



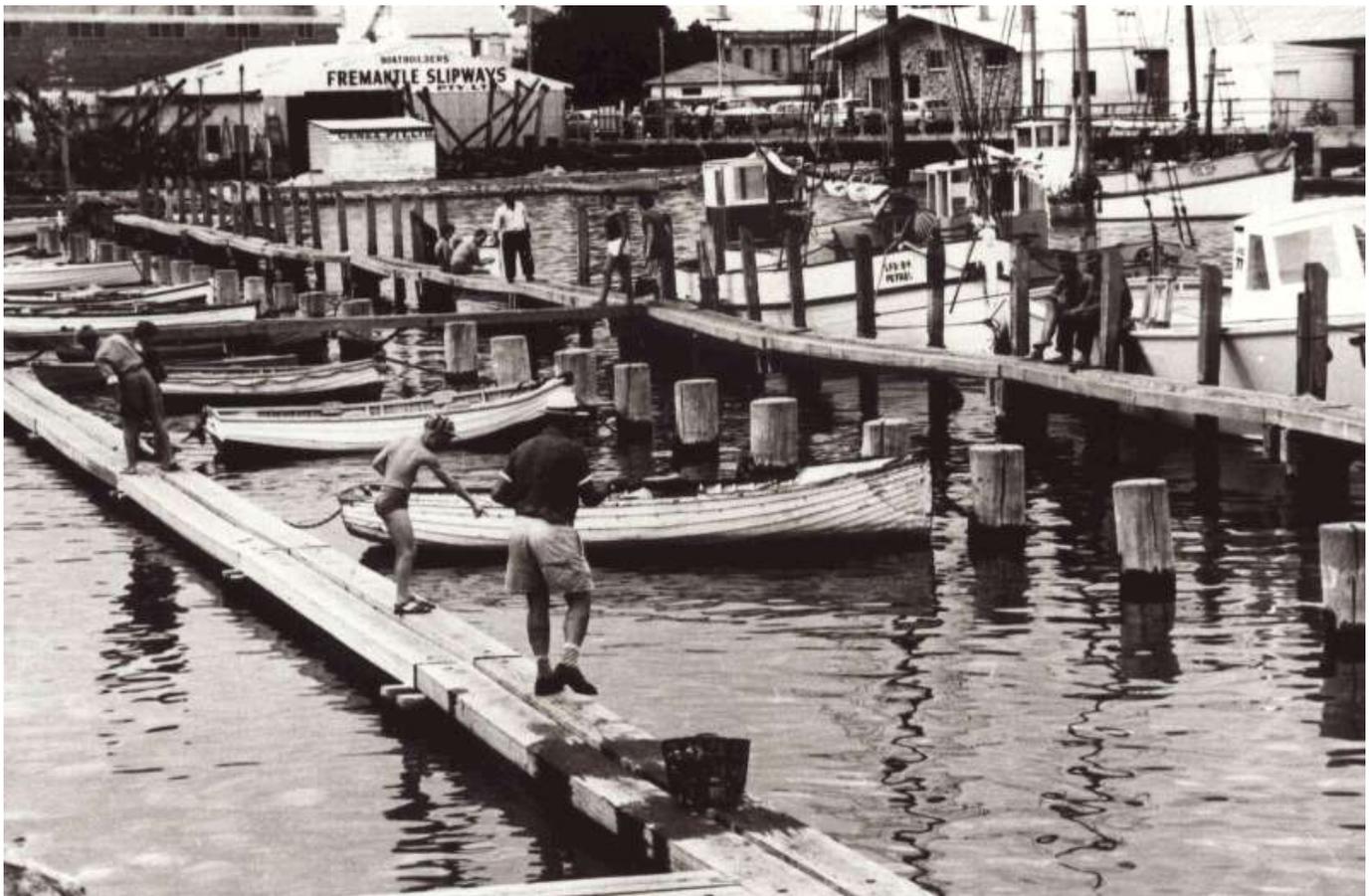
FREMANTLE HISTORY SOCIETY

Established 1994

The Secretary, PO Box 1305  
FREMANTLE WA 6959

**Summer Edition  
2007**

Editors: Ron Davidson, Dianne Davidson, Anne Brake



Fishing Boat Harbour, 1970 (Fremantle Local History Collection 2498)

