



FREMANTLE HISTORY SOCIETY

Established 1994

The Secretary, PO Box 1305
FREMANTLE WA 6959

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<https://fhs.org.au>

VALE DIANNE DAVIDSON

Anne Brake

Dianne Davidson was born Dagnija Everts in Riga, Latvia on the 8th of September 1940. Her story is one of incredible strength, resilience and courage. She was just four when her family packed up their home in two days, leaving Latvia not knowing they would never return.

With only the clothes on their back and the few possessions they could carry, they made their way to Germany where they lived for a number of years in a farm house and then at various displaced persons camps. They travelled from Germany and throughout Italy, and on 17th June 1949, boarded the Norwegian Steamer 'Nelly' in Naples and made the treacherous five-week journey to Australia.

Di was a very bright, young girl and despite being in a foreign country, she was third top of her class and received a scholarship to attend the prestigious University High School in Melbourne. She moved from Melbourne to Perth and in her 30s commenced her tertiary education studying history at UWA and working as a secretary in the psychology department, where she met Ron. It wasn't long before they bought a 'renovators delight' in Fothergill St where they raised their two daughters and lived until they both moved into care in North Fremantle. This gave Di what she had never had in her childhood – a stable and secure place to call home and to be a family.

She had a formidable intelligence, was a great writer and a very good cook. She was also passionate about the history and heritage of Fremantle. My first dealings with Di were when she and Jenny Archibald asked me if I would like to work with them to form an historical society in Fremantle. That was 27 years ago. Our friendship was forged early when we spent



The Fremantle History Society's 10th birthday celebrations, 2004
Back: Anne Brake, David Tassler, Bob Reece
Front: Margaret McPherson, Dianne Davidson, Suzanne Miles

several hours four times a year printing and coordinating the mail out of the Society's newsletter. Ron and Di did most of the writing in those days and we would gently (and sometimes not so gently) coax the cantankerous old photocopier down at the Fremantle Prison, where I then worked, into producing another edition. This work was sustained by take away pizza (delivered by the Prison security officer who would collect it for us from the delivery person) and red wine. She continued her input into the newsletter as technology made our lives easier and was also on every editorial committee for the Fremantle Studies journal until recently. She held the position of President on several occasions and Secretary as well. I think she may have even done a stint at Treasurer. Many of the ideas for meetings were Di's and she made important contributions to discussions and decisions of the committee. For this enormous input, she was conferred with Life Membership of the Society in 2016.

Writing was always a passion. Her publications included *Women on the Warpath*, shortlisted for the Premier's Prize and the award winning, *Fighting for Fremantle*, which she jointly authored with Ron. It is very fitting the Society's research scholarship should be rebadged this year to the Ron and Di Davidson Research Scholarship in honour of these two passionate people who gave so much and have left such a rich legacy. The Society, and indeed Fremantle, will miss them dearly.

With thanks to Jane Davidson for allowing me to draw heavily on her eulogy for Dianne.



MEETING REPORTS

'Pub' Lunch at Fremantle Sailing Club - Sunday 22nd August

Fortunately 'Pub' lunch is a generous title encompassing many venues that aren't actually pubs.

One such venue was the Fremantle Sailing Club, where FHS had a 'pub' lunch on Sunday 22 August. Carolyn Jupp, the club archivist (a voluntary position) was prevailed upon to give a potted history of the club before we had lunch. As the dining room had to be shared with others, the State Room at the club was booked for her presentation. This upstairs room with a beautiful view to the south, was accessible by lift or stairs and 36 members arrived at the appointed time. After being introduced by long-time friend Heather Campbell, Carolyn treated us to a fascinating illustrated talk ranging from the 1870s when races included an eclectic mix of cargo and coasting vessels, whale boats and yachts of varying sizes, to the club's early years sailing off South Beach, right through to the present day, with club members competing in the Olympics.

