# FREMANTLE STUDIES

## No 11

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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Volume 11 of Fremantle History Society's *Fremantle Studies.* The volume contains papers from Fremantle Studies Days in 2017 and 2018.

As expected this publication adds new and interesting information on Fremantle's past. Both years were based on themes, in 2017 the topic was Fremantle cultural institutions.

*'Working Class' organisations in Fremantle in the Late Nineteenth Century,* by Bob Reece provides an insight into the early institutions which served to educate the working class in the late nineteenth century through access to literature and the opportunity to attend regular talks from experts in a wide range of topics. Bob's research included the Working Man's Association and the early Fremantle Literary Institute.

Sheridan Hart's *Fremantle Arts Centre: Contemporary Programming in a Historical Site*, by, provides an interesting insight into the connection between heritage and art by discussing various exhibitions which have been produced at the Fremantle Arts Centre. Sheridan considers that intelligent and insightful interpretation of heritage sites is essential in ensuring the sites remain relevant and valued in society.

*Four Decades of Fremantle Press*, was written by Jane Fraser, currently CEO of Fremantle Press. Jane discusses the history of Fremantle Press from its early beginnings as Fremantle Arts Centre Press and over time reimagining itself to become a unique publishing house with a commitment to publishing Western Australian authors. Fremantle Press has introduced many new successful Western Australian authors over the years including Elizabeth Jolley, Sally Morgan, Philip Salom, Craig Silvey and Kim Scott to name just a few.

Natasha Metson, won the Fremantle History Society Scholarship in 2017. Her paper, *The Amateurs of Perth: Fremantle Symphony Orchestra,* provides an insight on the evolution of the orchestra from its early beginnings in Melville to its success as a musical institution in Fremantle. Natasha's passion for the orchestra is evident in the enthusiastic way she analyses both the benefits of the orchestra to the audience as well as the benefits and support individuals gain from being a committed musician with the orchestra.

The 2018 Studies Day provided an interesting and emotional program relating to the aftermath at the end of the World War I. The four speakers describe the personal, social and economic impacts of the war to the history of Fremantle.

Dr Leigh Straw's paper, *The Suffering Begins: Returned Soldiers, families and the aftermath of World War 1 in Western Australia*, tells in detail the effects of the war on individuals and families. The statistics in terms of the soldiers who went to war are distressing with close to 60,000 not returning, and of the 23,700 soldiers who returned to Western Australia, many struggled to create a semblance of civilian life amidst their ongoing trauma of war. The examples of the after effects on the soldiers and their families is explained using her research through soldiers' war records and Trove to bring to life many of the tragedies and pain which families experienced, including an ancestor in Leigh's family.

*The Fremantle Hotel Trade during World War One*, by Allen Graham, was more about the social and economic impact of life in Fremantle during the war. As Australia's only substantial port on the western seaboard it was the last part of Australia that many departing troops saw and the first that many maimed and wounded saw on their return to Australia. The people of Fremantle were, therefore, greatly impacted by the war, but perhaps no business class suffered as much from the war as Fremantle's publicans, for at the outbreak of war the Commonwealth Government had enacted the War Precautions Act which amongst other things allowed the government to "either prohibit or restrict the sale of liquor in any licensing district" or the "power ....to alter the closing time for hotels." Allen pointed out that Fremantle publicans lost trade due to this legislation being enforced and many travelled on to Perth where the restrictions were less severe.

Baden Pratt's, *Hell for Leather: North Fremantle Football Club and the Great War*, is an emotional paper recounting the effect of the war on the club. The statistics relating to the football club are distressing, 43 players and officials walked off the North Fremantle Oval to volunteer to serve Australia - 12 died, 22 returned limbless, shell-shocked or brain impaired from gas attacks and the remaining 8 all received bullet wounds. So many enlisted in 1915 the team had to forfeit the final five games of the 1915 league season. Apart from the devastating effect on the soldiers and their family and friends it also had ramifications on the future of the North Fremantle Football Club in the Western Australian Football League and resulted in them being left out of the competition. Eventually they became part of the Amateur Football League where they still compete today. It is an emotional story about the players and the history of the club.

Dr Michelle McKeough's paper, *Repatriation: A Debt of Gratitude*, describes the return of wounded soldiers from 1915 and brings home to

their communities the real impact of their 'first physical and emotional experience of modern warfare'. The repatriation of these men asserted itself as one of the most important social and civil concerns of the post-war period. The response of governments; local, state and federal to the issue of repatriation was founded on a prevailing sense of gratitude. Michelle's paper explains in real terms how government departments and community organisations worked together to provide, social, economic and health support for the soldiers and their families. It highlights issues which faced the Fremantle community for some time after the end of the war.

We thank the contributors who have given of their time, knowledge and expertise to produce such interesting papers relating to the history of Fremantle. Thank you to Shelley Campbell who prepared the index and Ian Chambers for his skills and patience during the laying out of the Volume 11. Anne Brake, Heather Campbell, Pam Harris, and Jude Robison undertook the editing.

We commend it to you.

# Four Decades of Fremantle Press[1]

Jane Fraser

Thank you for having me here today to talk to you about four decades of Fremantle Press and Western Australian publishing. I have been at Fremantle Press for nigh on ten years, and am very familiar with events over the last decade, so it was a lot of fun for today's presentation finding out more about the other three decades. Here we go.

In 1972, Fremantle City Council established the Fremantle Arts Centre, appointing local poet and visual artist Ian Templeman as its inaugural director. Housed in the refurbished Fremantle Lunatic Asylum, the Centre quickly established a community arts program offering hands-on classes in arts and crafts as well as in creative writing and literature appreciation. While the historic building provided plenty of opportunities to exhibit the work of visual artists, staff at the Arts Centre noted that no such opportunities existed for writers. This led to the creation of a poetry magazine called *Patterns* and *Pinup* – a poster designed to be pinned to community noticeboards, which Templeman described as an 'experimental project aimed at making more widely known the work of Western Australian writers'.

From the beginning, Templeman felt that neither helped fully resolve the difficulties that Western Australians had getting published. Academic

Barbara Milech reports that author and Fremantle Arts Centre creative writing instructor Elizabeth Jolley found publishing 'a slow, hard business from Western Australia', which seemed to her a result of the fact that those who governed Eastern States publishing houses had little interest in literary offerings from the west.

In 1975, spurred on by premier Sir Charles Court's promise that, if elected, he would establish a Western Australian literary fund to help local writers get published, Templeman commissioned Terry Owen to conduct a feasibility study into the establishment of a publishing house. That study led to the creation of Fremantle Arts Centre Press, now known as Fremantle Press. Not only did support come from Court's promise to establish a literary fund, but also from the Whitlam government's establishment of the Australia Council, which provided publishing subsidies for literary works: books were exempted from sales tax and a government-run Book Bounty system subsidised printing of books in Australia. That, teamed with the City of Fremantle's support in the form of staff and a home at Fremantle Arts Centre, made the establishment of the Press and the publication of its first titles possible.

From the start, though it was housed at the Arts Centre, the Press was designed to run independently and was set up as a not-for-profit organisation. Nonetheless, Templeman was appointed Chief Executive and Terry Owen became the Press's first General Manager, drafting our constitution and our first mission statement, which has barely changed in four decades. That was:

> To publish and promote to the widest possible audience the works of Western Australian writers and artists who may otherwise not be published by commercial publishing houses, and to record the cultural heritage of the State in a form that is easily accessible to the widest possible audience.

With additional staff members Sue Grey-Smith and Joan Sullivan, Terry Owen set up the Press in a poky attic at the Arts Centre. They leased an IBM Selectric composer, which at the time was cutting-edge technology. The machine produced camera-ready copy and most importantly could be operated by a typist rather than a professional compositor. This meant the book's pre-production and design could be undertaken in-house, just as it is today. Unlike today, however, the Selectric had just thirteen fonts, which could be printed in only a handful of font styles from eight to fourteen points. It also had a fragile and tricky to replace typeball system, which meant that most books were in fact printed in the same font.

In 1976, the Press published its first book, *Soundings*, an anthology of Western Australian poetry edited by Veronica Brady. Though critically well received by the local media, the book's production values left a lot to be desired. Poor binding meant the book fell apart in reviewers' hands and had to be returned to the printer to be stapled through the cover and spine. Then the book had to be withdrawn from sale altogether after Dorothy Hewett's ex-husband, solicitor Lloyd Davies, threatened to sue the Press for allegedly libellous material contained in one of Hewett's poems. It was withdrawn from trade, though by this time, most of the initial print run had already sold. Local artist Guy Grey-Smith's woodcuts adorned the cover of *Soundings* and the cover of our second publication, *New country*. The latter was a collection of short stories that, as editor Bruce Bennett pointed out, was the first of its kind to feature Western Australian writers since 1959 – a clear indicator that the state needed a local publisher dedicated to supporting local authors.

One such author was Elizabeth Jolley – one of Western Australia's great literary success stories. Her first book, *Five acre virgin and other stories*, sat alongside Nicholas Hasluck's *Anchor and other poems* as one of two single-author books published by the Press in its first year. Jolley had begun teaching at Fremantle Arts Centre in 1974 and by the time of her first publication was one of the Centre's most popular tutors. We held our first launch in the grounds of Fremantle Arts Centre in the middle of a Perth heatwave. The scorching temperatures didn't stop five hundred guests turning out to celebrate and, in less than a month, Fremantle Press had sold the entire print run at the recommended retail price of $2.95. Jolley's speech on the night was a hit and she added an eccentric twist to the evening when she moved among the crowd giving out 'little treats' – one woman was presented with a can of beetroot!

Clive Newman, who was the Deputy Director of the Fremantle Arts Centre at the time, said:

> *Five acre virgin and other stories* provided our first rush of adrenaline when enthusiastic reviews prompted strong sales in Perth. We boldly sent review copies of the book to literary editors around Australia, most of whom responded by running prompt and positive reviews, and discovered what was to be a major problem for the Press for many years – how to effectively and efficiently distribute our titles on a national basis. Discerning readers outside Western Australia had to demonstrate remarkable persistence in order to acquire a copy of the book.

The review in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, for instance, sent a customer

scurrying in to Gleebooks in Sydney, then and now one of the finest independent booksellers in the country. Good old Dave Gaunt (who was then good young Dave Gaunt), co-proprietor, mailed us an order for one copy. We obliged, of course, with an invoice for $1.77 – that's $2.95 less the booksellers' discount. Dave sent us a cheque for $1.77 and remains one of our favourite people in the book trade. What this story highlights is the fact that, until we had good distribution, the Press spent inordinate amounts of time and money sending single book parcels to the Eastern States, then chasing up outstanding invoices for ludicrously small amounts of money.

*Five acre virgin* has since been published in a number of different editions, both in Australia and overseas, and the stories remain as fresh and enchanting today as they did when they first appeared in 1976. Elizabeth published five more books with the Press as part of an acclaimed international career.

Another early success that highlighted our urgent need for adequate distribution was *A fortunate life* by A.B. Facey. The bestselling memoir was pulled from the submissions pile by Fremantle Press Commissioning Editor Wendy Jenkins. *A fortunate life* arrived as a roughly typed manuscript tied together with green-and-white waxed string. Wendy said:

> It did not look promising but almost immediately had my attention – and kept it. I read with growing interest, then excitement, skipping ahead to get a sense of the sweep of the life and to see if the story and voice were sustained. I experienced that almost visceral feeling I have had maybe three or four times when reading a manuscript by an unknown author that has arrived truly out of the blue.

There was no marketing budget for the book, so the Press approached well-known figures such as former prime minister Gough Whitlam and renowned historians Humphrey McQueen and Geoffrey Dutton. These endorsements, as well as a particularly strong recommendation from the host of a books segment on a high-rating Sydney radio station, plus extracts in both national and local papers, drove a demand for *A fortunate life* that could not be fulfilled by single-book mail parcels.

Publisher Ray Coffey said:

> The book almost sent us broke! It took off so quickly, before it had even been released, really. The orders were such that the first print run was gone and we didn't have the money to pay for a new print run. So we took out a little low-interest loan to do that. But within weeks of *those* copies arriving from the printer we had to reprint again. Soon after Penguin came to the

> Press and offered to buy the book, which was refused, but [we] agreed to license the rights, a deal which is still in play today.

After the phenomenal success of *A fortunate life*, when the time of the first lease agreement was due for renewal in 1986 we were able to negotiate a national distribution deal with Penguin – the first of its kind and one which persists to this day.

This was around the time when the Press was working on another memoir called *My place*, which became the first book to benefit from the new distribution deal. The Press had inaugurated its Indigenous list with *Gularabulu* by Paddy Roe with Stephen Muecke in 1983. According to academic Bob Hodge, this book heralded the birth of a new Australian literary tradition. That was because the book could be understood in both the Aboriginal and the colonial cultural contexts. You have to remember that this was the early 80s, before the time when Indigenous presses such as Magabala Books and Aboriginal Studies Press existed. So books like *Gularabulu*, with its mix of Aboriginal English, true stories and myths, were seen as groundbreaking texts. When *My place* came out in May 1984, there had been some published work by Aboriginal writers, but still not a great deal. In addition to this, women's experience was just starting to be noticed in fiction and non-fiction and, with the bicentenary approaching, there was a marked interest in Australian narratives. Using the same PR and marketing techniques we had employed for *A fortunate life*, the book began to sell within the first few weeks of getting it out into shops. This time when Penguin came to us with a lease agreement, we were able to say no thanks, we have a great distribution deal in place! So we still hold the rights to *My place*, with three quarters of a million copies sold to date.

But the 1980s were not just notable for these two books and it would be remiss of me to not mention that this was also the time when we released the first book Joan London ever published, *Sister ships*, which went on to win the *Age* Book of the Year. The 80s were when we began publishing the botanical artist Philippa Nikulinsky, and it was the decade when we started our long association with two of Australia's most important poets, John Kinsella and Philip Salom. Indeed, Salom's *The silent piano* and *Sky poems* won the Commonwealth Poetry Prize in 1981 and 1987 respectively, being named Best First Book and Best Book of Poetry published in the Commonwealth countries during those years.

By the 1990s, the Press had long moved from the Fremantle Arts Centre attic and into South Fremantle. The premises were so cold that, when

working late, employees usually found themselves sharing the heater with a resident mouse, who would pop up from beneath the floorboards to shiver alongside the editors and production assistants.

A new partnership between Fremantle Press and New Edition Bookshop saw the creation of the T.A.G. Hungerford Award for a previously unpublished manuscript by a Western Australian author. It was named for author Tom Hungerford, who was described as one of 'the Grand Old Men of Australian Literature' and who was thrilled to have the award named in his honour. Hungerford had had a long association with the Press, since the late 1970s, publishing six volumes with us and receiving the Patrick White Award for literature in 2002.

The inaugural Hungerford winner in 1990 was Brenda Walker, whose winning novel *Crush* was published in two editions by Fremantle Press and went on to be published in an Italian translation. The next emerging writer to win the award was Gail Jones, with her book *The house of breathing*. Gail has of course gone on to even greater literary successes, including having won the Western Australian Premier's Award for Fiction four times (1993, 1997, 2002 and 2004), three times being shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Award, and being recognised in several international awards including being longlisted for the Man Booker Prize, and twice longlisted for the Orange Prize.

While Jones's *The house of breathing* won the 1991 Hungerford Award, a fellow entrant identified that year was Kim Scott, whose manuscript we later published. Fast-forward into the past decade of the Hungerford Award and we see Alice Nelson being named *Sydney Morning Herald*'s Best Young Novelist for *The last sky*, Jacqueline Wright's *Red dirt talking* being longlisted for both a Miles Franklin and a Nita B. Kibble Award, and Robert Edeson's *The weaver fish* being picked up for publication in the UK and US.

One part of the program that commenced in the 1990s has arguably done the most towards helping Fremantle Press continue to thrive in the fickle world of publishing. When author Ellisha Majid's children Robert and Sarah were little, she decided to write a story just for them. 'There was a small plastic sausage squashed in their big toy box wanting to get out and run away,' said Majid. 'And so it did.'

Published 25 years ago, *A sausage went for a walk* was our first children's book. At the time, the then sales manager said it would 'never sell', but 20,000 copies later, he's been well and truly proved wrong. It eventually

became a Spare Parts Puppet Theatre production and perhaps the only person who doesn't remember Sausage fondly is their current director Michael Barlow – he spent more years in a Sausage suit than he perhaps cares to remember.

Former publisher Ray Coffey said the creation of the children's list was driven by demand, with unsolicited children's manuscripts being sent to the Press even though we did not have a children's program. Ray said:

> there was a young fella called Shaun Tan. We saw talent there but we couldn't help him because we weren't publishing in that area. Within twelve months we totally changed direction regarding picture books and went back to him but by then someone else had snaffled him. [Lothian Books]

Before commencing the list, Ray immersed himself in children's books and did a *lot* of homework, talking, over quite a period, to writers and academics, teachers and librarians who specialised in kids' books. He said:

> And after some time we felt we were in a position to begin feeling our way in this area of publishing with some confidence. And basically that's how we work with every area. In a real sense it's driven by authors who are looking for an outlet for their work.

Those early children's books included *Bawoo stories* by May O'Brien, one of the first books in Australia to feature an Indigenous language (Wongutha), and *Cat balloon*, which came with a CD-Rom soundtrack and which also went on to become a very successful Spare Parts Puppet Theatre production.

*The deep* by Tim Winton and Karen Louise was another early and very popular publication. The book was shortlisted for a Western Australian Premier's Book Award and Highly Commended in the Australian Family Therapists' Award for Children's Literature in 1999. It too was adapted for the stage by Spare Parts Puppet Theatre and is still a part of their repertoire.

We ended the 90s, however, on a different kind of high. The early and continuing success of his book *Australia's west* made it an easy decision to partner with Richard Woldendorp's own Sandpiper Press in 1999 to publish an extraordinary collection of his aerial photography, *Down to earth: Australian landscapes*. Richard's work had always featured aerial landscapes, but the new book focused exclusively on this presentation and reflected his passion for flying over Australia in small planes, armed with his cameras, to record the landscape in his own particular way.

His obsession with landscape was shared by Tim Winton. At the breakfast

launch of *Down to earth*, Tim told a story about flying with Richard one day just to see how he did it. Tim said he got the biggest fright of his life when he turned around to see Richard (who would have been in his 70s by then) hanging halfway out of the plane with his camera dangling around his neck. Twenty years later and Richard, who is now in his 90s, is still at it. We'll be publishing another book by Richard later next year.

Back in the 1930s with the paperback barely invented, the concept of ebooks and ereaders was proposed by the American writer Bob Brown. He said, 'To continue reading at today's speed, I must have a machine.' He described his ideal future ereader as 'A simple reading machine which I can carry or move around, attach to any old electric light plug and read hundred-thousand-word novels in ten minutes if I want to, and I want to.' Furthermore, this machine would 'allow readers to adjust the type size and avoid paper cuts.' Seventy-three years later, after floppy disc books and CD-Rom expanded novels, Sony released the world's first ereader – and Fremantle Press was ready (sort of!). Working with local company eBooks.com, *Benang* by Kim Scott became our first ebook to be published in a format approximating what we know ebooks to be today.

A much more compelling 'first' for Kim Scott and his book was to come, though. In 2000 with *Benang*, he became the first Aboriginal writer to win Australia's most prestigious literary prize, the Miles Franklin Award, which he won again with *That deadman dance* in 2011. Talking to Susan Midalia at the time of *Benang*'s publication, Kim explained that he wanted to deal with his sense of being psychologically damaged and culturally dispossessed as 'the first white man born' in his immediate family, the product of a long-standing, systematic, state-sanctioned policy of assimilation or the 'biological absorption', as it was called, of the Aboriginal race. To this end, his research, conducted over a five-year period, was both personal – tracing his family history though Welfare files – and more broadly historical – drawing on a diversity of sources including books, letters, parliamentary debates, a Royal Commission report and newspaper articles. An imaginative blend of fact and fiction, archival documentation and invention, *Benang* was designed to be educative in both historical and emotional terms – to inform us about the shameful history of the white treatment of Aboriginal people and also, centrally, to 'speak from the heart'.

After starting the millennium with this historic Miles Franklin win, Fremantle Press went on to publish two award-winning books that highlighted the histories of post-settler life for Aboriginal people. Anna

Haebich's history of Australia's Stolen Generations, *Broken circles*, won the New South Wales Premier's Book of the Year, the Gleebooks Prize, the Victorian Premier's Book Award and the AIATSIS Stanner Award, while Stephen Kinnane's *Shadow Lines* won the AIATSIS Stanner Award and the Western Australian Premier's Book Award for Non-fiction.

Within a decade of commencing the children's list, Fremantle Press was publishing the first Australian young adult novel to cover the topic of cyberbullying, the bestselling *Destroying Avalon* by Kate McCaffrey, and winning this country's most prized children's book award, the Children's Book Council of Australia's Picture Book of the Year Award for *In Flanders Fields* by Norman Jorgensen and Brian Harrison-Lever. Illustrator Harrison-Lever said creating a book based on the appalling conditions of World War I was emotional and stressful. He said:

> Being the proud father of a nineteen-year-old son does have advantages, I discovered, when son Tom willingly agreed to allow me to pose him in all of the attitudes and situations described in my 'storyboard' … This unexpected though possibly predictable outcome had the advantage for me of allowing a relationship or bond to develop between me the artist and the character I was leading through Norman Jorgensen's storyline. It also had a stressful and emotional outcome in that over the period of several months of concentrated research and actual work on the drawings, I became, for many hours each day, totally absorbed by the appalling conditions of the Western Front and the happenings in Flanders Fields. Having to turn off the desk lights and close the door on it all each night, feeling at times that I was leaving my son in there, was difficult. It was necessary on some nights to open the door to his room just to reassure myself that he was sitting happily working at his computer.

Another adult author to work on a children's book with Fremantle Press was Craig Silvey whose spin-off picture book *The world according to Warren* was created with illustrator Sonia Martinez. The book featured Warren, the guide dog from Silvey's first novel, and was a Children's Book Council of Australia Notable Book and shortlisted for the Crichton Award for New Illustrators in 2008. Famously turned down by his now current publisher Allen & Unwin because he was an unknown, Craig Silvey was only nineteen when he finished his first novel, *Rhubarb*, which he funded by cleaning toilets, selling ice creams and working in a hardware store. It was published by Fremantle Press in 2004 and won Craig *the Sydney Morning Herald* Best Young Novelist award. The book was hailed by critics and readers alike, was chosen as the 'One Book' for the Perth International Arts Festival in 2005, and was included in the national Books Alive campaign.

The *Sunday Times* reported that the book made him the darling of reading groups from Rockingham to Joondalup, who hung on his every word and made him eat lots of rhubarb pie.

By this time, Fremantle Press was operating out of our current building on Quarry Street – the Dux Building. Originally a bottling works for a cordial manufacturer, the building was renovated in the late 70s as a workshop and residence for the luthier Scott Wise. (A luthier is a maker of stringed instruments such as violins and guitars.) People drop by occasionally with stories about having babies in the top rooms and about our building being the one-time home of a troupe of opera singers who drank their earnings. We'd love to know if that last one is true. In any case, the creativity of the building's myths feels appropriate for a purveyor of stories.

During my decade at the Press, I have overseen the handover to a new generation of publishing professionals – each with their own specialities and interests. Though she's been at the Press since 1997, Cate Sutherland took on the role of Children's Publisher ten years ago. In that role, she has nurtured the talents of local creators and established strong partnerships between writers and illustrators, many of whom are publishing their work for the first time. During her tenure, there has been an increase in rights sales ,with children's books being the most sought after by foreign publishers.

Indigenous picture book creator Ambelin Kwaymullina was the first Australian children's author to launch her books in China, and more have since sold into China, South Korea, the USA and Europe. Cate says:

> Working with new and emerging authors and illustrators is exciting and incredibly rewarding. For me, these books are very personal. Each book represents many hours of deliberation, discussion and consultation, as well as fun and laughter. Our goal always is to work with the creators to help them perfect their craft and to make a book the very best it can be.

Along with foreign rights sales, Cate's books have been read on television and on children's radio and this year, Dianne Wolfer's books *Lighthouse girl* and *Light horse boy* were produced by Black Swan Theatre Company and played to packed houses.

When Georgia Richter took on the role as publisher of our adult titles, one of her first books was a crime novel, and since then she has developed an award-winning crime list with international appeal. Over the past seven years she has nurtured a small but critically acclaimed list of crime novels that have won two Ned Kelly Awards, as well another Ned Kelly

shortlisting and a longlisting for the Miles Franklin.

Dorothy Hewett once observed that 'Perth's air of manufactured innocence … was in fact the perfect field for corruption'. And Tim Winton has written of a 'kind of hardness and blindness that comes with an invader's ethos.' The boom state, the bloody colonial history, the spectacular and extreme landscape – all are fertile ground for crime fiction.

What we're seeing right now is authors grappling with our invader past, present and future in works by writers like Peter Docker and Jacqueline Wright. Crime fiction has a way of turning a forensic eye on unpalatable subjects that we may be reluctant to encounter in 'real life' and of provoking thought even as it entertains. It's not an easy space to write in – nor is it always a comfortable space to publish from – but we believe it's important.

And it is reaping rewards for Fremantle Press with crime list authors selling well, garnering critical acclaim, gracing the awards lists, and being sold into European and other territories.

Over the years we have supplemented our sales income through sponsorship and donations, but also through custom publishing projects for clients from a wide range of backgrounds. For example, we've been commissioned to produce books that feature private and public art collections, including the Kerry Stokes Collection and Wesfarmers Arts, we've produced corporate and community histories such as those for the Royal Perth Yacht Club, the Metropolitan Cemeteries Board, the City of Bassendean and Shire of Perenjori, as well as a recent publication we produced for the Dambimangari Aboriginal Corporation. We've created books for sporting organisations like the East Fremantle Football Club, WAIS and the Rottnest Channel Swim. Since 2006, we've been producing books for the State Library of Western Australia and their Better Beginnings program providing books for new mums and dads. Last year we also set up a philanthropic program called the Fremantle Press Champions of Literature whereby book lovers from all over donate each year to support our program of activities.

So here we are, 41 and a half years later, with the same core purpose to identify talented new and emerging Western Australian writers and artists, and to publish and distribute their work to the widest possible audience.

When we returned to Fremantle Arts Centre to celebrate our 40th anniversary last year, we were humbled by the community response. Almost 800 people came along to listen to readings from each decade of our existence and to show their support of what we do.

Ultimately, while these stories germinate in a Western Australian context, what they reveal about the self and society has no borders. I think the best kind of books are those that speak to us personally as readers. Books that help us know ourselves and have empathy for others. Books that transport and transform. Our job at Fremantle Press is to find those stories here in Western Australia, then share them with the world.

Fremantle Studies Day, 2017

1 Endnotes were not available for this paper as the material was produced from various sources, a mix of documents, articles blog posts and personal conversations and therefore difficult to reference. Contact Fremantle Press if further information is required.

# The Fremantle Hotel Trade During World War One

Allen Graham

It is well known that the declaration of World War 1 was not so much received with any sense of gloom, or despondency, but with a great deal of celebration and relief, for 'it was felt that the war had to come and the sooner it came the quicker it would be over.'[1]

The declaration of war captured everyone's attention and the local newspapers provided some good descriptions of how the news of war was received in Fremantle with the *Truth* telling how:

> Fremantle has got the war fever badly, and throughout the week little practical business has been done at the Port. War evidently is a great leveller, and it is not an uncommon sight to see Jack and his master hobnob in the street, or discuss the latest development across the saloon bar counter.[2]

As Australia's closest port to Europe it was inevitable that Fremantle would play a large part in the nation's war effort and many men of business could see the opportunities that the war would bring, just as others could see the problems that it would cause. One of those in the negative camp was Joseph Monaghan, the publican of Fremantle's Orient Hotel and the then president of the Fremantle branch of the Licensed Victuallers Association, who could see that business was going to be bad for the hotel trade and who quickly advocated that the publicans should approach the Premier 'requesting legislation compelling landlords to reduce rents.'[3]

As it proved, Monaghan was right with his concerns for throughout the

duration of the war the publicans were to be confronted with a raft of rules and regulations that continually impacted on their trade. No category of publican was to be more effected than the Fremantle publicans for, as the war progressed, these regulations became more onerous.

