



## FREMANTLE HISTORY SOCIETY

Established 1994

The Secretary, PO Box 1305  
FREMANTLE WA 6959

**Summer Edition, Jan 2023**

<https://fhs.org.au>

### **FREMANTLE IN 1923: A Year's Retrospect.**

Pam Harris

I came across this article recently looking for an event to write about a hundred years on, I found that this 1924 article highlighted events and issues that are just as relevant today.

'In many respects last year will be remembered by the bulk of the business interests of Fremantle as a period of trade depression, though, towards the close of the year, the outlook was brighter, and a big turnover of stock marked Christmas shopping. Outwardly, there were few signs of depression, but, during the winter months, tradespeople complained of a dearth of business. It was reported that unemployment was rife during the early winter but the difficulty was overcome by Government measures which absorbed the workless members of the community. As stated, the outward indications of a slump in business were not apparent; in fact, probably in no previous year, were the streets of the town in a more animated condition, and this was due to the never ending stream of immigrants. On exceptional occasions, when shipping was brisk, the population of the Port was increased in one day by the influx of a couple of thousand newcomers, not all of whom, of course, intended to remain in Western Australia. Large numbers, however, were to make this State their future home, and more often than otherwise the Government Immigration Home in South Terrace was crowded.'

*The above paragraph discusses Fremantle's economy and it is evident that there are signs of a depression which would worsen and become worldwide in the late 1920s. Fremantle in 2023 also has signs of businesses struggling with shops closing in the CBD. Although unemployment is not an issue currently.*

'Municipal affairs moved slowly, and there were no outstanding works attempted with the exception of equipping the South Beach with the Hydrodrome, a large two-storey wooden building, containing tearooms, dancing hall, accommodation for bathers, etc.; the cost of purchase, its removal from the Fremantle Oval, where it was erected during the war by the Commonwealth Government, and its re-erection at the beach amounted to £3,500. Many of the principal streets of the town became the worse for wear, and no definite plan of effecting improvement was adopted. The Town Engineer drew up a comprehensive scheme of road construction, which was said to be capable of being carried out at a cost of £45,000. After certain suggestions were made in regard to the most suitable type of road surface to lay down inquiries as to what was being done in the Eastern capitals, were made, and the replies showed that in the Town Engineer the council had an officer who was abreast of the times. Whether or not the council will undertake to raise the money necessary for the good roads question to be tackled in earnest, remains to be seen, but the travelling public and the ratepayers have waited patiently for an improvement of the roads. The annual rateable value of property in Fremantle increased by about £10,000 during the twelve months. In connection with the collection of rates,

it is noteworthy that the council holds the unique record for the State, the last total collections representing 96.2 of the rates assessed.'

*It could be said that Municipal affairs still move slowly in 2023, most of the problems above relate to roads and an increase in rates, interesting that 96.2% of rates were paid, I wonder what the percentage is now?*

'Operations of the Fremantle Municipal Tramways and Electric Lighting Board continued to be conducted successfully from a financial standpoint. At the annual meeting of the board, it was reported that twelve months' transactions yielded an income of £111,614 and a handsome profit. The working of the East Fremantle tramline was facilitated greatly by the duplication of the track from Preston Point Road to Allen Street, and the benefit was evident in connection with the heavy traffic to Point Walter during the recent holidays. Another new work undertaken was the construction, at a cost of about £8,000, of a car barn, with an entrance from Queen Victoria Street, and the builders should be in a position to hand over the building shortly to the board. Nearly 6,000,000 passengers are carried on the tramways annually.'

