

Fremantle

the immigration story



**twentieth century immigration through fremantle, including
fremantle's role in the early development of tourism in western australia**

by john dowson

official publication of the fremantle society, po box 828, fremantle, wa 6160

**Western
Australian**



Government.

IMMIGRATION.

Nominated Passages.

Persons having friends and relatives in the United Kingdom who are desirous of emigrating to Western Australia may obtain passages at half the ordinary fares by nominating them to the Hon. Colonial Secretary in Perth.

FARES from £6 to £15 10s.

Clerks, Artisans and Mechanics will NOT be accepted.

Advanced Passages.

Working men and others resident in the State may obtain an advance of passage money, including railway fares from port of arrival to destination, to bring their wives and families from the Eastern States and New Zealand to this State. Such advances to be repaid within six or twelve months, according to the amount advanced. A responsible guarantor must be provided.

Special Concessions are provided for Settlers taking up Land.

Full particulars can be obtained upon application to the Under Secretary, Colonial Secretary's Department, Perth.

J. D. CONNOLLY,
COLONIAL SECRETARY.



NOTICE TO FARMERS AND OTHERS.

Colonial Secretary's Office,

Perth, July 21st, 1908.

THE Government have decided to grant Passages at £5 to suitable single Farmers and Farm Laborers, upon their depositing with the Agent-General (in addition to the passage money of £5) the sum of £10, which will be refunded to them upon arrival in the State. It is desired, therefore, to bring under the notice of Farmers throughout the State that experienced Farmers and Farm Laborers are arriving fortnightly from the United Kingdom and that many of them are open for engagement on arrival.

The Government will be glad to receive applications from those who desire to obtain any farm assistance or who can offer employment to Farmers of any class.

All applications, enquiries, &c., in this connection should be addressed to Mr. JAMES LONGMORE, Superintendent, Government Labor Bureau, Perth.

F. D. NORTH,
UNDER SECRETARY.

Twentieth Century Immigration Through Fremantle



contents

- executive summary 5
- fremantle waterfront map 9
- original immigration building 10
- introduction 11
- immigration complex 12
- immigration precinct photo 13
- mail boats 14
- aubert octavius neville 17
- 20th century immigration issues 19
- dominions royal commission 22
- immigration between the wars 24
- child migration 26
- war time 28
- the great wave 30
- the great migrant liners 33
- an immigrant's story (2) 38
- a new passenger terminal 40
- conclusion inside back cover

THE CASE FOR RETENTION, RESTORATION, AND REUSE OF THE
PRECINCT OF BUILDINGS ON VICTORIA QUAY AT THE END OF THE
FOOTBRIDGE WHICH HAVE PLAYED A PIVOTAL ROLE IN THE HISTORY
OF FREMANTLE HARBOUR AND THE STATE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

by John Dowson, President, The Fremantle Society

Executive Summary

Reason for Report

In response to the Port Authority of Fremantle's intention to demolish or relocate the immigration buildings on Victoria Quay to make way for a commercial development totally unrelated to the port, The Fremantle Society researched the buildings, their history, and the social history of the uses they contained. Following the submission of a commissioned consultant's report and the full Fremantle Society Report to the Heritage Council of Western Australia, the Port Authority was instructed in August 2001 that the Immigration Office, adjacent toilet, and Waiting Room could not be demolished or relocated (see description below).

Description of the Place

The current buildings sit in their own precinct on Victoria Quay east of the relocated E Shed and at the foot of the overhead footbridge, in a row of buildings that to the passer by seem perhaps non-descript and unprepossessing.

The buildings are known as the "Immigration Complex Buildings." Looking from the wharf the buildings are, from left to right: the C.Y. O'Connor Centre (also known as the "Security Centre") which originally was a World War Two "lumpers" cafeteria, built in 1945 on command from the Prime Minister trying to keep the difficult waterside workers happy during the war; the Immigration Office (also known now as the "Old Police Station"); the Public Toilet; the Waiting Room (also known as the "Amenities Store"); and an Electrical Substation.

The building of the World War Two workers' cafeteria resulted in the demolition of the famous "First and Last Store in Australia," but the central building (the immigration building), relocated in 1912 from between B and C shed and subsequently altered, has many original architectural features including the original Public Hall. The Waiting Room has been in situ since 1928.

"Were the truths about this State widely known, there would be an incoming rush of immigration which would tie the present administration staff of the civil service in a hopeless knot. No other country in the world can offer what she is offering."

The Royal Perth Annual, Royal Agricultural Society WA 1907

Fremantle and its Harbour

Fremantle Harbour opened in 1897. With its safe anchorage and proximity to Perth, it overtook Albany as Western Australia's main port. Mail steamers switched from Albany to Fremantle and as the harbour traffic began to build, the facilities within the harbour were continually developed to handle the ships and their cargoes. Initially the mail steamers were destined to unload on the north quay, but fierce opposition from the Fremantle community, concerned that passengers would head straight to Perth and ignore Fremantle, saw very deliberate moves to have the human cargoes unloaded on South Quay, named Victoria Quay in 1901. The first purpose built immigration building (below) was erected on the wharf between B and C Sheds.



The original 1906 purpose built Immigration and Information Bureau on Victoria Quay (PWD12655)

Human Cargoes

The early days of the port have a particularly rich and colourful history, worthy of a much greater recognition and appreciation. While the various cargoes of the ships have been heavily documented, the human traffic of the port over the years has been largely ignored, especially in Port Authority records.

Immigration, from the opening of the harbour, was a major part of the Port's business, and along with the regular passenger traffic, continued to be important until the arrival of cheap air travel in the 1960s, not long after the new passenger terminal was opened.

This publication is an abridged version of the 100 page report "Twentieth Century Immigration Through Fremantle" written as a submission to the Heritage Council of Western Australia in 2001 in order to save the immigration complex of buildings on Victoria Quay from demolition by the Fremantle Port Authority.

Significance

The precinct of buildings covered in this report has not been studied in depth until now. It has been assessed by consultants in the past as having levels of significance ranging from being "significant" to having "moderate significance." However, some of the authors concerned have stated that they did not have enough time to investigate these buildings thoroughly, and that the buildings deserved further research.

Additionally, the model used for heritage assessment is too often restricted to "historic" value. The feasibility study to assess possible World Heritage Listing for Fremantle (*Fremantle: an Appraisal of Significance; a Study to Assess the Feasibility of Nominating Fremantle to the World Heritage List* HJM Consultants Pty Ltd 1990) omitted many of the themes which could have been considered, and according to Ian Molyneux (*Conservation Plan for the Western half of Victoria Quay, Port of Fremantle, Western Australia* 1996, appendix 7):

"For a place to have represented such a complete range of examples of things of possible cultural heritage significance is an unusual thing, and surely of World Heritage interest."

"The Port of Fremantle, and the Place (Victoria Quay and Moles) in particular, therefore have a "special value" as components within a place of potential World Heritage Status."

The precinct of buildings studied in this report represent a range of uses and a range of construction dates from 1906 to 1945. The deliberate positioning of these buildings and their central importance to the human traffic of the port, particularly in relation to the highly significant themes of immigration and tourism as demonstrated in this report is highly significant.

While the history of tourism in Australia has only recently attracted serious study, this report demonstrates that the birth of tourism in Western Australia occurred significantly from these wharf buildings and that these buildings were significant in the tourism industry for many years.

