

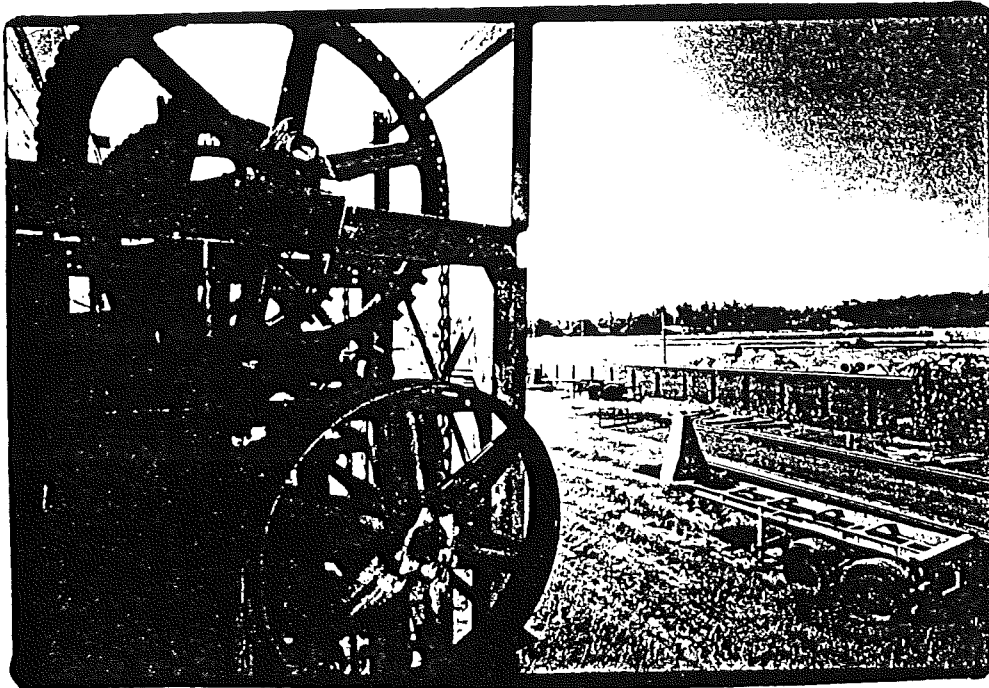


FREMANTLE HISTORY SOCIETY

Established 1994

The Secretary, Local History Collection
Fremantle City Library, PO Box 807,
FREMANTLE WA 6160

Winter Edition



Swan Wool Scouring WA - Machines like this lifted the bales of wool and started them through the scouring process.
Photo: Michael Wearne, courtesy Fremantle Herald.

Time was when Fremantle's economy largely rode on the sheep's back.

After the wharf, wool was possibly the port city's biggest employer. When there were 2,500 lumpers there were 1,500 woolies.

They worked in the cavernous Cantonment Street woolstores; at the Swan wool scour which took in greasy and grimy wool at one end of their process and sent off pristine wool and lanoline to the fine jumper and cosmetic manufacturers of the world respectively.

There were skin and tanning stores along Beach street; and in Russell street and south through Coogee were more of the wonderfully smelly skin traders.

The continuation of this quality publication depends on YOU - pay your dues NOW!

Trucks carrying wool were everywhere often moving to and from temporary stores in historic buildings in the West End.

All this has changed. The Cantonment street stores shifted in the late sixties and early seventies to Spearwood, leaving the Wesfarmers store at South Beach as the last of its kind.

Another significant loss occurred recently when Swan Wool Scouring (WA), that ever-evolving system of tubs, rakes, driers, elevators, and skilful people shut down for the last time.

The rusting landmark between the bridges in North Fremantle will soon be demolished. It will become part of the Monteath group's North Bank housing development.

The Antoine family began scouring wool there in 1918. Bill Hughes bought the plant in 1959 and between then and 1983 the plant boomed although you would never have guessed it at a passing glance.