*The Fremantle Municipal Tramways and Electric Lighting Board had a successful year with expansion of the tramways network, it is also amazing that they carried nearly 6 million passengers. One wonders if a light rail network would be just as successful! There doesn't seem to be any update on that matter recently.*

'That Fremantle is destined to be selected as the most convenient position in Western Australia for the erection of large warehouses and bulk stores was a fact that was further emphasised during the year. Nearing completion in Beach Street, facing the railway line, is a huge three storey building, which is to be used as a wool store. A building intended for the storage of wool and hides, and which covers a large area in South Fremantle, has just been completed. With the exception of the erection in the centre of the town of two buildings on the sites of disastrous fires, there was otherwise comparatively little activity in the building trade. For the last few years there has not been much incentive to provide for the demand for new houses, and the progress made last year towards overtaking the shortage was insignificant.

Discussions upon the housing problem took place at the meetings of the municipal council, and councillors agreed to permit the erection in certain areas of cheaply constructed dwellings, according to plans submitted by the Workers' Homes Board. So acutely was the shortage of houses felt that, within a few days of the announcement regarding this scheme prospective builders began to arrive at the office of the Town Clerk, where they received instructions to make their applications to the Workers' Homes Board at Perth. Hundreds of applicants, it is said, visited the Fremantle Town Hall in connection with the matter, and it is hoped that the assistance promised by the Government will relieve the congestion during this year.'

*Housing being in short supply is certainly evident in 2023, it is also interesting that the wool stores mentioned above include the development in Queen Victoria Street of upmarket apartments in the adaptive reuse development of the Elders Wool stores.*

West Australian 14 January 1924, P. 8

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/31209777?searchTerm=fremantle%201923%20in%20retrospect>. Accessed 5 February 2023.

## MEETING REPORTS

### Christmas celebrations – 27<sup>th</sup> November Fremantle Then and Now: Historical Panoramas.



1899 Panorama of Fremantle Harbour by Nixon & Merrilees, shown in the exhibition

FHC LH1753

Around twenty five FHS members and friends celebrated Christmas and the end of 2022 by attending the *Fremantle Then and Now: Historical Panoramas* exhibition at the WA Maritime Museum. Christmas drinks were held afterwards at the Fremantle Volunteer Heritage Guides Cottage near the Round House.



FHS members enjoying afternoon tea at the Gunners' Cottage after the exhibition



Pam Harris

The visitors to the exhibition enjoyed an informative talk by Mike Lefroy who was involved in some of the commentary relating to the panoramas of Fremantle. The exhibition recently received a 2022 Heritage Council Award for an Interpretation Project. The panoramas take the viewer through seven different vantage points across the port city spanning 155 years, and showcase the changing face of Fremantle. The exhibition was a collaborative approach, with strong engagement across research institutions as well as local business and community and was led by the WA Museum in collaboration with Curtin University HIVE. Key collaborators included the State Library of WA, the City of Fremantle History Centre and Fremantle Ports. The installation using a large, curved screen allows visitors to explore connected themes, including local photographers and photography studios, pre-colonial history, convict influence, the development and significance of the port, goldrush buildings and legacy and street life.

Thanks to Mike Lefroy and the Fremantle Volunteer Heritage Guides for use of the Gunners' Cottage.

## COMING EVENTS

### Fremantle Passenger Terminal

#### Victoria Quay

50 Peter Hughes Drive, Fremantle 6160

21 February 11.00 am



Our first meeting this year will be held at the Fremantle Passenger Terminal on Victoria Quay.

The Passenger Terminal was purpose built during 1960-62 to cater for the needs of the huge influx of passenger traffic post World War Two, following the Federal Government's immigration stimulation policies. The terminal is the largest in Australia and is the only passenger terminal in Australia capable of berthing two cruise liners at the simultaneously.

A representative from Fremantle Ports has agreed to give us a guided tour and talk about its history, functions, ship operations, etc. This is a terrific opportunity to explore this significant, Post-War International Style building, normally only accessible to sea-faring folk and seldom open to the public.

Note that the meeting is at an earlier time than usual in order to fit around the arrival of the passenger ship: the Zuiderdam.

