



FREMANTLE HISTORY SOCIETY

Established 1994

The Secretary, 24 Fothergill Street,  
FREMANTLE WA 6160

**Autumn Edition  
2002**

Editors: Anne Brake, Ron Davidson



Mayor FE Gibson, Mr Watson MHR, Cllr GW Shepherd & James Shepherd, Fremantle Town Clerk  
Fremantle Anzac Day Ceremony, Fremantle Oval, 1928. Photographer: Izzy Orloff

## WATSONIA BUTCHERS - THE LAST MEATING?

Ron Davidson

Watsonia butchers at 73 High Street, one of Fremantle's richest slabs of living history, may soon be dead. The killing may have occurred even before you read this article.

Watsonia patrons, some of whom had been visiting the shop for more than fifty years, were stunned to hear the West End landmark was to close. High costs were blamed by the current owners, international food group, George Weston. There was a rush to try to save Watsons and customers kept asking the staff whether this activity might be successful. No one seemed to know.

When I arrived in Fremantle in the mid-seventies the West End housed a number of butchers. I chose Watsons because I wanted pork. Every part of the pig was there in profusion: ears, tails, cheeks, livers, hearts, stomachs, and pieces of loin or leg with skin just waiting to crackle. Chinese restaurant owners were there in big numbers every Saturday morning, stocking up on spare ribs.

Twenty-five years later there is/was still a magic about the place. The same people worked there and they never seemed to grow any older.

This was not the first Watson outlet, although the Council rate books show Watsons were there in some form or other by 1919. Planning records suggest the butcher's shop opened in its current format soon after World War II. It has that look about it. The first business to carry the Watson name incorporated a grocery and tea rooms at the corner of High and Market Streets. It was opened in 1895 by William Watson who had just arrived in Fremantle from Castlemaine in Victoria with a limited sum of money, a large family, and a horse and cart.

He also brought a limited formal education (he left school at age 13) but he'd learned a lot working at a dozen or so occupations around the old Victorian gold towns. By 1903 Watson had premises in the Owston Building at the corner of High and Mouat Streets, and was opening more grocery stores and tea rooms as well as going wholesale with Watsons Foods.

It was while working for a country general store in Victoria in the 1880s that William Watson learned all about pigs and their products. Consequently, in Fremantle his interest gradually shifted from grocery shops and tea rooms to processing bacon, hams and sausages at a factory and abattoirs in Hamilton Hill. He began using a motor vehicle for deliveries, a radical move at the time. He was a conservative man politically but used his van to supply meat to the hungry families of striking members of the radical Lumpers Union. He also helped many ex-servicemen and was a major supporter of the Fremantle War Memorial Fund. He was disappointed at the public's apathy towards the project. Two of his sons had been killed in World War I.

Late in his life William Watson's empire included a head office, retail and depots in the Owston building, a bacon and a butter factory plus freezing works at Spearwood, a cream depot at Wagin, a cheese factory and a Perth depot in King Street.

While 'Old Bill' Watson became wealthy he was always seen as a good bloke around

the egalitarian port city. He entered politics and in 1922 was elected as the Independent federal member for Fremantle. He repeated the performance by defeating John Curtin by 6000 votes in the following elections in 1925. He was a conservative but an open minded one. He was not afraid to attack the Bruce Government and the system. In a speech to the House he likened Australia to an apple attacked by the codlin moth which struck at its core. The metaphor pointed, among other things, to Watson's dislike of political parties and the thirteen parliaments needed to govern Australia's small population.

Watson did not recontest his seat in 1928 and Curtin won by 1600 votes. "Old Bill" returned in 1931 and won Fremantle back from Curtin by 5000 votes, although the future Prime Minister had led by a similar margin on primary votes. Curtin was elected in 1934 when Watson was not seeking re-election. When Watson died in 1938 Curtin was a pall bearer at his funeral at Fremantle Cemetery. 'He was a friendly and generous opponent,' said Curtin. It is not known what happened to William Watson's extensive library which had for many years fuelled his expertise in ancient history.

Sources: *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 12; Fremantle Local History Collection files.



## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

### *Executive:*

Bob Woollett (President)	9335 7451
Alison Gregg (Vice President)	9432 9739
Alan Kelsall (Treasurer)	9336 4573
Ron Davidson (Secretary)	9430 6096

### *Committee:*

Elaine Berry	9336 1906
Robert Besford (wk)	9335 9473
Kristy Bizzaca	9328 5316
Anne Brake	9336 5206
Jean Cecil	9335 2352
Beres Coley (wk)	9335 9473
David Hutchison	9335 1594

Fremantle History Society's committee meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month.

If you have something you would like discussed at a meeting, please contact one of the members at the numbers shown above.

General meetings of the Society are generally held on the 4th Tuesday of the month. Details of these meetings can be found in your newsletter and reminders are placed in the local press. As we have started to have Sunday afternoon meetings occasionally, please be sure to check details.



## COMING EVENTS

### ST PAUL'S IN MAY

The Fremantle History Society will visit the heritage precinct of Saint Paul's, 162 Hampton Road Beaconsfield, for its May meeting. The building of the church began in earnest in the last years of the 19th century. With Australia moving to Federation the burgeoning Anglican community decided it wanted its own church. It already had its own rector and a house had been built for him on Hampton Road. Also, the mother church, St John's of Fremantle, had already erected a Mission Hall but it was too small to accommodate the growing congregation.

The energetic rector, the Reverend Alban Luxmore Marshall, set up in 1903 what was called the Talent Club to raise funds for a new church. The club made an encouraging beginning. Within two years the Fremantle architect, J Herbert Eales, had drawn up plans and work by Hooley Bros of Palmyra had begun on the limestone building. The money ran out in 1906 and building stopped. Fortunately the basic aim of Eales' elegant design had been fulfilled but the quasi cruciform shape of the Mission Hall in the original plans was never repeated.

The history of renovation and change, and restoration, will be illustrated when we visit the heritage precinct. The enthusiasm of the

present Rector, the Reverend Peter Humphries, and his congregation has set off plans for further restoration work and a project to record and interpret the precinct's history. Society members will hear all about this on **Tuesday, 28 May 7.00 pm** at the church (162 Hampton Rd).

### ANOTHER VIEW OF THE CATALPA

The June meeting will be something special (not that all our meetings aren't!). Sir William Heseltine, who was private secretary to the Queen, will speak at the Society's general meeting on the Fenians and their escape from Fremantle. And why is that special? I hear you ask. Everyone has heard the story a dozen times - or more. Sir William is however presenting the story from the guards' point of view. The May meeting will be held on **Tuesday, 25 June at 7.00 pm** in the Maritime Museum Cliff Street meeting room.

### HERITAGE IN OUR DOORSTEPS

Michal Lewi has long had a fascination with buildings, all over the world. A place that has captured his photographic eye for going on 30 years is our own Fremantle. Michal has also been a long term contributor to the heritage industry, particularly in Western Australia, where he has served on the Heritage Council of WA and as Chairman and councillor of the National Trust. Michal will share some of his insights into WA's heritage using Fremantle as his case study.

Michal's richly illustrated talk will accompany our AGM which will be held at the Maritime Museum meeting room, Cliff St on **Tuesday, 23 July at 7.00 pm**.



## MEETING REPORTS

### AS THE SUN SETS IN THE WEST

The sun was setting over the Western horizon on a perfect summer evening. This was the setting for the Fremantle History Society's February general meeting - a sundowner at Monument Hill. Members and friends sat on the monument steps to hear Kris Bizzaca speak of the Monument Hill's

varied history. Kris wrote the historical segment of the conservation plan which preceded the listing of the whole of the Monument Hill Memorial Reserve by the Heritage Council of WA.

Kris said that because of its prominence the site was included in many early drawings and photographs. It was the place for early residents to watch the sun go down. Its prominence also caused an obelisk to be built there in 1879 as an aid for navigators. The Hill became known as Obelisk Hill. It was also called Tent City in the 1890s when gold seekers camped all over the hill while waiting to leave for the goldfields. The prospectors used any available vegetation for firewood.

When the 1914-18 war resulted in a long list of Fremantle dead, pressure mounted in 1919 for a war memorial. It came first from the formidable mayor Frank Gibson who asked where there was another town in Western Australia which did not have a war memorial. Apparently the answer was that there wasn't such a town. Fund raising and a design competition began.

