



HISTORY WEST

PUBLISHED BY THE ROYAL WESTERN AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

March 2022

GENERAL MEETING

The next meeting at Stirling House is on Wednesday 16 March at 6pm when Dr Dorothy Erickson will present a paper on 'Miguel Mackinlay: "The Success of Season" – the art of the Perth Tech Poster boy'. Refreshments available from 5.30pm; Bookshop open until 6pm.



Miguel Mackinlay's painting of his garden studio with youngest daughter Theresa reading.

The illustrations in *Girls Own Annuals* of the 1930s might be familiar to some of our older members as might those in English magazines of the 1940s with illustrations for stories such as 'A Town Like Alice', but few would know that the artist illustrator Miguel Mackinlay was trained in Western Australia. J W R Linton considered him the most successful student to have ever attended Perth Technical School where he also taught the well-known Kate O'Connor. As he did with O'Connor, Linton encouraged Mackinlay to go abroad to further his studies.

Mackinlay left Perth on the eve of World War I and served on the Western Front where he made poignant drawings of the carnage. He went on to become the talk of the town in the 1930s being 'hung on the line' at the Royal Academy and spoken of in the same sentences as Augustus John, Jacob Epstein and Roger Fry. It is only now that his paintings are being re-evaluated, along with those of other interwar British Realist artists. Having spent much of the past four years preparing material for a website on Mackinlay which was launched last year Dorothy can now tell us his story.



Dr Dorothy Erickson, daughter of Dr Rica Erickson, is an artist-jeweller with an international career. In 2021 Dorothy was honoured by induction into the Design Institute of Australia Hall of Fame in recognition of her extensive achievements.

Dorothy has a personal request - 'I am triple vaxxed and request that only vaccinated people attend my talk as I have a fragile immune system'.

Please note that proof of full vaccination will be required for admission to this talk .



Can You Help?
More books needed for upcoming April book sale!
RWAHS Giant Second Hand Book Sale
Saturday 2 & Sunday 3 April 2022

Please bring any books you no longer want to Stirling House or call the Office on 9386 3841 to arrange a pick up. All books, except textbooks and encyclopedias, are wanted. Please deliver all large donations for sorting to 24 Barnfield Road, Claremont, & phone Nick on 0409 290 895. Many thanks in anticipation.

History in the City

Because of the difficulties and uncertainty posed by COVID, all History in the City talks have been cancelled for 2022. The Auxiliary Committee intends to resume the talks in 2023. We are grateful for your support and understanding.

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WA Museum Boola Bardip tour

‘So much to see and do’, ‘amazing stories’, ‘must come again and bring the grandkids’, ‘pleased to see the focus on Aboriginal peoples’, are some of the comments shared by participants at the conclusion of our November tour of the Museum.

Boola Bardip means ‘many stories’ in the language of the Whadjuk Noongar people, the traditional custodians of the land on which the Museum is located. Stories, underpinned by an Aboriginal narrative, unite the displays housed within the confines of an innovative blending of old and new architecture. Throughout the building the emphasis is on the ever-evolving rich natural and cultural heritage of WA expressed in thematic galleries embracing WA’s inventive spirit, geological origins, unique biodiversity, vibrant cultural mix and global connections.

The challenge for the Tours & Events Committee was how best to curate the visit into a two-hour period. The agreed aim was to give participants snapshots of the building’s cleverly integrated architecture, thematic galleries and highly prized specimens, including Otto the blue whale skeleton, and WA’s oldest fruiting grapevine possibly planted in the 1850s. This vine has been nurtured and pruned annually by Ian Cameron, formerly from the Department of Agriculture, for over fifty years.

On the day of the tour participants were joined by Mara Pritchard, Corporate Communications Manager. She emphasised that ‘the Museum is all about being Western Australian. It’s our shared history, our stories’. As part of her commentary she said a ‘People First’ approach had been utilised and that over 54,000 people had been actively engaged in shaping the development of the Museum.

An early stop was the thematic gallery *Connections – Our Place in the World*. In this gallery a special exhibit for the RWAHS is located: the Red Cross Flag which belonged to the 3rd Field Ambulance C Section, one of the first units ashore at Anzac Cove on 25 April 1915. It was Wendy Lugg’s keen detective work and subsequent fundraising initiatives that helped to bring this historic flag back home to WA to become part of our global story.

