



## FREMANTLE HISTORY SOCIETY

Established 1994

The Secretary, PO Box 1305  
FREMANTLE WA 6959

**Summer Edition, 2014**

Editors: Dianne Davidson, Anne Brake, Ron Davidson

**Patron: Dr Brad Pettitt,  
Mayor of Fremantle**

### WORKERS TURNS 100

The Fremantle Workers' Social and Leisure Club is 100 in February 2014. In February 1914 Billy Clare, an advocate of the dignity of labour, said: 'Our club is not just about drinking beer. It is a home. Possibly the only home some of our members have.'

The club had a varied provenance in Henry Street. It had been the Fremantle Club which by the 1880s had become Fremantle's version of the Weld Club. The 15 top merchants sat in leather chairs and generally ran Fremantle. One of the merchants, Mary Higham, being a woman, had to send her son along to meetings.

But Fremantle was changing: organised labour was taking over from the merchants with their fine furniture and cigars. The home for members could be a little wilder than Billy Clare indicated. Old club records showed fights were frequent and members were suspended under the catch-all offence of bad behaviour. In 1956 the club moved a few doors south of the original in Henry Street. One of those seeking to join the new

version of the club was union leader Paddy Troy. Paddy was black-balled, apparently because he was a communist. It was twenty years later that the club sent a formal letter to Paddy's son John apologising for the slight.

In May 2011 the club closed just before the Heritage Week Club Crawl. It was apparently in financial difficulties. It

reopened in January 2012 with a flourish, under Don Whittington's guidance. It now has nearly 800 members.

This portrait hangs in the foyer of the Club, but the dapper chap's identity remains a mystery. It was found in the cellar in 2012 when the Club reopened. The artist is WF Stuart. Do you recognise him?

In an effort to collect and collate the rich history of the Worker's Club, the Board is working with the FHC to collect oral histories from long-term members. A booklet of the history of the Club is also planned with

the help of the University of Notre Dame. If any of your members have old photos, articles or any memorabilia that could contribute to either project we would love to hear from them:

Email: [freeworkers@bigpond.com](mailto:freeworkers@bigpond.com) or phone Don on 9335 6091.



## COMING EVENTS

### An important Friend to Fremantle

*The town of Fremantle strongly resembles a Country Fair and has a pretty appearance, the pretty white tents looking much like booths*

As a young bride in 1829, Mary Ann Friend set sail on the *Wanstead* embarking on a two year journey with her husband Matthew Curling Friend, Captain of the *Wanstead*. The journal she kept during this voyage contains one of the earliest accounts of the Swan River Colony. Her frank sketch of the colony's harsh conditions contributed to the ongoing difficulty in attracting new migrants.

Nearly 200 years later, the journal returns to Fremantle. The original journal has been acquired by the State Library of Western Australia with the assistance of the Australian Government through the National Cultural Heritage Account.

[http://www.slwa.wa.gov.au/find/wa\\_resources/mary\\_ann\\_friend\\_journal](http://www.slwa.wa.gov.au/find/wa_resources/mary_ann_friend_journal)

Members are invited to a very special viewing of the diary of Mary Ann Friend, currently on display at the Fremantle Maritime Museum's Shipwreck Gallery, 47 Cliff St Fremantle. Assoc Prof Deborah Gare will discuss the fascinating life of Mary Ann Friend, the history of the diary and provide details of its content.

Meet on the forecourt of the Shipwreck Galleries at **10.30 am on Sunday 23 February**. The talk and viewing of the diary will be followed by morning tea.

### Wander Around Woodman's Point

For its March meeting the Fremantle History Society will visit a place of the highest medical and social history - the old Woodman's Point Quarantine Station, 8km south of Fremantle. The station was opened in 1886 after smallpox outbreaks and then dealt with cholera in 1889. The station handled a number of major outbreaks. Most serious of these were cholera, smallpox and, in the early 20th century, bubonic

plague. A jetty and tramline were added in 1901. Patients were brought from Perth to Fremantle on what was called the Plague Train then taken in a special ambulance to the quarantine station. Disposing of the bodies of victims was problematic. The first victim was sunk off Rottnest in a treble coffin filled with carbolic acid. No one would eat Fremantle fish after that. Another was burned on a pyre of railway sleepers on the beach near the quarantine station.

Meanwhile Dr Thomas Anderson, the medical superintendent at Fremantle Hospital in the 1900s, would go to Woodman's Point to treat victims. Afterwards he would burn his often new suit and take a bath in carbolic acid. Resident staff lived in five cottages and were 'quarantined' too.

After WW1 thousands of returning soldiers spent time at Woodman's Point. After WW2 many European refugees were processed in the large still-existing shower room which must have stirred terrible memories for some. There were special quarters for ship crews, divided into officers and seamen, and for passengers by class of passage. Ships carpenters made the existing kitchen/dining room - without nails or screws but wooden wedges. It is a place of images and memories.

