



# HISTORY WEST

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May 2021

## GENERAL MEETING

The next meeting at Stirling House is on Wednesday 19 May at 6pm when Melissa Hetherington will present a paper 'Through the Eyes of Henry Gray: an investigation into merchant life and the influence of the Temperance Movement in nineteenth century Western Australia'. Refreshments available from 5.30pm; Bookshop open until 6pm.



One seemingly simple question underpins this research: Why did Henry Gray change his mind about joining the Independent Order of Good Templars in 1874? The answer is anything but simple. What methods can be used to investigate an intangible topic like motivations for joining the Temperance Movement, particularly when such things were rarely discussed in the public sphere or when records do not survive? This investigation utilises references to Henry Gray in historical newspapers (now keyword searchable thanks to the NLA's Trove database) to piece together his life story and reveal the reflection (the mere shadow) of a man who for 25 years managed to keep the impact of one traumatic life event out of the public eye, but whose reputation was eventually undone by his demons. This research touches on issues at the core of the Temperance Movement that are still highly relevant today: PTSD, domestic violence, the battle against alcohol, and the efforts that people and organisations go to in order to help people overcome trauma and addiction.

**Melissa Hetherington** is currently working toward her PhD in Historical Archaeology at the University of Western Australia. Working closely with the National Trust of Australia (WA), Melissa led a team of students to excavate Gray's Store and the Temperance Lodge in Greenough. Her research pieces together a biographical account of Swan River ferryman and merchant, Henry Gray, and explores the influence of Wesleyan Methodism and the Temperance Movement on his life and business. Melissa graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Archaeology at ANU in 2010, after analysing material excavated from late-Holocene coastal Pilbara middens.



## History in the City

History in the City is back! After a twelve-month hiatus due to Covid-19 we recommenced on 3 March with a highly illustrated presentation by Dr Joanna Sassoon on E L Mitchell's stunning photographs of WA which have been widely published in books and exhibitions. His photographic collections are held in many institutions including the RWAHS. Her fascinating talk shone a light on Mitchell's life and explained how his photographs have been used.

Migrating to Australia as a child in the 1880s, by twelve years old he understood the communicative power of photographs. It wasn't long before Mitchell combined his knowledge of technological advances in printing and photography by initially taking commissions in portraits to later generating a regular income from photographing mining, agricultural industries and country shows. By 1913, he had established a photographic studio at 264 Murray Street, Perth – receiving commissions from government departments, local and interstate pictorial press, and members of the business and pastoral communities. Mitchell's photographs helped transform the international image of Australia.

Joanna Sassoon brought along copies of her book *Agents of Empire - How E.L. Mitchell's Photographs Shaped Australia*, which were readily purchased by enthusiastic guests.

History in the City is held on the first Wednesday of each month. On 5 May, Chris Holyday will talk on the History of the RSL in WA. The following month on 2 June come and listen to Roy Stall's topic OVENS, Oberons, and Orions – the story of Australian submarines in the Cold War. (OVENS is now part of the WA Maritime Museum in Fremantle.)

Join us at 2pm at the Citiplace Community Centre on the Perth Railway Concourse. Donation \$5 entry with afternoon tea; all welcome.

Rachel Roe

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## Another successful Second Hand Book Sale, 17 & 18 April 2021

We achieved another great success in raising \$20,302.00 over this weekend, a wonderful achievement which will enable the Society to continue to function effectively for the next year. Thank you to everyone who made the weekend such a success but, first and foremost, special thanks to **Pamela & Nick Drew** who worked tirelessly on the book sale throughout the year. Our grateful thanks also to the book sale team and the many volunteers whose work ensured that the weekend went off without a hitch.

Thank you to all those who decluttered their shelves and provided the books for sale, to those who provided book storage, those who priced, who set up and packed up, who came along to buy books. Without the assistance and support of all these members we could not achieve this wonderful outcome.

