



FREMANTLE HISTORY SOCIETY

Established 1994

The Secretary, PO Box 1305
FREMANTLE WA 6959

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Editors: Dianne Davidson, Anne Brake,
Ron Davidson



Patron: Dr Brad Pettitt,
Mayor of Fremantle



First Fremantle Housing Board houses under construction,
No 41 Forrest St is at left. Workers Homes Board, 1913 (detail).

LOCAL HISTORY COLLECTION TO THE RESCUE

Ron Davidson

The Fremantle History Society recently received an urgent email asking for help in finding an historic house. The request came from Michelle Forkin from the State Department of Building Management and Works. She wrote that the Department was approaching 100 years of involvement with public housing and could the History Society help find the original house – if it was still standing. We did what we usually do on receiving such a request – we sent it on to Pam Hartree and Kristi McNulty at the Local History Collection at Fremantle Library. They identified the house.

It was still there at number 41 Forrest street East Fremantle. That information was rechecked using a Google map and rate book searches. Pam and Kristi found that this was the first public house in Australia, built under a workers' housing scheme. Number 41 was identified by a concrete marker which was laid by Jack Scaddan who was Western Australian Premier and

Treasurer from 1911 to 1916. Scaddan was a former miner who promoted interest in a number of state-owned business schemes. The Local History Collection could also produce a number of photographs of number 41 and later public houses, which will be valuable during the centenary celebrations.

That the Local History Collection could produce such a rich store of information about Fremantle public housing was also due in no small way to research on documents done in the 1980s by Bill Latter, who was Fremantle's Deputy Mayor at the time and keenly interested in Fremantle labour history.



COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Executive:

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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. Be sure to check details as meeting dates may differ from this.

The Fremantle History Society committee consists of a **President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer** and no less than 2 and no more than 8 **committee members**. This hard working team organise all the meetings for the year, Fremantle Studies Day and the production of the Fremantle Studies Journal. The committee also respond to a number of requests and lobby on behalf of the Society on a range of topics. And its fun!

If you would like to be a member of the executive of a committee member, we would love to have you. Complete the nomination form attached to this newsletter and return it to the Secretary at the address on the front page by **Tuesday 29 June**.



MEETING REPORTS

Rock Up to Rockingham

On Sunday 28 August twenty-three members of the Society and their friends headed south to visit the Rockingham History Society Museum, enjoy the delicious morning tea provided by our hosts and move on to our traditional winter pub lunch at the nearby Rockingham Hotel.

Members of the Rockingham History Society were at hand to welcome us to their museum and answer questions about the interesting and well presented array of exhibits, including a stained glass window commemorating the pioneer women of the district. Curator Wendy Durant, also a stalwart member of our Society, rounded off the visit with a fascinating illustrated talk on the history of the Rockingham Hotel. Built in 1886 by James Bell Jr, the hotel has undergone many changes over the years and sadly none of the original structure remains today, but the buffet Sunday roast lunch was much enjoyed by everyone, particularly when, as a group, we were offered a \$5 discount on the usual price of \$20.

Trades Hall Revisited

Our September meeting was held on Tuesday 27 September at the old Fremantle Trades Hall, which had a long and chequered history, opening its doors in 1904, and morphing from Trades Hall to an Old Time Music Hall and a restaurant and home of the Orange People. Conservation architect Gerard McCann entertained members with its fascinating story, and also explained his extensive work on transforming this public space into a private home with optional office space available. He has succeeded in creating an imaginative living space while retaining all the heritage aspects.

Formal proceedings were followed by our usual sumptuous supper, supplemented by contributions from the current owner of the Hall, Dawn Quackenbush.

Many thanks to Dawn for allowing us entry into her home, and for providing delicious snacks as well!