**We will need to know numbers as soon as possible.** The Port Authority requires a list of names of people attending three days prior to the visit. You will be refused entry if your name is not on the list so please RSVP by 16<sup>th</sup> February to: [secretary.fhs@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.fhs@gmail.com)

### The History of Wooden Boat Building in Western Australia

#### Walyalup Civic Centre – Mardoo Room

151 High Street, Fremantle 6160

28 March 5.00 pm



Elly Spillekom, curator of the Dutch Australian Foundation and former co-ordinator of the Duyfken Replica Foundation, will be coming to talk to us about the importance of wooden boat building in the early years of colonisation in WA, with a particular focus on the industry in Fremantle.

She will also talk about the two replica sailing ships built in Fremantle: the HMB Endeavour Replica and the Dutch ship, the Duyfken Replica.

Ellie will have a surprise about the MV Perth ferry restoration – 109 years old, built at Browns shipyard and still around.

Drinks and nibbles will be served around 5.00 pm, before the talk.

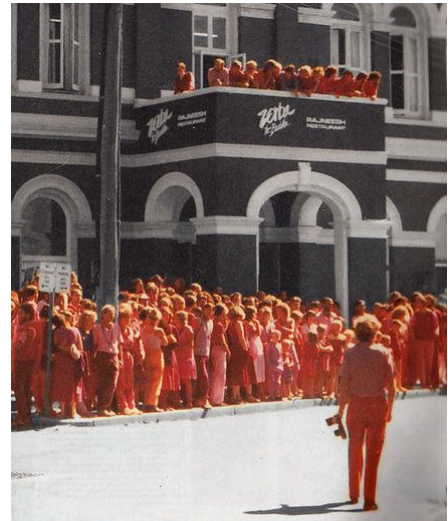
## The Orange People

### Walyalup Civic Centre – Mardoo Room

151 High Street, Fremantle 6160

2 May 5.00 pm (To be confirmed)

The Orange People were a conspicuous and powerful element in the Fremantle community for some years during the 1980s. Under the guidance of their leader Indian guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh the movement became a global phenomenon and Fremantle a major centre, a large 'satellite' commune and ashram established in the centre of town. Many young and educated people became disciples and were encouraged to cast off their worldly possessions and expand their religious dimensions through sex.



Filmmaker, Joseph London grew up in Fremantle and had many childhood friends whose parents became devotees of the Bhagwan. London has made a documentary about the Orange People or Sannyasins - a "compelling mystery that has remained in the fabric of the city" and is coming to talk to the History Society about his experience with this controversial movement.

We will be serving drinks and a delicious light supper beforehand.



## FREMANTLE HISTORY CENTRE

Our Local History Librarian, Stewart Alger, has recently started up an initiative to get the local community actively involved in building the Fremantle History Centre collection. The idea is to form local history interest groups within each ward, and including East Fremantle, to capture and collect present day news and stories of interest through a variety of media – video, photographs, recordings, text, etc. for the future.

Stewart set up an initial meeting to talk with the residents of North Fremantle as a starting point and received very positive feedback and a lot of community interest in assisting with the project.



If you would like to know more or are interested in volunteering to be a local history advocate give Stewart a call on 9432 9592 or send him an email at: [STEWARTA@fremantle.wa.gov.au](mailto:STEWARTA@fremantle.wa.gov.au)

Last year a call-out for donations to the Fremantle History Centre was sent to Fremantle residents via a letter included with their rates notices. The response has been very good with a range of lovely post cards, business cards, newspaper articles, books and photographs now added to the collection. In addition the FHC now holds the archives for the Friends of Cantonment Hill, the Women's Action for Nuclear Disarmament and Bob Reece's collection.