## **NOSTALGIC REFLECTIONS ON FREMANTLE FISHING BOAT HARBOUR**

Ron Davidson

When I came to Fremantle, a relative latecomer in 1976, I liked to ride my bike around the fishing boat harbour. Kids in a slender wooden dinghy, made by someone's father, would wave to me and hold aloft a couple of large sand whiting, skipjack, flathead and a flounder or two. These were the 'good fish'. I could have them all for a dollar. The kids had been netting for Perth herring and soon were rowing across the harbour to sell them as cray bait. I rode on with my fish, still wriggling.

Ahead I could see Joan Campbell, Fremantle's iconic sculptor, gathering driftwood and sand-washed stones for an upcoming exhibition. She'd talk about the evening light across the fishing harbour which made everything look a deep pink.

Whenever my unofficial fishmongers failed to deliver - or went to school - I'd ride on to Cicerello's and ask Peter (did he have another name?) 'what's fresh?'. He'd disappear to survey the small boats returning to the main jetty. 'Come back in half an hour. Mario will have some flounder or a shark or squid from his crabbing nets.' The Fremantle Fishermen's Co-operative was the only other fish and chip shop. Wise heads said it was better than Cicerello's and they were probably right.



Cicerello's Seafood Shanty, 1984  
Fremantle Local History Collection 3539

Outside the Co-op I'd meet Frank del Rosso, fisherman and long-time Fremantle City Councillor. As a young man he'd sail up the coast to catch large snapper in the lee of the coastal cliffs. He's talk about the days when Italian fishermen met with Paddy Troy in the nearby Fremantle Trades Hall to get better prices for their fish. The fishermen represented a strange collection of political ideologies. Frank liked to say that he was responsible for the foundation of the Fremantle Fishermen's Co-operative. However, this is, as historians say, contested territory. Frank died very recently.

Then the America's Cup defence arrived, and the old fishing boat harbour was gone for ever.

The area around the fishing boat harbour has a fascinating history, many stories and remnants of old structures. Our committee

member Sally May knows them better than anyone; join us in a nostalgic and informative ramble around this historic area for our February meeting!



## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

### Executive:

Dianne Davidson (President)	9430 6096
Anne Brake (Vice – President)	9335 5206
Alison Bauer (Treasurer)	9432 9739
Ron Davidso9n (Minute Secretary)	9430 6096

### Committee Members:

Bob Woolett	9335 7451
Fay Campbell	9341 4102
Marilyn Dimond	9335 3609
Cathy Hall	0407 086 300
Sally May	0409 431 844

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

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

General meetings of the Society are generally held on the 4th Tuesday of the month. Details of these meetings can be found in your newsletter and reminders are placed in the local press. Be sure to check details as meeting dates may differ from this.



## COMING EVENTS

### FABULOUS FISHING HARBOUR

Cool off with a wander around the Fremantle fishing harbour at our meeting on **Tuesday 27 February**, where Sally May, Head of the Maritime History Department of the Western Australian Maritime Museum, will lead us in an exploration of the fascinating development of the natural coastline, the history of the jetties, moles and harbours, and the development of the fishing industry.

After the tour, anyone interested is invited to join us for a meal of fish and chips at the legendary Cicerello's!

Meet at **7pm** at the CAT stop at the Shipwrecks Museum, **corner of Cliff Street and Marine Terrace**.

#### **A NEW LOOK AT AN OLD FRIEND**

Many of you will have noticed some changes at the Fremantle Arts Centre (aka the Asylum) of late. Stage 2 of conservation works has been completed including the replacement of gable finials on the western façade which had been destroyed around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Finials are typically carved in stone and used to decorate and emphasise the gable of a building.

