



FREMANTLE HISTORY SOCIETY

Established 1994

The Secretary, PO Box 1305
FREMANTLE WA 6959

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<https://fhs.org.au>

VALE JUNE HUTCHISON

18th August 2023 Fremantle lost one of its most well-respected and much-loved community members.

June Birt was born in 1927 in Tambellup and spent a wonderful childhood growing up on her parents' sheep farm, along with her sister and three brothers. Neighbouring properties were owned by aunts and uncles so the children were free to roam far and wide, although they had responsibilities too. The chooks had to be fed, eggs collected and cows milked before school each day.

Both parents believed in the value of education, for *girls* as well as boys, and the five siblings went to a small bush school that their father helped build. Both June and her brother Phil, won scholarships to Perth Modern, but their parents thought boarding school would provide better living arrangements. June spent her high school years at MLC, where she was awarded dux. In 1945 she went to university, the first girl from Tambellup to do so, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts, then completed a Diploma in Education. She taught in Perth for a couple of years before heading off to the UK, working there as a nanny and as a teacher for two and a half years.

Back in Perth she returned to teaching and, at a PLC-Christ Church school debate, met David Hutchison whom she married in 1955. They had two loving children Jane and Mark, and were happily married until David died at 90 in 2017.

June Hutchison was the sort of person who contributed to her local community for the benefit of her fellow citizens wherever she happened to live, and Fremantle was fortunate that in 1983, June and David chose to live there, building a home for their family in Attfield Street. She said "I came to Fremantle because...I wanted to be involved in the community and I liked the sense of history that is written into the built environment."

And she did indeed involve herself in the community. June worked as a volunteer for many years with the Women's Information and Referral Exchange; she was, in fact, their first volunteer. Having completed Library Studies earlier she worked for a period as a librarian for the Education Department. In 1984 she was nominated as a representative of library members on the Council's Library Advisory Committee and served until November 1986.

In 1985 she was elected to Fremantle Council representing South Ward, and served two three-year terms. During this time she served on the Community Services Committee, and was



June Hutchison
Photograph – FCC Annual Report 1989

subsequently elected to chair of the Planning and Development Committee, a role that is often difficult, demanding wisdom, quick thinking and fairness to deal with contentious issues which may lead to adversarial debate.

A senior staff member of that period remembered June with respect, as a person with strong views grounded in a sound philosophical basis. Because of her firm principles, June was unerringly consistent, and stuck to those strong views but was always willing to listen to people to find common ground without compromising her principles. She was supportive of staff while reserving the right to disagree.

June served as the City's representative on the Library Board of WA from 1985 to 1993. As a Board member she gave unswerving support for the interests of local government libraries, particularly in respect of improved new book supply, and the impact of the proposed amended legislation. She was a fierce defender of the community's right to a free public library service.

During the 1990s June was a driving force in the establishment of the Fremantle community precinct system – only the second of its kind in Australia. She was convenor and an active member of the South Fremantle Precinct for many years.

Having been involved with literature for most of her life as teacher, librarian and freelance editor, June was invited to join the Board of Management of the Fremantle Arts Centre Press in 1993, elected to Chair of the Board in 1995. Her professional experience in the State Library system, combined with her involvement at Councillor level in local government, ideally equipped her to lead the Press through a volatile period in the publishing industry in Australia.

In line with her strong belief in social justice, June co-founded the Fremantle Community Justice Group in 1993, to improve the community's relationship with the Fremantle Police, particularly in regards to young people. She was the driving force in putting together the Independent Adult Witness Program to help young people who are in trouble and without family support.

In 1999 June was awarded Fremantle Citizen of the Year for her advocacy in the areas of conservation, foreign aid, refugee rights and anti-nuclear activism.

In 2003 she was awarded runner-up in the business leadership category of the WA Seniors' Awards, for her work chairing Fremantle Ports' Inner Harbour Community Liaison Group.

June had always enjoyed travelling, she and David had travelled extensively. In her later years she ventured to destinations such as Syria, Oman and Turkey, sometimes with her good friend from Council days, June Boddy. Another good friend, Betty McGeever recalls: Around 2007 we stayed a couple of weeks in a little fishing village out of Muscat, Oman with a mutual friend, Helen Kirkbride, who was living and working there with her husband. We went off by ourselves most days; June was the most intrepid and curious travelling companion. We stayed in a desert camp, took a public bus on a 13 hour journey across the Empty Quarter to Salala (the only westerners on the bus), walked miles and miles. And this was the year she turned 80.

In 2020, at the age of 93 she was recognised with a Medal of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday Honours for her services to the Fremantle community.

Truly an extraordinary life. Vale June, thank you for all your hard work, your uncompromising integrity and principles, and your selfless commitment to your community.

This story has been drawn from daughter Jane's eulogy, kindly donated to the Fremantle History Centre, and Betty McGeever's nomination of June for the Citizen of the Year 1999. Thank you both.

