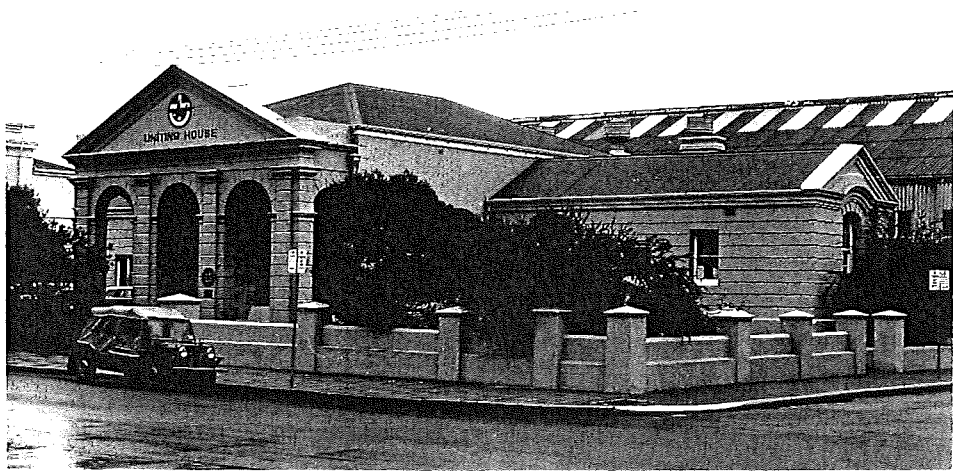


# FREMANTLE HISTORY SOCIETY

Established 1994

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

Spring Edition  
1997



The Courthouse in the 1990s  
Courtesy Fremantle Local History Collection

## The Old Fremantle Courthouse

The Swan River Colony's legal system developed in line with its British parent's model. The first gaol and two courthouses to service this system were built on Arthur Head. Both of these court buildings have been demolished, although records of them can be found in the Fremantle Local History Collection.

In 1883 a decision to erect a new courthouse in Fremantle was made. Two sites were considered for the new building – one in Cliff St and the other in Marine Terrace. The Marine Terrace site was the preferred site of a significant majority of the Fremantle Council. The Superintendent of Police made it known that the site encroached onto Water Police land. However the building proceeded, with construction commencing in May of the same year.

Richard Roach Jewell, Acting Director of the Public Works Department, supervised the works. On his arrival in the colony in 1852 Jewell was attached to the convict establishment, but soon moved into Public Works where he stayed until his retirement in 1884. During that time, Jewell was associated with a number of Perth's public buildings, including the Perth Town Hall and the Central Government Offices in St George's Terrace.

JJ Harwood and Sons were the successful tenderers for the job. The firm was responsible for the construction of a number of buildings in the Fremantle area, including the Railway Station.

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The new building was completed by February 1884, but there was a delay of several weeks before it was put into use – perhaps due to the unavailability of the Governor to conduct the official ceremony.

The first Resident Magistrate to make use of the building was JG Slade. His new quarters were reported in the *Fremantle Herald*, 28 June 1884, as ‘... more roomy than the old.’

The building served a courthouse, police station and lock up for thirteen years. By then the small building proved inadequate for needs of the growing population. New facilities in Henderson St were opened in 1897 heralding the end of the court functions at Marine Terrace.

The first years of the new century saw a shift in focus from the Cliff St precinct to Market and Phillimore Streets brought on by the completion of the port and the relocation of the railway station. The Cliff St precinct became deserted and those who may not have been “conducive to moral court hearings” inhabited its narrow dark lanes. The Fremantle Water Supply occupied part of the building from 1897 – 1918. The police station also operated out of the site until 1910.

Over this century, the uses of the building have varied from a home for migrants, to Public Works Department offices to the Uniting Church food co-op.

