



# HISTORY WEST

PUBLISHED BY THE ROYAL WESTERN AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

July 2020

## Public Programs resume in July!

### Good news & ongoing caution!

The Society is delighted to announce that it is again open for visits and events. **General Meetings, Community Talks and other activities will resume from 1 July.**

However ongoing public health restrictions will be necessary.

We will observe **social distancing protocols** and ensure that everyone has 2 sq m of space around them. With this space protocol, our meeting room can hold only **40-45 people**.

Therefore you will need to **book ahead** for all talks (general meetings and all others).

So, if you are really keen to hear a speaker, you should **book early**.

### GENERAL MEETING

The next meeting at Stirling House is on **Wednesday 15 July at 6pm** when **Dr Fiona Bush** will present a paper on the 'Watheroo Geomagnetic Observatory'.

**Refreshments available from 5.30pm; Bookshop open until 6pm.**

Please **book your place** by phoning the Office on 9386 3841 or emailing [admin@histwest.org.au](mailto:admin@histwest.org.au)



Andrew Carnegie was a wealthy American philanthropist who founded the Carnegie Institution of Washington in 1902. The foundation funded international research projects. In 1904, the Institution established a Department of Terrestrial Magnetism whose purpose was to determine the general shape of the earth's magnetic and electrical fields. To achieve this objective, magnetic surveys were taken around the world, on both land and sea. To obtain more accurate information more land-based observatories were required.

Thus, in 1915 the decision was made to establish two geomagnetic observatories in the southern hemisphere. The sites chosen were Watheroo in WA and Huancayo in Peru. Watheroo became operational in 1919 and became important not only for providing magnetic and electrical information, but it also weather reports. As well it became an important research facility for UWA Physics students. The observatory and its equipment were handed over to the Australian government in 1947. It closed in 1959 and its instruments (and buildings) were dispersed to observatories established at Gnangarra and Mundaring. The talk will outline the development of the Watheroo observatory and its importance to the Western Australian scientific community.

**Dr Fiona Bush** is a building archaeologist who has worked as a private consultant in the heritage industry for over thirty years. She is a firm believer in the idea that 'history matters' and the preservation of that history. Ensuring this preservation often means uncovering little known aspects of WA's history and bringing them to the forefront. These unsung aspects include — the Watheroo Geomagnetic Observatory, very ordinary vernacular buildings and stained glass artists. Her most recent project is researching the stained glass studio of Gowers and Brown, who manufactured windows in WA from 1954 to 2003.



### Appeal for Library Co-ordinator

A volunteer co-ordinator is needed to dovetail all the activities of the active team of library volunteers who maintain the library's services. This includes:

- convening the library committee to maintain the library and its services;
- co-ordinating library volunteers' duties to ensure that all essential tasks are covered;
- working with the library committee to ensure that the library collection is preserved for the future, used today, promoted and made widely accessible.

Contact Lesley on 9386 3841 or — [admin@histwest.org.au](mailto:admin@histwest.org.au)

### Can You help?

#### Appeal for volunteer to assist with RWAHS website

We love our website and have a team who works on it, but we need assistance from another keen volunteer to work from home to help create new pages and content as required. Can you assist or do you have a family member — maybe from the younger generation — who can help? Images and text will be supplied. Please contact Lesley at the Office on 9386 3841 or [admin@histwest.org.au](mailto:admin@histwest.org.au)

## 2020-21 Membership

Dear Member,  
 Many thanks for your current membership of the Society.  
 We appreciate it.  
 Now, at the start of the financial year, you will find enclosed your 2020/21 membership invoice.  
 We do hope you will continue to support the RWAHS by renewing your membership.  
 Kind regards,  
 Lorraine Clarke, Treasurer

## Reflections on life during the pandemic

Grateful thanks to all members who have kept a record of any sort of their experiences during the Covid-19 outbreak.

Please email, post or drop them in to the Office.

We plan to preserve them as part of the Society's collections.

In the future they will be used to help tell the story of these times!