With a war to fight the Australian Government needed extra revenue, so towards the end of 1914 it imposed a tax of 3d per gallon on beer and 3sh per gallon on spirits and while these taxes were inevitably passed onto the public, it seems as if some publicans took the opportunity to profit out of the new charges, with the *Sunday Times* reporting:

> Had the new liquor duties been passed on to the public as they stood the people would not have growled, ... but when the duties are used as a means of squeezing extra and inordinate profits out of the public then it is too much.[4]

While revenue was one thing, behaviour was another, and at the outbreak of war the Australian Government had enacted the War Precautions Act which amongst other things allowed the government to 'either prohibit or restrict the sale of liquor in any licensing district' or the 'power ...to alter the closing time for hotels.'[5]

These powers were resented by the publicans, but the government and the military did not want to be confronted by scenes of drunken soldiers in the streets for not only would it be bad for discipline and morale, it would also be disconcerting to the civilian population if witnessed by them.[6]

Still, while the war was the primary focus of the town, it did not stop the people pursuing other political ambitions and while the temperance movement was one of those groups that remained active throughout the war years, other people had other international ambitions like the nameless publican at the centre of the following tale told by the *Sunday Times*. The paper writing that:

> At a well-known Fremantle hostelry there is a granolithic 'lawn', painted green, with a pathway of a yellow hue some 4½ft wide. The Irish boniface responsible denies that any slur was intended when that 'lawn' was laid down, though any hiccupped Hibernian is at liberty to trample the orange to his heart's content.

The article concluded by saying that the 'ability to tread the path is proof positive that the pedestrian is sober.'[7]

Although the publican was not named, it was most likely Joseph Monaghan of the Orient Hotel for he was a well known supporter of the Irish Independence Movement and a memory held by his daughter was

'that whenever there was any strife with the movement, the police always came to see her father.'[8]

While Fremantle farewelled its first troops in November 1914 there were no real tales to tell of Australia's contribution to the war effort until the *Emden* was sunk by *HMAS Sydney* in November 1914.

Indeed, it was ironic that one of the first war tales that had a connection to Fremantle was that of the experience of Karl Fink, a former publican of the Orient Hotel. At the outbreak of the war he was back in his native Germany and while he had become a naturalised British citizen, his British nationality was not recognised by the Germans. The *Sunday Times* reported he was close to being 'commandeered and sent to the front' and was only saved from that bleak prospect by his poor eyesight.[9]

While men were fighting for their lives on the slopes of Gallipoli, for most of the people in Fremantle life went on pretty much as before including the over zealous attention that the police paid to the town's publicans, as demonstrated by this report in the *Truth*:

> Mention of Sunday Drinking reminds one that while the police force show astonishing zeal in attending to the publican, they exhibit lamentable inactivity in other directions. Fremantle at present is over run with human pests who, if they had their due, would be doing time on the hill. While the police are running after the hotel keeper in an attempt to keep him up to the collar, they entirely overlook the hordes of thieves and hangers on who lurk round the pubs waiting for the poor devil who when he gets a few drinks in, they can get into a dark corner and rob.[10]

Although the public was able to take some satisfaction from the reports of our gallant efforts at Gallipoli, it was not until the naval victory of the allies over the Germans in the Gulf of Riga in August 1915 that the Fremantle people were able to celebrate an Allied victory.

To celebrate this victory the publican of the Commercial Hotel engaged a band to entertain the people of Fremantle from his hotel balcony. Joining them on the balcony was WA Murphy, the President of the All British Association, from where he delivered a patriotic address to the crowd below. His speech ignited the passions of the crowd and so at around about 11.30 pm a riotous mob took to the streets to target any businesses that were seemingly run by people of German nationality. Consequently, businesses such as Kopp's Jewellery, Scherer's Furnishings and a couple of Fremantle hotels all suffered window damage to one degree or another. The two hotels targeted at this time were the Star Hotel which was run by a man named Wittorf and the Federal Hotel which was run by a man

named Fiedler, who in fact was a Russian and who 'had been celebrating the naval victory during the day.'[11]

By now Fremantle was a 'a real live garrison town'[12], with the *Truth,* writing:

> Since the khaki uniform has become such a conspicuous feature of the streets, the moral tone of Fremantle has very noticeably degenerated. In fact, the frailty of the female species has become most pronounced, and the most regrettable phase of the business is that many of the victims of soldiers' lust are mere children…Some of these are mere chits of fourteen or fifteen, who have fallen victims to the glamour of the King's uniform.[13]

But if promiscuity was one problem,[14] drinking was another and in October 1915, just after the dust had settled on the August riots, the soldiers put on their own show when they too rioted in the streets, the *Sunday Times* telling how:

> There were disgraceful scenes in the streets of Fremantle last week. Something like 300 more or less inebriated soldiers engaged in what was supposed to be a route march through the streets of the town, but which instead was a display of hooliganism.

While the behaviour of those revellers was marked by rowdy singing and the obstruction of the streets, their behaviour was 'eclipsed by a second crowd' which invaded the town's hotels and eating houses with many of the revellers helping themselves to the food that was on display for sale. The paper continuing its commentary by saying:

> Matters became so serious that the police…advised one publican... to close his doors two and a half hours before the regulation hour, while several other hotels 'put up shutter' half an hour or so later as the only apparent means of quelling the disturbance. [15]

Such behaviour drew the ire of both the temperance movement and the churches, and the *Truth* reported how:

> Concern is being felt by the members of the Fremantle Ministerial Association at the notorious behaviour of Australian soldiers in Fremantle, and latterly several members of the reversed-collar crowd waited on the Municipal Council and urged that all drinkeries should be closed while the transports are in the harbour.

Not that the proposal was supported by the *Truth* for it continued its story by saying:

> The injustice of this proposal did not occur to the rev. gents; all they saw was drunkenness, and, ... they hoped to be able to close up the pubs and thus get over the difficulty. It never occurred to them that almost every

> publican is paying a big rent; that every hour counts; that closing his pub would be depriving him not only of the special trade from the soldiers; but of much ordinary trade which he is entitled to; that it would be playing into the hands of low-down groggeries, wine saloons, and houses of ill fame; and that would be penalising hundreds of soldiers who like their beer but know when to stop. [16]

It was at this time that the State Parliament was debating a bill which called for a reduction in trading hours. By now there had been a worldwide movement to restrict trading hours. They had already been changed in Victoria where they were restricted to between 6.00 am and 6.00 pm, which gave rise to the ugly drinking tradition which became known as the 6.00 o'clock swill. However, in Western Australia it was agreed that the trading hours would be between 9.00 am to 9.00 pm and for them to be reviewed annually during the course of the War.

It was around this time that the Freemasons Hotel was put up for auction by James Gallop as part of a package of properties that included the adjacent Kings Theatre and adjoining shops.

This hotel had been owned by Gallop since 1901 and had been rebuilt by him in 1903, a year before he built the Kings Theatre on the site next door. However, the theatre never achieved the success that Gallop had hoped for and so it was that in December 1915 the properties were put up for auction under instructions from the mortgagees. The pending auction was reported by the *Fremantle Herald,* writing: 'Seldom**,** if ever**,** has a property sale of such importance been attempted at the Port.'[17]

However, it was not a good time to be selling properties and the *Daily News* reported how '[t]here was little competition, there being only two bidders, and the property finally went to Mr William Padbury, who offered £17,000.'[18]

By the end of 1915 troop ships were regularly coming into and out of Fremantle and in December Perth had its first experience of boisterous behaviour by troops when a number of windows were broken; an experience that prompted the Fremantle columnist of the *Sunday Times* to record that:

> Fremantle has been crammed and crowded with khaki during the past week, but up to the time of writing we haven't had such disastrous experiences as you have with window breaking larrikins in Perth. The soldiers around here to date have confined their attention to thoroughly and fully enjoying themselves, but beyond going into the pubs and consuming liberal quantities of drinks 'with Kitchener', (in other words without payment), they have not offended against the canons of fair dinkum propriety.[19]

It is not known how this free drink was scrounged, but it was an unpopular practice with the *Sunday Times* recording that, 'Fremantle publicans do not at all welcome visiting soldiers 'having one with Kitchener'.'[20]

While the soldiers continued to be responsible for the occasional ruckus, it seems that the change in opening hours had an early effect on the behaviour of the civilian population for the *Sunday Times* was able to write:

> the nine to nine regulations have been working with satisfactory smoothness, and up to the time of writing there has not, I hear, been as much as a complaint of any publican overstepping the law...you will now find us perfectly dry, albeit Fremantle certainly seems to imbibe enough during the hours the pubs are open.[21]

Still, trouble with the soldiers was never far way, as was the experience in December 1916 when the *Sunday Times* reported:

> Fremantle does not receive much revenue from the visiting soldiers, as they usually betake themselves to Perth with their spending silver, but if there is any 'stir', the port always gets its share of the unpleasantness. As witnessed last Wednesday morning when a mob of the visitors, most of them more or less alcoholically enlivened started to make things merry here.[22]

After the December troubles, there were no significant reports of soldier troubles until the 31 May 1917 when the behaviour of the troops again caused trouble for the police, the publicans and the public.

This was the usual tale of drinking and fighting with the inspector of police in Fremantle attributing much of the cause of these problems to the publicans:

> [w]ho regarded the visits of soldiers as a 'harvest' and were out to reap the harvest to the last shilling, utterly regardless to the effect the liquor may have on the sick or the wounded soldiers.[23]

And another police officer reported how:

> [s]everal military officers…asked me to bring their request … of having all hotels in the metro area closed when there are incoming or outgoing troop ships in port.[24]

As it proved, that was a decision that was taken by the military authorities and soon after the *West Australian* reported that:

> Instructions have been issued to district commandants ... to order the closing at Australian ports of licensed premises ...within such areas, and for such periods, as may be considered necessary on the arrival of hospital ships, or transports from abroad, ….[25]

This new regulation drew a mixed response from the interested parties,

but the Fremantle reporter for the *Sunday Times* saw the new regulation as having some appeal for he wrote:

> Down here of late, and for months past, we have had frequent trouble from soldiers who have become intoxicated on landing, and at times serious happenings have been only narrowly averted. Were the pubs closed and the men unable to drink it is claimed that there would be no sign of disorder.

But while the reporter remained cautious about the absolute effectiveness of the regulation, he closed his piece by asking rhetorically, 'What about the wineshops and the sly groggeries?' [26]

Of course, the publicans could see the threat that this posed to their trade and for a time they suggested that the closures should only come into force in cases of disorder arising, or failing that, to have the licensed hours closed to soldiers only.[27]

Despite the publicans' opposition, the regulation stood and the first notice to close the hotels was given on the 24 June 1917 with the *West Australian* noting how:

> The order applied to grocers and wine licenses, and prohibited the serving of soldiers in uniform at clubs, whether they were members or not. The breweries suspended deliveries while the order was in force. The closing order was the first that has been issued under the War Precautions Act, and was accepted with little demur by licensees and the public.[28]

This closure evidently having the desired effect, for the Town Clerk of Fremantle wrote to the Colonial Secretary saying:

> I can assure you that there was a very marked difference in general conduct yesterday when some 500 returned soldiers were granted leave from transports in port. Every effort was made by the ladies to entertain the men by the free distribution of tea, coffee, cakes, fruit etc.[29]

And while the *Sunday Times* had been favourably disposed to the closing of the hotels at the beginning of the month, by the end of the month, and after having experienced the first week of hotel closures, its editorial position had changed:

> For portion of three days last week the hotels within the metropolitan area, from Fremantle to Midland Junction, inclusive were closed…But while the licensed victuallers were compelled to obey the law, the clubs were allowed to remain wide open as usual, with the result that the members of those clubs and their friends were accorded privileges denied to the general public.

The paper also took the opportunity to attack the sly groggers when it

wrote '…we would like to know what effort was made to cope with the sly grog shops of which there are scores in both Perth and Fremantle', the paper then asking rhetorically, 'Which are the greatest menace to the public we have in our midst? There is not much danger in a properly conducted hotel.'[30]

The *Truth* also had trouble with the regulation, venting its rage with a front page editorial which stated:

> [t]hat the wowsers are making a welter of the European war as a vehicle for pushing their own pet fads on the people is so self evident as to require little stressing...During the past fortnight we have had the unpleasant fact hammered home to us that a District Commandant by a timely stroke of the pen, is able to paralyse the bar pumps and reduce the touring soldier to the status of the aboriginal[sic] by making him a 'prohibited pusson' within the meaning of the Act.[31]

The paper making a more satirical point a fortnight later when it published a cartoon captioned 'Friends in Misfortune' which likened the ban on the soldiers to that which applied to the Aboriginal population.[32]


Image 1: Friends in Misfortune (*Truth*, 21 July 1917)

While the publicans as a group were having to deal with the prospects of regularly closing their hotels, Joseph Monaghan was having his own personal troubles. Around this time Monaghan fell foul of the police, the public and the press when he turned away a returned soldier who was seeking accommodation for the night.

The facts in this case were that the soldier, who had lost a leg while fighting in Palestine and who was still getting around on crutches, was found at night lying on the Fremantle bridge after falling and hitting his head. The soldier was later found by two prominent men of Fremantle who after picking him up off the road drove into Fremantle with the objective of finding him accommodation for the night. It was their efforts that brought him to the Orient Hotel.

However, Monaghan was not prepared to make a room available and told the Good Samaritans that he was 'full up'. On being turned away the Good Samaritans then proceeded to look for other accommodation which was found at the Alhambra wine saloon and rooms. The next day they reported the matter to the police who, on making enquiries, found that Monaghan had no fewer than nine bedrooms empty at that time.

Consequently, he was charged with failing to provide accommodation, but this was dismissed under some technicality applying to the War Precautions Act. However, it was a very unpopular decision, and the *Sunday Times* was scathing in its attack on Monaghan when it wrote:

> There are too many of the Monaghan type in our midst only ready by an action such as this to cast a slur on the name of the returned soldier…It is no wonder that recruitment suffers when cavalier treatment of this kind can be meted out without impunity to a man who has done his bit. As for Monaghan, we have too great a contempt for his action to express in words.[33]

In the meantime, the closure of Fremantle hotels was starting to impact on their trade and in August 1917 the *Sunday Times* wrote:

> A lot of people are asking why Fremantle should be treated differently to Perth in regard to the provision for the closing of pubs. Only recently a vessel containing wounded...put into the port, and the pubs were immediately closed by order.

With the article going on to say:

> But the men simply trooped up to Perth and there they found that the pubs were waiting with open bars to receive them. When first the order was brought into force the regulation was applied to all pubs from Fremantle to Midland Junction. In this last instance apparently only Fremantle and surroundings were singled out. Why? [34]

The question was taken up by the Fremantle Council and a week later the *Sunday Times* reported, 'It is understood in future that Perth and Fremantle will be treated alike in this respect. And quite right too.'[35]

Thereafter, things stayed quiet for the next few months but it was too much to expect they would stay that way and so in April 1918, the *West Australian* told how:

> Scenes of a disorderly nature were witnessed at Fremantle on Saturday night when a number of returned wounded soldiers … broke leave, and indulged in riotous behaviour. ... Nothing of an untoward nature occurred until the hotels had been closed, when a number of the men commenced fighting amongst themselves. Before leaving the hotels some of the men secured a supply of liquor, and this was consumed in the streets.[36]

Although the soldiers caused trouble whenever they had the opportunity to do so, it seems that the rest of Fremantle had lost some of its verve because, with the regular closing of the hotels, it was not only the soldiers who were not being served, but also the locals. Throughout 1918 the *Sunday Times* regularly commented on how well behaved, yet how boring the town had become.[37] In fact, at another time it even suggested that the townspeople were now so well behaved that there was no work for the legal profession.[38] The paper also noting how dry the town had become, stating, 'The temperance people should be proud of Fremantle's control of local traffic.'[39] However, its best description of the town may have been when it wrote:

> [p]oor neglected old Port – Wanted a 'Cheer up Society', or some such progressive institution for Fremantle. There's about as much life in the place at present as in the froth of yesterday's beer.'[40]

The publicans' problems did not end with the Armistice on the 11 November 1918, for this only meant that Fremantle would be receiving a larger and, perhaps more boisterous, number of men into the port. Thus, in December the military commandant took the opportunity to address the metropolitan publicans who he advised, '[a]lthough the War is over I will still have to arrange to stop soldiers getting hold of liquor'. Adding, '[s]o far as the law is concerned, it is likely to be continued, until necessary, but I hope it will be reduced to a minimum.' The commandant concluding by saying, 'I do not think I will be your instrument of torture much longer…'[41]

This message was not what the publicans wanted to hear, for it was their belief that the closure of the hotels had already brought financial ruin to many publicans and if they continued to be closed with as much regularity

in 1919, as they had during 1918, then many more publicans would face bankruptcy.

Not that the military prohibition on drinking applied solely to the hotels. The regulation was far more intrusive than that, for it even prohibited a soldier, subject to his military rank, from accepting the hospitality of friends and families. The *West Australian* reminding its readers of this regulation when it wrote:

> It is an offence for any person whatever to supply intoxicating liquor to any member of the naval and military force, or a member of a convalescent home or camp undergoing medical treatment, or who is returning from service abroad. [42]

Throughout the first half of 1919 all the publicans in the metropolitan area were subject to the same hotel closing restrictions, but in June 1919 there was relaxation to the restrictions when the military commandant advised that he had:

> received directions... that in future hotels are not to be closed in Fremantle or elsewhere when transports arriving at Fremantle carrying West Australian troops only. When other troops are carried hotels at Fremantle only are to be closed.

With the proviso that:

> Hotelkeepers at other centres are to be warned that if unsatisfactory reports are received concerning any particular hotel it will be closed, and not reopened without express authority from headquarters. [43]

However, as experience had shown, the soldiers could never be relied upon to be on their best behaviour when they were given the right to drink and so this was once again experienced in Perth within days of the prohibition being relaxed.

For once the Fremantle publicans and the temperance movement were on the same side. After a number of ugly incidents in the streets of Perth, the Women's Christian Temperance Union announced that they would be sending the following message to the Acting Minister for Defence, viz:

> We women of Western Australia desire to enter a most emphatic protest against the new directions … in regard to the closing of bars when transports arrive at Fremantle. According to these directions hotel bars at Fremantle only are to be closed, a rather farcical proceeding, when a question of an hour's run by train or motor will bring anyone who wishes to liquor bars in other places. ... The scenes witnessed on Monday last in the streets of Perth and at the railway station were beyond description...[44]

Despite the joint protests of the Fremantle publicans and the WCTU, nothing was done to repeal the June regulation and so the Perth publicans enjoyed a good few weeks of unrestricted hotel trade. However, in August a number of matters conspired to again place this matter on the public agenda for while the war had finished in November 1918, there had not yet been any formal peace celebrations to mark the end of the War. Subsequently, those celebrations were set for the weekend of the 2 August 1919 with a public holiday to be observed on Monday, 4 August. To promote the importance of the occasion free trains were put on to run between Fremantle and Perth. While the Fremantle publicans were not allowed to trade at all, the troops were actively encouraged to travel into Perth and drink without restriction.

That experience was the first of a number of incidents that aggravated the Fremantle publicans as the Peace Celebrations were an event of great importance, August was a busy time for prominent visitors to be calling at the port including the Prime Minister, Mr Billy Hughes, the Acting Prime Minister, Mr Walter Watt, and the Minister for the Navy, Sir Joseph Cook. It was also the month which saw one of the biggest landings of returned soldiers with the simultaneous arrival of two transports, the *Karmala* and *Windhuk*. Both the politicians and the visiting troopships were to be warmly welcomed by the people of Fremantle, but as fate would have it, circumstances were to clash resulting in a change to the trading hours of the metropolitan hotels.

The troopships were the first to arrive and the *West Australian* reported on their arrival:

> The transports *Karmala* and *Windhuk* arrived at Fremantle yesterday and about 200 troops for Western Australia were landed…There were about two thousand Easterners on the two troopships. These were granted leave during the day, and most of them remained in the Port...All the hotels were closed by military order at the Port, and the men appeared to enjoy themselves thoroughly without the stimulus of intoxicants. In the evening as they wended their way across the railway bridge, returning to their ships, almost every man carried a parcel of fruit for himself, or a bulging package of presents for those who are anxiously awaiting the arrival of the quota in the East.[45]

However, before they left their visit was to again be the cause of ill will between the publicans of Perth and Fremantle. Unfortunately, the *Windhuk* was delayed in sailing and was forced to stay in port for a few extra days during which time free trains were again put on for the benefit of the

soldiers, a great inducement to the men to go into Perth and enjoy the unrestricted hospitality of the Perth publicans.

This was too much for the Fremantle publicans who soon after arranged a meeting to be held at the Fremantle Trades Hall; convened under the chairmanship of Joseph Monaghan. It was agreed that they would send a telegram of protest to the acting minister of defence. This telegram in part reading:

> The Fremantle hotelkeepers consider they are labouring under a gross injustice by opening hotels in Perth, and closing in Fremantle. The hotels are closed, presumably for the protection of the soldier; yet special trains are supplied to convey soldiers to Perth, where the hotels are open, while closed in Fremantle…As an example of hardship, the *SS Windhuk* is delayed in Fremantle for four days during which time Fremantle hotels are penalised by being closed, which spells ruin.[46]

While the Mayor of Fremantle supported them, these protests may not have been enough if it were not for the high-powered visitors who had arrived in Fremantle just after the trading fiasco of the *Windhuk*. This gave the Fremantle publicans the opportunity to make their protest to the highest ranking men in Australia.

The publicans' protests to the politicians had an immediate effect, for within days of their visit to Fremantle, a new regulation was issued where again the Perth hotels were obliged to close, (as they still were in Fremantle). As the *West Australian* reported, the new regulation:

> differs in an important respect from orders hitherto issued in that hotels and clubs are permitted to be open for limited trading for two periods of one hour each, namely between half past 12 and half past 1 in the middle of the day and between half-past 5 and half-past 6 in the evening. Intoxicating liquor may be sold or supplied only during these periods for consumption on and actually consumed upon the premises where obtained. The sale of bottled liquor is strictly prohibited, and it is announced that the military authorities will take drastic action with respect to any contravention of the order in this direction.

The paper closing the article by writing:

> The military authorities hope that with the co-operation of the licensees generally the results of permitting limited opening of hotels... will be such as to render unnecessary a return to the method of closure with its unavoidable inconvenience to the public generally. [47]

So, after a period of just two months in which the Perth hotels made the most of their unfettered restrictions on trade, all the hotels in the

metropolitan area were again subject to the same trading hours. With a common regulation now being applied to all hotels not much more was written by the papers on the closing of the hotels. With the passage of time, fewer and fewer troopships were coming back to Australia and the last closure that was required by the military was on the 28 January 1920.[48]

The trading worries of the war were finally over, but the publicans had no reason to be optimistic about the future. They knew that the 1911 Licensing Act required the government to again look at the questions of local option, or prohibition, and the cause of the prohibitionists was helped by the fact that Prohibition had come into operation in the United States from the beginning of 1920.

There was to be no respite for the Fremantle publicans and while they had fought hard to survive during the war, the 1920s was to be an even more difficult time for them. While all of Fremantle's hotels had managed to stay open during the War years, the same could not be said for the 1920's.

Fremantle Studies Day, 2018

1 *Daily News*, 5 August 1914, p.8.
2 *Truth*, 8 August 1914, p.9.
3 C de Mori, *Time, Gentlemen*, Western Australian Hotels Association, Perth, 1984, p96. See *WA Sportsman*, 21 August 1914
4 *Sunday Times*, 13 December 1914, p
5 C de Mori, C, *Time, Gentlemen*, Western Australian Hotels Association, Perth, 1984, p.96.
6 ibid, p.96.
7 *Sunday Times*, 11 October 1914, p.
8 C de Mori, *Time, Gentlemen*, Western Australian Hotels Aociation, Perth, 1984, p.163.
9 *Sunday Times*, 1 November 1914, p.1.
10 *Truth*, 26 June 1915, p.4.
11 *West Australian*, 25 August 1915, p.6.
12 *Sunday Times*, 12 September 1915, p
13 *Truth*, 4 September 1915, p.5.
14 'Port Paragraphs', *Sunday Times*, 12 September 1915, p
15 *Sunday Times*, 10 October 1915, p.8.
16 *Truth*, 6 November 1915, p.5.
17 *Fremantle Herald*, 3 December 1915, p.4.
18 *Daily News*, 10 December 1915, p.8.
19 *Sunday Times*, 2 January 1916, p.15 .
20 ibid
21 ibid

22 *Sunday Times*, 10 December 1916, p.13.
23 C de Mori, *Time, Gentlemen*, Western Australian Hotels Association, Perth, 1984, p.98.
24 ibid
25 *West Australian*, 31 May 1917, p.7.
26 *Sunday Times*, 3 June 1917, p.16.
27 C de Mori, op cit, p.98.
28 *West Australian,* 26 June 1917, p.4.
29 C de Mori, *Time, Gentlemen*, Western Australian Hotels Association, Perth, 1984, p.99.
30 *Sunday Times*, 1 July 1917, p.2.
31 *Truth*, 7 July 1917, p.1.
32 *Truth*, 21 July 1917, p.1.
33 *Sunday Times*, 19 August 1917, p.1.
34 ibid
35 *Sunday Times*, 26 August 1917, p.16.
36 *West Australian*, 9 April 1918, p.4.
37 *Sunday Times*, 3 March 1918, p.9.
38 *Sunday Times*, 14 July 1918, p.10.
39 *Sunday Times*, 21 April 1918, p.12.
40 *Sunday Times*, 31 March 1918, p.13.
41 C de Mori, *Time, Gentlemen*, Western Australian Hotels Association, Perth, 1984, p. 101.
42 *West Australian*, 5 February 1919, p.6.
43 *West Australian,* 21 June 1919, p.6.
44 *West Australian*, 30 June 1919, p.6.
45 *West Australian*, 9 August 1919, p.7.
46 *Fremantle Times*, 15 August 1919, p.2.
47 *West Australian*, 29 August 1919, p.7.
48 *West Australian*, 28 January 1920, p.1.

Further note: There was one more arrival of troops in February 1920, but no closures were imposed at that time and the *Daily News* of 14 February 1920 recorded that the *HMAT Cap Verde* would be the last official transport to call at Fremantle.

# Fremantle Arts Centre: Contemporary Programming in a Historical Site

Sheridan Hart

The Fremantle Arts Centre (FAC) is the home of a diverse arts program, spanning music, theatre, dance, comedy, contemporary visual art exhibitions and arts learning. As an institution it champions the development of new practices, innovative and original artforms, and intones with the character of the local community's long-established devotion to creativity and inclusiveness.

The cultural program that unfolds at Fremantle Arts Centre has become inextricable from the architecture and history of its grounds and buildings. A concert or art class held therein is wholly shaped and enriched by the presence of towering limestone walls, wrought iron gates that sing when they open and close, verdant plane trees turning amber in autumn, rich red jarrah floorboards scuffed by countless former occupants, Gothic finials and the stately, cloistered facade. The history of the place is undeniable and pervasive to all who visit.

In this paper, I will give a portrait of the way that Fremantle Arts Centre's substantial and varied arts program brings contemporary artistic voices to bear on the nature and history of the site. I will move through some examples of projects that have responded to or been inspired by architectural heritage, the building's labyrinthine floorplan or the narratives embedded therein. These examples will demonstrate how contemporary cultural

practitioners have critiqued, celebrated or commented on the history of the site in a meaningful way, supplementing and opening up that history for a local and international audience.

**A summary of FAC's site history**

The original building was constructed by the Bunnings Brothers using convict labour and opened as an asylum for male and female psychiatric patients in 1864. Treatment took the form of Moral Management, a widespread regime at the time, which involved a rigid routine of domestic tasks, a controlled diet and supervised social activities. A dividing wall separated men and women and a block of cells was used to isolate patients during acute episodes. Diagnoses varied widely, and included melancholy, religious mania, chronic idiocy and epileptic dementia. Despite an expansion under lauded Western Australian, architect George Temple-Poole, the building became so overcrowded that by 1900, it was no longer able to function as a place of effective treatment.