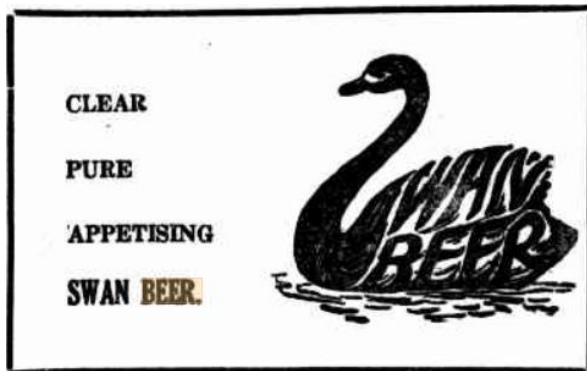
## TREASURES FROM TROVE – Fremantle New Year celebrations 1923

Heather Campbell

Between 1855 and 1922 purchasing liquor from a licensed premises in the metropolitan area on a Sunday was illegal except for bona-fide travellers or lodgers. An amendment in 1922 allowed licensed premises which were 20 miles or more from the Perth Town Hall (as the crow flies) to sell alcohol for a few hours on a Sunday.

Interestingly New Year's Eve – 31 December 1922 - fell on a Sunday, and impacted on the way the people of Fremantle celebrated.

### 'NEW LICENSING REGULATIONS: Now in operation'



Western Mail 04.01.1923 p. 31

'Under the previous bona-fide regulations Sunday thirsts were quenched by travelling to the nearest public house outside of a five mile radius, but in future, to get a little of the hair of the dog that bit you, a man must travel 20 miles from the Perth Town Hall, or outside of the metropolitan area. In the country districts the distance has been increased to 10 miles. This is according to a clause in the new Licensing Act which is now in operation, and which will be strictly enforced by the police.'

So far as clubs are concerned no stranger or visitor shall be admitted to the premises during the hours when liquor may not be lawfully sold or disposed of to the public on licensed premises. Every club has to be closed for the sale of liquor at 11 pm until 9 am on the next day, except to bona-fide lodgers. In clubs no liquor shall be sold to any member on Sundays except to bona-fide lodgers or members being served with meal, between the hours of 12 pm - 2 pm and 6 pm - 9 pm.' [*Sunday Times* 31 December 1922, p. 2]

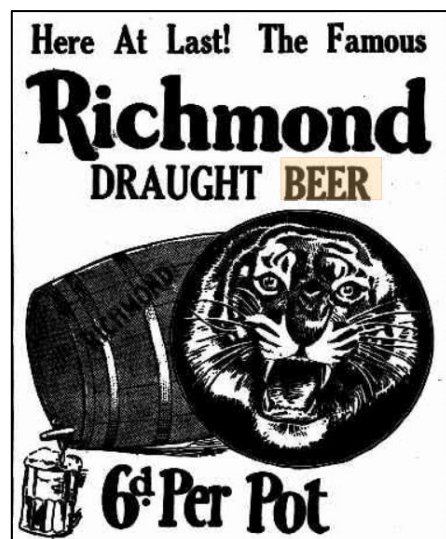
### 'NEW YEARS EVE At Fremantle

Fremantle rang out the old year and rang in the new without any outward signs of celebration. Yesterday was the first Sunday under which the sale of liquor to bona-fide travellers came under the restrictions of the new Licensing Act. The police in Fremantle reported that they could not recollect having experienced a quieter Sunday. "It is just what a Sunday should be," said one of the officers. "Not that we arrested many people for being drunk under the old regulations, but there were crowds of visitors in the streets, and they caused all kinds of petty annoyances." Before a person is entitled to liquor after hours or on a Sunday. he has now to prove that he has travelled 20 miles. There were very few people about the streets when the customary tooting and screeching of whistles ushered in the New Year.' [*West Australian* 1 January 1923, p. 6]

### 'RESOLUTIONS

Good resolutions are much like eggs — they are mostly either broken, or go stale in the keeping. This is the day of good resolutions. At least; it is supposed to be... No one likes to see a smudge on a clean copybook. It is a disfigurement that cannot be erased without leaving some trace. So when a new year dawns most people like a clean start. .... Like eggs, some resolutions will be cracked unintentionally almost immediately, some will be broken, others will be kept until they go stale and will then be thrown into the receptacle of forgetting...