Wool clung to all the wooden interior of the factory. The place was dark and smelly. But a particularly cohesive and enthusiastic staff of 50 loved it. They were proud of their reputation as the world's top scourers of delicate young wools.

There were many sad faces at the farewell barbecue after the plant had been switched off for the last time. Some had worked there since Bill Hughes' purchased the plant 37 years earlier.

At the time of writing it is not clear what will be preserved from this seemingly primitive but extremely effective plant. Probably not much. This indicates a need for preservation of Fremantle's industrial history, preferably on its

original site. Oral histories are also called for.

Two other recent losses from Fremantle's wool trades involved the closing of the Russell street tannery and the Coogee Felmongers. The latter was unique. Here damaged hides were placed in tanks where organisms consumed them and released millions of dollars worth of wool.



COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The following are members of the committee of the FHS

Dianne Davidson	430 6096
Elaine Berry	336 1906
Margaret McPherson	337 2668
Anne Brake (wk)	335 9473
Sally Rodgers	339 7922
Lorraine Stevens(wk)	430 2266
Ron Davidson	430 6096
Milton Jones	337 2331
Helen Brash	387 7453

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 on the numbers indicated.

General meetings of the Society are generally held on the 4th Tuesday of the month. Details of these meetings are 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.



New Members

Helen Brash
A Kenny
John Garvey



COMING EVENTS

Retail Trade in Fremantle - 1930s

Fremantle's Jewish community played an important role in the history of the town. Mr Eric Silbert grew up in Fremantle in the 1930s and his family are well remembered through their shop on the corner of Market and High St (where Betts & Betts is now located), still known as Barney Silbert's corner. His talk will focus on Fremantle in general in the 30s with a special insight into the Jewish community.

The meeting will be held at the Meeting Room, WA Maritime Museum, Cliff St, Fremantle on Tuesday 27 August at 7.00 pm.

Sporting Women

A panel of women representing various sporting clubs in Fremantle will lead a discussion on the history of sport in Fremantle, particularly women's sport.

A panel of speakers will share their experiences and members are encouraged to bring stories of their own (or others) moments of glory (!) on the sporting field to share with the group.

The meeting will be held at the Maritime Museum on Tuesday 24 September at 7.00 pm.

Samson House Gardens

Oline Richards has undertaken extensive research on the history of the Samson House gardens as part of her commission to write a Conservation Plan for the garden. As well as Oline's fascinating talk on the gardens, members and their friends will have the opportunity to take a turn in the garden which should be in its Spring glory at this time.

The meeting will be held at Samson House on Sunday 20 October at 2.00 pm.



MEETING REPORTS

The place no one wanted to know - the hidden history of the Asylum buildings

Approximately fifty people attended Margaret McPherson's very interesting and well illustrated talk on the history of the Arts Centre. Originally built as an Asylum by convict labour, the building has had many uses including an old women's home, a midwife's training school and a military headquarters for the American troops.

Margaret had many anecdotes about personalities that had been associated with the site over time and had a wealth of illustrations and plans relating to the various uses of the building.

This was the first of our Sunday afternoon meetings and it seemed to be well received. As you will have seen, another Sunday meeting is planned for October. Members are invited to comment on the committee's plan to vary the

general meeting times between Tuesday evenings and Sunday afternoons.

Growing up in a Fremantle Pub

Alec Smith entertained a well attended meeting with his amusing and revealing stories of that icon of the working class community - the Fremantle Hotel.

Alec told of times when children played cricket in High Street, with someone watching for the occasional car.

He described life in the hotel run by his parents. The patrons of the hotel knew their place. Lumpers drank in the public bar; captains and bank managers were in the saloon bar; and an occasional bold woman went to the Ladies Parlour.

During the war years the saloon bar became a favourite intelligence gathering spot for the RAN - from the neutral skippers who drank there.

Alec who lived most of his life in the same room at the Fremantle now lives in the Hills. After his talk he headed off home by train and bus.

Thanks, Alec.



