



FREMANTLE HISTORY SOCIETY

Established 1994

The Secretary, PO Box 1305
FREMANTLE WA 6959

Spring Edition
2005

Editors: Ron Davidson, Dianne Davidson



Opening of Conference Proceedings: (from left) Mayor of Fremantle, Peter Tagliaferri, President of RWAHS Professor Reg Appleyard, Nyungar elder Marie Thorn, Conference Coordinator Bob Woollett and RWAHS Council Chair Lennie McCall

STATE CONFERENCE OF THE AFFILIATED SOCIETIES OF THE ROYAL WESTERN AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Bob Woollett (Conference Coordinator)

The Fremantle History Society hosted this year's Affiliated Societies' Conference during the weekend of 16-18 September. Some 100 delegates and guests attended a Civic Reception in the atrium of the Fremantle Town Hall on Friday evening, hosted by the Mayor of Fremantle, Peter Tagliaferri, who hoped the visitors would find their stay in Fremantle and the program of conference activities both enjoyable and rewarding. The Mayor went on to officially launch Volume 4 of Fremantle Studies, a collection of research papers presented at Fremantle Studies Days in 2003 and 2004 (see below for full details). The gathering then moved into the main auditorium to listen to a presentation entitled 'Fremantle: a place of contact in literature' which comprised a narration by Bob Woollett and a series of readings by Geoff Higham, June and David Hutchison and Lisa Williams of excerpts from works by authors such as John Boyle O'Reilly, DH Lawrence, Patrick White and Tim Winton which show Fremantle as a place of contact with the law, the river and the sea, and with the land for migrants and others coming to Australia or departing from it.

SEE COMING EVENTS FOR DETAILS OF OUR CHRISTMAS FEAST!

On Saturday morning the President of the RWAHS, Professor Reg Appleyard, welcomed the 120 delegates and observers to the Conference and the Mayor of Fremantle officially opened the proceedings. A welcome on behalf of her people was then given by Nyungar elder Marie Thorn. The business section of the Conference occupied the rest of the morning with additional contributions from Dick Mussared, the President of the Cunderdin Historical Society, who spoke enthusiastically about the preparations being made for the 2006 Conference and from Paul Arthur of Murdoch University who told us about 'Voices from the West End', a major project researching the history of that part of the Port City and leading to the production of a book and a DVD.

The afternoon session took the form of a traditional Fremantle Studies Day, and four papers were presented under the broad theme 'Fremantle: a place of contact' (see Meeting Reports for full details).

On the Saturday evening the auditorium of the Fremantle Town Hall was transformed into the venue for some ninety guests to enjoy pre-dinner drinks and a three course buffet meal. Professor Geoffrey Bolton was the guest of honour and in his after dinner speech he spoke about the importance of history in a Fremantle context with his inimitable blend of insight and humour.

On Sunday morning eighteen delegates mustered at the Shipwrecks Gallery Function Room in Cliff Street for an early morning walk in the area of Bathers Beach and the Round House, led by Fremantle History Society member and bush poet/raconteur Rusty Christensen, who regaled the group with stories of local events and personalities and a recitation of a poem about Broome luggers. Some sixty people then congregated in the Function Room for the official farewell and a sumptuous morning tea catered for by Fremantle History Society members.

Afterwards eighteen visitors under the guidance of Robert Mitchell from the National Trust set off by bus to visit the WA

Army Museum in Burt Street and the Battery Site and Tunnels on Leighton Hill where they enjoyed a picnic lunch and a guided tour by members of the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Association. At the same time, led by David Hutchison a group of fourteen embarked on a Fremantle Heritage Trail, travelling by bus to Victoria Quay, the Arts Centre and Monument Hill before enjoying a pub lunch at Rosie O'Grady's in the City Centre and a post-prandial stroll in St John's Square. Choosing a third option, a smaller group were taken by Sally May on a behind-the-scenes tour of the Shipwrecks Gallery and by Margaret McPherson on a visit to the old Asylum building in Ord Street which now houses the Fremantle History Museum and the Fremantle Arts Centre.