The station was transferred by the Commonwealth to the State Department of Sport and Recreation in 1979.

Fremantle History Society members and their friends will be taken on a special tour of this fascinating site on Sunday 23 March from 10am. Morning tea and a talk will be followed by a bus tour of this large site. Meet at the Quarantine Station. Bookings essential – Dianne on 9430 6096 or [Dianne.davidson@gmail.com](mailto:Dianne.davidson@gmail.com) by Tuesday 18 March. A charge of \$7.50 covers the morning tea and bus.

### Great Train Journeys

April's meeting will be held at the beautiful Fremantle Railway Station which was built in

1907. The original Fremantle railway station was constructed in 1881 next to Cliff Street. Following the extension of the [Eastern Railway to Kalgoorlie](#) in 1896, the station was an important hub for gold miners arriving in Western Australia via ship and then travelling to the Yilgarn and [Eastern Goldfields](#).

However, in 1907 a new station and marshalling yards were built at the present location to better service the newly constructed [Fremantle Harbour](#).

Located at the end of Market St, the station remains a key transport hub for the city. Our tour and talk will explore the various elements central to a train station of the past but now rarely used. Our supper will be held in the old parcels office, now the staff's crib room.

Meet on the platform at 6 pm on Tuesday 23 April. This meeting is part of the Western Australian Heritage Festival.

## MEETING REPORTYS

### Christmas Lunch - Yum

The Fremantle History Society moved to East Fremantle for our traditional Christmas lunch on November 25. Everything worked. Thirty two members arrived at the George Street Bistro which holds 32 in its main room. We ate traditional roast turkey and vegetables, then pudding. Thanks to Bistro owner Alison Thorburn who kept the food flowing. Between courses the Fremantle history quiz was held with items submitted by Ron, Anne and Madison who made an effort to get easier items. Winner was Wendy Markmann who took away a Christmas cake as her prize.

George Street was the commercial centre for that area in the early twentieth century with grocery and butchers' shops, ice-makers and frock shops. Then there was the Royal George Hotel and later the Richmond Raceway Trotting Ground.



Christmas Diner at the George St Bistro (ABrake)

And for those who didn't make it, the 2013 **Christmas Quiz** is attached. Answers on page 6.

Diners at the society's Christmas lunch wondered what had happened to Baker Brothers butchers, who used to occupy the George Street site. This article from the Western Mail explains what happened.

### **BUTCHERS' PLANT GUTTED.**

**Estimated Damage, £20,000.**

In a spectacular fire which destroyed the large butchering and ice-making plant of Baker Bros., at East Fremantle, late on Tuesday afternoon, damage estimated at £20,000 was caused within an hour. The fire brigades were handicapped by an inadequate supply of water, probably due to the unprecedented demand on the mains following the abnormal heat of the day. Many of the fire hoses could not be filled, and others delivered only small streams of water until Water Supply Department workmen cut off certain mains to increase the pressure.

Detonations of bursting oil drums, which shot showers of sparks and burning material into the air, the temporary engulfing of surrounding premises under a pall of acrid black smoke, the destruction of a lofty condenser tower, which was converted into a mammoth torch, and the crashing of a 600-lb. steel smoke stack above the engine-room, were features of the conflagration, which was watched by big crowds.

*Western Mail, 09.02.33, p24*

## BOOK LAUNCH AT THE BUFFALO

There was a special evening for another Fremantle club, this time the Buffalo, on December 5 when *Perth* the book was launched. *Perth* was written by crime writer and Fremantle identity David Whish-Wilson and launched by Fremantle author Ron Davidson.

The crowd of 150 plus was like old times at a Fremantle club and Leo Amaranti the manager was excited by the turn out. You might wonder why the launch of *Perth* took place in so Fremantle a place. What Dave did was draw Fremantle colour and characters into his *Perth* narrative. *Perth* is the eighth of a series on Australia's capitals published by New South Publishing, an imprint of the University of New South Wales.

Editors Note: *Perth* is already 'out of print'; such was its popularity. A second printing has been promised.

## TIME TEAM INTEREST IN FREMANTLE

Emails were flying between David Cunningham a research officer for a history documentary hosted by Tony Robinson (Time Team; Blackadder) and Fremantle History Society members. David is preparing a documentary commemorating 100 years of military service from 1914 to the present for pay TV. Each program focuses on a city's experience of the war. This could range from the homefront to active service. The group will be filming a Fremantle episode in the third week of May. They contacted Pam Hartree first who sent them on to Ron Davidson. Ron noted that the previous walk seemed to disappear without a trace. David said the program had rated highly in the Eastern States.