## Tuesday Treasures

Glimpses of the collection resumes in August

## Timber Tales

on Tuesday 4 August  
 10.30am start

Come for a look, see, chat and coffee  
 To explore objects on display or from our storerooms  
 Learn something of their making, use and history  
 A time for questions and discussions  
 There is no charge

Register your interest with Lesley 9386 3841

**A message for all historical societies and historical researchers!**

## Western Australian History Foundation Grants 2020

The Foundation's grants round for 2020 is now open.  
 Grants round closes - 31 July 2020.  
 Announcement of successful applicants - by 1 September 2020.

See <http://www.wahistoryfoundation.org.au/> for detailed information.

The Secretary, Lenore Layman, is available to answer any further questions by email — [layman@westnet.com.au](mailto:layman@westnet.com.au)

## The Mod Squad

**An invitation from our AGM speaker, Patrick Cornish**

Did you attend Perth Modern? If so, do you have memories of the institution in Subiaco that has produced so many successful and/or eminent alumni and alumnae. (You can tell I was keen on Latin at my school in England).

In my writing and editing work, mainly newspaper obituaries and books of family history, I often come across 'Mod', usually in biographical material on people I am writing about. Invariably they felt themselves fortunate to have had a decent start in life at the school that opened in 1911.

For the Society's Annual General Meeting in September I have offered to give an illustrated tribute to the school, titled Mod Squad and based partly on its multitudinous appearances in my own work. I would, however, like to include a few memories from Society members who are Old Modernians. Please email me at [patrickjcornish@aol.com](mailto:patrickjcornish@aol.com), giving a few details or anecdotes I can mention on the night. Do include any photographs, either from your teenage years or at reunions or other formal occasions.

If your memories are not so favourable, I'm interested in those too.

Mod's motto is: *Savoir C'est Pouvoir* (Knowledge is Power). How true.



A hive of history . . . Mod acknowledges the presence of Thomas Street school, which was incorporated into Mod. The lettering on the sign, compared with today's promotion of Mod, is part of the heritage contrast.



**Joe Smith - volunteer grounds-keeper**  
 Our grateful thanks to member and volunteer Joe Smith for keeping the lawns and gardens at Stirling House looking good.

## Letters to the Editor

Thankyou to all members who send us feedback as they read their latest copy of *History West*. We really appreciate all your messages and helpful comments. Keep them coming. This month we share several of the responses because they will be of wide interest.

### First, from member Geoff Gallop, Geraldton boy, former Premier and lover of history -

For a Sandgroper like me living in Sydney what a pleasure it is to receive *History West* every month. There's always something of interest in the articles, book reviews and reports on the many events organised by the RWAHS and its affiliates.

Being born and raised in Geraldton the June issue attracted my attention with material on explorer George Grey's observations on the Nanda settlements, his reports now part and parcel of the debate about indigenous modes of living and production first sparked by the publication *Australia and the Origins of Agriculture* (2008) by the late Rupert Gerritsen. More recently the debate has been re-ignited by Bruce Pascoe in his book *Dark Emu* (2014).

This takes us to the issue of Dutch shipwrecks in the 17th and 18th centuries and whether or not survivors integrated into the Nanda community to the north of Geraldton. I'm reminded of the earlier publication by Rupert Gerritsen, *And Their Ghosts May Be Heard* (1994) which provided a wide-ranging analysis of this issue. Like me Rupert was born and raised in Geraldton and became fascinated by the shipwreck stories. For his detailed work Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands conferred upon him the honour of Knight of the Order of Orange-Nassau in 2007.

I'm also reminded of my membership of the Select Committee on Ancient Shipwrecks (1994), chaired by the late Phillip Pendal and advised by the much-missed Professor Geoff Bolton. Whilst our report focussed on recognition for those who discovered the wrecks, we did receive evidence of an oral tradition of storytelling related to the wrecks and Dutch integration. George Grey himself had observed that amongst the Aboriginal people were some totally different in appearance and almost white.