The theme of immigration has been studied in much greater detail, though only seriously by researchers since the 1970s. Now it is recognised that: "There is nothing more important in Australian history than the immigration story" (former Prime Minister Bob Hawke). Despite this importance, immigration through Fremantle has not received the attention it deserves and the material that follows demonstrates that the theme of immigration and its relationship to these buildings on this wharf has **exceptionally high significance**.

Recommendations :

- 1) It is recommended that the whole of the precinct of buildings studied in this report be given full permanent protection under the Heritage Act of Western Australia and not be relocated or demolished.
- 2) It is recommended that the buildings in this precinct be restored as soon as possible using funds from projected earnings of the Port Authority from other current or future uses of Victoria Quay.
- 3) It is recommended that the precinct concerned be given protection from any future developments by way of sufficient curtilage and a conservation plan for the whole area, and that the precinct be re-emphasised as it was initially when the statue of C.Y. O'Connor was placed in front of it, by returning the statue to that location.
- 4) It is recommended that, once restored, the complex serve as an interpretation centre for immigration with a permanent immigration exhibition, and that space be set aside for a tourist information centre for visitors to the Victoria Quay precinct, especially given the precinct location near the railway station at the beginning of the Victoria Quay heritage area.
- 5) It is recommended that the precinct of buildings concerned be managed after restoration by the Western Australian Museum in conjunction with their Maritime Museum.
- 6) It is recommended, to complement the above uses, and in recognition of the relevance of the area, that proposals for immigration related uses be discussed with the relevant bodies for housing those bodies in the immigration precinct or nearby 1960 Passenger Terminal.

All of the above recommendations are consistent with all of the reports done so far relating to Victoria Quay. See map opposite for study area. Immigration precinct is group of three buildings at bottom of shaded area. Map provided by Cox Howlett + Bailey Woodland.



Fig. 02 The study area

1 2 3 4 5 6

masterplan 2008-2018

COX HOWLETT + BAILEY WOODLAND

- Legend
- Study Area
 - Existing Buildings in Study Area
 - Open Spaces

Fremantle Waterfront



"There is a Government Information Bureau right opposite the mail steamer's berth on the Victoria Quay, Fremantle, where travellers passing through the Port are cordially invited to call and spend a few minutes in the Bureau inspecting samples of West Australian products, which they will find exhibited, and obtain any information they require on all matters concerning the State."

(Western Mail Christmas Number, Dec 25, 1907 p22)



The 1906 Immigration Bureau, before its relocation in 1912 to the footbridge. Sections remain under existing 1928 rebuilt structure, mislabelled "Old Police Station" by the Port Authority. Saved from Port Authority demolition, by The Fremantle Society and others August 2001. Hilson Beasley Architect. Photo: The Handbook of Western Australia 1912.

immigration through fremantle

by john dowson

At the dawn of Federation in 1901 when this story begins, only 2% of Australians were not of British stock. The 1901 Immigration Restriction Act, which could impose a dictation test in any European language, the 1903 Naturalisation Act, and the 1904 WA Factories Act, aimed at restricting non Europeans. "We should be one people, and remain one people, without the admixture of other races" said Alfred Deakin, later Prime Minister, in 1901. Almost half a century later, Australia's first Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell, echoed the same sentiments: "The evils of miscegenation always result in rioting and bloodshed."

After World War One, Germans, Austrians, Bulgarians, and Hungarians were barred from Australia until 1925. Turks were barred until 1930. The disastrous Group Settlement Scheme of the 1920s was not open to non British settlers. It failed to turn fertile forests into fertile farms. With the Great Depression in 1929, assisted passage schemes closed. After World War II, the same desire to attract the British persisted, but with a new 'populate or perish' philosophy, Australia had to look elsewhere. A propaganda campaign began, to get Australians to accept not only more migrants, but those from other European countries. New migrants were portrayed as clean, hard working, and happy.

By 1958 the Dictation Test and the White Australia Policy had been abolished. The 1970s saw the community acceptance of a universal migration scheme. Of a total 10 million immigrants since the First Fleet, two thirds have arrived after 1947.

A century after Federation in 1901, we have, bar Israel and Luxembourg, the highest number of overseas born residents in the world.



One of many famous visitors to Victoria Quay. The 20,051 gross ton "Otranto" of the Orient Line, built 1925 and in service until 1957, made 64 round trips to Australia. Here shown at Victoria Quay in 1945. During the war the "Otranto" served as a troop and landing ship, while after the war she mainly carried assisted migrants from England to Australia migrants from England to Australia. Photo: WAN.COM 57

Immigration Complex: How it Got Where It Is

The immigration complex as it exists today (opposite and map page 9) is a rather non-descript looking group of buildings just east of the relocated 'E' shed, at the foot of the footbridge leading to the station. The central building (mislabeled Old Police Station) is the relocated 1906 Immigration building, extensively added to, with the addition of the colonnade in front of the building to promote the formation of an important precinct, having the statue of CY O'Connor moved there to look through the gap between C and D Sheds (see photo page 17), with the Immigration building behind, flanked (initially by the First and Last Store in Australia before it was demolished and replaced with the current CY O'Connor Centre) and the 1928 waiting rooms. This created a deliberately arranged entry forecourt. Directly behind lies the main railway station, the main post office, and the centre of Fremantle.

It took ten years of blasting to remove The Bar, the limestone ridge across the mouth of the Swan River that had prevented any ships entering. Torpedoes were even used to destroy some sections. Dredging operations were massive. One dredge trundled all the way from England; the captain went mad and was removed to the Fremantle Lunatic Asylum.

When the harbour opened in 1897 it was by no means ready to cope with the demands of a busy port. The first sheds on the wharf were not built until 1902 and prior to that cargo was unloaded into rail wagons and taken to the railway yards where further sorting took place. The Mail Boat Jetty had been completed in 1900 on the North Quay and it is fortunate for the economic interests of Fremantle that the area near the immigration buildings south of the river was chosen for the mail boats.

The photograph below, a sublime representation of the situation a year or so before the harbour opened, demonstrates the filling in of much of the river, the already heavy presence of the railways and the location of the main railway station at the end of Cliff and Meusel Streets (until 1907). It also shows the river jetty where goods unloaded from the Long Jetty, off to the right of the photograph, were transported up river.



immigration and tourism

While immigration has been studied for a long time, the history of tourism in Australia has only recently attracted serious attention. The birth of tourism in Western Australia occurred significantly from the Fremantle immigration and information buildings. The building below is the same but much altered 1906 building on page 6 that was relocated to this area in 1912 and built over in 1928. This building was significant in the tourism industry for many years. In the 1913 "Webster's Guide" to Western Australia, only two places in Fremantle are mentioned: the 1500 seat King's Theatre (now Metropolis nightclub) and this building, the Government Information Bureau. In the 1960s, this was still the main tourist bureau for Fremantle.



A section of the immigration and tourist buildings precinct c 1948. The precinct is today almost as shown except that the C. Y. O'Connor statue was moved from here to the front of the Port Authority building in 1974. The wharfside cafeteria (left) was built on direct instructions from Canberra during World War Two in 1944-5 to keep labour disputes at a minimum. The Tourist and Information Bureau, which dealt with immigrants as well, is the centrepiece of a precinct that addressed the waterfront area. Of interest is the fact that the wording on the bureau had been changed to "Tourist and Information" as above but by 1951 the word "immigration" had again been put back on the building. This precinct linked directly into Fremantle via the footbridge which led to the railway station and the main thoroughfare of Market Street.