Architect Jeff Considine has spent considerable time researching and accurately recreating the appropriate details and proportions of the finials using a range of techniques. He will explain some of these and his findings at our March meeting.

Friend to many of you and long time Fremantle History Society member Margaret McPherson has also spent much time researching this historic site. Margaret will join Jeff at the meeting to help provide members and the guests with a well rounded history of the building and its use.

Make the most of these extra hours of daylight by joining us at the **Fremantle Arts Centre** on **Tuesday 20 March** at **6.30 pm** for a comprehensive look at this old friend. The usual convivial refreshments will be served after the meeting.

**NB – we will be meeting on the THIRD Tuesday in March not the fourth as is our usual custom**

#### **APRIL ANNOUNCEMENT**

We are still finalising details of our April meeting. A flyer will be forwarded in plenty of time for you to make plans to join us.



## **MEETING REPORTS**

### **FREMANTLE STUDIES DAY**

Another very successful Fremantle Studies Day was held on 28 October in the Reception Room of the Fremantle City Council, with some fifty members and friends attending. Sandra Murray, curator at the Fremantle Prison, started off the day with a fascinating look at the intricacies of organising an exhibition which involved bringing in documents and artefacts from various parts of the world. A notable feature of the talk was the amount of travel and detective work necessary to track down new memorabilia which shed fresh light on the *Catalpa* story and the escape of the Fenians. Yet another aspect of the famous escape was presented by Allen Graham who looked at the famous escape from the viewpoint of Patrick Moloney, the proprietor of the Emerald Isle hotel in Fremantle where the organisers had their headquarters and plotted their strategy.

Archaeologist Shane Burke gave an eye-opening talk on the extent of historical information revealed during his recent digs in the West End, and highlighted the ease with which important evidence can be destroyed by careless bureaucratic intervention before material that has been uncovered has been inspected and assessed by archaeological experts. Finally academic and writer Pamela Statham Drew presented a lively and informative paper on the history of the sandalwood trade and its impact on Western Australia, covering the early years of the colony, the part the trade played in ushering in the convict era, and its later impact on the gold rushes and its fortunes during the depression of the 1930s as well as more modern developments.

Committee members excelled themselves in providing a truly magnificent afternoon tea, and we thank the City of Fremantle for providing us with a free venue and complimentary tea and coffee facilities!

## CELEBRATING AT THE SAIL & ANCHOR

The Fremantle History Society is building up quite a reputation for sumptuous celebrations of Christmas, held in interesting places. In 2005 it was the Fremantle Club: last Christmas members gathered on the balcony of the Sail and Anchor to sip champagne while vegetarian skewers and steak sizzled on the barbecue. A highlight of the evening was the Christmas music superbly played by The Sopranos, who had been persuaded to take part by committee member Sally May.

The history component of the evening came from committee members Bob Woollett and Ron Davidson. Bob concentrated on the Freemasons' in its early days. He used quotes from early local newspapers and other sources. The hotel was built for James Gallop in 1903. It became a watering spot for those travelling with their produce to the markets opposite or theatre-goers from the Dalkeith Opera House.

Ron focused his story from the forties to the sixties when first Merton then his widow Emelda Day became legendary Fremantle hotel managers and football supporters came across from Fremantle Oval for liquid refreshments at half-time during a game. Ron's material came from interviews he conducted with Emelda Day, while he was writing his book, *Fremantle Impressions*, which will be launched by Fremantle Arts Centre Press in March.

Another highlight of the evening was Fay Campbell's rich home-made Christmas cake, and a burst of carol singing led by our guest musicians closed the very enjoyable evening.

Special thanks to committee member Sally, Fay, Bob and Ron for their exceptional contributions to our festivities.



Dear Editor

Where have all the Fremantle farriers gone?

I know of one, my nephew, who was born at St Helen's Maternity Hospital, Moss Street, East Fremantle. His name is Don Steedman. Great grandson of Tony Lippiatt of 'Threeanin' fame, Don loved being around horses so spent a lot of time on his great grandfather's property in Onslow Street, East Fremantle. When he turned fourteen years of age he left school, declaring that he only wanted to be a farrier.