When living in the Netherlands for some time following my retirement from Sydney University, it was heart-warming to see the interest in matters Western Australian. A book on the Batavia story was prominently displayed in Amsterdam's Maritime Museum and I visited the replica of the vessel in Lelystad, a town built on reclaimed land. I'm sure there will be interest in Howard Gray's latest publication *Spice at Any Price* (2019) which deals with the life and times of seafarer Frederick de Houtman, of Houtman Abrolhos fame. Graeme Henderson, who has been a major contributor to maritime history in WA, reviews it in the June issue.

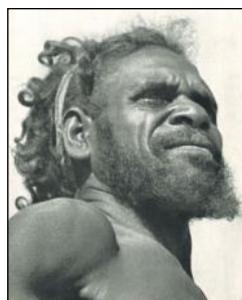


What a delight too, to read the collection of extracts from Edith Cowan's various speeches to Parliament. I was the Minister for Education in 1990 who took to the Cabinet the recommendation to re-name what had been the WA College of Advanced Education. There had

been a vigorous debate on this matter, and a range of options for names were put forward by interested citizens, including the University of Perth and Edith Cowan University. It was my view - backed by Cabinet - that we should draw from our own history and our own people and what better way to do this than by using the name of the first woman member of an Australian Parliament and someone who stood up for the importance of education and the equality of women. I'm not sure though that two of my many and wonderful Aunts who were barmaids would have agreed with her view that such a position should be abolished, as 'not a suitable employment for women'!

Geoff Gallop

### And another interesting response from Stephen O'Brien, Local History Librarian at the City of Gosnells



Your article on the acquisition of old copies of *Walkabout* reminds me that the influence of this magazine extends to the present day in the form of the Australian two-dollar coin. The striking photograph of the Aboriginal man shown on one of the covers [for September 1936] was later used for an Australian

postage stamp and later still was tweaked by artist Ainslie Roberts and with a few later adjustments wound up as the model for the current Australian two-dollar coin, which portrays a longer beard and an only slightly different hairstyle. This link gives more details: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gwoya\\_Tjungurrayi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gwoya_Tjungurrayi)

## Mystery Photos in May's *History West* - responses



Jeffrey Pollard and Yvonne Lawrence believe that the Church of Christ photographed is the church that was demolished in Northam and the Bridgeley Reception Centre built on the site. Many funerals and other functions are held at Bridgeley.



Member Graeme Cocks knew it was an early local race but the background didn't look like Fremantle. So he checked with Forbes Watson who thought it could easily be the first recorded ladies' rowing race held in 1891. He pointed out that Bill Cooper's book *Home & Dry: A history of rowing in WA* (2008) describes the ladies as wearing white straw hats, cream blouses and navy blue skirts and that the event was held at the Royal Perth Yacht Club regatta which accounts for the background. Many thanks to Graeme and Forbes for the probable identification.

# Spotlight on Members' Research

## Western Australia's Engineer-in-Chief

*History West thanks member Mike Taylor for sharing his research findings and correcting the historical record. Mike is a retired engineer, member of Engineering Heritage Western Australia, a busy historian and library volunteer.*

Having worked as an engineer in the Public Works Department (PWD), I was intrigued to read in an article by Martyn Webb that 'C Y O'Connor was appointed Western Australia's first Engineer-in-Chief on 26 May 1891' [*Early Days*, 11, 1, 1995]. This statement may have come from the 1965 biography of C Y O'Connor by Alexandra Hasluck which states that O'Connor 'came to Western Australia as its first Engineer-in-Chief'. A PWD honour board also supports the impression of O'Connor as its first 'engineering head'.



PWD Honour Board 1985. Photographer M Taylor

However, as it is generally recognised that the PWD started in 1876, I wondered who O'Connor's predecessors were. In researching this question, it helps to understand position titles and what they mean in an English public service tradition. The first engineering appointment in WA was Henry Reveley as Civil Engineer. As the title suggests, his authority was limited and his role was to design and construct works as directed by the Governor. Reveley was followed by a number of appointees with the titles of Superintendent of Public Works and Clerk of Works, titles that indicate practical experience rather than professional qualifications.