Fremantle Port Authority photo.

Mail Boats Arrive in Fremantle- 3 Hour Turnaround!

While the first mail ship to enter the harbour was the German steamer S.S. "Gera" on August 10th, 1898, the first British mail steamer, the "Ormuz," on August 13th, 1900, attracted huge attention. Organising celebrations was difficult as the mail boats were the new greyhounds of the ocean, and the "Ormuz" only intended to stay in port for three hours. The press heralded the arrival of the "Ormuz" as "one of the most important days the town has known." (*Daily News* August 13, 1900). The ship arrived with 111 passengers and took away 30, but it also took away 300,000 pounds worth of gold bullion. Dignitaries only had three hours to celebrate, and as soon as the gangplank was lowered, Sir John Forrest, followed by C.Y.O'Connor

as Engineer in Chief, and then F.H. Piesse as Director of Public Works, led a group on board for a banquet in the steamer's large dining room.

While the "Ormuz" was the first outbound British mailboat, the first inbound, the RMS "Himalaya," arrived the next month and gave locals another excuse for celebrations. Unfortunately it arrived late, so the public holiday organised for the masses did not eventuate, but VIPs like C.Y. O'Connor and the State's richest man Sir George Shenton still attended a party and toasted Commander Brown who, co-incidentally, had been born in Fremantle 42 years earlier.



SWAN RIVER FROM LIGHTHOUSE, FREMANTLE, W.A.

To get ready for the "Ormuz," an urgently constructed temporary railway station was built for the ship on the south wharf opposite the new overhead footbridge which led directly to Market Street and the centre of Fremantle. This construction can be seen in the top right corner of the above photograph.

Until a few years earlier, Sir George Shenton had lived a few metres to the right of the photo above, in Cliff Street.

But, port facilities were so primitive that the *Daily News* thundered: "There was vast and well-merited grumbling on the part of those who went down to the wharf, at the lack of decent facilities."

"The meaning of the word (sandgroper) can very easily be appreciated by those who, like the passengers from the Himalaya, land at the wharf and desire to go into the town, for it is really nothing more or less than groping through the sand in order to reach one's destination."

"Doubtless mention will be made of the fact that a new bridge has been erected over the railway to the wharf, but this, although a very useful work, nothing like meets requirements. For one thing, those passengers who come down to Fremantle by train do not want to walk around the slums of Fremantle in order to reach this bridge. The trouble of getting luggage to the wharf is dreadful, and about the whole business there is an air of fearful confusion." (Daily News, Sept 1900)

By the end of the year the newspaper concluded: "Fremantle: At the present time the place has, with the exception of its salubrious climate, scarcely anything to recommend it. It is, naturally, a dismal town, devoid of any attempt at architectural beauty in its public buildings; its streets are narrow, gloomy and badly laid out; its drainage (like that of Perth) is defective, its places of amusement are few and unswitable and its

recreation grounds are dreary in the extreme." (Daily News Nov 20th, 1900)

But, the shipping companies were increasingly losing passengers to the railways and fought back, targeting tourists as a relatively new source of revenue. By 1904, Howard Smith, with steamships to Fremantle, was issuing lavish 256 page tourist guide books. Compare their view of Fremantle with that of the Daily News above: "The blue light on the Fremantle breakwater is the last thing the patriotic Australian watches as he leaves his land for Europe. The glittering white lights of the town itself, resting like a diamond diadem on the brow of Australia, are the first thing he sees when the engines of the homecoming mailboat stop to tell him that Australia is once again in sight. For twenty-four hours he has smelt the perfume of the bush, and Westerner or Easterner, he looks to Fremantle as home."



South Quay (later Victoria Quay) had to handle major crowds with primitive facilities in its early years as the Daily News and others complained. Here, in one of the most evocative and telling photographs of the port's 100 year history, is the Bushmen's Contingent setting off to the Boer War in March 1900 aboard the "Maplemore." A.O. Neville, who had so much to do with immigration and tourism through Fremantle, helped organise the contingents for the Boer War, one of which included his brother Frederick. (WAN Hist 5815)

The places that are significant in telling the story of the immigration experiences of these Australians are not necessarily well protected, partly because the wider community is not aware of the significance of these places. (Peter King, Chairman, Australian Heritage Commission)



Fred Flood, himself an immigrant, arrived in Western Australia in 1912 and went on to become one of the State's great photographers. He keenly photographed immigrants at Fremantle like these children coming in the 1920s under the Empire Immigration Scheme. (Western Mail 1925)

Auber Octavius Neville: Immigration Officer

photo: 1935 view of Immigration Precinct, with C.Y.O'Connor statue looking between C and D shed, immigration buildings to right of statue.



DIRECTOR/actor Kenneth Branagh has flown back to London and the film he made here, "The Rabbit Proof Fence," is soon to be released.

Branagh plays the protector of Aborigines A.O. Neville, the most vilified individual in WA's history, according to "The West Australian".

And Neville played an important role in Fremantle's history.

His first connection was working for Dalgety's before joining the Public Works Department in 1897, and then the Premier's Department, in time to be involved with major events like the troops heading to the Boer War, the visit of the Royal couple during Federation, and the opening of the Coolgardie Water Scheme.

In a public service career of 43 years he's known for his 20 years as chief protector of Aborigines, but for the first 15 he was central to immigration and tourism in WA through Fremantle.

In August 1905 he signed his first immigration report and noted: "Arrangements were made to provide for the efficient meeting and reception of immigrants on their arrival."

The next year he wrote: "Information bureau, Victoria Quay - the building was finished in November 1906, since its opening thousands of the travelling public have visited and inspected the exhibits of the state's products."

In 1912 he observed: "It was found necessary during the year to move the bureau...to a site immediately at the foot of the overhead bridge, leading from the railway station to the wharf, and directly opposite the mail steamers' berth."

An "advantageous" move, Neville says a year later, "It is now right in the path of

passengers both to and from the station and steamers."

The building's new location served Neville well in coping with the flood British immigrants, bewildered people who, on arriving at Fremantle, according to Fat Jacob in "Mr Melville": "were met by an immigration officer and an official from the lands department, allocated a farm and despatched into a wilderness, so remote from civilisation that some never overcame the shock. There were no towns, no villages, no house, no neighbours, no roads, no flowing rivers, only the land."

While promoting fertile land and yellow wheat fields publicly, privately he raised the alarm over problems with immigrants misrepresenting their abilities. Female domestic servants were always in demand, but: "From my observation some of the so-called domestic servants sent out here have been the most utterly useless creatures unable to undertake the most elementary housework."

Neville's interest in tourism coincided with the concern of shipping owners at growing competition from the rapidly expanding railway networks.

Travelling across the US in 1904 he saw the benefits of good promotional literature, and set about having pamphlets, folders and brochures printed that promoted WA. The output was massive.

While "the Daily News" in 1900 said Fremantle had "scarcely anything to recommend it," Howard Smith Co Ltd Steamship Owners was issuing lavishly printed tourist handbooks that gave rave reviews to Perth and Fremantle, along with the state's only real tourist attraction outside Perth, the limestone caves near Yallingup in 1904.

A Caves Board had been established and vast amounts of money were spent building Caves House and making the caves accessible, with the hope of attracting 10,000 visitors a year.