The Society would like to express its appreciation of the major sponsorship of the Conference by the Fremantle City Council in making the Town Hall available as the main venue and by providing the Civic Reception on the Friday evening. We would also like to acknowledge the assistance of the WA Maritime Museum in providing the venue for the Sunday morning tea and the generous financial assistance of our six Conference Centurions: Fremantle Ports, Fremantle Markets, Notre Dame University, Elizabeth's Secondhand Bookshop, Jim McGinty MLA, and Les Lauder. In addition the Society is indebted to Stewart Cownie who kindly gave his permission for us to reproduce images of his sketches of the Fremantle Town Hall and St John's Church on greeting cards, the Conference brochure and the dinner menu.

A breakdown of the accounts shows a useful profit for the Society. Although this was not the major aim of the exercise, it is always a happy outcome when it occurs. The accounts show that, in addition to the sponsorship, the profit mainly came from the sale of books, journals and cards, the success of the raffle and the self-catering of the Sunday morning tea. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking members for their participation in the Conference and, in particular, for their enthusiastic support of these fundraising activities. I would also like to thank my fellow members of the Conference Management Committee, Alison

Bauer (Treasurer), Kristy Bizzaca, Geoff Higham, Margaret McPherson and Jacqui Sherriff for their sterling work and dedication to the task throughout the year. Tribute should also be paid to the stalwart members of the Catering Committee, Judy Cecil (Coordinator), Joan Donaldson and June Hutchison. I would like to thank Wendy Antonovsky and Linda Kilkelly for their imaginative organisation of the raffle; to Ruth and Dee Shelley, Cathy Hall, Jon Strachan, Rita Higham, TS Huang, Lisa Williams and Barbara Dudding for their worthy assistance on Saturday; and to Rusty Christensen, David Hutchison, Sally May and Margaret McPherson for their valuable contribution as guides on the Sunday tours.



COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Executive:

Dianne Davidson (President)	9430 6096
Lisa Williams (Vice President)	9430 7966
Alison Bauer (Treasurer)	9432 9739
Kris Bizzaca (Secretary)	0417090 476

Committee:

Anne Brake	9336 5206
Ron Davidson	9430 6096
Marilyn Dimond	9335 3609
Sally May	0409 431 844
Loretta O'Reilly (wk)	9432 9739
David Tessler	9386 4348
Bob Woollett	9335 7451

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

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

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

occasionally, please be sure to check details.



COMING EVENTS

Feast at the Fremantle Club!

Imagine Christmas dinner, in December - introductory free glass of champagne, roast turkey and ham, pork or lamb, lots of roast vegetables, traditional plum pudding - all without having to do any cooking. You've imagined it? Now savour it at Fremantle History Society's Christmas function at the Fremantle Club, 15 Bannister Street at 7pm on Thursday, 1 December. There's ample parking next door. Donna, the club cook and Fremantle's queen of the traditional roast dinner, will be in charge.

The last time we went to dinner at the club it was sensational value and a sellout. This year should be better. A feature of the club is its matchless fifties decor. There are also remnants of the controversial pre-war Italian Club days and the old sin, cinema and opium den days of the Duke of York Hotel which was on the site.

Committee member and writer Ron Davidson, who has just finished a book on Fremantle impressions for Fremantle Arts Centre Press, will give a brief talk on 'Writing Bannister Street'. He will recall, inter alia, describing Connie Ellement's arrival back in Fremantle aged 12 from the Salvation Army Home in Cottesloe. She sneaked though her backyard into Bannister Street and watched the Army's band playing outside the Palms cottage, where Bannister Street meets Phillimore. She knew the band played where sin was strongest but wondered what sinning could be happening there.