The architects Wilkinson and Ross produced the winning design in 1922 which featured a colonnaded tower and a viewing chamber. By 1925 the local sculptor Pietro Porcelli was working on the project. However he was soon removed and Fremantle architects Allen and Nicholas modified the plans so they matched the available funds of about 6,000 pounds. The monument was ready to be unveiled by Armistice Day 1929.

The monument to the Fallen Sailors and Soldiers has always been plagued by allegations of 'lack of respect'. Apparently unaware of the irony the RSL complained in the thirties of a two-up school operating there; someone stole 500 petunia seedlings; and during World War II service personnel refused to stop playing football on the grassy slopes when requested. Then there was the skateboard controversy.

In the late forties new plaques were added to accommodate the 1939-45 war. There have been many additions since. After Kris' talk picnic meals were eaten as the sun went down.

### **O'CONNOR**

The ever-charming Tony Evans overcame a bad cold and sore throat to give members at our March meeting an insight into the work behind writing his most recent work on 'The Chief' – CY O'Connor. His research took him to Ireland where O'Connor was born and educated and to New Zealand, where O'Connor worked for over 20 years, before being seduced by Forrest to come to Western Australia. Tony entertained us with anecdotes of some of some of the interviews he had with family members and the like, as well as his trepidation at debunking some of the great men of history who have also written on O'Connor.

Those of us there on the night were given a real treat. On his visit to Ireland Tony visited 'Gravelmount' where O'Connor was born and lived as a child. The current owner is doing renovations in the house and has revealed wall paper from the nursery, most likely where the great man himself slept as an infant. Tony brought along a piece of this early Victorian wallpaper, with its mixture of nursery rhyme characters and Oriental themes, which he was given and has had framed.

### **ROCK UP TO ROCKINGHAM**

Fremantle History Society members were pleasantly surprised when we visited the Rockingham Museum and Local History Library managed by the Rockingham District Historical Society, for our April meeting. We were amazed by the size of the display areas, including the old Rockingham Road Board offices and the old library, and by their cultural richness.

There were pictures and remnants of old pioneers, of Rockingham as a timber port, the ship *Rockingham*, the East Rockingham agricultural areas, and lots lots more. The wedding displays were a feature with a particular gem the simple and elegant dress

worn by Doris Browning at her wedding in 1921. Then there was a wonderful afternoon tea - simple and tasty.

The museum is open Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday 1 pm to 4 pm and Sunday 10 am to 4 pm. It's well worth a visit.



### For Your Diary

#### **Tuesday 28 May: St Paul's in May**

Churches have always provided a point of focus for communities. Over the past century, St Paul's has done just that. Come and hear about the history of the church and the how it has kept pace with changes around it. **St Paul's Church, 162 Hampton Rd, Beaconsfield, 7.00 pm.**

**Tuesday 25 June: Another view of the Catalpa.** Sir William Heseltine will throw new light on this fascinating story of escape and adventure. **Maritime Museum meeting room, Cliff St, 7.00 pm.**

**Tuesday 23 July: Heritage in our doorsteps.** Michal Lewi will give a richly illustrated talk on the bounty of Fremantle's building, but let's not be complacent about what we have. You'll be reminded of the losses we are still experiencing. **Maritime Museum meeting room, Cliff St, 7.00 pm.**



### ORIGINAL COLLECTIONS WANTED

The information sheet of the Library and Information Service of WA indicates the JS Battye Library wants to collect and preserve original non-government records which reflect the full range of human activities in the State. After being assessed as suitable by staff members, a Deed of Gift will be issued to provide for the legal transfer of a collection to the library. It will then be housed in the Private Archives Collection.

There are times when the standard DOG is not appropriate in which case there is a

range of non-standard DOGs covering areas like confidentiality and uncertain copyright. Donations may be eligible under the Taxation Incentives Arts Scheme. If you have material you think may be useful for future researchers contact David Whiteford, senior librarian, on 9427 3107 or email [dwhiteford@liswa.wa.gov.au](mailto:dwhiteford@liswa.wa.gov.au). The Special Collection includes original company documents and records.



### A CYCLE SAGA

Bob Woollett

Soon after moving into our house in Norfolk St in 1973, we came across a discarded ladies bicycle in the back lane. It was in a fairly decrepit state but some good work by the cycle shop on South Terrace soon restored it to a reasonably roadworthy condition. It bore the trade name *Oliver* and we understood the brand was well known in post-war Fremantle. And it may well have been assembled, if not made, locally.