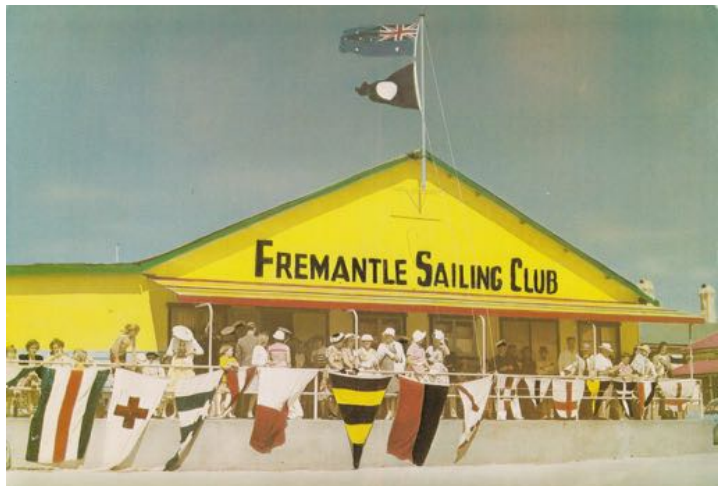
Her Power Point presentation included numerous photographs, one of which was a memorable shot of club members floating (yes in the sea) wooden walls dismantled from a shed on South Beach to build the first clubhouse on the corner of Scott Street and Marine Terrace in the 1930s. Fortunately the current clubrooms did not require such hands-on input!



1923, FSC Clubhouse, Scott Street, South Fremantle
Fremantle Sailing Club

After a short question time, we then came down to earth and went to the galley/restaurant on the ground floor for lunch. This venue is adjacent to the marina, so the view is of boats, jetties and water. We were seated over two tables, where individual orders were taken from the delicious items on the bar menu (plus some extras), drinks were available over the bar.

The staff of FSC and the volunteer Duty Officers made sure we were well looked after and this very different 'pub' lunch was thoroughly enjoyed by all. If you missed out and would like to know something about the club history, there are plans to publish Carolyn's talk in an upcoming issue of Fremantle Studies.



1947, Nov 29th FSC opens Louisa Street Clubhouse
Fremantle Sailing Club

Australian History in Western Australian Schools – Tuesday 28th September

We were very fortunate to have Catherine Baron address a meeting of about 20 members on the current role of Australian History in the Western Australian curriculum at our September meeting. Cathy is the Principal of Lakeland Senior High School and the President of both the History Teachers' Association of Australia and the History Teachers' Association of WA.

Cathy explained that in primary schools' history is an integrated part of the curriculum with a focus on Australian and Western Australian history covering such areas as present and past family life, first contacts with indigenous people, and colonies, through to nationhood. In the lower grades of high school history is compulsory as part of the HASS (Humanities and Social Sciences) programme. Through grades 7-10 history moves from the Ancient World through to World War II, so teachers can squeeze some WA and Indigenous history in where appropriate. In upper school, history is not compulsory but can be studied as an ATAR subject (for university entrance) or as general history. The units chosen for study at this level usually depend upon the choice of the teacher and therefore students may not learn any further Australian history.

The audience was interested in how associations such as the FHS might be able to engage with students and there was the suggestion of adding a piece on Fremantle to the HTAWA website [Western Australia: A Centenary of Change 1918 - 2018 \(htawa.net.au\)](http://www.htawa.net.au).

Fremantle Studies Day 2021 – Sunday 24th October

The Fremantle History Society has once again organised an interesting and informative Studies Day. It was held in the beautiful dining room of the former Woodman Point Quarantine Station. The site is now used for recreation. Around sixty people attended and enjoyed the papers as well as the sumptuous afternoon tea.

The first paper of the day was presented by Neil Wilson, a retired educator and grandson of a former Officer in Charge of the Quarantine. Neil has had a long history with the site spending school holidays there as well as now being a long standing member of the Friends of Woodman Point Recreation Centre.

Given his association with the site he provided a broad and far reaching history of the Quarantine Station, including how the site was chosen, the construction of various buildings on the site, how the station operated in times of emergency such as the Boonah tragedy and the

devastating smallpox outbreak. It is a sad history but also an uplifting one showing the dedication of the medical staff putting their own health at risk to tend the patients. Neil certainly captured the essence of the site and provided an informative and entertaining paper.

The second paper was presented by Tarryn Lawrie, a senior archival officer at the National Archives of Australia's Western Australia Office. Tarryn provided an extensive history of the Customs Service in Fremantle, from the colonial service operated by the State to the changes after Federation in 1900 when the service was transferred to Commonwealth control.

Through the use of archival records Tarryn demonstrated the development of legislation which affected how the Customs Service operated. Particularly interesting was the information about the use of the Dictation Test which was part of the White Australia Policy. It was used to restrict entry into Australia of people other than those of Anglo Saxon descent, known then as 'Aliens'. It was a racist law and was in force until 1958. Other parts of the White Australia policy, such as the registration of non-British migrants as 'aliens', continued into the early 1970s.