Notre Dame University Australia now leases the building. Law students will use the renovated courtroom for mock trials as part of their advocacy training. Although most other law schools have mock courts, it is believed this is the only one in Australia to use an original court room. Other colleges within the University will also make use of the facilities. The area is also available for

lease for functions, including the Fremantle History Society’s 1997 Christmas Party (see p 3 for details). For further information on this fascinating building, contact Geraldine Byrne on 9239 5555.

This article was adapted from *A Conservation Plan for the Former Courthouse, Fremantle WA*, Ian Molyneux & Assoc, Architects, in association with Rima D’Arcy, 1990.



## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The following were elected as members of the committee of the FHS at the last annual general meeting.

Dianne Davidson	9430 6096
Elaine Berry	9336 1906
Anne Brake (wk)	9335 9473
Sally Rodgers	9339 7922
Lorraine Stevens(wk)	9432 9739
Ron Davidson	9430 6096
Helen Brash	9387 7453
Gina Wright	9331 3314

There is still room on the committee for further members and our constitution allows for co-opting of committee members. Anyone interested in joining the committee should contact Dianne Davidson on the number above.

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.



**Have you remembered to pay your membership fees?**

## NEW MEMBERS

**Dr Jan Machin  
Alan & Janet Kelsall  
Malcolm Tull  
Thelma Lumpis  
Graham & Susan Wyche  
Australian Customs Service**



## COMING EVENTS

### **Christmas Party Old Fremantle Courthouse**

Following the rollicking success of last year's Christmas Party, we are planning this year's event with enthusiasm. Like last year, we have a very special venue for you to enjoy a refreshing drink, a delicious nibble and some good company. The newly refurbished Courthouse, located on the Esplanade will be our venue. This salubrious site recently hosted a function for the Chief Justices of Australia. Now a part of Notre Dame University, we will be given a talk on the history and current use of the building as well as being able to enjoy its surrounds for our festive celebrations to be held on Tuesday 25 November from 7.00 pm. Cost - \$10.00 for members, \$12.00 for friends.

**Please RSVP Dianne Davidson on 9430 6096 by 20 November to secure your place.**



## MEETING REPORTS

### **Fremantle Prison Cell Reconstruction Project**

Anne Brake, Curator of the Fremantle Prison, provided an insight into the

behind the scenes activities that lead to a reconstruction such as this. Included in the team which undertook the original research were an historian, an architect, an archaeologist, a materials analyst (chemist) and a builder, as well as Anne as a curator. This team analysed the written and physical evidence that helped determine the changes in the building and the living conditions of inmates at Fremantle prison from 1855, when the Prison took its first inmates, to 1991 when the place was finally decommissioned. As members who attended found out, living conditions changed little over that time.

### **In Paddy's Tracks**

I stood beside the remnant granite base of the Tom Edwards memorial, against the wall of the old Fremantle Trades Hall, and looked over the large crowd which had gathered for the Fremantle History Society's Labour History Walk.

Suddenly I felt like a lecturer talking on relativity, who discovers Albert Einstein is in the audience. For there, standing on the edge of the crowd and wearing an unfamiliar panama hat, was John Troy.

John was the former member for Fremantle whose anarchistic tendencies had him replaced for the ALP by David Parker in 1980. He is also the son of the legendary unionist Paddy Troy, stories about whom featured at many of the stopping points along the way. At each John provided rich inside information.

When we stopped outside the old Victoria Coffee Palace in Phillimore Street (now a backpackers' hostel) I mentioned that this had also been the Burlington Buffet, where members of the anti-war International Workers of the World lived during the 1914-18 war. Security policy kept the building under surveillance and checked all letters coming in and going out.

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John could tell the Labour walkers that his grandmother had run the Burlington during the Depression. She had gone bankrupt when insufficient diners could pay the nine-pence for their dinners. Here Paddy also met his future wife Mabel, who worked at the Burlington as a waitress.