MEETING REPORTS

Pub Lunch at the Wray Hotel – Sunday 27 August

Wray Avenue was originally known as Hampton Street up until 1901-2, then Alexander Road until 1923 when it was changed again to Wray Avenue. It was named after William Ernest Wray who served as Mayor of Fremantle 1914-18, and chairman of the Fremantle Tramway Board 1920-28.

Luckily business at the Wray Hotel was reasonably quiet this Sunday afternoon as Society members took up the entire Dining Room and part of the upper level. The fires were lit and, as we arrived we ordered our lunch and drinks and settled in to listen to Allen Graham talk about the hotel's beginnings and the early licensing laws in the colony.



A good crowd of Society members enjoying a drink before lunch

Photo: K. McNulty

It was unfortunate that one of the hotel chefs was off sick that day, but at least the company was good and we managed to pass the time until our meals *finally* arrived.

The History of Heathcote Hospital and the culture of mental health nursing in WA - Tuesday 26 September

Having spent the greater part of her working life both as a nurse, then an educator in the field of mental health, Julia Crook is well placed to discuss the development and culture of mental health nursing in WA over the past 50 years, although her recently published book includes the 100 years from colonisation in 1829 to 1929 when Heathcote Psychiatric Hospital was built.

She related stories to us from earlier times, extracted from interviews with past staff members of Heathcote Hospital, which described a culture of bullying, apparently still evident today. It was standard practice for the older staff and matrons to intimidate the new, younger trainees and nurses. Indigenous nurses suffered racial discrimination. Patients were often treated cruelly and with great insensitivity, such as being made to wait in a queue for their turn to receive Electroconvulsive Therapy, within view of a patient receiving that treatment.

During the 1970s-80s organisational practices changed which drastically altered the way things had been. This coincided with the appointment of Dr. OJ Solis as Director of Nursing. His

approach was grounded in a positive regard for all staff. He implemented a number of progressive changes which included:

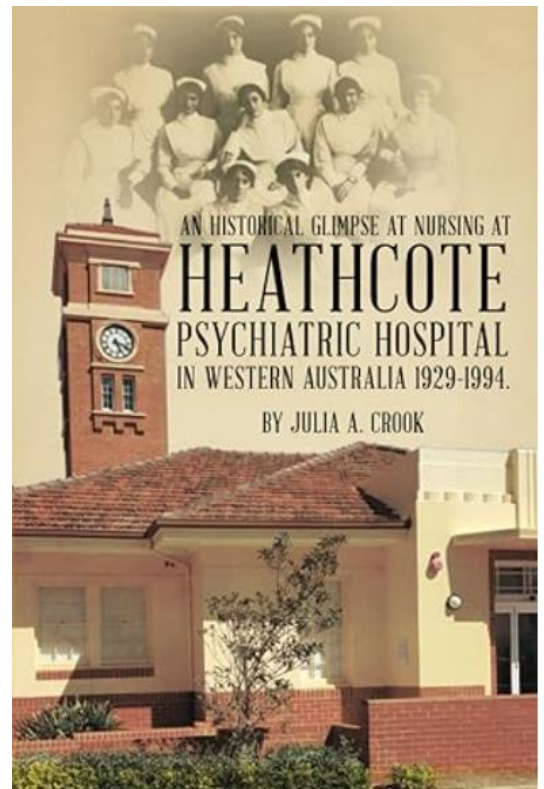
- the employment of a horizontal management strategy;
- multi-disciplinary meetings where team members were heard and considered;
- the introduction of fresh-trained staff from outside WA

Julia talked about the progression of mental health nursing education, beginning with the lunatic attendants in 1909 when little education was required. Ticket-of-leave ex-convicts were employed in this unpopular position and received 12 x 1-hour lectures a year. In 1960 the WA Psychiatric Nurses' Association was formed and registered mental health nurses had a right to registration with the Nurses Board of WA, although few did, discouraged by a general negativity towards further education. By 1977, however, the curriculum had been completely overhauled in both psychiatry and psychology and both were now degree courses taught at university.

So to the future – The Bachelor of Nursing degree allocates a very little time in its 3-year course to mental health training: 2-6 weeks, and students must then complete a further Graduate Diploma to specialize. Julia suggested that in order to attract more people to jobs in mental health a standalone course is needed.

Julia ended her talk on the topic of de-stigmatising mental ill health, and pointed out that the book/movie: *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*, has a lot to answer for in fostering that stigma. It sensationalised the treatments of the day – ECT without anaesthetic, lobotomy – those images are hard to forget. Yet ECT in a modified form is used very effectively today.

It was an interesting presentation, providing a bit of an insight into a field most of us probably know very little about, and generated some good discussion afterwards. Julia's book: *An historical glimpse at nursing at Heathcote Psychiatric Hospital in WA 1929–1994* is available from Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com.au/dp/B0CB7CNLWL> and there is a copy in the History Centre.