By 1900, all patients had been relocated to more modern institutions and the building became a home for women, mostly elderly, who were without family and in need of health care. A school was set up in the south wing, where student midwives delivered the babies of local women, and part of the building was used to house 'wayward' girls; that is, young women who were arrested for prostitution or unmarried pregnant women.

With the advent of World War 2, the women were moved to Woodbridge near Guildford and the building was used as a US naval depot. A small bar, brig, laundry, parade ground and radio room were established and the interior walls were painted military grey-green.

By the war's end, the building was crumbling. Neither the Asylum nor women's home had attracted sufficient funding to maintain it properly, and the Navy's extraction had been swift. Detritus scattered the grounds. Rot and infestation went unchecked. Yet, with the advocacy of Sir Frederick Samson, Robin McKellar Campbell, the Earl of Euston and an impassioned local community, the building was marked for restoration. Fremantle Arts Centre opened in 1974 under the leadership of Ian Templeman and custodianship of the City of Fremantle.

**Site history and contemporary audiences**

The site history of FAC is a complex and sensitive one to articulate. It involves doing away with stereotypes of Bedlam-esque asylum chaos, and thrilling though they might be, ghost stories, to address the *actual* cultural

climate and issues around mental health treatment in Western Australia in the 19th century. It also involves emphasising the less focused-on eras of the building's history such as the midwifery school, technical college and the nascent, energetic and self-sustaining gallery and publishing house of the mid-1970s. FAC also suffers a unique historical hurdle; the building was handed from one set of occupants to another, being completely overhauled many times, with little regard to the preservation of objects, furniture or other would-be museum artefacts. There is simply no room that remains 'as-is', as visitors might expect to find in other preserved, historic sites.

In the face of this complexity, artistic engagement has proved a valuable way to articulate and interpret history at FAC. Artists have much to offer to the historical legacy of the site: they invigorate timeworn narratives; consolidate the importance of the building to the local community; they fill previously empty rooms with objects that materialise the characters and ideas of history; and they can inspire new projects which weigh site history against contemporary issues around mental health, imprisonment, midwifery, art, Fremantle and other prominent themes in the life of the building. Art practice is of tremendous value as a 'way in' to history. Evocative use of digital media, powerful music, theatrical colour, poetic words, unexpected takes on the archive, creative re-enactment and respectful interpretation provide a rich and engaging context for understanding the history of this wonderful site.

**Lily Hibberd - Benevolent Asylum: an eclipse of historical fiction – 2011**

*Benevolent Asylum* was an art exhibition created by Lily Hibberd. Hibberd's particular interest was in the relationship between asylums and water. Historically, this proximity meant that patients might be delivered to an asylum without travelling through a city or townsite, where their presence might disrupt or disturb everyday citizens. It also meant fresh air and natural scenery; both thought to be healthful for the wracked mind of a patient. The Arts Centre's location beside the Swan River and Indian Ocean is inextricably linked to its role as a place of confinement in a port city that already had a somewhat unusual self-image, having been in large part peopled by convicts and immigrants wanting to chase gold in Kalgoorlie or start afresh in the new continent. Between 1850 and 1868, almost 10,000 convicts had been transported to Fremantle, a figure which represented 50% of the immigration of that period and which inflated the numbers of people admitted as asylum patients.

In one gallery space, Hibberd exhibited documentary videos and creative writing. In the adjoining space she erected scaffolding, ramps and lighting to simulate a ship. Here she performed *Take Me In,* a drama that explored exile, transportation of convicts by water and the housing of lunatics beside bodies of water. Drawing on historic sources, the play starred two inmates travelling from the Thames to the Swan, on a diet of ship biscuits, to be placed in the sanctuary of a 'Benevolent Asylum'.

Central to Hibberd's story was the notion that in many asylums, boundaries were blurred between patient and prisoner as hope for definitive cure of lunacy in the 19th century was meagre, making continued incarceration more likely. Indeed, this is what occurred in Fremantle. The flow of inmates between Fremantle Prison and the Asylum was known to be a revolving door – poor behaviour in prison was chalked up to mental unrest and dealt with by admittance to the Asylum, where the inmate would stay until overcrowding, fighting or thieving sent them back to prison.

This exhibition gave us a glimpse of how the interweaving of newly written stories and artistic interpretation can sit side by side with historical records, in effect answering the same question - How can we understand the past? - in two different and complementary ways. The artist wrote: 'Imagine history as an active and shared practice that belongs to the whole community. Art can be instrumental in helping Australians to comprehend the past and to engender a collective future for how these histories might unfold.'[1]

**Médée**

In 2016, Fremantle Arts Centre partnered with Lost & Found, an opera company whose model is to present rarely performed, or 'lost' operas, in 'found' spaces that are not usually used for public performance. In response to the asylum history of the building, co-director Chris van Tuinen settled upon a production of Médée, a dramatic tragedy in five acts. Médée first written by Pierre Corneille in 1635 and adapted for opera by Darius and Madeleine Milhaud in the 1940s. The opera is notable for its atonal melodies which are urgent, meandering and a real feat for contemporary vocalists to pull off. A cast of ten sung this opus to life in the Arts Centre's north wing, making use of the cell and former museum rooms.

The combination of this particular opera with that space was a direct investigation of the history of the status of women receiving mental health treatment. The opera begins as the title character, Médée, a pagan

sorceress, gives birth to twins conceived with her lover and Roman official Jason. Jason soon leaves Médée for a highborn Corinthian woman, Creusa, taking the children with him. Médée succumbs to a passionate fury that leads her to murder Creusa and her own two children, in turn driving Jason to suicide. This is a story which evokes the ancient stereotype of the woman scorned, turned mad with rage. Played out within the former cell block area of the Fremantle Asylum, this opera struck a powerful resonance with the particular fortunes of Fremantle women who were considered dangerous due to the strength of their passions, their drive to take action or their desire for power.

The performance itself made use of the last remaining cell room on site as an off-stage area, from which characters would appear and disappear, and within which, the performers implied acts of violence or incoherence that were all the more intense for not being played in full view, but only through the sounds of voices soaring through the old iron bars of the heavy door. Fiona McAndrew, playing Médée, wore a costume that echoed the design of a straitjacket. Leather restraints and gloves were sometimes used at Fremantle Asylum, but were for the most part avoided in favour of patient isolation.

That the production was designed in concert with the north wing space encouraged audience members to ruminate on the way in which women who did not fit the mould in 19th century Australia were often sent away, as much for the comfort of their local community as for their own treatment. The character of Médée breaks free from this, challenging authority by being neither silent nor invisible, and the play (accordingly for attitudes of the time) ends in chaos and tragedy, at her own hand. The contemporary audience was left to decide whether her revenge and subsequent sorrow were catalysed by Médée's unreasonable jealousy, or in fact by Jason's betrayal; was this ending an inevitable mess caused by a woman out of control, or a cautionary tale about the perils of a society where women are denied power, voice and respect?

The story of Médée chimes in with that of many known patients who spent time in the Fremantle Asylum. Rachel Smyth was committed at age 32 for 'melancholia due to death of a baby'. What today we would call acute grief, menopause, postal-natal depression or adolescent moodiness were seen in the 19th century as due cause to drop a wife or daughter off for an indefinite incarceration, cut off from the family and community which we now know play a vital role in supporting anyone's mental health.

Similarly, local wife and mother Sarah Salter, the Asylum's first admission, was delivered to the institution by her husband, without official permission and on the grounds of his dissatisfaction with her behaviour. Despite being deemed sane and twice returned to her family, Sarah was readmitted a further two times. She spent most of her life as a patient, and died as a patient, 22 years after her original admission. Like Médée, Salter had transgressed, failed in her expected role in her family and community, and been abandoned.

**Jazmina Cininas**

The City of Fremantle's diverse and extensive art collection is a rich repository of artworks that trace, echo and interpret the history of the building and Fremantle's social and artistic history more widely. It includes many images of the building, which one can date by the presence, or absence, of finials that were added during its restoration in the mid-1970s.

One notable artwork is Jazmina Cininas' multi-layered linocut print titled *The asylum is no place for a werewolf* from 2005. This work is a remarkable example of unique state printmaking. The artist carved a linoleum plate, applied one colour, printed it onto paper, and then carved again into the lino, building up the print in gradual layers. This artwork continues Cininas' research into the cultural relationship between women's psychological states, and lupinism (wolves and werewolves). The artist draws on a wide range of sources such as records of witch-hunts and werewolf trials, psychiatric and medical literature, fiction, folklore, cinema and the internet. The capacity for lactation, pregnancy, childbirth and menstruation and their implied relationship to the lunar cycle gave rise in early psychiatric literature to the understanding that lunacy was somehow a natively female condition.

The façade of the building looms Gothic in the background. The figure, caught between humanity and wildness, wears a straitjacket marked with convict stripes. Female patients at Fremantle Asylum were routinely dressed in second-hand uniforms from Fremantle Prison. The use of this pattern, in conjunction with the locked harness on the front, puts forward the artist's argument that asylums of this period offered little in the way of serious medical treatment, its patients being barely more than prisoners, considered dangerous and beastly, rather than in need of help. The figure's literal marginalisation in the print's composition analogises historic asylum theory, which recommended segregation from community life and segregation of the sexes within the asylum.

This work is a critique, but more urgently, it is an evocative lamentation on the harm that was caused to the lives of those individual Asylum patients who, had they lived today, might not have been confined. We might read it as an interpretation of the past, as well as a depiction of the gulf in understanding around mental health between then and now.

The life of this work has continued beyond the City of Fremantle Collection. In 2013, students from Hamilton Hill Senior High School, John Curtin College of the Arts and Disability in the Arts, Disadvantage in the Arts (DADAA) were invited to select and respond to artworks in the collection for an exhibition called *Take 12* at Fremantle Arts Centre. Each student wrote and filmed a short video clip, using a green screen background to superimpose imagery behind them. Jazmina Cininas' linocut print was selected and responded to by a student called Monica. Monica reinterpreted this print as an image not of isolation but of escape, a female patient's return to a natural state of freedom and expressiveness. Her video is cryptic, moody and melodramatic, and appears almost like a moving version of the original print.

This is a fine example of how the practice of responding to history through art can create anchor points by which others may engage with that history; both other audiences and other artists. When Monica found this print, she was able to enter back into the site's history and into Cininas' artwork and research, before applying her own flair, to produce a new, compounded reflection on the FAC site.

**Mad About You: FAC 40th anniversary**

In 2013, Fremantle Arts Centre celebrated its 40th anniversary. This was an occasion to reflect on the cultural contributions of the centre and also to consider how the building's earlier history had infused those cultural events over decades. The exhibition was public-led and celebratory. Artists, students, tutors and members of the public who had helped shape the life of FAC contributed their memories, memorabilia and artwork to the exhibition. Well-known sculptures and paintings that had hung in the galleries returned once more and the public were invited to respond, reminisce and extend the exhibition with their own stories. These contributions were collected on memory walls and on a blog. Mad About You was an opportunity to acknowledge how central the Arts Centre had become in many people's lives, not just artists or musicians, but community members from all kinds of backgrounds who had a very real and personal connection to the building through taking classes, visiting the craft shop


Image 1: Public contribution to the 'memory wall' at Fremantle Arts Centre's Mad About You 40th Anniversary exhibition, 2013. Image FAC. Photograph by Sam Leung.

or café, living nearby, walking past, sneaking into the grounds as a child or taking tech college classes therein.

Though the story of the lunatic asylum is well-known, FAC's history as a place for families, art, learning and community has also become as iconic and important a part of the building's character and history.

**Gosia Wlodarcza**

The architecture of FAC, with its many rooms, municipal grandeur and internal chambers, exemplifies 19th century asylum theory and the designers' belief in the benefits of isolation, lack of distraction and simplicity on the minds of asylum patients.

In 2016, Gosia Wlodarczak, an internationally esteemed artist and the winner of the 2014 Fremantle Print Award, undertook a project called *A Room without a View* in the Kathleen O'Connor gallery. For twenty-one days in a row, the artist spent eight hours by herself, door shut, in the

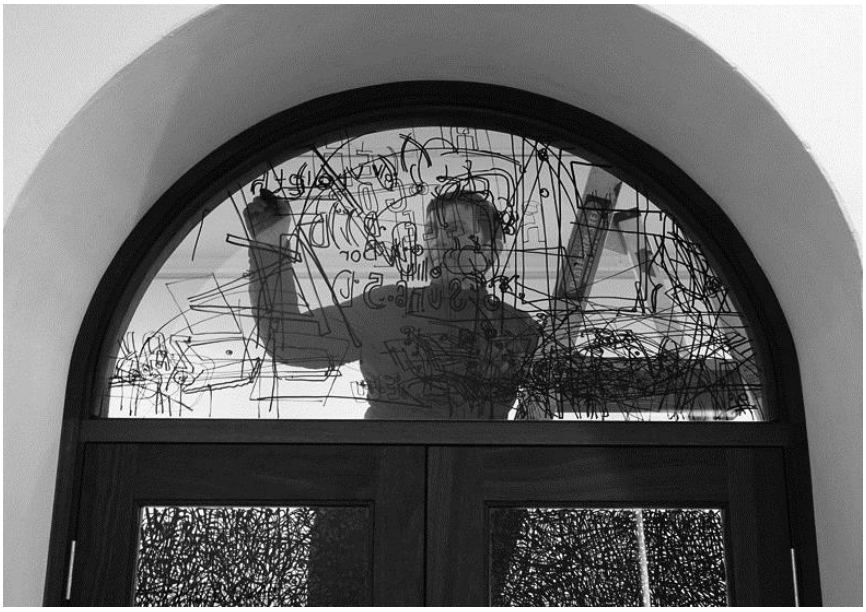


Image 2: Gosia Wlodarczak at work during her drawing performance Room Without a View in the Kathleen O'Connor gallery at Fremantle Arts Centre in 2016. Image FAC. Photograph by Sam Leung.

empty gallery, with only a ladder, a chair, her jacket, an apple, water and her drawing supplies. Throughout this endurance performance, the artist slowly and arduously set about covering the walls with line drawings, black on white, every inch of which reflected the items and architecture around her. Despite being confined to modest immediate surroundings, with no windows, Gosia's drawings were able to reflect a rich and microscopic observational response to the building: the shape of the door, the reflection of light on floorboards, the rivets in the ladder, the bruise on her apple, the lines in her hand, paint flaking from the wall.

This work was an experiment. The artist wanted to see what would flow from her extended isolation and her regime of constant drawing. This was no morbid curiosity however, but a challenge to the artist's stamina and discipline, as well as a genuine research exercise which would put Gosia in touch with the former occupants of the building in a manifestly tactile way. The project was a way of understanding isolation in its purest and simplest sense, and it led onlookers who watched her via a live video stream, from the outside, to meditate on terms of isolation associated with asylum history: cloistered, committed, admitted, closeted, sectioned, segregated and deprivation, both sensory and in liberty.

Image 3: The Drawing Studio at Fremantle Arts Centre in 2017. Image FAC.

Image 4: Students at work in the Drawing Studio at Fremantle Arts Centre in 2017. Image FAC.

## Absence of Evidence

*Absence of Evidence* was a major exhibition project mounted in 1994. It brought together a group of Western Australian women artists to give a response to two sites of female confinement in Fremantle: The Fremantle Lunatic Asylum and the Female Division of the Fremantle Prison. The exhibition was a purposeful proclamation by the artists on the difference in

value placed on the lives, histories and material record of female prisoners and Asylum patients compared with males. Their work was not only a response to a dearth of historical material reflecting the voices of each site's former female occupants, but pointed to more than a century of structural causes for this absence of historical evidence: the underfunding of the women's home, the overcrowding of the Asylum, the disposal of items which may have been of historical value later and the paintings-over, building conversions and cleanings up which have rid both sites of a possible wealth of the signs of past occupants. We can assume this material existed from the presence of graffiti, murals and muster boards still present in the male quarters of the prison.

The scant material specimens of the lives of the women inside each institution were like rare treasures to the artists. While consulting the Fremantle Prison collection, local author, and Miles Franklin winner, Josephine Wilson, noted its lonely contents: four bells, two letters, one postcard and one prisoner sketchbook[2]. Artefacts from the men's division numbered in the hundreds. This scarcity of evidence is also reflected in the Asylum register in which two whole years in the life of a patient called Johanna were summed up in four words, 'no change'. Then a year later; 'no alteration'. Indeed, it was the very space between these objects and words which the artists approached in their work for this exhibition. They aimed not to fill the gaps with fiction or conjecture but to explore the shape of what was missing, to map out the attitudes, cultures and practices that formed the historical absences and silences that distanced them from the women they were studying.

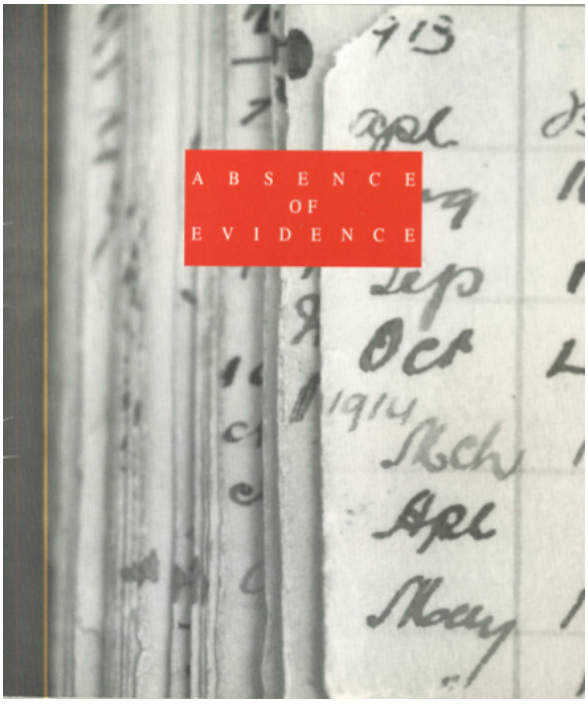



Image 5: The cover of the exhibition catalogue for *Absence of Evidence,* published by Fremantle Arts Centre in 1994.

**Out of the Asylum**

The shadow cast by the history of the building has been meditated on, written about and called upon for inspiration by OOTA, the Out of the Asylum writers' group. For over two decades OOTA has met each Friday for lunch in the gardens followed by alternating prose and poetry sessions, run by tutors including Helen Hagemann and Shane McCauley. The group provides a supportive crucible for local writers, including less experienced or unpublished writers, and continues the legacy set by former literary occupants of the site: the State Literature Office, Fremantle Press (formerly Fremantle Arts Centre Press), and the art journal Fremantle Arts Centre Review.

**Conclusions**

The exhibitions and cultural programs mentioned above took as their foundation historical archives, architecture, artefacts and stories, then expanded upon them artistically. Each artist's existing interests and style are brought together with contemporary social and cultural debate, not to rewrite the past, but to find new reasons to keep coming back to it, to learn from it, consider it from new perspectives, in different colours, materials and methods. These artists retold history with paint and clay, with their bodies, their voices and poetry, with wood, photographs, limestone, embroidered cloth, motion sensors and royal icing.

Apt closing words are provided by June Moorhouse, former director of Fremantle Arts Centre, taken from her lyrical memoir written for the organisation's 40th Anniversary:

She writes:

> Surely a little flight of fancy is acceptable on the occasion of a 40th? From a formidable past, which should never be forgotten or diminished, we now have a creative cultural powerhouse in our midst. For years people have been telling me how much they love the place and all for their own, personal reasons. It's not so surprising that we are affected by our surroundings but this place is definitely more than the sum of its parts - the architecture, art, music, food, learning, gardens and heritage come together in a welcoming spirit that encourages each of us to lose ourselves in the moment. It has become a place that not only provides a program of activities but also, for many, meets that profound human need for a sense of place. So what a rare and precious thing we have to celebrate. 40 years of creativity, connections, ups and downs, brainwaves, fiascos, first steps... all this and more in a setting that, rather than playing on our imaginations, now calls our imaginations to play with it.[3]

Fremantle Studies Day, 2017

1 Lily Hibberd, 2011, *Benevolent Asylum,* exhibition catalogue, p 7, published by Fremantle Arts Centre, URL: https://www.lilyhibberd.com/images/1_2011/Benevolent_Asylum/Hibberd_Benevolent_Asylum_program_2011_e.pdf

2 Josephine Wilson, 1994, *Absence of Evidence,* exhibition catalogue, published by Fremantle Arts Centre

3 3 June Moorhouse, 2013, *Mad About You,* exhibition catalogue, p 7, published by Fremantle Arts Centre, URL: fac.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Mad-About-You-Catalogue.pdf

## More information:

Mad About You: www.fac.org.au/whats-on/post/mad-40-yeras-fremantle-arts-centre/

Benevolent Asylum: https://www.fac.org.au/whats-on/post/lily-hibberd-benevolent-asylum/

Médée: https://www.lostandfoundopera.com/fullscreen-page/comp-jnwia45q/383ad201-5ada-4fc3-a0cb-e68c57abe2b4/3/%3Fi%3D3%26p%3Dr9ekk%26s%3Dstyle-jnwia45s

Jazmina Cininas: https://www.jazminacininas.com/

Gosia Wlodarczak: https://www.fac.org.au/whats-on/post/gosia-wlodarczak-room-without-view-extended/

Out of the Asylum: https://www.ootawriters.com/

# Repatriation: A Debt of Gratitude

Michelle McKeough

During the Great War over 30,000 men left Western Australia for the fields of battle overseas.[1] Of these, Andrew Pittaway writes that, 'three thousand of the best and brightest Fremantle could offer left these shores to serve in the war and eight-hundred and forty-two sons of Fremantle lost their lives'.[2] How did Fremantle welcome and restore into civilian life these thousands of its returning sons who were deeply altered by the war they had endured? How did the community into which they returned respond to the home-coming of the men and boys they viewed as soldier-heroes?

In the first year of the war, municipal life in Fremantle, although now undeniably shadowed by the conflict overseas, continued in its traditional routine. This was borne out in Mayor Ernest Wray's annual report in November 1915, in which the war received no more than a passing mention. Instead, the mayor announced that 'during the past year the Council has revived a policy of tree planting and with the interest and assistance of residents the work will be comparatively easy and the streets made beautiful'.[3] In the matter of the budget, he was able to report that the finances of Fremantle were actually in much better shape than they had expected at the start of the war: 'A year ago we had some misgivings as to how the war and general depression which threatened would affect our municipal finances, but whatever fears prevailed they were groundless'.[4] The war seemed a distant notion. The Mayor of Fremantle himself

acknowledged that during the first year of war, 'its effect was little felt by us, living in comparative security and feeling quite sure that we had no cause for alarm'.[5]

This 'wartime naivety' as Deborah Gare and Madison Lloyd-Jones succinctly put it, was due to the fact that in general, Western Australians had a simplistic notion of the 'imperial adventure' being played out on the battlefields of Europe.[6] Bill Gammage similarly observes that 'very few Australians learnt, then or later, what their soldiers did on that stage, and not many ever acquired more than a vague notion of their country's part in the Great War'.[7] This limited understanding was brought to a sudden comprehension, when the hospital ship *Kyarra* carried wounded soldiers into Fremantle in July 1915 — less than a year after the first troopship had departed.[8] Fremantle was exposed for the first time to the real effects of war. Wounded soldiers filled the base hospital and rested on specially built seats around the town. Worse, the arrival of the wounded men coincided with the first of many heartfelt bereavement letters sent by Fremantle Council to local lamenting families whose sons would never come home. The mayor wrote with earnest sympathy, but also wrote that 'in the midst of all the sorrow' it was with pride they could think of the sacrifice of their young men for the sake of Empire. Equally, the parents of these boys clung to that belief. A 'Thank You' letter to the mayor from a grieving father, who had just lost his third son to the war in a matter of months expresses the depth of this feeling. He wrote, 'We all feel the loss of our brave and good sons terribly, the mother almost heartbroken, but we cannot help feeling proud of their noble and heroic deaths'.[9]

In Fremantle, as elsewhere, the natural emotional response to the return of their soldiers once the full impact of what they had endured was also brought home was a prevailing sense of gratitude. This emotional response was echoed and supported by the creation of employment and of education and training, with particular and specific attention being given to 'maimed men'. This debt of gratitude defined the method and motivation for schemes of repatriation across Western Australia. The sense of a 'debt of gratitude' begins with an understanding of the real shock that was occasioned by the return of Fremantle's soldiers from the war. Belief in the honour of their cause and the heroism of their beloved sons, brothers and husbands, became an inviolate resolve, borne of necessity.[10] As Walter Murdoch wrote in 1915, 'in the presence of real things, of suffering and loss and sorrow', the only consolation, was the 'justness of their cause'.[11] In Fremantle, as

in the rest of Australia, the valorization of the soldier-hero became the prevailing sentiment that determined government and civil action for the repatriation of home-coming soldiers.[12]

Fremantle, as the first port of call, had a particular relationship with the soldiers returning from the battlefields. When hospital ships were coming into Fremantle Harbour Fremantle citizens were able to show their gratitude in an immediate way. The Council had an arrangement with the Naval Office that when the hospital ship was sighted from Rottnest, the Town Hall would receive a telephone call, and they would fly a 'white and red rectangular flag' from the Town Hall warning relatives and friends that the boat was in sight and that the wounded would land 'five hours from the time of first hoisting the flag'.[13] Whilst the returning men were welcomed and nurtured, it was quickly realised that these soldiers needed a return to a normal life and the means of earning a livelihood. Figures for returning injured soldiers are difficult to pin down, but the general consensus in Western Australian historiography is that in 1919 about a third of returning soldiers were wounded or incapacitated.[14] Exact figures are unknown, but what is clear is that the numbers were substantial. From 1916 to 1919 these returning men, all of them affected in some way by the war they had endured, had to find a way to resettle into life at home. The issue of repatriating returned soldiers became one of the most important social and civil concerns of the last years of the war and the post-war period.

Writing only a few years after the end of the war, Ernest Scott examined the practice and meaning of 'repatriation'. He wrote that 'in Australia, the word was employed to describe the difficult function of replacing returned men in civil employment'.[15] Certainly, from 1916 the question of employment for returning servicemen became the highest governmental priority, both in Fremantle and the rest of Australia. However, the key difficulty facing former soldiers was that many were physically incapacitated.[16] In February 1917, the secretary of the Western Australian State War Council wrote that practically the whole of the 1,450 men who had at that time been discharged, were unfit for hard work. In addition, he cautioned that a percentage of those men 'by reason of disablement through loss of limbs or otherwise, will be unable, even when their general health has returned, to follow their former employment'.[17] For the majority of the returning wounded soldiers, future employment of some kind, was possible. However, it was recognized that there would be a significant amount of re-training required to allow them to return to work. The War Council identified

the importance of the issue, noting that the re-education and training of maimed men 'will probably turn out to be the most important function devolving upon the authorities' in the repatriation of returning soldiers.[18] The plight of returned maimed soldiers and the means and method for re-assimilating these men, caused a broad rethinking of civilian life.

Efforts at training schemes began in 1916 under the direction of the State War Council who expressed in the strongest terms the state's debt of gratitude, advocating that 'until effective action is taken to put the re-education and training of maimed men upon a scientific footing, the national obligation to our returned soldiers will fall lamentably short at its most vital point'.[19] The essential direction for repatriation followed the lines of education and training.[20] A vocational training committee was formed under the chairmanship of the Director of Technical Education and classes were under the general superintendence and control of the Education Department. All returned soldiers under 20 years of age on enlistment were eligible. Classes were started at the technical school in Perth and Fremantle. Men were drafted into the classes after consideration of their disabilities and also of their previous careers and their personal wishes. Certain classes, for example boot-repairing, were reserved for those who were seriously disabled and were incapacitated for more strenuous forms of work.[21] In Fremantle, classes in 'educational subjects and book-keeping' were established at the Fremantle technical school near the Base Hospital on South Terrace.

