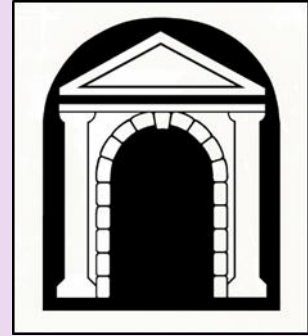


# FREMANTLE HISTORY SOCIETY

Established 1994

SPRING EDITION, NOVEMBER 2025



## NEXT MEETING: CHRISTMAS PARTY

I can hardly believe it's time to talk about the Christmas Party again – the passing of time certainly doesn't slow down as we get older. Most of you will by now be quite familiar with the Army Museum of Western Australia, having gathered there recently for our annual Fremantle Studies Day. We actually had this venue booked for the Christmas Party some months ago, and when the Port Authority Building fell through for Studies Day it seemed like the best alternative.



The plan is to meet once again in the Lecture Room at 1.00 pm. You may park your cars within the museum grounds with proof of ID required on arrival at the front entrance. A couple of the museum's guides will take us on a tour around one of the galleries for half an hour, after which we will reconvene in the Lecture Room for drinks and nibbles. Contributions to refreshments welcome as always - last year's spread set the bar pretty high! Members may then inspect the Museum at their leisure until closing at 3.00 pm.

The Society will contribute a donation on behalf of members.

**2025 Christmas Party - Army Museum of Western Australia**  
**Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1.00 – 3.00 pm**  
Artillery Barracks, 6 Burt Street, Fremantle 6160



## MEETING REPORTS

### Pub Lunch at the Local Hotel – Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> August



You need to be fairly brave to venture into Fremantle on a Sunday afternoon and actually expect to find somewhere to park, but the annual pub lunch at the Local Hotel was worth it.

There was a nice group of about 25 of us gathered for this long-table lunch. We ordered from the usual classics such as fish and chips and the steak sandwich, and many people chose the haloumi and avocado burger, which was

apparently excellent. The food overall was really very good. Our resident expert on Fremantle's hotels, Allen Graham, gave us a bit of background on the hotel's history and its early owners.

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There was no September meeting, this was because half the committee was off travelling the world at the time, and the rest of us had arranged to attend the RWAHS Affiliated Societies Annual State Conference which was hosted by Cockburn this year.

### Faces and Spaces of Cockburn 12 – 14 September 2025

Heather Campbell and Kristi McNulty

Memorial Hall, Hamilton Hill. The conference opened with registrations and a welcome event on the Friday night. This included a Welcome to Country by Rev Mitchell Garlett and a welcome by the Mayor of Cockburn, Logan Howlett. Rev Garlett's welcome was an inclusive one which included indigenous and non-indigenous people. Denise Cook then conducted an informal chat with Rev Garlett about the contribution of his father, Rev Sealin Garlett, to Cockburn.

Saturday morning at the Jakovich Centre, Whadjuk Noongar elder, Vaughn McGuire, gave us a heartfelt Welcome to Whadjuk country, stressing the importance of history to all cultures, and the passing it on to future generations. This was followed by welcomes from the Cockburn Mayor, RWAHS Vice President, Sally-Ann Hasluck, and the President of the Historical Society of Cockburn, Helen Greer. The Hon Simone McGurk MLA formally opened the conference, and Nick Drew followed with the Roll Call, Apologies and Remembrances.

**Midgegooroo:** The first speakers, Mary Blight joined by Eric Hayward via Zoom, talked about early Whadjuk Noongar leader, Midgegooroo. They explained the Whadjuk Boodjar territorial divisions, migration routes and campsites pre-colonial times. Noongar people originally had a friendly relationship with the settlers but their traditional hunting grounds and way of life were greatly impacted and the settlers did not understand the Noongar laws and obligations, nor their system of restorative justice.

Driven from their land and food sources by the settlers, they took animals and vegetables from their farms. A Beeliaman caught doing this was killed. Midgegooroo and son Yagan attacked that farm and killed a servant in retaliation, restorative justice according to their laws, but to the

settlers they were considered dangerous outlaws and were arrested and executed without trial. While this was applauded by some, there were many amongst the settlers who loudly expressed their condemnation. The descendants of these Whadjuk Noongar people continue to occupy these lands.

**Growing up in the gardens:** A panel discussion followed, by Jeanette Paulik, Rina Lovreta and Marica Blagaich who had all grown up on market gardens. Chaired by Bruce Baskerville, the women talked about their experiences, coming to live in the area, the people were very poor and life growing vegetables and flowers was very hard. They didn't have machinery but dug furrows with shovels and planted by hand.