A disastrous season in 1909 saw just 191 tourist turning up and newspapers railed at the "beauty spot for the pampered few".

The board's funds were cut, and the whole operation handed over to Neville along with the constitution of the new Immigration, Tourist, and General Information Office.

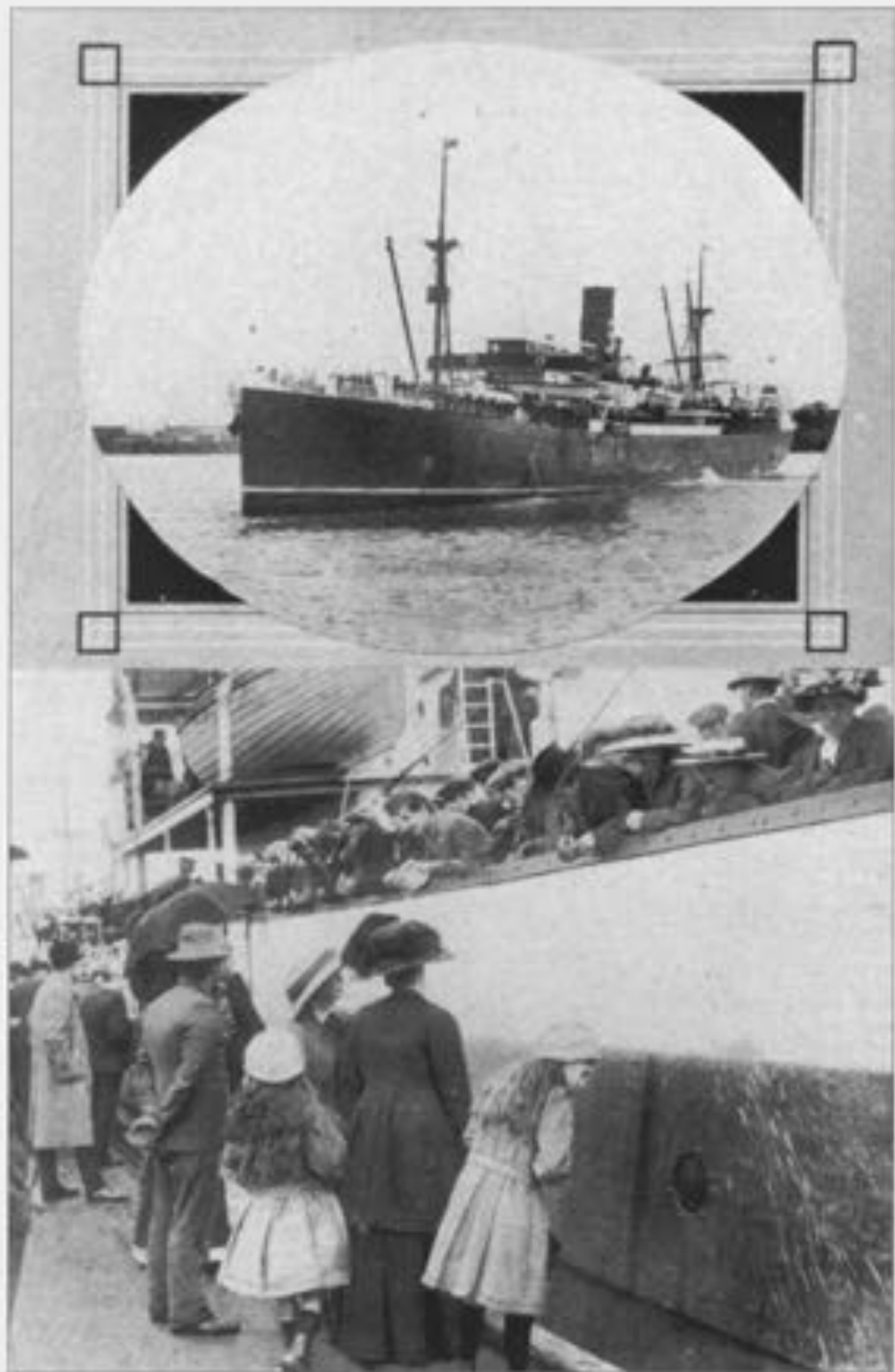
The 1913 visit of the Dominions Royal Commission at which Neville appeared gave the impetus for the founding of the Million Club, whose goal was one million people living in WA.

Neville was the secretary, but the outbreak of WW brought a downturn in tourism and immigration, giving the government the excuse to add more work to his plate.

And so against his will he became the Chief Protector of Aborigines in 1915 - keeping his immigration duties until 1920.

Neville was a highly competent administrator and his successful work on immigration and tourism through Fremantle has gone unheralded.

It remains to be seen whether his reputation will be savaged, or salvaged by Branagh's new film. But, the material uncovered by the Fremantle Society shows Neville was a competent, hard working civil servant whose achievements with immigration and tourism add greatly to the significance of the immigration precinct Victoria Quay.



A Western Australian postcard, c 1905, here enlarged. It continued to be issued for some time, with a different title: Immigrants arriving at Fremantle. Photo also appeared in the 1912 Handbook (see page 23)

20th Century Immigration Issues Who Goes Where?

"Even by a restrained calculation, I conclude that Australia is able to support at least 200,000,000 people."
 (John Foster Fraser, *Australia, The Making of a Nation* 1910)

Immigration into Western Australia was greatly boosted by the gold rushes. The peak year was 1896, with 55,215 arrivals and 19,324 departures. By 1899 however, 20,278 arrived and 20,287 left, a net loss of 9 people. Assisted immigration during this period was miniscule. By 1903, when Fremantle was handling 90% of the State's immigrants and 88% of emigrants, Western Australia had by far the greatest excess of immigrants over emigrants of any State in Australia, and for the previous 10 years had an excess of immigrants over emigrants of 139,131, vastly greater than the nearest other State, New South Wales, with 1,127.

It is into this scenario that A.O. Neville stepped to run immigration for the next 16 years.

While Auber Neville implemented government policy and managed the floods of immigrants coming through Victoria Quay at the beginning of the 20th century, politicians were reacting to overseas events, and colourful characters like General Booth of the Salvation Army, pushed emigration to the British Empire on a much larger scale. Even in Australia he was regarded as 'the greatest organiser of the day' (*The Australasian Health Magazine*, Feb 1, 1910). An enormous flow of emigrants from Europe to the United States (223,078 in 1850, 857,046 in 1903, and 1,285,349 by 1907 - Jeancoeur-Galignani L. *Immigration en droit international*, Paris 1908) led to vigorous campaigns to increase immigration into Australia.

The following proceedings were recorded at the prestigious Royal Colonial Institute in London in 1906: Sir Frederick Young (himself a promoter of emigration to countries of the Empire), in introducing General Booth of the Salvation Army, said: 'For a long time those who, like myself, advocated emigration were simply howling in the wilderness, during which thousands of our countrymen have emigrated to the United States instead of going to our own Colonies; but I am delighted to find in my old age that the subject is again reviving, I hope with far more success than in the days I have referred to. This can hardly fail to be the case with the powerful help of the Head of the Salvation Army.'

General Booth: 'I am contemplating emigration on a scale that will be in some measure proportionate to the present need. The mere sending forth of isolated groups of twenties, thirties, or even hundreds, appears to me to be little more than trifling with the evil we seek to remedy. What I think is required, and what I should like to see realised, would be a bridge across the seas as it were, to some land of plenty, over which there should be constantly passing, under conditions as favourable as the circumstances would allow, our surplus population, instead of its melancholy gravitation, as at present, down to the filthy slums, the hated workhouses, the cruel casual wards, the hopeless prisons, and the like....I will begin with the selection of the emigrant.'