Fremantle Studies Day 2023 – Sunday 29th October

The Fremantle History Society Studies Day was held on October 29th in the Local History Display Area at the Walyalup Civic Centre, Fremantle. About 40 people attended the meeting. The day commenced at 1 pm with a welcome from the Vice President, Allen Graham, as the President Jude Robison was away.

There were just three speakers this year as unfortunately Nick Everett had to cancel his talk on *Wobblies on the Waterfront: The Industrial Workers of the World in Fremantle during WWI* due to his involvement with the Palestinian community. It was a sad reminder how a war on the other side of the world has effects far and wide.

The first speaker was Bruce Menzies who spoke about his involvement with the Orange People in Fremantle. This started in the late 1970s and lasted until the movement imploded in 1985.

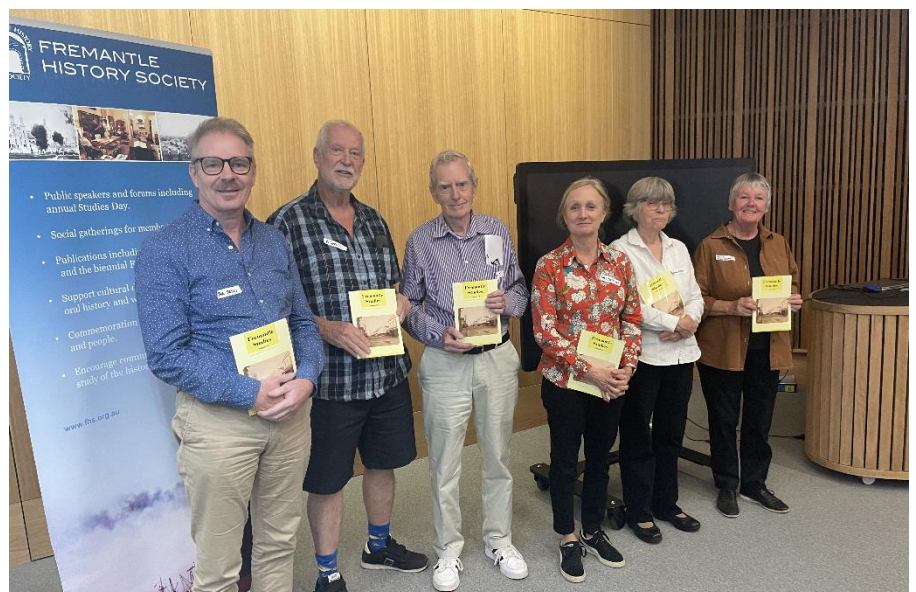
Trained as a lawyer, Bruce spoke about his own personal journey as the movement progressed and explored both the positive and negative aspects of being part of such a community. His eventual disillusionment led him to repair his relationships with family and friends and re-enter mainstream society. The talk stirred memories for many members of the audience who lived in Fremantle at the time.

Steve Grant gave the second talk of the day. Steve, who has been the editor of the *Fremantle Herald* for the past 16 years, detailed the evolution of the newspaper from its beginnings 35 years ago with Andrew Smith as owner/editor, to the present day. Steve paid tribute to Ron Davidson, the first ever letter-writer and thereafter one of the newspaper's most important mentors. He talked about the challenges of editing an independent newspaper, especially with regard to controversial topics. Although he says it can be a lonely job at times, Steve is obviously passionate about the importance of maintaining the *Herald* as an independent, local voice which aims to reflect the diversity of community opinion. While hard copies are still important the *Fremantle Herald* is embracing the digital age.

Next item on the agenda was the launch of the latest FHS journal, *Fremantle Studies Volume 12*. It was introduced by Cr. Jenny Archibald, who summarised the six papers which cover a wide and interesting range of topics.



Photo: Caroline Ingram



Contributing authors, from left: Paul Reilly, Allen Graham, Steve Errington, Cate Pattison, and Bobby Oliver, with Jenny Archibald Photo: Pam Harris

Cr. Archibald also announced this year's recipient of the *Ron and Dianne Davidson Research Scholarship*. Caroline Ingram (at left) was the winner and she will be investigating the life of Margaret Cody who, in 1871, was the second woman to be executed in Western Australia for murder.

The meeting then broke for a very welcome afternoon tea and a chance to meet and chat with some old and new friends.

The last speaker of the day was Grant Donnes. Grant spoke about his great grandfather, Mick Donnes who was a returned serviceman after World War 1. Mick Donnes was also a member of the Australian Labour Federation. Using information gleaned from military intelligence and police records a complex story emerged of events that took place on the wharf in Fremantle in 1919, involving gold, Japanese warships in the harbour and surplus wheat and flour exports to Germany. Grant's research is ongoing and he currently has a FOI request for more details with the Perth Mint.

The meeting was closed by Allen Graham who thanked everyone for a successful day. Special thanks went to Stewart Alger for his involvement and hard work in setting it all up, and everyone who contributed to the delicious afternoon tea.