At this early stage of the scheme for re-training, the War Council had two officers solely employed on the work of looking after returned soldiers. The role of these men was to get in touch with employers, visit hospitals and bring to the attention of the returned men the facilities offered for tuition and for finding employment. To fund its commitment to the training program, the War Council attempted to harness the already existing social network of fundraising for the war effort, and to 'influence the majority of the public appeals' to be made in favour of the repatriation fund. Which brings us to another important consideration. Whilst an emotional commitment to repatriation was obvious, the question remained of who was to foot the bill? Especially in a time when general economy was suffering.

In March,1917 the *West Australian* reported that some commodities in Western Australia had risen in price as much as 60 or 70 per cent since the outbreak of war and that 'exploiters were putting prices up to such an

extent that it was impossible to get the necessaries of life'.[22] Yet although the average cost of food and groceries had increased there was not a corresponding increase in wages. Jean Beadle, one of Western Australia's most tireless advocates for women and families' interests, reported that 'bed clothes had gone up and she knew of many poor families that could not buy blankets owing to their increased price' and that many children had to go without boots.[23] The secretary of the Education Department likewise reported that 'owing to the economic stress prevailing at the present time the numbers of pupils in the 8th classes is diminishing from day to day'.[24] EL Driver, whose job it was to investigate the cost of living for a royal commission in 1917-1918, declared that families were living under lower standards than 'convicts in the Fremantle gaol'.[25]

In this environment, paid employment, even for those capable of undertaking it, was hard to come by. In Fremantle, a solution was found by which 20 returned soldiers were employed by the Council for short periods at a time, 'in order that the work may be distributed as far as possible'.[26] The expense was covered by municipal funds, but when the town council applied to the state for reimbursement, the War Council replied that it was unable to do so as it had not yet received funding money from the Commonwealth. The Works Committee, which had employed the men, recommended nonetheless that 'in the interests of the returned soldiers the employment be continued and the Council will settle with the department later'.[27] In practice, therefore, the Fremantle Council was prepared to incur a debt in order to provide work for their local returning men. The War Council recognized that probably the most suitable employment for these men would be 'light work' in the towns but, as employment was increasingly hard to provide, it became progressively more difficult to find a place for returned men in the metropolitan area.

For those for whom work was either not an option, or as yet unavailable, the state government made sustenance payments available, akin to what would now be considered 'the dole'. Many men of course did not wish to fall back on the government for direct assistance — charity, as they saw it, was considered more of a burden than a blessing. In fact, the secretary of the Fremantle Council said at this time 'that a considerable number of returned soldiers in Fremantle had a decided objection to taking sustenance money which appeared to be purely charitable and would much prefer to earn their living by working'.[28] Returned soldiers mostly sought to find their own opportunities for work and only asked for aid in smoothing out

the necessary permissions.

The first example of the intentions, and plight, of such soldiers was contained in a letter received by the Fremantle Council in December 1916, in which two returned soldiers described their situation:

> We the undersigned returned soldiers, late of the Tenth Light Horse A.I.F., respectfully apply for permission to have a stall for the purpose of selling fruit, outside the entrance of the Fremantle Railway station. We have received injuries on Active Service in Gallipoli which render us incapable of doing any hard work. Any guarantees or references you may require we will be pleased to supply.[29]

A note beneath, signed by the Officer in Charge, Light Horse Reinforcement, assured the Council that both of the men 'have excellent character and clean discharges, and are in every way respectable reputable citizens'.[30] The quandary faced by these two soldiers, the earliest in the records of Council, would be repeated many times over during the coming months and years. Repeatedly, these men requested and were granted licenses to run barrows and stalls, so that by the end of the war and for years beyond, the streets of Fremantle's west end, were flourishing with returned soldiers, able to maintain their independence and create a new livelihood.[31]

Barrows and stalls had until this time, been a means for new immigrants to earn a living, predominantly selling fruit, vegetables or fish. With the return of injured soldiers, the role of these carts and stalls expanded in the port town. With new licenses being granted to soldiers, the stalls and barrows offered a range of goods, from coffee to patented razor sharpeners. These stalls populated the streets of the west end.[32] To give just a few examples: there was a coffee stall on the corner of Market and Leake Streets; a bookstall in the ground near the weighbridge and Cliff Street; a pie stand in Cantonment Street; a fish barrow at the corner of Bay and Market Streets; and a fruit and nut stand on Essex Street'.

Yet these 'barrowmen' represented a small solution to a larger problem. The *West Australian Worker* in May 1918 declared that 'for some weeks we have been silent regarding the growing scandal of discharged soldiers' unemployment. Here in Western Australia, the State War Council is vainly trying to find 250 employers for 250 returned men'.[33] The twin problems of employment and training were paramount to government departments determined to fulfill their obligation to returning soldiers. The stop-gap

reliance on local welfare was all too clearly an insufficient program for handling the expanding numbers of cases; a more formalized approach, from a level of authority higher than local municipalities, was required.

Towards the end of the war, the Prime Minister Billy Hughes made an announcement to the nation:

> We owe it to those who have borne the brunt of battle more than the nation can ever adequately repay. But we can at least make certain that the maimed are not left to struggle on unaided. There must be no room for criticism in the future. The Commonwealth Government undertakes the full responsibility for the welfare of the returned soldiers.[34]

Consequently, in 1918 the federal government stepped into the role of providing of work for returning soldiers, much to the relief of Fremantle and no doubt municipal authorities throughout the nation. In April 1918 the Commonwealth established a Department of Repatriation, whose responsibilities are fairly clear from the department's title; it was introduced specifically for the purpose of repatriating Australian soldiers and in the words of its director, 'to re-establish the returned men in civil life'.[35] Two of its central responsibilities were placing returning men into suitable employment and the payment of a sustenance allowance to the soldiers in order to support their wives and families whilst they awaited employment.[36]

The scheme as set out by the federal government covered every person who had enlisted in the Imperial forces in any part of the Empire, as long as the person was a resident of Australia and had seen service abroad. It also provided for nurses and those who had 'taken positions of value outside of the combatant class'.[37] The federal board established a central executive in each state that was responsible to the Minister for Repatriation. Local councils were to aid each central executive. Perth and Fremantle were the first two councils in Western Australia to be given this role.

Classes at the technical schools were expanded to cater for the numbers of returning men. In 1918, the largest class was that for motor mechanics and there were 20 other classes on offer that provided training for men in a variety of trades.[38] Yet despite the eagerness of returning soldiers to undertake training, the system itself was fraught with difficulties. Apart from the problem of finding, in one of the least industrialised states in Australia, a sufficient number of 'light labour positions to serve as an introduction to more strenuous labour later on', the emotional state of the soldiers themselves compromised the success of the program.[39] The

director of the Education Department wrote in March 1919 that the soldier students were 'extremely sensitive' and could become disheartened and drop out. That month he had admitted two students who could neither read nor write. Indeed, in almost all cases, the students had poor literacy: 'it is the exception to find one who has read fairly'.[40] These returned soldiers, with their associated physical, mental and emotional difficulties, often needed extensive sick leave from their studies. Some of them were clearly unqualified for the courses they wished to undertake, as the director indicated in October 1919: 'of the eleven candidates for the October examination nearly all left school at about the age of 14 and have done very little since in the way of study'.[41]

Despite this, in 1919 the two subjects most requested were clerical training, to enable students to pass the Commonwealth and State Public Service Examinations, and 'accountancy in all its stages'. A popular option was for the soldiers to then go on to 'the teachers' college and to work as school teachers.[42] An article in the *West Australian* in 1919 lauded the proliferation of teachers who had lost an arm or a leg in war service.[43] By mid-1919, over 270 returned soldiers were studying bookkeeping and accountancy while nearly 90 more were preparing for clerical work or teaching. An additional 30 were taking science and professional courses. Further, the trades classes contained nearly 600 men, 'the largest class being that for motor mechanics'. Other classes were training men as saddlers, harness makers, woodworking machinists, cabinet makers, French polishers, upholsterers, house painters, carpenters, coopers, blacksmiths, bricklayers, plasterers, plumbers, fitters and turners, electricians, body builders, trimmers and painters, watch repairers and wool classers.[44]

On a state level, the other focus of the repatriation effort prioritized the employment of returned soldiers in all workplaces without exception. The Premier, James Mitchell introduced a policy stating that 'if a man suffers disadvantage due to his war work, it is right that the public should recognize that, to the extent of finding him suitable work, wherever possible'. Whilst the employment of returned soldiers in preference to anyone else was an accepted and encouraged practice, it was not without its pitfalls. Following a strategy of Elders to replace some of its workers with returned soldiers, a man living in Trafford Street sent a letter to the Fremantle Council in which, as he put it, 'married men who had large families depending on them were put off the work and single soldiers put in their places'. He continued in earnestness that, 'I am sure our brave returned boys have no

wish to make women and children suffer hunger and want, as must be the case - and many of these men have sent some or all their sons to the front - as in my own case, five sons answered their country's call and all will never return, one remains forever. I am sure not one of them would want a married man with a family to make way for him'.[45] So, despite the good intentions of the plan to re-insert soldiers into the workplace, it was not without its drawbacks. In addition, on the wharves, there were clashes over unionisation and the employment of returned soldiers and the whole issue coloured Fremantle's social, political and working life throughout the post-war years.

The Premier's policy, nonetheless, directed practice and it had three key aspects. First, that in making appointments to the public service, 'active military service must be the first consideration'. He stressed that although efficiency was not to be disregarded in making a selection from among the soldiers themselves, if employers were in doubt, they were encouraged to give the soldier a trial. Returned soldiers asked simply for opportunity; after that, they 'must deserve continuous employment by honest effort'.[46] Yet the policy also recognized that it would be impossible in some instances to find soldiers to fill professional positions or those needing special training and experience. The Premier's answer to this is indicative of the sense of valorization of the soldier that infused Western Australian culture during this time of repatriation. He wrote in his policy that 'the soldier is also a citizen and as such, is as much concerned as anyone else in the good Government of the State'. In other words the Premier was asserting that the soldier's own sense of civic duty would be the determining factor when considering whether he was capable of taking on a particular position.[47] The Premier's policy also stated that those men hired into the public service since the outbreak of war in August 1914 were to be 'put off' (that is, let go) when necessary to make room for returned soldiers who had enlisted from the public service.[48] The Premier attempted to reduce the 'inconvenience' of those who therefore lost their job by offering transfers 'should positions be available in any department which cannot be filled by returned soldiers'.[49]

All local governments throughout Western Australia received this policy and were expected to adhere to it. In actual fact, they probably did not need to be instructed on this matter. It seems local governments across Western Australia were keen to re-absorb and accommodate their returning soldiers wherever they could. Certainly, in Fremantle, the sense that they owed their

soldiers a debt of gratitude that could best be fulfilled by safeguarding their return to employment and security, was at the forefront of their actions. Since 1916 the Fremantle Council had re-employed all the soldiers who had left for the war and wished to return. It had also created work within the municipality from council funds for returning soldiers who were capable of physical labour. To the self-defined 'wingies and stumpies', those who had lost an arm or a leg during the war, the Council gave work as gatekeepers at Fremantle Oval.

The monumental task of repatriation reflected the key goal of the administration at this time on a national, state and local level, which was 'to reinstate in civil life all those who are capable of such reinstatement'.[50] And whilst they could do little to oversee the practices of private employers, they could ensure that all government work was given to returned soldiers where possible — and in particular, to injured returned soldiers. The policy was protectionist in its nature, reminding government employers that 'no matter how efficient a man with one leg may be, he may not get outside employment as readily as a sound man'.[51] The difficulty of finding employment for returned soldiers continued after 1919, but was significantly worse for the permanently injured.[52]

In summary, the crisis of the Great War for Fremantle and the State of Western Australia was not entirely about the tragedy and loss of life that defines so much of what we know of that conflict. The crisis was also about how to resettle thousands of men, many of them broken in mind and body, into civilian life. Thus, an emotional response to the return of their soldier-heroes guided government policy. The federal government established a Department of Repatriation with a large and generous policy for the resettlement of returned soldiers into their former lives. The Premier of Western Australia provided his own program to ensure soldiers state-wide were given every opportunity to re-enter the work force and gain happiness and security. Fremantle, as did other local governments throughout the State, took their local heroes under its wing.

In short, from Fremantle Town Council to the Commonwealth, the administrative architecture of government, responded in terms of language, policies and practical schemes of assistance, to the emotional debt of gratitude felt by civil society. This debt, they felt, could best be repaid, at least in part, by facilitating a return to employment, to health and to security for their soldier-heroes.

Fremantle Studies Day, 2018

1 In August 1919 the Premier of Western Australia, James Mitchell, was informed that that thus far following the end of what we now call 'the Great War', the total enrolments of Western Australians had been 32,244 and of those, 6,007 had been killed or had died, 17,571 had returned and 8,671 were yet to return. Dr. Hope to Mr. Mitchell, 7 August 1919, AN 2/1, Acc 1496, Item 112, 1919, Fremantle wharf – quarantine and dimboola. S.R.O., Perth.

2 A. Pittaway, 'Fremantle Anzacs', *Fremantle Studies: Journal of the Fremantle Historical Society*, v7, 2012, p 30.

3 *Daily News*, 24 November 1915, p 2.

4 *Daily News*, 24 November 1915, p 2.

5 Address by Mayor William Wray, 17 November 1918, Fremantle Municipal Council Files, Cons 1377, AN 217/3, Box 57, Item 4, S.R.O., Perth.

6 Gare, D. and Lloyd-Jones, M. *When War Came to Fremantle*, Fremantle Press, 2014, *p* 37.

7 Gammage, B. 'Anzac' in D. Gare and D. Ritter, *Making Australian History: Perspectives on the Past since 1788* South Melbourne: Cengage Learning Australia, 2008, p 294.

8 Gare, D. and Lloyd-Jones, M. *When War Came to Fremantle*, Fremantle Press, 2014, *p* 37.

9 Mr. Curlewis to Henry Haynes, 10 June 1915, Fremantle Municipal Council Files, 1914–1920, ACC 1377, AN 217/3, Item 109, S.R.O., Perth.

10 On the subject of families dealing with the grief of war, in particular the impact of disability, and the life they faced as the 'social and economic worlds in which they lived underwent transformation', see Marina Larsson's book, *Shattered Anzacs: Living with the Scars of War* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2009) See also Leigh Straw's *After the War: Returned Soldiers and the mental and physical scars of World War I* Crawley: UWA publishing, 2017.

11 *Western Mail*, War Souvenir Christmas Edition, 1915, p 1.

12 It is essential to recognise here that the valorization of the soldier-hero did not extend to all returning soldiers – specifically returning indigenous soldiers, whose experience of life on their return from war is not at all commensurate with the experience of their European brothers-in-arms. As Phillip Paynton writes, for many indigenous soldiers their general welfare deteriorated and 'things became markedly worse for indigenous communities'. Phillip Paynton *Australia in the Great War* (London: 2015) p. 239. For further reading also see Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Community Development Directorate, *They Served with Honour* (Government of Western Australia, 2015) and Bobbie Oliver *War and Peace in Western Australia: The social and political impact of the Great War,* Fremantle, 1995.

13 *Fremantle Municipal Correspondence Files Acc 1377 AN 217/2* Box 55 Item 7

14 Turner, I. in Crowley, F. (ed) '1914-1919' *A New History of Western* Australia p.353 This agrees with Dr. James Hope's enrolment returns to the Premier: 'The state of return of the men from abroad on 31 July 1919 was: Total enrolments 32,244; Killed or died 6,007; Returned 17,571; Yet to return 8,671. Dr. Hope to Mr. Mitchell, 7 August 1919, AN 2/1, Acc 1496, Item 112, 1919, Fremantle wharf – quarantine and dimboola. S.R.O., Perth defining precisely what 'injured' means. Historians such as Marina Larsson, advance the new thinking which advocates

that mental and emotional trauma be considered in quantifying the soldiers who returned 'disabled' from the war and she puts the national figure of soldiers who returned with a disability at 90,000. Larsson, M. *Shattered Anzacs: Living with the Scars of War,* p 18.

15 Ernest Scott, *Official History of the War of 1914-1918. Volume XI: Australia During the War* 7th edition, 1941 ID no: RCDIG1069950 Digitised Collection, Australian War Memorial, Canberra.

16 Memorandum to chairman, State War Council [unsigned, undated], Premier's Department files, AN 2/1, Acc 1496, Item 106, 1916, Repatriation Fund, formation of, S.R.O., Perth.

17 Memorandum for Premier from Secretary, State War Council, 28 February 1917, Premier's Department files, AN 2/1, Acc 1496, Item 106, 1916, Repatriation Fund, formation of. S.R.O., Perth.

18 Memorandum for Premier from Secretary, State War Council, 21 October 1916, Premier's Department files, AN 2/1, Acc 1496, Item 106, 1916, Repatriation Fund, formation of. S.R.O., Perth.

19 The secretary of the War Council suggested that there were sixteen trades in which instruction could be given to maimed soldiers, but did not name the specific trades in his correspondence. Memorandum for Premier from Secretary, State War Council, 21 October 1916, Premier's department files, AN 2/1, Acc 1496, Item 106, 1916, Repatriation Fund, formation of. S.R.O., Perth.

20 Whilst arrangements were made within the repatriation scheme, to be given medical treatment in the military hospitals, and convalescent homes were established for those 'where there is little hope of the patient regaining ability to earn his living'. Medical treatment of returned soldiers will not be considered in this paper, which examines the issue of training and reemployment.

21 *Annual Report of the Minister of Education 1919*, Education Department files, WAS 24 Cons 1497 1920/0046. S.R.O., Perth.

22 *West Australian*, 23 August 1917, p 5.

23 *West Australian*, 19 October 1917, p 5.

24 Department of Education to the Inspector of Schools, 21 September 1915. Education Department files: WAS 24, Cons 1497, Item 1915/3233. S.R.O, Perth

25 Premier's Department files, AN 2/2, Acc 1496, Item 173/17, Cost of living – newspaper clippings, S.R.O, Perth *The Royal commission of inquiry into the costs of the necessaries of life* was published in various stages during 1918.

26 Fremantle Municipal Council files, AN 217/3, Acc 1377, Box 53, Item 1: Council Meetings, Meeting of 4 July 1919, Report of works parks and oval committee – repatriation. S.R.O., Perth.

27 Fremantle Municipal Council files, AN 217/3, Acc 1377, Box 53, Item 1: Council Meetings, Meeting of 4 July 1919, Report of works parks and oval committee – repatriation. S.R.O., Perth.

28 Haynes to Premier, 5 August 1919, Fremantle Municipal Council Correspondence files, Acc: 1377, An 217/3, Box 57, Item 10. See also: Minutes, meeting of 2 October 1919, Works and Lighting Committee, 1918-20, Fremantle Municipal Council Files, ACC 1377, AN 217/2. S.R.O., Perth

29 11 December 1916 from Cnr Keane and Lochee Streets, Cottesloe Beach to the Town Clerk. Fremantle Municipal Council, Cons 1377, AN 217/3, 1915, Box 39, Item 30. S.R.O., Perth

30 11 December 1916 Fremantle Municipal Council, Cons 1377, AN 217/3, 1915, Box 39, Item 30. S.R.O., Perth.
31 The 'barrowmen' of Fremantle and Perth are the subject of this author's post-doctoral research but is only in its nascent stages.
32 Fremantle Municipal Council Correspondence Files, 1917-1919, Acc: 1377, AN 217/2, Box 55, Item 2. SRO, Perth. A map is contained in the archive with the prohibited areas coloured yellow: By Resolution of the Council, 6 September 1915, Fremantle Municipal Council, Cons 1377, AN 217/3, Box 39, Item 31. SRO, Perth The precautions against competition between retailers and street vendors had initially been resolved to manage the positions original fruit vendors, usually recent immigrants to Western Australia. See Appendix D, map showing the permitted zone for street barrows.
33 *West Australian Worker*, 24 May 1918, p 14.
34 Premiers Department files, AN 2/2, Acc 1496, Item 133/17, Repatriation, S.R.O., Perth – including copy of *West Australian Worker*, 24 May 1918, p 14.
35 Letter from Comptroller, Department of Repatriation, to Director of Education, Perth, 29 April 1918, Education Department files, WAS 24, Cons 1497, 1919/2007, Repatriation. S.R.O., Perth.
36 From Department of Repatriation to Minister for Repatriation, 4 July 1918, Education Department files, WAS 24, Cons 1497, 1919/2007, Repatriation. S.R.O., Perth
37 *Geraldton Guardian*, 16 May 1918, p 2.
38 *Annual Report of the Minister of Education 1919*, Education Department files, WAS 24 Cons 1497 1920/0046. The number of useful trades and courses available had obviously exceeded the original sixteen contemplated in October 1916. S.R.O., Perth.
39 E Scott, *Australia During the War*, Angus and Roberson, Sydney, 1940, p 837.
40 Director, Education Department, to Department of Repatriation, [undated], Education Department files, WAS 24, Cons 1497, 1918/1787, Returned soldiers. S.R.O., Perth.
41 Director of Education to J.O. McNamara, 3 October 1919, Education Department files, WAS 24, Cons 1497, 1918/1787, Returned soldiers. S.R.O., Perth. The director suggested that 'Men of this kind should be very carefully tested to make sure that it is worth their while to go on with the course, as unless they are very exceptional cases I think that they would generally need at least a year's work before entering the College'.
42 Ibid.
43 'Soldier Teacher' in *West Australian,* 14 October 1919.
44 The number of useful trades and courses available had obviously exceeded the original sixteen contemplated in October 1916. 'Annual Report of the Minister of Education 1919' Education Department files, WAS 24 Cons 1497 1920/0046. S.R.O, Perth.
45 7 March, 1919 from William Mitchell, Trafford St to the Mayor and Councillors
46 Circular signed by L.E. Shapcott, Secretary, Premier's Department, 30 September 1919, Premiers Department files, AN 2/9, Acc 1703, Item 649/22, Returned maimed & limbless men's association. S.R.O., Perth
47 Circular signed by L.E. Shapcott, Secretary, Premier's Department, 30 September

1919, Premiers Department files, AN 2/9, Acc 1703, Item 649/22, Returned maimed & limbless men's association. S.R.O., Perth

48 A comprehensive list was compiled by the public service commissioner who wrote 'My last annual report contained a list of them up to 4 August 1915 and the next report will contain the names of those who have been given a similar undertaking since that date. Being aware of the difficulties which arose in connection with alleged promises made during the Boer War, I am taking pains to avoid similar trouble after the present war is ended'. From public service commissioner to premier, 1 January 1916 Premier's Department files: AN 2/1 Acc 1496 Item 34 1916 Government employees enlisting.

49 Circular signed by L.E. Shapcott, Secretary, Premier's Department, 30 September 1919, Premiers Department files, AN 2/9, Acc 1703, Item 649/22, Returned maimed & limbless men's association. S.R.O., Perth

50 E Scott, *Australia During the War*, Angus and Roberson, Sydney, 1940, p 833.

51 Circular signed by L.E. Shapcott, Secretary, Premier's Department, 30 September 1919, Premiers Department files, AN 2/9, Acc 1703, Item 649/22, Returned maimed & limbless men's association. S.R.O., Perth

52 Gare and Lloyd-Jones write that, Australia-wide, in 1920 some 90,000 Great War veterans received a commonwealth disability pension. Gare, D. and Lloyd-Jones, M. *When War Came to Fremantle*, Fremantle Press, 2014, p 41.

This paper is dedicated to the men and women of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society.

In particular, I extend thanks to Lynn O'Hara and Valerie Hutch, who have been incredibly generous with their time and energy in the period that I have known them. I continue to reap the opportunities that their support has granted me, and will always be grateful of their interest in an early career historian.

# The Amateurs of Perth: Fremantle Symphony Orchestra

Natasha Milosevic Meston

## Introduction

> '…It is my belief that the cultural development of any community is best measured by the commitment of its amateurs. If this is so, then Perth is a healthy city indeed in cultural terms.'[1]
>
> *Review*, December 1988

The City of Fremantle Symphony Orchestra has taken on many names over the course of its existence. Beginning as the Melville Orchestral Society in 1961, it next became the Melville Symphony Orchestra. Then in 1981, the ensemble 'crossed the river' to become the Nedlands Symphony Orchestra, or the Nedlands Music Association. Finally, after an agreement with the City of Fremantle and several years of performance at the Fremantle Town Hall, the orchestra once again relocated across the river and here found a more permanent home. Since 1993, the historic Fremantle Town Hall has served as the primary venue for a multitude of performances and the ensemble has formally adopted the title of the City of Fremantle Symphony Orchestra. Affectionately known by its members as 'Freddie's', the orchestra (referred to hereafter as the FSO) has proven itself to be a vital contributor to the artistic and cultural landscape of Fremantle. Boasting an annual program of four concerts, in addition to auxiliary performances held in conjunction with seasonal events, the orchestra brings classical music performance to Fremantle. The ensemble also holds a significant place in its community in that it is a valuable tool for engaging audience members with local amateur musicians, and

vice versa. It is primarily these functions of the FSO that this paper will henceforth expand on, evaluate, and celebrate as vital contributions to the City of Fremantle's cultural landscape.

My first experience with the FSO was as a first-year university student. I had just emerged from seven years of highly competitive primary and secondary musical education. I had always loved the magic of recreating the works of musical geniuses such as Mozart, Stravinsky, and Verdi and was proud to have achieved a level of technical mastery of a notoriously challenging instrument; the French Horn. Throughout high school, I had led my section through competitive festivals, memorial services and an international tour to the Western Front. However, much of my experience with musical performance had been overshadowed by feelings of anxiety. A small mistake in a classical music concert can be highly exposed and painfully embarrassing. I was always extremely conscious of how my playing reflected upon both my orchestra and myself as a musician. In effect, I felt that my musical commitments were a burden.

It was for this reason that I made the decision upon entering university to put the music world aside. While musical commitments had previously consumed my time and thoughts, I began to focus on aspects of my life where I wasn't quite so vulnerable. I embraced the chance to disappear among hundreds of fellow first year Arts students. Lecture halls, I found, were far less stressful than concert halls.

Within this new, low pressure environment, I was invited to fill in for an absent orchestra member in a community ensemble which rehearsed just down the road from the University of Western Australia. I was extremely apprehensive; after all, I had only ever played with other high school students. Nonetheless, I tentatively agreed to participate.

At the first rehearsal I attended, I felt I was being judged by every single member of the orchestra for every wrong note I played. Our conductor was a veteran guest artist of the orchestra; the director of the University of Western Australia School of Music, Dr Alan Lourens. Under his scrutiny, I was unable to play the single note solo given to my part as the second horn in Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*. I left that rehearsal a wreck. However, each week and each following rehearsal became easier and easier. I learnt my part and began to notice wrong notes coming from other players. I slowly realised the ensemble's reaction to such mistakes was invariably relaxed.

Come the day of the concert, I was confident. After our dress rehearsal,

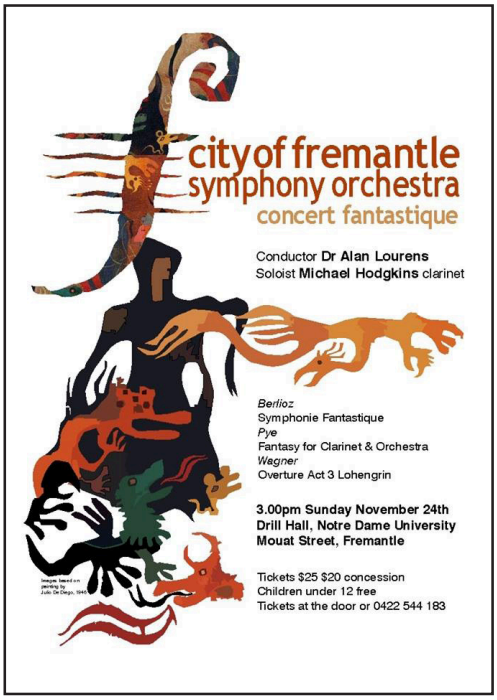



Image 1: Program of the author's first FSO concert.

chatty members of the orchestra offered to introduce me to other community ensembles and I began to relax enough to make some friends. The performance began and I saw my family sitting near the back of the hall, enjoying themselves immensely. Nevertheless, I felt a familiar anxiety in my chest as my single note solo approached. The conductor made eye contact with me, my throat closed and my heart began to pound and I quickly realised that my stage fright meant I would be unable to produce a sound from the instrument. And then: a miracle happened. The principal horn, Mandy Herriman, took one look at my panicked face, raised her horn and played the solo herself. It was at that moment that I fell in love with this community orchestra.