We viewed where Tom Edwards had been hit with a rifle butt and where the bull ring, used to select waterfront labour, had been situated. And the Victoria Hall saved by a Builders' Labourers green ban in 1975. And lots more.

This walk was a try-out for a similar walk the Fremantle History Society put on for delegates from the National Conference of Labour Historians which was held in October in Perth. The conference organisers asked the Society to put on the walk and forty delegates took part. John Troy joined us again, and Geoff Harcourt, who gave a paper at the Fremantle Studies Day, helped with the commentary.

Ron Davidson – Ron compiled and presented the Labour History Walk

### **A Small Fish Remembers her Pond**

Imelda (Pearl) Smith was the guest speaker at the Fremantle History Society's October general meeting.

Pearl's book *A Small Fish* has been delighting readers Australia-wide with its rich account of family life in Fremantle from the twenties to the eighties and of her disastrous marriage to waterfront legend Jock Smith, since it was released three months ago.

Pearl, 73, is a natural performer, and among the large crowd which came to the Maritime Museum were some of her old primary school friends. They provided powerful supporting acts.

A feature of the evening was Pearl's description of the joys of late-night shopping in Fremantle on Christmas Eve. Numbers of nodding heads in the audience indicated that Pearl's description was reviving memories.



### **Fremantle at Christmas**

*Despite the efforts that have been made to combine with Perth in connection with Christmas attractions, we understand that it has now been found impossible to do so. It is regrettable that some workable arrangement, in accord with the ideas of both places, could not have been arrived at. That not being possible, however, it behoves the Fremantle people to bestir themselves at once in order that they may not be left out in the cold altogether. There are many ways in which people could be attracted to the Port during the holidays, but it will need strenuous work at this late hour, backed by unstinted publicity, to achieve the objects aimed at. It will never do to try and procure satisfactory results and success by going about the matter in a half-hearted style. To use an Americanism, the proposals for the pleasure of holiday-making must be hustled along and boomed. It is not yet too late to make a decided move, but unless that is of a broad and generous nature it will fall flat from the outset.*

*There are in and about Fremantle any amount of splendid attractions for visitors, but these will certainly remain unpeopled unless some better move than at present is evident is made. It is suicidal to sit down and say 'The South Beach is there, the side shows are there, the river is there, the beaches, the picnic grounds, etc etc.' Unless the fact is dinned into the people's ears they might as well have never been exploited. What is necessary is a vigorous advertising programme of such a nature as will not admit of its being missed. It is to be hoped, therefore, that*

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*those who are responsible for whatever is to be done will not allow themselves to fall into the error of overdone cautiousness, but will rather err on the other side.*

*The Evening Mail, December 11, 1909*



### **Interested in registering your interests**

From time to time, the Society gets requests for information on specific subjects. This is often general in nature, but sometimes requires further research, perhaps even paid research.

The Society is interested in keeping a register of people who may be able to assist with these enquiries. If you have a particular area of interest or specialist knowledge to do with Fremantle, for instance labour history, or the convict era, and would like to be contacted should we receive a request in that area, then please send your details, including name, address and contact phone, fax and email details to Lorraine Stevens, Secretary, Fremantle History Society, Fremantle City Library, PO Box 807, FREMANTLE 6160.



### **The Fremantle Society hits 25**

The Fremantle Society was formed in 1972, at a crucial time in Fremantle's history. The port city was at a crossroads: it was run by a Council which was strongly pro-development, and which saw no value in Fremantle's old buildings. Plans were on the board to widen both High Street and Market Street, demolishing all the buildings that line those streets and replacing them with modern structures. Henry Street was also to be widened and

made into a highway, all buildings on the eastern side being pulled down in the process.

It was at this critical point that a young, politically inexperienced school counselor, Les Lauder, decided to take an interest in Fremantle. Though living at that time in Cottesloe, Les had made frequent visits to Fremantle and had noted the comparative intactness of its historic buildings. He had mourned the destruction of many beautiful buildings in Perth to make way for soulless skyscrapers: he had also noted that in other parts of Australia groups were springing up determined to prevent this type of mindless vandalism.

