



MAY 2013 - EDITION 75!

PATRON: DR BRAD PETTIT, MAYOR OF FREMANTLE

NEWSLETTER

The Secretary, PO Box 1305, FREMANTLE WA 6959
Editors: Dianne Davidson, Ron Davidson, Anne Brake

Special Edition - our 75th

Dianne Davidson

This is the 75th edition of the Fremantle History Society newsletter, and we are celebrating it with an enhanced and updated version and a little reminiscing.

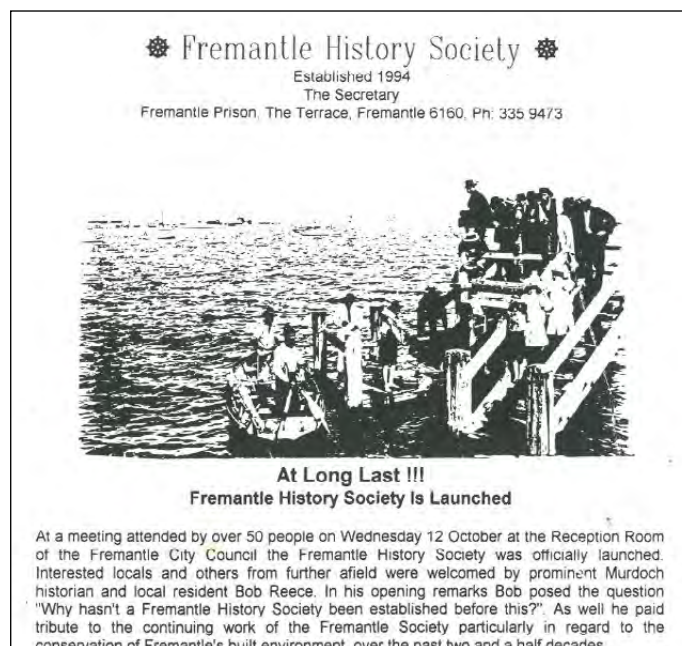
The first newsletter, issued in Spring 1994, began with the headline 'At Long Last! Fremantle History Society Is Launched' and reported on the inaugural meeting in October 1994 at which Professor Bob Reece from Murdoch University officially launched the Society.

For its first ten years the newsletter was produced painstakingly by Anne Brake and myself at the Fremantle Prison where she worked. The Prison only had primitive copying equipment – all double sided printing, collation and folding had to be done by hand. The old photo copier was a hand me down and quite cantankerous.

It often needed much cajoling and the odd expletive to get it working again. Anne and I had only just met, and became close friends during this laborious process, which also included regular ordering of takeaway pizza, which was delivered to the offices by the Prison security guard who would meet the pizza delivery person at the locked front gate.

The occasional bottle of wine helped the creative juices.

The hard work eased up when access was obtained to more modern equipment which performs the printing, collating and stapling of newsletters with ease. Envelope stuffing and affixing of stamps continues, and is performed still by the two of us – with the help once more of the odd bottle of booze and Ron Davidson's words of encouragement!



The front page of the Society's first newsletter, announcing the Society has been officially launched.

Executive:

Anne Brake (President)
Prof Bob Reece (Vice – President)
Pam Hartree (Treasurer)
Dianne Davidson (Secretary)

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Fremantle History Society's committee meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month. If you have something you would like discussed at a meeting, please contact one of the members at the numbers shown above. General meetings of the Society are usually held on the 4th Tuesday of the month. Details of these meetings can be found in your newsletter and reminders are placed in the local press. Be sure to check details as meeting dates may differ from this.

NEWSLETTER NOSTALGIA

The next few pages continues our lead story. The three editors have delved into the 74 newsletters produced over the years to come up with some of what we see as the highlights. I hope many of you will remember these stories and have favourites of your own.

The newsletter has been an important part of the success of the Fremantle History Society with around 160 printed each edition and distributed to members, councilors, libraries and schools to keep people up to date with things Fremantle. If we slip up and don't forward a quarterly edition, the National Library and the Battye have been known to send letters requesting their copy!

We hope you enjoy the read and will continue to into the future. Don't forget, you can contribute too – all offers welcome. *The Eds (Dianne, Ron and Anne)*

Closure of Fremantle Social History Museum

In July 2009 the WA Museum closed the Fremantle Social History Museum, and the newsletter head-lined this as 'Our History Has Been Stolen From Us!'

This left people with nowhere to find out where they had come from and no provision of a sense of place. As the article stated, 'We will no longer be able to show our future generations how their forebears lived, dressed, worked and played, or how they saw their world.'

The museum had to be closed because successive governments, both Liberal and Labor, had been severely underfunding the WA Museum which had had to lock away its many collections in storage in Welshpool, denying the people of Perth access to their own past.

The Society held an official wake for the Fremantle History Museum in August at the Davilak Tavern, which was very well attended – and very vocal!

The Curtin Amenities Building

A recent letter and amended assessment documentation from the Heritage Council of WA to Fremantle Ports represented a big win for the Fremantle History Society's bid towards 'Saving John Curtin's memory'.

The Summer Edition 2012 of the Society's newsletter pointed out that, with the end of WW2 in sight, Prime Minister John Curtin who had seen the industrial turmoil at the end of WW1 was determined it would not happen again. Through the Prime Minister's

Department he organized funds for the construction of an amenities building where port workers could have hot meals and washing facilities. Curtin had seen the primitive nature of facilities on the wharf when he visited there during the 1943 election campaign and he feared for the future. Curtin was already thinking of a postwar Australia – which he would not see.