With the departure of the Royal Engineers and an increase in government works, it was decided in 1874 that Malcolm Fraser, Surveyor General, would take on

the additional role of Commissioner of Works. The title Commissioner, still used today, implies that the appointee has a very broad role in advising government, with service that can be terminated only by parliament. Generally, commissioners rely on their staff for professional expertise, historical exceptions being appointees to the Commissioner of Railways and Commissioner of Main Roads which required engineering qualifications.

Government's first railway between Geraldton and Northampton started construction in October 1874. Recognising that there would be more railways as well as additional telegraphic and marine works, government decided to recruit an experienced NSW engineer, James Henry Thomas, to be WA's Government Engineer. Thomas started in May 1876 on a salary of £450 per year. In November 1876 his title was re-designated to Director of Public Works. In 1878 he was given the additional responsibility of Commissioner of Railways with a salary of £600 per year. On 22 February 1879 Thomas was appointed a member of Executive Council. [WA Blue Books 1879, 1882, 1883].



Lead mines at Northampton - First Locomotive 1879. P2013.96

Following Thomas's unexpected death in July 1884, government recruited John Arthur Wright in June 1885 as Director of Works, Engineer-in-Chief and Commissioner of Railways on a salary of £900 per year [WA Blue Book 1886]. Wright was also appointed to Executive Council and Legislative Council.

The decision to recruit an Engineer-in-Chief was recommended in an 8 August 1884 report by a Legislative Council Select Committee chaired by S H Parker [*Le Page, Building a State*, 1986]. At that time, Engineer-in-Chief was a common position in the other colonies and, as implied by the title, the appointee was accountable for all government engineering.

A comparison of salaries at that time reveals that Governor Broome was paid £3,000 per year, Chief Justice Onslow £1,000, Colonial Secretary Fraser £900, Engineer-in-Chief Wright £900 and Treasurer Lefroy £650. Surveyor General Forrest, Postmaster General Gahan, Commissioner of Titles James and Commissioner of Police Phillips were all paid £600, Colonial Surgeon Waylen £450, while the average wage was about £50 per year [WA Blue Book 1888].

With expanding railways and other works increasing his responsibilities, Wright sought an increase in salary. This was not approved and in December 1890 he resigned from his government posts and took up the

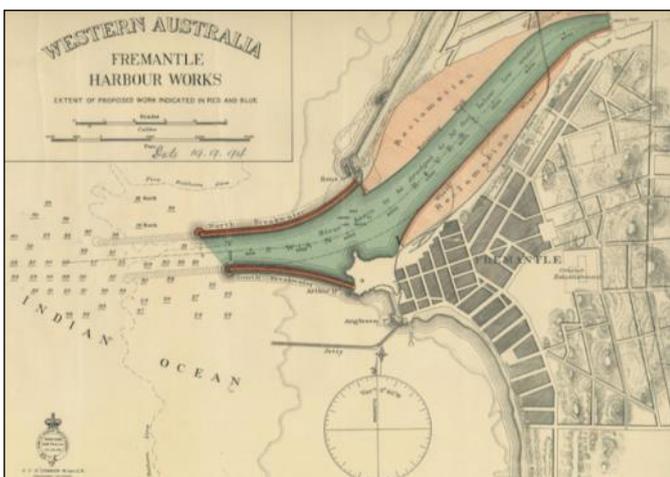
position of General Manager of the Western Australian Land Company and Great Southern Railway.



Albany Land Company Jetty 1889. P2014.776

It was Wright's resignation that triggered the need for Forrest to recruit C Y O'Connor as Engineer-in-Chief, a position that O'Connor had missed out on in New Zealand. Having turned down an offer of £1,000 per year, O'Connor ultimately accepted an offer of £1,200 per year, still less than the £1,500 per year that Wright was now earning with the Great Southern Railway [Tauman, *The Chief, C Y O'Connor*, 1978].

Wright was respected by government and, between his resignation and O'Connor's arrival, he provided engineering consultancy services. He was also quite supportive of O'Connor's proposals, providing evidence to the January 1892 Joint Select Committee inquiring into Fremantle harbour works and, in March 1892, speaking in support of the river mouth scheme as a member of the Legislative Council [Le Page, *Building a State*].