**Fremantle in Sober Mood.** - The new licensing regulations were rigorously observed in the Fremantle district yesterday. Only two repentant drunks faced the Bench this morning, and contritely promised to limit their absorption in future. Those coming home from the trots on Saturday evening are reported to have received several shocks, as erstwhile open houses were rigorously locked and barred, and repeated knocks only sufficed to bring into vision one of the several strong squads of police who were detailed to see that the law was observed in its entirety. The new 20-mile bona-fide provision also caused confusion.



The Advertiser 22.09.1932 p.4

Those who had been accustomed to go the limit (in mileage) and no more, found that the radius of their activities would have to be increased, with the result that many hostelries nearer the edge of beyond found that they had sprung into popularity overnight. The men in blue had a busy day travelling along the extra distance, but their services were not in requisition. Amongst a little knot of people standing on the wharf to meet an incoming vessel, were a couple of tousled looking individuals, who, after a wild and stormy night ashore, waited to see if they could get 'a hair of the dog' on the vessel. From dawn they had visited hotel after hotel, in vain, and as a last resort, stood on the wharf watching the vessel's arrival in order to throw themselves on the captain's bounty. The genial skipper himself, however, was not available, but apparently someone else extended the proverbial hospitality of the sea for the men came ashore looking like giants refreshed.' [Daily News 1 January 1923, p. 4]

This restriction on Sunday trading resulted in 'Sunday Sessions' in the 1950s and early 1960s, when a pleasant drive in the country (to somewhere, of course, at least 20 miles from the Perth Town Hall and outside the metropolitan area) could culminate in the enjoyment of a drink. Fortunately the restrictive nature of the Licensing Act has undergone several amendments in recent years and it is no longer necessary to go for such a long drive on a Sunday to purchase a legal drink.



Kristi McNulty

In the late 1800s Thomas Percival Bousfield arrived in Western Australia intending to set off for the goldfields, not to mine for gold but to open a shop and sell clothing to the prospectors. However, he was convinced to stay in Fremantle and set up shop here instead, to sell clothes to the miners before they left to find their fortune.



Thomas Bousfield  
Photo from shop

He began trading with two others as: Bousfield, Wilkinson & Middleton, tailors, Canning Highway, Richmond before going into partnership with Joseph Purser.



Purser & Bousfield tailors was originally established at what was 100-102 High Street, (now 82) taking over J S Wilkinson's tailoring business next to the Commercial Hotel in 1912.

At left: 1920s. Purser & Bousfield at 100-102 High Street (now 82). The building was demolished c1935 for the building of the Commonwealth Bank. FHC LH3882

Thomas Bousfield was one of the founders the Fremantle Baptist Church and his business maintained a close association with the church over the years. Guided by

strong Christian principles rather than profit-driven, the store became known for the good quality of its stock, value for money, efficient service underpinned by a firm belief that if you treat people well they will treat you well in return and keep coming back. They took pride in providing for the clothing needs of all age groups from 9 through to 90; neither high-end fashion nor cheap, mass produced clothing but good, basic, middle-of-the-road boys and menswear.

They moved to 51 Market Street (57 today) next to the National Hotel around 1927, advertising as tailors and mercers. The partnership ended in 1932 according to a notice of dissolution appearing in the *Daily News* 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 1932. Joseph Purser carried on with the tailoring portion of the business and Thomas Bousfield continued the mercery and men's outfitting; however they continued to share the shop at 51 Market Street until 1938/39.



1927 Purser and Bousfield at 51 Market Street, between the National Hotel and the Strand Café LH0607C

Thomas' only son, Frank, joined his father's business after training and working as a mercer in Perth at Worth's and other stores. The *WA Post Office Directories* list T.P. Bousfield – Mercer occupying 97 High Street for the first time in 1939/40.

Laurie Haskell joined the staff at 14 years old sweeping floors and other odd jobs.