The bike provided reliable transport around Fremantle until 1989 when, having been left near the kiosk at South Beach, it was sadly appropriated by an obvious connoisseur – poetic justice in a way, perhaps, in light of the manner in which it had been acquired sixteen years earlier.

A recent trip to Olivers Cycles on Canning Highway in East Fremantle failed to shed any light on the possible origin of the bicycle and its name. The shop changed hands in the 1990s and the former owner, who was an Oliver and may have been able to help, moved away from the area soon after.

If you have any information about what was possibly Fremantle's own brand of bicycle, please contact Bob Woollett on 9335 77451.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *I'm sure Bob's Oliver cycle was in better condition than another famous and very rusty bike which hit Fremantle streets at about the same time. It belonged to Fremantle architect Gerard McCann and its frame had not one scrap of paint on it. Apparently it had spent some*

years in the river before becoming Gerard's means of transport, using it for inspections of building sites and social calls. Gerard's bike, like Bob's, was stolen (from the corridor beside his practice). Gerard pined for some time after the loss.



### ELIMINATION – A WORD GAME

Our President recently came across an example of this relating to London. Here is a version which refers to Fremantle. The object is to find the remaining word.

Forty-four (44) of the forty-five (45) listed can be paired up to give you the names of places and streets in Fremantle. The twenty-two (22) clues which help you do this are listed (a) to (u).

EXAMPLE: Clue (c) *two make a circular residence* will pair words 23 *round* with word 16 *house* – *Roundhouse*, enabling you to eliminate those two words. Using the rest of the clues to eliminate the other twenty-one (21) pairs, see if you can find the remaining word.

#### Clues:

- a) The furthest most part of Fremantle
- b) difficult to enter this haven
- c) two make a circular residence
- d) two make a royal figure
- e) but this was made for tall ships surely?
- f) Two make for a stately wharf
- g) Sounds a safe way to cross (h)
- h) Waterway for lazing on
- i) Main items found here
- j) Two commemorate WA's self government in 1891
- k) Two suggest a knightly principal
- l) A way to stable horses?
- m) Two make a strand for swimmers
- n) Two make a memorial park
- o) Fremantle's towering piece of architecture built in 1885
- p) Two make the city's university
- q) Two make contemporary art gallery
- r) recently re-established place for flag hoisting alongside (c)
- s) Septimus Roe's bisector of (a)

- t) Underground passage constructed in 1837
- u) A reserved area for sport
- v) J Talbot Hobb's Kirk on South Terrace

#### Words:

- |                  |               |
|------------------|---------------|
| 1. end           | 2. mews       |
| 3. town          | 4. park       |
| 5. long          | 6. swan       |
| 7. road          | 8. hall       |
| 9. high          | 10. quay      |
| 11. tree         | 12. head      |
| 13. hill         | 14. dame      |
| 15. west         | 16. house     |
| 17. kings        | 18. jetty     |
| 19. river        | 20. Scots     |
| 21. beach        | 22. Notre     |
| 23. round        | 24. bridge    |
| 25. museum       | 26. Arthur    |
| 27. church       | 28. Moore's   |
| 29. signal       | 30. street    |
| 31. tunnel       | 32. square    |
| 33. station      | 34. whaling   |
| 35. harbour      | 36. bathers   |
| 37. Stirling     | 38. maritime  |
| 39. monument     | 40. building  |
| 41. Victoria     | 42. challenge |
| 43. esplanade    | 44. Fremantle |
| 45. proclamation |               |

(solution at the back of the newsletter)



Dear Ed

May I make a suggestion to further improve this already brilliant and scintillating publication? Could we maybe have a regular column on Fremantle personalities past and present - not the famous ones that everyone already knows about, but people well known in the local community for whatever reason.

Perhaps members would like to contribute their own 'memorable Freo person'!

Dianne Davidson

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Sounds like a good idea. If you read the lead story you'll find that*

*quite by chance we've started the series already. If you have a contribution to make or a suggestion of a person to highlight, please ring Ron (9430 6096) or Anne (9336 5206).*



## **ARE YOU A PRIZE WINNING HISTORIAN?**

The Royal Western Australian Historical Society are calling for submissions from its members, members of affiliated societies, or secondary students (Yr 10 –12 or equivalent) for the **AE Williams 2002 History Prize**. (Professional historians – retired or practising – are not eligible).