Fremantle Harbour Proposed Works 1894 - Drawer 30 M15

After O'Connor, there were three more appointees as Engineer-in-Chief: Charles Palmer (1902-1904), James Thompson (1904-1925) and Frank Stileman (1925-1930). Following a re-organisation of Public Works in 1930, Edward Tindale, who was Commissioner of Main Roads, took on the additional role of Director of Works and Building [Le Page, *Building a State*].

Tindale and all subsequent appointees through to the closure of the PWD on 30 June 1985 were titled

Director. This title, similar to that of Thomas in 1876, reflected the role which was now limited to accountability for the works performed by the Engineering Division of the PWD. The Architectural Division of the PWD had its own structural engineers, while Fremantle Ports, WA Government Railways, Main Roads Department and the Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Board all had their own engineering organisations.

So the questions remain — why aren't James Thomas and John Wright recognised on the PWD Honour Board and why isn't Wright recognised as the first Engineer-in-Chief? One answer may be that O'Connor's achievements were so remarkable that the efforts of his predecessors are not noticed or considered worthy of mention. Another answer may come from the culture of a traditional public service. As public pay is generally less than private, part of the compensation is an expectation of recognition on retirement. Historically, anyone who leaves before retirement, particularly for a better paying private industry job, is considered to have relinquished that expectation.



John A Wright 1894

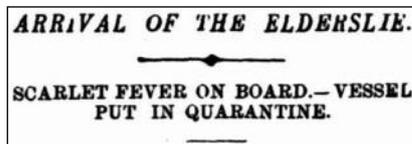
A biography in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* of John Arthur Wright is available online and, as a Member of Parliament, he is included in the *Biographical Register of Members of the Parliament of WA*. James Henry Thomas is also in the *Biographical Register* and, as he is buried in East Perth Cemeteries, is included in the Cemeteries' website. An obituary for Thomas is also available from the Institution of Civil Engineers in London. More information on Western Australian engineers is available from the Engineering Heritage Western Australia website at <http://ehwa.wikidot.com>

**Mike Taylor**

## The Development of Woodman Point Quarantine Station

Many thanks to **Zoe Newby**, new graduate and museum volunteer, who has used the opportunity afforded by the Covid-19 shutdown to explore TROVE's newspaper riches. Given our current concerns with infection control, Zoe decided to explore the history of Woodman Point Quarantine Station, now a heritage site but once Western Australia's main protection against imported contagions. Here Zoe shares her findings with us.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, diseases such as smallpox, bubonic plague and influenza (notably 'Spanish flu') were major threats to Western Australian society. Newspapers discussed travel and diseased ships in a tone of great anxiety. In 1876, this fear led to the decision to construct a quarantine station at Woodman Point, an area approximately eight kilometres south of Fremantle. Its isolation made it an ideal location for a quarantine station, and its proximity to Fremantle meant that it could be used to house passengers from infected ships.



After completing construction of the first buildings in 1886, one of Woodman Point's first challenges was the SS *Elderslie*. Arriving from London in December 1886, it carried two children suffering from scarlet fever. With approximately one hundred passengers on board, the quarantine station did not have the space or resources to house them. Whilst the main building in the centre of the grounds was reportedly comfortable, clean and well stocked, there were only two large bedrooms, one for women and one for men, that each contained four beds. With a kitchen, dining room and drawing room, the building more closely resembled a private home than a functioning quarantine station, the only thing marking it as such being a medical consulting room.

With Woodman Point not an option, another ship, the *Cingalee*, was stationed in Fremantle to house and isolate passengers while Woodman Point became a backup option should any other passenger fall ill. Although this was not ideal, the conditions on the *Cingalee* were acceptable, and thankfully the disease was controlled. The quarantine station, however, had proved inadequate. Over the next few years, discussions were had about its usefulness. Whilst it would be used to house minor cases, such as individuals suffering from leprosy or minor outbreaks of smallpox in Fremantle, the quarantine station throughout the 1880s and 1890s was rarely seen as a sole option for infected travellers and Perth residents alike. Often Carnac Island, despite its poor resources, had to be used in tandem with Woodman Point, or passengers were kept on their ships rather than allowed onshore.