In 1945 the amenities building was opened: it was later called – wrongly – the CY O'Connor Building. The newsletter notes that when a heritage assessment was done in 2001 of buildings on Victoria Quay the personal link with the wartime Prime Minister and with labour history generally had been missed. Amazingly. Consequently when the plan for the now-defunct ING commercial development on Victoria Quay was proposed the only tangible link with Curtin in Fremantle was marked for demolition. Such action was approved by the Heritage Council.

The importance of the building was first noted by the Victoria Quay Task Force firstly under Ian Alexander and later June Hutchison. The cause was then vigorously taken up by your Fremantle History Society which put a five-page, closely argued case for retention to the Heritage Council. Recently the Heritage Council wrote to the Fremantle Ports CEO Chris Leatt-Hayter saying that because of the demonstrated cultural heritage of the amenities building it could no longer support any proposal to demolish it. The Council advocated the appropriate re-use of the existing buildings not just the Immigration Complex but also the amenities building, in the manner of some successful Perth CBD adaptations.

At its April meeting the Fremantle History Society committee welcomed the Heritage Council's change of heart but there is further work needed. John Curtin's role is still not mentioned in the assessment. This is quite extraordinary. There is also no indication of what change to the building the Council would accept from developers. The FHS will be seeking a meeting with the Heritage Council to raise these and other problems with the report.

This time the statue

John Curtin – this time his statue – raised passions when it was the topic in 2006 for a monthly meeting sandwiched between two lively newsletters. The Summer edition pictured a clumsy-looking statue which looked as though it was about to fall from its

vast black marble plinth. Members were asked to give their views.

The next edition of the newsletter showed the offer was widely accepted. More than 60 crammed into the small Local History Collection space for our monthly meeting. The Herald's Andrew Smith was MC and the former head of Curtin University's School of Art, John Teschendorff, kicked off the debate by calling the statue 'aesthetically inept' and a 'disgusting embarrassment' for Fremantle which called itself a city of the arts.

Heritage architect Ralph Hoare noted he had drawn up plans for the FCC (and been paid) for the Town Hall balcony to be replaced. The statue now stands in the way of the desirable balcony restoration. The autumn newsletter reported that a unanimous motion was carried, for the present statue to be removed and replaced with something which adequately honoured one of Australia's greatest prime ministers. But alas, the statue remains.

Now there is an idea to which our present committee might return.



Coverage of the Curtin statue fiasco in the summer and autumn editions of 2006

Fremantle Prison

Fremantle History Society received a special mention when then Federal Heritage Minister, Peter Garrett, made a quick visit to Fremantle to announce grants of \$1.8M for the restoration and conservation of the Main Cell Block. It was well-deserved praise. As the newsletter of spring 2009 stated the society had always taken a special interest in the appropriate restoration and interpretation of what we saw as one of WA's major heritage sites. Subsequently the prison

became WA's only building on the world heritage list. There were many damaging proposals for the re-use of the prison which the society has had to counter over the 19 years of its existence. One was in a secret report which placed small hotels around the site. Skilful leaking of the report to local newspapers saved the day.

When the proposal for a master plan was put forward in 2004 many signs were not good: the study team seemed to be dominated by tree experts and accommodation enthusiasts. The society held its ground and attitudes started to change before the sheer expertise of our team. When Palassis Architects released the draft master plan the Society's team placed particular attention on the layers of meaning on the site and the need to retain them – not just on the popular convict layer. The master planning group thanked the society for its work which it said had improved markedly the quality of their final report.

Ron Davidson was community representative on the Prison Trust committee for 10 years. A frequent threat came from those who wanted to 'soften' the site by removing the gun towers and razor wire. The 'softeners' seemed to have won when the master plan came before the Labor cabinet including a recommendation the razor wire and gun towers be removed. He explained our position to local member and cabinet heavy-weight, Jim McGinty. He agreed and immediately wrote to the relevant minister, Tom Stephens, saying he would not support the master plan in cabinet if it involved removal of the wire and towers.

In July 2008 a number of our Society members attended a dinner at the Prison to mark its being considered by UNESCO for World Heritage listing and to thank community groups for their support. FHS members present were pleased to hear the heritage expert, Michael Pearson, state that listing would mean that all stages of the Prison's long history would have to be recognised not just the relatively short convict period.

Rusty Christensen

If we were to tally frequency of contributions to the newsletter Rusty Christensen would be number one and the rest of us nowhere. Rusty's mother called him Kevin: seemingly no one else in Fremantle did. Open any two newsletters and one would feature Rusty, son of a lumper and grandson of a sailor of tall ships, who drew on a vast knowledge of Fremantle for his material. One of his first articles appeared in the Silver Jubilee issue of the newsletter: A Glimpse in the Rear Vision. Rusty

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specialized in stories of Depression kids at play on the riverbank, Fremantle characters like Tommy Newbold the auctioneer who stammered, and of course Connie (Herbert).

His Connie obituary started with:

On December 9, 2002, our long standing Fremantle History Society member, friend of the world, writer, poet and performer extraordinaire, Constance Marguerite 'Connie' Herbert, took her final bow. (He could have added storyteller.)

Connie was an unusual subject. She even, on her 75th birthday, had a 'funeral' so she could hear what people would say about her. Rusty also wrote extensively about the Blocks, the Oliver family and the racing industry, and a touching obituary in 2006 for Billy Dermer, the generous Fremantle dentist whose patients included many from Fremantle Prison.

Major moments

Over the years, the newsletters have covered some of the Society's finest moments. These have come in the form of special events and launches of a Society activity right through to celebrating special birthdays and reporting on the awards that have come our way.