Other aspects of the service were examined, such as the search of ships for drugs and stowaways. It was an interesting paper and illustrated some of the laws which were restrictive and racist but reflective of society at that time.



The third paper was presented by Dr Michelle McKeogh. Michelle completed her PhD at Murdoch University in 2016, which examined three times of crisis in Fremantle during the twentieth century: The Bubonic Plague; The Great War and the Depression Era. Michelle's paper looked at the events surrounding the death of a Chinese immigrant Ah Keo in 1901.

The paper examined the West Australian experience of the Bubonic Plague and not only gave emphasis to a crisis of sanitation and health, but exposed the worst prejudices of its colonial beginnings.

When the plague reached the Chinese community, Western Australians began to display the social vilification that had coloured Sydney's recent experience of plague.

Michelle used, at its centre, the case of Chinese plague victim, Ah Keo, who was taken from the city 'to a lonely place in the bush' to die under a tree. It also examined the ugly controversy that surrounded his death and of the further deaths of his countrymen, revealing the experience of Chinese immigrants during a crisis which has remained unexamined to date.

It was another fascinating paper which revealed some of the worst aspects of Western Australian society at this time.

The fourth paper was presented by Dr Susanna Iuliano, who has researched and written the histories of Italian migrants locally and around the globe. Susanna did her doctoral research in Canada on Italian migration to Canada and Australia.

From the early days of their migration to Fremantle in the late 1800s, to the heyday of Italian migration to Western Australia in the 1950s and 60s, Italian migrants left an indelible stamp on

Fremantle. Susanna's paper explored the ways Italians in Fremantle created an Italian ambience which influenced the cultural and built environment of Fremantle. Susanna also discussed some of the daily and seasonal movements and activities of Italian migrants in Fremantle which helped define places as 'Italian', as well as the more permanent ways Italian migrants changed the shapes of Fremantle houses, buildings and streets where they lived and worked.

Susanna's paper was entertaining and at times very humorous in terms of the images she provided of the houses with the inevitable lions and concrete. Fremantle's history is all the richer due to the influence of Italians over the years and illustrates that society, to some extent, has become more tolerant and accepting of different cultures and provided a positive contrast to the previous two papers.

All in all it was a fascinating and informative day. Thanks to all the presenters for their time and contribution. Thanks also to the committee and catering team for the excellent afternoon tea.

See you next year!

Winner of the Inaugural Ron and Dianne Davidson Scholarship.

The winner of the Ron and Dianne Davidson Scholarship was announced at Fremantle Studies Day on the 24th October 2021.

There were six applicants and the research proposals ranged from indigenous history, early Fremantle cemeteries, Hillcrest Maternity Hospital, Fascism in Fremantle in the 1930s, conscription in Fremantle in the 1960s and artists of Fremantle.

It was a difficult choice to make as all papers were from well qualified individuals and the range of proposals was quite diverse.

However a decision was finally made and the Fremantle History Society was delighted to announce that Dr Dorothy Erickson had won the scholarship for her proposal, Fremantle through Artists' Eyes.

Dorothy Erickson is an Australian artist-jeweller who has been exhibiting internationally since 1979. She has written five books on art, design and history and is a principal of Erickson & Taylor Art, Design and Heritage Professionals. Dorothy's research will explore Fremantle and its history through the framework of the artists who depicted it and would document the changes from sandy streets to a busy port city and reveal the spirit of the place through time.



Dorothy Erickson receiving the scholarship Photo: Anne Brake

Congratulations to Dorothy and thanks to all the applicants who applied.



COMING EVENTS

AZELIA LEY HOMESTEAD – CHRISTMAS PARTY

Manning Park

Azalia Road, Hamilton Hill

28th November 3.30 pm tour of homestead, 4.00 pm drinks in the garden



We will venture out of Fremantle for the November general meeting, all the way to Cockburn, to Azelia Ley Homestead Museum. The heritage listed residence was built in 1923 and offers a glimpse into the life of a prosperous settler family. The Cockburn Historical Society oversees the running of the museum and will provide us with a guided tour of the museum. Meet inside the park, on the western side of Manning Lake. Members of CHS will join us for Christmas drinks and nibbles in the garden after the tour.