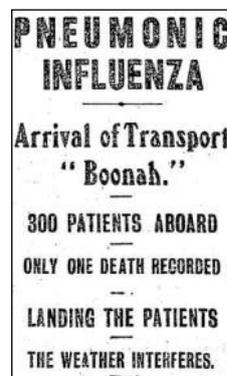


Western Australia began the twentieth century with a bubonic plague scare. With cases diagnosed in Sydney and Adelaide, the plague dominated newspapers and heightened fears of infected ports, enough so that steps were taken to expand the quarantine station at Woodman Point in April 1900. New buildings of galvanised iron were constructed, and those quarantined from infected

vessels were to be divided by class, similar to how they were on their ships. First class included the original stone building, whilst second and third class each had a building of five large bedrooms and a living room. By this time, the quarantine station could accommodate around 200 people at most. A crematorium was also constructed during this time, although cremation was not a common practice in Australia until the 1920s. Finally, a plague hospital was built adjacent to the quarantine station, where those suffering from the disease were isolated from those who had just come into contact with it. The plague broke out in Fremantle in April 1900 and continued throughout the next decade.



During World War I, the quarantine station was mostly used to house those arriving on ships carrying smallpox. However, the biggest threat to Western Australia, and certainly the most tragic case within the walls of the quarantine station, was the HMAT *Boonah*. The ship, carrying approximately a thousand soldiers and crew, arrived in South Africa from Australia with the war having already officially ended, thus receiving orders to return home. This good fortune for the soldiers on board quickly turned as 'Spanish flu' struck them down days into their return voyage – it was posited that the disease was introduced by locals who loaded supplies onto the vessel before its departure from South Africa. By the time the *Boonah* reached Fremantle in December 1918, approximately 300 passengers had contracted the disease, with at least one passenger dead.



Despite the poor weather that initially prevented movement from the ship, the quarantine station eventually accommodated around 300 patients. However, that meant the majority of the passengers had to stay on the ship; only the worst cases were allowed at Woodman Point. There are many articles after the crisis that reported it being disastrously mishandled, particularly as the conditions on the *Boonah* were described as very poor, with little room for the people remaining on the ship to sleep and exercise.

This would have put them at significant risk considering how quickly the disease could spread throughout the ship.

Conditions within the quarantine station were slightly better; whilst there were alleged issues with overcrowding and lack of supplies, it was very well-staffed. Military doctors travelled from South Australia to assist Western Australian doctors, and countless nurses volunteered their time and risked their lives to help others. Despite their tireless efforts, however, 27 soldiers and four nurses tragically lost their lives. By early January 1919, soldiers had begun to be released, and the flu had been to this point successfully confined to Woodman Point.

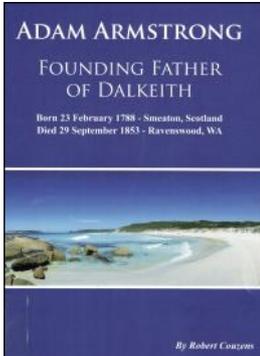
Without the quarantine station, and its developments that the plague and influenza demanded, Fremantle would have faced several epidemics from infected ships that could have had lasting repercussions throughout Western Australia and beyond.

Zoe Newby

## Book Reviews

**Robert Couzens, *Adam Armstrong: founding father of Dalkeith: born 23 February 1788 - Smeaton, Scotland; died 29 September 1853 - Ravenswood, The Author, 2018. In Library.***

**Reviewer: Pamela Statham Drew**



This is a history of Adam Armstrong's family stretching back to the 1500s with much material relating to the family in Britain. Widower Adam Armstrong himself arrived in the Swan River Colony on the *Gilmore* as one of Thomas Peel's party in December 1829 with his six children — Francis Fraser, George Drummond, John Gow, Laura Powell, Adam and Christopher. It is interesting to note that Adam

Armstrong was never a 'Captain' in the military but for some time had managed a colliery at Wales. After that business failed he moved to London.