The first newsletter in Spring 1994 started a tradition and a format that has continued

including meeting reports, upcoming meetings, For your diary, snippets of local research, excerpts from historical books and documents, anecdotes and photos relating to the history and heritage of our port city.

Ten years later, the Society was celebrating its 10th birthday complete with a cake and champagne. There was a photo of six of the original committee and much reminiscing about the previous 10 years.

A very proud moment announced in the newsletter in winter 1999 was the launch of our journal, Fremantle Studies. The first volume contained papers from 1996 and 1997 and so began an epic journey for our small society. As this newsletter is being prepared, the editing of volume 8 of Fremantle Studies is being undertaken with over 55 papers being published over the years contributing to the

growing resources associated with Fremantle's past.

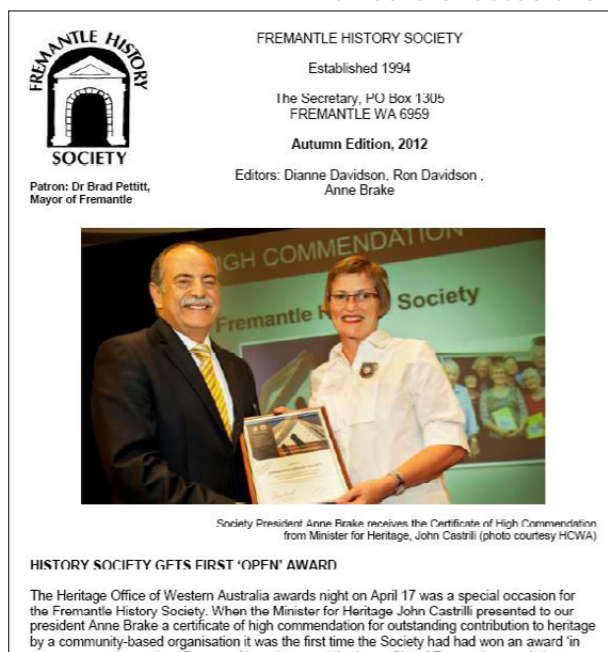
Probably one of the biggest events the Society has taken on was the organising and running of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society's Affiliated Society's Conference held at the Town Hall in September of 2005. The newsletter was used to keep members up to date with the progress of planning leading up to the conference, and then reported on the outcomes and the activities associated with it. Much help was provided by the RWAHS but Bob Woollett led a team of dedicated workers that ensured a very successful program and conference.

The hard work of the Society has been recognized on several occasions with awards, both locally and

at a state level. Once again, the newsletter was there to spread the good news. Our first award was at the Fremantle Heritage Awards of 2002 for significant contribution by an individual or group. Fremantle Studies has won two awards, firstly volume 4 in 2006 and then volume 5 got a gong in 2008. Also in that year, long time member Prof Bob Reece won the award for his unpublished manuscript and our nomination of Trish Macarlin's Cook and Bayley Hairdressers (now MV Hair) got up in the restoration section of the awards. In 2010 Ron and Dianne Davidson were nominated in the WA Heritage Awards in a joint submission by the City of

Fremantle, the Fremantle Society and the Fremantle History Society in the category outstanding contribution to heritage by an individual in the community. They were awarded a high commendation. And the front cover of the Autumn 2012 newsletter had the beaming face of President Anne Brake with our highly commended certificate for the category outstanding contribution to heritage by a community-based organization in the State Heritage Awards in a packed field.

The newsletter has never been given a gong, so the Committee has decided to submit this, the 75th edition, for consideration in this year's Spirit of Heritage in the Fremantle and East Fremantle Heritage Awards – fingers crossed. The awards will be announced during this year's festival. No doubt it will be reported in the following newsletter if we are successful!



President Anne Brake with then Minister for Heritage John Castrilli at the 2012 WA Heritage Awards

CONGRATULATIONS



The 10th birthday celebrations: Margaret McPherson, Anne Brake, David Tessler, Bob Reece, Suzan Miles and Dianne Davidson cutting the cake (Winter 2004)

Mayor's Message

Fremantle has a rich and diverse history, elements of which have been captured in the pages of the Fremantle History Society's newsletter.

I always look forward to receiving the newsletter for its mix of news, reports on events and upcoming activities; and items of interest relating to Fremantle's history. I'm led to believe the newsletter is sent far and wide throughout Australia and until recently, the United States of America, where one of your members lived.

The Fremantle History Society is very active in supporting history and heritage institutions and organisations throughout the port city. Representatives of the society sit on a number of local committees and it is not unusual for me to receive letters, or even a representative from the society in my office from time to time. I'm always happy to discuss issues associated with Fremantle's history and heritage and issues that will influence its understanding.

As patron of the society, I congratulate the editors of this newsletter, the society committee and the members for their ongoing hard work and commitment to making our history accessible, relevant and better understood. The 75th newsletter is not only an impressive achievement, it also adds greatly to the ongoing archive of information about Fremantle held by the Local History Collection.

I look forward to the next 75 editions!

Fremantle Mayor

Dr Brad Pettitt

The celebration of the Fremantle History Society's 75th newsletter is a good time to take stock of what the History Society means to Fremantle. I'd like to do this from a personal perspective; looking at what influences and help the History Society has offered me in the last decade or so. From memory the first formal contact I had with the Society was, like so many other people, at one of the very popular Studies Days. Since then I have attended talks on an incredibly broad range of topics and can only conclude there are a large number of people working

hard researching Fremantle's history and importantly the characters who lived and worked here.