Frank inherited the business (by then named T.P. & F. Bousfield) upon Thomas' death in 1947. He brought in his son Max and son-in-law Albert Paull in 1951, and along with Laurie Haskell,

ran the shop and in 1974 became partners. Max married a girl in the eastern states and moved away. Frank died of a heart attack in 1980 leaving Albert (Alby) Paull and Laurie Haskell owning and running the business as equal partners. Laurie's son Bruce joined the firm in 1987. In 1991 Laurie finally retired after 55 years in the business; Alby, after 46 years, retired in 1997. Bruce inherited his father's share and buying Alby's share became sole owner of Bousfields.

The business has been through some ups and downs. Notably Bruce has steadfastly refused to participate in Sunday trading, believing that Sunday should be spent with family. Bousfields is one of the few businesses in Fremantle that is closed on Sundays, yet in 2017 it was doing better financially than many others. Covid hit hard and the store had to close in March 2020 with no-one knowing when or if things would return to normal. By May they were able to open for 3 days a week with a skeleton staff of just three: Bruce, his wife and niece, but thanks to the support of their loyal customers, were able to get back on their feet.



2023 Owner Bruce Haskell at right, with staff members Kevin Whyte and Ellen Whiteford  
Photo - K. McNulty

Today the business is going as well as it ever was, however, the retail industry is facing some daunting challenges - a booming economy where workers can make \$100,000 upwards in the mines and be home every second week, customers with unrealistic ideas as to their rights and the rise of online shopping, to name a few. The lease is up for renewal but after 35 years Bruce has had enough and unless a new owner can be found, he will close up the business and finally enjoy his well-earned retirement.

#### References:

- 6PR Radio – Everyone's Got a Story: Bruce Haskell and Fremantle's iconic Bousfields 26.09.2022
- ABC Radio Perth – Bousfields Menswear to close its doors in Fremantle 22.01.2023
- Fremantle City Council ratebook records
- Fremantle Herald Interactive*: A perfect fit for Fremantle 03.03.2017
- Fremantle History Centre, Biographical files: B/Bousfield
- Fremantle History Centre Interview OH/Haskell/B, 2001
- Western Australian Post Office Directories

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

### Executive:

Allen Graham (President) 0412 933 360  
 Judith Robison (Secretary) 0434 571 666  
 Pam Harris (Treasurer) 0408 092 100

### Committee Members:

Fay Campbell 0419 969 678  
 Tania Heyne 0419 197 116  
 Alan Kelsall 9336 4573  
 Mattie Turnbull 0409 200 157

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

Some time ago the FHS received this memoir from Darryl James about her very enterprising grandmother Lillian Embleton, as related to Darryl by her mother, Molly (Lillian's daughter). Darryl writes:

*"Like Molly's memories, oral family histories are never sequential or of a whole – they just come in bits and pieces in quiet times over a cuppa or a sherry in the evenings. Molly died (in her 91<sup>st</sup> year) not long after she ended this narrative and, as her family, my brother Richard Parkin and I, and our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, are very thankful to have this record and blessed to have the strong family matriarchy as our legacy and goal.*

As Darryl says at the end, it reaches far beyond Fremantle, but the family has had strong connections here throughout their lives – and it's a very entertaining story that will run over two issues. We hope you enjoy it.

### **Lillian Jane Embleton – a daughter's memories by Molly Embleton/English/Parkin**

My mother, Lillian, was widowed in 1925 when I was seven and my youngest brother, Trevor, five. Although left comparatively well off with six young children – Joseph 17, George 15, Ena 13, Lillian 10, it became obvious that life as we knew it could not be sustained, so my mother became a **business woman**.

She was well equipped for this life with loads of energy, initiative, intuition and good humour and, I daresay, an eye for a bargain. She drove our white Hupmobile around Fremantle with competence and panache – unusual to say the least in 1925!