Fremantle Studies Volume 12

Copies are available for purchase now. I will send out an order form with the newsletter for those who missed out getting a copy on Studies Day. Members: \$20.00 Non-members: \$25.00.

If you are interested in buying a copy but would like to know more about it, Garry Gillard has kindly listed the contents, introduction, and contributors to the volume on his website Freetopia: <https://freetopia.org/fhs/fs/12/index.html>

Back issues are also still available at \$5.00 each or \$20.00 for a set. (Issues 1, 2 and 5 out of print)

Send the completed form to Treasurer, Pam Harris, at: pamharris0153@gmail.com



COMING EVENTS

2023 Christmas Party – Sunday 19th November Samson House 2.00 pm

It was the venue for the Christmas party in 2017, but is such a lovely building in such a beautiful garden setting, we thought it worthy of a revisit. One of the National Trust (WA) guides will take us on a tour of the house at 2.00 pm. This will be followed by a picnic in the garden at 3.00 pm. There will be a \$7.00 charge for entry.

Bring a plate, bring a friend and join us to celebrate the coming festive season.



Samson House 1985

FHC E000213



CATHY HALL MEMORIAL

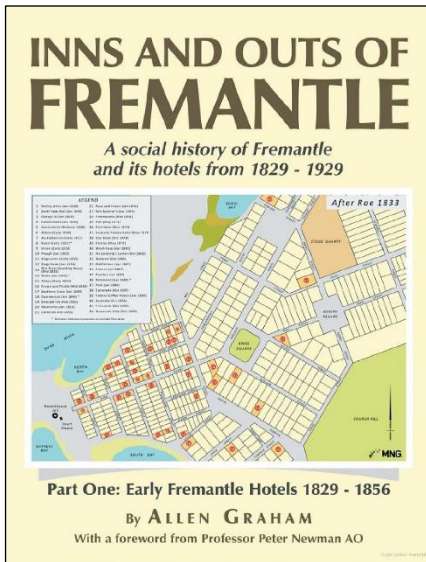


In recognition of Cathy's contribution to the Fremantle community the Council has installed a memorial seat at the southern end of Hulbert Street.

Friday 22nd September family and friends gathered to pay their respects to this much loved and sorely missed wonderful woman. Partner Jon Strachan and Fremantle Mayor Hannah Fitzhardinge said a few words before raising glasses in a toast.

The bench is in a lovely quiet spot amongst the trees that Cathy so loved, and while some mischievous tagger had already left their mark across the seat, I think we felt that Cathy would have been quietly amused.

INNS AND OUTS OF FREMANTLE by Allen Graham



Allen Graham's long-awaited history of Fremantle hotels, part one has been published. When Allen started looking into Fremantle hotels 40 years ago he possibly didn't realise the extent of what he was taking on. Initially intended to be a coffee-table book with a little history accompanying the pictures, the project gradually grew into something much bigger over time.

The completed work will be a trilogy of books, not just telling the story of Fremantle's hotels but Fremantle's history from 1829-1929, and *Inns and Outs of Fremantle: A Social History of Fremantle and its Hotels 1829-1929. Part One 1829-1856* is the first volume to be published.

Copies may be purchased from Allen at a cost of \$65.00 hardcover or \$55.00 softcover.

To order, make payment and arrange delivery, call Allen on 0412 933 360. (The book is also available as an e-book.)

RWAHS 58th STATE HISTORY CONFERENCE OF AFFILIATED SOCIETIES

Bridgetown, 1-3 September 2023

FHS Delegate - Heather Campbell

On Friday 1 September delegates attended a welcome function at the Junior Farmers Hall, where delegates registered. Drinks and finger food was enjoyed as delegates listened to a welcome addresses by Tim Clynch CEO, Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes and the Shire President, Jenny Mountford. Time was also spent by delegates catching up with those they had not seen since last year's conference in Denmark before leaving for dinner at one of the many excellent outlets in town.

The Conference proceedings were held at the Bridgetown Library where we all gathered the next morning, many of us deviating first to the coffee van parked in the car park. Sessions were planned for about 20 minutes each with five minutes for questions.

Conference convenor, Mary Elgar opened Session One with a welcome, and introduced Elder Sandra Hill who gave a very eloquent and informative Welcome to Country. The Hon David Templeman, MLA Minister for Culture and the Arts, Sport and Recreation, International Education, Heritage spoke enthusiastically of the importance of heritage and of the essential work carried out by volunteers. He was followed by Jane Kelsbie MLA, Member for Warren-Blackwood, who spoke of the strong history Bridgetown has and of the importance of road and rail transport and of orcharding. Nick Drew then conducted a roll call of delegates and took apologies. Members who had passed on were also remembered.

The first presentation was by Elder Sandra Hill, who spoke of sharing our story and of the journey from exclusiveness to inclusiveness in Bridgetown and Balingup. She described the surrounding country as being a bountiful gathering place and talked of the different language groups inhabiting the Bibbulmen country. In stressing the importance of truth as integral to reconciliation, Sandra urged historical societies to seek out the Elders in the areas in which they

operated because 'If you don't understand what we as a people have experienced, how can we walk side by side into the future.' Sandra was the recipient of the Red Ochre Award 2023.