Of course out of the Studies Days comes the journals, which are I believe unique to Fremantle and are a fantastic legacy from the Society to the people of Fremantle. When I attended the World Historical Cities Conference in Ballarat back in 2006 I presented Mayor David Vendy with a selection of Fremantle Studies Journals as a snapshot of Fremantle's history. During my first term on Fremantle Council, ending in 2009, I could always rely on the Society for advice on history and

heritage issues, but also importantly, the Society would keep history and heritage on the public agenda. There were regular talks and invites, and when the Canberra bureaucrats came to Fremantle to explain the new Federal Heritage Act, we met them in the home of Society member Bob Woollett - thanks Bob!

My year as Fremantle Society President saw me working closely with the History Society President on issues such as submissions on development applications and collaboration on the Fremantle Heritage Festival. One major submission related to the application for a YHA hostel in the Female Division of Fremantle Prison. Both Societies were adamant the original application was far from perfect and fortunately Fremantle Council rejected it. When a new application was submitted it was gratifying to see that it addressed many of the issues we had raised. That development is now subject to a Federal Government Tourism Grant and looks like going ahead. In the same year Fremantle Council's plans to amalgamate the Annual Heritage Festival with the Fremantle Festival were fought and won, resulting in renewed energy for the Heritage Festival in 2011. The 2012 Heritage Festival like the 2011 one, was something we can all be proud of.

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The confluence between the History Society and Australian ICOMOS has also been beneficial. The 2006 Historic Ports ICOMOS seminar was influential in helping me understand the role of the professional historian and the benefits they bring to our communities. It's great to see there are now popular television shows such as *Whose Been Sleeping In Your House* dedicated to making history educational and entertaining. Those ICOMOS connections also helped me to attend an ICOMOS conference in Malta last year, thanks Anne (Brake).

Of course I cannot end without mentioning the newsletter. Always informative and entertaining; without it I would never know about the many events the Fremantle History Society puts on and supports. Congratulations to the editorial crew, and roll on the next 75 editions!

Jon Strachan

My Fremantle

David Hutchison

Each of us who lives in Fremantle has special memories of it. My first memories date from when I was about eight years old. My father often took me and my three brothers to fish from Victoria Quay. We also often passed through the edge of Fremantle on the way to my grandfather's fishing shack at Yunderup. I always felt a little scared when we passed the grim walls of the Prison.

We went often to farewell friends or relatives who were setting sail for London – they said that they were 'going home', although they were born here – on a P&O or Orient Line steamer. The departure of each vessel was made colourful by the hundreds of coloured paper streamers that connected the passengers to people on shore.

I did not know then that Fremantle would one day offer me the most intensive creative period of my life: the creation of the Fremantle Museum in the old Asylum Building. The decision to house the Museum in the building helped to save it from demolition. At the time the principal champions of its saving were the Mayor, Sir Frederick Samson, the Director of the WA Museum, Dr David Ride, and Professor George Seddon. Rob Campbell was the conservation architect for the restoration of the building.

I joined the Museum staff in March 1970, as the first Curator of History. On my first day David Ride told me that my immediate brief was to prepare, with the Display Department, displays for the Fremantle

Museum. There was no established history collection at the Museum then, and I am not sure that anyone knew what a Curator of History might do. I was staggered to be told that the then Governor-General, Sir Paul Hasluck, had been invited to open the new Museum in October. I had just seven months to assemble a collection and research the background for displays. Fortunately, under the leadership of Geoffrey Shaw, the Museum had pioneered ideas for such displays, including text and graphics.

Those seven months were the most intense creative period of my whole life, and established my connection with the city before my wife and I came to live in it. We finished the last display at 3am on the opening day. I do not know how I managed to stay awake during the opening ceremony.

Constable William Hopkins of the Fremantle Water Police

Peter Conole

The attached photograph is a true rarity, being one of a constable who operated as a member of the Water Police in Colonial Fremantle. The Imperial Water Police was established in WA during 1851 and retained a separate and independent existence for decades. Commissioner Matthew Smith of the WA Police obtained control of the establishment in 1876, during a time government cost cutting. From 1883 onwards the Fremantle men were led by a coxswain who reported directly to the officer in general charge of the port town.

The third such coxswain was the man depicted in this image – an English seaman named William Francis Hopkins (1855-1935) who settled and married in old Fremantle during the early 1880s. Hopkins joined the Water Police as a constable in April 1885 and won praise for dealing firmly with armed offenders and sly grog sellers, not to mention a 'gallant rescue of Herman Anderson from drowning at Fremantle...'. Constable Hopkins succeeded to the position of coxswain in February 1897.

His task was not an easy one and the under-strength Water Police attracted criticism when seamen sometimes 'went missing' or became drunk and disorderly around the fringes of the waterfront. However, Hopkins made good use of available resources and was a capable organiser. He

recognised the need to improve the physical fitness of serving officers and established a Water Police athletic club in 1903 for that purpose. Following some tragic accidents, water safety measures were also improved in his time. WA police officers were the prime movers in forming both river and surf life-saving clubs in our State up to and beyond the First World War.

Hopkins did well in helping to preserve public order among the crews of ships in the harbour during the 1899 Waterfront Strike. It is also certain that he played a key role in defusing our first terrorist threat in the year 1900 – a plot to blow up a troopship taking Australian soldiers across to South Africa from Fremantle for active service in the Boer War. Confidential reports on that episode would make fascinating reading but, alas, none are known to have survived.

William Hopkins resigned in February 1914 and received a fine gratuity for his services. The officer and his family seem to have become fond of Fremantle and he lived out the rest of his life as a respected member of the local community.



Captain Charles Fremantle

John Dawson

James Stirling arrived in 1829 to begin the Swan River Colony. Charles Fremantle preceded him by a few weeks, with orders to claim "all that part of New Holland which is not included within the territory of NSW."