To everyone — **Our Grateful Appreciation - Thank You!**



## Introducing Amy Jurilg

Amy is assisting the Members' Fundraising Campaign by making courtesy calls to members to seek support in multiple ways. The purpose of the Campaign is to provide a new future for the Society for members and for the significant museum and library collection. Donations, bequests, introductions to corporate networks and persons of influence all assist the project to provide new premises for the Society by 2026, our centenary. Amy is ringing you on behalf of the Council of the Society and your involvement will be most appreciated.

### Warm welcome to new members in March & April

Ms Susanne Johnston  
Mr Malcolm and Mrs Kay Mason  
Mrs Jill Munro  
Mr Julian Peet  
Mrs Rae Wackett  
Mr Simon Watson  
Mrs Eleanor Sanders  
Mrs Carol Newton Smith

Ms Valerie Ferreira  
Mrs Eleanor Sanders  
Mrs Carol Newton Smith  
Ms Susanne Johnston  
Mr Malcolm & Mrs Kay Mason  
Mrs Jill Munro  
Mr Julian Peet  
Mrs Rae Wackett  
Mr Simon Watson  
Kwinana Heritage Group

### Writers' Group

The group's numbers expand and contract as members' outside activities and sometimes ill-health cause leaves-of-absence. However, a dozen or so members attended a spirited meeting this month where, along with our usual (gentle and constructive) criticism of the work of two members, we undertook to individually plan our writing year, month by month, culminating in a Big Reveal in December.

Written down, and sealed till then!

# Nedlands Yacht Club Morning Tea: the campaign begins

On Thursday 24 March the Society held an enjoyable morning gathering at the Nedlands Yacht Club to introduce the fundraising campaign for the History West Community History Centre to members. The occasion began with a general invitation to consider what History means to each of us.

Richard Offen took us on an enjoyable journey through his life to explain what history means for him. He began with a favourite quotation —

Everyone has a history,  
What you do with it is up to you,  
Some repeat it,  
Some learn from it,  
The really special ones use it to help others.

**John Mark Green**



Sheep being driven to market,  
Tenterden High St

He explained —

Almost from my earliest memories, history has played an important part in my life. I grew up in the beautiful, Kentish market town of Tenterden, which can trace its origins back to Saxon times. During my childhood, the town still carried on the centuries-old tradition of two livestock markets a year on the recreation ground, for which sheep and cattle were often driven down the High Street.



Richard Offen in background. Thanks to Margaret Medcalf & Val Hutch for the flowers.

It was my father (a man fascinated by local and family history) who fired my interest in history, the flames of which have continued to be fanned by my close association with places such as Canterbury Cathedral, the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in London's East End, the UK National Trust and, in the past twenty years, my love of everything Western Australian.



James Cassidy

James Cassidy then spoke as a young historian to explain the excitement of historical research and the value to be found in the previous research and writings of earlier historians, how this work underpins the research of contemporary historians to enrich our understandings of the past.

Since its foundation in 1926 the Society has played an important role in ensuring that Western Australia's history is not lost, that the long history of Australia's western third is researched and written and presented to the public; and that significant material items such as ceramics, costumes, artworks, documents, and all forms of memorabilia are preserved. In 1926 the Society set out to save the past from oblivion and continues today to preserve, record and present Western Australia's community history.

To continue to play that role effectively the Society needs a new home; its existing building is inadequate. And that is the intention of this major fundraising campaign the Society launched at this morning gathering.

## Can You Help?

We need donations, bequests, skills and contacts. They will all benefit our future. Please contact Lesley at the Office if you would like to discuss your contribution with a member of the History West Community Centre



Members gathered



Lady Heseltine draws the raffle of two hampers, with Sally Anne Hasluck. Many thanks to all donors, organisers and ticket sellers -the raffle raised \$1580.



## Community Talk

### Personal Archives Panel

We are all responsible for personal archives — documents, photographs, scrapbooks, albums, memorabilia, old books and booklets. In some cases this is material we have retained ourselves over our lives; in other instances we hold family or community collections. Some collections are large, others tiny, but all are important, at least to ourselves, often to our family, and sometimes to the wider community. What about the care and preservation of all this material? Often we don't think about it at all. Photographs lie unlabeled; documents become dusty and dog-eared, and objects get broken. Then a family clean-out sees the collection consigned to the tip without much thought. The Society's March Community Talk focused the minds of those attending on these personal collections — how they can be preserved, and what histories can be drawn from them. Many in the audience had come to learn how to care for the materials they hold; simply what to do with them. At the end of the morning we had all learnt a great deal.