Perth was gone - surely at least Fremantle could be saved?

During a vinous dinner at his Cottesloe flat, Les floated the idea of a Fremantle Society: his friends challenged him to do something about it. He got in touch with various people and organised a public meeting in the Council Exhibition Hall to discuss the forming of such a Society. At first it looked as if the idea had no appeal - fifteen minutes before the meeting was due to start only five people had arrived. However, during those fifteen minutes the hall filled up, and Les found himself addressing a meeting of 400 people.

The Fremantle Society was born.

But this was only the first step. Soon committee members discovered that it was impossible to change the views of councillors who thought of Fremantle only as a source of funds - and almost invariably lived somewhere else. The Society began actively promoting their own candidates for Council, with Les Lauder being the first to become a councillor. He had by this time moved to Fremantle, and was elected councillor for North Ward in 1973. Soon others followed, and so the tide slowly began to turn.

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During the 1970s the Fremantle Society managed to save several significant buildings, sometimes with the aid of union green bans: the Victoria Hall, the Evan Davies building (now the Dome), the Fremantle Markets and the Moore's building are some of those, and the battles fought over them were often vicious. But history was also on the Society's side: throughout the country the importance of heritage was gradually being accepted and understood. Throughout the late 1970s and the 1980s the Fremantle Society had considerable input and influence with the Fremantle Council.

Nevertheless in 1988 the now-famous heritage watchdog almost died. With increasingly heritage-oriented councils being elected, the Fremantle Society had all but ceased operations, to the point where a meeting was called at the end of 1988 to wind up the Society. However, a new group of interested people nominated for the committee and kept the Society alive.

This year the Fremantle Society celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. It can look back to an era of solid achievement - indeed, but for its efforts there would be no Fremantle as we know it today.



### **Fremantle 6160**

Fremantle History Society members will enjoy a visit to the Arts Centre and Museum in November, with two new exhibitions focussing on Fremantle. The Fremantle Museum has opened 'Foundations of Fremantle' and the Fremantle Arts Centre is showing 'Fremantle 6160', an exhibition celebrating Fremantle's unique character through the eyes of the artists who have represented it over

the years. Contemporary and historical works present a picture of the port city, its heritage and architecture, as well as its lifestyle and vibrant artistic community. Over 200 works convey the spirit of the place, past and present, with many images representing a past no longer visible, while others reflect the themes and landmarks that have obsessed so many local artists. The oldest works are two 1880s paintings by Captain Russell, loaned by the WA Maritime Museum. Other important works have been loaned by the City of Fremantle Art Collection, the Holmes a Court Collection, Royal Perth Hospital and Sir Charles Gardiner Hospital Art Collections, University of Western Australia and Murdoch University Art Collections, Fremantle Hospital and Fremantle Prison, to mention a few of the institutions who have supported the show.

The exhibition is a dynamic collaboration between the Fremantle Arts Centre, the Fremantle Society and the City of Fremantle, with support from the Heritage Council of WA, the Gwenyth Ewens Bequest as well as local artists and collectors. It marks the 25<sup>th</sup> birthdays of both the Fremantle Arts Centre and the Fremantle Society, and was opened by the Premier on 19 October. It continues until 30 November, and is part of Festival Fremantle.

### **Comments by Thelma John, co-curator of the Fremantle 6160 Exhibition:**

**For me it has turned out to be a very exciting project, a chance to meet lots of artists and collectors and find out about Fremantle's past and thus its present. Notebook in hand, I have insinuated myself into the homes of artists and art lovers, picked their brains and snatched the art off their walls. With every question, there is another lead, another artist, another phone number. I have become a detective, a superficial historian and Fremantle-obsessed. Every social**

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outing is an opportunity to find the quintessential Fremantle work. Every chance meeting in the street is the start of another trail. I fall asleep each night counting representations of the Dingo Flour Mill. I wake in the dead of night imagining an elusive image that combines container ships, aircraft carriers, sheep ships, sailing boats and fishing vessels.