'And, first, I have said he will be poor. But my Colonial friends must not condemn or refuse him on that account. the right kind of emigrant must possess a certain character, without which he will be unsuitable. Here I pause to say that I think I deserve a little more confidence than has been shown me by my Colonial friends on this aspect of my subject. For some sixteen years now, notwithstanding my frequent and emphatic repudiations of the charge, I have had to endure the opprobrium of wanting to dump down on the Colonial shores the scum and rill-rall of Europe....Again and again I have said that I should not think any man was a suitable emigrant for Canada, Australia, Africa, or elsewhere, whose character would fit him for unemployment at home. I think, however, that there are signs of its giving way a little of late.'

'Every selected emigrant must, to come up to our standard, be honest, industrious, and sober.'

Then I may, perhaps, be allowed to say that our Colonial friends seem to me to entertain somewhat extravagant, if not selfish, notions as to the character of the emigrant they desire. Being themselves the very pick of creation, and having obtained possession of a territory without its equal in this world, if it can be paralleled in the next, they can afford to be generous to the Mother Country. Having selected our emigrant, he must be wisely transferred to the country he has chosen. Now this includes the careful advice, guidance, and oversight of the emigrant in this country. Then there is the careful oversight for passing over the sea, which is of no little importance; reception on landing,

20th Century Immigration Issues continued...

and guidance to the destination, and the employment already fixed for him; as well as oversight and care until he is able to stand on his own two feet. In short, a friend in need when accidents, sickness, and other misfortunes follow... we charge ourselves with the responsibility for the arrangements necessary for his welfare. This includes the disposal of any surplus goods and chattels that he may possess, advice as to the outfit he and his family might require, his transfer over the railways, his well being, physical and moral, on board ship, his reception on disembarkation, securing for him employment, and his transportation to his destination, as well as the general oversight required afterwards."

General Booth obviously thought that Australia was being too fussy about choosing immigrants.



The original 1906 Immigration building right on the wharf just before it was moved to its current location in 1912. In 1928 it was extensively modified, though the additions were additive, and the original Public hall is largely intact within the existing building at the foot of the footbridge. Batho Library 54750P

"The farming emigrant is given 160 acres. True; but how? He is dumped down in the midst of his acres, and whatever may be the potentialities of the soil and the beauties of the bush, I can tell you that I know no aspect more disheartening than is presented by the mulga and undergrowth and artistic wildness, if you wish, the bush of Western Australia affords. And what is the consequence? Assuming the farmer is able to feed himself while the grass is growing, he starts dispirited, and the stamp of despondency is set on his future efforts, and during that period of suspense and depression he writes letters to his friends in this country carrying back the mood of gloominess and dejection bred in him. I believe that, more than any other cause, dams the flow of emigration to Western Australia." (E.A. Harey in addressing the Royal Colonial Institute, March 12th, 1907)

Until now each State had pushed their own barrow, but in 1909 Sir George Reid, former Prime Minister, was appointed as Australia's first High Commissioner in London to promote Australia as a whole. By 1911 at the Prime Ministers' Conference, the British were keen to see promotion of the British Empire for migrants and a Dominions Royal Commission was set up the next year to report on the best ways to develop the resources of the dominions.

When the commissioners arrived in Perth in May 1913, the person they interviewed was A. O. Neville.



His first one
and what I looked
the try

Ay introduction



Opening up
the country



On
The Wallaby



Headed what
head a wall

A little happy garden
near of 5000



The Man with
The Hoe

A very long way
from the city
and hills

PRISON AREA



OUR IMMIGRANTS OR COLONIAL EXPERIENCE

By A. J. STONE

Dominions Royal Commission

Royal Commission on the Natural Resources, Trade, and Legislation of Certain Portions of His Majesty's Dominions (Set up to find the best ways to develop the resources of dominions like Australia)

Minutes of Evidence Taken in Australia in 1913

Auber Octavius Neville, Officer in charge of the Immigration Department, Western Australia, was called to give evidence on 27th May, 1913. He began by outlining the system of landing arrangements: "The Immigration Bureau is supplied with a list of immigrants by the London Agency, and the officers attached to the Fremantle Branch of the department go out in the pilot boat to meet incoming immigrant vessels. Each adult immigrant is presented with a letter of welcome, a list of baggage rates, and an identification card, while in addition assisted immigrants are given a card of admission to the Immigrants' Home, on the back of which is printed the rules governing admission. The identification cards and the cards of admission to the Home are signed on board in the presence of the Immigration officials. When the vessel is cleared by the doctor the representatives of the baggage company are allowed to board and take instructions as to the disposal of their baggage from immigrants. Upon the vessel berthing at the wharf arrangements are immediately entered into for landing the immigrants. The wharf in front of the shed devoted to the reception of the immigrants is cleared of all but officials until the whole of the immigrants have been landed and have entered the shed. The assisted immigrants are then taken charge of by the officer in charge of the Immigrants' Home, and conducted to the Immigrants' Home, which is situated in South Terrace, Fremantle. The nominated immigrants are met by their friends, by whom they are taken in charge. The rules governing the admission of immigrants to the Immigrants' Home provide that free board and residence are allowed for three days. On the day of arrival or the following day the landing money of 3l. per head deposited by immigrants with the Agent General, is refunded to them, while officers of the Labour Bureau are in attendance to effect engagements. Any immigrant wishing to make application for land is introduced by the immigration officers to the Lands Department where they may make the necessary inquiries."



The Base Hospital, Fremantle, W.A.

Old Base Hospital used as Immigrants' Home, South Terrace, Fremantle, now demolished.

Compared with the 40% failure rate of the group settlement schemes later in the 1920s, Neville was confident that 99% of those who settle down to work on the land were successful, though he admitted the substantial 'failure' rate of the 8000 to 10000 who were not State aided but came as 'free third class passengers... a proportion of them have been rejected as assisted immigrants.'

The ex-soldier seemed to be a particularly successful type of immigrant, and Neville indicated: 'We have had a good many ex-soldiers from India. Some time ago we sent one of our officers to India and as a result of that mission some of the soldiers who have settled in Western Australia have done well.'

Child migration was not actively encouraged, though Kingsley Fairbridge had brought 9 boys to a farm at Pinjarra, and Reverend Freeman of Midland Junction had brought a large number of boys out aged 15 to 21.

Then, when Neville was asked: 'Do you believe that boy immigrants are highly desirable?' he answered: 'I do, and I think the younger the better... children from eight, nine, or ten years of age.'

Neville indicated that there had been an 'extraordinary' increase in immigration to 10,000 from a low figure of 1,139 in 1907-08, due to 'cheapening the passage rates and advertising.' A commissioner commented: 'I noticed a telegram from London a few days ago stating that a ship had sailed with 1500 immigrants, the largest batch ever dispatched in one ship.'

A constant line of questioning around Australia concerned the welfare of female immigrants aboard ship. Neville answered: 'We have a matron with each party, and, as a rule, her task is not altogether easy on account of those members of the crew and other men who are continually molesting the girls.'

The State Labour Bureau, established in 1898, had plenty of work to do finding jobs for immigrants, and was busier than the Victorian and South Australian bureaus put together.