Peter Hall then spoke of Orchardring in Bridgetown drawing on family stories and resources and his own experience growing up on an orchard in the area. This comprehensive talk told the story of orcharding in the district from early settlement and its growth and development, including in terms of transport and technology, through to modern cool stores and included the formation of the Bridgetown Fruitgrowers Association in 1907, the introduction of beehives to encourage pollination, assistance from Italian POWs, the damage caused by pests such as the codling moth, and the introduction of new varieties of apples.

The WA Railway History to Bridgetown was ably covered by Philippa Rogers from 1871 when transport relied on horsepower, through to the implementation of the WA Government Railway network from 1879 and the part played by timber concessions granted to railway companies. Because of the involvement of timber concessions, steam locomotives were powered by wood rather than coal, as timber offcuts were readily available. Philippa then gave a broader view of the railway system before focusing on expansion to Busselton, Donnybrook and Bridgetown. Pick and shovel work commenced in Donnybrook in January 1897 and in March 1898, the railway arrived in Bridgetown, thereafter providing an efficient way of transporting timber and fruit to a port. Also covered were the development of the Bridgetown and Greenbushes railway stations.

The first session after morning tea was Pat Scallen, OAM discussing mining in Greenbushes, from tin to lithium. Tin was discovered in 1886, mining commencing in 1888 and over the years changed to mining for tantalum. In 1970 a spodumene (lithium) ore body was discovered and this has become the focus of the current mining operations. Lithium is a strong and non-abrasive product, used in nuclear fusion, in Pyrex and glass (as it does not crack under heat) and in batteries for smart phones. There is an increasing demand for lithium and this mine, now owned by joint venturers, provides a large percentage of the lithium produced in the world, and has also generated many other industries.

Tim Clynych, CEO, Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes, then discussed 'The evolution of Bridgetown – growing a rural town' and in doing so highlighted the growth of the town from its beginning as a rural centre with the taking up of land for orchard blocks. He talked of the impact of the closure of the railway depot in 1954, but also of a bright future with the attractiveness of the area from a lifestyle point of view, and of a growth in jobs. He also noted the restoration of the railway station and of the importance of the town as an access point to the Bibbulmen.

Dr Sally Paulin brought Session Two to a close, discussing 'The Donnelly Mill Project - recycling a mill town'. After covering the early history of the timber industry in the area and in 1886 the extension of the WA timber industry into timber yards and mills, she described development in 1909 by the Wheatley family and the Donnelly Karri and Jarrah Co and the effect of the Forests Act (WA) which gave the Forests Department autonomy. The post WW2 housing boom put pressure on timber supplies and in 1948 Bunnings chose the site and built the mill and in 1950 the State Housing Commission built houses in the town. The mill, which was sawdust steam powered, milled mainly karri, but with some jarrah and marri, closed in 1978 and in 1980 the town was vested in the WA Dept of Tourism, which leased it to Tony and Sally Fitzpatrick. In 1996 it was entered on the State Register as a heritage place and in 2007 the 'village' and Wheatley Forest site became freehold. In 2010 a group of 35 families purchased Donnelly River Village, a company town, built for Bunnings workers in 1947-1978. Each share a 20-year lease over a cottage which they maintain and make available for use or use personally as a holiday cottage or for use as Donnelly accommodation for Bibbulmen Track walkers.

Those attending the conference were then treated to a 'Paper Bag' lunch from the Shamrock Hotel, Greenbushes and this was followed by optional activities in the afternoon.



On the bus Photo – Nick Drew

Bevan and Jennie Carter conducted a genealogy workshop: how to discover your ancestry. There was a Greenbushes Talison Lithium Mine Tour, a flora/fauna walk through Dorothy Scott Reserve, and a Bridgetown history walk.

The tour of the Greenbushes Talison Lithium Mine was excellent. A bus took those participating out to Greenbushes RSL Hall where mine staff assisted in fitting out everybody in PPE, comprising of glasses, helmet and high viz vest. Looking more like mine workers than historians, we were then bused to the mine lookout located at the southern end of Telluride Street, on the edge of the open cut pit, where we had a bird's eye view of the modern mining operation.

This open cut pit nearly rivals the super pit at Kalgoorlie. There the group were met by mine manager Craig Dawson,

who gave an excellent rundown of the history of the mine on that site - tin, tantalum and lithium. Talison has rights to the lithium, but not to the tin and tantalum and Mr Dawson explained how to recognize the ore and explained in layman's terms the scientific attributes of each mineral. The bus then returned the group back to the RSL Hall where the PPE used was disposed of and the bus proceeded back to Bridgetown to enable everybody to prepare for dinner.

The conference dinner was held at the Junior Farmers Hall at the Bridgetown Showgrounds. The caterer and sponsor for this event was Bridgetown Pottery Restaurant, with the wine sponsored by Sunnyhurst Winery. A very successful, friendly occasion as a conclusion to the day's events.