On the way to the next thematic gallery *Changes – Transforming Landscapes*, we stopped at ‘The Lantern’. This an ideal spot to appreciate the beauty of the heritage architecture within the embrace of the new as visitors are invited to look down through the old building’s layers into Hackett Hall, once the State Library’s reading room.

Changes tells the stories of how people, over time, have impacted on the land we call home. The depiction of landscape changes in the postcolonial period is confronting and participants were challenged to start conversations on how WA’s natural environment could be managed in the future.

Next, participants met Otto the 124-year-old, four-tonne, blue whale skeleton which now hangs in a ‘lunge feeding’ position above Hackett Hall. Mara explained the intricacies of hanging Otto, a wonderful story celebrating creative engineering solutions with a huge dash of Western Australian ingenuity.

On the way to ‘The Well’ we paused at the Juliet balcony, which overlooks the *Innovations* gallery, to appreciate again the imaginative blending of the old and the new so special to this Museum. Here the former Art Gallery of WA showcases ‘creative minds, amazing ideas’ against a backdrop of the Parthenon frieze cast from the original located in the British Museum.

The Well was discovered, intact, during renovations as part of the Museum building project. Now visitors can view the old well through a glass floor. This well is thought to have serviced the freshwater needs of the Old Perth Gaol between 1856 and 1888. Also in this space Ian Maitland, one of the tour convenors, was surprised to learn that this well was under the floorboards of his grandfather’s office.

Ian’s discovery was shared with participants whilst sitting in the yarning circle located in *Ngalang Koort Boodja Wirm* – a place which tells the stories of WA’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Participants were invited to share how their personal stories had been enriched by their visit to the Museum, bringing forth poignant glimpses into their lives. Also, it was the place where we thanked Mara for her passionate commentary and insights into how this world-class Museum evolved into what we can see today.

Georgina Wrigley



Some interesting books in April's Book Sale

Writings on Wine

The books we have on offer are bolded in the story below.

Among recent donations to April's Book Sale are three books written by Walter Edward (Bob) James, the fourth and youngest child of once Premier Sir Walter Hartwell James and his wife Gwentyfred (née Harder).

As his famous father was a shareholder and director of the *West Australian* newspaper, Walter (always known as Bob) was able to start his career at the newspaper in 1923, and there he met fellow journalist Paul Hasluck. In 1928 he joined the Melbourne *Herald* and by 1930 was freelancing in London. Paul and Alexandra Hasluck's Freshwater Bay Press published his *Venite Apotemus* ('Come, Let Us Drink') in 1940, under the pseudonym of Tom Turnspit, which argued that Australians should embrace more locally-made wines and a café culture like Europe's.

He joined the ABC and moved to Canberra in 1941 but was increasingly unhappy in his work and in poor health. He told Paul Hasluck he was 'revolted by the unhealthy dullness of my sedentary work'. And so he made a major lifestyle change, moving with his family to the Perth hills to run his new purchase — Glen Hardey vineyard and winery. Despite no prior experience, he produced sweet wines and claret until his vineyard was destroyed by fire in 1949. He then moved to Melbourne.

His life changed again with his publication of ***Barrel and Book: A Winemaker's Diary*** with illustrations by Harold Freedman. This success was followed by *Nuts on Wine* (1950), *Wine in Australia* (1952), ***The Gadding Vine*** (1955), *Antipasto* (1957), *A Word-Book of Wine* (1959), and *Ants in the Honey* (1972).

His wine writings were influential, coinciding with changes in Australians' drinking tastes and helping to re-shape them. He was witty, confident and informative, drawing on his accumulated knowledge, practical and otherwise. His biographer wrote that 'He was convinced of the delights and civilising benefits of wine [and] railed good-humouredly against "beerolatry", restrictive licensing laws, wowsers, and drunks alike'. His readership agreed that the time was ripe for change as Australia opened up to the postwar world.

Reference: David Dunstan, 'James, Walter Edward (Bob) (1905–1991)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 19, 2021.

These are just three of the hundreds of books we have on offer at our upcoming sale!