FREMANTLE HISTORY CENTRE

Stewart Alger and Heather Campbell

Kenneth McKenzie, Saddler, Fremantle

In August 2021 Mike Gilpin from Pinjarra Hills, Queensland, sent FHC a piece of interesting Fremantle history found in 2010 on a station up near Exmouth. This little metal object advertises a Fremantle business of yesteryear – K McKenzie, Saddler, Fremantle - and was possibly one of a pair fastened somehow to a riding or harness saddle.



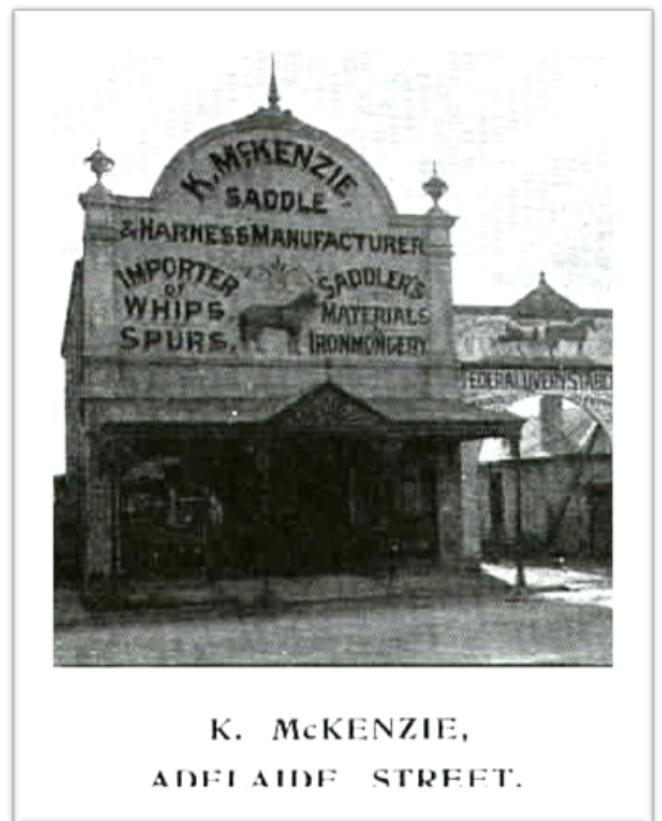
Original disk, now held by FHC - Stewart Alger



West Australian, 13 January 1900 p 1

Kenneth McKenzie was born in Araluen, NSW in 1864, and after completing a saddlery apprenticeship, came to Western Australia in 1892. He started a business in High Street, and then relocated to Market Street for eighteen months. By 1900 he was doing so well that:

‘In order to cope with the rapid expansion of his business as a saddle and harness manufacturer and merchant, Mr Kenneth McKenzie recently erected a handsome and commodious factory and warehouse in Adelaide Street, opposite Fremantle Town Hall. The building is of two stories and presents an ornate facade to the main thoroughfare.



From Twentieth Century Impressions of WA,
 Thiel and Co, 1901, p 500

A feature of the design is a well modelled figure, in relief, of a horse with full set of harness—an artistic and lifelike presentment of the noble animal so necessary to

civilisation. The large plate glass windows on the ground floor disclose a most attractive display of saddlery and harnessware, and all requisites for the stable or carriage yard. Mr McKenzie has always a large stock of the very best description, and is constantly importing and manufacturing fresh supplies. Upstairs, a large number of hands find constant and remunerative employment all the year round, and the quality of the goods turned out is equal to the very best imported. In fact, Mr. McKenzie is not afraid of anything that can be imported, and invites competition. It is no wonder, therefore, that he is a supporter of the principles of Federation, although a large manufacturer.

Adjoining are the livery and bait stables, where, in addition to the horses and vehicles required for his extensive town and suburban 'bus service, there are always traps of every description and well trained horses for hire by the public. The establishment throughout is well worth a visit, and Mr. McKenzie is to be congratulated on his spirited enterprise, and on the faith that he reposes in the future of Fremantle and the colony generally.¹

Kenneth McKenzie was a colourful character. Not only was he a prosperous saddler but an omnibus proprietor² being 'the first to establish a 3d. 'bus system in Fremantle,'³ and was also frequently in and out of courts of law for a variety of reasons. These included being fined for driving without a license in 1899⁴; when his wife of 26 years successfully asked for the dissolution of the marriage on the grounds of cruelty and misconduct⁵; and when he charged George Hanlon with unlawful detention of a heifer he claimed was his (a case that was expected to last several days)⁶. A popular man, he was petitioned to stand for local government in 1898 and did so, representing North Ward on the Fremantle Council from 1898 to 1902.