When asked about the failure rate for immigrants, Neville wrote: 'For the year ended 30th June, 1912, out of 9,697 State-aided immigrants introduced, only eight persons were deported at the State's expense...but it may be stated that certain boys sent out by reformatory schools for the most part proved to be failures.'

The Dominions Royal Commission was a powerful empire building idea but World War One arrive a year later and destroyed its momentum. Instead of settlers and tourists flowing into Fremantle, the war years saw waves of troops flowing out of Fremantle, over 20% of whom had not been born here.



A.O. Neville

HANDBOOK OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA 1912

One of the great publications printed by the Immigration and Tourist department while A.O. Neville was in charge. While the Colonial Secretary in the Addendum noted that the contents were plain and impartial, the reality was totally different. The book was a most enthusiastic sales pitch for the immigrant and settler.

p77. There seemed to flash across the public intelligence, about 1903, a stimulating consciousness of vast agronomic resources stagnating in neglect. It was then the people heard the distant hoofbeats of the agricultural industry as it broke out of a lazy amble through remote bypaths into a hand (sic) gallop along the firm macadamised road of progress... as a consequence the land selection movement in Western Australia has been a marked economic success... energy had been imparted to idle wilderness, utility and value have been given to what formerly was valueless, and progress like the giant of the fairy story, has marched through the land in seven league boots... The surveyor appeared, then came the army of invading settlers, and with axe and fire, war against the ancient dominion of forest and thicket was waged. Tree by tree acres of forest were obliterated.

Accompanying the verbal assault on the environment are photos showing the 'routing of the forest' leading to 'the undulating miles clothed in a garment of golden grain.'

Immigration Between the Wars



After World War One, immigration was again considered vital to agricultural expansion.

Western Australia was about to embark on the disastrous Group Settlement Scheme thanks to Premier James Mitchell. Mitchell had commented that "One half of our population lives within the metropolitan area. That is too great a proportion."

In March 1922 he made his one and only trip outside Australia, to go to London to promote group settlement.

Already established was the Overseas Settlement Committee set up in the Colonial Office to help ex-soldiers migrate, and the Empire Settlement Act of 1921, where the British government would pay half costs.

Helped by immigration restrictions in the USA, falling wheat prices in Canada, and problems in South Africa, Western Australia looked good. Unlike other states, the Agent General continued to recruit migrants.

The scheduled 6000 families for group settlements would have represented an increase in the State's population of 8%. But, it was a hard life: "We were sent to a dreadful migrants' home in Fremantle (1924), where we spent three days before being sent to Northcliffe, there the families had to live in tin shacks, until the land was cleared. There were no toilets, only water was a small creek; no roads, only rough bush tracks, no doctor or hospital, no beds or blankets, no milk, no fruit. In these shacks women and children laid on the bare earth covered with sacks, while the men slept out in the bush." (Helen Woolmer to Prof Bolton 1966).

By 1924 when Mitchell left office, around 30% of immigrant group settlers and 42% Australian born groupies had walked off their land.

But, the 1926 'Report on the Group Settlements in Western Australia' presented to British Parliament by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs (L.S. Amery) was far more positive, concluding: "...these settlements...stand out in my opinion as one of the most remarkable experiments in the history of colonization." He was impressed particularly by: "The extreme comfort of the houses. Each has four rooms and a verandah and can be made very picturesque."

THE WESTERN MAIL
 NEWSPAPER NUMBER 1924-1925



The Port of Opportunity.

Young Men's Migration from Their First Homes of Australia at Their Ship Home Previous Return.

(John, G. B. Stone)



Amery noted the high failure rate and other problems. "The Ugly Men's Association and Women's Committee do what they can to provide alternative employment." In conclusion he noted that the woman is the key to the success of the whole scheme and the psychological side of the medical examination was important as was keeping the restriction that only families with at least 3 children could participate.

Other advice came from Lord and Lady Apsley (*The Amateur Settlers* 1927) who had lived incognito for a few months in the settlements and suggested that "camps should be formed in England, to which single migrants of both sexes accepted for assisted passages should be sent during the period that elapses between their acceptance and the day when a berth can be found for them on a ship. Here they would be given the rough elementary training which is so necessary for them to learn how to use their hands, how to mend and wash their clothes, how to do rough carpentering, chop firewood, to use a mattock and spade, how to cook on a wood stove or make 'damper' in a camp oven, in fact to learn, not so much how to farm, but how to live."

Child migration from the United Kingdom began in 1618 when poor children were sent to Richmond, Virginia. It continued until 1967 when 90 children left Southampton for Australia.

In 1947 Rhodes Fairbridge, Kingsley Fairbridge's son, gave a talk to the Western Australian Historical Society. He began: "From time immemorial the lot of the migrant has generally been unhappy...no matter how wonderful the new land, there is a nostalgia for the place of one's childhood which tends to grow and grow the longer one is away from it...Thus it was long ago recognised that the most easily assimilated migrant was the young one, who has moved at an age well before he or she could have taken root, preferably at an age before memories remained clear and emotions strong; at an age of 5, 6, or perhaps 7, but not older."

Child Migration



Cover of an Immigration Office's *Australia's Offer to the British Boy* 1921

Child Migration continued

The first group of boys brought to Australia by Kingsley Fairbridge arrived in January 1913. In July that year A.O.Neville inspected the farm to provide a report. While not condemning the scheme, Neville wrote: "On the whole the arrangements are very primitive, and some of the premises would doubtless be condemned were it a government institution. As a training farm, in order to render the boys fit to undertake farm work in Western Australia when they grow older, the place is, in my opinion, quite unsuitable, as there is not real farming carried on, though, doubtless, until the boys are beyond the school age it is sufficient. It is quite certain that there is no room for any more boys until additional buildings have been erected, the premises, in my opinion, being already over crowded."

Neville's report highlighted problems that were to remain for some years, even though the vision and ideas of Fairbridge had support. The Fairbridge Society operated from 1909 for over 75 years and led to almost 6000 children going overseas to different places under the auspices of the Society.

Other schemes such as Dr Barnardo's Homes and Big Brother Movement (later known as British Boys Movement) also brought children. Schemes operated by the Christian Brothers have in recent years drawn serious complaints about abuse occurring many years ago. The whole subject of child migration is now more openly discussed and evaluated, and the removal of children from England has been compared with the "Stolen Generation" of Aboriginals removed from their families, despite the highly moral and idealistic intentions of the supporters of child migration.



The Italians: The West Australian gold rush drew Italians here and by 1901 WA had the second highest numbers of Italians of any State, though only 58 of the 1354 were women, and by 1911 the highest (2361). With the USA virtually closing its doors after 1914, more came to Fremantle. Salvatore Dipane remembers living next to 10 Italian fishermen who inhabited one dwelling in Cliff Street in the 1930s. The Regina D'Italia arrived in 1927 with 700 Italians (177 disembarked in Fremantle) and because Mussolini ordered a halt to the exodus, it was not until after WWII that significant numbers of Italians came again.

War Time

"The Place (Victoria Quay) is notable for a major defense contribution to the victory of the Allied armed forces in the Indian and Pacific Ocean in World War II. Notwithstanding the Gallipoli campaign (and ANZAC theme), this theatre of war offers perhaps an equally significant historic-social Australian cultural theme of unification, in which for the first time the Australian nation bonded together for its own collective interest, as distinct from its interest in the British and Eurasian homeland, marking a turning point toward disengagement with eurocentrism."