DAF Dutch Australian Foundation Seminar series

NWS Shipping Theatre, Maritime Museum, 2-4pm
Bookings necessary — through the WA Museum

6 March

Richard Offen – Wooden boat building in Western Australia

Graeme Henderson – Building the 1606 *Duyfken* replica

13 March

Dr Wendy van Duivenvoorde – Our *Batavia* shipwreck

Dr Michael McCarthy & Adriaan de Jong – *Sloop*, the first European shipbuilding in Australia

20 March

Dr John McCarthy – Developing digital libraries of Dutch 17th & 18th century merchant ships

Jeroen ter Brugge – The Rijksmuseum Amsterdam project: Wooden half models

27 March

John Longley – The *Endeavour* build: The largest great wooden ship built in Fremantle

John Rothwell – The future of shipbuilding in Western Australia

Diary Dates

- **Monday 14 March 2022**, 10am to Noon — Royals Writers' Group
- **Sunday 20 March 2022**, 10:30am Tour — Samson House Visit
- **Tuesday 22 March 2022**, 10 for 10:30am start — Community Talk speaker Bill Bunbury topic 'The Country is Alive: a sense of place among Aboriginal and other West Australians'.

The John Gavin Writing Competition 2022

The Fremantle Volunteer Heritage Guides Association in association with the Fremantle Round House is pleased to announce the John Gavin Writing Competition 2022 – with two open categories, The John Gavin Ballad Competition (500w limit) and The John Gavin Flash Fiction Competition (750w limit).

Theme: The Life and Times of John Gavin

Competition closes: 12 March 2022

For details about the competitions, entry forms, terms and conditions, links and recommended reading about John Gavin and the trial, see website below. Winning and highly commended entries will be invited to perform at a special awards day in April 2022.

For more information visit - <https://www.fremantleroundhouse.com.au/competitions/>

An interesting acquisition - Lady Fraser in portrait



The Society has recently received a donation from the Australian Red Cross in WA of a painting of Lady Elizabeth Fraser (1841-1896) by English portrait painter Emily Dixon (later Calvert).

Lady Fraser was the wife of Sir Malcolm Fraser (1834-1900) who was the Surveyor-General of WA (succeeding John Septimus Roe) from 1870, and then Colonial Secretary from 1883 to 1890. He was also a member of the Executive Council and Legislative Council as well as Commissioner of Crown Lands. Just before he returned to England in 1890 Sir Malcolm acted as Administrator of the colony for ten months between Governors Broome and Robinson. He was knighted in 1887 and retired to London where Premier Forrest appointed him WA's first Agent-General in England (1892-1898).

Sir Malcolm had trained as a surveyor in England and moved to New Zealand in 1857 where he worked for various government departments before marrying Elizabeth Riddiford in 1861. The Riddifords were an early colonial family who arrived in New Zealand in the 1840s.

The couple were active members of WA society, supporting many organisations, schools and charities. Lady Fraser became a close friend of Lady Broome and together they held fundraising receptions, balls and events to raise money for charities. Lady Fraser was also a member of the Dorcas Society whose mission was to promote the welfare and alleviate the sufferings of the poor. She organised picnics and raised funds for Perth orphanages and many other good causes. Fremantle's *Evening Times* described her as the 'Lady Bountiful of Perth', indicating that she was part of a

strong philanthropic tradition among elite women — to fundraise for 'good causes', almost always those relating to women and children in need.

Emily Dixon's painting of Lady Fraser was completed in 1892 following the Frasers' return to England. Indications are that Emily Dixon also painted Sir Malcolm. The artist and portrait painter was born in Sculcoates, Hull, in northern England in 1853. Over the years, she exhibited paintings in galleries in the Manchester Academy of Fine Arts, Nottingham Castle Museum, Royal Academy, Royal Society of British Artists, Royal Scottish Academy and the Society of Women Artists.

How the painting found its way to WA is not known. The painting was not donated to the Red Cross until 2018 and before that appears to have resided in private hands.

Bruce Hoar

Can any reader help us with further information on the history of this beautiful painting?

Affiliates News

Did you know that the **Katanning Historical Society** was the WAHS' first Affiliate? Katanning's Society was formed in 1937 because of the need for research into the early history of the district. The first members wanted to record that history before it was lost forever. The early history of the police in the district was a focus of study as well as the erection of a memorial at the Police Pools.