When increasingly motorised transportation, including electric trams, resulted in less demand for horses and saddlery, McKenzie diversified, advertising himself as a coachbuilder as well as a saddler.⁷ He was, however still working as a saddler in 1925, but from Angle Point Farm, off South Road. He moved to James Street, Fremantle, selling Angle Point Farm in 1926.⁸

By 1937 he had retired, but achieved some notoriety when, in February 1939, aged seventy-five, he became lost in dense scrub for more than 24 hours without food and water, at Bulls Creek, near Canning River, eventually finding his way out and getting a bus to Perth and then one back to Fremantle.⁹

He died on 3 June 1941, aged 77.

ELECTION NOTICE.

Fremantle, November 2, 1898.

To Mr. KENNETH MCKENZIE,

High Street, Fremantle.

SIR, We, the undersigned, Ratepayers of the East Ward, respectfully request that you will nominate yourself for the Extraordinary Vacancy for this Ward, caused by the resignation of Councillor R. Jarvis. Knowing the large stake you have in the town, and that the welfare of Fremantle will be your greatest aim, we feel satisfied that the East Ward will benefit by your presence in the Council, and should you consent to stand we pledge you our support, and will use our utmost endeavours to secure your return.

We are, etc.,

(Here follow 48 Signatures.)

From *Umpire* 5 November 1898, p 2

¹ *Umpire* 21 July 1900 p 4.

² *West Australian*, 20 September 1898, p 2.

³ *Twentieth Century Impressions of WA*, Thiel and Co, 1901, p 500.

⁴ *West Australian*, 3 Feb 1899, p 3.

⁵ *West Australian* 13 December 1911, p 10.

⁶ *Daily News*, 14 November 1927, p 1.

⁷ *Wises West Australian Post Office Directory*, 1915.

⁸ *West Australian*, 30 August 1933, p 12.

⁹ *Daily News*, 11 February 1939, p 3.

The Dutch Australian Foundation presents:

Wooden Boat Building in WA

WA Shipwrecks Museum,
Cliff Street, Fremantle

Saturday 4 December 2021 - Sunday 1 May 2022

This community exhibition highlights the importance of wooden boat building in Western Australia and marks the 25th anniversary of the construction of the *Duyfken* replica in Fremantle.



To build a ship, the *Duyfken* Replica Photo: Robert Garvey



TREASURES FROM TROVE – TALES FROM THE PORT

Heather Campbell

The steam tug *Dunskey* was built by well-known Balmain shipbuilder David Drake in 1891 and worked on the east coast before coming west to work in the Port of Albany in 1896, having been purchased by Bill Douglas. In 1899 Douglas transferred the tug to the Port of Fremantle. Soon after its arrival it was involved in a dramatic rescue, which was reported in *the Inquirer and Commercial News* of 21 July 1899 (p. 3).

THE DUNSKEY'S EXPERIENCES.

Tired and weary after a wonderful day's work. Captain Douglas, the captain and owner of the tug *Dunskey*, was run to earth at his home in Cantonment-street. Cheerfully, he gave the following details of his adventurous voyage: — “Yes; it was a trying experience. I heard quite by accident that a vessel was supposed to be wrecked at Rottneest Island, and with an eye to business in the shape of salvage, I got my steam tug ready for sea. I saw the Government steamer *Penguin* getting ready. I followed on 'spec'. When off Moore Roads I passed a bundle of oars and some clothing floating on the surface of the billows. I did not stop to pick them up, but passed on to the scene of the wreck. About a mile or so further on I met the harbormaster's boat *Penguin*, returning from the ill-fated vessel. Captain Russell hailed me, and said, “Go on, and if you get near enough to them tell them that I will come back with a surf boat and get them off.” I continued onwards, and when about a quarter of a mile from the *City of York* I dropped anchor to windward of her in about 11 fathoms of water. I watched her for from 15 to 20 minutes anxiously, to see how she acted in the high seas that were running, and to ascertain whether I could possibly get near her. I could see by watching the big seas, how they broke, and I came to the conclusion that it was possible for me to get in between the breaking seas. I called the crew together, and having told them how to act if anything happened to me, or if I was left on the wreck. I ordered the dingey to be lowered.

