewer: Peter Ellery



While spear fishing near Ledge Point north of Perth in April 1963, young Graeme Henderson noticed wreckage on the sea-floor which was later identified as the remains of the Dutch East India Company ship *Vergulde Draeck*, wrecked in 1656. News of the discovery became the talk of Perth and seven weeks later a Geraldton fisherman

led some local divers to wreckage off the Abrolhos Islands, which was identified as the remains of the Dutch treasure ship *Batavia*, lost in 1659.

The fates of these two ships, their crews and passengers, so enthralled the young Henderson that he has devoted much of his life to investigating shipwrecks. He has dived on many wrecks, served for 13 years as Director of the WA Maritime Museum and played an influential role in the development of Australian and international laws for the protection of shipwrecks. He is one of Australia’s most distinguished maritime archaeologists.

Now he has written *Swallowed by the Sea—the Story of Australia’s Shipwrecks* spanning 400 years since Europeans first sailed unknowingly into the waters surrounding mysterious *Terra Australis*. He writes with authority of dramatic, tragic, often horrifying human stories of incompetence, skill, weakness and fortitude. He says there are thousands of shipwrecks in Australian waters and focusses on fifteen of them, beginning when our pre-European history was essentially the story of European mariners lost on their way to trading destinations. The story goes on, through the saga of British discovery, settlement and emigration, through two world wars until today, when turning back boatloads of unauthorised refugees is in the forefront of our maritime experience.

Each chapter is told by a maritime archaeologist with forensic skills which would be the envy of a detective, and the book is handsomely illustrated in colour with a mix of contemporary under-water photography and antique charts and paintings, including some from the rare 1649 Utrecht edition of Francisco Pelsaert’s story translated as *Unlucky Voyage of the Ship Batavia*.

The first story is of the first European wreck in Australian waters, the English East Indiaman *Tryal* which, in May 1622, struck some sunken rocks while sailing from Cape Town to the East Indies. The Master, John Brooke, had sailed too far east on the southern route across the Indian Ocean and later lied about the location to protect his reputation. Brooke and 45 crewmen escaped in two boats, leaving 128 men and

boys “to God’s mercy”. Wreckage, thought to be the *Tryal*, was found in 1969 at the lonely reef now named Tryal Rocks, north of the Montebello islands. Five expeditions from the WA Museum found cannons, anchors and small artefacts on the sea floor but that is not enough to confirm conclusively that it is *Tryal*’s graveyard.

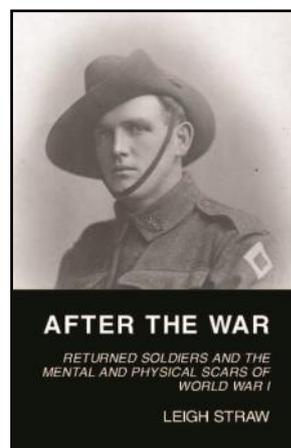
Establishment of the British convict colony at Sydney in 1788 brought new maritime activity to Australian waters and new maritime disasters including HMS *Sirius*, protector of the colony, at Norfolk Island in 1790, and HMS *Pandora*, sent by the British to bring the Bounty mutineers to justice, which was wrecked on the Great Barrier Reef in 1791. Graeme Henderson has explored both.

Men held the wheel of all ships in this history but Graeme Henderson also tells of horrors and heroism experienced by women during colonial days, including WA’s Grace Bussell who at the age of 16 played a heroic role in rescuing passengers from the wrecked SS *Georgette* near Margaret River in 1876, and of two Scottish women Eliza Fraser and Barbara Thompson who were cast away amongst nomadic Aboriginals in far north Queensland in 1836 and 1844. When rescued and returned to Sydney, their misadventures were so mythologised by the press that they may well have been more comfortable living in the wild.

Tragic losses of more recent times include the sinking of the light cruiser HMAS *Sydney* by the German Raider *Kormoran* in November 1941 and the loss of the *Siev 221* asylum boat off Christmas Island on 15 December 2010. The fate of both the *Sydney* (in war) and the *Siev 221* (in peace) demonstrates a good measure of the incompetence, skill, weakness and fortitude which Graeme Henderson sees as the human traits most on display in shipwrecks.

Leigh Straw, *After the War: returned soldiers and the mental and physical scars of World War I*, UWA Publishing, Crawley, 2017. 226 pp. In Library. SP \$39.99.

Reviewer: Heather Campbell



In July 1929 *The Truth* newspaper reported a murder-suicide that had taken place in Collie, identifying the killer as Andrew Straw. While researching crime over 80 years later, Leigh Straw printed off the relevant page, noticing later that the photograph of the killer, dressed in war uniform and a slouch hat, had ‘a hauntingly familiar face’ and bore a striking resemblance to her husband.

He was in fact her husband’s great, great uncle and she had ‘unearthed an unexpected family story’.

In trying to make sense of this tragedy Leigh Straw was led back to the First World War during which, according to his friends, Andrew Straw had lost his

sanity. The author weaves his experiences into a narrative with stories of other ‘ruined men’. Chapters cover ‘the role of Western Australians in the war effort, the realities of the battlefield and the return of servicemen to their home communities’. The experience of soldiers suffering from tuberculosis is then covered and followed by chapters dealing with shell shock and psychiatric treatment – both from a personal and family perspective. Soldiers’ lives are traced, sometimes for decades, as they and their families struggle valiantly, not only with their demons, but with institutions and bureaucracy.

Leigh Straw allows soldiers and their families to speak for themselves through letters, diaries and oral testimony. Jack Host, in the trenches in France in 1917, wrote in his diary that he had kissed his wife’s photo goodbye. He had seen the ‘awful sights of Messines Ridge’ and could not rid himself of the image of a ‘dead man’s hand sticking out that the boys used to shake and place smokes in’ and was ‘deeply unsettled’ by the sights along Menin Road, which was ‘like a slaughter house, and all over the place for miles are strewn men, horses, guns, limbs, motor transports, all smashed up.’

This is not a book with a ‘happily ever after’ ending; final chapters deal with post-war suicide and family stories of the war’s aftermath. It is however, a book that provides a sobering balance to what James Brown, in *Anzac’s Long Shadow*, referred to as ‘our national obsession’. In its grip we tend to celebrate rather than commemorate.

Andrew Straw was buried on a cold wet day in Collie Cemetery. ‘The little army of Diggers’ who buried him hoped that his call to duty ‘in the days of his sanity would be weighed against the act of a disordered brain ... and that a balance would be struck in poor Andy’s favour.’ It should be.

A happy Christmas Party

Members enjoyed our annual windup at Marie Louise and David Wordsworth’s as we have done so happily in recent years. We are grateful to them for sharing their garden with us for the evening.

Many thanks indeed to Jo Cornish for her original artwork for the Christmas Raffle.



And thanks to our volunteers on the night – Steve Bartley, Steve Errington, Mike Taylor, Ron Bodycoat, Judy McCarthy, Val Hutch, Sue Clarke, Nick Drew and Pamela Statham Drew, and, of course, Lesley Burnett.

But thanks most of all to our wonderful raffle organiser Ally Drake Brockman. Without Ally our end-of-year evening would be lose much of its sparkle.

And the raffle raised a much-needed \$1,895.00

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

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

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