Melville History Society's 2021 Murdoch Lecture, given by postgraduate Peter McMullan, looked at the presence and work of Italian and German Prisoners of War in WA during World War II. In all, 3456 POWs were sent to WA during the war. Most were Italians and were assigned to farmers to alleviate the extreme shortage of rural labour; the German POWs worked from the Marrinup Camp on firewood supply. At least some of these former POWs returned after the war as postwar immigrants having learnt something of the country in their previous stay, and in some sense these men paved the way for the influx of European immigrants whom WA welcomed after war ended. The latest newsletter contains a transcript of this interesting talk

York Society is taking part in the **York Heritage Weekend**, 23-24 April, and will host two walks conducted by President Rob Garton Smith:

Janet Millet's York Walk, on Saturday 23 April at 2 pm

York Architecture Walk, on Sunday 24 April at 10 am

Australasian Mining History Association

The AMHA invites historians with an interest in Australian mining history to submit papers for publication in its journal.

Visit — <https://www.mininghistory.asn.au/>
Contact *Journal* editor Jason Nitz at email:
amhajournaleditor@gmail.com

Gentlemen's Shoes

'... a massive rose of lace, droplet spangles, honeysuckle flower, exquisite vine patterns in silver, gold and black'.



Richard Sackville (1589-1624), 3rd Earl of Dorset.

These evocative words described a 17th century earl's perfumed, embroidered shoes and stockings, a man who financed his love of fashion by selling off family land and property. Fashion mirrors history and, by the time of the English Civil War in the mid-17th century, men's shoe decoration had disappeared, except for silver buckles. Charles II returned from exile, and again elaborate shoe and leg styles were worn; but a century later, after the French Revolution, men's footwear had simplified. Some Parisian ladies traded in their jewellery to help finance the

Revolution, prompting their counterpart male deputies to take 'the silver buckles out of their shoes and also lay them on the President's table'. So began the buckle's demise.



Gentlemen's shoes in the 17th & 18th centuries

Similar dress shoes together with fine leather London boots would have arrived in the Swan River colony in the luggage of male settlers, though it is doubtful they would have given much thought to

the soil or sand type they were about to set foot on.



Gentlemen's leather boots in the 19th century

George Fletcher Moore, a man of standing in the new colony, was pleasantly surprised by the balls held in the Government House tent and noted that 'slight shoes, silk stockings and kid gloves' were worn; but his pleasure turned to anger when, needing new boots and shoes, he couldn't find any, nor a shoemaker. He complained he'd waited sixteen months for a pair to arrive — 'the ships bring nothing in'. Perth's heat cracked his London boots; they'd only lasted six weeks and he'd had to cut off the leg part to use as repairs. When he did find a shoemaker he objected to the 150% profit made on eighteen shillings shoes. Meanwhile, he himself imported 150 pairs of shoes into the colony, sold thirteen pairs immediately and remarked 'people were running to me for them'.

Superintendent of Works and Buildings Henry Trigg didn't care about dress shoes with or without

silver buckles, nor fine leather London boots. He was building a city on sand, and needed strong boots for his workmen. Summoned to meet with a Governor desperate for a reliable contractor, Trigg walked from Fremantle to Perth through scrub. It took him eight hours and wore out his boots. His wife sent him stronger ones laced above the ankles, together with leather gaiters, although never hob-nailed boots, 'as I have a deal of walking'. Needing constant supplies he urged his old shoemaker friend Jeff to emigrate; he could make himself a fortune selling light shoes at 17/6d a pair – even more for boots.

Others helped themselves. In what perhaps was a smart business move, Robert Moore negotiated a pair of ammunition boots from a private in the 21st regiment and was fined £5. With more guile than Moore, two privates in the 51st Regiment, William Phillips and James Reynolds, stole marked boots from Thomas Jecks' Guildford store. They sold them on, but the original owner recognised the mark. The men were sentenced to twelve months' hard labour, escaped and hid in the bush, waiting for a passage on an American whaling ship. To estimate society's value of a pair of boots, consider their sentence with that of John Wade, who in the same year, 1841, was let off with a bond for stealing money from the Colonial Treasury!

Desperate families used any means to obtain footwear. Revd Wollaston's family tried making boots from worn-out shoes, gratefully accepted handouts and, perhaps adding to the distress of the well-born Mary Wollaston, bought shoes off a visiting ship, the *Hooghly*. The Fergusons' long-awaited trunk arrived with shoes for the family – all too large. Jane Dodd's family went barefoot for five months, prompting her call for 'a steady young man who is a shoemaker...he might make a fortune here'. And a barefoot shepherd boy worked without shoes. De Courcy Lefroy recorded that 'I made a pair of shoes for the lad minding the sheep, with wooden soles and kangaroo skin uppers. Poor boy had no boots for 6 months'. It was said that even the Governor's children went barefoot like all the others.