Fremantle Studies Day

This year's Studies Day, held on Sunday 23 October, was an exceptional success, with over 50 people attending. The overall theme was 'Port City Sheilas' and Assoc. Prof. Deborah Gare from Notre Dame kicked off the proceedings with a fascinating look from an unusual angle at the early female immigrants from the UK and their experiences; she was followed by Dr Bobbie Oliver from Curtin University, who gave us a deeper insight into the personal and political life of John Curtin's wife Elsie. Then Prof Carmen Lawrence provided enlightening and entertaining information about the career and private life of the first Australian woman elected to the Senate, Dorothy Tangney, while Lindsay Lovering finished the day with a fascinating, informative and long-overdue account of the career of

Fremantle's much-loved potter, sculptor and environmentalist Joan Campbell.

The proceedings were recorded for the Local History Collection, and are available for anyone interested to listen to.

Well done, everyone associated with 'Port City Sheilas'!



Lindsay Lovering giving his presentation on Joan Campbell at the 2011 Studies Day (Pam Hartree)



KATE AND SHINER IN FREMANTLE Ron Davidson

Local television viewers have recently watched Kate Leigh, carrying a razor, revolver or rifle, compete with Tilly Devine for the title of Sydney's Queen of the Underworld in the popular series *Underbelly* which has just finished. This was set in the thirties when Kate and Tilly and their collection of supporting thugs sought to destroy one another in King's Cross, Surry Hills and Darlinghurst aka Razorhurst. What the locals may not know is that in the late forties and early fifties Kate flashed across the Fremantle scene with her romance with local identity Ernest 'Shiner' Ryan. Shiner Ryan first came under notice in 1913 when he was the first Australian hold-up man to use a get-away car. Kate provided an alibi but no one believed her. Shiner got ten years and Kate seven for perjury.

Later Shiner became a regular burglar around Fremantle and a folk hero. He was a master of locks. Meanwhile Kate prospered with sly grog, drugs and brothels in Sydney. They met again in the late 1940s when

Shiner took to Sydney for Kate a painting he called 'The Black Sheep'; Christ is coming down from the Prison carrying a black lamb with Shiner's face. Sydney art critics were ecstatic. So was Kate when it was presented.

Soon a romantic Kate came to Perth for a big party held at Shiner's house. She wore an enormous straw hat and 15 chunky diamonds on her fingers. The kids at the HV Sutherland chemist shop were fascinated to see all the diamonds on display: most had never seen a diamond before. There was a party at Shiner's house below what is now Giuffre's shop opposite the Fremantle Hospital in South Terrace. Next they were married at St Johns with Cannon Edward Collick, the prison chaplain, officiating. The wedding of two folk heroes drew a big crowd including the butchers from JL Baker's shop opposite. The marriage didn't last long. The pair headed for Sydney by taxi. But on the way over Shiner gave Kate the flick, stole a car and came back to Freo. Soon Kate was broke and ironically sued Shiner for maintenance. There must be another TV drama here.

PS Anyone who knows where there is a reproduction of 'The Black Sheep' please let us know.



Kate and Shiner meet in Fremantle.
(Courtesy Ron Davidson)



THANK YOU JOHN

Ron Davidson

At the last meeting of the Fremantle History Society committee it was decided to write to John Dowson to thank him for the care he has devoted to our beloved city. John on the Council over eight years has shown great courage in promoting issues like those we hold dear. John has taken a rest - joke. He said he did not want to be on a council which promoted high rise.

Next month John will launch another big project. He has just completed a book on Fremantle Ports - following the path of his prize-winning *Old Fremantle*. Looks like a great Christmas present. Launch day is December 15th.



RECENT MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES – AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

A new oral history project has commenced at Fremantle City Library thanks to financial support provided by the Fremantle History Society and the City of Fremantle.

Over the years staff have interviewed European migrants but until recently had not gathered the stories of more recent arrivals from places such as Africa, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan. It was felt important to discover the stories behind their settlement in Western Australia and their experiences living/ working in the Fremantle area. Doing so could lead to a better understanding of the issues and problems faced and combat some of the negative views expressed by the community and media. In addition, staff wanted to interview individuals working closely with new arrivals to ascertain current settlement practices.