All three women emphasised how hard a life it was for them, physically really strenuous, back-breaking work, however, the struggles and difficulties were offset by the unfailing support and kindness of family and friends, the good times as evidenced by family photographs where 20 people are sitting down to share a beautiful, homemade feast. These lovely women would not change any of it – and they all still have productive gardens!



Photo courtesy of Carolyn Jupp

**Shipwrecks and vampires: Cockburn Sound's underwater sites** - Dr. Ross Anderson, Curator of Maritime Heritage, WA Museum spoke of the rich cultural heritage along the coastline and below the sea level, describing how Cockburn's Underwater Cultural Heritage (UCH) can be classified under a number of themes loosely grouped around periods in history, shipwrecks and stranding sites, and defence sites. Fascinating to learn that the sea level was once 100 metres lower than it is today and Aboriginal people could walk to Rottnest!

Cockburn Sound has important natural and cultural heritage values of historical, archaeological significance. But it is also a key industrial hub for the State - significant industry, maritime support industries and shipbuilding, and extractive industries such as sand dredging. The WA Museum is responsible for the protection and management of the UCH. The preservation of the site must always be balanced with development, and the Museum works with State and local government agencies, and developers to protect the UCH.

Vampires? Apparently in 1968 a De Havilland DH100 Vampire jet fighter went down in the area, the pilot ejected safely but the wreckage was never found.

**Walliabup (Bibra Lake): Land and people over time** – was conducted by Dr Catherine Baudins and Dr Nandi Chinna. Archaeological evidence and artefacts show that Indigenous people have lived in the area for at least 10,000 years. In 1842 Government Surveyor, A.C. Gregory, first mapped Walliabup (Bibra Lake), and this is still an important and well-used location for Noongar people.

The speakers told us a number of local stories of individual experience: Two Indigenous Bibra Lake squatters, Black Sam and Gentle Annie, lived in an old hollow tree trunk/humpy at Coolbellup and frequented the Jandakot Hotel.

Singapore immigrant, Hi Lory owned a market garden at Bibra Lake; his name was linked to the death of neighbouring Ah Poy in 1927. Asians were frequently victims of racial discrimination – “Pig-tailed Pirates ... The cabbage-cultivating Chow”.

Indigenous footballers, the Hayward brothers, who played for South Fremantle in the 1930s, camped at Bibra Lake on their way up from Katanning as they liked the spirituality of the area.

So many stories, but what about the impact these pioneers had on the land? The changing agricultural practices, along with the development of housing, roads and other infrastructure inevitably brought about change.

By the 1970s real concern was raised about the impacts of continued loss of wetland environments. In 1992 a document was prepared by the Dept. of Planning and Urban Development to establish boundaries for Beeliar Regional Park, and to address issues of land tenure, land use conflicts and management. In 1993 the Bibra Lake Conservation Wetlands was established, a community centre for environmental education and sustainability awareness.

Lunch, (and mention must be made here about the catering, which was generous, varied and delicious), was followed by tours – the Tales and Trails tour, which included the Azelia Ley Museum, and Bibra Lake tour, a visit to the wetlands and Noongar history. The day's proceedings ended with the conference dinner, held at the City of Cockburn Administration function room in Spearwood. After a sumptuous three-course dinner, we enjoyed an entertaining live presentation by Ross Vegas and Jeanette Friesen, titled 'Dark Corners Immersive History'.

Sunday started with a RWAHS business session describing the Society's move to new premises and their plans for holding the Affiliated Societies Conference in the city in 2026, the Society's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

**Coogee: So much more than a beautiful beach** presented by our own Maeve Harvey. Maeve described features of the Coogee Beach area, beginning first with its Noongar mythology. She covered the pensioner guard settlements in the 1870s; remnants of Bernard McGrath's stone cottage still remain. The Coogee Hotel, built by the Powell family in 1898, which was very popular with local workers from nearby market gardens, lime kilns, quarries, and Robb Jetty, and day-trippers from Fremantle.

Maeve talked about other features: the growing popularity of Coogee Beach, mixed bathing permitted and towels, costumes and whiskey procurable from Powell's Coogee Hotel! The lime kilns – veiled in smoke by day and glowing cheerily by night. The munitions bunkers, magazines and explosives reserve of the early 1900s. The opening of the Naval Base in 1913. The significant remnants of beautiful bush around Woodman Point.


Then the post-war shortage of housing in the 50s; families were forced to live in the Coogee Beach Camps where makeshift 'huts' could be rented for £2.10/week from the Fremantle Road Board. Living conditions were appalling, with whole families sharing a single small space for living and sleeping, with no toilet or washing facilities. At the same time the beach was suffering the effects of local industries discharging their noxious effluent into the sea, notably Wilcox and Mofflin wool scourers and Anchorage Butchering Co.