Ron replied saying the coastal battery in Burt Street could provide a nice addition to their war programs: "One of the gunners, Hughie Edwards, is being criticised by other gunners when he accepts a scholarship to RAAF's Point Cook. Fremantle is strongly

tribal and it was felt Hughie is leaving us and joining them. He ended up with a Victoria Cross, the most decorated pilot in the RAF, equerry to the Queen, and WA governor. There is a statue to him in Kings Square. Madison Lloyd-Jones has an interesting paper in volume 7 of Fremantle Studies on the impact of US navy submariners on Fremantle women in WW2."

David Cunningham was most interested in these stories as he pointed out in a later email to Ron. He mentioned also Tony Fletcher's Fremantle 1939-1945 Extraordinary Events in the Port from volume 1 of Fremantle Studies. Ron's email showed the extraordinary events included bayoneting of Chinese seamen who sought a pay rise. A later email from David asked for the names of Hughie Edwards' friends from Burt Street for interviews. Ron replied they would nudge 100 by now.

Watch this space

## THE NASH OPENS IT DOORS AGAIN

Ron Davidson

I was strolling past the National Hotel in early December and was surprised to see the doors open and beers being poured. There were many drinkers. But it was disappointing that the hotel's rich history had been largely ignored at the re-opening. The Fremantle History Society had been an advocate for some very visible bit of history on reopening day. We had even sent copies of our newsletter which covered the society's celebrated wake for the fire-ravaged hotel in 2007, both to an earlier set of owners and to the Fremantle City Council.

At the wake it had become obvious that the National was more than just a hotel. It was the centre of the Fremantle CBD. Milton Baxter told us that. He was a newspaper boy in the forties and eventually became the top seller. His reward was to sell papers outside the National. It had that sort of cachet. We hope some of the spirit of Milton Baxter continues at the National.



Milton Baxter and Fay Campbell at the Nash Wake in 2007 (A Brake)

### FROM THE LOCAL HISTORY COLLECTION.

It was great to see so many members at Studies Day on 27 October at the Artillery Barracks; it was a very successful day in terms of new research about Fremantle and also for the Society's coffers. Thanks you all for you contribution to the day.

You will be pleased to know that the collection is developing a new database for the digital collection. Over 400 new images have been added including a collection of images of buildings taken in 1985. It is interesting to see how some of them have changed in such a relatively short time. Keep an eye on the Library's website for access to the new images.

#### Images

Sail and Anchor - Image No. E000170  
 Esplanade Hotel - Image No E000189  
 Rosie O'Grady's - Image No E000260  
 Port Mill Essex St - Image No E000256  
 Dome Café & Kulcha - Image No E000259  
 Kidogo Arthouse - Image No E000130

Also recently discovered has been an Electoral Roll for East Fremantle dated 1955, it will provide useful information regarding the owners of East Fremantle property during this period.

Please call in and see Pam, Kristi at the collection, we are open Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 5.00pm.

## THE SKINNER-STREET CEMETERY

Wendy Markmann

The Skinner-street Cemetery was the main Fremantle burial ground for our early settlers from 1852 to 1899. The burial cortege would have left the funeral director's in Market Street, proceeded up High street and left into Ord street. The old cemetery was very large, the grounds bounded by East, Ord, Ellen and Vale Streets. The main entrance was in Vale Street. This was an impressive entryway with a recessed area inside the large double iron gates. Upon reaching the gates and passing through, the cortege entered the cemetery. Some funerals had hundreds of citizens accompanying the mourners, walking from as far away as the Esplanade in Fremantle. Trees formed elegant avenues as the last journey of the departed moved along to the relevant denomination section. The burial ground filled up quickly and in the fifty years to the end of the nineteenth century, the Skinner Street cemetery was almost full. The last burial was in 1923, a young girl from Tuckfield Street, whose family wished her to be buried with her grandfather. She had died in Wooroloo Sanatorium from tuberculosis.

Although the grounds were level at the recessed entrance, it soon became necessary to enlarge the Catholic section, already on rising ground. This section was very near East Street and small iron gates were built into the stone wall or picket fence for relatives to visit more directly.

The story of Skinner-street Cemetery in Fremantle is thus far largely untold. Few, except a decreasing number of local old timers have ever even heard of it. But this important burial ground deserves acknowledgment and recognition, even so long after it has closed. I can do no better than quote from a beautifully written newspaper story of the time, with its picturesque language. This was in the closing days of the cemetery, 1935, when the few remaining headstones and graves were dismantled and removed to the new cemetery at Carrington Street, Palmyra.

The following extracts come from an article in the *West Australian*, 27 May 1933, p 18

#### THE OLD FREMANTLE CEMETERY.



A photograph eloquent of the dilapidation and disrepair in the old Fremantle cemetery, described in an article in this issue.