(Ian Molyneux, Victoria Quay Heritage Study 1996)

Temporary wartime immigrants included 500 children in 1940 who arrived on the Polish ship "Batory," evacuated from the UK. Staying with host families in WA for the duration of the war, some were to return again after the war aboard the "Athanasia."

Japanese aggression led to other evacuees heading for Fremantle. 5,000 arrived between December 1941 and March 1942 alone in 323 vessels.

With evacuees and refugees of all colours, it was difficult to enforce the White Australia Policy. When Chinese crewmen mutinied because of pay and conditions on a hot January day in



The Immigration and Tourist buildings were used by the Army from 28 June 1940 and then in 1945 by the Navy. In the photo above taken out the front of the immigration building in 1945 are, left to right: Ben Davis, Beryl Sumpter, Roma May, and Lieutenant Commander Bell.

1942, 300 soldiers boarded their ships and two Chinese were shot dead before almost six hundred Chinese crewmen were taken away in lorry trucks.

Two months later when a Dutch tanker captain faced the same situation, he called for help from a Dutch minesweeper then in port. Dutch naval ratings boarded the ship and in the melee that followed 3 Chinese crew were shot.

Fremantle boarding officer Timperley worried that "local Army and Navy officers know nothing and apparently care less of our Immigration Laws."



One of the casualties of war was the *Orcaades*, seen here peacefully at rest in Fremantle Harbour in 1937 and later sunk by the Germans. The first new liner to arrive in Fremantle after the war was the new *Orcaades*. (WAN COM 146)

Immigration and Tourism Precinct: Wharf Labourers' Amenities Building



Built during World War Two in 1945 on express command of the Prime Minister to reduce labour disputes at the wharf, this amenities centre for port workers is here pictured not long after construction with an appetising menu that included Corned Mutton and Baked Rabbit, with American Orange Pie to follow. The wharfies moved from here to North Wharf by 1974 and this building became known as the C.Y. O'Connor Centre. The Port Authority intends to demolish this part of the precinct of immigration buildings, but it would be useful in the future and would help the formation of an immigration museum and tourist facility for this historic precinct. (*Battery Library "Custom Hut"*)

The Great Wave

post world war two immigration



"populate or perish"

between 1945 and 1977, 169 vessels made 2000 trips
to Australia carrying 3 million people

in 1977 official migrant traffic was switched to air

the great wave



DEC 1946: First post war British migrants (192 building tradesmen)
OCT 1947: 840 displaced persons- Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians- arrived here in the General Heintzelman, the start of 180,000 from refugee camps. 3 million migrants arrived after the war from 60 countries. To maintain the flow of immigrants, Australia signed agreements with the Netherlands and Italy in 1951 and West Germany in 1954 after earlier agreements with Britain and Malta. In the three years to 30 June 1970, 500,000 immigrants arrived but after a change of government in 1972, the intake was cut to 110,000 and then, with rising unemployment, to 80,000. (Dept of Labour and Immigration (1788-1975) Australia and Immigration 1975 pp7-13).

The bombing of Darwin by the Japanese in WWII helped push Australia towards accepting an enormous population increase. "Only seven years ago a powerful enemy looked hungrily toward Australia. In tomorrow's gun flash that threat could come again. We must populate Australia as rapidly as we can before someone else decides to populate it for us" said Prime Minister Chifley in 1949. Shipping was scarce at the end of the war for migrant ships and Australia sought the assistance of the USA. Troopships were initially used and conditions were tough, but by 1952 many immigrants were travelling in luxury liners.

above: 1955 Customs Hall Fremantle M/7550, previous page: 1949 Arrival Hall Fremantle M/7386

The Great Migrant Liners



President Truman: "The Government of the United States appreciates the offer of the Australian Government to accept up to a total of 200,000 displaced persons from Europe at an accelerated annual rate provided sufficient shipping can be supplied."

(*Tomorrow's Australians*, Department of Immigration, August 9th, 1948.)

Of 21 regular migrant liners, 8 were exclusively for migrants:

"Ormonde" (25047 tons), "Asturias" (22445 tons), "Ranch" (16738 tons), "Chitral" (15346 tons), "Empire Brent" (13595 tons), "Dorsetshire" (9717 tons), "Somersetshire" (9716 tons), "Georgic" (5965 tons). Above: "Toscana," built 1923 (9584 tons) (WAN COM-352)

New Australia

20,256 tons



The *New Australia* made 25 trips to Australia between 1950 and 1957 as a migrant ship. She had begun life in 1931 as one of the most luxurious liners, with three funnels, and taking 830 passengers, all first class only. During the war in 1940 the *Monarch of Bermuda* carried 690 million pounds of gold bullion on a hair raising trip to Halifax from Clyde. Later, as a troopship, she was capable of carrying up to 5560 men.

After the war a serious fire gutted the ship and it was not until 1950 that she was ready as a migrant ship, now as the *New Australia*. She is here pictured in Fremantle in 1950 on her first voyage as a migrant ship and her now single funnel in Shaw Savill Line colours. She remained in the migrant trade until 1957.

great migrant liners

Orontes

20,186 tons



The last of a group of 5 Orient Liners built in the 1920s for the Australian trade, the Orontes carried 460 first class and 1112 third class. During the war, like her sisters, she carried troops, and survived bombing by German aircraft.

Refitted in 1953 for 1410 tourist class passengers, she remained on the Australian run until her last voyage to Australia in 1961. She made 74 round trips between England and Australia during 32 years on the run and in her lifetime carried 400,000 passengers while burning 800,000 tons of oil.

great migrant liners

Asturias

22,445 tons



When built in 1925 Asturias was, for a short time with her sister ship, the largest motor liner in the world. During the war she was requisitioned and had internal fittings removed and stored, those being lost during a bombing raid. In 1949 she began in the migrant trade and is seen above in Fremantle that year when she arrived with 1340 migrants. She had been refitted to carry 160 first class, 113 third class, and 1134 dormitory passengers. She was not in her Royal Mail Line company colours, but still troopship grey with a yellow funnel.

Until 1953 Asturias brought migrants to Fremantle before being used to take British troops to Korea. One of her last roles was in 1957 for filming the story of the Titanic in "A Night to Remember."

great migrant liners

Flaminia

8779 tons



Built 1922, she began life as the *Missourian*, a funnel less freighter. In 1940 she was one of 90 ships given to the British government by the United States for the war effort.

After several name changes she was refitted in 1948 with cargo holds removed and third class passenger accommodation for 800 installed. In 1955, after another rebuilding, this time for 1024 passengers in 154 cabins, with a swimming pool thrown in, she began on the Australian trade as the *Flaminia*. Here shown with new arrivals in leather pants in 1956, the *Flaminia* left Fremantle for the last time in 1961.

great migrant liners

An Immigrant's Story

Story Time

These are just two of the millions of stories from immigrants to Australia. Both boys in these two stories were 16 when they set out for Australia from different countries.

Interview with Clive Ruffy (May 2001) Noted Antique dealer. Worked 32 years building famous Lou Whiteman collection.

Clive was 16 when he left a very close and loving family in Essex to board a former troop ship at Tibury, the "Malojo," in May 1950.