Not long after he left school he became an apprentice farrier to Alby Mollett, also well known in Fremantle.

In 1980 Don had been a farrier for twenty-five years. He shod five of the ten finalists in that year's Channel 7 WA Derby final, held at Gloucester Park, among which was San Simeon\*. Don's photo was in The West Australian newspaper on 17 April 1981(?) with San Simeon. This story brings in another well-known Fremantle identity, Howard Porter, whose son Lyall owned San Simeon.

Don has two sons, both of whom are farriers, Brett and Scott Steedman. I think Don Steedman is worthy of being recorded in Fremantle racing history.

Best wishes for Xmas to you and your family, and to all Fremantle History Society members. May there be peace on earth in 2007.

Sincerely

Shirley Lippiatt

\*San Simeon was a glamour pacer in the 1980s



## NOTES FROM THE LOCAL HISTORY COLLECTION

Alison Bauer

We have had a busy time as usual during the last quarter with staff on leave and one volunteer away for six weeks. However, we have been glad to welcome back Lorraine Stevens for one day per week after her extended break.

Kristi McNulty and Alison Bauer attended the ICOMOS Conference, held in November. This was a very interesting and stimulating conference with sessions which highlighted the tensions between the preservation of history and change and development in port cities throughout the world.

Staff also attended a presentation at FTI of three minute Digital Storytelling. Digital Storytelling is a process which conveys personal subject matter and enables the participant to master multimedia. This is aimed at seniors and the stories obtained have great potential as a complement to the Oral History process in building a social history of Fremantle.

We also attended a function on 14<sup>th</sup> December to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Battye Library at which Professor Geoffrey Bolton gave a very interesting talk on its history. Many historians and past Directors and staff of Battye Library were among the guests.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> January I went to the launch of the replacement finials at the Fremantle Art Centre. We had an interesting discussion with Jeffrey Considine about the processes involved in the work done so far and about plans for disabled access to the upper levels of the building. As with so many of the projects discussed at the ICOMOS Conference, the Arts Centre restoration reveals conflicts between a desire for greater use and accessibility and the preservation of the structure in its original form.

The LHC has received a number of new items in the last quarter. These include: two visitors books and accompanying memorabilia from HMAS *Fremantle*; A History of the St John Ambulance Volunteer First Aid Service; Celebrating the Centenary of the East Fremantle Bowling Club; *Old Fremantle Childhood* by John Dowson; The Arthur Grady Story; The Mighty Maggies of Gilbert Fraser Oval (North Fremantle Amateur Football Club) and Swan River Letters. In addition, we received a very large donation of photos covering the construction

of the *Duyfken* from start to launch; and a file of notes on the Fremantle Volunteer Defence Corps. Lorraine has also completed a 12 cassette and CD Oral History with Jennifer Bourke on growing up in Hilton in the 1940s and 1950s.



## **AT LAST – WE HAVE AN HISTORIAN AT THE PRISON!**

For a number of years the Fremantle History Society has lobbied a series of Ministers for Housing and Works to have a historian appointed to the Fremantle Prison Advisory Committee. At the end of November last year we received a letter from the current Minister, Michelle Roberts, advising us that she had appointed Dr Bill Leadbetter to the Prison Advisory Committee as an expert in history.

This represents a major step forward. Dr Leadbetter is Senior Lecturer in Social Science Education and History at Edith Cowan University, and a member of the History Council of WA.

We have contacted Dr Leadbetter, who seems eager to promote history at the Prison, and has indicated a willingness to meet with us and discuss how this may best be achieved.

This is a major victory for the Fremantle History Society, and we look forward to working with Dr Leadbetter to strengthen connections between the Prison and researchers within university departments so that the rich seam of social history available through the Prison archives can be more fully explored.



## **HOBSON'S CHOICE ON VICTORIA QUAY** Ron Davidson

The Fremantle History Society voted to put its logo on advertising for a ratepayers' meeting, to protest about the proposed high-rise ING commercial development on

Victoria Quay. A large number of society members were among a standing-room-only crowd of 700 in the Fremantle Town Hall. A series of strong motions were passed opposing the development's mass and height.