Heather Campbell and Lorraine Stevens were employed to undertake the project. To date eight interviews have been conducted with individuals from the South Sudan, Zimbabwe and Afghanistan as well as with representatives from St Paul's Church and the Fremantle Multicultural Centre.

The interviewer's reports give us an insight into the project and those that are involved:

A friend who is a member of the congregation of St Paul's Anglican Church, Hampton Road, Fremantle, provided contact details of Michael and Joan Jessup, members of the church and the Just Manna group associated with it. The Just Manna group (Justice and Food) is concerned with alleviating need in the community, a brief that encompasses refugees. It is the Jessups' interaction and assistance to refugees from South Sudan that is the main focus of their interview. They also provided introductions to Mayom Mading Agau and Abraham Mayen Matueny, members of the Dinke tribe, who suffered persecution in South Sudan because of their strong Christian beliefs.

Abraham and Mayom were living together in rented accommodation in Rockingham Road when they decided to attend a service at St Paul's Church. They immediately found the church community welcoming and supportive and this contact has made a significant difference to the lives of both men on an ongoing basis.

Just Manna and its work are described in the Jessup's interview, as are difficulties encountered by refugees in settling into a culture so different from their country of origin. They were able to offer valuable insights into the most effective way of providing assistance, while encouraging independence. Understanding financial arrangements is of particular concern, including concepts such as loans and interest. There is also pressure to assist family members still in South Sudan.

An interview was then conducted with Mayom Mading Agau who was boarding with the Jessup family in Fremantle at the time of the interview. Mayom was born in the Southern Sudan village of Akot and although his precise age is not known, he was thought to be in his early forties at the time of the interview. His father was killed in tribal clashes, and his mother subsequently married his father's younger brother.

He describes the village of Akot and a happy childhood surrounded by his extended family, and comments on his awareness of war and unrest. In 1989 Mayom was forced to leave his home and family at night with nothing and undertook a perilous journey to Ethiopia where he remained until 1991. A political crisis prompted a further journey to Kenya in 1992, where he remained in a refugee camp until 2006 when he was granted entry to Australia.

Mayom's interview was followed by one with Abraham Mayen Matueny, his nephew, who was born under a tree in a cattle camp along the river Nile. His precise date of birth is not known, but thought to be in 1978. The family lived in the Southern Sudan village of Yirol and village life is described, including his childhood, schooling, and desire to be a farmer and cattle keeper like his father.

Separated from his family in 1989, he left Yirol with nothing when the village was attacked. Meeting with others he travelled to the border to seek sanctuary and his family assumed that he was dead. Subsequently Abraham joined Mayom at the refugee camp in Tacoma, Kenya and lived there from 1992-2006 (aged 14 to 28 years old).

In both interviews there is commentary on the effects of long-term separation from family members – in particular Abraham describes his mother's anguish in trying to recognise him as her son when contact was re-established because he was no longer the boy she remembered. Conditions in the refugee camp are covered, including work and the educational opportunities there. Subsequent selection for settlement in Australia is described, as are perceptions of Australia, cultural differences, difficulties encountered, work and further education.

Mayom and Abraham talk of their surprise at their first sight of the sea at Fremantle and of their confusion over the identity of the 'Fremantle Doctor'. Their interviews and that of the Jessups, contain commentary on the celebrations on the declaration of the new country of South Sudan and the effect this

may have on their future. Both men lent photographs to the Library for copying.