Women's ballet-style ball slippers, c1840.



Women's wedding shoes. French, c1860. MA2005.83.

Unsurprisingly, the Society's costume collection has no examples of men's shoes from that era, but it does have women's flat pumps worn under shorter, wider crinoline skirts. De Courcy Lefroy made a pair of white satin shoes for his girlfriend for a ball honoring the Officers from the *Ferolara*. 'The first time I ever turned shoemaker...had to let shoes out a little'. Silk pumps with ribbons and satin kid boots with rosettes were popular for Perth balls and weddings.

Jo Pearson

Dr Nonja Peters remembers growing up in Northam

Nonja wrote a personal history of her early life in Northam for Northam Senior High School's centenary celebrations in 2021. We are delighted to publish that history in edited form below.

I was a student at Northam High School from the age of thirteen in 1957 until the end of 1959. I left after completing the Junior Certificate. I remember waiting anxiously at midnight outside the newsagent with a huge crowd of kids for *The West Australian* newspaper to arrive. It contained the exam results. Success or failure was very public then.

Friendships at school were important. When I started high school, I knew only the girls who had been at St Joseph's convent with me and the boys at Marist Brothers. In second year high school, five of us were given the opportunity to learn German. You had to have some background in the language as we had to complete a three-year course in two years. Mine was in Dutch, the others were all the children of Displaced Persons who had been born and lived in camps in Germany before coming to Australia. Many of their parents had been abducted as teenagers by the Nazis from villages in Poland or the Ukraine to work as slave labour for the Nazi war machine. The Nazis also raided villages and towns in the Netherlands. My parents were sent to Strasbourg in Alsace Lorraine as forced labour in a munitions factory. My mother was pregnant with me. Northam was first home in Australia to most Displaced Persons and non-English speaking migrants disembarked in Fremantle. Northam's 'New Australians' had suffered a great deal during the war. All sought a safe haven for the future.

None of the horrendous suffering of Northam's migrant kids was known to the school's staff or other students. Moreover, the 'sink or swim' education policy and extremely culturally-biased IQ tests meant few migrant kids got a real handle on their capacity. I recall IQ tests that were completely culture-bound and based on language and vocabulary which migrants could only fail. This tended to add to our sense of inferiority. Likewise, the expectation of the assimilation policy that prevailed at the time would have us renounce our cultural heritage and language and become Australian. How was this to work? These migrant parents didn't know how to be Australian.

Somehow our lunches became an issue around identity. I wanted to sit with the Australian girls only on Mondays when I was allowed to buy a pie for lunch given the bread was stale. Eating lunch with the other migrant kids meant no further observation on 'being Australian'. When some of the local boys fell in love and took home a migrant girl to marry, there was much ado in many Australian households. Some migrant kids became more Australian than Australians, others stayed in their own group.

The loveliest memory I hold of Northam is of Mrs Mabel Stempel, who lived in a federation house behind us on Doctors Hill. My parents had bought our block of land

from them. Mr and Mrs Stempel had kindly let us purchase the land, over time, to enable us to start building immediately to accommodate our growing family. Mrs Stempel was an extraordinary woman. She made me lovely afternoon teas served in beautiful china cups and saucers accompanied by delicious slices. We would talk books and general knowledge. I was a little girl of eleven when our relationship began and it was amazing attention from a thoughtful, caring Australian adult. Mrs Stempel loaned me books and also gave me three books: Edmund Hillary's *Ascent of Everest*, Eric Williams' *The Wooden Horse* and Adam Lindsay Gordon's poems. What the books conveyed to me was that I should never give up; I could escape from my circumstances and that learning was my way out. Also, as well as sadness, that life had beautiful experiences to offer.

At that time, our family of six was living in two rooms and a lean-to kitchen. My bed was in the lounge, so I would get up at 5am in the morning to do my homework while the rest of the family was still asleep. Most migrants lived in makeshift or substandard homes to start with; there was a countrywide housing shortage after the war. None of us had any money when we arrived in Australia and we built bits of our houses at a time until we had achieved a whole.