Entries of 1500 to 2000 words which interpret any aspect of Western Australian history are sought by COB Friday 12 July.

A prize of \$400 will be awarded. Application forms are available from the RWAHS, Stirling House, 49 Broadway, Nedlands. Ph 9386 3841 or email [histwest@git.com.au](mailto:histwest@git.com.au).



## **ENROLLED PENSIONER GUARDS**

A special interest group of the WA Genealogical Society, the Enrolled Pensioner Guards, held its second AGM (its that time of the year!) on 27 April. The aims of the group are to provide opportunities to gain more knowledge of the men and their families, share research, build resources, provide relevant speakers, provide social interaction and produce a quarterly newsletter.

Pensioner Guards were British soldiers who re-enlisted as convict guards to come to the Swan River Colony with their families as free settlers between 1850 – 1868. The Barracks Arch, in St George's Tce, is all that remains of the main Pensioner Barracks.

For more information contact the WA Genealogical Society, Unit 6, 48 May St,

Bayswater 6053. The next meeting will be held at WAGS on 27 July (12 noon).



## **FACES IN A CROWD**

The faces of many women and a few men peer from a display cabinet in the Local History Collection at Fremantle Library. They are part of a cache of framed photographs discovered under considerable grime in the garage of a Woodlands house. There's some evidence they may be members of the Tapper family. The Tappers descended from Daniel and Ann Tapper who arrived on the *Rockingham* in 1830. Daniel was a boatman and one of his sons, John, was in turn a whaler, lighterman, Suffolk Street storekeeper and finally, a master mariner.

The main photograph in the mystery collection has about sixty faces, only two of them men. It was taken - probably in the late twenties - by Fremantle photographer CM Nixon. Drop in to the Local History collection and see if you can provide any clues as who is in the anonymous photos.



## **COCKBURN HISTORICAL SOCIETY REACHES A MILESTONE**

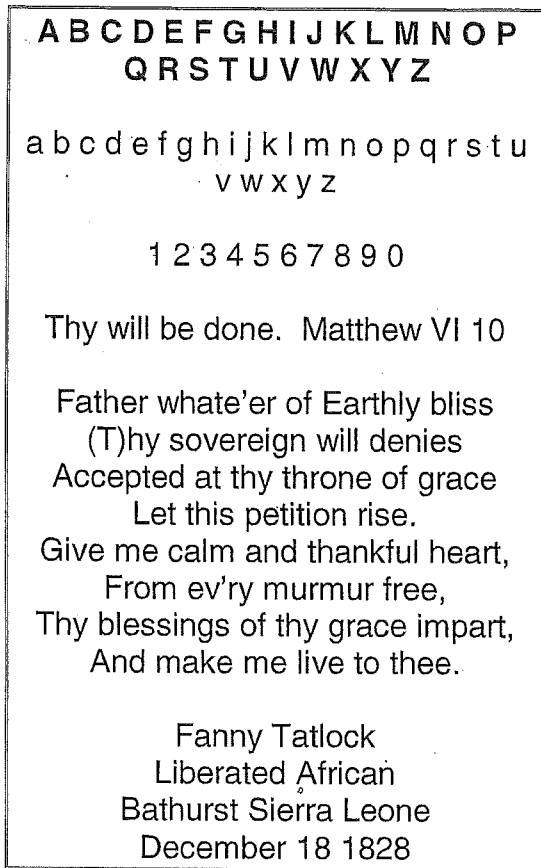
Vice-President Alison Gregg and Jim Gregg represented the Fremantle History Society at a light luncheon followed by a museum open day on April 21st. It was to celebrate the Cockburn Historical Society's 25th Anniversary and the upcoming 20th birthday of the fascinating Azelia Ley Museum. Visitors were impressed by the special historical displays and quality of the museum. Well done Cockburn.

Those wanting to visit the museum will find it at Azalia Rd, Hamilton Hill. It's open Sundays 1.30 – 4.30 pm.