Mayom is currently studying for a certificate in Human Resources at TAFE and Abraham has completed a certificate in Agriculture and works as a laboratory assistant. Abraham met his wife Mary in the refugee camp and after a struggle against Dinke tradition; they were officially married in February 2011 in Nairobi. He hopes to bring Mary to Australia

My final interview for the project was with Clara Mazena from Zimbabwe and was a striking contrast to those of Mayom and Abraham. The seventh of nine children born to Patrick Mazena, a mission school principal and his wife Rose, Clara had a good education and intended continuing her studies at the University of Zimbabwe. In the meantime however she married and had a daughter and found herself living a very restricted life with her in-laws. With the help of her sisters and family, Clara acquired a student visa for a degree in Human Resources at ECU in Western Australia.

The interview contains commentary on Clara's early life, marriage and the support she received from her family in obtaining a student visa. She describes her feelings on leaving Zimbabwe and her reception in WA. Because Zimbabwe had been colonised by Britain and the culture anglicised, Clara was able to settle in quickly and manage life in Western Australia with growing confidence. There is commentary on the pressure to succeed because of lack of funds and of the wide variety of work she undertook to support herself.

Impressions of Fremantle are covered, as is Clara's association with St Paul's Church, including the help given to her by the church community and the Just Manna group.

Clara graduated from ECU in 2010 and her current work includes human resource administration. She plans to continue her studies and undertake a Masters degree at a later date. Her daughter has joined her in WA and they live in Hamilton Hill with

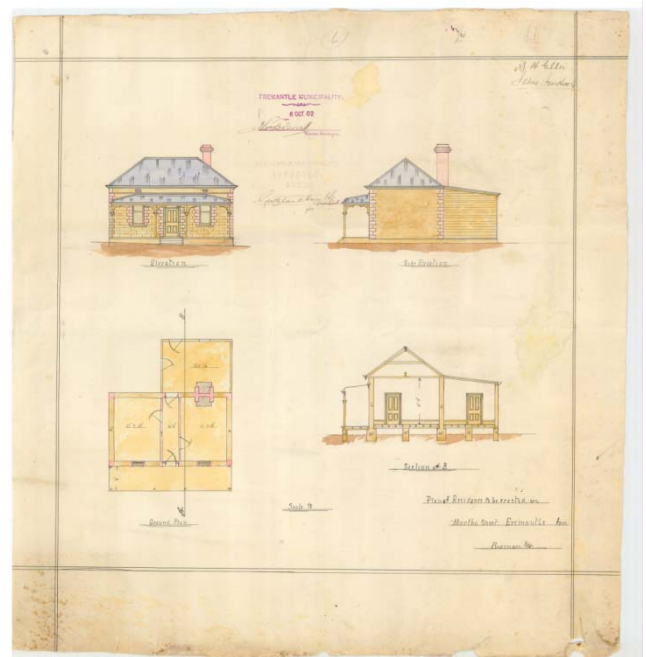
Clara's Australian partner, while awaiting approval for permanent residency. **(to be concluded)**

Heather Campbell (interviewer)



LOCAL HISTORY COLLECTION Pam Hartree

Research in the Local History Collection often unearths some rare treasures, usually quite unexpectedly. Recently my colleague Kristi uncovered a rare plan of a house in Martha Street. The plan was put aside until there was time to identify the actual house and street number. At this point coincidences started to occur. A query was received asking if we knew the location of the first Worker's House built in Fremantle and at the same time the Heritage Planner called in to research a house in Martha Street. Kristi quickly retrieved the plan of the cottage in Martha Street and between them both they identified the house as 23 Martha Street. The owner was notified and was thrilled to find such accurate information about how their property looked when it was first built in 1902. We have since digitized the plan and offered the owner a copy. A photograph of the plan is below:



Fremantle City Library, Local History Collection

We will shortly be adding *The Herald* 1867-1886 to the National Library of Australia's historical newspaper database. The collection will provide the funding to have the microfilmed papers processed and this will enable full text searching through the Trove database. The availability of these papers online will be a valuable resource for researchers of the history of Fremantle.