He did so on May 2, 1829, on a spot close to where the Round House now sits; the oldest surviving building in the State.

In gratitude, Stirling named the town after Captain Fremantle. Soon after, the first three streets after Cliff Street running up High Street were named after Fremantle's officers: Mouat, Henry and Pakenham.

The City of Fremantle took the Fremantle family motto as their own: *Nec Prece Nec Pretio* (Neither by entreaty nor by bribery) and Cottesloe was named after Charles' eldest brother Thomas, and Swanbourne in honour of Charles' birthplace in Buckinghamshire.

But here we are in 2013 with no physical commemoration to the man the city is named after. In 1980 a cairn to identify where Captain Fremantle planted the British flag, paid for by Fremantle Ports, was put in the wrong place and has since disappeared. A statue gifted by sculptor Rod Browton was erected on the Esplanade Park in 1981 but fell apart and was sent to the rubbish tip after Council refused to repair it.

In 2007 Captain Fremantle's reputation was severely tarnished when, at a book launch, the MP for Fremantle Jim McGinty labeled him, with flimsy evidence, a 'sadistic rapist'.

I am on a mission to resurrect Captain Fremantle's name and place in our history. The Premier Colin Barnett indicated to me the government may consider putting \$100,000 towards a statue, so I am building a case for that, helped by members of the Fremantle family and some extraordinary unpublished letters they have given me.

Apart from Ann Parry's out of print *The Admirals Fremantle 1971* and excellent work from Ruth Marchant James over the years (especially *Fremantle: The Man and his family RWAHS 1994 Vol 10, part 6*) and Professor Bob Reece ('A Sadistic Rapist'? *Fremantle Herald 22/9/07*) little has been written about the man.

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(Captain Charles Fremantle - cont...)

Yet, what a life he led, and at what a tender age he went to sea. Never before published letters from Charles Fremantle reveal his time as a prisoner of war with the Americans at the age of 11. These letters are fresh and dynamic and mark the beginning of a long and successful career.

But not everyone agrees...

Ron Davidson

John Dowson is right about so many Fremantle issues. He is right about opposing high-rise; about the importance of Fremantle heritage; about the silliness of Kings Square becoming Kings Triangle; about the neglect of the Warders' cottages. And lots more. But he is dead set wrong about seeking a new monument for Captain Fremantle. Fremantle hoisted a flag near Bathers Beach to indicate our Western coastline belonged to Britain. Outrageous but that is what people did in 1829. There is no reason to commemorate it nearly two centuries later.

If Colin Barnett has a spare \$100,000 I would want to see it mark Fremantle's 40,000 year history; or even the 48 countries represented at Beaconsfield Primary School. Port Adelaide has a fine monument to workers. Just that. The premier could even use the money to resurrect Fotofreo.

Deckchair Theatre: 30 years in Fremantle

Cathy Hall

More qualified folk than myself can tell a fuller story of Deckchair Theatre Company's thirty-year sojourn in Fremantle; this is more of a personal reflection on the theatre company that was literally my neighbour in its early years.

Deckchair Theatre Company's first decade was its most mobile, plays were performed in one-off venues around the town with a small shop on Fremantle's South Terrace as home base. My connection with Deckchair started in the 1980's when the company set up office on the corner of South and Price across the road from the cottage we were restoring. From our front balcony we oversaw the creation and rehearsal of works in the tiny backyard and on the front wall on the Terrace. Early works were performed at the City's Moores Building, in the

Port's sheds on Victoria Quay and on the Cappuccino Strip. Productions included; Emma, Silent Years, The Roundhouse and John Boyle O'Reilly.

Deckchair's middle decade was based in the neglected West End at the Old Customs House in Phillimore Street. A number of works of this period toured nationally and internationally. Productions included; Ningali, Jimmy and Pat Meet the Queen and Mavis Goes to Timor.

Deckchair's third and final decade was in High Street at the City's Victoria Hall. Artistic Directors were Angela Chaplin and Chris Bendall from Melbourne. Works included; Love, Meme La Blanc, Grace, Modern International Dead, Krakouer! and Taking Liberty. The final curtain was the Fremantle Candidate, the story of the making of Prime Minister John Curtin. You can view a video of the performance at http://m.youtube.com/#/user/DeckchairTheatreFreo/?&desktop_uri=%2Fuser%2FDeckchairTheatreFreo%2F

As a board member I came to understand Deckchair as not just a Fremantle Theatre Company but a West Australian Theatre Company with its base and its history of story making in Fremantle. I count myself lucky to have had a special opportunity to glimpse behind the scenes at the workings of a fine theatre company. Fremantle was particularly fortunate to host Deckchair Theatre, one of only two such national companies crafting and producing new Australian contemporary theatre and now there is one! I wonder, will Fremantle ever play host to a professional contemporary theatre company again?

(Cathy Hall is a long time member of the Fremantle History society and Board member of Deckchair Theatre who is preparing the company archives for deposition at the State Library with assistance from City of Fremantle and the Fremantle Local History Library.)



Examples of T-Shirts to support a number of the Deckchair productions over the years.