I have now seen more representations of the War Memorial Monument on Monument Hill than could be remembered. The Roundhouse is another recurring dream for me now, with the cries of Aboriginal prisoners and indentured servants haunting my nights. Time has collapsed for me with images of wharves and marinas bustling with whalers, luggers, wharfies, migrants, America's Cup hopefuls and ice cream licking tourists interrupted by the sound of gunfire and panic on Bloody Sunday in 1919...



#### For Your Diary

**Tuesday 25 November** – Christmas Party – join fellow members at what should be another memorable festive function for the Society. Old Fremantle Courthouse, Marine Terrace, 7.00 pm.



#### CROSSING THE BAR

When Willem de Vlamingh tried to enter the Swan River on 10 Jan 1697 he noted that 'in the galliot's pinnacle entered the river where we found the mouth of the river with very many rocks

as also with shallows so that we could not enter without peril.'

In 1827 Capt James Stirling reported similar problems entering the river mouth and in 1829 Captain Fremantle noted in his journal that on arriving at the bar 'the sea appeared to be still breaking considerably ... the passage close to inside after passing the bar is rocky with not more than four feet water...'

In January 4, 1841, a notice placed in the Inquirer by the Colonial Secretary, Peter Brown gave early settlers instructions for boats attempting to cross the bar at the mouth of the Swan River.

*The deepest part of the channel is close to some detached covered rocks which lie to the north of the South head.*

*In starting for it keep rather towards the South Head and the black gable end of the house a little behind it, in a line with the large heap of stones on the outline of the hills over the town of Fremantle - the heap of stones being distinguished from others of smaller size by having a white mark resembling a road way laid down the hill from it. These three marks in a line will lead over sandy ground close on the north side of the covered rocks of the South Head, and clear of a longer ledge which projects inward from the north head. The depth of the water between the two is five to seven feet according to the time of the tide.*

This situation remained until 1891 when Charles Yelverton O'Connor was appointed as Engineer-in-Chief of the Public Works Department in Western Australia. He was 48 years old, over 6ft tall and for 26 years he had been working in the South Island of New Zealand.

His first task on arrival in WA was to construct a harbour to meet the standards of the Royal Mail contractors, Orient Steam Navigation Company and the

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Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company (P & O).

Unlike other schemes suggested, he looked to the river for a safe anchorage. His scheme was the removal of the rock bar, construction of two moles and dredging of the river. This was at first dismissed by the Premier, Sir John Forrest, who favoured another proposal put forward by Sir John Coode, a prominent marine architect. However, Forrest eventually accepted O'Connor's proposal. O'Connor stated that his scheme 'was designed to meet the requirements of the largest class of ships that might be expected to be necessary to provide for in the next generation or so.'

On 4 May 1997, the harbour celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Very little has changed in the basic design of the harbour. Technology, however, has advanced, cargo handling has been revolutionised by containers, strange looking cranes dominate the skyline and turn-around time is measured in hours not days.

The size of the vessels entering the harbour continues to grow. Recently the deepest draft vessel ever to enter Fremantle's inner harbour, the *Contship Romance*, arrived. It was 192.5m long with a laden draft of 12.8m. Considering the harbour has a depth of 13 metres this was quite an achievement.

This was due to a new technique installed by the Port Authority. The Under Keel Clearance System which is designed to assist harbour masters to safely guide deeper draft vessels through the inner harbour. Until now the big container ships entering the port were restricted to a draft of 12.5m. The system consists of electromagnetic wave poles attached to beacons at strategic points in the

shipping channels, which measure wave height, swell and height of tides. The data is sent to the FPA and analysed by computer to show best time for deeper draft vessels to be guided in without hitting the bottom.