The first venture in business was a small drapery shop in the heart of Fremantle called 'The Kalazoic' (I wonder why?) I loved visiting the shop. It smelt busy. The anchor was missing, but that was all. There were needles, hats, pins, ribbons and bows and fancy garters which were meant to be worn above the knee. These were extremely elaborate adorned with ribbons, feathers and even tiny beads. Their exoticism of course escaped me and I longed to be old enough to wear a pair. The shop was famous for its hand embroidered baby clothes and these were done by the women of the family. They were exquisite and I learnt to embroider and keep deadlines. It was a good little business but my mother as was her wont grew restless.

We shifted to a café type shop (kiosk) on the foreshore in Nedlands. This was a disaster and I'm sure in those pre consumer protection days, my mother was well and truly diddled. The chief source of income came from visiting yachtsmen who arrived whimsically as they were very dependent on the weather. In order to cope with the expected influx, ice cream in churns and saveloys in abundance were ordered. It was either a feast or a famine and if the customers failed to appear the family lived on hot dogs, ice cream and seed cake until the food became unpalatable or a hunger strike was threatened. To this day I can't look a sav in the eye.

The curtain was drawn on this episode and like many of life's little failures was never referred to again. According to George, our mother rounded up all the local kids and her family and gave them some pennies and when the prospective buyers arrived all the kids were organized to descend on the kiosk to buy ice creams and it looked much more profitable than it was!

At this point we moved in to the hotel business and the Hotel Mount Helena opened its arms and hearts to us. The hotel was situated on the railway line and consisted of built-on rooms and sheds. We spent an idyllic year there. Mother and her sister Queenie (Elizabeth) had run the Grand Hotel in Coolgardie in the gold rush days (one of 23 hotels there at the time) so mother had plenty of hotel experience. A creek meandered through the bottom of the garden and was a source of endless pleasure. With the same entrepreneurial acumen displayed by our mother, Trevor and I went into the gilgie farming business. With great and unusual energy and enthusiasm we dammed the creek and caught and installed about a hundred gilgies with visions of instant fortune plaguing our sleep. We were devastated to find not a single gilgie left in the dam the next morning. Not children to be fazed by adversity, we used the dam for a swimming pool until time and the elements restored the creek to its former state.

Next to the hotel was an orchard which we visited at will – ours – not the farmer's with whom we had a love/hate relationship. We loved him and the largess his orchard provided and he hated us. The hotel was overrun by huge rats which were caught alive in a large wire cage. One day the very Atlas of rats fell victim and with the misguided idea of returning favour for favours supplied we carried the incarcerated rat to the farmer's cat, placing the cage on the ground. We caught the cat and placed it in front of the cage. We released the rat which sprang out of the cage, the valley echoed with the cat's scream of horror as it fled meowing pitifully to the highest branch of a nearby Marri. The rat disappeared under the verandah and we ran as fast as we could with the empty cage flapping between us.

I went to the Mt Helena Primary School and I suppose I was taught the 3 R's, I don't remember, but what I do remember was that the Head Master had three bee hives at the bottom of the playground and we all developed an affinity with the bees and they often drank from our lips. I can still taste the honey.

Molly's memoir will continue in the autumn newsletter.

## **FOR YOUR DIARY**

### **February 21<sup>st</sup>, 11.00 am**

Fremantle Passenger Terminal  
Victoria Quay  
50 Peter Hughes Drive, Fremantle 6160

Make sure you RSVP [secretary.fhs@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.fhs@gmail.com) by 16<sup>th</sup> February please

### **March 28<sup>th</sup>, 5.00-7.00 pm**

The history of wooden boat building in Western Australia  
Walyalup Civic Centre – Mardoo Room  
151 High Street, Fremantle 6160

### **\*May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5.00-7.00 pm (To be confirmed)**

The Orange People  
Walyalup Civic Centre – Mardoo Room  
151 High Street, Fremantle 6160

\*The April meeting has to be brought forward to the first week of May as it falls on Anzac Day.