Our experienced panel consisted of Carol Leigh, Sally Anne Hasluck and Jennie Carter. Librarian/archivist Carol Leigh has managed collections at the City of Wanneroo and the Town of Bassendean. Carol is now the RWAHS's Honorary Archivist and has accessioned the Society's recently donated collection of Forrest and North papers. Sally Anne Hasluck, inaugural curator of the Claremont Museum and former president of the Museums Association (WA Branch), oversees two extensive private collections, that of the Hasluck family and the English Terrot (Huguenot) family. Archivist/librarian/historian Jennie Carter worked for fourteen years at Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority, then ten years as Manager Archives and Director at State Library of WA. Together this panel outlined the basic care needed for a collection and explored the sorts of historical stories which personal archives can tell.



Carol Leigh

Carol provided advice on the essential first steps in caring for and cataloging collections — know your collection (understand its individual components); retain the order in which it has been collected and stored; remove all metals; keep like documents together (for instance, photographs with photographs); use proper archival products to store your material (available from RWAHS); do not laminate; document each item in a list; label photographs on a separate sheet or on the back of the photograph in soft pencil; digitise photographs; save to computer and store in the Cloud. Beware of digital storage formats that quickly become obsolete and then cannot be accessed again. These steps will assist a collection's survival into the future.



Sally Anne Hasluck

Sally Anne spoke of how to read family archives; that is, the histories that can be told by drawing on material from collections. This material can be used both autobiographically and biographically. Sally Anne pointed out that the Hasluck collection has been used to assist in writing two autobiographies — Alexandra Hasluck's *Portrait in a Mirror* (1981) and Paul Hasluck's *Mucking About* (1977) — and two biographies — Robert Porter's *Paul Hasluck: A Political Biography* (1993) and Geoff Bolton's *Paul Hasluck: A Life* (2014). And then she explored the fascinating Terrot collection of her English family and suggested that stories are often hidden in ephemeral items. One delightful example she provided concerned the 1831 English census. In the Terrot vicarage at the time were three young girls being home-schooled and, as a result, the Terrot collection contains a 'Census of Dolls', presumably collated by the girls and their governess, which lists all their dolls with each one's attributes. While the girls' task in handling the dolls was presumably fun to complete, it was also a tool to teach them an understanding of the government's official census, which was in its infancy in the early 19th century.



Jennie Carter

Jennie Carter discussed the value of institutional archives to the State's history as repositories of both official and private archives without which this history cannot be convincingly told. As well, Jenny spoke of the personal stories that are contained in them and pointed to the crucial role the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority's archives played in opening up opportunities for Aboriginal people to find out more about their families and tell their own histories. Jennie reminded us of the book (and subsequent film) *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* by Doris Pilkington Garimara about her mother Mollie and two other Aboriginal girls, Daisy and Gracie, who escaped from Moore River Native Settlement in 1931 and walked home along the fence to their home at Jigalong. This story brought the experience and history of the Stolen Generations to the forefront of public knowledge.



Our special thanks to Val Hutch for organising the morning tea

# Heritage Conservation

Next month the Society is running a metals conservation workshop for practitioners who wish to improve their skills. Below are two edited reports on conservation work carried out recently on important items in our collection. History West includes these to inform members of the ongoing work that is needed to preserve our valuable collection, and warmly thanks Dr Ian MacLeod and Rinske Car for their generosity in working at pro bono rates.

## The Society's replica of the Hartog plate

The plate was given to the Society in 1938 by the Dutch East Indies government through the WA government. The replica was cast in bronze, heavier and thicker than the original for durability, and can be seen today on display at Stirling House. It was modified from the original condition of the plate in the mid-1900s as the mould was 'touched up' to make the main lettering clearer. It was patinated with a sulphide solution and so all the lettering and the background of the plate was a dull grey-black colour, which made exhibition of the plate and the story around it a real challenge.