Adam met Thomas Peel and became closely involved with his settlement scheme – carrying out much of the office work in Piccadilly. However, after arrival in Western Australia, Peel sued Armstrong and complained about him to the Colonial Secretary. Years later when the Governor told Peel to settle outstanding debts before being granted his land on the Murray, one of the debts was to Armstrong for £25.8s 7d.

Adam Armstrong and family arrived as free settlers not indentured servants. The late arrival of the *Gilmore* meant that Peel missed the deadline of 1 November to claim his chosen land. His hapless party had to remain on the *Gilmore* for two weeks while a solution was found. Peel's new land grant extended from the Murray River in the south to Woodman's Point. Armstrong was asked to survey the land around the latter for a township that Peel named Clarence. Passengers then set up camp as best they could, surrounded by sand, flies and incessant cold wind. In all 39 of them died of scurvy, dysentery and pneumonia, and were buried in the sand – though later most were re-interred at Fremantle. Eventually the Governor intervened, releasing the families from indenture. Some moved to Swan River and some left the colony. Adam and his family used their entitlement to settle on a 1,200 acre plot on the Murray, which he named Ravenswood, and commenced farming.

While visiting Perth Adam looked for better land. He was staying with his friend Captain Mark Currie and wife at Swan Location 87, the current site of UWA, and learned that, while the Upper Swan area had been taken, there was a vacant block of 320 acres at Swan Location 85 on the river. He successfully applied for it and Stirling organised to have the family moved by boat to the new location. Adam also applied for Fremantle town lots 47 (on Mouat St) and 64 (on Henry St) that backed on to each other, so he had a large block with frontages on two streets. Lot 67 became their home, and a house and shop were built.

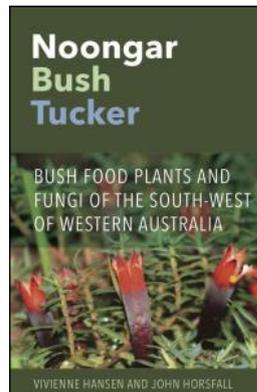
The family struggled to establish Dalkeith farm on Grant 85. In 1835 Adam obtained a loan of £80 from George Leake at 20% per annum which he repaid within the three-year loan limit, despite the fact he and his family were living at subsistence levels. In the 1837 census

Armstrong was resident at Dalkeith farm with two acres of green crops, two acres of gardens, forty goats, twelve swine, five horned cattle and one horse. He still had the 1,200 acre grant at Ravenswood and, as conflict with Aboriginal people had subsided, he decided to return there. He mortgaged Dalkeith in 1838 to pay a government debt of £64, then within months decided to sell the property. He realised £380 for 320 acres – that is, marginally over the going rate of £1 per acre.

Adam moved to Ravenswood where he lived for the next fourteen years, bringing his sister Elizabeth out to act as housekeeper after his daughter's marriage. He died there on 29 September 1853 at the age of 68. The most notable of Adam's children was Francis (1786-1853) who became the Native Interpreter as well as Schoolteacher. He married May Mews and they had fifteen children. As well, May took in young Aboriginal girls and taught them 'domestic arts'. Adam left a large family with 49 grandchildren.

**Vivienne Hansen and John Horsfall, *Noongar Bush Tucker: Bush Food Plants and Fungi of the South-West of Western Australia, UWA Publishing, 2019. In Library & Bookshop \$35.***

**Reviewer: Rhuwina Griffiths**



This is a stunning, largely pictorial record of over 260 edible plants and fungi used by the Noongar people in the southwest of Western Australia, all of which can be found today if you know where to look and what to look for. This is the second book that the authors, Vivienne Hansen, a Noongar Elder, and John Horsfall, a retired nurse educator, have collaborated on. Their first was *Noongar Bush Medicine: Medicinal Plants of*

*the South-West of Western Australia*, published in 2016. Their combined expertise and enthusiasm for sharing their botanical knowledge is infectious. In addition to identifying the plants and describing which parts can be eaten (raw or cooked), they set themselves the task of providing approximate locations of where the plants grow. This was not easy, given the area inhabited by the Noongars stretches for over three million hectares, from Geraldton to Esperance.