I believe this anecdote sums up everything I want to communicate through this paper regarding the FSO. For its audience, the FSO is a way for locals to support their friends and family, or recognise and enjoy the musical talent of their community. For its musicians, this ensemble means a chance to play and perform the often strenuous but always enjoyable works of musical geniuses alongside full-time work and family demands. In short, the FSO provides a chance for socialisation, connection, and support between diverse members of the community.

While Australia's current political climate seeks to convince its population that 'the arts' sit in a position of precarious popularity, musical performance, in the State of Western Australia, in particular, consistently challenges this view. Orchestral concerts continue to thrive across the state as is evidenced by well-attended and well-respected performances of a variety of individual communities. The ensembles which compose and inevitably shape this artistic landscape range from the professional West Australian Symphony Orchestra to amateur, volunteer orchestras. Clearly, one such novice ensemble which lays claim to these successes is the FSO.

As a non-profit organisation, the FSO is particularly dedicated to the promotion and enjoyment of classical music as part of the cultural community landscape of Perth. With a regular membership of approximately 60 amateur musicians, the ensemble presents an average of 5 concerts each year. These currently include a subscription series of concerts at the Fremantle Town Hall in addition to performances in various other venues around Perth.[2]

I began this paper by introducing the ensemble through the lens of my own experience as a part-time participant of the ensemble and explaining my subsequent inspiration behind this research endeavour. In the following parts I will expand my thesis from a more scholarly point of view. First, this paper uses the origins of the orchestra as a foundation toward exploring the empirical, linear history of the ensemble from its humble beginnings. As we begin to trace the growth and adaptations the ensemble has embraced over the decades this part also provides a glimpse into the inner workings of the orchestra. What does the FSO mean to its musicians? Anecdotal evidence and personal testimonies are utilised here to answer this question by showcasing the orchestra's social significance. The following part outlines the musicianship and vast and varied role of the FSO within its community focusing on collaborations, notable milestone performances, and accolades. This segment also nods to the significance of the ensemble as an avenue for emerging Australian musicians and composers. This is primarily facilitated by longstanding Musical Director, David Pye, and current President, Steve Harmer. Pye and Harmer accommodate new music (including the former's own) in the FSO's programmes and emphasise the performance of prestigious or early career soloists. This aspect of the ensemble's role is a unique and vital contribution to the contemporary music performance landscape of Western Australia. Finally, this paper looks to the future of the orchestra speculating growth and outlining existing obstacles. The

paper's conclusion serves a secondary purpose in promoting the ensemble's endeavours and events. By encouraging further community engagement with this ensemble, I hope to assist the ensemble's exciting expansion. In summary, this paper will argue the current position of the FSO as an invaluable part of Fremantle's cultural heritage.

As a community-run venture, the FSO's members are themselves vital resources to my paper. I have conducted both oral interviews and written surveys with both musicians and community audience members at performances throughout the year. Specifically the large contingent of veteran members will receive great attention in providing evaluations of how the ensemble has evolved as well as testimonies of the ensemble's significance to their own lives. Input from executive committee members also inform this paper's review of administrative aspects and the future of the ensemble. In addition to these living testimonies, I have relied upon the large amount of archival material found in various private collections which members have kindly made available. Archived visual sources such as photographs, performance programs and newspaper clippings, feature heavily in the following pages in order to illustrate the extent of the FSO's impact. Uniquely, this paper features an extensive appendix containing the web links to audio-visual recordings of the past performances referenced to it which readers may easily access as they wish.

'Heritage' may be defined as the intangible, original attributes of a society which have been inherited from the past, maintained in the present, and will be bestowed on the future.[3] This paper serves as an overview of the FSO as an ensemble of valuable cultural heritage. I believe the FSO will benefit from the following scholarly attention as it attempts to secure both short and long-term preservation of the ensemble within Fremantle's vibrant arts scene. This research project, produced in collaboration with the Fremantle History Society, is a proactive effort to preserve, celebrate and promote arts and culture in Fremantle through the documentation of the City of Fremantle Symphony Orchestra.

**Inside the Orchestra**

> The players really matter in community orchestras. In a professional orchestra, you play what's in front of you. In a community orchestra, you don't like it, you just don't turn up. And every week, you don't know who's going to turn up.[4]

Various stories exist about the exact beginnings of the FSO. Some posit

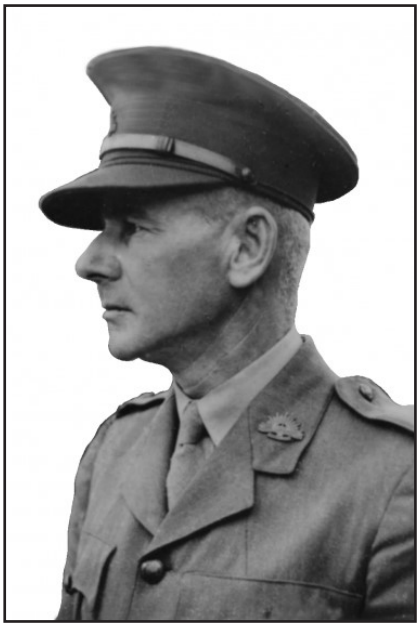


Image 2: Major Albert Saggers.

that its origins lie with the Fremantle Youth Orchestra. Still others remember the previous form of the ensemble, the Nedlands Symphony Orchestra, and claim this was its earliest incarnation. However, it is undeniable that the orchestra's first form, the Melville Orchestral Society, had a key figure at its helm; Major Bert Saggers.

In March of 1961, 15 musicians gathered in the home of Major Saggers and from this meeting the Melville Orchestral Society was formed. The group was supported by the Shire of Melville and was presided over by Mr A C Brachs. The early evolution of the ensemble has been described as duos which became trios which became quartets which became quintets which became octets (all strings) ... from there other instruments wanted to join ... so a venue had to be found and so began a small orchestra.[5]

As the group expanded, it relocated from Saggers' home to Applecross Civic Hall. Thereafter, 15 musicians met weekly to make music together and at regular intervals, concerts were presented. During the early years, the orchestra was conducted by Major Saggers and Mr Doug Robinson.

However, the need soon arose for a dedicated conductor. Three key figures of the orchestra at that time (Ron Palmer, Dick Brown, and Gerry Ligtemoet) took it upon themselves to find and hire an appropriate candidate for such a role. In late 1972, Brown and Ligtemoet interviewed a Peter Bandy in his own Bayswater home. Bandy had a unique set of skills – he had been a teacher, a radio announcer, and an orchestral manager, before finally coming to the profession of conducting and musical directorship. The interview was ultimately successful. By the following year Bandy was the Society's appointed conductor a position he held for 10 years. During this time Bandy was renowned for his ability to get amateur orchestras 'up and running'.[6] Under Bandy's baton, the ensemble's name quickly changed to the Melville Symphony Orchestra. Bandy described this decision as a reflection of the ensemble's growth into a full-size orchestra; the term

'symphony orchestra' 'sounded less 'amateurish'![7] The newly branded Melville Symphony Orchestra rehearsed in Tivoli Halland put themselves 'on the map' with regular performances.[8]

On the 15 April 1981 the orchestra 'crossed the river' so to speak and was reinvented as the Nedlands Symphony Orchestra (NSO). The move was assisted by the then Mayor of Nedlands, Peter Kyle. As the NSO, the ensemble fell under the umbrella of the Nedlands Music Association headed by Helen Parkinson. During this period, the orchestra began performing in various new locations such as Wesley College, the prestigious Winthrop Hall, and, significantly, its first foray to the Fremantle Town Hall.

Along with the first 'river crossing' came the ensemble's final change of rehearsal venue; rehearsals are held there to this day. Its first rehearsal in the John Leckie Pavilion; however did not exactly make the musicians feel at home. Member Jeremy Hall remembers '… [Leckie Pavilion] was just a shed then. No ceiling – just a roof capping and the rain would come dripping in… We would store risers and set them up out of the cupboard every rehearsal and got bits of rug out for those instruments which dribbled'.[9] It wasn't until the venue underwent 2 renovations, funded by the Nedlands City Council, that the Pavilion was transformed into the well-lit and acoustically improved venue it is today. That same year the orchestra performed its inaugural concert in the Perth Concert Hall. A mission statement for the ensemble, which had grown increasingly more official during these years, was devised by then-President Michael Parry. The group's aim 'to be Perth's premier amateur orchestra, a vehicle for young orchestral and solo musicians who are looking for a professional career, an asset to the community at large and all-round nice guys!'[10]

Ian Westrip, the well-known baritone, briefly held the reins as conductor in 1983 giving the orchestra an operatic leaning and resulting in the birth of several unique collaborations. Performances with ensembles such as the Perth Oratorio Choir, the Fremantle Choir and the Gilbert & Sullivan Society were undertaken in this period.[11] By 1985, the lattermost partnership saw the orchestra play five performances of *H M S Pinafore*. It was in this same year that Henryk Pisarek took over as the orchestra's conductor. Under his demanding leadership the musicians' talents were tested as they never had been before.[12] Critical comment from a performance at Winthrop Hall noted that 'it would be difficult for an amateur orchestra to perform better without getting professional musicians in to support it'.[13]

The fruits of the orchestra's hard work under Pisarek are certainly

observed in the 1986 calendar where the ensemble performed no less than 13 times.[14] The NSO also toured extensively to rural locations including Narrogin, Katanning, Moora, and Albany.[15] At this time, the ensemble featured a variety of young musicians as a direct consequence of the absence of dedicated youth ensembles. The NSO also included a number of career musicians who had ample free time as what is today known as the West Australian Symphony Orchestra was at that time split into two separate ensembles: a symphony orchestra and a dedicated 'Arts' orchestra for WA Opera and ballet performances.[16]

From January 1986 musical directorship of the NSO passed to Peter Moore, OAM, who also conducted the orchestra.[17] Also during this period Sir Charles Court (AK, KCMG, OBE) became the ensemble's patron, and in June 1991 was even invited to extend his support of the arts to make an appearance as a guest conductor.[18]

Finally, after an agreement with the City of Fremantle wherein the ensemble was offered discounted use of the Town Hall and following several years' experience performing in the Fremantle Town Hall, the orchestra relocated across the river once more and found their permanent and current home. Since 1993, the historic Town Hall has served as a permanent location for performances, and the ensemble formally adopted the title of The City of Fremantle Symphony Orchestra.

**The Committee**

'As a member of an amateur orchestra one meets people from various walks of life – teachers, doctors, salesmen and an orthodontist, to name but a few. This inevitably leads to a variety of ideas and attitudes being contributed to the running of our orchestra, which is undertaken on a voluntary basis by members.'[19] As a community orchestra with its roots in a small group of music-loving friends the FSO has always taken an exceedingly light-hearted approach when it comes to its executive committee. As one tongue-in-cheek writer penned in the extinct publication *Music Maker* in 1987*:*

> While most of the orchestra comes along to rehearse each Wednesday night, not much thought is given to all the work that goes into making everything run smoothly. This job is undertaken by that shadowy gang of faceless men and women known only as The Committee. Membership of this inner circle is restricted to those hardy few who have the time and inclination to keep the orchestral wheels in motion, who have some kind of talent or ability to lend to the organisation, and who have the stamina to endure four-hour meetings each month.[20]

Current Musical, Director David Pye, graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts in 1980, conducted his first programme with the FSO in 1997 and certainly exemplifies the frequently jocular nature of the FSO's administration. As he declared during a tricky moment in a recent rehearsal, 'If I actually 'get it' in the gig, you owe me a drink!'[21] His background as a percussionist has informed and allowed his compositions, and indeed directorship of the FSO, to embrace 20th and 21st century styles of music. His success in this first season conducting the FSO is reflected by his subsequent election to the role of Musical Director of the ensemble only one year later. The Australian Music Centre characterises his leadership of the FSO as such; 'his programming … reflects a policy of the encouragement of Australian composers combined with a practical acknowledgement of the importance of audience and orchestra enjoyment of their music-making'.[22] Under Pye, the orchestra has performed and premiered a large amount of new music, including Pye's own. In Pye's words: '(The FSO) is one of Perth's two leading amateur orchestras… They have been very generous in performing my works over the years'.[23] In fact, Pye claims that this aspect of the ensemble's repertoire is crucial to what makes it such an exciting and relevant group.[24]

Indeed, the FSO's characteristic welcoming of any opportunity to play challenging works is a distinctive feature of the ensemble. As one member mentioned in a 1987 article in *Music Maker* magazine, 'the majority of members feel that having to deal with difficult symphonies 'stretches' their ability much more than the less demanding roles, and therefore improves technique.'[25] Prestigious guest conductors also appreciate this characteristic of the ensemble; Peter Moore (OAM) commented that

> …on so many occasions an invitation to conduct a concert by a non-professional organisation starts a quest for 'suitable works'. 'Will they be too difficult?' but in the case of the Nedlands Symphony Orchestra these considerations are reduced to a minimum. Indeed, such is their standard that the exciting prospect of being adventurous becomes a possibility.[26]

Aside from the FSO's executive committee, the ensemble adopts a largely team-based approach in the handling of daily business. For example, the process of setting up, packing away, and transporting equipment on performance days is solely ensemble-driven.[27] 'Rotations' of more challenging or exciting parts are organised by the musicians in collaboration with section leaders. As an occasional FSO trumpeter and university student discusses the influences which drove her to participate in the orchestra, she

refers to not only 'orchestral experience [and] to learn new repertoire', but also 'friendships with players that asked me to play the concert…'[28] The orchestra's ranks thus depend on inner-section organisation in addition to, as will be discussed in the following pages, a social element.

**Socialisation: A cornerstone of the ensemble**

Contemporary behavioural research indicates that people who participate in organised, socially-supported recreational activity typically enjoy lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression, and reduce symptoms of Alzheimer's disease.[29] Involvement in the arts specifically provides a sense of achievement and connection to community and cultural events, and its therapeutic effects are commonly used in health care settings to influence mood.[30] In this way, the FSO has an unforeseen but substantial mental health benefit to its participants. As such, a high priority of the FSO's executive committee is the nurturing of the social aspect of music making; both within the regular ensemble, and in providing its musicians the opportunity to interact with the prestigious guest artists which so much of the orchestra's budget goes towards acquiring. This facilitation is done in several ways.

One such method is the ritual of 'supper' during rehearsal break. Aside from a reprieve from the hard work of rehearsals and an opportunity to sample the cooking of fellow musicians (an astrophysicist and horn player lists 'spring rolls at break' as a highlight of her FSO experience), historically the FSO committee has been known to use supper as a method of bribery.

> Lynn [a former President] is still hovering over her telephone, waiting for all you string players out there to ring her and say you'll join the NSO. They can't offer money, but an extra biscuit during rehearsal breaks isn't totally out of the question. They'd really love to see you![31]

The diversity of musicians, in age as well as profession, also dictates the atmosphere of the ensemble. As one FSO oboist and classroom teacher puts it

> …when we have young people in the orchestra, as we do at the moment, its very fun, it becomes very much a 'young person's orchestra'. For example, if you consider the current horn section: you have the great scientist James Risdill-Smith, and he's there sitting alongside university students being as friendly to them as he would be to people his own age. That's the wonderful thing amateur music brings with it.[32]

A concert in 1991, which combined the (no longer operational) Karrinyup Symphony Orchestra with the NSO, also hoped to achieve this aim. The

collaboration involved performing music which required large forces of both string and wind instruments (Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*, and Shostakovich's *Festival Overture*). The concert's program wrote

> Up until now the amateur orchestras in and around Perth have lived their lives quite separately, and not without a certain amount of rivalry, so one of the aims of this joint venture has been to get to know each other and to work together in a friendly and cooperative manner.[33]

Whether this effort to encourage socialisation and an atmosphere of casual enjoyment has been successful is of course a matter of highly subjective opinion. However, readers might inspect the following quotation, taken from a disgruntled critic's review of a 1986 concert, which called for 'a little more discipline in getting choir and orchestra back on stage after interval'![34]

**Interval: Meet the Players**

> … I thank the Orchestra for their great friendship and trust. It is a shame that you, our audience, cannot share with me the experience of knowing this extraordinary bunch of people, seeing them as you do three or four times a year, all dressed up and clean. I can assure you that, exasperating though they sometimes are, I know no finer group of people and I am proud to work for them.[35]
> *Michael Parry, 1983*

One of the FSO's most unique and crucial features is its diversity of musicians. For example, the orchestra boasts several highly respected members of the medical and scientific profession, who have embraced instrumental playing upon retirement as a way of engaging with their community. The FSO has always prided itself on this membership, printing in a programme that 'its … members come from a very wide range of experience musically, from the university and conservatorium to the ex-professional.'[36] The orchestra as a microcosm of the music community will here be explored through the testimonies of three recent members. These musicians' experiences are both representative of the wider ensemble and evidence of the diversity present within the ensemble.

**Jeremy Hall**

As a member of the FSO from 1978 to 2016, Jeremy Hall can certainly be called a valuable member of the ensemble. His involvement with the orchestra began after he moved to Perth from the Northern Territory, at which point he immediately began seeking out a place to practice his orchestral playing. He discovered the FSO after he 'got in contact with any musical names [he] could think of.'[37] Hall recalls his experience auditioning

Image 3: Jeremy Hall celebrating his final concert backstage at Fremantle Town Hall in 2016.

on the oboe as quite daunting; positions for his instrument are considered rare in any standard symphony orchestra.

'To join the orchestra, I had to go to Peter Bandy's house and audition before him, Peter Summan and maybe Jay [Harrison, a cor anglais player with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra] too.'[38] Hall reflects that the audition process is slightly more casual nowadays!

Hall went on to become President of the FSO, serving for 15 years in addition to his regular occupation as an orthodontist. One might expect these commitments to be overwhelming: however, Hall didn't consider them to be an impediment to his enjoyment of the social side of the ensemble:

> … I definitely prefer playing in an ensemble than playing alone. When I first joined, the orchestra was very much about the social aspect, too, and great diversity in age and profession. I met my wife through music, and some old friends came out of FSO, too.[39]

Hall left the FSO in 2016, after sixty-four years of playing the oboe. His 'fingers were struggling to reach the keys and wrong notes were happening too frequently' and so, despite the enormous importance music has on his life, Hall made the decision to step down.[40]

**Teresa Duhig**

Teresa Duhig, the FSO's current resident second oboist, sat alongside Hall for more than three decades. She was introduced to the orchestra by her mother (Nedlands Music Association leader Helen Parkinson, previously mentioned) and began playing with the FSO in 1981 whilst studying at Teachers' College. For Duhig, participation in the ensemble stems from a mix of loyalty and habit. In addition to the FSO being her first experience with community orchestra, she served on its executive committee for many years and is happy to retain her coveted position in the small woodwind section of the orchestra. Duhig says 'rehearsal is on my particular night for going out and I played alongside my best friend for thirty-six years … it's just what I do. And as a music teacher I feel I should always be playing.'[41] Like many members of the orchestra Duhig can easily recall past performance highlights and has particularly enjoyed tackling the large, challenging classical works which the FSO has become renowned for. She remembers fondly the musical directorship of Lawrence Jacks, who served the FSO in the early 1990s, and 'who believed, as I really do believe, that it is essential to keep in mind when conducting an amateur orchestra that the people sitting in front of you are in their own right, extremely intelligent people.'[42] For Duhig, an amateur orchestra is 'the opportunity for lots of people to play, it's a social night, and its fulfilling to have that music in people's lives'.[43] The FSO has become so intertwined with Duhig's life that the ensemble's history has also seen Duhig's husband, brother, two sons, and daughter participate musically amongst various performance seasons.

**Samuel Herriman**

Another musician who certainly illustrates the community nature of the ensemble is young Media Studies major and casual musician Samuel Herriman. Herriman began playing in the orchestra in 2010 while still in high school and has continued to do so to feed his interest in orchestral playing, alternating between the lead and second bassoon player. Herriman is the youngest to follow a long familial tradition of involvement in the ensemble which includes both of his parents and his three elder sisters. The observant reader may recall a member with his surname from this paper's introductory anecdote. Herriman states:

> My FSO highlight is probably performing *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* by Paul Dukas in 2015 conducted by my father. It is an iconic piece of orchestral music featuring a significant bassoon section solo, and so

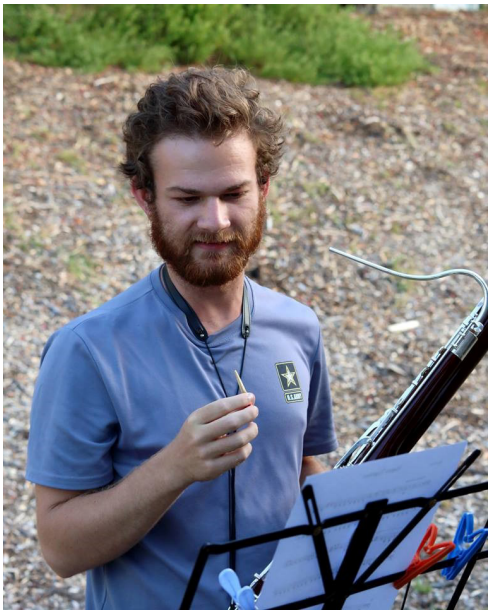


Image 4: Samuel Herriman at Quaranup Music Camp, 2016.

> having the opportunity to perform the piece is the definite highlight of my FSO participation.[44]

For this young player the attraction of the orchestra resides in 'the opportunity to continue playing orchestral repertoire in a casual, enjoyable environment.'[45] In relation to socialisation and the ensemble he states 'much like a sporting team or book club (albeit much larger), the weekly rehearsals build a sense of community amongst the orchestra…'[46]

**Part 3 : Collaboration, Community & Culture**

> "… on behalf of the players I would like to thank all those people behind the scene and you the audience who make it enjoyable and possible for the orchestra to function."[47]
> *Speech notes, 2011*

As a genre, classical music has been oft criticised as elitist, and indeed, some patrons of the performing arts in Australia might even support the notion of a performance landscape restricted in appeal to the upper echelons. However, the FSO is one community ensemble which resoundingly rejects this perspective. The group constantly strives to bring classical music to quite a different audience; the middle classes. As one FSO player describes:

> As a member of the community at large I appreciate classical music and I would like to have affordable events with talented players that I can attend, and eventually take my children to.[48]

The FSO strives to appeal to this target audience in many ways, including through collaborations, involvement within cultural events, and the organisation of schemes specifically designed for audience outreach. In short, the Fremantle Symphony Orchestra perform for the community of Fremantle.

The FSO has enjoyed numerous collaborations with other local, national, and even renowned global musical groups and individuals. In September 1997, the FSO performed in conjunction with the West Australian Mandolin Orchestra presenting a commissioned work entitled *Fanfare for Fremantle*. In recent years, the orchestra has worked with well-known Perth conductors Joel Migdal, Lawrence Jacks, Alan Bonds, Dr Geoffrey Lowe, Kevin Gillam, Chris Sears, Burhan Guner, Bruce Herriman, Warwick Potter, Jessica Gethin, Dr Robert Braham and Professor Alan Lourens. The FSO also boasts a range of impressive alumni, made up of early career musicians who have been grateful to find, in the FSO, a friendly organisation to either perform concertos (solo works) or merely within a section. This paper has already touched on the eminent West Australians of non-musical professions who show up to John Leckie Pavilion every Wednesday night but it must be recognised that musical professionals have also joined the FSO's ranks for a time in their early careers as they sought experience playing in an orchestral setting. In this fashion the FSO names among its alumni such musicians as Ben Jacks, who is currently the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's principal horn.[49]

The FSO furthers its role in supporting early career musicians by maintaining a close relationship with the Fremantle Eisteddfod, offering the winner a soloist engagement with the orchestra. In November 2017, 2016's Open Concerto winner and Year 11 student Emmalena Huning will perform Bruch's *Scottish Fantasy for Violin and Orchestra* with the FSO. In addition, the FSO 'Young Conductors Program' offers young community conductors an opportunity to develop their skills under the guidance of a more experienced conductor. In the program's inaugural year of 2004, Jessica Gethin participated in this unique program, and in 2015 was named one of Australia's '100 Most Influential Women' as an award-winning conductor.[50]

The FSO also supports its own talented older community members, who balance full time careers and families alongside their love of orchestral

playing. One such player is lawyer Michael Hodgkins, who has performed multiple solos within the ensemble, including premieres of Pye's own pieces.

Of course, the FSO has also featured professional musicians at the height of their careers. Former West Australian Symphony Orchestra (WASO) concertmaster and current University of Western Australia Head of Strings, Professor Paul Wright, performed as a soloist in 2016.[51] Another WASO concertmaster and former concertmaster of the London Symphony Orchestra, Ashley Arbuckle, appeared alongside WASO violist Lawrence Jacks in a 1994 all-Brahms FSO performance courtesy of the ABC, an ambitious concert lauded by *The West Australian*'s Neville Cohn as 'a first in WA'.[52]

The FSO has taken part in a wide variety of unique performances in order to best engage and serve its audience as well as the broader cultural community. The FSO has even performed at the Fly By Night Club – a renowned performing arts institution of Fremantle![53] Notably, it performed at the opening ceremony of the 1998 Festival of Croatia Culture which celebrated the forty year-long conducting career of the Republic of Croatia's Consul-General, Dr Nikola Debelic. This multicultural performance was also the Perth premiere of several pieces by Croatian composers.[54] The FSO has also performed in a wide range of settings in support of its community, including Hollywood Senior Citizens Village, *El Caballo Blanco* and the South West Italian Club Hall. It has engaged with numerous charity concerts supporting other non-profit organisations, such as Guide Dogs WA and Hospice Palliative Care. Most significantly today, it supports Western Australia's youngest musicians through a workshop assisting Year 12 students in their final Australian Tertiary Admission Rank preparations.[55]

The FSO has also provided family-centred events, produced to both support families and educate young musicians. Collaborating organisations in this field include the Cottage School of Junior Music, music teacher Sally Christmass, and the Kelmscott Primary School Choir.[56] Family entertainment events also include 'Proms', popular music concerts catered to younger audiences, and an ongoing Christmas Concert tradition. One Proms of special significance was held in 2009, with the pictured concert program *Bushfire*. Here, the FSO partnered with Perth artist Drewfus Gates and composer Jeff Carroll to present the world premiere of "an Australian alternative to *Peter and the Wolf*".[57] This concert supported the Red Cross

Victorian Bushfire Appeal and introduced the children of Fremantle to different instruments in the orchestra by way of Australian animals.

This thematic focus on highly community-centred programming is continued through the multiple, complimentary, outdoor 'summer concerts' the FSO has participated in. As stated in a 1996 concert notes, 'our aim is to bring music to you the people (of Fremantle) in a way that is readily accessible.'[58] Multiple performances at the City of Canning World Arts Exchange likewise has strengthened the bond between orchestra and community.