Heather Campbell at the lookout Photo - Nick Drew

Sunday Session One commenced with the RWAHS Annual General Meeting, with the usual ratification of minutes with reports from Federation of Australian Historical Societies and President Richard Offen. Bob Nicholson spoke about the configuration of FAHS and its role and activities and suggested that societies look at the Federation website to keep up to date with current issues. Richard Offen opened his report by complimenting the organisers of this conference on arranging an outstanding event before going on to draw attention to the new RWAHS website, which includes an online bookshop, and also an interactive map, showing the location of the affiliated societies. He urged affiliated societies to send any items of interest for inclusion in History West and the website. There is also an Instagram page where forthcoming events can be posted. He also commented that the number of volunteer hours contributed by members was 'quite remarkable' and advised that a new building for the RWAHS was currently being investigated as a replacement for Stirling House.

The Merit Award for 2023 was awarded to Maylands Historical and Peninsula Association, with particular reference to its walking tours and self-guided walks and its success in securing grants for IT development.

The 2024 Affiliated Societies Conference will be held in Dongara 6-8 September. Bruce Baskerville from the Irwin Districts Historical Society circulated a brochure providing details and advised that accommodation should be booked early. A full plan of proceedings is currently being developed. In 2025 the Conference will be held in Cockburn and in 2026 by the RWAHS.

After declaration of election results, there was an open forum for questions, one of which focused on insurance for affiliated societies.

Speakers in Session One, following the AGM, were Karen Hill, Mngr VC discussing 'Heritage Festivals for rural towns', followed by Denise Smith-Ali OAM and Jordanna Rebbeck, 'Saving Indigenous Language: Research on Kaniyang grinding stones'. Session Two commenced with Bevan Carter and Richard Allen presenting 'Joseph Smith – Convict, builder and civic leader', followed by a presentation by Mary Elgar, on 'Oral History – Voices sparking memories'. Mary then went on to close the formal Conference proceedings, which were followed in the afternoon by optional tours – Emily Smith presented a two-course lunch with a talk on cider making at The Cidery & Blackwood Valley Brewing Company and Richard Allen took members on a Bridgetown History Walk which commenced at the Bridgetown Police Station Museum.

A very well organized, interesting and worthwhile conference.



GWENYTH EWENS ART AWARD

On Thursday 21st September the annual Gwenyth Ewens Art Award was held at the Fremantle Town Hall. This year saw a very good turnout of entries with 8 primary schools entering a total of 317 artworks.

Gwenyth Ewens made a very generous \$75,000 bequest to the City of Fremantle to promote art and architecture to the children of Fremantle and inspire them into artistic professions. See story in the winter 2021 edition of the newsletter: <https://freotopia.org/people/ewensgwenyth.html>

The judges would have had a very difficult job to do as the standard was very high. 270 people attended the opening night, the Town Hall was bustling. Richard Offen, President of the RWAHS, was the Master of Ceremonies and presented the awards.



Gwenyth Ewens FHC

Students were invited to submit one A3 sized entry, a painting or pencil sketch, depicting part or whole of a historic building in the Fremantle area. The awards were distributed as follows: 2 winners per school, 3 Judges' Choice Awards, and an overall winning school, which was Richmond Primary.



A small sample of the students' artwork

Fremantle History Centre

Yes 2023

On the 14th October Australians went to the polls to vote in a referendum either for or against the inclusion of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 'Voice' to Parliament, in the Australian Constitution. In 2017 the proposal for the Voice was formally endorsed by Indigenous leaders with the Uluru Statement from the Heart at the First Nations National Constitutional Convention. This document called for Australians to support a Voice to Parliament in order to address First Nations disadvantage by giving those communities a greater influence on laws and policies that affected them.

The outcome of the referendum was a negative result, however, if you had been walking through the City Centre on Tuesday afternoon 19th October, you could be forgiven for thinking the result would be otherwise. A crowd of over 700 people turned up to listen to the Hon Linda Burney MP, the VOICE23's Tom Mayo, Josh Wilson MP and Mayor of Fremantle Hannah Fitzhardinge, give impassioned and heartfelt speeches to support the cause. The atmosphere was warm and happy, full of positivity and hope, and a very loud voice; a nice thing to be a part of.



Thanks to Roel Loopers for this photograph from his blog Freoview September 19, 2023

<https://freoview.wordpress.com/?s=YES+23>

THE PERILS AND BENEFITS OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH - FOLLOWED BY A TREASURE FROM TROVE

Heather Campbell

In the last issue of the FHS newsletter *Treasures from Trove* covered the arrival of the first steamer to visit Fremantle - *HMS Driver* - a wooden paddle sloop, and the amazed reaction of the local community. Sources used were mainly newspapers in Trove, but others were also cited.