New additions to the collection include:

Ron Davidson
Brain in his fingertips in [High Jinks at the Hot Pool : The Mirror reflects the life of a city, pp. 214-224. 1994. LH 079 DAV

CBD marketing plan: retail & professional services 2011 to 2015
City of Fremantle. LH 352 CBD

Johnson, Ruth
Dahlias, roses and Smallpox Road: a history of the lives affected by Woodman Point Quarantine Station. 2007. LH 994.11 JOH

Gomm, Kevin
In the shadow of the eagle : German raider and U-boat attacks off Western Australia and in the Southern Ocean during World War II. 2010. LH 940.5459 GOM

Gowland, Alan
The Men's Shed Health and Wellbeing Project ,2010. LH 305.31 GOW

Johnson, Ruth
Unshed tears and stilted suffering : the influenza epidemic in Western Australia. 2011. LH 994.11 JOH



NAMES – MOSTLY FREMANTLE cont'd Rusty Christensen

'Smiling Tom' or 'Sandshoe Willie' was a mobile institution around town. He had a gait between a fast walk and a slow jog when going around between hotels. He wore a perpetual smile which made it easy to accept his activity of picking up cigarette butts and being a 'bar fly' which meant that

he would go into a pub bar and drain the glasses left on the bar after the drinker had left. He kept to himself and if he was in a bar the barmaids would not be in a hurry to clear away the (nearly) empties.

Bill 'Goaty' Baldry was a fixture around town for many years. He was a kind of itinerant baggage man and pushed a barrow around, operating mainly from the railway station. It appeared there was a story about goats in his background and even though he was a little bloke if you wanted some excitement you just had to go 'Baaa' and then stand back or take off.

Alec Maru was a well known commission agent which really was another name for an SP bookmaker. There were a number of them in Fremantle of which Alec was the best known. He had some kind of exotic blood (as per his name) and had big jowls. He supported the East Fremantle Football Club when they were under the grandstand on Fremantle Oval and had a reputation of singing 'Old Man River' like Paul Robeson. I was lucky enough to hear him one Sunday morning when East Fremantle were celebrating a grand final win, a memorable occasion for a young lad.

Oscar Stack was a personality around town. He was a well known barber (men's hairdresser) with a shop on South Terrace on the way to South Beach. Blokes would catch the tram in town, hop off at his shop, have a haircut and catch the same tram going back into town (so the stories go). He provided a service for people who couldn't get out to his shop. On Saturday afternoon he could be seen on his bicycle with a Gladstone bag containing his hair cutting gear on the handle bars, calling at various houses to cut someone's hair. He was also the minister of the Church of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons) which was in the old Girton College building on High Street (opposite the Monument). Oscar was always neat and well groomed and had a beautiful voice which he would use to good effect on Sunday afternoons to entertain the patients and visitors at Fremantle Hospital as he

moved from ward to ward singing. **(to be concluded)**



WEST AUSTRALIAN POLICE SOURCES FOR THE FREMANTLE LUMPER'S STRIKE OF 1899

Peter Conole

The six-week long lumper's strike in the port of Fremantle during early 1899 was the longest in WA colonial history. The dispute marked a turning point in WA industrial relations because it demonstrated the collective power of organised labour and galvanised the Forrest government into taking action. Compulsory arbitration was introduced in 1900, giving industrial organisations legal status and requiring employers to recognise and negotiate with them. At the same time, the 1900 Act constrained unions and their ability to take collective action.

Some accounts of the events are politically loaded. However, there is some consensus that the actions of certain church leaders played a key role in ending much of the violence and persuading the parties to negotiate. Bishop Gibney (Catholic) and Bishop Riley (Church of England) played key roles in the business. Gibney's speech of March 30, 1899 to the contending parties makes fascinating reading: it is printed in W.B.Kelly's *Reminiscences of Fifty Years in Western Australia* (Sands and McDougall, Perth, 1903), pp465-469.

The role of the WA Police active in the port city at the time was also vital, partly because their balanced and unemotional reports give both sides of the picture and may have encouraged the government to take a conciliatory approach. The role of the police in the Strike has been misrepresented and it might be timely to set the record straight.