He and fifteen other boys aboard aged under 18 were looked after by two scoutmasters. Closing in on Fremantle after a direct run from Aden, Clive spotted numerous flying fish, and then the first sight of land was the Norfolk Pine trees at Cottesloe. Clive had been lured to Australia by tales of adventure, from a sea faring uncle who had agreed to look after him. Getting off the ship, he remembers seeing squares on the ground of the wharf shed marked in chalk with letters of the alphabet. Being a Ruffy he went to the R square to collect his luggage there before joining his uncle for a bumpy ride in a Ford "A" with wooden spokes to Jandakot where Clive was expecting to see at least a glamorous two storey house in wooded gardens. What he got was an open ended shack with a kapok mattress on the floor. And, the first night it rained heavily. The tins and buckets trying to catch all the inbound water through numerous leaks couldn't prevent water running under Clive's mattress.

Clive's uncle worked at the nearby woollscourers and Clive spent most of his time cutting firewood for sale. A German neighbour put Clive on her knee, bounced him up and down and told him to "Go back to your mummy!" This was despite the fact that Clive was a 16 year old 6'2" strongly built athlete. After seeing his uncle in action, and after having his uncle trying to get him to marry an 80 year old woman living nearby: "Because she owns 20 acres and will be dead soon," Clive ran away with his suitcase.

After living at the back of Robb's Jetty in the bushes for 6 weeks he met another runaway. Breaking into huts at Coogee they were able to survive and when they read in a newspaper there about jobs at Wittenoom Gorge with fares, accommodation, and food included, the two of them walked to Perth, secured a job, walked back to collect their suitcases, and then walked to Perth Airport.

Seriously homesick, and back in Fremantle after a year or so, Clive found himself a regular visitor to the wharf to greet incoming ships from Britain, in a desperate bid to talk to anyone from his home town. Pining for home and alone in Australia, he would often get to Leighton Beach and walk out into the water, and just stand there. Somewhere across the water his family was carrying on with their lives.

Boarding in various places throughout Fremantle, Clive remembers Fremantle as a place of many nationalities and one that always seemed a hub of movement- never a lonely place because everyone came through the port.

"In Perth you didn't know anyone but in Fremantle you could always talk to someone. Wearing sandals gave the Poms away- when I spotted them I went up to ask where they were from."

Eventually settling down, he entered the antique trade, and for many years imported antiques from his home country. Among his greatest achievements was the years spent building one of Australia's largest antique collections for Lou Whiteman.

An Immigrant's Story

Story Time Two

Interview with Otto Pelczar May 2001

Otto was born in 1934 in Austria of Polish parents. During World War Two both his parents were killed, and after the war Otto found himself living in the Russian occupied zone of Austria. In 1950, after 5 years of misery under harsh Russian military law, afraid that his Polish ancestry might be discovered and held against him, he decided to escape with some friends into the American zone. Aged 16 and with no family to keep him back, he and his friends made a dash for the border. In the middle of winter, high up in the snow covered hills and travelling on skis, the group was spotted by Russian soldiers who opened fire. Two of his young friends were shot and fell, and the remaining three made it to the American zone where they were placed in a refugee camp.

The IRO (International Refugee Organisation) gave Otto a choice of three countries prepared to take him- Chile, Canada, or Australia. Sick of cold and snow, Otto chose Australia, and after signing a contract to work for two years at any job the government sent him to, Otto sailed for Fremantle in 1950 aboard the "Skaugum."

The "Skaugum" had been fitted out as a troop carrier for the French Foreign Legion, and conditions were cramped with 12 to a cabin. The women were separated from the men, leaving the husbands to meet their wives in lifeboats for any amorous pursuits.

Young and keen to learn, Otto worked every day in the radio shack charging batteries and being involved with ship communications. He was given 200 Lucky Strike cigarettes for every day's work in lieu of cash. His pile of cigarettes was quite enormous after two weeks but he panicked on hearing that Australian Customs were very strict and would only allow a small amount of tobacco per passenger. Otto then became a serious chain smoker for the rest of the voyage.

An Australian immigration officer boarded the ship at Suez and began processing passengers, so that when the ship arrived in Fremantle, the migrants were quickly placed on trains and taken to Northern Army Camp. Otto had no relatives or friends in Australia. Having just turned 17, he was totally on his own. Working for the Maylands Roads Board and even with a weekly pay of only two pounds, ten shillings and six pence, he was keen to get himself established. So, he sought a loan to buy a block of land of his own and with a deposit of 25 pounds he secured one on Hampton Road in Morley. After work each day he trudged through the sand from the nearest railway station some kilometres away to live by himself in a tent on his new purchase. It took some years to pay the full 125 pounds for the block and to be able to build a house, but he stayed there until he got married in 1959.

Now retired but still very active, Otto has returned to the interest in ship communication he developed 50 years ago aboard the "Skaugum." He gives lectures aboard luxury liners to wealthy retirees. After a recent trip with the QEII, he was staggered to receive a phone call from his bank manager to say that his cheque account had just had one million dollars deposited into it. On board the ship he had befriended a retired Japanese lady and told her how wonderful living in Western Australia was. She had taken him at his word and the million dollars was for Otto to go out and buy a nice little house for her.

At last. A passenger terminal...



The first stage of the new passenger terminal was opened in 1960. Finished with local timbers and fauna and floral murals, the facilities included a passenger lounge, Post Office, banking facilities, forist, gift shop, newsagent, tourist office, hire car office, travellers' aid society, cafeteria and Port of Fremantle Public Relations Bureau. Bilingual hostesses greeted visitors and migrants, and later a Migrant Information Service was established. The mass migration programs came to an end through Fremantle with increased air travel, but the terminal still functions for cruise and navy ships. Recently the terminal, situated on Victoria Quay several hundred metres east of the Immigration Precinct, was heritage listed with the Heritage Council of Western Australia.

Conclusion

Can you imagine how Australians would feel if the Turks told us they wanted to use the beach at Gallipoli where Australian soldiers landed in 1915 for a condominium development, and that we could commemorate Anzac Day at another beach nearby?

Well, the story of immigration needs to be told right where it happened on Victoria Quay in Fremantle and the buildings concerned (known now to many as the "Old Police Buildings") must stay right where they are.

There is a huge weight of evidence that the social heritage of immigration and tourism through Fremantle is highly significant, and Fremantle's status as the first port of call from Europe allows the immigration buildings and their precinct to be considered Australia's Ellis Island.

Ellis Island in New York has been restored with massive public support, sponsorship, and donations, after President Ronald Reagan in 1982 asked the Chairman of the Chrysler Corporation to head a citizen's group that would raise money for the restoration of Ellis Island as an immigration museum. There is no immigration museum in Western Australia. South Australia and Victoria have one, but Fremantle is the logical place for a museum that celebrates what Prime Minister Hawke said is the most important story in Australian history.

**"Home is not where a man is born.
Home is where a man is prepared to
die."**

(Entry in visitors' book at Fremantle Museum Migration Exhibition 2001)

Copyright 2001 John Dowson. Any corrections or additional information is welcome. Please write to: The Fremantle Society, PO Box 828, Fremantle WA 6160

Acknowledgements:

Fremantle Port Authority, especially Alan Pearce and Ainslie de Vos

Fremantle Local History Library, especially Alison and Loretta

Fremantle Council

West Australian Newspapers (WANL), Lynne Smith

Battye Library

Nonjar Peters

photo rear cover: "Steam Ferry" photo "Asturias" berths in Fremantle 1947. Courtesy Kevin Lock.