Two deserters were reported while the ship was in Fremantle and according to the website [HMS Driver \(rootsweb.com\)](https://www.rootsweb.com) [accessed 30/5/2023] they were James Ball, Carpenter's Crew, age 24, born Liverpool, Lancashire; and William McDonald, AB; age 25; born at Devonport, Devon. Therein lies one of the perils of historical research - even though correctly quoted from the source 'Ball' should in fact have read 'Bell'. I am grateful to Wendy Durant, Curator/Historian, Rockingham Museum, for pointing this out. Wendy advises that 'the name Ball was a misprint on the original Note of Desertion, so it gets perpetuated constantly,' and that she is always having to correct it. So, thanks to Wendy, no harm done, peril averted, and she has thoughtfully provided two articles she has written on James Bell and his family to set the record straight. From these we learn of the lives of James Bell and his wife Jane and the part they played in our history, particularly in the Rockingham area.

James was the son of a ship's carpenter, also James, and his wife Ann Bell. He was the sixth of their eight children and the family moved to the Isle of Man when James junior was a boy. Young James followed his father into carpentry, serving an apprenticeship and joining the Royal Navy in 1843, where he subsequently became crewman on *HMS Driver*, then under the command of Captain Hayes, arriving in Fremantle on that vessel December 1845. During this visit James Bell and fellow crewman William McDonald absconded. James went down the coast to Mandurah readily finding work repairing boats and worked as a farm labourer. He also carted produce to Fremantle, taking back goods back for settlers in Mandurah. On one of these visits he espied Jane Green scrubbing the steps of St John's Church and 'declared that she would be his wife'. Jane had come out under the Children's Friendly Society Scheme in 1837. They married in November 1847 and settled in Mandurah, working at Jim Jam, Beacham's property nearby. Two children were born there and two more at Barragup, where James worked for Captain John Thomas, boatbuilding and on the construction of the Ravenswood Hotel. In 1855 he purchased twenty acres on Mandurah Road. The Bells had four more children at that location and spent the rest of their lives there, taking an active part in community life; when the Rockingham Road Board was formed James Bell became an inaugural member.

Jane Bell died at East Rockingham in 1909 and James died at his daughter's home in Beaconsfield in 1911. Both are buried in the East Rockingham Pioneer Cemetery.

For further information see the Rockingham Museum website at: rockinghammuseum.org.au

The source thoughtfully provided by Curator/Historian Wendy tells of a famous piece of WA history that James Bell had a small part in, which featured in the *Western Australian Times* [28 April 1876, p.2] titled:

LATE ESCAPE OF FENIAN PRISONERS

The following details in reference to the recent escape of Fenian Prisoners from Fremantle have been supplied from a source which may be relied upon; and we are glad of the opportunity of laying them before our readers while the events which they describe are fresh in the public memory.

About 10 am, on the morning of Easter Monday it was reported at the Fremantle Police Station that six Fenian prisoners had absconded from the works at Fremantle. Immediate search was instituted, and constables sent out to track up the absconders along South Beach as far as Rockingham. ... The men were at first supposed to be concealed in some premises at Fremantle; but upon search being made, this proved not to be the case. ...

At 1.30 am, a man named Bell arrived in Fremantle from Rockingham, with the intelligence that a whale boat had put in there with a man that seemed to be an American and six coloured men on board. This was about 9 am, and about two hours afterwards a man on horseback and about eight or ten others in three separate traps arrived at the same spot from Fremantle. They all had jumped into the boats, and put out to sea. As they were pulling off, Bell asked what was to be done with the horses and traps. He was told they might go to—, but Bell left them in charge of his own people and hurried off to Fremantle to give the alarm; the traps, two four wheelers and one two wheeler having been previously examined, when three prison hats with numbers on them, a quantity of Patent Revolver Ammunition, a cloth gun-cover, and a bottle of wine, were found in them.

On arrival at Fremantle, Bell was unable to say how many were in the traps. He believed, however, there were about ten altogether, who had guns and revolvers in their possession. When the boat in which they embarked, was last seen by Bell, about 11 am, it was making for the Southern passage.

At 2 pm, the Water Police Boat, with Coxswain Mills, four Water Police and two land Police constables left Fremantle in pursuit.

At 8-45 pm, the steamer *Georgette* also left Fremantle in pursuit, having on board the Superintendent of Water Police, Major Finnerty and a party of Pensioners, Sergt. McLarty and seven land Policemen. In the meantime it had been ascertained, through the Police, that the absconders had left the Rockingham Timber Company's Station, in a whale boat, and gone out through the Southern passage. Two of the Land Police, while going along the beach, got sight of the boat bearing South, under sail about four miles from shore, and going towards Mandurah. These constables lost no time in pushing on to that place in the hope of intercepting the boat. ...

At 3.50 pm, the *Georgette* was sighted coming round Garden Island through the Challenger Passage towards Fremantle.