That was not the end of it however, as many had hoped. Fremantle Ports and ING commissioned Murdoch University to conduct a 'community workshop' where the 190 people attending were given the choice of only two buildings, both high-rise; both were higher than in the state government endorsed master plan for the area. The consultation method used in the workshop was not suitable for the task at hand, making the whole process what Carmen Lawrence called a 'push-poll' sham. But still the six-storey alternative was announced as the preferred option.

A number of History Society members have now been urging the Fremantle City Council to conduct its own community consultation using appropriate sampling and measurement methods when the ING-Fremantle Ports proposal is presented to Council in the next few weeks.



#### **GLEANINGS FROM THE HERALD 4** David Hutchison

In the issue of 27 April 1867, there was, at last, a report of some action towards the development of the inner harbour.

*The works at the mouth of the Swan [the Trigg Cut] have been inspected by the Board; present Capt. Roe, Mr James Manning, Capt. Harding, and Mr. H. Trigg and instructions given to remove a rock which was to Seaward of the entrance. [The Board reported that] the channel through the rocky bar has been blasted to its full extended width of 100 feet, with the exception of a projecting rock, which the warder in charge has been ordered to remove. That the average depth of the water on the bar was from 4 ½ feet to 5 feet on a rocky base.*

I recall reference to a comment—I think in Patsy Brown's book, *The Merchant Princes of Fremantle*—that Fremantle merchants feared that, when the Trigg Cut through the rocky bar was completed, boats would sail past Fremantle and go on to Perth.

On the 18 May 1867, there was a reference to *The Knowle*, the residence built for Capt E.Y.W. Henderson the first Comptroller-General of the Convict Establishment, now in the grounds of Fremantle Hospital.

*Announcement of the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Wakefield, who have taken up residence in Perth. We much fear that there is no hope of the beautiful official residence of the Knowle being restored to its appropriate use when we look at its present occupants, and compare them with those who delighted to improve its natural beauties by the cultivation of all that has intellectual dispensing a graceful hospitality to everyone who had the pleasure of being acquainted with them, we cannot but think that the intelligence of the uses to which is doomed will cause feelings of deep mortification and regret, in which the whole population of Fremantle will sympathise to fullest extent.*

In the 'blue file' for 16 Alma Street, in the Fremantle Local History Section, the following dates are given for the *Knowle*: 1853, completed; 1867; became the Imperial Invalids' (that is, convicts') Depot—these invalids were later transferred to the prison grounds; 1895, Government decides to transfer *Knowle* from prison control to enable the town to use it as a public hospital; the patients moved in 1897.

I cannot find any reference yet to 'Mr and Mrs Wakefield'.

Escapes of convicts and crimes committed by them are still being reported, as in the issue of 1 June 1867:

*William Johnson, Pensioner, charged in the Coroner's inquest with the manslaughter of Alcock, another Pensioner, has been*

*committed to trial at the next sessions on the more serious charge of wilful murder.*

*Three prisoners broke out of the Establishment between 12 and 3 o'clock a.m. yesterday.*

However, as the paper commented in its next issue, the settlers were beginning to wonder whether labour would be available in future for public works.

*We have often asked ourselves the question when travelling about the country, how all these interminable miles of road are to be kept in repair when the labor by which they are now preserved in a tolerably passable state, is withdrawn.*



## **FREMANTLE LOCAL HISTORY AWARDS 2007**

The Fremantle History Society will again join other sponsors of the Local History Awards 2007, an important component of the Heritage Festival. The festival runs from 27 May to 4 June this year and has three parts. One is the published open award for the outstanding work from the last five years. First prize in this section is \$500 and second \$250. The unpublished open award carries similar prizes and covers work produced over the same period (since 2002). The unpublished work can have a word count of 3,000 to 15,000.