Immigrant Fremantle

Michal Bosworth

More than twenty five years have passed since I first met Emma Ciccotosto and her friends at Club Amicizia in a Beaconsfield church hall. Emma died in March of this year within sight of her 86th birthday, joining many of the women whom I had met with her. They were part of a generation of migrants who arrived in Australia during the uncomfortable inter-war years. They knew poverty, hard work, feelings of displacement and inadequacy, muted hostility from the locals. Emma's story was not unusual among her peers. She had completed the obligatory three years of elementary school in the Abbruzzi, so she could read and write in Italian (which was more than her mother could), although she spoke in dialect. In a Western Australian country town she completed another year and a half of schooling which gave her rudimentary spoken English and some literacy skills. There were no books in her house and barely a newspaper or magazine, but she knew and respected the power of the written word, so between us she left a record of her life to her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

It would be easy to say that the world she came to has long gone, since it is greatly altered with the advent of new technologies and high expectations for women as well as for men. Sadly, popular attitudes to foreigners appear not to have changed. After the Second World War the Labor government recognised a need to increase the population. A strong, active labour force was required for the new industries that the war had stimulated into being. The era of mass migration began and a new push for tolerance of

non-English speakers in our midst was attempted. The Good Neighbour Council offered friendship and free English lessons; government publicised the benefits that immigration brought the country which were many, not least families willing to work and build up small and big businesses.

Nostalgia interrupted the desire to become 'real Aussies' as demanded by the popular press. In the days before the internet and easy access to phones, homesickness could not be alleviated by interaction with those left behind. By the time the children were grown up and a level of wealth had been achieved the



This garden in Ellen Street was an example of a model southern Italian productive garden which unfortunately disappeared when the house (built in 1901) was extensively renovated in 1998. Note former Fremantle Grammar School (1885) Nos. 196-200 High Street in the background. (Brent Sumner) Fremantle Local History Collection BS1283

home visits often proved disappointing. The Italy to which they returned was not the one they had left.

All these elements were part of Emma's story and of many like her. Her history, written chiefly for her family, contains truths that are as relevant now as they were then. Immigration remains a hotly debated issue. Thoughtless racism is endemic (not only in Australia), and individuals who exchange their country for another in search of safety, health and wealth pay their title of suffering for their hope and expectations.

Emma was a generous, intelligent and active woman, who worked for many years in a biscuit factory doing the kind of repetitive work that has disappeared now. She rose above many of the pricks of discomfort that resulted from the conditions I have mentioned, in a way her husband was not able to achieve. A small but telling incident when he won a darts competition makes this point. Emma recalled that a whisper went around the pub: 'a pity a 'ding' won'. She herself never

thought of herself as a victim, nor did her children, all of whom are high achievers.

Fremantle, the first port of call for the immigrant boats from Europe saw a small tide of people like Emma wash through it. In ways that can be seen in its streetscapes, shops, markets and in its gardens, the City of Fremantle has been enriched by these arrivals. Immigration is a process unlikely

(Immigration Fremantle - cont...)

to stop. Perhaps her life displays the success of an exceptional personality, which she was, but perhaps it also tells us that every newcomer has a story that will help us understand the trials and risks that immigrants bring with them in their cultural baggage.

Emma and I wrote two books together, Emma: a translated life and Emma: a recipe for life, both published by Fremantle Arts Centre Press in the 1990s, and subsequently reissued.

Wake for the 'Nash'

Ron Davidson

This was one of the best-attended History Society meetings reported in the newsletter. Members of the Molly McGuire's, an Irish band that played at the Nash, and a sprinkling of ex-barmaids and regulars to the front bar fronted up and mixed with History Society members at the meeting to tell stories and reminisce.

In 2007 Fremantle's iconic National Hotel burned down, and in April of that year the History Society held a huge wake to mourn its passing. The wake was held at the Fremantle Club and presided over by well known Fremantle identity Rusty Christensen.

The star of the show, amongst the many who spoke, was former newspaper boy Milton Baxter, who related how he had sold newspapers at the National Hotel corner, which was judged to be the best spot for a paperboy, who could sneak past the bar manager and sell papers in the bars as well as on the street.

At the time the hope was expressed that the 'Nash' would rise again to function once more as a proper hotel, but time went by and it remained a wreck. Then in 2009 the Fremantle City Council approved plans for extensive restoration work. However, within a couple of years the owner, Sean Butler, had run out of money and the bank would not lend him any to finish the building work.

The hotel languished again. Then in 2012 it was purchased by Singapore-based Carnegies International Group and restoration work recommenced. It is now hoped that the 'Nash' will reopen as a fully functional hotel before Christmas 2013.



Photos from the Nash Wake adorned the front cover of the autumn edition, 2007

News from the Local History Collection.

Pam Hartree

Congratulations to the Fremantle History Society on the publication of their 75th Newsletter. The Local History Collection has always had a role in the Fremantle History Society and its newsletter. Over the years interesting snippets of Fremantle's history have found their way into the newsletter, mostly through the work of long standing Local History Librarian, Lorraine Stevens. I am the new chum and consider that Lorraine's role and contribution to the collection and the development of the documentation of Fremantle's history cannot be underestimated. Lorraine's tenacity and thoroughness in collecting resources for the collection is evidenced by the comprehensive range of documents, photographs, oral histories, ephemera, serials, and archives which now constitute a collection which covers Fremantle's history from 1829 to the present day. The collection is renowned as one of the most comprehensive and extensive Local History Collections in the state. I am privileged to have the opportunity to work with the collection and work towards digitising it to make it even more accessible for researchers.

We continually receive donations to the collection and we recently received 20 years of documents from the Fremantle Jazz Club. Also some of the photographs which were purchased by the History Society from photographer Andy Outh-Aut of the South Fremantle Power Station are currently on display in the Local History Collection. A presentation using the photographs of the power station will be part of the West Australian Heritage Festival and the Fremantle Heritage Festival in April and May respectively. Look out for details in this newsletter and the festival programmes.