The ensemble consistently embraces opportunities to grow. Most noticeably, the group has performed with a variety of internationally renowned conductors, composers and soloists. For example, the ensemble has formed a close working relationship with West Australian teacher, musician and poet Kevin Gillam collaborated with him on several occasions. In 2016, an ambitious year long program centred on the four seasons saw Gillam conduct '*Winter*' and co-compose a new piece, '*The Seasons*' with Pye.[59] In 2009, Pye and the FSO premiered 'Circadian Rhythms', a piece commissioned of Pye by the Carrie Forrest Project.[60] This concert was a great undertaking, which saw the FSO's contingent swell to one hundred musicians, its largest cohort ever, to accommodate Australian composer Percy Grainger's epic, *The Warriors*. Pye's premiere was 'several years in the planning' and featured thirty percussionists as orchestral soloists.[61] This performance especially demonstrates the FSO's commitment to new and exciting styles of music, as the piece explored modern techniques such as improvisation and a balance between free form and cohesive structures. In Pye's words, 'we've been sticking out necks out over the last couple of years… the excitement at rehearsals is palpable.'[62]

Since its evolution into the FSO, the ensemble has continued to engage with its community in numerous and diverse ways. In 2010, the FSO provided a recorded performance of Auber's *Fra Diavolo* to serve as a soundtrack for *I Belong to the Shadows*, a film about the youngest British sniper to land at Normandie during WWII, by a Perth-based production company.[63] The FSO's commitment to its diplomatic and community-based approach to classical musical appreciation is further exemplified by their dedicated history of performing tours outside the metropolitan area. In past years the orchestra has toured to Albany, Busselton, Kwinana, Narrogin, Kalgoorlie, Esperance and Margaret River. In addition, in 1997 the FSO premiered Pye's *Symphony No.1* alongside a work commissioned

Image 5: The orchestra performs Pye's epic *The Warriors* in Fremantle Town Hall.

by the orchestra, *Fanfare for Fremantle*. In typical tongue-in-cheek style, the latter piece has been described as a 'Freo-for-all for wind and brass'.[64]

The reach of the FSO's community engagement is only growing. Most recently, the FSO were a part of the 2017 Perth Heritage Festival. Held annually by the City of Fremantle, this celebration marked the festival's twenty-fifth anniversary and was an opportunity to appreciate and explore the diverse cultural history of Fremantle. The FSO have participated in both this and the Fremantle Heritage Festival for over a decade. In 2000 the ensemble opened the Fremantle Festival with a performance featuring '100 birds, local circus children, David Pye's *Tangling* and an Aboriginal rock opera'.[65] In the collaborative spirit that its audience have come to expect, the Festival saw the FSO produce a diverse concert in conjunction with guest artists, the Perth Scottish Fiddlers.[66] This especially significant concert coincided with the unveiling of the newly renovated Fremantle Town Hall in which the FSO have had the pleasure of playing since 1991. As one scientist and occasional FSO horn player notes, 'playing in the beautiful Fremantle town hall [is] definitely a highlight.'[67] The FSO explicitly aim to use their performances to reach their community in order to 'boost the communities' interest in the area of classical music and the arts, an interest that is shown to have many benefits, particularly on individuals.[68]

**Reviews**

As a result of its adventurous programming, the FSO is no stranger to

positive reviews which typically have in common one thing; praise for the ensemble's indomitable courage. A small selection of this feedback, as listed below, provides insight into the qualities which audiences and professional music critics alike have found worthy of note in the ensemble.

Amateur orchestras can stay with indifferent and uncomplicated music, or they can essay the heights. On Sunday the Nedlands Symphony Orchestra, with conductor Peter Moore, threw discretion to the winds at Perth Modern School…[69]

One wondered how much blood, sweat and tears at rehearsal have gone into this performance which managed to get it together, and convey much of the work's atmosphere of sheer excitement and colour.[70]

A performance which proved once again that the amateurs of Perth can give us very good music indeed.[71]

This was not a programme for the faint-hearted.[72]

The orchestra is to be commended on its courage and enterprise.[73]

**Conclusion**

> The local does not have the lure of the international or famous. But it does have a friendliness and feeling and excitement that is our own. To prevent Classical music from becoming an even smaller minority occupation, or from sinking into the ground altogether, may require the proselytising energy of more than just a few concerned individuals… [Warsaw amateur orchestras] have always drawn large and enthusiastic audiences, who feel that their music is something to be proud of and enjoyed, and not the intellectual task of an elitist few that it often so mistakenly appears to be here.[74]
> *David Helfgott, 1984*

Clearly the FSO has proven itself to be an important cultural institution of not just Fremantle, but of Western Australia. Throughout its 66 year history, it has undergone transformation after transformation, and an ensemble which originally began as duos in a veteran's home has gone on to become a respected community orchestra. Constant reinvention and adaptation have proven essential to the orchestra's survival and enduring success, not only with its audience, but also among its community in the form of the musicians. Thus, the orchestra looks forward to another year of ambitious programming in 2018. Socialisation within the orchestra and community engagement, always cornerstones of the Committee agenda,

will, of course, continue to be priorities for the FSO's activities in the coming years.

However, the obstacles the orchestra face moving forward are apparent. The very success of the FSO, discussed in its many forms at length within this paper, has seen other metropolitan community symphony orchestras spring up in imitation.

These include:

- Churchlands Community Orchestra;
- Hills Symphony Orchestra;
- Perth Symphony Orchestra;
- South Side Symphony Orchestra;
- South West Philharmonic Orchestra;
- Swan Philharmonic Orchestra;
- The Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra;
- WA Philharmonic; and
- the West Australian Charity Orchestra.

While the growth of community orchestras in Perth is positive on a grand scale, there is no doubt that increased options for instrumental playing greatly influences the FSO's membership, often to its detriment. The growth of the Western Australian Youth Orchestras Association (Inc) since its inception in 1974 has been responsible for a decline in younger musicians participating in the FSO. The lack of opportunity for early career instrumentalists to engage in orchestral playing was a key factor in the FSO's early appeal and so Perth's recent 'arts scene boom' has in this respect been disadvantageous in encouraging and boosting young membership. The array of younger community orchestras complicates the running of the FSO in that, as discussed in Part 1, community musicians tend to 'flow' in and out of performance seasons. Participation in each season depends partly on player availability, but primarily on their enthusiasm for the music being rehearsed. With so many options, players can 'vote with their chairs'.[75] Furthermore, two of the ensembles listed above rehearse on a Wednesday night, the same night traditionally claimed by FSO's rehearsals. This means that even dedicated musicians are regularly faced with the blunt decision of which ensemble to prioritise – sometimes, to the detriment of the FSO.

To this end, the FSO would like to extend an invitation to any aspiring, retiring, or hobbyist string players to contact president@fremantlesymphonyorchestra.com.au and make an enquiry about membership or participation on a casual basis in upcoming concerts.

President Harmer and the string leaders would be happy to hear from you!

As a current FSO violinist and medical student state: '[FSO] is an important outlet for me to express myself creatively… It's great to have the opportunity to play music of a high calibre at an affordable price.'The future of the FSO is of course still evolving. But it is the FSO's dedication to its core values and goals fostering emerging artists and building community relationships which characterise its future as one of development, expansion and innovation. As this future unfolds, the Fremantle Town Hall will undoubtedly witness the first performances of many young musicians, including those on the cusp of a professional career.

In the meantime, the ensemble will continue to focus on its audience who make performances the enjoyable and exciting pastime they are and without whom it would be impossible for the orchestra to function.

## Appendix A: Performance links

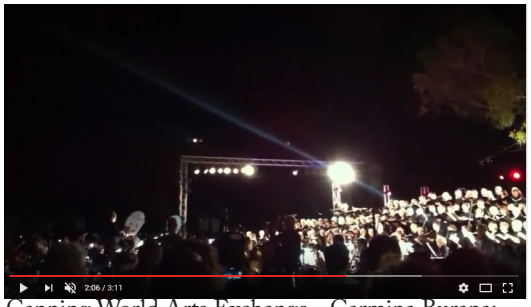
Type the following URLs into an internet browser on your computer, laptop, iPad or mobile phone to see and hear the following performances of the FSO!

Danceesport under the stars by the Swan River on a warm Perth night.

'Dancesport' couples take part in the Canning World Arts Exchange dancing to the Fremantle Symphony Orchestra

1 February 2014

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZcSdFkdGEo



Canning World Arts Exchange - Carmina Burana: Fortuna Imperatrix Mundi - O Fortuna.

Canning World Arts Exchange - Carmina Burana

February 2013

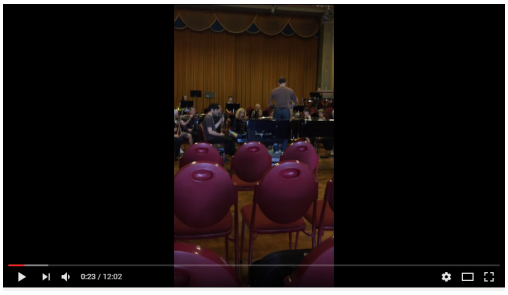
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNS-w_kjxJ8

David Pye - Fantasy for Solo Clarinet & Orchestra.

Fantasy for Solo Clarinet and Orchestra – David Pye (World premiere)

9 March 2008

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wBHJUv5_MBs



Silence Impressions – David Pye

23 November 2014

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1xj5FC6rkxg

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# Hell for Leather: North Fremantle Football Club and the Great War

Baden Pratt

> I wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation and pay my respects to elders past and present.

It may seem strange that, in addressing the subject of World War I and Australian football in Fremantle, a little suburban club like North Fremantle should take centre stage rather than, say South Fremantle or East Fremantle, both successful clubs within the Western Australian Football League, commonly known as the WAFL.

Yes, South Fremantle lost 6 footballers in World War I, and East Fremantle had 7 footballers killed.[1] Across the WAFL, 84 players and two umpires would die. Not to take too narrow a view of things, it can be noted that the Fremantle-based Caledonian Soccer Club was effectively decimated as a result of the war with 27 players and officials signing up and 8 being killed, though it was able to 'regroup with sufficient numbers in 1922.'[2] But, as I will go on to demonstrate, the North Fremantle Football Club, then playing in the senior WAFL competition against teams like East Fremantle and South Fremantle, suffered more than these, and probably at least as much as any senior sporting club in Western Australia. Yes, it suffered much - and then was treated appallingly.

The title of this article, 'Hell for Leather: North Fremantle Football Club and the Great War,' could begin to make sense when one knows that volunteering for World War I military service depleted its player list to the extent that it was no longer able to field a team in the WAFL competition.[3]

Then, post war, as the North Fremantle community re-established itself, the club was ambushed by the WA Football League and stabbed in the back by all of today's existing league clubs.[4]

Hell for Leather? Yes, Hell as 44 players walked off the North Fremantle Oval, as it was then called in 1914, 20 in 1915, 19 in 1916 and 2 in 1917 to volunteer to serve Australia. Twelve would die, 23 would return limbless, shell-shocked or brain impaired from gas attacks, and the remaining 9 received bullet wounds. Only a handful would ever play Australian football again, though it is worth recording that one, Cyril Hoft, playing for Perth, would go on to win the first Sandover Medal in a tie with Tom Outridge, in 1921.[5]

When life returned to something like normality in 1919 the North Fremantle community agitated to have its team readmitted to the West Australian Football League for the start of the 1920 season.[6] At a well-attended public meeting, Councillors William White and Arthur Counsel, were deputed to attend a special meeting of the WAFL at which North Fremantle would have the opportunity to 'receive the fullest consideration for readmission to the league.'[7] Despite the gallantry of these North Fremantle footballers on the battlefields of Gallipoli and the Western Front in helping to preserve the freedoms that allowed the playing of Australian football to continue after the war, this meeting was never held. During the week before its scheduled date the WAFL club delegates met secretly and passed a motion to change the constitution of the League that had the effect of removing two clubs - North Fremantle and Midland Junction - from its membership.[8] It meant that any special meeting to consider North Fremantle's readmission was now beside the point - the matter had been decided by the stroke of a pen. The North Fremantle players who had hoped to play again for their old team then drifted to the league clubs who had voted it out of the competition.

**Recruiting Posters**

While a case could be made that the North Fremantle footballers were influenced by the recruiting campaigns to urge sportsmen to enlist for the war - such as Norman Lindsay's, '*The Trumpet Calls*, showing an image of soldiers in the trenches and civilian sportsmen watching on, or the 1917 direct appeal to Australian footballers to 'be in the last quarter' and join the Sportsman's 1000 - a more compelling factor could be the social context. To fully understand the response of both the North Fremantle football

players and the North Fremantle community at large - more than 600 men and boys, dads and sons, brothers together, would enlist from this small village - one needs to know that from 1901 until 1915 these footballers were the pride of the North Fremantle municipality. Everybody went to the football at the North Fremantle Oval.


Image 1: Norman Lindsay's World War I recruitment poster (Museums Victoria HT27660)

One factor in this could have been that the venue itself was exceptional - located alongside the Swan River with its iconic grandstand and fenced oval. Not only did it have its own press box, a facility famous at the time for having its own telephone links to the newspaper offices. Another factor was the proximity of the Gresham Hotel, which was located on the other side of John Street, just behind the press box.

If you wanted to be elected to the North Fremantle Council you had better join the football club. In one year, for instance, almost all the North Fremantle councillors served on the football club's committee.

**Samuel Cookson**

The fans were fanatical. Samuel Cookson, for instance, went to all games wearing a black and white waistcoat, had one trouser leg torn off at the

***HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPH OF GILBERT FRASER RESERVE*** *- The picture shows the wooden picket fence built inside the ground. The Gresham Hotel is in the right of the photograph, with the press box between it and the grandstand. The entire oval was originally enclosed by an eight-foot picket fence and the playing arena by a three-foot picket fence. The outer fence was replaced by cyclone wire and the inner fence by cement posts, with a galvanised pipe running*

Image 2: Gilbert Fraser Oval

Image 3: Press Box at North Fremantle Oval (Source unknown)

knee to display a black and white football sock and always carried a railway lamp that he would turn on and swing wildly every time North Fremantle kicked a goal. In 1915, Cookson donated a one-off 5 guinea medal to the WA Football League for umpires to vote 3, 2 and 1 for the 'Fairest and Most Brilliant Player' in each game. The votes were placed in envelopes and counted by the league at the end of the season. It was won by an Aboriginal player for Midland Junction, George Blurton, with 22 votes from East Fremantle's 'Nipper' Truscott with 18 votes. Six years later the Sandover Medal was introduced, building on the idea that Cookson had launched.[9]

It is easier to understand this fanaticism when you know that North Fremantle had some of the greatest players ever to pull on a boot. Players included Phil Matson, for instance, who went on to be named in East Perth's team of the century as captain/coach, Sam Gravenall went home to Victoria as captain/coach of St Kilda, Jim Toohey represented Western Australia 4 times and then played in a Fitzroy premiership team. Dolph Heinrichs became an East Fremantle champion and Albert '100 miles' Franks was a WA and VFL superstar.

**Seven Players**


Image 4: Albert Franks.

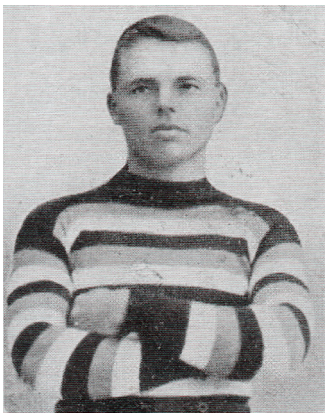
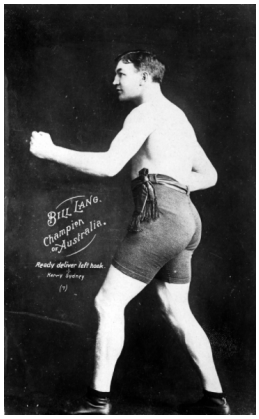


Image 5: Alphonsus "Dolph" Heinrichs

(Player images 4 and 5 by permission of the Rod Baltovich collection)




6: Bill Lang, champion Australian boxer. State Library of South Australia.

Their exploits were not confined to the football field. Billy Orr became secretary-manager of the WA Football League.[10] Bill Lang - or, to give him his correct name, Bill Langfranchini - fought Tommy Burns for the World Heavyweight Championship and was later inducted into the Australian Boxing Hall of Fame for his exploits in the ring.[11] One hundred and thirty six game player Les Charlton became Mayor of North Fremantle.[12] Club delegate J J (Boss) Simons was a prominent politician, journalist, trotting and football administrator, and founder of the Young Australia League.[13] It seemed that everything in North Fremantle revolved around the football team.

Margaret McPherson described the football club this way:

> The North Fremantle Football Club had a name for aggressiveness, supporters were one-eyed and to some outsiders we were a lower socio-economic community. It was a rich community, with the football club made up of decent, hard-working, kind men.[14]

As former State Member for Fremantle Jim McGinty said in 2006:

> You can't exist in Fremantle and not be, at some stage, reminded of the exploits of 'The Mighty Maggies' of North Fremantle because the club's members pervade all walks of Fremantle life.[15]

Back in 1915 at the start of the new football season, the war seemed to be a long way off. 'Enthusiast', the *Fremantle Herald's* football writer, greeted the coming 1915 football season, with the words:

> There is no shadow of doubt whatever that the national game is with us once more. On every open space the youth of the country is afoot with the elusive leather, secretaries have come forth from their summer seclusion, and clubmen are stiffening their sinews and summoning up their blood for the stirring times ahead. Training rooms are now beehives of industry and small talk.[16]

He made no mention of three North Fremantle footballers - Jackie Newham, 'Chum' Whittle and William Byfield - who had been among the first to sign up for the war in August, September and October 1914. Such was the public's frame of mind that everybody knew they would surely be back for the end of the 1915 season.[17]

As the North Fremantle Football team ran on to what is now called the Gilbert Fraser Reserve for the start of the 1915 season, on Saturday 24 April, nobody knew that their two champion ruckmen, Whittle and Newham, were preparing to storm the beaches of ANZAC Cove the very next day.

**Gilbert Fraser**

Image7: Gilbert Fraser

At the Fremantle Post Office, letter carrier Gilbert Fraser knew everybody in North Fremantle.[18] The young man was destined to represent the district in the WA Parliament for 30 consecutive years. The North Fremantle Oval was re-named after him in acknowledgement of his 27 years as president of the football club.[19] In those early days of the war he was in the front line of delivering information.

North Fremantle were 5 games into the 1915 season when the news swept across the North Fremantle community that the club's 2 champion ruckmen, Newham and Whittle, were dead. Private Arthur Gilbert 'Chum' Whittle, a 27-year-old coachbuilder from Preston Point Road in East Fremantle, died just 7 days after the Gallipoli landing. Over 6 seasons he had been a 78-game champion ruckman who was said to do his side 'a lot of good and not a little evil'.[20] He also was a champion WA yachtsman. [21] Second Lieutenant John 'Jackie' Drummond Newham was killed just 13 days after landing at Gallipoli, during the famous charge of the 2nd Infantry near Krithia. He had played 26 games in two seasons. Newham had been captain of Melbourne's exclusive Wesley College, and captain of their cricket, football, athletic, rowing and shooting teams before being transferred to WA as sports master of Scotch College.[22] He was just 25 when he died.

You can imagine the impact the devastating news of these losses had on the remaining football players.

A week later the postboy rode down John Street and stopped at the home of Mrs White with the news that her 20-year-old son Tom had bled to death from Turkish bullets to his abdomen, thigh and legs on Dead Man's Ridge at Gallipoli.[23] The White family were prominent members of the football club and the news swept through the team.

Five times the postboy cycled up to Mrs White's front door as one after the other the news arrived that her other four sons, George, David, Clarence and Bruce had been shot and wounded.[24] If that wasn't enough for the White family, and the football club, the postboy arrived a sixth time. Mrs White's only daughter had married William John Westergaard before he went to war and their son was born while he was overseas. The postboy arrived to say Westergaard had been shot and killed.

Over the next few weeks a further 20 players walked off the North Fremantle oval and signed up, so many that the football club had to forfeit the final four games of the 1915 league season. They had simply run out of players. The club sought and was granted a three-year exemption from

league competition 'on the understanding that League readmission would occur when the club could firmly re-establish itself.'[25]

In 2008, Australian football celebrated its 150th anniversary since the first game was played in 1858. Today's club, wearing the same black and white jumpers, playing on the same oval, using the same change-rooms under the same historic grandstand as the original club, but now in the A Grade competition of the WA Amateur Football League (since renamed the Perth Football League), decided it would celebrate the anniversary by holding special ANZAC services at every gravesite and memorial of these fallen footballers at both Gallipoli and the Western Front.

At the Cape Helles Memorial on the tip of the Gallipoli Peninsula, North Fremantle footballers remembered Jackie Newham and at the Lone Pine Cemetery wreaths were laid on the grave of 'Chum' Whittle. On The Western Front, 35 young footballers held ceremonies at the site of the battle of Mouquet Farm, where 20 year old centre half forward Private John Morris (Jack) Toohey and 27 year old centreman Private William Byfield died; at the mud and horror of Passchendaele, where 36 year old ruckman/forward Private Frederick Charles Shingler, 25 year old wingman Private Victor Ernest Ellement and 35 year old half forward flanker Lance Corporal Walter James Backshall lost their lives at the battle of Flers, where twenty six year old midfielder Private Samuel Thomas Podger was killed; at Fleurbaix, where nineteen year old ruckman/forward Lance Corporal William John Hewby died; at the second battle of Villers-Bretonneaux, where twenty two year old midfielder Lance Corporal William Arnold Spencer Thomas of the 51st Battalion died on 24/25 April 1918; and at Polygon Wood, where twenty seven year old miner Lance Corporal William Thomas Maddern was killed.[26] To complete the services, in April 2019 the club visited the gravesite of Royal Air Force Flight Lieutenant John Leonard Dunstan who is buried at the Highgate Cemetery in England.

Some people question why a football club of today, with no personal connection to these soldiers, would go to such lengths to honour their former players, even for some to suggest it was promoting war. Well, there are three reasons, one is the compelling stories of each of the 12 footballers killed from the club, another comes from a former Prime Minister, Paul Keating, and finally there is Mrs White.

**Maddern's Gravesite**

Let me just talk about Lance Corporal Will Maddern and you may then

ask yourself whether it is important to remember this man.[27] When he enlisted he was newly married. He would never see his daughter, Evelyn, who was born after he left for the Western Front.

Maddern had been a tall centre half forward. He was fit, fast and fearless and the Army recognised this by giving him one of the worst jobs on the Western Front battlefield, that of runner. Time and again at the call 'Runner!' Will would crawl forward, take the note from his superior, climb out of the trench and run as fast as possible. He won a Military Medal for his bravery at the bloody killing field called the Windmill Site, continually running messages through the hail of bullets. But his luck ran out. Will Maddern was shot and killed at Polygon Wood on his 28th birthday. Australia's official war historian, Charles Bean, said the Windmill Site marks a ridge 'more densely sown with Australian sacrifice than any other spot on earth,' with 23,000 Australian casualties, almost 7,000 killed, on that little plot of land.[28] So symbolic was this place that after the war the Australian Government negotiated with the French to buy the site. When the decision was made 75 years after the end of World War I to bring home the body of an unknown soldier taken from a cemetery at Villers-Bretonneux to be interred in the Australian War Memorial, dirt from the Windmill Site was flown 17,000 kilometres to Canberra.[29] In the week before our young current footballers left for the Western Front an email arrived at the football club, amazingly from a relative of Will Maddern asking if the club had any information on him because his family was on its way to the Western Front to visit his gravesite. They were simply amazed to find that a little amateur football club in North Fremantle was also planning a visit to the same gravesite to honour Will Maddern. The family emailed back.

> This is extraordinary. My wife sent off the email on a chance and lo and behold a reply. Real lump-in-the-throat stuff for us I can tell you. We are visiting Ypres later this year and taking our daughter and three grandsons to trace my grandfather's steps through the campaigns of the Somme and Belgium. I grew up without knowing my grandfather, as did my mother who was only one year old when her dad, Will, died on the Western Front. This kind of story must have been the norm for so many of these men and boys; they gave up so much for this country of ours. The fact that your club is taking a group of young men from the old club to visit the graves of their predecessors is a deeply touching tribute to both them and to the spirit of tradition in your club. We are deeply touched by this project. I rather fancy that Will Maddern would have been amazed to think that, ninety-one years after his death, his old team would come to pay him a visit. I am

> sure Will's tale is not too different from those of many of his generation who went off to serve our country, but it is a gruelling and confronting litany of deprivations, hardships, raw courage, grit and determination. Their stories truly deserve the telling and for all of us who have had the incredible privilege of growing up freely in this great country, it seems to me we have a duty to pass them on to the next generations. Someone has to bear witness to the loss of so many grandfathers, fathers, brothers, and sons.

When the club got to Will Maddern's gravesite at the military cemetery on the Menin Road they were gob-smacked to find an envelope there addressed to the North Fremantle Amateur Football Club with the inscription in Will Maddern's own handwriting. Inside the envelope was a piece of paper with just 4 words – 'Thank you, Will Maddern' - again, in his handwriting. Very strange. It took a little while to work out that his family had photocopied some of Will's letters home and carefully cut out individual words from his letters, and then meticulously assembled them to create the soldier's supposed message.

Now that second point. Former Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating said this in his address at the ceremony for the Unknown Soldier at the Australian War Memorial:

> In the long shadow of these upheavals, we gather to ponder their meaning and to commemorate the values that shone in their wake: courage under pressure, ingenuity in adversity, bonds of mateship and, above all, loyalty to Australia.[30]

He went on:

> We have gained a legend: a story of bravery and sacrifice and, with it, a deeper faith in ourselves and our democracy, and a deeper understanding of what it means to be Australian. It is not too much to hope, therefore, that this Unknown Australian Soldier continues to serve his country - he might enshrine a nation's love of peace and remind us that in the sacrifice of the men and women whose names are recorded here there is faith enough for all of us.

As Keating spread the soil from the Windmill Site over the coffin of the Unknown Soldier he proclaimed: 'He is all of them, and he is one of us.'

Well, so is Will Maddern, and so are all the 12 North Fremantle footballers who gave up their lives. It is about history, about our club history, about your history.

So what about Mrs White? So determined was she that her sons not be forgotten that she rallied friends, neighbours, and the community generally to start a fund to assist in building a memorial to the lost men, and

footballers.[31] The widows and bereaved of North Fremantle went door to door asking for donations, they held dances, and held fetes, and organised food and clothing stalls in the streets, to raise enough money to help build a memorial to their lost men, the first to be erected in Fremantle.

**Today's Footballers at Fallen Soldiers' Memorial**

That Fallen Soldiers' Memorial is on the old Perth-Fremantle road, now known as Queen Victoria Street, North Fremantle, near the old Weeties factory where every Anzac Day the players, officials and members of the North Fremantle Football Club gather at 9am for a 30-minute service of remembrance. Schoolchildren from the North Fremantle Primary School introduce the short service with a story about one of the footballers.

May I conclude with the words of C.E.W. Bean, editor of *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*.

> What these men did, nothing can alter now,
> The good and the bad, the greatness and the smallness of their story will stand.
> Whatever glory it contains nothing now can lessen.
> It rises, as it will always rise, above the mist of ages, a monument to great-hearted men; and, for their nation a possession for ever.[32]

Fremantle Studies Day, 2018

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# 'Working Class' Organisations in Fremantle in the Late Nineteenth Century

Bob Reece

The mechanics' institutes, literary institutes and schools of arts movement flourished in Britain from the early 1820s, numbering no less than two hundred organisations with a membership of 25,000 by 1841.[1] Quickly taken up in the major towns of the Australian colonies, Hobart (1827), Sydney (1833), Newcastle (1835), Adelaide (1838), Maitland and Melbourne (1839), Brisbane (1840), Perth (1851), Fremantle (1851) East Fremantle (1901) with Guildford, Albany and Greenough between (1853-1867), it was fostered by upper class urban elites for the 'improvement' of the more aspirational members of the working class.

The institutes did not act like craft guilds or trade unions to further their members' interests by negotiating minimum wages and hours and conditions of work with employers. Their upper class founders were strongly opposed to what had been called 'combinations', or trade unions, membership of which had not long since been a hanging offence in Britain. They wanted to improve the technical knowledge of the working class in a fraternal social *milieu* in which 'Jack' did not need to prove that he was 'as good as his master'. Ordinary membership tended to consist of those more skilled workers and artisans who aspired to self-employment and the social respectability that went with it. At the same time, management committee membership brought prestige for those members of the social elite who

regarded leadership of organisations like these as their prerogative.

It was hoped by their founders that these organisations would bring together employers and workers in a mutually respectful relationship conducive to social and political harmony. Political discussion was quietly discouraged, but it is difficult to say to what extent this prevented the airing of views on the more controversial subjects of the day, such as responsible government, women's rights and overseas shipping cartels. Beyond membership lists, annual reports and other newspaper accounts of their activities, there are few records extant and almost none of a personal nature.