### Treatment

In order to improve the readability of the plate and achieve an 'authentic' ancient pewter look it was initially coated with an acrylic Derivan Matisse Mars Grey paint, which gave it a dull and very dense light to mid grey colour. The paints are based on an acrylic polymer emulsion and the pigments are waterproof, flexible and light fast. The main lettered section of the plate was then outlined in a fine brush using the Graphite Grey colour and, while this produced a much more readable look, it was not satisfactory as it was too stark a contrast, compared with the original plate, and the background was lifeless. Using a stiff hog's-hair brush dipped in water, the Graphite Grey colour was stippled until it was partially mobilised and then it was blotted off the surface with paper towel. This process was repeated in many areas until the heavy coating of the Mars Grey was reduced to show through the underlying surface roughness of the original cast, which had been 'lost' through the patination process. This process was repeated many times across the surface until a mixed colour of the background black, the Mars Grey and the Graphite Grey was reporting to the surface.

### Completion

The completed replica of the plate was re-hung in its Perspex form support system inside the exhibition case and then the protective cover was positioned and secured with Abloy locks.



### Reference

Tamar Davidowitz, 2019, personal communication from Rijksmuseum conservator

**Dr Ian D MacLeod, Principal,  
Heritage Conservation Solutions**

## Braid and button on the RWAHS bicorne hat

During the National Library of Australia's Significance and Conservation assessment of the 100 most significant objects in the Society's textile collection, the corroded gilded braid and button were noted. The hat originally belonged to Sir Luke Leake, first President and Speaker of the WA Legislative Council 1870-1886.

### Treatment

The initial treatment involved using cotton buds that had been moistened with distilled water and gently rolling them across the braided metallic coated textile detail, removing a significant amount of dirt as shown in Figure 1. It is likely that significant amounts of dirt lie on the surface of the hat, but a wet treatment was not possible during the timeframe as there was no washing facility or suitable museum quality detergents available on site. Full future treatment of the hat is likely to take a full day of close work. Following this first step, a prepared 0.3 molar solution of disodium EDTA (ethylenediamine tetraacetic acid) was used to moisten fresh cotton buds. The solution is naturally mildly acidic and complexes the copper-based corrosion products, which is partly seen by the buds turning a slight shade of green. It is likely that the metallic thread is a gilded silver-copper alloy and that being the most reactive metal in the alloy, copper is selectively corroded, and it moves to the surface of the gilded threads. If washing had been a possible option, the reaction of the EDTA with the corroded metal could have taken place over a period of 30 minutes. However, the final step was enough to remove the mobilised copper from the surface and the underlying acidity and to leave the surface clean and sparkling, as shown in Figures 2-4. The copper minerals were removed by surface cleaning with moistened cotton buds dipped into sodium bicarbonate. The use of carbonate complexes is a well-known method of mobilising copper complexes. Following the bicarbonate treatment the metallic surfaces were given a final clean with deionised water.



Figure 1: First stage cleaning with distilled water



Figure 2: Cleaned button and left side braid



Figure 3: Cleaned button and braid with towel protection in position under braid



Figure 4: Completed work on the Leake bicorne hat

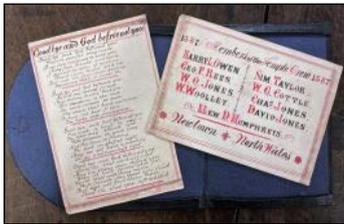
The completed metal braided decoration and the button were dried with clean cotton towelling and the hat was re-padded with supportive acid free tissue paper before the protective cover was positioned and secured with Abloy locks.

**Rinske Car, Principal,  
Denmark River Textile Conservation Studio**

# Museum News: a new donation

## The Rees Wallet

The Society is delighted to report member Bernice Reid's recent donation of a leather wallet that belonged to her grandfather George Rees (1865-1954). Bernice made a number of replicas of the wallet for her family before donating the original.