Entries for the Local History Awards are still open until the 1st May. If you have any papers you have written about the history of Fremantle or East Fremantle please enter them in the Awards. Entry forms are available from the City of Fremantle's website at http://www.fremantle.wa.gov.au/festivals/Register_to_be_part_of_the_festival/Heritage_festival_registration/Local_history_awards

or contact me on 94329739 for a printed entry form.

South Fremantle Power Station through a photographer's eyes

Young, old and in-between... there were lots of new faces at the April meeting of the Fremantle History Society which was also part of the WA Heritage Festival. And what stories they had to tell. The evening started with the head of the Local History Collection Pam Hartree's stories of the tight-knit community who worked in this industrial cathedral. It was always a dangerous place at which to work. Oral histories told of workers being burnt and falling and being deafened by the clatter. The site was difficult to keep clear of seaweed. There was no such thing as industrial and occupational safety. But there were later dangers. There were four murders there and one of those at the meeting told how, before the stairs were removed, the power station was a popular site for suicides down the five-storey drop.

Andy Outh-Aut, who took the photographs on display, was asked many questions. One was how he pronounced his name: try to say 'tooth out' after visiting the dentist. The next was 'when was the best time to photograph the building?' Andy told us of a magic moment three times a day. Suddenly a whole wall would turn golden while the rest of the building was a grey concrete. Then it was gone. Others had other memories. Often they involved crawling under

barbed wire and painting the dazzling images. There will be another opportunity to view the photographs during the Heritage Festival and they are permanently available at the local History Collection. The scans of Andy's slides were purchased – at a very reasonable price – by the History Society and donated to the Local History Collection.

Protecting the South Fremantle Power Station is a work in progress for your society and we hope one day to organize a site visit there.



Fremantle City Library: LHC No. E000076-01



Fremantle City Library: LHC No. E000605-29 -- Aaron Photographics



Fremantle City Library: LHC No. E000605-04 - Aaron Photographics

Fremantle in the 1890s

Ron Davidson

In December 1922 my dad Frank Davidson arrived at the Perth editorial office of the Mirror newspaper. He was allocated a rolltop desk in which he found an album of photographs, *Views of Western Australia*, by the Fremantle firm of Bertel and Williams. The album was inscribed with 'To Charley and Julia with love and best wishes from Ed'. The album contained photos of Fremantle, Perth, the Goldfields, Serpentine, Bunbury and other centres, taken in 1895 and 1896. As my dad moved up in the world of journalism he moved desks. He took the album with him. In 1978 he retired. When he died in 1996 I found the photo album in his desk at home. The Fremantle images are particularly fine. A sample of them is reproduced on these two pages. Some of these appeared in my book *Fremantle Impressions* (Fremantle Press).



Fremantle Gaol



Swan River near (East) Fremantle



Inscription in the front cover of the album



O'Dea's first goal in WA, Fremantle Imperials, 20th June 1896.



Railway Bridge, Fremantle



Fremantle Jetty



High St, Fremantle

Meeting Reports

Rivers of Emotion

Unfortunately this fascinating meeting in February clashed with the state election's candidates' debate and only a small number of people attended. Gina Pickering, who has been researching the history and significance of the Swan and Canning Rivers for a number of years, demonstrated a fascinating website that has been developed as part of a joint project between the Centre for the History of Emotions at UWA and the National Trust. The website has been designed to capture people's emotional attachments and responses to the rivers through uploading photographs, stories, video and sound.

The material that is gathered will feed into a project being undertaken to prepare an interpretation plan for the Riverpark which follows the banks of the rivers from their upper reaches through to Fremantle. Much of our archival and museum collections provide an official telling of the history of the rivers; the rivers of emotion website captures the stories of the everyday person – you and me – and shares them so others can glimpse at the myriad of ways people interact with these important water ways.

Gina demonstrated how to look at material others have already uploaded but, most importantly, showed us how to upload our own stories and photos. While a little daunting at first, the process is straightforward; even more so if you have a tech savvy person by your side.

Members are encouraged to visit the website and browse the many items already in place AND to add your own material. Start digging around for those old photos of family picnics and scan them to upload. Write a poignant piece about standing by the river holding the hand of your first love or even that first kiss. Tell adventure stories of you and your mates fishing and paddling along the East Fremantle shore. Maybe you worked at the boat building sheds that flanked the water's edge at North Fremantle. The stories are endless. All it needs is for you to put them on the website.

Go to www.riversofemotions.org.au

Why is archaeology so fascinating

Scott Chisholm and his team of anthropologists and archaeologists at Terra Rosa gave society members

are very warm welcome at our March meeting which they generously hosted at their premises in South Fremantle.

Terra Rosa is involved in cultural heritage management and much of their work involves working with land owners, including Aboriginal native title holders, to undertake heritage significance assessments. The work involves site work as well as wide consultation and desktop surveys in an attempt to build a picture of the heritage importance of certain sites. This work is usually prompted by some kind of development, often related to mining and its related industries, but it may also be a new building on a metropolitan or suburban site. The assessments determine if there has been a previous building on the site and if so how significant was it and what, if anything, remains. The place may also have been the site of an important event or have sacred or religious meaning for certain communities. The level of significance of the site will influence whether or not a development can go ahead or not, so it is very important work. The site work is supported by archival research.

While a lot of team's work is in the north of the state on Aboriginal sites, they are keen to do more cultural heritage work in and around settled areas, investigating the evidence of post settlement history.

Upcoming Meetings

Our upcoming May meetings are going to be connected to the Fremantle Heritage Festival which runs from 24 May – 3 June.