## THE SLAVE GIRL SAMPLER – 1828

This sewing sampler was worked by Fanny Tatlock, a rescued African slave girl. It reads:



When Royal Navy Captain Tatlock pursued a fleeing slave ship, (slavery was outlawed by Britain in 1807), he noticed a floating barrel. Hauling it on deck he was amazed to find a small African slave girl inside. She had been thrown overboard from the slaver. He adopted the little girl and raised her in England with his own family. He named her Fanny after his wife, Fanny Tree Tatlock. As a young woman she returned to Sierra Leone and spent the rest of her life as a missionary. She sent this sampler to her English family as a gift in 1828. Her 'sister' Frances Tree Tatlock married The Revd William Mitchell in 1832 and migrated to Western Australia in 1838 and brought the sampler with her as a memento of her African slave 'sister', Fanny Tatlock.

The sampler was donated to the WA Museum by Mrs Doreen Effie Berliner (nee Wright), great-great-granddaughter of Frances and The Revd William Mitchell. Courtesy of History Dept WAM (H.1991.149).

## GRAVE WORK

The Fremantle History Society has started work in one of its favourite places - the Fremantle Cemetery. Members have been fascinated by the place's rich history since one of our early general meetings there. Now the Fremantle Cemetery Board has set aside \$3000 so that the Society can employ a consultant to develop a list of 40 graves in a fairly compact area (from the 70,000 people there) and provide a 200 word picture of each. There are difficulties with the project because of the trend towards cremations.

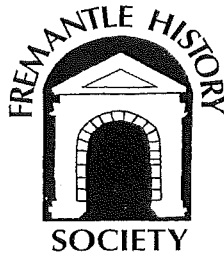
At the April 9 meeting of the Society committee it was decided that Kris Bizzaca and Anne Brake would act as the steering committee for the project. Time was short as the 40 names and pen portraits had to be submitted to the board by mid-June.

The sub-committee asked Ron Davidson to do this task. He is an experienced academic and social historian who has written extensively on Fremantle topics. He has had three books published by Fremantle Arts Centre Press and has twice been short-listed for the WA Premier's non-fiction awards.

The 40 names will be printed so they provide visitors with more detail on the lives of the varied mix of people buried in the cemetery and used as the basis of a cemetery walk. It is hoped that this will be the first of a number of such booklets.



Elimination word game solution:  
a) 15/1 west end; b) 42/35 Challenge Harbour; c) 23/16 Round House; d) 17/32 Kings Square; e) 5/18 Long Jetty; f) 41/10 Victoria Quay; g) 37/24 Stirling Bridge; h) 6/19 Swan River; i) 38/25 Maritime Museum; j) Proclamation Tree; k) Arthur Head; l) 2/7 Mews Rd; m) 36/21 Bathers Beach; n) 39/13 Monument Hill; o) 3/8 Town Hall; p) 22/14 Notre Dame; q) 28/40 Moore's Building; r) 29/33 Signal Station; s) 9/30 High St; t) 34/31 Whaling Tunnel; u) 44/4 Fremantle park; v) 20/27 Scoff's Church.  
ESPLANADE was the remaining word.



Once again it's time for our Society's Annual General Meeting (23 July) and elections.

The committee is made up of  
President Secretary  
Vice President Treasurer, and  
no less than 2 or more than 8 committee members.

The committee meets on the second Tuesday in the month in the old council chambers at the Fremantle Town Hall. Our main business is to plan activities for the Society which include our general meetings, the Fremantle Studies Day and our annual pub lunch. The committee is also involved in the publishing of your quarterly newsletter and the Fremantle Studies Journal. Other activities have included working with the Fremantle Society to assist the City of Fremantle with elements of the Municipal Inventory and the current work on the cemetery.

We are always looking for new ideas and would love to see some new faces at our meetings. If you would like to join the committee please nominate now.

Nominations for the committee of the Fremantle History Society must be received by the Secretary by Tuesday 25 June.

Nomination for the committee of the Fremantle History Society – 2002 – 2003	
I ..... nominate	
.....	
for the position of (tick appropriate box)	
<input type="checkbox"/> President	<input type="checkbox"/> Vice President
<input type="checkbox"/> Secretary	<input type="checkbox"/> Treasurer
<input type="checkbox"/> Ordinary committee member	
Signature: ..... (nominator) ..... (date)	
..... (nominee) ..... (date)	