In the 2007 Young People's Award primary and secondary school students are encouraged to explore and present history-based projects in media such as written or digital or artistic formats, oral presentations, drama scripts including skits, video or DVD projects. A free teachers' resource kit is available on request. All contestants in this section must submit a brief summary providing a historic underpinning to the project. Prize money is \$150 for first, \$50 second, and a book/art supply voucher for third.

Fremantle History Society and its members did well in last year's awards. Our journal, *Fremantle Studies Vol 4*, won the published section with member David Hutchison's *Fremantle Walks* taking out second prize. Another member, Allen Graham, won the best unpublished work prize for his paper on 'Patrick Moloney – the story of a Fremantle publican and his connection to the Fenian fright of 1881'. This was Allen's second win in this category. Yet another Society member, Graham Nowland, took out second prize with 'Fremantle and the novel'. Allen's paper will be published in the forthcoming *Fremantle Studies*, while Graham is revising his for publication in *Westerly*.

Members are encouraged to carry on this proud record and submit any eligible material they may have been working on! For enquiries about conditions of entry and application forms telephone 9432 9812: applications close at noon on 1 May 2007.



## **THE BLOCKS: AN ACCOUNT OF LIFE IN THE FREMANTLE AREA IN THE EARLY 1900S (Part 2)**

**Rusty Christensen**

On an adjacent highpoint to the south was a reservoir filled with water pumped from the jail and reticulated to residences on the lower levels of Fremantle. The limestone stretched away to the east. Should one stand on Monument Hill facing east today, you would see it as far as the golf links and further to the right is White Gum Valley. Look to the left of High Street and you would be seeing the area known as 'The Blocks'.

The turn of the century saw locals purchasing their piece of paradise in The Blocks, although paradise it wasn't. No connected water, no gas, no electricity, no roads or footpaths. The early residents of the area were pioneers and did it tough. An earlier settler named Jarvis had established an orchard with a well on an acre of land on the corner of High and Chudleigh Streets. The new arrivals carted water in four gallon kerosene tins from his well to their homes.

Kero tins were a symbol of life on The Blocks. Kerosene was the universal fuel for cooking, lighting and as a luxury, heating. The pine boxes in which came two four gallon square tins containing the flammable liquid were put to all manner of household uses from seats, storage shelves, tables, etc. The product was named Laurel kerosene, so the houses were said to have a 'Laurel' suite, meaning some or most of the furniture and fittings had been improvised from the ubiquitous boxes.

Earlier substantial homes had been built, mainly at the western end and along parts of High, Marmion, Forrest and Holland Streets. The remainder was a collection of various construction and design. Building materials were scarce and expensive, there was little supervision, allowing The Blocks battlers to have a free hand when constructing their creature comforts, often from recycled or materials scrounged from demolition sites or wherever they could be obtained. The Pearse family, of Pearse Brothers boot and shoe factory in North Fremantle were the developers of the blocks. My father told me how Mr Pearse came around every Saturday in his horse drawn buggy to collect the two shilling (20 cent) payment as the battlers paid off their piece of dirt.

As stated, I grew up in the area. I sold papers through it during the war years, so I saw the people and the houses at close hand before most of the quaint cottages on small blocks were sold and demolished to make way for modern houses with garage. One I vividly recall for its dirt floor and the inhabitants eating a meal in the light of a kerosene lamp. Another on the next corner where a fine double storey house now stands had a flat corrugated iron roof and was clad with flattened tar drums. It was home to a large family who slept double in their beds. This was not unusual; it was the norm – on The Blocks.

In the early part of the century, many of the battlers lived in tents, causing parts of The Blocks to be called 'Canvas Town'. The residents were a hardy lot with a sense of

camaraderie, mostly working class, with a sprinkling of small business proprietors. Horse owners had been encouraged to shift out of Fremantle, consequently there were cartage contractors, racing stables and those who could afford to keep a horse and buggy for transport. Everybody else either rode a push bike or went on 'Shanks' Pony (walked) until the tram service was installed up Marmion Street to Onslow Street, to High Street, terminating at the cemetery.