**Dida Ante's Vino: An Enduring Croatian Tradition** – Presenters Erik and Joshua Surjan are grandsons of Ante Surjan, a Serbo-Croat who arrived in 1961, bringing his Dalmatian wine-making traditions with him. Ante worked and saved hard and 18 months later brought out his wife and child. Wine-making was his passion. In 1965 he bought his first wine barrels and his brother bought a wine press. The winemaking process was a family affair – food, family and

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❧ POWELL'S ❧

**COOGEE FAMILY HOTEL,**  
Rockingham Road, South Fremantle.



Replete with every comfort and convenience.  
Splendid Place for Visitors from Up-Country or the Goldfields.

Located in Extensive Grounds within 300 Yards of the Sea.  
LOVELY SITUATION.  
Approached by good Metal Road. Two Miles from Fremantle. Regular Omnibus Service.

BATHS. BOATS. FISHING.

**Coogee, The Garden of Fremantle.**

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friends so important. Their presentation was enlivened with photographs which illustrated a family story, close relationships brought together by the process of winemaking.

They brought along a flagon of one of their red wines, which was absolutely delicious, unfortunately not available to the general public but made solely for family occasions.

**Murder and the Camel Trade** - Dr Criena Fitzgerald told us a tale of avarice, deceit and pursuit, this fascinating story covering many aspects of the camel trade and the importance of them to local commercial activity. Dr Fitzgerald identified local camel camps at Davilak and at Manning Estate.

1896 was the height of camel importation in WA. Abdul Hussein was a polite, privileged young man who came from Karachi seeking adventure in Australia. He brought 30 camels with him and had a servant, Moolchand Choudrie, who spoke very good English so was entrusted to organise the sales of the camels. Moolchand killed Abdul to pocket the profits himself, constructed an elaborate story that Abdul went to South Australia to marry a young lady, and then disappeared back to India himself.

The Coroner's inquest found Moolchand guilty, but although an Australian policeman pursued him, aided by Abdul's father and family, he was not found. He was sighted in Bombay in 1903 but the Australian authorities said not to bother any further as too much time had passed.

**Wandi Dixon** – Dr Michael O'Connor and Dr Denise Cook. Wandi Dixon (c. 1880 – 1955) was a boxer, a stockman, a sportsman and a very well-known character in both the Cockburn and Fremantle districts. His origins are not quite clear, probably from the Wyndham area, East Kimberley. He was relocated with many other Aboriginal boys and may have arrived at Fremantle as early as 1886, and probably no later than 1895.

He was taken in by William Dixon's family of 239 Hampton Road, Beaconsfield. He worked as a stockman at Anchorage Abattoirs but became better known for his skills as a boxer and then a footballer. On 27<sup>th</sup> March 1901 he came up against Black Paddy, his long-time friend and sporting rival, in a 4-round spar – 'two WA natives, and their antics kept the house in a roar of laughter'. In 1905 he was voted the best Aboriginal boxer in WA.

Wandi was sent to Mogumber late in his life where he died 1955. He is buried at Moore River.



Wandi holding George Atkinson, grandson of the original George Atkinson 1947.

**Cockburn as a conservation powerhouse** – Professor Andrea Gaynor discussed the conservation areas and the encroachment of urban development into areas thought to be worthless. Cockburn grew very quickly from 1950. The Stephenson-Hepburn Plan in 1955 did propose open space being set aside for regional parks and the Dept. of Conservation and Environment drew up a guide for parks and reserves in 1981. Land was set aside for a Marsupial Breeding Station in the 1950s but it was not very successful. Proposed uses were often contested, for example, in the 1970s the City lost the case to conserve the bushland at Rose Shanks Reserve to Boral who wanted to mine the sand there.