The charge for the lavish dinner, entertainment and introductory champagne will be \$15. **RSVP by Friday 25 November to Dianne Davidson, 9430 6096, or email ronaldi@cygnus.uwa.edu.au.**

MEETING REPORTS

Tales at the Tradewinds

The History Society moved east to the Tradewinds Hotel for our pub lunch. But our thoughts were of the days when this was the East Fremantle watering hole, the Plympton, where the workers who lived to its south met the bosses from the big houses to its north. Traditional pub lunch performer, Rusty Christensen, told us stories of the hotel and the famous families who lived around it - like the Millers and Regans. Above the long public bar at the old Plympton was a jug known as Toby's jug. Toby Regan would spread his change along the bar: bar staff would gather it up and place it in the jug. Next morning the Regan boys would arrive to collect the contents of Toby's jug. Rusty told how sometimes Toby would walk down from the hotel verandah and swim across the Swan to 'clear his head'. Once he went as far as Rottnest.

Among those attending was new FHS member, Alice King, international sailor and, since May, a councillor with the Fremantle City Council.

Fremantle Studies Day

The Fremantle History Society's 2005 Studies Day graced the historic Fremantle Town Hall on Saturday 17 September as part of the Royal WA Historical Society's Affiliated Historical Societies annual conference.

More than 50 delegates listened to four papers on the wide-ranging theme of 'Fremantle: A Place of Contact'. The first, from Len Collard of Murdoch University, looked at the Nyungar interpretative history of the southern suburbs. He began by stating how the beliefs, values and knowledge of his people came from the dreamtime. This particularly applied to stories like those of the Wagyl. He said more needed to be done to explore the contact between Nyungar and colonial histories. The origin of place names gives clues to these contacts.

Michelle Morrison from Murdoch University's *Voices of the West End* project spoke of the health and sanitation problems around 1900. At the time bubonic plague (Black Death) took hold in Fremantle because of infected rats from Sydney coming off ships tied up in Victoria Quay. Panic gripped Fremantle spurred by sensational stories in the papers. Disinfectant ran out. The plague eased with improved sanitary arrangements (introduction of dunny carts) and street cleanliness and greater control with ships hausers to stop rats coming ashore.

Sally May from the Maritime Museum returned to her study of Fremantle fishing and fishers. The industry only got under way early in the twentieth century. Before that Nyungars then colonial settlers supplemented their diets with fish they caught themselves - which was not a difficult thing to do. Official boat registrations began in 1905 and the fish auction system in 1908. It was this system which, coupled with a lack of refrigeration which put fishers at the mercy of buyers, caused much aggravation among fishers from several nations. Sally spoke of the difficulties associated with the Fishermen's Union which had members who were really independent small businessmen. The paper showed how the industry fostered further migration and boat building, despite its essentially unstable nature.

The final speaker was Kris Bizzaca who told how desirable it was to encourage community development through history and heritage. Heritage interest, which picked up apace since 1960, can provide a community with a sense of place, of belonging and identity. Grants for local heritage projects can assist these aims. Schools especially are encouraged to be involved but results are varied. Kris said the week-long Fremantle Heritage Festival had been held annually since 1989 and involved most local societies and museums. Local government seemed sympathetic to the heritage message but funding remained a problem despite the time being put in by volunteers.



A Penchant for Pistols

The October general meeting of the Fremantle History Society saw a persistent myth debunked. Allen Graham told us that the Clark-Johnston duel by the river in August, 1832, was by no means the only duel fought at the colony. He came across this information while working on his monumental study of the first 100 years of hotels in Fremantle which has now reached 150,000 words. Allen demonstrated that the early Fremantle was a quarrelsome place with a number of challenges being issued. In one encounter, in March, 1833, mine hosts of the Albion and Union hotels sought to settle their differences with pistols. However, the authorities intervened. The Perth *Inquirer* mocked the whole affair. In another duel the seconds moved forward and stopped it. Many of the clashes seemed to involve the protective fathers of women.

There was lively discussion among members and their visitors over drinks and tasty food. Someone suggested that Allen should come to another meeting and talk about his study of Fremantle hotels.