The best primary sources for the entire dispute and its aftermath can be found in the police files of 1899. They are in the State Records Office. The reference number and descriptors are as follows: Acc 430, An 5/1:

File 846/99 – Fremantle Police Station, Lumper's strike at Fremantle, March/April 1899.

All relevant police action reports are included. So are both formal and informal exchanges of information and comments, complete with arguments and disputation, between various senior officers. They involve Inspector Edward George Back (in charge of the Fremantle police district – pictured here in a photo of 1899), Chief Inspector Francis Wheatley Lodge (who at times seems quite frustrated) and even the Police Commissioner, George Phillips.



Some very interesting documents are the confidential notes and statements by detectives and undercover operators, who were trying to keep track of events and assess the rights and wrongs of the conflict. Some entertaining newspaper clippings are also attached. In all, the file contains over 100 pages – mostly quite legible and often in very fine copperplate writing.

Among the most revealing reports are those of an experienced but at times rather volatile law enforcement man - William Francis Hopkins, Coxswain in charge of the Fremantle Water Police from 1897 to 1914.

He had seen the best and worst of waterfront life for many years and during 1899 his comments were measured, calm and quite meticulous. He was careful to emphasise that during the dispute various normal but unrelated maritime activities suffered no ill effects.

A couple of highlights are worth brief discussion, especially an analysis by Detective Barton Lessey - a 'secret report' never meant for public consumption. Lessey offered comment on the causes of the dispute on April 13 and noted that union members did not object to contract labourers in general, except when they were undercutting pay. The union wanted them to receive the same rates. The detective suspected that management wished to undermine working conditions and kept the contract men in Fremantle longer than necessary to achieve it.

That cool and perceptive advice, which was accepted without concern by more senior officers, disproves tired old accusations by the far left of the 1930s and beyond that the police supported the company officials. The trouble is, in the 1890s some exactly opposite suggestions surfaced – implying the clergymen (especially the Anglican Bishop Riley) and some police were 'soft' on the strikers.

It is amusing to read that managers and shipowners criticised the police for not taking harsher action, but still thanked them afterwards for keeping the peace and got really worried when they were presented with a bill for law enforcement costs. In the end, Chief Inspector Lodge recommended cancellation of the debt because it had all been ordinary 'line of duty' police work aimed at simply keeping the public peace.

On the reverse side of the coin, there are ugly reports of brutal, cowardly mob attacks on isolated contract labourers, who almost certainly did not realise they were being used to undermine the conditions of the local men. A couple of union leaders organised assaults to try and intimidate the outsiders. Local newspapers expressed

outrage and the police arrested some culprits, who were heavily fined for assault on April 16.

There was one all-out, violent clash on March 26, which has been inaccurately described as follows in one account: "The mob raided the SS Wollowra to try and intimidate free labourers. Police pickets were swept aside and within a few minutes the free labour was hustled off the ship" (in J.Williams, *The First Furrow*, Lone Hand Press, 1976, p39).

Confidential police reports and other eyewitness accounts on file disprove those comments. The police had advance warnings of trouble, called in reinforcements and established a line on March 26 to keep the two feuding mobs apart. One large group of lumpers tried to break through. Batons and fists were freely used and the police received a barrage of missiles as well, but they successfully held the line and made several arrests. To the surprise and annoyance of various police officers, the local magistrate could find no adequate grounds for conviction, as the confusion of the day made exact identification of culprits too difficult.



Christmas greetings to all our members and their families and friends. May you have a happy and safe festive season.

We leave you this year with Christmas salutations from around the world.

The Editorial Team.

Feliz Navidad y prospero Año Nuevo (Spanish)

Buon Natale e Felice Anno Nuovo (Italian)

Selamat Hari Natal (Indonesian)

Joyeux Noël et heureuse année (French)

Gledlig jol og Nyar (Icelandic)