On gaining my Junior Certificate, I was shocked to have my father tell me I should go to work. I wanted an education and it seemed unreasonable given all the urging to do my best at school but I found out then that he did not believe in educating females. In any case the family needed the money I could earn. Then, unexpectedly I won £5 for first prize in the Locke's Limited essay competition. It gave me the money to enrol in fourth year. Moreover, I had enough left over to buy a proper school skirt. Its pleats were sewn from the waist to the hip, whereas my homemade skirt was gathered at the waist. My sport tunic was a hand-me-down from some migrant family, and had been washed so often the blue looked green. However my foray into fourth year was short-lived. I simply couldn't resolve the home situation and left to go to work in the township. Mine was the experience of many Dutch kids. As a group, the Dutch were less inclined to educate their children than many other migrant communities.

I sat a mature age matriculation exam in 1977. I wanted to tell the migrant story and, while working as a curator at the WA Museum, commenced to produce a large exhibition based on my research on post-war migration, I also embarked on a PhD. To my utter amazement I passed the PhD with distinction. My book, *Milk and Honey But no Gold*, on migration to WA was published by UWA Press in 2000. The post-war migration exhibition was on display at the WA Museum in Fremantle and parts of the research were also exhibited in Northam. We eventually created multicultural festivals around the Northam exhibition. I moved onto Dutch heritage after that, but to today get enquiries from migrants related to my original migration research.

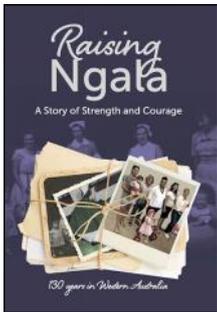
I currently live in Amsterdam and don't know when Covid will enable me to come home to my sons, their partners and my eight grandchildren.

Dr Nonja Peters

Book Reviews

Cherilyn McMeekin, *Raising Ngala: A story of strength and courage*, Ngala, Kensington, 2021. In Library.

Reviewer: Heather Campbell



This book traces the inspiring story of Ngala, an organisation which started in 1890 as a 'House of Mercy' to rescue women, who had become 'the soiled doves ... the battered wrecks of men's base passions' and provide them with a refuge and practical help to re-establish their lives.

An engaging read, in which the depth of research is readily

apparent in the narrative, referencing and footnoting, this publication also includes numerous photographs. 'Boxes' at relevant points in the text add colour and context. For example, 'Child Rearing in the 1890s: Training the Baby' suggests, among other things, that toilet training should begin at two months of age. 'From the Matron's Diary' notes that, 'The House was gifted two dozen bottles of stout by the Swan Brewery in April 1895, with the offer to supply same at three shillings and sixpence a dozen. It is not noted whether this offer was accepted.'

The reader cannot fail to be impressed with the foresight, vision and hard work of the administrators of this organisation, from the 32 women who answered Wesleyan Methodist Minister Rev James Young Simpson's 'fervent' appeal in 1890, through to the more formal Directors, Boards and staff of the complex structure of recent years. In covering its various incarnations – from the House of Mercy to the Alexandra Home to Ngala, the book tells the story of an organisation in touch and responding to the developing needs of its clients and the changing moral stances of the community from 1890 to the present day.



The last baby to leave the Alexandra Home, 23 July 1959

Final chapters detail the development of Ngala since its naming as such in 1959 - chapter headings indicating its changing and developing role – *Ngala Mothercraft Home and Training Centre (1959-1989)*, *Ngala Family Resource Centre (1989-2001)*, and simply *Ngala (2001-2020+)*. The organisation has come a long way from the original aim of

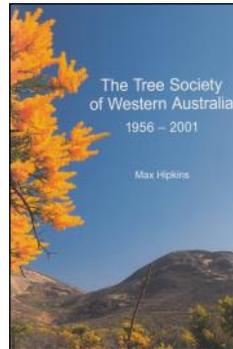
rescuing 'soiled doves', and now works '...with and for families to enhance the experience of parenting and the development of young children'. Initiatives include a Helpline, the involvement of fathers, parent education workshops and many others discussed in the narrative.

As Cherilyn McMeekin says in her final paragraph: 'Change is inevitable, but it is not easy. It takes strength and courage, hope and resilience. Ngala, its people and its supporters have proven they have what it takes to keep evolving and to work together for the benefit of WA children, families and communities. Watch this space.' After reading this book we certainly will.

To purchase this book go to —
<https://www.ngala.com.au/product/raising-ngala/>

Max Hipkins, *The Tree Society of Western Australia 1956-2001*, The Author, 2021. In Library & Bookshop \$10.