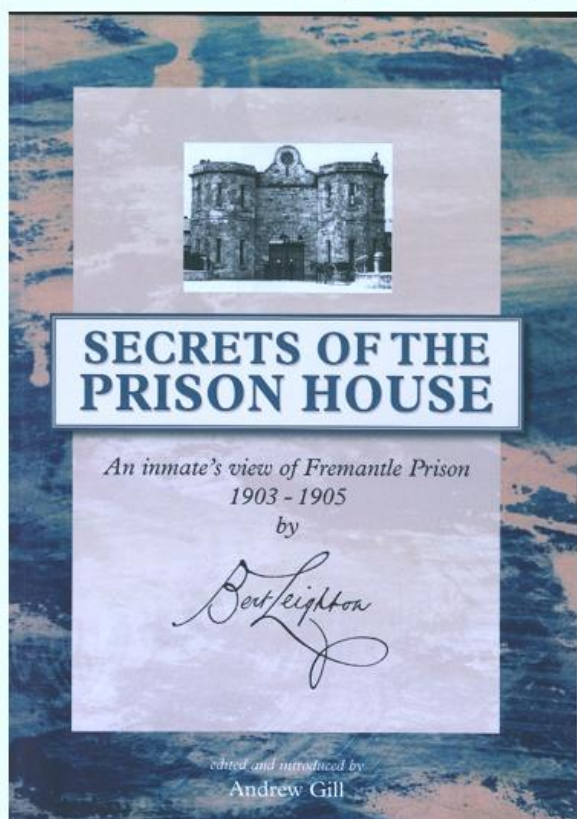
The steep rise in population coupled with growing environmental awareness prompted the establishment of the Environmental Authority which established regional parks for recreation and conservation in the 1990s.

After a break for lunch, delegates left for two tours – one conducted by Maeve Harvey – around Coogee, initially planned as a walk, but due to inclement weather was quickly restructured as a bus tour with short stops and walks at interesting locations. The second tour went to Woodman Point Quarantine Station. In the late afternoon delegates reconvened at the Jakovich Centre for wind up drinks and nibbles and to make the most of the opportunity to view the exhibition organised by Denise Cook and created by Jo Darbyshire: *Passion and Protest, Cockburn Community speaks up*, on display there.

A most successful, very well organised conference, full of variety and interest.

## SECRETS OF THE PRISON HOUSE. AN INMATE'S VIEW OF FREMANTLE PRISON 1903-1905 by Bert Leighton.

Edited and introduced by Andrew Gill, Blatellae Books, Perth 2025. RRP \$40



Bert Leighton served two years and nine months 'hard labour' of a five year sentence, for receiving stolen banknotes.

In 17 articles published after his release, Leighton described aspects and areas of the Fremantle Prison not mentioned in official reports, including the misery of separate treatment, the wasted hours spent in the prison yards, labour in the pump gang, singing in the Anglican prison choir, the absurd pomposity of the Sunday church parade, the poor quality of books in the prison library.

Leighton recorded the abuses he observed: the treatment of mentally unsound prisoners in separate treatment who were also subject to electric shocks- 'bath and battery', inconsistencies in granting remission for work within the prison, and the failure to observe the recommendations of the 1898 Penal Commission.

Leighton's account is written with the passionate belief that only a prisoner could write an accurate account of the experience of being imprisoned.

Available at RWAHS, Nedlands or bookshop Fremantle Prison  
Inquiries to [a.w.gill7@bigpond.com](mailto:a.w.gill7@bigpond.com) or 92444672 9am to noon only



## Culley's Bakery – 100 Years!

The sign says "Est. 1925" and by my calculations that makes this year the Culley's Bakery Centenary! They've certainly not made a lot of fuss about it, hardly a word, but I suspect they are just far too busy! And that is terrific, but 100 years is a big deal for any business, especially in this day and age. Four generations of Fremantle folk have grown up relishing Culley's culinary delights, from their pies and pasties to the famous horseshoe rolls, so let's take a look at the Culley's story.

Edward Ernest Toynbee Culley married Alice Josephine Downey in York, WA in 1907. They had three children, two daughters, Alice and Edwina, and a son, Edward (Ted), and in 1917 moved from the country to set up a bakery in Cottesloe. Their names are listed in the WA Post Office Directory that year:

**Culley, Edw E, Mason st, Cottesloe**  
**Culley, Mrs A, pstryck, Mason st, Cott**

Quite unusual for both husband and wife's names to be listed, this might say something about Alice. Mason St. became Stirling Highway; the shop was located between Stuart and Glyde Streets and their home was in Stuart St. Cottesloe. A second son, Darrell, was born in 1918.

Over the next few years the business was quite successful and the Culleys started to look for larger premises. Legend has it that Mrs Alice Culley chanced to meet Mrs Mary Abbott on a train trip into Fremantle one day and Mrs Abbot mentioned that she and her husband John, had a confectionery shop in High Street, Fremantle and were looking to sell. By the time the train reached the station an agreement had been reached.