Launch of Fremantle Studies Vol 4

The Mayor of Fremantle, Peter Tagliaferri, launched the fourth volume of the Fremantle History Society's biennial journal, *Fremantle Studies*, at the Civic Reception held on the first evening of the Royal WA Historical Society's Affiliated Societies conference in September. We are particularly pleased with this latest volume, which covers a wide cross-section of Fremantle-related topics, from biographical information about prominent Fremantle businesswoman Mary Higham and local larrikin politician Harry Marshall to discussions of architecture and heritage, and even a study of protest movements in the 1980s. Also included is the full text of Allen Graham's ground-breaking research on the pugnacious tendencies of the Fremantle population in the early nineteenth century!

Fremantle Studies Volume 4 is now available for purchase by members, and an order form is included with this newsletter. **Be sure to get your copy now!**



Phillimore Street Masterplan

At the end of October the Fremantle History Society submitted its response to the Phillimore Street Integrated Masterplan which was produced by the combined efforts of the City of Fremantle, Fremantle Ports and the Public Transport Authority and is designed to facilitate contact between the West End and Victoria Quay.

We expressed concerns about the increasing marginalisation of Fremantle's labour history and an apparent lack of awareness of significant sites relating to that history. We also questioned the need for two-way traffic along Cliff Street with the resulting lack of already scarce parking facilities, and emphasised the need for care when providing shade trees so that the authenticity of the relevant streetscapes is not compromised. We also strongly suggested that any artworks planned for the area be open for public comment to avoid a repetition of the flawed process which resulted in the disastrous John Curtin statue by the side of the Town Hall.



For Your Diary

Thursday 1 December, 7pm: Christmas feast at the Fremantle Club, 15 Bannister St, Fremantle (\$15 including complimentary champagne glass; other drinks at members' prices at the bar). **RSVP by 25 November**
Dianne Davidson 9430 6096 or email ronaldi@cygnus.uwa.edu.au



History and the Fremantle Prison

You will be aware that representatives of the Fremantle History Society have had discussions with the Minister for Heritage, Fran Logan, about the role of the Fremantle Prison in the wider Fremantle community and have emphasised the crucial need for historical research to be carried out into hitherto neglected aspects of the story of this prime heritage site.

We have had subsequent correspondence with the Minister in which he has pointed out that the responsibility for initiating such research lies with the Prison team from the Department of Building and Works and has suggested that the Society should promote their aims through this channel and through the Prison Advisory Trust.

We wrote some months ago to the Prison CEO pointing out that a link between the Prison and the Fremantle History Society which had existed since the formation of the Society in 1994 was broken with the departure of Beres Coley, the former manager of the Prison, from our committee this year. We also requested his consideration of an appropriate replacement. However, so far we have had no reply to our letter.

We are currently investigating other means of drawing attention to the need for further serious research into the history of the Prison and will report further on developments in this area.



EXHIBITIONS WORTH VISITING!

'Movie Magic' Celebrates the 110th Anniversary of the Cinema

The exhibition runs from November 14, 2005 until February 2006. It includes a display of old and historic movie technology, from a large cinema projector and motion picture cameras, to 8 mm home movie equipment. Many rare examples of historic movie gadgets including 9.5 mm movie equipment, Polaroid instant movies will be displayed. Pre-cinema technologies such

as the Zoetrope, Phenakistoscope, Kinetoscope, and Praxinoscope will also be on show.

There are hands-on activities for all visitors.

A one hour talk and demonstration on the 'Invention of the Moving Pictures' will be presented each week day from **Monday November 21 to Friday November 25 at 10.30 am** and on **Saturdays November 19 and 26 at 1.30 pm.**

Cost for the talk is \$3 and bookings are essential – 9430 7966

Location: Upstairs in the **Light and Sound Discovery Centre**, Fremantle History Museum, 1 Finnerty Street, Fremantle



'From the Coast to the Plains'

This exhibition of Croatian contemporary graphic art will be on display at the WA Maritime Museum from 13 November 2005 until 8 January 2006. It shows works by major Croatian artists of the last fifty years and is a visual challenge from a country which sits at the edge of the Mediterranean basin and in the centre of Europe. From the Dalmatian coast in the south to the Slavonian plains in the north it covers a vast area from which the artists drew their inspiration.