“The position was exceedingly dangerous, but I made up my mind to rescue the poor fellows on board. I had perfect faith in my dingey, as I had her specially built for surf work. With difficulty I got into the little dingey, and all alone set off for the wreck. I had a hard tussle for it, but at last got safely alongside on the lee side, and at once got three of the crew into the dingey.



The Dunskey

FHC E000855-112

By carefully watching the approaching seas, I got in between the breaks, and getting well away landed them safe on the tug. I immediately returned, and in the same way got three more men on board. Then I made a third trip, and took the remaining two men off, and into safety on the tug.

Thus eight men were saved without accident. The men who were saved stated that two boats with 18 of the crew had left the

vessel, but they saw both of them come to grief in the breakers, and the survivors thought that their comrades had been drowned when the boats were swamped. When we subsequently met the Government launch we heard with pleasure that seven had been saved. The vessel is lying with nearly all her sails set, and with a slight list to starboard. There is no doubt that she will speedily become a total wreck, as every sea is breaking over her. As the cargo is mostly lumber it is very likely that it will be saved. She is lying on a sandy bottom, close to the Horseshoe Reef, and, in my opinion, is nearly 1,000 yards from the shore. After getting the men on board, I returned with all haste to Fremantle with them, and I handed them over to the police to take to comfortable quarters. The men were wet and cold, and most of them were barefooted, while all were much exhausted. In trying to get my anchor on board, I unfortunately lost it, and several fathoms of chain. This anchor must have fouled with some of the rocks.”

All the sailors who were rescued speak in the highest terms of Captain Douglas's, pluck in going out alone in his little cockleshell of a surf dinghy in the dangerous sea which was then running. They are very grateful to him. The people in the Port, who have heard the details, are loud in their praises of the captain's bravery.’

The City of York Bay on Rottneest is named after the wrecked vessel.

Subsequently Alex Armstrong purchased *Dunskey* from Bill Douglas and the tug returned to Albany to work with Armstrong's other vessels working out of the port. In March 1917 *Dunskey* was taking a survey party to Nornalup Inlet when it was 'utterly wrecked' on the bar of Wilson's Inlet. The vessel was a total wreck, but all on board were saved. [*Kalgoorlie Miner* 12 March 1917, p. 4]



FREMANTLE LADIES' HIGHLAND PIPE BAND

Lucy Hair

Fremantle Ladies Highland Pipe Band (FLHPB) commenced around 1946 when several girls asked members of the (all-male) Fremantle Highland Pipe Band to teach them how to play pipes. With sufficient interested players, the band was performing by 1947.¹⁰ At that time in piping communities around the world, piping was considered primarily as something only men did. There were exceptions such as England's Dagenham Girls' Pipe Band (formed in 1930).

¹⁰ Cairns, L. *A Hundred Pipers and O'er and O'er: the story of the Fremantle Ladies Highland Pipe Band 1947-1993*, Perth WA, 1998, p. 5.

While Dagenham is often regarded as the first female pipe band, the Australian Ladies Scottish Pipe Band was formed around 1918 to welcome back soldiers from World War I.¹¹ By the early 1980s, it was still not common for women and men to play in the same band. In WA, this can be seen through the continuance of separate ladies' bands in Fremantle and Perth.¹²

Lynne Cairn's unpublished manuscript, 'A Hundred Pipers and O'er and O'er' chronicles the rise, growth and development of FLHPB until it disbanded in 1993. FLHPB has a very strong connection to the PLC Perth Pipe Band. In 2021, PLC is celebrating the 40th anniversary of its Pipe Band.

In the early years of the band, the lines on the PLC tennis courts were an essential training tool to teach new Pipe Band members how to march. The other essential training tool was to give the students playing experience within a pipe band. Kerry Jones (Drum Tutor) and Ailsa Miller (Pipe Tutor) had been members of the Fremantle Ladies Highland Pipe Band (FLHPB) for many years by the time they started teaching at PLC. Arranging for students to attend FLHPB practice sessions was as simple as inviting them to attend. In 1981, student pipers Ashley Fraser and Joanne Lapsley marched with FLHPB at the Anzac Day Parade.