The Culleys had so established their reputation as a 'high-class confectioner' during their time in Cottesloe that the move to Fremantle was greeted by the newspapers of the day singing their praises. The Advertiser 7<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1927 stated:

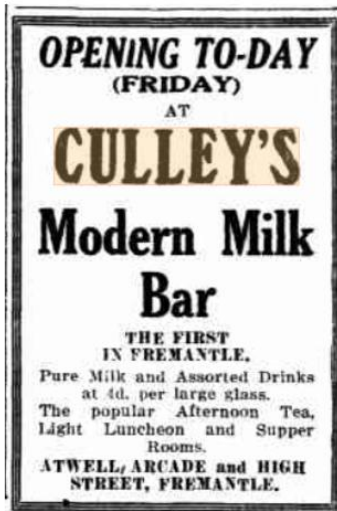
Mrs. Culley has taken over Abbott's confectionery shop in High-street. Abbott's has a reputation as the cleanest shop in town. Back door visitors are as welcome as any others, for never a sign of refuse is seen. Culley's, in Cottesloe, has an equally high standing, for never has it been possible to cavil at the goods stocked by Mr. and Mrs. Culley.

Now that Mrs. Culley has taken over the Fremantle business, she will add a great many up-the-line clients to the list, for she is very well known and appreciated as much for her amiability as for her keen business sense.



Edward and Alice Culley c.1930 From: <https://culleys.com.au/>

Westralian Worker 4.10.1935



Once again the business prospered and during the 1930s the shop was extended into Atwell Arcade and a 'modern milk bar' was added. Sons, Dick and Ted, took over when Edward and Alice retired.

Shirley Caley got a job there in 1946 when she was a young teenager and Dick and Ted were her bosses. She remembers:

*The war had not long since ended. Three scones with jam and cream and a pot of coffee cost 9p. Ham was very dear so a ham sandwich with a pot of tea was 1/-. They sold sandwiches, pies, pasties, cakes, pastries, tins of chocolates and lollies, and offered a very small menu of cooked dishes such as bacon and eggs, and tomatoes on toast. They used to make dozens and dozens of cream sponges, there was a long list of orders to fill.*

*After work each day there would be a queue a mile long waiting outside for the 6-penny bags which had a selection of leftover sandwiches, pies, cakes and whatever food could not be sold the next day. The shop girls were allowed to help themselves to whatever they wanted, it was a good place to work. Girls did not have to leave when they got married, which was what normally happened in the 1950s.*

*In time Darrell Culley and Bob Wegner became the next generation of bosses, and the high standards of service were upheld. Customers (boys particularly) were not allowed in the shop wearing singlets or thongs. The counter girls were expected to wear make-up and would dash up to the hairdressers in the arcade to get their hair 'combed up' before work or during the break at 10.30 each morning. Culley's girls had a reputation as being the best-looking and best dressed girls in Fremantle. Perhaps more importantly, staff members described their time with Culley's as the happiest working years, the Culleys' – kind and considerate employers.*

*While the menu was simple fare, Culley's was always very very popular, with a reputation as being the cleanest café with the freshest food. Grandfather Culley said he would give £10 to anyone if they found a cockroach in the shop. Nobody ever did.*

Edward died 1965 aged 90, Alice died in 1969 aged 80. The Culley's story has now run over four generations. Sons Dick and Ted took over from Edward and Alice, Darrell Culley and his friend Bob Wegner were the third generation to continue the tradition.

Culley's is now in the hands of the latest generation, with great grandson Michael Culley running the business with his wife Melissa, taking over from his father Darrell in 2007. In 2016 Atwell Arcade underwent a substantial redevelopment which led to Culley's moving from the premises it had occupied for 91 years, to a shop two doors down and the actual bakery moved to a new location in Kardinya. The décor has been updated to give it a more contemporary feel, while remnants of the past such as pressed tin on the walls, old fans and photographs have been retained to preserve something of the old charm.



2019

Photo: Culley's Tearooms Facebook page

Maybe their enduring success is due to a combination of uncompromising standards of service, along with a willingness to adapt to change. The menu today includes continental delights such as baguettes, wraps and Portuguese tarts, and of course there are now gluten-free, vegetarian and vegan options. These contemporary goodies sit comfortably alongside the traditional pies and pasties, lamingtons, scones, jam and cream, catering to the many and varied tastes of today's consumers.

#### Resources:

Culley's website: <https://culleys.com.au/>

Western Australian Post Office Directories: <https://slwa.wa.gov.au/collections/collections/post-office-directories>

Trove historical newspapers: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/>

Fremantle History Centre: Property File 110-116 High Street

Fremantle History Centre: Oral History - Shirley Caley

We had a number of dramas leading up to this year's Studies Day, not least of all that the arrangement to hold the event at the Port Authority Building fell through at the last minute. Then one of our speakers was no longer able to present their paper. The forecast for the day was rain and possible thunder, the EFTPOS gadget refused to work – what else could possibly go wrong? Nothing, as it happened. Our President, Jude Robison, welcomed us and thanked everybody for coming. Cr Fedele Camarda launched the latest Fremantle History Society Journal, Volume 14, presenting copies to the authors, almost all of whom were able to attend.