Unlike other books which attempt to cover all plants in the region, the focus here is exclusively on plants that are edible. It is as if a pantry door has been opened wide and we glimpse the food plants that sustained Noongar communities for thousands of years. Several of these plants, such as the youlk, are now potentially in the process of having a wider market. The youlk is a perennial shrub with attractive white, star-shaped flowers that produces large tubers rather like Kipfler potatoes and the authors note that it could probably be grown as a commercial crop here in WA.

It is easy to imagine fruits such as wild plums and grapes and the woody pear, but how about the yellow fruit called snottygobbles or the small reddish fruit from the coastal pigface? The small pigface plant is clearly a lifesaver, as its leaves contain a large amount of water relative to their size, which could sustain human life in an emergency. Several native vegetables such as the bush bean, ribbon pea, native spinach and Australian carrot are smaller and hardier versions of

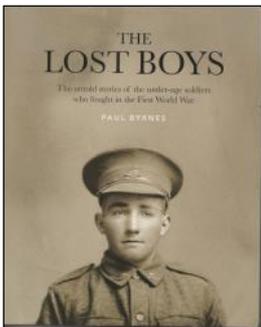
their commercially-grown counterparts, but the majority of other plants that can be used as vegetables will be new to most readers.

The size of the book (23 x 15cms) is large enough to read easily yet small enough to go into a glovebox or day backpack which makes it an ideal companion to accompany anyone on a bushwalk. The photographs are fabulous and skilfully compiled as they were taken by several photographers. Some groups of plants such as banksia, acacias, eucalypts, hakeas etc do not have photographs showing all the named varieties, but this is of minor concern when judged against the overall quality of the book.

I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in local flora and a deeper understanding of how the land sustained the Noongar community.

**Paul Byrnes, *The Lost Boys: The untold stories of the under-age soldiers who fought in the First World War*, Affirm Press, South Melbourne, 2019. In Library.**

**Reviewer: Heather Campbell**



This book details previously untold stories of 40 AIF boys – and mentions many more in the telling, bringing the total to 56. At least eight of these boys were from Western Australia: Hughie O'Donnell, Edward Giles, brothers Frank, Lewis and Frederick Collins, Albert Anderson, James Harrington and John Elliott. The book's boy soldiers are drawn from across Australia, the majority

from Victoria and NSW, so the WA stories form only a part. The book is divided into fields of battle – Turkey 1915, France 1916, Belgium 1917, France 1918 –

while the final section, Coda: the Last Post, contains additional detail.

### **The Three Cobbers**

'Fifteen-year-old Edward Giles and eighteen-year-old James Harrington were typical West Australian boys, sons of labourers, tanned and strong. They were keen to do their bit and fight the Germans, whom they called 'Fritz', when they went to France in 28 Battalion in January 1916, along with their mate John Ellard. At Pozieres they were due to go into battle just after midnight on 28 July. Shelling was destroying trenches as soon as they were dug and the West Australians went forward under heavy machine-gun fire. 'Hundreds fell... and were never seen again, their bodies buried or blown apart by the shelling'. As signallers the boys were assigned to repair telephone wires which had been cut as soon as the battle commenced. Ted and Jimmy died that night and their bodies were never found, though John Ellard said he saw them killed, all victims of the 'mincing' machine of Pozieres.

More pain was in store for the Giles family, Ted's Uncle Frank died six days after his nephew and Frank's sister Bridget, nursing at AGH Rouen trying to cope with thousands of casualties from the Somme, succumbed to nervous exhaustion, having lost her brother and her nephew within three weeks. Bill Giles, Ted's eldest brother, suffered a gunshot wound to the hand, returning to Australia and becoming a farmer in outback WA. He never married. Another brother, Nathaniel won the Military Medal.

The third and last 'cobber' John Ellard, invalided to England with heart problems, returned to France in the middle of 1917 but had barely arrived when he was wounded in the jaw and repatriated to Australia in mid-1918.

These personal stories about the experiences of members of the First AIF are harrowing and made even more so by the thought that those injured or killed were only boys.

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