PLC students Joanne Lapsley (left) and Ashley Fraser (right) in FLHPB uniform on their way to the 1981 Anzac Day Parade

Once PLC Pipe Band had evolved to include a mix of new and experienced players, FLHPB became less of a training ground and more a viable option for players interested in continuing playing after they left school. With PLC a ready recruiting ground, it is unsurprising that many ex-PLC students joined FLHPB.¹³

From the establishment of FLHPB in the late 1940s through to the formation of the PLC Pipe Band in 1981, an all-female pipe band was the only option available to women players. Many pipe bands in Perth became 'mixed' from the late 1980s as they gradually (came to their senses and) opened their ranks to female players. The WA Police Pipe Band accepted their first female player in 1986 and a second female player only a few months later.¹⁴ By the mid-1990s, both Fremantle Ladies and Perth Ladies had disbanded as the 'drain of talent' to other bands occurred as female players had greater choice of bands to join.¹⁵

Adapted extract from: *Proud to be PLC: 40 years of the PLC Perth Pipe Band*, by Lucy Hair, published 2021, PLC Perth.



¹¹ Grant, Erin C.M., 'The Ladies' Pipe Band Diaspora: Bands, Bonnie Lassies and Scottish Associational Culture, 1918-2012', PhD Thesis, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand, May 2013, pp. 12-27.

¹² Harvey, John, 'The First Part: Perth Highland Pipe Band, 1946-1979', which discussed Pam Copeland's attempt to join Perth Highland Pipe Band in the 1970s.

¹³ Cairns, L., *A Hundred Pipers*, p. 71. Oral Histories with Kerry and Peter Jones and Ailsa Miller, interviewed by Lucy Hair, December 2020.

¹⁴ *Forty Years in the Making: A pictorial history of the Western Australia Police Pipe Band 1966-2006*, WA Police, 2006, p. 45.

¹⁵ Cairns, L., *A Hundred Pipers*, p. 78, 81 and 84.

SOUTH BEACH/SOUTH FREMANTLE 2020

The rise of the South Fremantle vibe, and the rise and fall and resurrection of South Beach

FHS Member Mattie Turnbull, shares her thoughts on South Fremantle and South Beach – Now THE places to be!

A quick history is required prior to my contemporary ‘stories’ which acknowledge South Beach and, of course, South Fremantle which came alive early in the 20th century, moving back a bit towards the middle of that century (allegedly South Beach attracted ‘boguns’ at that stage: wot?) and blossomed again in the first decades of the 21st century. So here we go and it won’t take long.

Australian Rules Football – Western Australian Football League

The Bulldogs (South Fremantle) also had a chequered career from rising to falling and rising from 1909 until 2019. However, no matter that they did ‘rise’ in the first two decades, in 2019 unfortunately local rivals, the City of Subiaco known as the Subi Lions, succeeded in the WAFL final. But they’ll be back! *Is a bulldog scarier than a lion?*

South Fremantle Power Station

According to Bodycoat (2004): although the Power Station is not specifically located in South Fremantle, the installation reached full power capacity in 1954 as part of the State Electricity Commission electric power grid servicing the metropolitan region and the southwest region of the state. The power station ceased operations in 1985; it is still a landmark, the future of which has engendered much debate but no resolution.

...and so to South Beach

The rise and fall and resurrection of South Beach goes in chunks and interesting that we now have the ‘Falls Festival’ in Fremantle city centre, but of course it has no connection to the ‘falls’ I’m reflecting on.

...and a wee bit more on South Beach

Horses for Courses

South Beach was the site of the first official horse race in WA, run in October 1833, and was used extensively for exercising and training some of WA’s famous horses. CY O’Connor (pipeline/Kalgoorlie ring a bell?) rode and trained his horses at South Beach on a regular basis and it was at South Beach, near Robb Jetty, that he shot himself in March 1902.

Fascinatingly, South Beach was a training ground for the 10th Light Horse Regiment during WWI for service overseas. South Beach then established itself as a resort after that, da daa! Sadly another ‘fall’ of South Beach, from the early 1970s, the number of horses training at South Beach was reduced due to the closure of many stables in the area.

How did the punters get ‘there’?

Work on the Fremantle tram system commenced in 1905 and by April 1906 the initial routes had been completed. The service to South Fremantle terminated at South Beach (Douro Road) where a tram shelter was located. However, it was not until 5th November 1909 that South Beach was declared officially open by Governor Sir Gerald Strickland, in a ceremony attended by upwards of 35,000 people.

Hydrodrome

Voila! ... In 1923 the Hydrodrome was born (an architectural delight) and incorporated a dressing room for bathers on the lower level with tea rooms, and a concert hall above. Swimming baths were established and were popular with the public and holidaymakers, as well as the Ladies’ Swimming Club (wow!). Alas... nothing lasts forever, not even the Hydrodrome.