**Working Class**

The use of the term 'working class' in relation to Fremantle's population during this period is problematic, as indeed is 'upper class'. Fremantle was primarily a port and services centre where employment was mostly in lightering, wholesaling and retailing of consumer goods, and in the hospitality 'industry' catering mostly to seafarers. Masons and carpenters were in keen demand, with something like 90 per cent of the town's buildings constructed of local stone and timber. These skilled 'operatives' or 'mechanics', some of whom became prosperous building contractors (notably, J.J. Harman), were relatively secure in their employment and ability to command good wages. They would have been seen by their 'social betters' as the most promising recruits for membership of the bodies set up on their behalf.

**Ward and Nadel**

Historian George Nadel, author of *Australia's Colonial Culture* (1957), pointed to the institutes movement as part of a strong urban social tradition in colonial Australia that preceded the 'bush' or 'outback' tradition outlined by historian Russell Ward in his influential book, *The Australian Legend* (1956). Focusing on the egalitarian ethos of miners, shearers and other itinerant, semi-skilled bush workers, the 'legend' was seen by Ward as being boosted during the late 19th century by writers of the Sydney *Bulletin* 'school' intent on emphasising what was unique about Australia's physical environment and the social values of its by then majority native-born population. Nadel, on the other hand, believed that the urban social elites in colonial Australian society were intent on reproducing the British class system with its deferential ethos of 'knowing your place' and other mechanisms of social control.

The three self-styled 'working class' organisations that waxed and waned in Fremantle during the second half of the nineteenth century have not attracted much interest among historians of Western Australia. Even Fremantle's first historian, J.K. Hitchcock, had little to say about them, due no doubt to the paucity of sources and the challenge of disentangling their complex inter-relationships.[2]A notable exception was the survey of early Western Australian literature by B J Smith, who claimed in his 1962 article that they were 'the most outstanding cultural achievements of the 1860s'. Further contributions were made during the State's Bicentennial in 1979 by Bruce Bennett in his edited collection, *The Literature of Western Australia*, and C.T. Stannage in his *The People of Perth* which explored the history from 1851 of the Swan River Mechanics' Institute, portraying it as an expression of the need for 'free' workers to differentiate themselves from the 'bond' population once convict transportation had got under way. Strongly supported by senior government officials like Surveyor-General J S Roe, 'it aimed to provide facilities for the 'improvement and recreation of mechanics, excluding from its discussions all questions 'of controversial theology, party politics, or of an immoral tendency'. By the end of 1852 it could boast a fine building in Howick (later Hay) Street, providing a hall, meeting rooms, library and minerals museum.

**Fremantle**

Patricia Brown in her *The Merchant Princes of Fremantle: The Rise and Decline of a Colonial Elite* (1996) looked at the three Fremantle bodies in the context of the port town's merchant elite, but under-played the significance of the Working Man's Association.[3] More recently, former Fremantle Local History Librarian, Pam Harris, has shown that they formed the nucleus of what became the Fremantle City Library in 1958.[4] The absence of the association's early minute books limits what can be said about the discussions that took place, but a good deal might be learnt from the diaries of the Congregational Church's Reverend Joseph Johnston, one of the formative influences of the Mechanics' Institute and a key figure in its merger with the Working Man's Association in August 1868 to form the Fremantle Literary Institute. The subject calls for more detailed study, but in the meantime it will be useful to survey what is known about the Fremantle organisations.

**Fremantle Mechanics' Institute**

The earliest of these was the Fremantle Mechanics' Institute, which was

established at a meeting at the long room of Wellard's (later the Cleopatra) Hotel in High Street on 30 July 1851, just six months after the Swan River Institute was formed in Perth. The meeting was chaired by the Surgeon to the Convict Establishment, Dr. Shipton, while Government Resident, Richard McBryde Broun, was nominated President and Governor Fitzgerald Patron in their absence.[5] These senior officials, together with members of the town's commercial elite (popularly known as 'The Merchant Princes'), who dominated its economic, political and social life, saw it as their duty to 'uplift' the more skilled and literate members of the working class. They were encouraged to improve themselves by attending lectures by experts on mostly practical subjects and by consulting books and magazines held by the Institute's modest library.

According to Fremantle's senior 'merchant prince', Charles Alexander Manning, the Institute was to have as its objects

> the improvement of its members in the various departments of science in which they are employed, by the establishment of a suitable Library and Reading Room, the delivery of Lectures on the Mechanical and Fine Arts, and the exhibition of models and drawings, illustrating them, and the formation of a Museum.[6]

Significantly, the Institute did not refuse membership to ticket-of-leave men or expirees, as the Swan River Mechanics' Institute had done. Nor did it explicitly forbid discussion of a theological or political nature.

At one of the Institute's early meetings in November 1851, which was graced by the presence of Governor Fitzgerald and the Comptroller of the Convict Establishment, Capt. E.V.Y. Henderson, and their ladies, The Reverend Dr. Barry lectured the audience on works of art exhibited at the Crystal Palace in North London which he had recently visited. [7] The meetings were first held in a warehouse rented from Captain Daniel Scott, on the corner of Cliff Street and Dalgety Street (now Croke Lane) and next to merchant Lionel Samson's house. The Institute was later allocated Lot 564 on Adelaide Street. by the colonial government, which it then exchanged for Lot 433 on the corner of South Terrace and Collie Street.

The exodus of workers to the Victorian gold fields over the next few years meant that membership of the Institute fell off dramatically and virtually collapsed in 1854. Its activities were revived in 1857 when membership and resources were boosted by absorbing the local book club and its thirty or forty members. In November there were lectures on the 'Fourth Estate' (i.e., newspapers and journals) by James Kemp and the 'Steam Engine' by

Assistant Surveyor William Phelps.

Edifying and 'improving' as these lectures may have been for some of those attending, but the Fremantle correspondent of *The Perth Gazette* was critical of the lecturers as public speakers. Kemp's 'powers of speech', he complained in November 1857, were 'rapid and he was therefore imperfectly followed', while Phelps' '*delivery* did not appear to give general satisfaction, and the audience was very small - not half the attendance of the former lecture'.[8]

English literature was introduced into the Institute's programme in January 1858 when L.Y. Coleman gave the first of a series of lectures 'to a numerous and respectable audience' on the works of Shakespeare, providing anecdotes from his own travels. *The Perth Gazette* also reported that 'a large quantity of popular works' had been ordered from England, including books by Captain Frederick Marryat, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, William Harrison Ainsworth, Benjamin Disraeli, William Thackeray and Charles Dickens. A series of fortnightly lectures was planned for the winter months and a decision was made to erect the Institute's own building at an estimated cost of £260.[9] The 'gentrification' of the working class was already proceeding within the Institute, leading it to resemble what its critics dismissively referred to as 'a gentlemen's reading room'.[10] By then, the upper class membership of the Institute had virtually taken over control of its Management Committee, leading to a loss of working class support. Colonial Secretary Frederick Barlee consequently withheld part of the colonial government's modest annual grant of £50 to the Institute on the grounds that it had become 'a book club and reading room for the upper classes'.

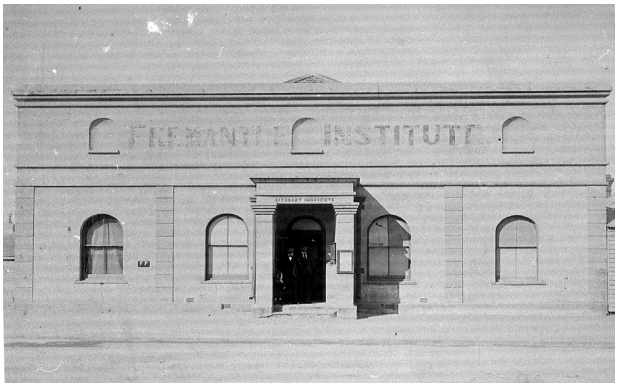


Image 1: Fremantle Working Man's Association building, late 1860s, LH00812, FHC

**The Working Man's Association**

The split in Institute membership that led to the formation of the Western Australian Working Man's Association in May1862 reflected the organisational dysfunctionality produced by class differences. This is how its Committee explained what had happened in a memorial presented to the Governor:

> The direction of the Fremantle Mechanics' Institute being at present greatly swayed by the upper classes, the lower [classes] do not feel for the Institute as theirs – thus antagonism or indifference spring up, producing apathy in those who stand aloof and discouragement in those willing to act.
>
> Experience teaches [us] that the higher and lower classes never do work well together in the conduct of Public Affairs.
>
> Harmonious vigorous direction in matters of an intellectual caste depends on unity of purpose, absence of reserve and unconstrained independence; these require that the managers feel themselves on a footing of equality directing that which concerns themselves. An efficient mixed management by both classes is impossible, tastes differ, the action of an inferior in the presence of his superior becomes constrained and degenerates into mere patronage on the one hand, dependence on the other, resulting in indifference.[11]

The Institute subsequently gathered a healthy membership of 168 with its promise to 'afford rational amusement, combined with information for the working classes, during their leisure hours'. One of its main attractions was a subscription library which made available 847 books to members.

Its first public function took place on 5 June 1862 at the Fremantle Boys' School Room, with more than four hundred people present, including the Anglican Bishop of Perth, clergy of other denominations and 'a fair sprinkling of the leading families'. So strong was the popular interest that many people had to be turned away. The entertainment featured readings by the versatile David Hancock from Shakespeare's *Macbeth,* Dickens, and Allingham's *Fortune's Frolic*, a popular two-act farce first performed in London's West End in 1860. Musical items were rendered by the Association's Choral Society, accompanied by the Fremantle Volunteer Band, courtesy of its Commandant, Charles Manning. [12]

The association's Committee of Management was to consist of 'mechanics', but defined more narrowly now as those men

> whose chief means of subsistence is derived from the labour bestowed on raw products of nature or the materials elaborated therefrom, and on the various workings up of the same, artistic or otherwise, for the food, raiment, habitation, convenience and comfort of civilized life, whether as

> daily labourers therein or as the employers of such labour, in other words, as mechanics or master mechanics, also traders not being wholesale. [13]

According to *The Perth Gazette's* report of 8 September 1864, the association had been 'based … on principles of improvement and recreation for those who would otherwise squander their money in drink or play [gambling]'.[14] Its stated aims were 'to afford rational amusement, combined with information, for the working classes, during their leisure hours'. Much of the initiative seems to have come from the Revd. Joseph Johnston, who served as the association's Treasurer, and the Reverend G.J. Bostock of the Church of England who served as President. Its first quarters were in a building in Pakenham St., moving to a new building on the corner of Cliff Street and Croke Lane and, finally, to a sizeable, purpose-built premises on the corner of Market Street, South Terrace and Collie Street in late1899.

With an early membership of 151 members, no less than forty-four of whom were of the 'bond' or ex-convict class, the association's membership grew to three hundred within a couple of years.[15] Enjoying the patronage of Charles Manning, who had also supported the Mechanics' Institute, it received a subsidy of  from the government to support its library. This became a bone of contention in July1863 when another leading merchant and member of the Legislative Council, Lionel Samson, complained to Colonial Secretary Frederick Barlee of the Governor's refusal to give the Institute its customary grant. According to *The Inquirer,*

> The Colonial Secretary replied that the latter was now merely a reading and Book Society, the former being the only association approaching to a Mechanics Institute. Further, the Governor considered The Working Man's Association, though not exactly a Mechanics' Institute, more nearly approached it than the other Society, its object being to assist the lower class of people, a class whom it seemed were not acceptable to the Fremantle Institute.[16]

Among the association's most popular activities were 'Penny Readings' held every month on a Friday evening and drawing on the association's library. This was a form of popular entertainment which enjoyed a vogue in mid-Victorian England with the rapid increase in popular literacy. Among the association's early  offerings was W J Robson's 'Chat about London and London People' on 5 September 1864. The evenings were so well-attended that the Fremantle correspondent of *The Perth Gazette* wondered why the Mechanics' Institute, by contrast, seemed to be moribund:

> What are the committee of the Mechanics Institute thinking about? The whole winter has passed away without a single entertainment being given

> by them. Are there now no lecturers in our town, or any one that will kindly assist them? Surely they are not in the same fix as the wise man of Athens 'who about the city ran, with a lantern in the midst of the day, to find an honest man'.[17]

Nevertheless, things had not been going so well for the association, either. The Fremantle correspondent of *The Perth Gazette* reported as early as September 1864 that there had already been a division in the Committee, leading to the resignation of the President and 'a number of its most influential members'. [18] There had been instances of such 'instability' before and the correspondent put it down to 'the want of that essential knowledge and aptness for business on the part of the majority of the committee, to regulate and manage such an Institute'. He suggested re-modelling the body and appointing a new committee.[19]

Image 2: Pencil sketch of Leopold Redpath, attributed to William Egley, 1839. National Portrait Gallery, London.

Part of the 'instability' referred to resulted from the unexpected loss of its Secretary (and one of its principal founders), the celebrated convict expiree, Leopold Redpath (1816-1891), who had been sent back to the Convict Establishment on 21 September 1864 for some unstated 'misdemeanour'.

Redpath was a former London lawyer's clerk and Great Northern Railway shares swindler who defrauded his employers of more than a million pounds over eight years before being caught in Switzerland and sentenced at London's Old Bailey on 5 January 1857 to transportation for life to Western Australia.[20] Redpath had picked up a good working knowledge of the law and court procedure in his time, frequently appearing as a litigant in the Fremantle magistrates' court. All this made him a thorn in the side of the local magistrates who were none too gentle in their treatment of convict ticket-of-leave men and expiree offenders whose 'bond' status rendered them ineligible to represent themselves in court. [21]

In his letter of 10 October 1864 to *The Perth Gazette*, association Chairman William Brown took the opportunity to cite the Governor's grant and the interest taken by him and Barlee in the association as

> the first occasions in which the desire of the really Working Men of Western Australia, for moral and intellectual improvement, was officially recognised by those who have the rule over them, and these therefore will form the brightest landmarks in the memories of those who, after all, are the backbone of the colony. The working men have not the tongue of the learned, neither can they obtain easy access to the great to plead their own cause.

Ending this peroration with a rhetorical flourish, Brown promised that despite all efforts to 'check' the progress of the association,

> we will still endeavour, under Providence, to keep the sturdy little vessel afloat, even if others should be found insufficiently infirm of purpose, uneven in temperament, or timid of heart, to abandon a cause which has for its ultimate object one of the greatest successes which can crown a lifetime of anxiety, viz., the moral and intellectual improvement of the most isolated portion of mankind.

As we have seen, the association was more authentically working class in its stated aims than the Mechanics' Institute had proved to be, boasting in its Fifth Annual Report in 1867 that

> although at first many opponents had publicly prophesied that this association, arising like the fungus from an unhealthy soil would only appear upon the Surface of Society for a brief space, presently to sink into its original obscurity.

Nothing of the kind had happened. By then it possessed a collection of 4,000 books, while 2,274 newspapers and journals had been used in the Reading Room or in members' homes. It had also organised an ambitious programme of lectures and entertainments, including the ever-popular

Penny Readings, 'for the benefit of the community at large'. The second of these evenings in February 1867 featured the gifted local mimic, David Hancock who, 'as usual, delighted his audience with his clever delineation of Irish character and English rustic humour'.[22]

**The Fremantle Literary Institute**

On 10 August 1868, the year after convict transportation to Western Australia ceased, Fremantle's recently-established *Herald* newspaper announced the formation of the The Fremantle Literary Institute, 'being an amalgamation of the two cultural bodies existing in the town'. Most likely engineered by William Pearse, part-owner and manager of *The Herald* who had served four years as Secretary of the Working Man's Association, the merger of the two bodies brought to an end their uneasy co-existence. *The Herald* also reported that the new body would be offering two evenings each week from 31 August. [23] An ex-convict himself, Pearse was so determined to cast off the 'leper spot' of convictism that he successfully sued the proprietors of *The Inquirer* newspaper, the Stirling brothers, for libel when they published the well-known fact that he was of 'bond' origin. [24]

During the first decade of its existence, the Literary Institute held its meetings in the old Working Man's Association rooms at the corner of Cliff Street and Croke Lane where a semi-retired solicitor, H W Young, acted as honorary librarian. According to local historian J K Hitchcock, an avid auto-didact who used the library extensively during those years,

> he [Young] was rarely in the Institute owing to other engagements. Anyone wanting a book had merely to walk in, take it from the shelf, and enter it in a book kept for that purpose.[25]

In 1879 a modest building intended to serve as a permanent headquarters for the Institute was constructed at a cost of £1,000 on Lot 217A, a triangular piece of land situated on the corner of Market Street, Collie St. and South Terrace. As well as providing a paid librarian, reading room and meetings room for members, the Institute was able to lease parts of the building to the Fremantle Town Trust, the local Road Board and other semi-official bodies until the completion of the Town Hall in 1887 made alternative premises available.

After the Institute's fifteen years of existence, *The Herald* (which had been initially supportive because of Pearse's key role in the merger and his work as its first Secretary) suggested in March 1883 that its early promise had not been fulfilled:

> [The] Fremantle Literary Institute is … noticeable for the indolence and apathy of its management. It consists of a little cheap lending library and an untidy table strewn with periodicals of the nursery–maid [i.e., Mills and Boon] type.[26]

No new books had been purchased during the previous year, only 2369 books and 1258 magazines had been issued and membership was static in a community of four hundred people.

In April, *The Herald* observed testily that despite a well-publicised 'shake-up',

> The recent … flourish of trumpets produced nothing. The only way open to the committee is to get out and be replaced by more energetic members.[27]

The Fremantle Literary Institute had gone the same way as the Mechanics' Institute and the Working Man's Association before it, becoming 'gentrified' at the hands of its more cultivated and socially influential members who were more interested in 'rational amusement' (i.e., genteel entertainment) than practical self-improvement. By providing a programme of fortnightly 'shilling concerts' during the winter months, it developed a popular following. A moderately favourable review appeared in *The West Australian* on 30 August 1886 of a concert presided over by Mr Justice Alfred Stone and featuring piano solos and duets, recitations and readings. Committee member Michael Samson read 'one of Mrs Caudle's 'famous curtain lectures' on the vicissitudes of married life and Mr. Nugent 'earned some merriment by a recitation in which he expressed his determination to live and die a bachelor'. The programme was something between a penny readings and a glee club or 'old village choir', including comic songs of a sometimes *risqué* flavour.[28] The fortnightly events continued to be a success and were an important source of income for the Institute.[29]

The gold rushes and subsequent influx of workers from the eastern colonies and overseas stimulated membership for a time, but by the late 1890s the Institute was in a bad way. Dr Richard Rendle, its Vice-President and Resident Medical Officer of the Government Hospital in Fremantle, complained in a letter to *The West Australian* of 9 July 1898 that he was unable to fulfil his duties properly because the organisation had departed from its original objects:

> Instead of being an institution to help the masses in acquiring technical and scientific knowledge, it has degenerated too largely into a circulating library for novel readers.

Nor was this necessarily the fault of the Committee:

> The general public has regarded it throughout more as a circulating library of light literature, and has taken little interest in its efficient management. On this account the control of its affairs has repeatedly been allowed to fall into the hands of its poorly paid officers, with the result that the papers, magazines and books have been appropriated by members and others, its subscriptions have been allowed to fall into arrears or have been misappropriated.

Consequently, Rendle added,

> The Institute has been repeatedly insolvent and would have died out more than once but for repeated grants from Government and the perseverance and generosity of a few public spirited men. It is now in a fairly prosperous condition, and it seems a pity that some determined attempt should not be made to develop in some degree its original good objects '.

The Literary Institute took on a new lease of life as a library with the laying of the foundation stone of a fine new two-storey headquarters on the South Terrace site on 15 March 1899 by the new President, Elias Solomon, M L A for East Fremantle. Setting a new, more genteel tone for the Institute as a cultural body was a chamber music concert in October of that year that featured the Misses Parsons performing Haydn, Schumann,

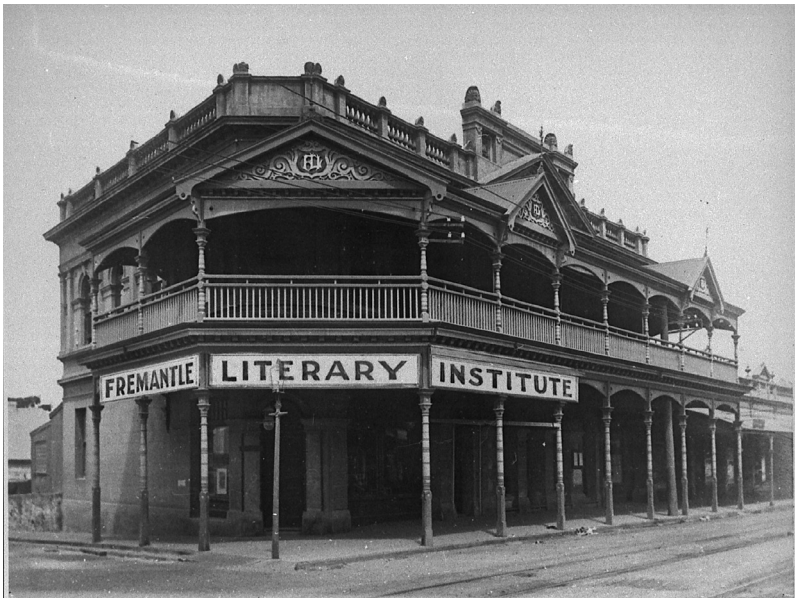


Image 3: Fremantle Literary Institute, n.d. LH001401, FHC

Mendelssohn, Brahms and other composers, supplemented by more popular songs such as 'Because of Thee' and 'The Spanish Gipsy' rendered by Miss Louie Legge and 'Thour't Passing Hence' and 'Ailsa Mine' by Mr. J. Ernest Andrew. Nothing could more clearly have emphasised the

Institute's abandonment of its working class character for something unmistakeably middle class.

Charles Frost, Fremantle branch manager of *The West Australian* and *The Western Mail* from 1901, who was elected President in 1911 after serving nine years on the Institute's Committee, was able to expand its collection of books to more than 10,000 by 1912. From then until the late 1930s they were looked after by its secretary, Harry Raymond, who continued to live rent-free with his family at the rear of the building after retirement and was one of the town's best-known 'identities'.[30]

In 1947, Fremantle City Council took over the assets of the by then moribund Institute, notably the building which became known as the 'Evan Davies Library' after the local councillor and Labor Party stalwart. He had instigated the move on the understanding that it would provide a comprehensive library service for the town's rate-payers.

The Institute's role as anything other than a subscription library and venue for genteel musical events had long since disappeared in Fremantle where working men now joined trade unions to further their interests and were more concerned with industrial issues and strike action than self-improvement.

**Conclusion**

Organisations dedicated to the 'improvement' of the working class, inspired and led by members of Fremantle's upper class, were ultimately dominated by them for want of sustained working class interest and management ability. All three organisations had their origins in the well-meaning but patronising and self-serving philanthropy of the port town's mercantile elite, but were doomed by the very class differences that they were intended to ease. Nevertheless, they were to provide the nucleus of Fremantle's government-supported municipal library as well as technical, vocational and adult education services.

Reflecting rapid social change and the lessening of class differences by the end of the nineteenth century, the Evan Davies Library served as lecture hall and reading room, literary institute, public lending library and municipal library. More recently it served as the venue for *Kulcha*'s musical entertainments, followed by a coffee shop franchise and up-market pub on Fremantle's 'Cappuccino Strip'. These different incarnations are all strands of Fremantle's unique social fabric.

Fremantle Studies Day, 2017

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# The Suffering Begins: Returned Soldiers and the Aftermath of World War One in Western Australia

**Leigh Straw**

***Special Care Notice:***
*This paper includes descriptions of trauma, suicide and violence.*

On Friday 15 November 1918, the *Daily News* reported the 'joyous welcome' that awaited returned soldiers arriving in Fremantle that morning:

> Eight hundred lean, bronzed men, wearing the packs and accoutrements they have borne through Egypt, Gallipoli, France and Belgium, landed at the Gateway of Australia — Fremantle — this morning. From, the moment the first four swung through the wharf entrance gates until an hour, later, when they entrained for Perth, cheering never ceased. Their welcome to their homeland could not have been heartier, nor their happiness greater. The West Australian Anzacs were at first to have headed the procession through the main streets, but they begged off. They did not want the crowds, but only to be with their own again.[1]

Their desire to be with their loved ones again was borne out of the knowledge that they had survived and made it back home when so many others had not. Of the 331,781 Australian men who enlisted in the Australian Infantry Forces and embarked for the war, 60,000 never returned home. Australians suffered just under 5 per cent of all Allied casualties but in terms of their own losses, the war dead were over 14 per cent of all men who had enlisted from August 1914.[2] Western Australia's commitment to the war effort was the highest in the country, by proportion of population. Close to 10 per cent of the state's population enlisted in the war.[3] Of the 32,000 West Australian men who enlisted, 23,700 were repatriated. Yet, while three in four of these men survived the war, over two-thirds returned with mental and physical injuries.[4]

Unlike the cessation of fighting which history can neatly work into beginning and ending dates, in this case 1914–1918, 'return' was a process that involved years and sometimes decades of support. For the men who required mental and physical treatment after demobilisation, their repatriation stories, 'on the periphery of our popular histories of war', require greater understanding of the 'damaged and dependent veteran' who brought the war back home in a confronting and emotional manner.[5]

Seventeen years, after the returned soldiers walked jubilantly through Fremantle, the *Sunday Times* ran a front-page story on the 'Diggers For Whom the War Has Never Ended'. Referring to ex-servicemen receiving treatment for disabilities caused by the war, the newspaper article highlighted the long road to recovery still being experienced by men in the 1930s. In the various homes and institutions visited by the reporter, former soldiers told their stories. So many were still caught in the thralls of coping as best they could with physical and mental trauma. One man had not been able to walk since he was injured in the back on the Western Front in 1917. Yet, there was also resilience: 'despite their disabilities, they are fighters still'.[6] Collectively, however, the men carried the scars of war about their bodies and minds and were 'a reminder of those horrible days of 1914–18 on Gallipoli, in France, Palestine and other theatres of war'. For them, the war had no end.

In the years following World War One, returned servicemen and their families experienced and coped with the aftermath of war in a variety of ways. There were silences, breakdowns, years of treatment, and some men never recovered. Their families shared in the trauma of war's aftermath. Andrew John Straw was one of these returned soldiers. He arrived in Fremantle in July 1919 and stayed on in the port city, before marrying in Perth in 1921 and later returning to his hometown of Collie. Andrew suffered illnesses during active service on the Western Front from July 1916, ranging from sceptic throat to sceptic heels.[7] When he returned from the war, Andrew set up a new life with his wife and four children. Yet, as his digger mates would later state, the 'days of his sanity' were when he fought in the war. Afterwards, he was a changed man.[8] On 24 July 1929, ten years after his return from the war, Andrew Straw shot his neighbour, Muriel Pope, dead and turned the gun on himself. He died in hospital two days later. His wife, Mary, was expecting their fifth child.[9] Muriel Pope was herself a war widow after her husband, Percy, died from tuberculosis in 1928.

It was the shocking discovery of this story in the newspaper archives that led to my own research into the war's aftermath. Our family knew nothing of the murder-suicide in Collie in 1929. After years of looking at state and national war memorials with my husband – keen to find mention of a Straw family member – I had found a personal connection with World War One but it was not the story we had expected. In my efforts to uncover more of Andrew Straw's story, I discovered the stories of many other men who struggled to adjust to civilian life in the months and years after World War One.

