

Fremantle Studies Day 2025

FHC LH001753 E&F



Sunday 19th October 2025

10.45 am for an 11.00 am start, finishing at 3.00 pm

Army Museum of Western Australia

Lecture Theatre, Artillery Barracks, 6 Burt St, Fremantle WA 6160

Bookings ESSENTIAL Email: secretary.fhs@gmail.com by Tuesday 14th October

Cost: Members \$20.00, non-members \$25.00

Payment can be made online:

Account name: Fremantle History Society BSB: 036-306 Account No: 604012

Launch of Fremantle Studies Volume 14

Program:

Neil Stanbury

The box that changed a city - the social and economic impact of containerisation

The advent of containerisation in the 1960s, starting with the arrival of the container ship *Encounter Bay*, transformed the way in which cargo was handled through Fremantle and eventually most ports around the world, bringing to an end almost all break-bulk cargo handling. This development introduced great economic and logistic efficiencies but was accompanied by significant social, cultural, labour and commercial changes to not just the waterfront, but also Fremantle, most particularly in the West End. This paper by Fremantle Ports explores this transition.

Neil Stanbury is Manager Communications and Community with Fremantle Ports. Prior to joining the port seven years ago, Neil was Director Media and Public Affairs for the Western Australia Police between 2003 and 2017 and formerly a journalist with The West Australian, Seven News and the Yorkshire Evening Press. In 2007 he was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to research the public information response to terrorist incidents, visiting Spain, the UK, Netherlands and Singapore.

Max Vickery

Ways of relating: Noongar people, settlers and the environment in early colonial Fremantle

From Captain Fremantle's proclamation of possession at Manjaree (Arthur Head) in 1829, through to the blasting and reshaping of Derbal Nara (the mouth of the Swan River) in the 1890s, colonists related to nature as a site to be reconfigured for their own ends. Their activities over the nineteenth century, however, were always entangled with Noongar ways of relating to the environment. This paper will discuss colonial and Noongar interactions with and through the environment around Fremantle across the nineteenth century.

Max Vickery is an historical researcher of early colonial history in Whadjuk Country in the south-west of Western Australia with a background in history, Indigenous Knowledge, and anthropology. His

Honours thesis, Beings and Relations, completed at UWA, is a study of the interaction of Noongar and colonial social forms and ontological commitments in the first two decades of colonisation, bridging the sub-disciplinary research areas of Indigenous biography, histories of emotions, legacies of British slavery, and more-than-human histories. Currently, Max is engaged in similarly informed research on the ontological interactions between colonists and Noongar people implicated in the desecration of Noongar sacred sites over the first century of Noongar–colonial contact in Fremantle.

Leigh Straw

The Ballroom Murder: A scandal in Perth

In August 1925 Audrey Jacob of Fremantle, shot dead her former fiancé in full view of hundreds of guests at a charity ball. Arrested with the gun still in her hand, it seemed an open and shut case of murder, and possibly would have been if Arthur Haynes had not been assigned to her defence. His manipulation of the press and ability to exact sympathy from the jury led to an extraordinary outcome. Based on firsthand archival research and newspaper accounts of the day, this case from 100 years ago reveals the power of the press and privilege. Leigh discusses her book which describes this sensational true crime story.

Dr Leigh Straw is Associate Professor of History at Notre Dame University, Australia, where she teaches in Australian, European and Modern US history. Leigh is the author of several books including The Worst Women in Sydney: The Life and Crimes of Kate Leigh which was longlisted for an Australian Book Industry Award, and Lillian Armfield, a biography of Australia's first female detective. Her WA history books include The Petticoat Parade: Madam Monnier and the Roe Street Brothels for which she was joint winner of the 2022 Margaret Medcalf Award, and The Ballroom Murder: The dancefloor shooting that shocked Australia. Leigh's most recent book is The Kennedys at Cape Cod, 1944: The Summer That Changed Everything (Bloomsbury, August 2025).

Aurora Philpin, Andrew Oakeley and Alex Aberle-Leeming (WreckSploration)

Wadjemup Kepawirn/ the Rottnest Deepwater Scuttling Ground

From 1910, redundant vessels have been scuttled in the deep water southwest of Rottnest Island, known as the Wadjemup Kepawirn (Watery spirits)/ Rottnest Deepwater Scuttling Ground. The wrecks include hulks, tugs, submarines, naval vessels, aircraft and more. They tell a story of Fremantle's maritime operations including dredging and port development, steam shipping and coal hulks, salvage and vessel recycling. Many sites are unidentified, with few divers able to visit them safely due to their depth, while many other sites remain to be discovered. The WreckSploration team are local divers using custom-made camera rigs to produce 3D models of the graveyard wrecks that lie in depths of 45-120 metres, which is outside the reach of recreational or commercial divers. In this talk WreckSploration and the WA Museum will present the results of a project they have been collaborating on since 2023 to locate, 3D map and identify sites in the Wadjemup Kepawirn.

Aurora Philpin is a maritime archaeologist and Assistant Curator of Maritime Heritage, WA Museum. With an interest in telling the stories of unidentified shipwrecks to understand their significance, Aurora works with her team to identify sites based on information in the historical record.

Alex Aberle-Leeming works in IT sales and has long had a passion for technical and cave diving across WA and abroad including cave exploration work in the Nullarbor Plain and technical dives off the WA coast. Alex also has an extensive background in aquatic and maritime rescue, volunteer with the Swanbourne Nedlands Surf Lifesaving Club and as a swiftwater rescue operator.

Andrew Oakeley is an IT Consultant with 10 years' experience in technical diving. He is passionate about encouraging people to further their technical diving skills, and is a driving force behind many local and overseas diving projects. Andrew is one of the few divers in Australia completing dives deeper than 200m.