A severe storm in the 1950s damaged the upper level so badly that the whole structure was demolished soon after. South Beach and South Fremantle then languished until the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Part Two – The Resurrection

We now acknowledge that South Beach/South Fremantle have emerged in the last few years as successful ‘hubs’ which accommodate industry, business, fashion, restaurants by the score, and, not forgetting a few great pubs – a necessary contribution to any Australian success, and not excluding the CAT (Central Area Transport) bus which does a very useful ‘run’ around Fremantle and South Fremantle.

We now have an expansive green space for everyone, a safe beach, a ball court, and last but not least, house prices are...well perhaps not soaring but potential buyers are aplenty.

Walking around the suburb and the beach, the multicultural makeup is embraced and is reflected in the wonderful integration both in the eateries and on the beach.

Last but not least are the amazingly successful ‘South Beach Sunset Markets’ which offer so much and this is confirmed by the numbers in attendance!

Anecdotes which acknowledge the above

International Women’s Day on South Beach

On the non-dog area and I meet two guys with a HUGE dog and I say quietly (well...) ‘Just reminding you that this is a non-dog beach and the rangers could be here in a minute.’ One of the guys (not that young) says to me ‘Go back and wash the dishes.’

I say ‘I’m a nun, the trainee priests do the dishes!’ So the other one says to me ‘If you had a wife would you do the dishes?’ I managed to ignore that one.

The first one then says quite loudly ‘Look, I need to go. I’ve got to clean the bathroom because my girlfriend will be arriving at any minute and I’ve got the slow cooker going and she won’t be pleased if lunch is overcooked; oh, and I think I forgot to put the white wine in the fridge.’ He concludes ‘I used to think it was easy to be a woman...’ as he scrambles up the sand in a mild panic. The other guy and I chuckled as good friends should.

Warm water on South Beach

Guy I meet on the way from the beach on the hottest day of 2019 who suggests that the water was soooo warm that he would be bringing a bucket of ice for his next swim!

Last year in the street

The day recorded almost 40 degrees when I was at my front door and a guy came by on a tandem by himself. He was wearing a balaclava helmet, a leather backpack, Tony Abbott smugglers and leather boots. He waved to me and I spotted that he was also wearing leather gloves. I said something like ‘Lovely day’ and his return was ‘Well, you never know, it could cool down so easily but I’m prepared.’ Boom boom!

Next one is our friend in the motorised bath who has not been seen for a while. So cool to see him taking stock of all the streets and the punters taking stock of him.

More eccentricity

On the CAT bus the other day, no seats left. Bus rolls off and a guy with a ukulele starts strumming and singing ‘The wheels of the bus go round and round’ and the whole bus joins in. He gave us a clue for the next verses which included ‘The kids on the bus go Hahaha’ and ‘The driver of the bus goes Sshh, sshh, sshh.’

Last but not least

A guy I presume is of Scottish background is strolling on the beach in his kilt with naked torso and ensuring that we all know what is NOT WORN under a kilt.

So onwards and upwards. There is no stopping the place now and this is reflected by the amazing vibe it has achieved. Move over Melbourne – South Fremantle is the place to be!

Bodycoat, Ronald. 2004, 'South Fremantle Power Station: a heritage dilemma,' *Fremantle Studies* 3 : pp. 65-74.



Some highlights of the year:



Beerporium (April)



Pub lunch (August)



Studies Day (October)

The members of the committee would like to wish everyone a happy and safe Christmas and festive season with family and friends. Thank you for your support across the year. We look forward to welcoming you back to another year of fascinating talks and visits when we begin again in February.

FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday November 28th

Christmas celebrations

3.30 pm tour of homestead, 4.00 pm drinks in the garden

Azelia Ley Homestead (inside the park, on the western side of Manning Lake)

Manning Park

Azelia Road, Hamilton Hill

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Executive:

Allen Graham (President) 0412 933 360
Judith Robison (Secretary) 0434 571 666
Anne Brake (Treasurer) 0438 445 141



Committee Members:

Fay Campbell 0419 969 678
Pam Harris 0408 092 100
Tania Heyne 0419 197 116
Alan Kelsall 9336 4573
Terry Murphy 0406 168 794

Ordinary meetings are generally held on the 4th Tuesday (or Sunday) of the month. Details of these meetings can be found in your newsletter. Be sure to check details as meeting days and times may vary.