The day commenced with **Ways of relating: Noongar people, settlers and the environment in early colonial Fremantle**, by Max Vickery, a recent history graduate from UWA.

Max addressed how the Noongar people and early settlers' ways of relating to the environment around Fremantle differed. Max acknowledged the contribution of early Noongar people such as Yagan, and settlers' records such as those of Robert Lyon Milne and Mary Ann Friend to the store of knowledge that we have today.

By examining the different approaches to the balga or grass tree Max demonstrated how the Noongar people achieved long term management of their environment. Using only what was needed for 'insect husbandry' and ceremonial uses over thousands of years, Noongar people preserved natural resources for the future. This contrasts with the attitude of the early settlers who depleted the stock of balga around Fremantle in the first ten years of settlement as it was an excellent source of fuel for fires.

Using the example of the woylie or kangaroo rat Max contrasted Noongar management of the environment to the subsequent rapid destruction of the environment and its native animals by the early settlers, as a consequence of their different attitude to the world around them.

Max then discussed the importance of totems to the Noongar people and their relationships with plants and animals, connection to land and the importance of ways of being in the natural world. The early settlers wanted to make use of Aboriginal labour by exploiting their bonds with nature and this had a disruptive effect on Noongar social organisation.

Another feature of the environment and differing attitudes was the importance of limestone in the Fremantle area. The bar which existed across the mouth of Derbal Yerrigan (the Swan River) and pillars in Rocky Bay and their relation to the Waugal, an ancestral serpent that moved across the river plain, is central to Noongar traditional mythology. Limestone however was seen only as an important resource to the early settlers, useful for building and agriculture. Features such as the Seven Hills around Fremantle were mined, changing the topography of the area forever. These features however still exist in the Noongar imagination and stories.

This interesting talk has re-evaluated the ramifications of the shared history of colonial settlement and its effect on Noongar culture and way of life since the 1970s when the Black Action Group challenged mainstream views. Max is hopeful that further studies will open up new vistas for historical enquiry into the relationship that existed between the original inhabitants and the colonial settlers.



## **The Ballroom Murder: A scandal in Perth.**

The second speaker of the day was Dr Leigh Straw who is Associate Professor of History at Notre Dame University in Fremantle. Leigh has an interest in understanding how women are perceived in history and has authored many books on this topic. One of her books and her topic for the talk was *The Ballroom Murder: The dancefloor shooting that shocked Australia*.

The story is set in Perth in 1925 and involved a woman called Audrey Jacob who lived in Fremantle with her family. Although set locally the story was at the time notorious nationally.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> August 1925 Audrey Jacob shot her ex-partner at the St John of God Annual Fundraiser Ball at Government House, which was witnessed by all at the ball. The murdered man was Cyril Gidley, a 25 year old ship's engineer who had been living in Fremantle for just two years. Gidley was having a good time dancing with another woman and ignored Jacob at the ball. To the onlookers this was the reason why she shot him, perhaps out of jealousy.

Although superficially a straight forward case of murder, Leigh explores other aspects of the case such as the fact that Jacob's lawyer, a well-regarded man called Haynes, was sympathetic to Jacob's cause. Arthur Haynes was also on good terms with the editor of the *Mirror* and the focus of the story shifted to Gidley who was portrayed in the press as the bad guy who had been violent in his treatment of Jacobs. As Gidley's family was back in England he did not have many to speak up in his defence although some of his friends said that he was not the kind of man who was violent towards women.

Following the trial Jacobs was acquitted of the murder. Leigh talked about the frustration of not knowing what really happened and the importance for historians to focus on the facts and what we know about the case rather than conjecture. The murder case also spoke to the power of the press and the influence it had on the jury and popular opinion. She finished by commenting on how we have an interest in crimes and delight in being deviant and probably will never know the real cause of what happened.

Following the murder Jacobs moved away from Perth, initially to Melbourne and then the U.S. where she married a wealthy businessman. Although she did not go into detail Leigh implied that Jacobs was involved in other nefarious deeds before her death in 1970. We will have to read the book to find out more about this intriguing history.

## **Wadjemup Kepawirn/ the Rottnest Deepwater Scuttling Ground**

The third and final presentation of the afternoon was by a team of particularly passionate and inspiring people. Wrecksporation is a highly trained group of six divers' who work in close collaboration with the WA Museum to identify and document wreck sites. Andrew Oakeley and Alex Aberle-Leeming are two of the Wrecksporation team, and along with Aurora Philpin, Assistant Curator of Maritime Heritage at the WA Museum, present their work to the community.