George Rees' wallet and its contents

George Rees' friends in Newtown, north Wales, gifted the wallet to him on his departure for Australia in 1887. It contains a list of members of the 'Temple Crew' and a moving poem, 'Goodbye and God befriend you'.

Good bye and God befriend you  
 Since 'tis that we must part  
 May his strong arm defend you  
 When ill luck proves your foe  
 You'll meet with faces newer  
 With friends who treat you kind  
 But you will not find them truer  
 Than the ones you left behind.

Who the Temple Crew were has proved a mystery. Perhaps one of our readers may be able to help us solve it? The crew members themselves were all tradesmen and may have been members of an Oddfellows Lodge or similar fraternal society.

Newtown Wales in the 1880s was just starting to lose impetus as a previously flourishing centre for the textile and flannel industry, being overtaken by the more competitive mills in the north of England. Work on the land too had fallen into difficult times so, for George and some of his friends, migration to Australia must have seemed an opportunity.



George Rees

George arrived in Melbourne aboard SS *Manapouri* in November 1887 but little is known of what he did over the next fifteen years. A friend, Harry Oakley, and his sister Amy arrived in Melbourne in early December of the same year and Harry recorded in his diary that George was there to meet them. Harry went on to set up a successful travelling drapery business in the Riverina area of southwest NSW.

George next appears in the shipping records, arriving in Fremantle from the east on SS *Marloo* in July 1903. He heads for the goldfields and Post

Office records in 1904 list him as a machine engine driver at the copper mine at Anaconda (later Eulaminna) near Leonora in the northern goldfields. He is also mentioned in the *Kalgoorlie Miner* newspaper in 1904 as having forfeited a mining lease at Mt Margaret.

The next major event involving George Rees is reported in the *Phillips River Times* in Ravensthorpe which records his marriage to Miss Eliza (Lizzie) McCurran on 15 June 1908.

A quiet but very pretty wedding ... The bride was attired in a very handsome wedding costume

composed of white silk made in the fashionable kimono style, daintily trimmed with quantities of lace, and wore bridal wreath of orange blossom.



George and Eliza c1910

Miss McCurran, originally from Victoria, was understood to have run a boarding house in Ravensthorpe with her sister Emily for approximately two years prior to her marriage. She and George had four children, all born in Ravensthorpe. Sister Emily later moved to Perth and was the housekeeper at the Palace Hotel before becoming the live-in housekeeper at the Hotel Esplanade for the Paxton family for over forty years.

Ravensthorpe was initially known as the Phillips River Goldfield and gold was first discovered in 1892 with the find of small quantities in association with copper and iron pyrites. It was not until 1898 that gold was discovered in auriferous quartz reefs in the area and by 1904 the first government smelter became operational. The goldfield peaked in 1911 with over 2,000 people in the district. George continued his work as a machine engine driver in the mines until 1918 when they closed in Ravensthorpe and surrounding areas.

Since then, mining has had a chequered history in Ravensthorpe with later discoveries of copper and nickel and cobalt. Copper was mined up until the 1970s, then nickel and cobalt have been mined off and on over the last 15 years, often dependent on the price of nickel.



Leaving Ravensthorpe in search of work, George and the family eventually relocated to the small settlement of Shotts outside Collie where he took up work in the coal mining industry. Shotts originated as a railway siding and was named after a coal mining town in Scotland, halfway between Edinburgh and Glasgow. The Rees family lived on a five-acre lot and soon became an integral part of the community. George became a patron of the local soccer team and showed his Welsh farming roots by keeping a milking cow or two and at one stage grew cotton. The *Collie Mail* of May 1923 reported that he had called into the newspaper with some bulbs from cotton plants he had grown on his property. George also had a love for cars and was one of the first owners of a car in Shotts.

In the early 1930s George and Eliza retired and moved into the town of Collie. Eliza died in 1935 and sometime later George moved to Mandurah for a number of years before failing health had him return to Collie in the late 1940s to be cared for by some of his children until he died in 1954 just short of his 89th birthday.