MORE OF THOSE UNUSUAL SIGNS

Seen on Gizo (Solomon Islands) - a public notice in both English and Pidgin warning householders that they would be charged for unblocking toilets if they did not stop using "pieces of calico,

coconut husks, and various other materials" instead of toilet paper! (from Robert Besford)



For Your Diary

Tuesday 27 August - Memories of Fremantle. Eric Silbert will recall growing up as part of the Fremantle Jewish community. WA Maritime Museum, Cliff St, 7.00 pm

Tuesday 24 September - Sporting Women. Dig out those old running spikes and join in the memories of Fremantle's women's sports clubs. Maritime Museum, 7.00 pm.

Sunday 20 October - Samson House Gardens. Oline Richards will provide details on the history of the gardens of this Fremantle landmark. Samson House, 2.00 pm.



DO YOU KNOW YOUR WA HISTORY?

A new column featuring questions on the state's past. (For those who are struggling, you'll find the answers on the back page.)

Q1 Where was WA's first free settler's turnip grown?

Q2 When was Proclamation Day first celebrated?

Q3 What was Moondyne Joe's real name?

Q4 How did Rous Head Fremantle get its name?

Q5 Many of Perth's finest buildings were constructed in stone some by convicts. Where did the bulk of it come from?

Q6 What is Perth's oldest building?



VIEWS ON FREMANTLE

Lieutenant Breton RN, passing through in October 1829 on his way to NSW:

"Fremantle at the time of my arrival was a mere encampment, every person being either in a tent or temporary hut: its site is a level spot, consisting entirely of sand, and the 'bush', or forest, extends to within a very short distance of it. Water was easily procured by digging holes a few feet in depth but it was not particularly good...If the site alone be considered, a worse spot for a town could hardly have been selected. Situated as it is upon a bed of sand and exposed to a glare that is almost insupportable, it holds out but little inducement for any person to fix his residence there, unless compelled by circumstances."

from *Excursions in NSW, Western Australia and Van Diemen's Land*, London, 1833

Dr T B Wilson RN, also visiting in October 1829:

"The greater part of the settlers yet remain here, not one having gone to his farm. It is a very bad place, owing to the idleness, roguery and thieving of those people brought out as servants, and also of some others of a higher designation. It is so bad that the Governor designated it a 'sink of iniquity' and stated that he took no measures to

make it better on purpose to force people to go to their farms."

from TB Wilson (MD), *Narrative of a Voyage Round the World*, London, 1835

Early settler George Fletcher Moore, arriving in 1830:

"...a bare, barren-looking district of sandy coast; the shrubs cut down for firewood, the herbage trodden bare, a few wooden houses, many ragged-looking tents and contrivances for habitations - one hotel, a poor public house into which everyone crowded - our Colony, a few cheerless dissatisfied people with gloomy looks, plodding their way through the sand from hut to hut to drink grog, and grumble out their discontents to each other; a stranger...could not admire the settlement."

from George Fletcher Moore, *Diary of an Early Settler in WA*, London, 1884

FROM THE LOCAL HISTORY DESK

Lorraine Stevens

A selection of snippets from newspapers of the day

***The Umpire*, 4 Feb 1899**

South Beach Bathing Regulations - Fremantle Municipal Council. Male Swimming Area - Two chains south of By-the-Sea (Jenkin) St to two chains north of Douro Rd. Female Swimming Area - two chains north of By-the-Sea Rd to Louisa St.

***The Mail*, September 1904**

The Adelaide Tailoring Company will open a branch, 62 South Tce, Kings Theatre Building, on Saturday next, 3rd September. Gentlemen's suits to measure, 35/-

***The Herald*, 24 December 1881**

Perth bound train ran down a flock of goats, the capricious animals

suffered severely, over 20 were killed.

***The Herald*, 16 April, 1881**

During the heaviest rains, the municipal water-cart is to be seen out in High St. Last Thursday, disagreeably hot sun, nasty wind blowing all day and clouds of dust made the same High St a veritable Sahara; but of course, the water cart did not put in an appearance all day.