At 5 pm, when the *Georgette* returned from her look-out for the absconders, it was reported that she had gone up to the whale ship *Catalpa* at 11 am that morning off the Murray River. She was hove-to, apparently waiting for some object. The Superintendent of water police asked the officer in charge if he had any strangers on board; to which he replied, "No!" He was then asked if the Captain was on board and again answered "No!" When the question was put to him where the Captain was, he replied he had gone to Fremantle, and was expected back during the day. The Superintendent of water police then inquired whether he might go on board; when the officer replied that he had positive instructions not to allow anybody on board during the Captain's absence from the ship. During this time the water police boat came up, and the coxswain reported that they had seen nothing of the whale boat; and as the steamer was short of coal and provisions, she returned to Fremantle, leaving the police kept to look out. ... However they kept a good look out, but never saw the whale boat afterwards. ...

At 9 am, off Cape de Verd, the *Catalpa* was sighted, and at 2 pm, the whale boat with the absconders and others was seen, in all about fourteen men. The *Georgette* had left the vessel two hours previously for Fremantle. The police boat ran down towards the whale boat, with the view of intercepting her, but the vessel also seeing the boat coming, bore down, and they both came together before the police boat could get up. All hands in the boat climbed up the ship's side as quickly as possible, and the *Catalpa*, immediately hoisted the American Flag. The police boat then hoisted the British Flag. The police boat ran up within about fifty yards of the vessel, and the corporal in charge recognised nearly

all the escaped convicts, some of them being at the time in their prison dress. They all immediately ran below, but came up armed, and stood in a line by the bulwarks facing the police boat. As there was apparently no chance of recovering the prisoners from the vessel, the police boat returned to Fremantle; and ... the *Georgette*, with the Superintendent of water police, Major Finnerty, and a party of pensioners and water police, again went off in pursuit.

On the morning of Tuesday, the 18th the *Catalpa* was sighted off Rottnest, and the *Georgette* got alongside of her at 8 pm; some of the absconders were recognized. The Superintendent of water police hailed the Captain and taxed him with having the absconders on board his ship. He however, denied that he had. The Superintendent then observed that he could see them on board; upon which the prisoners immediately ran out of sight. The Superintendent then demanded the prisoners but the Captain refused to give them up. The Captain was then told that he would have a quarter of an hour to consider whether he would give them up or not. If he then refused he would have to put up with the consequences. The Captain laughed and said, "If you fire on this vessel, you fire at that Flag," pointing to the American Flag which was flying from the vessel at the time. The Superintendent of water police asked permission to board the vessel, but the Captain refused him. The *Georgette* then returned to Fremantle; the Superintendent of water police having been instructed not to fire on the *Catalpa* unless she fired first.

The foregoing is a plain, unvarnished statement of facts connected with the late Fenian escapade. The plan was very skilfully laid and succeeded quite as well as the absconders and their abettors could possibly have expected. Not a blow was struck, and not a shot fired; but a lesson has been learnt which the authorities will no doubt profit by hereafter.

James Bell did not receive a reward for his dash to Fremantle to warn the authorities, but the resulting publicity was noted by his English family, who had lost contact with him on his desertion from the *HMS Diver*. They wrote to him and after establishing his identity he received an inheritance.

Introduction to our new committee member:

Beth Powell

Professionally I am a teacher with my first appointment being to East Fremantle Primary School. I went on to spend 30 years in the School of Education at Murdoch University largely focused on both the teaching and learning of mathematics and the professional development of practising teachers throughout the State.

My early years were spent in and around Fremantle. Like my parents I was born in North Fremantle and attended Princess May High School and its annex the now Fremantle Arts Centre and the new John Curtin Secondary High School. I have clear memories of tram rides to visit the Willy Wheaties 'picture' club at the Hoyts theatre on a Saturday morning. This was followed by buying six pence worth of fish and chips to eat on the way home. Whilst I now live in Bull Creek I remain connected to Fremantle through my work as a volunteer at Fremantle Hospital and attending the many and various activities which Fremantle has to offer. I joined the Fremantle History Society to come to know more about the early days on which the future of this city has been built and perhaps in some small way to contribute to the growth of this important aspect of Fremantle's history.

Studies Day Snaps



The committee of the Fremantle History Society would like to wish all our members and their families a very merry Christmas and a festive summer break. We look forward to organising the next series of exciting events and places to visit for 2023 and trust we will see you all again in February.

FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday November 19th 2.00 pm

Christmas celebrations

Samson House tour at 2.00 pm and afternoon tea at 3.00 pm

\$7.00 Entry

You are welcome to bring a plate

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Executive:

Judith Robison (President) 0434 571 666
Allen Graham (Vice President) 0412 933 360
Kristi McNulty (Secretary) 0412 786 843
Pam Harris (Treasurer) 0408 092 100

Committee Members:

Fay Campbell 0419 969 678
Alan Kelsall 9336 4573
Tania Heyne 0419 197 116
Mattie Turnbull 0409 200 157
Maeve Harvey 0417 324 461
Beth Powell
Stewart Alger 9432 9592

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.