The caption reads "A photograph eloquent of the dilapidation and disrepair in the old Fremantle cemetery ..." from the article in the *West Australian*, 27.05.33, p18

#### **A Fremantle Relic**

*Lying in the shelter of a hill which overlooks the bay where the ships of the State's first settlers first sought anchorage, a dilapidated but unforgettable relic of the days when Western Australia was a struggling colony, the old Fremantle Cemetery in Skinner Street will soon exist only in memory as do the pioneers whose mortal remains it holds. Under a joint arrangement between the city of Fremantle and the Fremantle Cemetery Board it is proposed to exhume the remains of those buried there and transfer them to graves in the new cemetery. This done, a park and children's playground will be built on the site and so will disappear yet another of the many landmarks which have symbolised the history of the State since during its 100 years existence.*

*It is with no desire to bring to an inglorious end a graveyard around which is woven an enchanting web of memory that the authorities have decided on this course of action rather has their decision been reached from a desire to ensure that vandalism and desecration, which have reduced many of the graves and headstones to a pitiful state of disrepair shall cease. What were once imposing*

*tombstones have been demolished and now lie beside the graves, a mass of crumbling and broken marble; weeds and grasses grow in disorder where once flowers gave the place an air of quiet beauty; a stone dividing wall has crumbled and is partly in ruins, while stock are sometimes to be seen grazing among the tombstones.*

(to be continued)

#### FOR YOUR DIARY

##### **Sunday 23 February – 10.30 am**

Mary Ann Friend Diary viewing and presentation by Assoc Prof Deborah Gare. Meet outside the Shipwreck Gallery, Cliff St, Fremantle

##### **Sunday 23 March – 10am**

Woodman Point Quarantine Station bus tour of the site. Bookings essential to Dianne on 9430 6096 or [Dianne.davidson@gmail.com](mailto:Dianne.davidson@gmail.com) by Tuesday 18 March. \$7.50 includes morning tea and bus tour.

##### **Tuesday 22 April – 6pm**

A behind the scenes look at the beautiful Fremantle Railway Station as part of the Western Australian Heritage Festival. Meet on the platform.

#### **Quiz Answers**

1. 1995 2. Fremantle war brides 3. Anna Gare 4. All of the above 5. Shiner Ryan 6. To shade husband Tom Edward's eyes 7. Jenny Archibald 8. Xavier Herbert 9. Les Lauder 10 20 years 11. Paddy 12. Ben Elton 13. Barney 14. Butcher 15. Dorothy Tangney 16. Joan Campbell 17. Samsons 18. John Curtin Senior High School 19. John Curtin 20. Anne Brake

#### **YOUR SOCIETY**

Fremantle History Society meetings are held once a month February – November. For details on these events or information on our other activities go to [www.fhs.org.au](http://www.fhs.org.au).

## **HAPPY NEW YEAR**



## **Fremantle History Society Christmas Quiz**

1. What year did the Dockers play their first AFL game? \_\_\_\_\_
2. The folk rock group the Waifs sang  
*Then waits in the Freo rain/ to climb aboard the Bridal train.*  
Who was on the bridal train c 1946?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What member of the Jam Tarts group later judged Junior Master Chef?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Stephen Montague Stout was a convict an early Fremantle photographer  
teacher journalist all of the above (circle your choice)
5. Underbelly's Kate Leigh married a Fremantle folk hero in 1951. Who was he?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Why did Sara Jane Edwards kneel on Victoria quay in 1919?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Who was the Mayor when the Fremantle History Society was formed?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Who wrote in *Disturbing Element*, "Of night the bars fumed and roared, the  
drunks bawled and brawled and wept and puked...?"  
David Hutchison Bill Latter Ron Davidson Xavier Herbert. (circle your choice)
9. Who was the driving force behind the establishment of the Fremantle Society in  
1972? \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

10. What commemoration is being planned for the FHS next year  
20 years    25 years    30 years (circle your choice)
  
11. In recent times we saw the sad end of Deckchair theatre. One of their hits was about a union leader and held in a cargo shed. What was it called?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
12. Which English comedian, author, playwright, actor and director, known for his work on Blackadder now calls Fremantle home? \_\_\_\_\_
  
13. \_\_\_\_\_ Silbert's Corner
  
14. What was the original business on this site that burnt down in 1933?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
15. Australia's first woman senator came from Fremantle. What was her name?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
16. Who was Fremantle's most famous potter? \_\_\_\_\_
  
17. Which Fremantle company is believed to be the oldest continuously running family business in Australia? \_\_\_\_\_
  
18. What will you find today at the old Skinner St Cemetery site?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
19. Which member for Fremantle became the Prime Minister of Australia?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
20. Who is the only person to have served on the Fremantle History Society Committee since its inception?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_