The exhibition has been organised by the Australian Croatian Congress and the General Consulate of the Republic of Croatia in Perth, in collaboration with Gallery Klovcevi Dvori, Zagreb, Croatia, and the WA Maritime Museum, and is sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, Republic of Croatia, and the Croatian Community in Western Australia.

Entry to the exhibition is free with Museum entry or Annual Boarding Pass. The Maritime Museum is located on Victoria Quay in Fremantle and is open 9.30am-5pm daily and 1-5pm on Boxing Day. It is closed on Christmas Day.



Snippets from Local History at the Fremantle City Library, November, 2005
Loretta O'Reilly

Local History has been busy with Fremantle Festival projects being researched, students from Notre Dame and other schools/ universities researching our wonderful old buildings and people, genealogists seeking their family histories, budding authors looking for material and background for their proposed books and Real Estate agents wanting information and listings for the properties they are selling etc.,

An exciting historic photographic project for the Fremantle Festival is about to be beamed onto the walls of the Town Hall so don't miss that display. Should look very effective! There will also be a display of our old photographs in the windows of Angus & Robertson during the Festival week.

Lorraine Stevens is conducting a five week course on the 'how to' of Oral History in the Local History Section of the Library. The course began on October 29th October and will continue on every Saturday during November. A very enthusiastic group of 12 people (with a few more to come as they could not make the first lesson) met at the Local History section at 9.30am and were loath to leave at 12 o'clock! The introductory lesson questioned the relevance of oral histories in the modern world (all of early history was oral: for example, the Bible was written many years after the events depicted and resulted from stories which had been passed down through different generations), and, then emphasized the importance of such a medium. Equipment needed and available was demonstrated and we all had a little practice!

The attendees all stated their projects eg history of nursing at Royal Perth Hospital, the history of Royal Perth Hospital itself, people working with the aged and wanting to record the fantastic stories they hear every day, a social worker who also hears amazing stories of lives well lived, an indigenous/ bush people project, and interviewing elderly relatives etc. The list was many and varied but all projects were

worthwhile. The aim of these classes is not only to record the story of the ordinary person but to also stimulate interest in a great resource held here at Local History and to promote usage of this underused resource.

Local History has recently acquired a new Marantz recorder and two more AWA machines for the public to use for the listening to of tapes. Our tapes cover every subject you could think of involved with Fremantle. There are also about 35 tapes prepared for borrowing and are available just by using your Library card. If you feel like listening to a tape about adventure, necessary hard work to survive, living through WWII and its effects on residents, what school days were like in Fremantle, what the schools themselves were like and who attended, the businesses in Fremantle throughout the years, some of the processes involved in the production of a product, carefree leisure activities which didn't cost money (e.g. fishing off the wharf, playing in the sandhills at South Beach etc.), the feeling of safety residents had and how they trusted their fellow man/woman, and so it goes on.....come in and borrow a tape and take it home and listen to it at your leisure.



MEMBERSHIPS NOW DUE!



**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A
HAPPY NEW YEAR**

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

As part of the celebrations for the 100th anniversary of the 2005 Fremantle Festival the Fremantle History Society in conjunction with the Fremantle Local History Section and Angus & Robertson have produced an exhibition of some of the wonderful historic photographs that illustrate the story of the installation of electricity and tramways in Fremantle. The work undertaken by the Fremantle Municipal Tramways and Electric Lighting Board culminated in its official opening on 30 October 1905 as part of the first Fremantle Week – now our Fremantle Festival. The photographs will be displayed at Angus & Robertson in High Street, Fremantle, from 18 – 27 November.