Reviewer: Lenore Layman



For half a century the Tree Society devoted itself to identifying and protecting WA's natural cultural heritage. Members worked voluntarily to preserve native forests, develop national parks, protect fragments of remnant vegetation, and save individual trees. This book records the history of that community effort and the key activists who devoted themselves to this work. Author Max

Hipkins was one of those volunteers for twenty years from 1977 and so is ideally placed to tell the Tree Society's story.

The Society was formed in 1956, primarily by the Women's Service Guilds and their president Miss Mabel Talbot with her colleague Bessie Rischbieth. John and Ray Oldham were early supporters as was Judy Hamersley from Guildford, and Vince and Dom Serventy. Peter Thorn who became president in 1959 was another well-connected and influential early leader. Given the array of talent and community experience among its early leaders, it is little wonder that the Tree Society flourished.

Country branches were set up, a Junior Tree Society formed and, as membership numbers grew, early successes included changes to road regulations to widen verges allowing more native vegetation to survive, protections for the natural bushland of King's Park, and national park status for the Knoll at Gooseberry Hill. In 1959 the Tree Society was among several influential organisations that guided the establishment of the National Trust WA and in 1967 the Conservation Council of WA as well as successfully lobbying for the establishment of the Environmental Protection Authority in 1971. In the mid-1960s the Tree Society reached its peak of 3000 members, and was recognised in its time as the State's leading conservation group.

The Society initially pursued only positive policies, avoiding critiques of existing land-use policies and practices. For instance, it did not fight the infill of Matilda Bay for the Narrows interchange but rather concentrated on remedial tree plantings and landscaping. While this policy contributed to its successes in the 1950s and early 1960s, it became more challenging to pursue by the late 1960s as development accelerated and clashed with conservation values. Community views became increasingly polarised and the Tree Society was undoubtedly in the conservationist corner. It responded with an increasingly critical public voice, especially opposed to mining in national parks and to aspects of metropolitan planning projects.

Running the Society and effective lobbying became more difficult as grant funding dried up and other conservation bodies drew much of the Tree Society's

former support. In many ways, the Society had become a victim of its own success! In 2001, with the future of the State's old-growth southwest forest apparently secured

with a change of government, the Tree Society decided its time had passed, its job done as far as it could.

This clear chronological and well-evidenced account of the Tree Society's life is a valuable addition to WA history, recording for all of us who are interested the life story of one of WA's most influential conservation organisations and its key leaders. It is splendid to have the history well-told.

Peter Farr (ed.) *ROBOTS. 2016/2019 Collection of Autobiographies. PMG Department / Telecom Australia / Telstra Engineers, 2019. In Library.*

Reviewer: Pamela Statham Drew



This 259 page, fully illustrated biographical collection is dedicated to all the engineers who have worked for this influential communications organisation,

particularly those who 'are no longer alive to tell their own tale'. The biographies begin with A Ross Abbott. Each biography is approximately two pages in length and includes a photograph where possible.

Titled ROBOTS, meaning Retired Old Bastards of Telecom/Telstra, the book looks at approximately 100 male and female engineer employees. Professional engineers were just one component of the massive

collection of resources that made Telecom/Telstra function, but they were an essential part, so their story needed telling. Peter Farr has done just that in this volume which he has ensured has been deposited in the State and local libraries. Listed by name, Farr has included cadet engineers, trainee engineers, graduate engineers, 'Pommy' engineers, female engineers, and international engineers. Their individual stories reveal the huge changes that occurred between 1950 and 2017, changes that defined the amazing era of revolutionised communication technology. One entry, chosen at random, ends with the comment 'it has been an interesting and challenging career from step and crossbar to electronic switches, analogue to digital transmission; copper cable to optic fibre; land lines to mobiles and mobiles to smart phones.' The biographies are therefore the stories of the men (and women) who made the miracle happen. Most of the many photographs of individuals have come from groups of people celebrating birthdays or Christmas giving the book a convivial feel.

The book begins with a brief history of the three entities involved – the PMG, Telecom and Telstra. In discussing the reforms introduced by Director Sol Trujillo from 2005, the author comments that 'Trujillo is recognised as a combative CEO who frequently locked horns with Australia's government but was pivotal in shifting Telstra's position from a government-run monopoly to a more nimble competitive company'.

Compiling this collection has been a labour of love for Peter Farr. It will be treasured by all those named and, as each entry sheds new light on our communication revolution, it will be a valuable tool for future historians.

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