World War One remains a foundational story in the history of Australia. The war, it has been argued, provided the newly federated Australian nation with a national story and legend that ordinary Australians could identify with. In the decades following Australia's 'baptism of fire',[10] World War One has featured in national identity and nationalism. It is a story grounded in the Anzac legend that has been used to bind the nation, an imagined community of citizens, around a shared sense of history.[11] Despite recent criticism of the militarisation of Australian history and national identity, World War One dominates popular understandings of the 'birth of the nation'.[12] In fact, as Carolyn Holbrook aptly states, 'the extraordinary currency of the Anzac legend in contemporary Australian society is a striking phenomenon'.[13]

In an effort to account for the consequences of physical and mental breakdowns brought on by war service, recent historical works have generated greater discussion about the realities of war and its legacies for individuals and families into peacetime. The works of Joy Damousi, Bill Gammage, Ken Inglis, Marina Larsson, Alistair Thomson and Bart Ziino, for example, address the importance of memory, mourning, commemoration, repatriation and disability in war history and its social impacts.[14] This is exemplified in the collective work *Anzac Legacies: Australians and the Aftermath of War*.[15] The stories of men living with the legend featured in the works of Marina Larsson and Alistair Thomson. Such personal and family stories extend war history beyond Armistice to include the hard years that followed for individuals and families trying to come to terms with the aftermath of war in Australia. This is particularly poignant in the lives of men who were disabled or suffered from deteriorating mental health.[16] Marina Larsson highlights the silent histories that still remain and the neglect of these men and their families in official war history: 'It

is only by admitting to the devastating effects of war on the private lives of Australian families that the true cost of war for the nation can ever truly be understood'.[17]

The war was devastating and left lasting legacies. My own research into the aftermath of World War One on returned soldiers and their families in Western Australia is a history located within the existing scholarship on war and its impacts on society. Michael McKernan's argument in his history of Australian prisoners of war is relevant here too, experiences and consequences of war do not end with an armistice. For some, the war continued to invade civilian and private life in ways that would resonate for years afterwards.[18] War traumatised members of the AIF. In the last few decades, Australian war history and narratives have been influenced by new ideas around war, trauma and victimhood. As Christina Twomey argues, 'war's traumatising effects have been a central trope in the post-1980s incarnation of Anzac'.[19] Personalised stories now feature in war histories and have influenced public interest in the 'traumatised individual' and the veteran as 'victim of war's horrors'.[20]

Over the course of six years of research, I explored the history of repatriation and return through analysis of treatment and suicide as key factors affecting veterans' health and mortality in postwar Western Australia.[21] The search for answers to the Collie murder-suicide of 1929 was the over-arching narrative that bound my focus on tuberculosis, mental health treatment, and suicide. This research raised particular questions in analysing the lives of returned soldiers. In looking at the combat experiences of soldiers on the battlefields, there was the question of the extent to which the war was a contributing factor in postwar breakdowns. What do personal battles with war-related illnesses reveal about state, public and personal histories of sanatorium treatment for returned servicemen? How did the war lead some men to suicide? Overcoming the mental and physical impacts of war proved even harder than combat for some returned soldiers in Western Australia.

In an effort to address these questions, military, hospital, sanatorium, newspaper, and personal records were used to detail postwar lives. Their stories are present in the state records relating to Wooroloo Sanatorium, Edward Millen Home, Claremont Hospital for the Insane, Stromness Hospital and Lemnos Hospital. Veterans' case files, available through the National Archives of Australia, have been an essential part of building individual profiles (a close, socio-biographical study) and mapping the

medical and institutional lives of returned servicemen.

Interviews were also an important part of understanding the personal impacts of war. Oral testimonies, as Alistair Thomson's seminal work on Anzac memories has shown, allow us to understand public legends alongside personal memory.[22] In my interviews with surviving family members, I engaged with people as sources, as eyewitnesses to the past.[23] In doing so, this 'active human relationship'[24] transformed my own practice of history by allowing me to share the stories and experiences on a human level. One of the achievements of oral history is its ability to give a voice to ordinary people who might have previously felt their experiences were not a part of particular social and community histories.

War trauma deeply affected wives, children, families and the wider community. As Joy Damousi's work on war widows has shown, wives experienced the silences, the survivor guilt complexes and trauma as it was lived out in everyday lives.[25] Given the passage of more than 100 years since the start of World War One, I was not able to talk with the wives of returned soldiers but garnered some of their experiences from inquest and newspaper records. I did, however, talk with sons and daughters who have shared details of their lives with their parents and the impacts of the war and its aftermath. What I discovered was the aftermath of the war on the men, their minds and bodies, and the impacts on their family life. I came to understand the experiences of the men who came home; the ones who had to face living with the memories of war.

The war took its toll on the minds and bodies of the men of the AIF. Trench warfare at Gallipoli and on the Western Front riddled whole lines of soldiers with exhaustion, illness and mental stress. Under regular threat from enemy shell and sniper attacks, soldiers also battled against the elements. There was little protection from the seasonal weather – rain, snow and ice in the winter months and the full heat of the sun's rays in summer.[26] It was in these cramped and unhealthy trenches and in the shell holes around them that soldiers were buried under the constant bombardments and suffered what was often irreparable damage to their health. Trapped under sandbags while fighting at Gaba Tepe in Gallipoli, for example, Ernest Corse contracted the tuberculosis from which he would never recover.

Tuberculosis presented a serious health concern for medical authorities in Australia during and after the war. By June 1920, close to 5,000 men

were still receiving treatment for TB in institutions across Australia.[27] In Western Australia, despite initial care at the Fremantle Army Hospital and Perth General Hospital, isolated care was needed for servicemen with more advanced cases of the disease. By the end of 1917, 81 soldiers had undergone treatment for tuberculosis at the sanatorium at Wooroloo.[28] The war further isolated them from the rest of the population and confined much of their suffering to family experiences. Such men did not carry the visible signs of war wounds so that they were respected and supported by the community around them, as demonstrated in regular newspaper articles and letters to newspaper editors, the tubercular soldier has not entered into the popular imagination of the war as much as the maimed, limbless or shell-shocked veteran. Reclaiming these stories in Western Australia allows for greater understanding of the many ways in which the war physically impaired two-thirds of the men who survived. Tuberculosis stories are not as widely known as other war injury histories, but the silent resting places of the men buried in Wooroloo Cemetery remind us that there were returned servicemen who faced a personal battle with broken bodies isolated away from the rest of the community. Isolation and disease marked their post-war lives.

The mental trauma of war carried itself in the minds of men from the battlefields to the landscapes of home. The mental and emotional symptoms often defined as 'shell shock' but more broadly known as war neurosis wore down the mental resolve of ex-soldiers once they no longer had to sustain morale at the front.[29] 'Mental soldiers' forced the medical authorities to reconsider the care offered to individual cases and to look to ways to separate mental treatment and care as per the specific condition of the patient. In doing so, initiative was shown to address ways to better care for mentally impaired veterans that led to wider improvements of mental health care in Western Australia in the decades following World War One.

There was a degree of understanding within the West Australian communities that war wounds were also reflected in the mental health of returned soldiers. Newspaper editors published sympathetic stories about former soldiers and offered their readers an opportunity to gain personal insight from letters received from returned servicemen. The newspapers referred to shell shock as the 'new terror of battle' and the cause of intense mental breakdowns suffered after the war. The returned soldiers were exhausted, the *Geraldton Guardian* reported, and their ability to cope was severely depleted.[30]

Medical and health authorities in Western Australia responded quickly to the challenge of treating mental breakdowns in soldiers. Beds and wards were made available at Claremont Hospital for the Insane and the Inspector General for the Insane looked at proposals to create Repatriation hospitals specifically for mentally unwell soldiers. There was an understanding that ex-servicemen and their families did not want to carry to the social stigma of institutionalisation in lunatic asylums. They did not want to be tarnished as 'asylum-made lunatics'.[31] Home-designed care for returned soldiers was first offered at Stromness Hospital in Cottesloe, along with Kalamunda Convalescent Home which was taken over by the Repatriation Department in 1919. After Stromness closed in 1926, patients were then transferred to Lemnos Hospital in West Subiaco.

Personal battles of living with traumatic war memories – what we now recognise as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) – reveal the devastating impact of World War One on the men who served. When faced with combat stress and exposure to war zones, some soldiers were unable to cope. After returning to their civilian lives and unable to reconcile their experiences with their lives afterwards, ex-servicemen experienced a thwarted sense of belonging and felt that they were burdens on the people close to them. Depression, irregular employment, cuts to their war pension, reaching middle age and continued ill-health and treatment all contributed to feelings of burdensomeness and lack of belonging. Importantly, ex-servicemen were also capable of inflicting lethal self-injury. All of these factors are fundamental to interpersonal-psychological explanations for suicide and are combined in the lives of close to 70 men surveyed in my study of post-war suicide.[32] Suicide took the lives of men who simply could not cope with their war memories. In their suicide stories we see the devastating way in which, for some returned soldiers, the war never ended and the only way for them to find peace was to end their everyday suffering.

In an effort to investigate suicide amongst returned soldiers in Western Australia, I conducted an electronic search of online Australian newspaper archives using the Australian National Library's TROVE search engine. Newspaper archives were prioritised in lieu of the Western Australian government's former policy of destroying inquest records after ten years. For this reason, original inquest records are scarce, though copies have been included in some repatriation files. Caution is important, however, when using newspaper reports as historical evidence. Newspaper stories

are shaped by news values whereby 'editors and journalists will select, produce and present news according to a range of professional criteria that are used as benchmarks to determine a story's "newsworthiness"'.[33] Soldier suicides were thus deemed to have public appeal and public interest as far as the news values of the journalists and editors were concerned. In order to achieve quick public interest, newspapers use sensationalist headlines to accompany 'stories about crime designed to shock, frighten, titillate and entertain'.[34] By virtue of their sensitive content, suicide cases were not written up in the same manner as sensationalist front-page stories or crime reports. However, while respect was accorded to the dead and their families, the newspapers did not spare many details from the police investigation or the inquests. For this reason, news articles are important in setting out a brief profile for the returned soldier (name, age, occupation, war service and family circumstances), and providing the main details of the death and the coroner's findings.

When conducting the analysis of newspaper reports, I restricted the overall search of records to include only West Australian newspapers covering the years from 1915 to 1940.[35] The key identifiers used were: 'returned serviceman suicide', 'returned soldier suicide' and 'war veteran suicide'. Articles were only included in the study if the deceased individual was identified as a returned serviceman and the suicide was given as the cause of death. The initial search produced more than 1,000 newspaper articles that were then assessed for whether or not they directly related to a returned serviceman from the war. Suicide reports were crosschecked against other newspaper articles featuring each individual to corroborate the main details such as name, age, place of death, marital status, method of suicide and explanation. According to the inclusion criteria, 76 suicide cases were identified for returned servicemen from World War One.[36] The conclusions from this sample provide some insight into war-related suicide in the years following individual active service from 1915–1940. I ended the sample in 1940 as it would become complicated by service in World War Two and it provided an accessible number of years to be able to cross-check other public records and private archives.

A lack of belonging led to Thomas Marsh's death in East Fremantle after the war. When Marsh returned from the war in April 1919, he struggled with the transition period and his perceived lack of belonging. Before he left for the war, his only family link in Western Australia was an aunt working at Wooroloo Sanatorium. His parents had died some years before

and his siblings lived in England, America and Canada. During fighting at the Somme in July 1916, Marsh attempted to help the wounded in No Man's Land but was captured by the Germans. He remained a prisoner of war for the rest of the conflict before being repatriated to England where he was hospitalised with bronchitis. When he arrived back in Fremantle, Marsh also carried the mental scars of having been a prisoner of war for two years. Capture by the enemy had thwarted his sense of effectiveness in the war and, as an English migrant, he returned home to few close family members who could offer vital support. On 26 May 1919, a month after his return, Thomas Marsh took his own life in a vacant block of land at Pier Street, East Fremantle.[37]

Guy Lukin, later a farmer at Northam, also never recovered from the mental trauma of the Western Front. The trauma is audible in the words he wrote to his sweetheart, Doris, from the trenches near Ypres in August 1916: 'The shelling is so heavy and it's heart breaking to see fellows badly wounded and unable to get back – they just simply in many cases have to stop there and die'.[38] Guy watched this day in and day out and felt personally responsible as sergeant to the men he sent out to fight. So haunted was he by what he witnessed at the Western Front that his life after the war was severely impaired. War trauma led some returned soldiers to take their own lives and this is what Guy Lukin did in 1930.

Returned soldiers experienced traumatic stress that involved 'a fundamental rift or breakdown of psychological functioning (memory, behaviour, emotion) which occurs as a result of an unbearably intense experience that is life threatening to the self or others'.[39] The ways in which they dealt with their war trauma affected the post-war lives of all of those who served. While some suppressed the memories enough for them not to impact on their ability to cope, other men could not avoid thinking about the war and experienced social, familial or occupational dysfunction.[40] For returned soldiers who could not cope and decided to take their lives, the war had drastically traumatised their 'positive beliefs about the world' and led to a loss of a sense of the importance of family, friends, the future and their own self-worth. Unable to suppress the memories enough and cope, returned soldiers experienced what has now been termed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). While this condition can be the outcome of one devastating single event, men of World War One experienced a complex version of PTSD, meaning myriad complex events that made up their war service, damaged their psyche and created war trauma.[41] While the history

presented here deals specifically with World War One, the devastating impacts of PTSD has ongoing relevance to understandings of the impacts of war on current service men and women.

Analysis of the specific years when returned servicemen died by suicide also reveals some interesting trends. Over a quarter of the men featured in the newspaper sample group took their lives between 1917 and the end of 1921. This coincided with large numbers of men returning from war service. However, an even larger number, close to 40 per cent (or over a third), died by suicide in the five years from 1925–1929. This was before the onset of the Great Depression which exacerbated financial and unemployment problems. In the worst years of the Depression, less than a fifth of returned servicemen took their lives. From the mid to late 1920s, a large number of ex-servicemen had reached middle age and continued to struggle for years to find work or recover from war wounds and injuries. War pensions were increasingly queried and lowered from 1925 and ongoing issues associated with war wounds continued to affect employment. Many of these men had suffered nearly a decade of poor health and unstable employment. In February 1927, an executive meeting of the Returned Servicemen's League of Western Australia declared finding work for ex-servicemen was the organisation's 'most difficult problem' and pleaded for greater fairness in recognising 'war-caused or war-aggravated disabilities'.[42] Two years later, the Federal Congress of the RSL continued to argue against the sudden retrenchment of returned soldiers. It pleaded with the federal government to apply wider permanency to ex-servicemen in the public service over the consideration of colleagues who had not fought in the war.[43]

As much as there was some understanding of war-related suicide in the West Australian community, war widows had to fight hard for recognition, often without success. For many years after her husband's death, Doris Lukin appealed to the Repatriation Commission to reconsider the cause of Guy's death. In a March 1937 letter, seven years after his death, Doris writes: 'I am of the opinion that his [Guy's] war service and wounds engendered such mental condition as caused him eventually to take his own life'. Refused a war pension due to her husband's suicide, Doris continued to petition the Department to recognise his death as war-related. Her request was denied. In what Guy's grandson has described as a great love story, Doris died in 1980 having never remarried or loved anyone else. When she was in her eighties and suffering from dementia, 'she kept calling for Guy', according to family. Their grandson, John, recalls his grandmother waking

one day from a brief nap and asking 'Where's Guy?'[44] She and Guy share a burial plot at Northam Cemetery.[45]

Suicide can be an intensely private experience and family and friends may be completely unaware of the personal struggles that a person is going through. In 15 cases in this sample, family and friends were not aware that the veteran was suicidal. In the other 61 cases, there were external signs of the veteran's inner turmoil. Eight men were described as 'nervous wrecks' or 'nervous' by family or friends, while boarding house owners and occupants attested to a further 10 veterans acting 'erratically'. Eighteen men were 'troubled' or 'troubled greatly' by their war injuries – one of whom was blinded and maimed - and 18 men were maimed and disabled physically. Six men were suffering visibly from what the newspapers called 'shell shock' and none of them had been given treatment in a soldiers' hospital or mental institution. Three men were in a 'chronic state of ill-health', another 5 were 'constantly getting treatment' and another veteran's sister told an inquest in 1926 her brother had 'never been quite normal since his return from the war'.[46] A further 5 men were suffering 'outwardly from the effects of gas' and 8 more were 'outwardly depressed'. It was these outward indicators that continued to thwart each veteran's sense of belonging and increased their perceived sense of being a burden. Added to this was their increased capability for self-harm. Unable to keep their personal struggles private through public battles with readjusting to civilian life, these veterans were thus more susceptible to taking their lives.

An important question that arises is why these men took their lives when other returned servicemen did not.[47] The question of resilience is a fraught one because individuals can seemingly have the same personal and social circumstances and yet manifest very different capacities for adaptation. Risk factors can include stressful situations, the lack of a cohesive and warm family environment, and a person's temperament. However, even when a person has a cohesive and warm family environment, avoids stressful situations, and has a balanced temperament, they can still suicide. Lewis Poad provides an example of this. Going about his usual farm work with his young sons, Alexander and Ray, on the morning of 4 August 1934, Lewis did not show up for breakfast. His wife, Whilimena, went out looking for him and found his lifeless body on the edge of a creek running along their Crooked Brook property, near Boyanup, south of Perth. Lewis Poad had shot himself using a German automatic revolver he brought back as a souvenir from the war. In his final moments, Lewis had scribbled a

note on an envelope. On that cool winter's morning Whilimena read her husband's simple, tragic, and beautiful message: "Dear Wil: I can't stick this any longer. Take care of yourself for the boys till we meet again. Lew."[48] Lewis Poad took his own life but he had also shown immense resilience in trying to adapt back into civilian life and raise a family for over a decade after returning from the war.

In contrast to Poad, Alan Diggins was undoubtedly traumatised by his service at Gallipoli and, as his son, Alan, recalled:

> he got left overnight in No Man's Land, somehow, in between trenches… and he had to lay down…he wasn't hit but he was a wreck, they reckon… bit nervous. He finished up with bronchitis…he was in hospital for a long time…[49]

After the war, Alan Diggins suffered from migraines and nightmares, and would often take long walks alone. Yet, Diggins did not suicide. He was still fit enough to work and to carry on outwardly as he had before the war, with no visible signs of mental and physical injuries. This is the complexity of suicide and why questions continue to surround it. Why did some veterans find resilience and others did not?

Sunday 28 July 1929 was cold and wet as the funeral car brought Andrew Straw's coffin to its final resting place in the Methodist section of Collie Cemetery. Family, friends and dozens of ex-servicemen gathered close together to listen to what they hoped would be comforting words from the Reverend. *Truth* newspaper would later report that the Reverend E R Rodger 'spoke of the understanding forgiveness of the Master'.[50] The war had taken its toll on Andrew Straw. His killing of Muriel Pope was the work of a 'disordered brain' but Andrew had not just snapped in that violent moment, for Andrew's digger friends, the 'days of his sanity' were when he fought in the war. The murder-suicide would have dramatic impacts on how the Straw family dealt with the trauma of it.

Grace Straw was almost twenty when her older brother Andy returned from the war. She married local man, Isaac White in Collie in 1927 and added their nuptials to the list of life events in a family record book gifted to her when she was 15. Grace was 30 when Andrew shot Muriel Pope dead in July 1929. No detail was spared in the local and state newspapers. Andrew Straw's funeral was well attended and days later, Jessie Straw and Mary Straw, Andrew's mother and wife, placed notices in the *Collie Mail*

thanking family and friends for their support. Yet Grace White told her children a completely different story. In this version of events, Andrew was married to Muriel Flanders but while he was away fighting on the Western Front, she took up with another man. Betrayed and caught in the fury of the moment, Andrew shot the other man dead and then killed himself in 1919.[51]

Grace White recorded all immediate family deaths in her record book. The deaths of her parents are listed, along with those of her siblings, but Andy's entry is different. It reads: 'Andrew Straw, Died July'. There is no date, whereas dates are listed for all other family members.[52] Grace's family story does not match the historical records. It's not just that local and national newspapers headlined the murder-suicide of 1929; the stories featured photographs of Muriel and Andrew. The murderer was clearly identified as Collie miner, Andrew Straw. Could the newspapers have identified the wrong man? Was there another Andrew Straw in Collie? There were two unrelated Straw families in town in the 1920s but there was only one Andrew Straw. Andrew Straw's death certificate, identifying him as the son of Jessie Straw and dying by self-inflicted wounds, shows 26 July 1929 as the date of death[53].

The intersection of family and recorded history has created a fractured post-war story. Andrew Straw did not die after the war; he married Mary Brown in Perth in 1921. They had five children, even though Grace told her own children Andrew died childless. In May 2008, Andrew Straw's great-granddaughter posted a notice on a message board on Ancestry.com, asking for information about her grandfather's side of the family. She knew his father, Andrew, had married Mary Brown and came from a mining family in Collie. I came across this notice late in 2013 and made contact with the author. Andrew Straw's wife, Mary, did not deny the identity of the children's father and while the details of his death were not known down the generations, he was still a recognised part of the family. In searching for Andrew Straw, I discovered the resilience of his wife. I have also just discovered in the last year that one of Andrew's children is still alive and living in the north of Western Australia.

The shock of that first moment of recognition remains raw for me. Andrew Straw killed a woman and took his own life. I have visited Muriel Pope's grave at Collie Cemetery, accompanied by other Straw family members, including my three young sons. I now know the headstone was erected by Muriel's children in the years following her death. It is sad to

know Muriel's life ended at the hands of Andrew Straw. His grave, unlike Muriel's, has no headstone. It is unmarked and with no final words of commemoration. It speaks volumes for the pain and trauma of his story. Andrew Straw, along with the other returned servicemen featured in this article, struggled to adjust back into civilian life. Andrew's death reveals the homicidal cost of his having a 'disordered brain' after the war. In the end, however, the circumstances surrounding his death have also served to open my eyes to the wider story of what it meant to return home from a war that continued to impact on the lives of returned soldiers and their families.

In the years following the end of World War One, Western Australia's asylums, hospitals and sanatoriums carried the scars of war through the returned soldiers who wandered their wards. Outside of institutional care, men fought their own personal battles with war trauma that reduced their self-worth and led some to take their own lives. Other men were not hospitalised and while they did not take their own lives, the war trauma remained, seen in nightmares, stressful reactions and silent stories that carried on within families.

For the families of mentally and physically incapacitated ex-servicemen, in particular, the war never receded from view. Wives, parents, siblings and children were all affected. Discharged back into civilian life, returned servicemen and their families lived with the aftermath of war for years afterwards.

For more than thirty years Ada Cook (née Carroll) witnessed the devastating mental toll that war service took on her brother. William Carroll was admitted to Claremont Hospital on 13 September 1917, aged 23. According to his patient details he had suffered a breakdown due to the 'strain of active service'. He had served a week in the trenches in France before he was wounded in the knee. He was hospitalised and entered a quiet period where he was 'reticent, suspicious of everyone, had delusions of being a prisoner'. Sometimes it didn't take weeks at the frontline for soldiers to suffer mental breakdown. Once admitted to Claremont, William Carroll became bad tempered, then vacant, and refused to associate with anyone else. By the end of September 1917 he was intent on escaping and staff saw little improvement. A month later, Carroll remained unsociable and was classified as 'unemployable'. This meant he was in a reduced state and would not be able to actively contribute to society. This affected the health

care that was offered. Ex-soldiers who showed some recovery and were able to work were released quickly and expected to pay their way in civilian life. Carroll reluctantly told staff – he didn't like being questioned – that he was 'still suffering from the effects of his experience in the trenches'. Six months later there was little improvement in Carroll's mental state.[54]

Regularly institutionalised at state mental hospitals after his return to Australia, William Carroll's battle with his war wounds only ended with his death at Lemnos Hospital for Returned Soldiers in 1953. Not long before her brother's death, Ada Cook revealed the impact of the war on her family in a letter to the Medical Superintendent at Hollywood Repatriation Hospital. While her older brother, along with William, 'went to FRANCE to FIGHT for FREEDOM', the cost was always present in her brother's mental state:

> …when the 'Cease Fire' sounds after the war, the suffering of the men and their relatives begins, including all the distressing after effects in the social and economic life of those affected, and we have had enough, particularly my brother, whom I claim to know and understand better than anyone…[55]

The cease fire was only the beginning for Ada and her family in trying to understand and support William in what he was going through in the aftermath of his war service. As much as it is important to commemorate the war dead, it is also imperative that we follow the survivors and their families as they moved into peacetime. Only then will we really understand the full impact of World War One on West Australians.

Fremantle Studies Day, 2018

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# CONTRIBUTORS

## Jane Fraser

Jane Fraser joined Fremantle Press in 2008 as a non-fiction publisher and has been its chief executive since 2010 with a portfolio that includes sales and custom publishing. She began her career in educational publishing in Sydney over 25 years ago before moving into editorial trade publishing. Jane spent five years in San Francisco heading up the editorial office of an international book packaging and co-editions publishing company. During this time she further developed her interest and expertise in the production of large-format photographic books, including landscape photography, art, history, cooking, gardening and natural history titles. For a decade prior to joining Fremantle Press, Jane worked in the corporate communications sector, expanding her business skills working with large international companies.

## Allen Graham

Allen, who is the current President of the Fremantle History Society, is a long standing member of the Society and a lifelong resident of Fremantle, having been born and raised in Beaconsfield. Allen was a Councillor with the City of Fremantle during the heady days of the America Cup, serving on the Fremantle Council between 1985 and 1990. Allen has been researching and writing about Fremantle's history for over thirty five years with a particular focus on Fremantle's hotels. He has won the City of Fremantle's unpublished history award on three occasions and two of those essays have since been published in Fremantle Studies.

## Sheridan Hart

Dr Sheridan Hart (née Coleman), is an artist and arts writer from Perth, Western Australia. She has been manager of front-of-house at Fremantle Arts Centre since 2011 where she also conducts research and works on editorial, exhibition and administrative projects for the Centre's varied programs. Hart holds a PhD in contemporary art theory, with a particular focus on landscape art, museum archive organisation and small-scale community groups. She has written for Artlink, Art Guide, Art Monthly and IMPRINT and shown her artwork at Turner Galleries, Paper Mountain and John Curtin Gallery.

**Michelle McKeough**

Dr. Michelle McKeough is an historian working in Western Australian history. Michelle is a contributing author of *Voices of the West End* (Fremantle: Maritime Museum of W.A, 2012) and author of *Rescues, Rogues and Rough Seas 150 years of Water Police in Western Australia.* (Fremantle: W.A Water Police, 2000). Michelle's thesis (Murdoch University, 2016) examined three times of crisis in Fremantle during the twentieth century: The Bubonic Plague; The Great War and the Depression Era. She is currently writing a history of the pandemic of Bubonic Plague experienced in Western Australia between 1900 and 1906, which is due for publication later this year.

**Natasha Meston**

Natasha Milosevic Meston completed her degree in History at the University of Western Australia in 2016. Her honours thesis concerned the fields of gender, biography and Australian history. Natasha was the Fremantle History Scholar for 2017. Her work has since been published in *History Australia*, *Limina: A Journal of Historical and Cultural Studies*, and *Damsel* magazine. Natasha is currently working for the Australian Government, living in Canberra, and playing with the Australian Wind Symphony.

**Baden Pratt**

Baden Pratt lives in Fremantle and is a life member and former president of the North Fremantle Football Club. He is currently studying History at Notre Dame University (Fremantle). Two of his four published books, *The Mighty Maggies of Gilbert Fraser Reserve,* and *Hell for Leather: The Forgotten Footballers of North Fremantle,* trace the history of the football club. He is a former City of Fremantle Councillor, former president of the Fremantle Society, and has been a working journalist for 60 years.

**Bob Reece**

Bob Reece is Professor Emeritus in History at Murdoch University where he lectured from 1978 until 2010, apart from three years as Keith Cameron Professor of Australian History at University College Dublin. Widely published in Aboriginal history and Irish convicts in Australia, he has also written extensively on the history of Sarawak (Malaysia).

**Leigh Straw**

Dr Leigh Straw is the Deputy Head of the National School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Notre Dame Australia. She is a Senior Lecturer in History and teaches across the History program, specialising in Australian history, modern U.S history and crime studies. Leigh was the 2018 joint winner of the Margaret Medcalf Award for Excellence in Research and Referencing using the State Archives Collection (this was for the book 'After the War: Returned Servicemen and the Mental and Physical Scars of World War I', published by UWA Publishing). She is the author of a number of true crime and social history books including her most recent publication *The Petticoat Parade: Marie Monnier and the Roe Street Brothels* (Fremantle Press, 2021).

# INDEX

**Notes:**

*Italics* indicate titles of published works, art or musical compositions, and names of ships.

Titles starting with *The* or *A* are filed by the next word (e.g. *A Fortunate Life* can be found under *Fortunate Life, A*).

Surnames starting with Mc or Mac are interfiled as if spelled Mac.