Notable Convicts

In the early 1870s, Fremantle was almost a convict settlement if visiting English novelist Anthony Trollope is to be believed. Scores of ticket-of-leave men were working in the town, filling its boarding houses and carousing in its inns and shanties. The little we know about them depends largely on Fremantle's first historian, Joseph Hitchcock, who put together a number of biographical sketches of what he called 'notable convicts'. Who were they? Meet at the Round House on **Sunday 26 May at 4 pm.**

George St Ramble

Join Stuart Wearne, CEO of East Fremantle, as he walks through the historic George St Precinct and shares the history of the buildings and some of the characters that have made this street legendary.

Meet at the Royal George at the corner of Duke and George Streets at **2 pm on Saturday 25 May.**

A second chance to see the South Fremantle Power Station photos

For those of you who missed the April meeting, you have a second chance. Pam Hartree will be running this fascinating presentation of the evocative photos of Andy Outh-Aut of the South Fremantle Power Station taken since its closure. The photos were acquired from Andy by the Local History Collection at a much-reduced rate, to ensure they are available in perpetuity.

Pam's presentation will be held at the Local History Collection at the Fremantle Library at **2pm on Wednesday 29 May.**

Club Crawl

The ever popular Club Crawl will be held on Friday 31 May from 5pm. Ron Davidson, author of the wonderful introduction to the very handsome but very limited publication Clubs of Fremantle, and Don Whittington, savior of Fremantle's iconic Worker's Club, join forces once again to take you on a tour of the classic clubs of Fremantle – the Navy, the Buffalos and ending at the Workers. Can you keep up? See the Festival program for details.

Prison Art

On the walls and in the art classes of Fremantle Prison some very poignant art works were produced. There is much humour and not an inconsiderable bit of talent in many of these works. Acting curator Isa Menzies and Jacquie Brisbout, until recently assistant curator, will present a fascinating illustrated talk on the history and variety of the art works of the Prison. Isa and Jacquie have been researching the many influences and personalities that have shaped the variety of works in the collection.

The talk will be held at the Prison on **Tuesday 25 June at 6.30 pm.** The heaters will be on, but make sure you rug up! The talk will be followed by our regular sumptuous feast.

A North Fremantle site of significance

Now known as Stirling House, the property on Stirling Highway opposite the intersection with Alfred St began its life as the North Fremantle Primary School and was designed by government architect, George Temple Poole. Over the years it has served as a hostel (Kui Men's Hostel), a Bail Hostel for kids who were waiting for trial and later as a hostel for Clontarf Aboriginal Academy.

This year's AGM will be held at Stirling House. The more formal part of the evening will be followed by a talk about the history of the house by Senior Heritage Architect for the National Trust, Kelly

Rippingale. There will be a chance to have a look around the building and share a delightful supper with members and friends.

Venture across the river to Stirling House, Stirling Highway (immediately south of the North Fremantle Railway Station – parking on site), North Fremantle, **6.30 pm on Tuesday 23 July.**

A Research Tool

Madison Lloyd Jones

In early 2010 I was sitting in the Battye Library trying to find anything and everything that would help get me started with my study of Fremantle's experience of World War II when the Fremantle History Society's newsletter collection just happened to come up in one of my searches.

This would be my first introduction to the Society and their work and I was delighted with what I found! The newsletters from 1995 and 1996 were the most useful for me given that the FHS had made a concerted effort to contribute to the Department of Veterans Affairs national program titled Australia Remembers 1945-1995.

In their Summer Edition, 1995, it was revealed that the Society would conduct:

- an oral history program that would link in with work already being undertaken by the Local History librarian (co-ordinated by Lorraine Stevens)
- pictorial research including sourcing material from public and private collections (co-ordinated by Dianne Davidson)
- a heritage walk which will identify buildings and sites that were of significance during the war (co-ordinated by David Tessler).

In their Autumn Edition, 1995, Margaret McPherson gave details of an interview with an American sailor that came to live in Fremantle during the war and it also was advertised that 'a group of Fremantle personalities will share their memories of the war as seen from the homefront. They will be interviewed by Fremantle Herald editor Andrew Smith and audience participation will again be encouraged.'

I simply could not wait to get my hands on these archives. I ended up spending the rest of my week with Pam Hartree and Kristi in the Local History Collection at the Fremantle City Library pouring through their oral history files and ephemera.

World War II and Fremantle's experience of it was coming to life for me as I listened to tape after tape revealing fascinating personal accounts of rationing, the arrival of the Yanks, air raid shelters, and other experiences from the war.

In undertaking my doctoral research I have had the opportunity to conduct some oral history interviews of my own. In fact I had the privilege, shortly before Christmas last year, to meet a woman who had returned to her hometown of Perth from the US for a fortnight to scatter the ashes of her beloved in the waters near the Rottneest lighthouse. The couple were happily married for 60+ years before the ex-American submariner succumbed to ill health. Having been a navigator during the Second World War, and responsible for maneuvering his vessel while on war patrol, the Rottneest lighthouse was always a significant landmark as, on their return journey, it signalled safety from perilous waters and the prospect of a warm reception in Fremantle. It was his final request to be laid to rest in these safe and welcoming waters.

Such stories deserve to be preserved and retold. And I am so grateful that the Fremantle History Society took up this challenge long before I did and preserved a number of local stories that would no longer be available today if they had not.

Fremantle History Society Newsletter Indexing

Pam Hartree

A project has begun to index the previous 74 issues of the Fremantle History Society newsletter. The newsletters have been indexed up to 1998 so there is still a long way to go (the Society started in 1994). The index will provide a valuable research tool for Fremantle's history as many articles have been contributed over the years on a diverse range of topics. It is hoped that the index will be available shortly. Notification of the release of the index will be advised through the newsletter.