Between 15 and 20 kms southwest of Rottnest Island the water ranges between 60 to 200 metres deep and holds a wealth of historic material. From the early 1900s unwanted sea vessels were sunk in this area: barges, hulks and submarines, but also military equipment from both world wars such as warships, ammunition and even aircraft.

These waters have been studied since the 1980s when fishermen noticing large numbers of fish there, suggested there may be wrecks on the sea floor. Officially the site is Commonwealth Sea Dumping No.7. There are currently 18 identified wrecks, there are 21 vessels recorded as being scuttled in this area that have yet to be found. There are another 20 anomalies that require

further investigation. Survey work in Area No. 7 really began in 2000 with a documentary series: 'The Shipwreck Detectives', although many of the vessels were too deep to explore.

Improvements in technology now allow divers to descend to depths of 100 metres and more, with photographic equipment so advanced they are able to compile the images of the deep wrecks into 3D models. The process is called photogrammetry: the science and technology of obtaining reliable information about physical objects through the process of recording, measuring and interpreting photographic images. This means everybody has the opportunity to learn about and enjoy exploring these historic sites as if they were there themselves, without the dangers of deep sea diving!

Andrew and Alex talked about the diving team. They all have day jobs! All the equipment is their own but another team must be employed to operate the boat and Wrecksploration pays for this out of their own pockets. Each dive costs in the vicinity of \$5000. There is an eerie calm just before they dive, mental preparation to 'get into the zone'. The descent takes 5 minutes, they have 15 minutes on the bottom to do the imaging, then they must spend 197 minutes returning to the surface to allow for decompression. There is always a safety diver in the team to watch for hose leaks, current changes, etc.



3D Model of Dutch submarine HNLMS K XI  
Photograph taken from: <https://wrecksploration.au/projects/>

An extraordinary presentation, I think we were all quite amazed with what these people are doing. They were obviously doing something they loved, but their hard work and dedication to their project was inspiring. Check the website for further information <https://wrecksploration.au/>

## A TREASURE FROM TROVE - THE FIRST [RECORDED] HORSE RACE IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Heather Campbell

The first recorded horse race meeting in Western Australia took place in Fremantle on 2 October 1833. This was greatly facilitated by Captain Taylor of the *Helen*, who had imported a number of Timor Ponies in September of that year, 'for the institution of an amusement calculated to excite a considerable emulation amongst the breeders and importers of horses.' [Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal, 5 October 1833, p. 158]

**JUST IMPORTED**  
**PER BRIG "HELEN,"**  
**AND ON SALE**  
AT THE STORES OF THE UNDERSIGNED.  
**SUPERFINE FLOUR, Wheat, Bran,**  
**Stock, 13 Timor Ponies, in excellent**  
**condition ; 10 Working Oxen, 5 Cows**  
**in calf, 2 Heifers.**  
The whole will be sold on very low  
terms for cash.  
**CHARLES SMITH, Agent.**  
*Fremantle.*

Taken from: Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal, 21 Sept 1833, p. 150

An account of the race day appeared in the *Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal* of 5 October 1833 [p.158]:

This not inaptly termed October meeting, took place on Wednesday last the 2nd inst., on the Downs near Fremantle, and presented both a novel and interesting spectacle. As the origin of racing in this Colony it will probably be interesting to future chronologists, we feel it our duty to record, that the sporting world are indebted to Capt Taylor of the *Helen*, who has lately imported a number of Timor Ponies, aided by Mr C Smith and Mr J Weavell, for the institution of an amusement calculated to excite a considerable emulation amongst the breeders and importers of Horses. It may be expected from the general interest, which was evinced in the sports on Wednesday, that before long some steps will be taken to form periodical meetings. The spot selected for the race course has long been fixed upon as an appropriate site; it is about a mile and a half from Fremantle, on a slightly undulating plain skirting the sea, the adjoining hills affording a full view of the course; booths which were erected on the brow of the hill, with their variegated flags,—the ginger-bread nut-stall—and the *lame* fiddler, contributed much to the animation of the scene. The groups of fashionably dressed ladies and gentlemen promenading to and fro,—the tillted carts,—the busy din of preparation —the cry of clear the course—and at length the ponies being placed side by side at the starting post— the jockies all appropriately dressed,—we can assure our Readers who were not fortunate enough to witness it, presented no contemptable display.