As the population increased, the demand for goods and services grew. McFetridge's dairy was in the valley in Holland Street by Carrington Street. The milkman delivered fresh milk before daybreak from his horse and cart, serving the milk out from his hand can into the jugs, billycans and various containers left out overnight for him. The butcher covered the area in daylight hours with his box shaped horse drawn cutting cart, the meat, scales and necessary knives, choppers etc suspended from rails inside the cart, with a chopping block across the rear. He would announce his presence with a loud 'BUTCHER' which would bring the lady of the house out to select her needs and after some banter, pay or put in 'on the slate', meaning to book it up.

The baker in his canvas topped horse drawn cart followed much the same tracks as the butcher. He would pull up at a customer's house, select the loaves he thought may be required, place them in a wicker basket, then proceed to the kitchen or rear door. To announce his arrival he gave a sharp cry of "BAKER". As the residents didn't move far, most of the baker's accounts were also settled off the slate.

The grocer did a dual trip. The first was to write up a lengthy order. They called weekly or fortnightly. He (they were always males, women were yet to be liberated) would arrive at the back door to be invited into the kitchen by the lady of the house and after exchanging pleasantries and gossip, the order would be written. A day or so later it would be delivered, sometimes by another person depending on the size of the firm. Again most of these transactions were on

the slate; the grocer usually had a shiny black covered note book in which the purchases and agreed price were recorded and usually settled on pay day.  
(to be continued)



#### FOR YOUR DIARY

**Tuesday 27 February – Fabulous Fishing Harbour.** Be surprised by what you can learn about this familiar spot, then round off the evening with a fish and chip dinner. Meet at **7pm** at the CAT stop at the Shipwrecks Museum, **corner of Cliff Street and Marine Terrace.**

**Tuesday 20 March** Enjoy the beautiful surroundings of the Fremantle Arts Centre and learn a little about the building and its history and just what goes into conserving an historic place. **Fremantle Arts Centre, Finnerty St, 6.30 pm.** (please note this is the third Tuesday and not the fourth as is usual).

**April meeting** – dates, time and location to be confirmed.



#### CY O'CONNOR ANNUAL ADDRESS

David Dolan, professor of Cultural Heritage Studies at Curtin University and Chair of the National Trust of Australia (WA) will deliver this year's CY O'Connor Annual Address.

This event is held every year on or about the anniversary of O'Connor's death and celebrates the legacy of O'Connor's life and his work. Rather than concentrating on the history of O'Connor, speakers are invited to explore broader issues that influenced O'Connor in both his personal and professional life and apply them to their field of interest. This includes issues of innovation, sustainability, integrity and excellence.

In this richly illustrated lecture, Prof Dolan will focus on the work of the engineers of the Victorian and Edwardian eras as their various endeavours not only reshaped the landscape but changed forever the way we experience, conceptualise, depict and understand the environment.

The lecture is presented in conjunction with Engineers Australia and will be held on **Thursday 15 March** at their offices at **72 Murray St, West Perth.** Please arrive by **5.45 pm for a 6.00 pm start.**

Bookings essential – RSVP to Julie Hutchens on 9321 6088 or [trust@ntwa.com.au](mailto:trust@ntwa.com.au) by 13 March.

Entry is by donation and all proceeds go to the Trust's Golden Pipeline project.



#### **Ron Reminiscing ...** **Anne Brake**

Many of you have had the absolute pleasure of being entertained by our very own newsletter editor's reminiscences of Fremantle life whether it be through articles in our newsletter or at any number of meetings over the past 11 years. Now you can revisit these stories and read many more in a new book about to be released by the Fremantle Arts Centre Press.

*Fremantle Impressions*, by Ron Davidson will be launched by Carmen Lawrence on 7 March and will be an absolute must for anyone who has ever even walked the streets of this fascinating city. Its richness and colour, its smells and delights, its cruelty and candour are all here in Ron's very easily accessible and engagingly quirky style.

The book includes a range of wonderful images – historic and contemporary – to help illustrate these wonderful stories.

Look out for it in the bookshops.