PROCLAMATION TREE

The Celebrate WA Week Council recently ran an ad in the "Can You Help?" column of *The West* asking for members of the 1930 class of first-year boys from the Fremantle Boys School who placed a plaque on the Proclamation Tree to contact them. The tree was planted in October 1890 by the Governor Sir William Robinson to celebrate the adoption of WA's new constitution which came into force on Tuesday 21 October 1890 and by which the colony achieved self government. The tree was planted near the intersection of Queen Victoria, Adelaide and Parry Sts.

Anyone with any further information on the tree or the boys from the 1930s Fremantle Boys School class who erected the plaque are to contact Diane Chambel, Celebrate WA office, 270 3353.



JIGSAW COLUMN

Margaret McPherson

Winter is here and for those who suffer from cold and 'flu here is a

recipe for a cough mixture taken from *The Australian Household Guide* 1916.

½ pint of Linseed, 2 ozs liquorice, 2 ozs gum arable, 2 poppy heads, ¼ pound brown sugar.

Boil in 3 pints of water until reduced to a quart. Then strain off, when cold add a wineglass of vinegar well mixed.

If you haven't already seen a doctor, I'm sure you will after taking this cure!



MUSICAL MEMORIES?

John Curtin Senior High School

On 24 September, 23 John Curtin High School students will leave for an education trip to Japan. The group will be comprised of Year 10 and 11 students, who will be paying \$3400 each for the journey. They will be billeted in guest homes in Japan and the intention is that later on Japanese students will pay a return visit and be accommodated in West Australian homes.

To raise money for the trip the students have arranged sausage sizzles, doughnut days and tupperware sales at school, among other activities. There will be a Musical Quiz Night in the Fremantle Town Hall on Wednesday 31 July from 7.00 pm - 11.00 pm. Cost \$6.00 per person with 6 people to a table.

The FHS Committee have decided to support the kids and get together a table (or 2). If you would like to join the Committee table, contact

Dianne Davidson on 430 6096 or if you would like to organise your own table contact Mrs Jenny Keep on 418 4647.



READING VOLUMES

If you enjoy

- ◆ reading good literature
 - ◆ good company
 - ◆ good discussions
- (I think this covers the majority of FHS members!) then a new group dedicated to selecting, reading and discussing good literature invites you to join them.

Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of the month. Contact Rob Besford for further details on 335 9473 (wk) or 314 1948 (evenings).



FREMANTLE HAS A NEW HISTORIC SITE

"Where is the basketball ring on which Luc Longley practised as a kid?" a tourist asked us recently. There has been an increasing number of such queries in Cliff Street following Luc's triumph with the Chicago Bulls in the 1996 NBA play-offs.

Among those interested was a group of American sailors. The ring in question was at the back of a laneway, beside 40 Cliff Street where the Longleys lived.

Here, from the late seventies, Luc, 10, and his younger brothers Sam and Grif shot baskets - after first getting any parked cars removed.

The ring was erected by Luc's basketballer father, Richard, who used for a backboard one of his architectural mockups of a planned development.

It was always above regulation height. Naturally. Luc went straight from it to the plush conditions of the Australian Institute of Sport in 1988.

The practice ground is now part of Notre Dame and all that remains are large circular spots where paint has been knocked off by the impact of basketballs.

Do you know of any other places in Fremantle that deserve to be celebrated? Send details to Anne Brake, Newsletter editor, c/- Fremantle Prison, The Terrace, Fremantle 6160.



ANSWERS

- A1 Garden Island
- A2 21 October 1890
- A3 Joseph Bolitho Johns
- A4 Named by Captain James Stirling for Captain Rous discoverer of the Richmond and Clarence Rivers in NSW.
- A5 Cottesloe
- A6 Old Court House now occupied by the Francis Burt Law Education Centre.

(Courtesy Celebrate WA Facts and Trivia sheets)

The continuation of this quality publication depends on YOU - pay your dues NOW!