A far cry from the pile of rocks and the black gable end that guided boats across the rock bar and into the Swan River in 1841.

Source:

*Voyage to the Great Southland*, Gunter Schilder; Dairy & Letters of Admiral Sir C H Fremantle GCB; *The Chief*, Merab Tauman; *West Australian*, April 1997.



### From the Local History Desk

A selection of books from the Local History collection which highlight the multi cultural nature of our society.

Mennicken-Coley, Mary, *The Germans in Western Australia: Innovators, Immigrants, Internees*. Mt Lawley: Department of Language Studies, Edith Cowan University, 1993.  
(Documents the German presence in Western Australia from 1833 to the present day.)

Bosworth, Richard, *Fremantle's Italy*. Rome: Gruppo Editoriale Internazionale, 1993.  
(An account of the history of the origins of the Italo-Australian community of Fremantle)

Gentilli, Joseph, *Italian Migration to Western Australia 1829-1946*. Nedlands: Department of Geography, UWA, 1982.  
(A history of Italian migration to WA from 1829-1946. Chapters include brief biographical histories of selected individual migrants)

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Gamba, Charles, *A Report on the Italian Fishermen of Fremantle: a Preliminary Study of Sociology and Economics*. Nedlands: University of WA 1952

(a field socio-economic study of the Italian fishermen in Fremantle in 1948)

Sumner, Brent and Mayer, Kathlin, *Lords of the Sea: a Tribute to the Fishermen*. Fremantle: Higher Perspective, 1997  
(Fishermen's Co-operative Society Ltd)

*Asian Immigrants to Western Australia 1929-1901. The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians Vol V*. Nedlands: University of WA Press, 1988

(Covers Chinese, Japanese, Afghans, Indians, Filipinos and Malay immigrants to WA)

Gibbs, Martin, *Report on an ethnohistorical investigation into Aboriginal heritage of the Fremantle area*. Nedlands: Centre for Prehistory, UWA, 1988

(Includes a general introduction to traditional Aboriginal life and economy in the Swan River Region, and a summary of economic information directly relevant to the Fremantle area. A brief coverage is made of the post-contact Aboriginal history of the district, up to the present)

Ciccotosto, Emma, *Emma: A Recipe for Life*. Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1995

(This book is divided into two parts. The first part, *Emma, a translated life*, is the autobiography of Emma Ciccotosto from her arrival in WA in 1939 until the present day. The second part, *Emma, a recipe for life*, is filled with Emma's favourite Italian recipes and 'conversations across a kitchen table' with Michal Bosworth)

Joseph Raffa, *The Happy Children*. Perth: Artlooks Books, 1984

(The story of the life of Joseph Raffa and his family in pre-war Fremantle. Details the life of an Italian fisherman and the closeness of migrant families)



### **Travellers and Immigrants: *Portuguêses em Perth***

Travellers and Immigrants: *Portuguêses em Perth* is an exhibition about the Portuguese community in Perth. The aim of the exhibition is to capture, through photographs, objects and oral histories, some of the experiences of Portuguese immigrants in WA.

As well as documenting personal histories, the exhibition provides historical background to the various waves of immigration, which have occurred since 1952.

It covers a wide geographical area, telling the stories of immigrants from the island of Madeira, continental Portugal, Angola, Mozambique and East Timor.

The exhibition will open on the 8th of November at the Fremantle History Museum in Finnerty Street and will be on until late March. There is a catalogue to accompany the exhibition.



**Membership Fees for July 1997 - 98 are now due. For those who haven't paid, please send your remittance to:**

**Anne Brake  
Treasurer,  
Fremantle History Society  
c/- Fremantle Prison  
The Terrace  
Fremantle 6160**

**Ordinary - \$10**

**Family - \$15**

**Organisational - \$20**

**Conc - \$5**

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