**Bruce Hoar**

# Affiliates & Other News

## Esperance Bay Historical Society

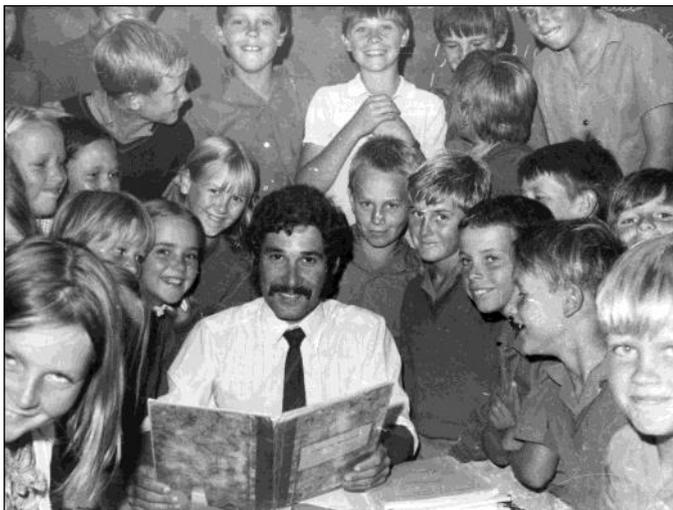
John Viska, current Chair of the WA branch of the Australian Garden History Society, recounts the beginnings of the Historical Society in Esperance.

Fifty years ago, on the evening of 24 February 1971, a public meeting was held at the Esperance Primary School, its purpose to ascertain if the residents of the town were interested in forming an historical society. A steering committee of three, comprising Mr W Annear, Mr J Viska and Mrs M Barker and headed by Mr Annear, welcomed all. Over twenty people attended and took their place in seats designed for Grade 6 students in one of the classrooms. According to the original minutes, much discussion took place on the role of the Society and the possibility of later establishing a museum.

During the meeting, a motion was moved to form the society with myself as inaugural President, Marie Louise Wordsworth Vice President and Marjorie Barker Secretary/Treasurer. A working committee of five was elected with an annual membership fee of \$1 per head being agreed upon. At the conclusion of the meeting, I presented a paper on the history of the Esperance Bay School that had been established 75 years before in 1896.



The first Esperance School Courtesy: John Viska



A young John Viska showing his Grade Six students the original 1896 School Admission Register. Courtesy: John Viska

Mrs Wordsworth offered to host the next meeting at Dempster Homestead which she and her husband David, had recently restored. [See 'Pioneer's home restored to grace and grandeur', *Women's Weekly*, 5

Feb 1969, PR 8679/ESP/23 SLWA].

Each monthly meeting was followed by a guest speaker who talked on an aspect of the region's long history. The town was named after *L'Esperance*, one of the two French ships that had sought shelter in the bay in 1792; the other, *La Recherche*, giving its name to the archipelago. Some of the historic sites visited on weekend trips included Fanny Cove, Thomas River Homestead, Israelite Bay and Ravensthorpe.

In 1972 a house was leased in Dempster Street and a small museum established. Found in the town's garages, back sheds and barns, were many items that were donated to the fledgling museum, becoming the nucleus of the Society's collection.

Old glass negatives, discovered in a barn and developed by a committee member who was a professional photographer, were found to be rare scenes of the town from the late 1890s, when Esperance was a major goldfields port. These were developed in sepia and can still be seen in the present museum. Many of those early objects donated by townfolk are now valuable collectors' items.

Later a public appeal raised enough money to buy an old steam engine and eventually Commonwealth funding enabled the acquisition of the old bond stores. The building is now the permanent home of the Esperance Bay Historical Society and houses a large important regional museum with displays exploring the many facets of the rich history of the district.

Today, a major tourist attraction in the museum is Skylab that crashed east of the town in 1979. This brought international status to a Society that fifty years ago began in a small way in a classroom in Esperance. John Viska, was honoured in 2019 by the Esperance Bay Historical Society with a Life Membership and in 2008 was a recipient of an award from the Heritage Council for *Outstanding Contribution to Heritage in Western Australia by an Individual*. He has given presentations for the RWAHS on aspects of WA's garden history and written articles for *HistoryWest*.