A LECTURE BY SIR CONRAD SWAN, FORMER GARTER KING OF ARMS OF THE ENGLISH COLLEGE OF ARMS

David Hutchison

The Genealogical Society sent our Society an invitation to a lecture by Sir Conrad Swan at the Alexander Library on Friday 30 September. I was pleased to represent the Society, as I had met Sir Conrad on two occasions. The first occasion was during one of his visits to Perth, when I was Head of the Department of History at the WA Museum. The second occasion was during a visit to London in 1977, when Sir Conrad Swan invited me to the College of Arms. During that visit, he showed me the original patents for a number of Australian coats of arms, including the State and National coats of arms, and the Armorial Bearings for Fremantle, which he designed.

For those interested, there is an explanation of these Bearings as a frontispiece to John K. Ewers' *Western Gateway*. The Fremantle Bearings include an example of 'canting' (or punning) arms. The shield is divided by a Pile (wedge-shaped area) into two triangular areas, which represent an open cape or mantle—a 'free mantle'.

Sir Conrad, who was born in Canada, spoke entertainingly, with donnish humour, about

his life and career as well as about the work of the College of Arms. The original College was destroyed during the Fire of London in 1666, although all its records were saved by being carried away on a barge on the River Thames. King Charles II offered the services of the Royal architect—his official title was 'Bricklayer to His Majesty'—, Sir Christopher Wren, to design a new College, which is the existing one.

Sir Conrad designed the heraldic emblems for the Order of the Australia. It was he who decided that the blue ribbon of the order should have on it embroidered sprigs of our national flower, the wattle. He hesitated to do so, because all other order ribbons are plain, but remembered that the oldest order—an Order of Malta—had a black ribbon with embroidered crowns of thorns. So the Order of Australia ribbon is the first to have this feature in hundreds of years.

Sir Conrad has an affection for Australia and, some years ago, when a severe storm destroyed trees in the grounds of his house at Boxford in Suffolk, he decided to plant an avenue of eucalypts. He consulted with Kew Gardens and with the Forestry Department of Tasmania, as he thought that the climate in Tasmania would be closest to that of Suffolk. Snow gums were recommended and he now has a handsome avenue 'like an avenue of Gothic columns'. Kew Gardens believe that it is the only avenue of eucalypts in the British Isles.

He also has black swans on the lake in the grounds. This, I suspect—given his surname—, is another example of 'canting' arms.

Tragically, Sir Conrad's wife was killed in a hit-and-run accident only a month after his retirement from long service in the College of Arms.

He has recently published his autobiography, *A King from Canada*.





Fremantle History Society
(ABN 92065886400)

The Membership Coordinator, FHS
PO Box 1305
Fremantle WA 6959

The Fremantle History Society aims to:

- encourage community involvement in the study of Fremantle history and cultural diversity through research, oral history and writing.
- disseminate information about Fremantle in a variety of ways, in particular through public forums and liaison with other history and heritage groups and schools in the area.
- promote the identification and preservation of historical evidence relating to Fremantle.
- encourage the commemoration of important events, places and people in appropriate ways.
- arrange social gatherings for its members.

FHS membership categories and fees:

Ordinary membership	\$20	Organisational membership	\$40
Family membership	\$30	Student/pensioner/unwaged	\$10

NOTE: FHS fees are due on 1 July each year. New memberships paid after April will carry over to the next year.

Membership fee of \$.....paid to the Fremantle History Society on.....
PLEASE RETAIN THIS TOP SECTION AS A RECEIPT FOR YOUR OWN RECORDS

✕

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION			
NAME.....			
ADDRESS.....			
			POSTCODE
TELEPHONE (Home).....		(Work).....	
EMAIL:.....			
OCCUPATION.....			
SIGNATURE/S.....			
DATE.....			RECEIPT: Yes/No
Please circle the appropriate category:			
Ordinary membership	\$20	Organisational membership	\$40
Family membership	\$30	Student/pensioner/unemployed	\$10