FIRST RACE—PONY RACE The Subscription Purse for 5 sovs. Heats, once round a half-mile course;

Captain Mc Dermott's Dandy, Captain Taylor's Doctor. Captain Taylor's Teazer, Mr. Samson's More in Sorrow than Anger, Mr Leeder's Bob, Mr Solomon's Tinker Mr Dowing's Jacko Mackako.

The first heat was well contested between Dandy and Tinker; until within a few yards of the winning post, Tinker's rider (Master Butler), whether with the intention of jockeying, or from accident, we will not pretend to determine, cleverly sidled his antagonist off the course. The second heat Dandy's rider retaliated, and Tinker bolted at starting. Dandy came in without any competition. The third heat was again well contested between Tinker and Dandy; the latter however won.

SECOND RACE.

Mr George Leake's Jack, against Mr Samson's Black Mare: the former won. One heat twice round.

THIRD RACE.

Captain Erskine's Perouse, Mr S G Henty's Jack, and Mr Scott's Grey. This was a good run between Jack and Grey: the latter won. Perouse bolted.

FOURTH RACE—PONY RACE. A Subscription Purse for £3.

Five Ponies were entered, but most of them preferring the branch roads soon after starting, the run was more amusing than edifying.

FOURTH RACE

Mr Henty's Jack, Mr Scott's Grey, and Mr Smith's Horse : Jack won.

Climbing a greased pole for a hat;— wheeling a barrow blindfolded to a given mark — and a running match between Mr J Morrell, jun., and Mr. Davey, which took place

previously to the horses and ponies arriving on the course, comprised the entertainments of the day. Owing to the protracted sittings of the Quarter Sessions, the races did not commence until about half past 2 o'clock.

Some evil genius seems invariably to watch over these meetings. The arrangements for the amusement of all parties would not be complete without a row—consequently a row we had, but we should not have expected a Gentleman of Mr. Lamb's respectability to have been the originator.

The Yorkshire Club dined together at the Union Hotel;—the sports of the day were canvassed over, and but one general opinion of satisfaction prevailed.



Left: An impression of the first race meeting in Western Australia, held at Woodman's Point, near Fremantle, with Timor ponies on October 2, 1833. From: [State tramples horse heritage link – StreetWise Media](#) (accessed 31 May 2025)

This interesting event marked the beginning of an enduring enthusiasm for horse racing among the settlers. In 1852, the Western Australian Turf Club (WATC) was established and has played a crucial role in formalising and regulating the sport.

For further information see [Racing WA Thoroughbred History](#) [accessed 1 June 2025.]

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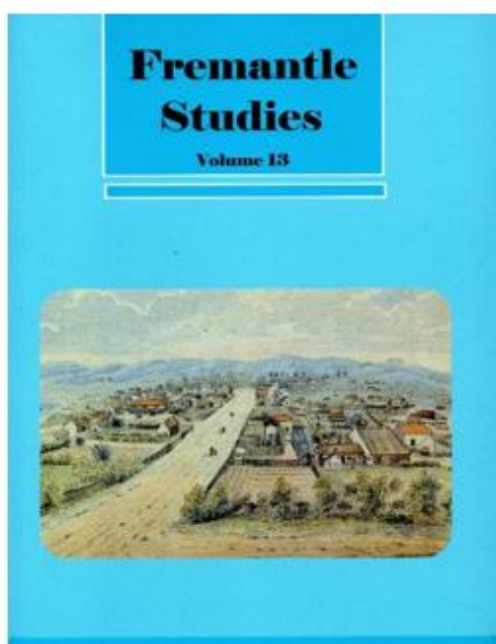
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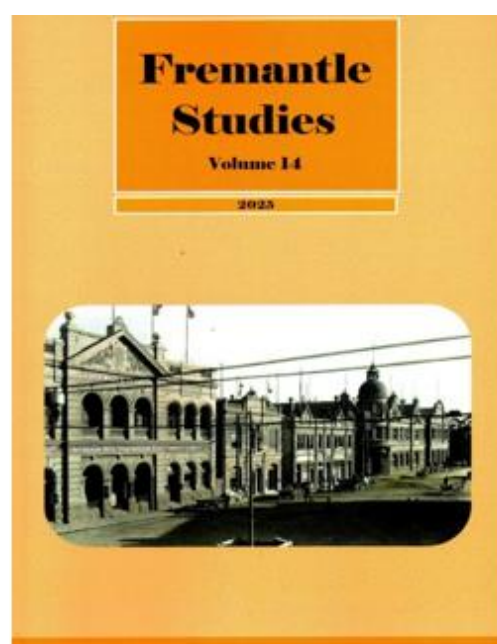
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