**John Viska**

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**Maritime Heritage Assn** Journal has reproduced a long letter written in 1908 by the part-owner of the pearling lugger *Phyllis*, Beresford Bardwell, which was lost at sea during a hurricane in April 1908. It tells a sad and powerful story.

**Walpole Nornalup & District Historical Society** reports the recent publication of a photographic history of the district titled the *Walpole Coffee Table Book*, published by the local Community Resource Centre and providing much information on the area's history. See also the historical society's lively new website at <https://wndhs.org.au>

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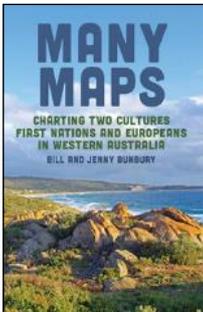
*Western Ancestor*, journal of **Family History WA**, continues its articles on the question of Karrakatta Cemetery's redevelopment. Not surprisingly, opinion varies on the subject. The issue also contains an excerpt from the memories of Ruth Reid on life in Government House as Governor's wife.

The **History Council** has joined with other leading heritage and history experts to seek State Heritage listing for the Windsor Theatre in Nedlands. The Council's submission expressing concern that the Heritage Council has determined that the Windsor does not merit listing and called for an independent review of the heritage assessment of the Theatre, the re-establishment of the Register Committee to provide expert advice and peer review of all heritage assessments prior to presentation to the Heritage Council. The matter is ongoing.

# Book Review

**Bill and Jenny Bunbury, *Many Maps, Charting Two Cultures : First Nations and Europeans in Western Australia*, UWA Publishing, Crawley, 2020. In Library & Bookshop \$30.**

**Reviewer: Heather Campbell**



‘When do ships die’ – Chapter one – provides an excellent discussion on differing perceptions of each culture. The effective use of direct quotes in this chapter (and throughout the book) illustrate the reality of death for First Nations saltwater people who ‘see [where] the ocean and the sky meet together...like a resting place’ for the spirit to rest before its return.

Chapters that follow describe the growing relationship between the two cultures and the souring of that relationship, mainly through different perceptions of land ownership; leading initially to ‘anger and interrogation on both sides’ and subsequently to war. The authors use contemporary sources to leave no doubt that the British were aware that the land they were settling was already occupied. They justified doing so on the grounds of their cultural superiority as opposed to the ‘primitive and uncivilised’ nature of the original inhabitants. An array of religions became involved in missionary, pastoral work and education, to bring First Nations people from ‘savagery to civilisation’, contributing to a loss of independence, language and culture and an alienation from traditional country.

As time progressed legislative control affected almost every facet of life for those with Aboriginal heritage, including the removal of children from their parents.

Despite material poverty, however, a sense of family and community remained strong. ‘There was a sense that someone would look after you... There was never a door locked.’

The final chapter – ‘The Past is still with us’ – details a sad lack of progress. Assimilation by the middle of the 20th century achieved little. Poverty was exacerbated by the 1930s depression; while the Second World War provided opportunities for Aboriginal men to fight, nothing much had changed on the home front, with many suffering hardships living in camps. Despite citizenship, ‘Aboriginal people were seen as passive players in a situation where white people knew best what was good for them’. Taking the initiative Aboriginal people set up self-help organisations, such as the Aboriginal Legal Service and the Aboriginal run and owned Coolbaroo League and Coolbaroo Club in Perth. They also went on strike for pay in the pastoral industry prompting an examination of wage justice.

This book ably demonstrates that, while there are many maps, land is ‘the origin of much misunderstanding between two different cultures,’ and ‘in trying to impose whitefella law, we have often failed to understand or accept that Australia’s First Nations have their own living Law which underpins their entire culture’.

Afterthoughts provided by several contributors includes those of Fred Chaney, former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, who said:

The Uluru Statement from the Heart is integral in allowing Aboriginal voices to be heard, which is essential for Australia to move forward as a country. All they are asking for is the right to be heard on issues that affect them.

The Statement was rejected in 2017; however in this book Bill and Jenny Bunbury set out clearly why we should be listening and attach the Statement to the end of the book.

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