



FREMANTLE HISTORY SOCIETY

Established 1994

The Secretary, PO Box 1305
FREMANTLE WA 6959

Summer Edition, 2011

Editors: Dianne Davidson, Anne Brake, Ron Davidson

**Patron: Dr Brad Pettitt,
Mayor of Fremantle**



Former mayor Bill McKenzie was in office when the Fremantle Port Authority passed the control of the Round House to the Fremantle City Council. Here he is returning in 1989 from an overseas posting and checking progress in restoring the City's oldest public building. (Fremantle Herald 1989)

THE ROUND HOUSE **David Hutchison**

The Round House, the first prison in the colony, is the oldest surviving public building in Western Australia. This year we celebrate its 180th anniversary. It was designed by Henry Reveley, whose father was an influential English architect. He lived and practised for some time in Italy. It is possible that his design of the Round House was influenced by coastal fort buildings in a part of Italy. It is built of local limestone, possibly quarried from Arthur Head.

In Italy, Reveley befriended the English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, whom he saved from Drowning. However, after Reveley left Italy

Shelley was drowned. Perhaps the colony gained a prison at the expense of the life of a poet.

The cells were arranged radially around a central courtyard, in the centre of which was a well. One cell, to the right of the entrance, was used as a kitchen and the one to the left as a warders' dining room. Two of the cells were fitted for use as privies and one, specially lined with wooden planking, was used for housing refractory prisoners. The teenage Pankhurst boy John Gavin, one of the 'juvenile immigrants' brought to the colony during the 1840s, was held there pending his hanging, on a gallows erected to the north of the steps, on Easter Saturday 1844. He was the first European and the only juvenile to be hanged in Western Australia.

The Round House's primary function was taken over by the Prison built for the Imperial Convict Establishment in the 1850s; it was then used as a lock up. The curfew bell was rung at the Round House every night at 9.50pm as a warning to 'ticket-of-leave' convicts to return to their lodging. Any 'bondsman' found outside after the curfew was locked up.

The Round House was later used as a women's prison and, from the late 1860s, as a transit prison for Aboriginal prisoners on their way to incarceration on Rottnest Island. Relatives of these prisoners gathered outside it during the night to talk, through the wall, to the prisoners. Colonial officials did not understand the psychological stress experienced by Aboriginals separated from their own lands and people.

In 1922 harbour works were planned and demolition of the Round House would have resulted. The Harbour Master argued for its retention as it sheltered his house – one of those on Arthur Head – from strong winds. When this house was demolished in 1928, the Round House was threatened again. Dr J S Battye, the Public Librarian, was chairman of the 1929 Centenary Committee and largely due to his efforts the building was saved again, but began to fall into disrepair.

During 1966 the standard gauge railway was extended past the end of High Street and the original steps were partly demolished and rebuilt in their present form. In 1973 the building was severely damaged by nearby quarrying.

In 1975 a grant from the recently established Australian Heritage Commission enabled conservation and restoration work. In 1983 the Round House and its surrounding reserve were transferred from the Fremantle Port Authority (now Fremantle Ports) to the City of Fremantle.

Additional information: By 1900 the Round House had been converted into a home for a constable and his very large family (10

children). They lived there for some twelve years, using the cells as bedrooms and as homes for ducks as well as for smoking fish! And there was another attempt at demolition by the Fremantle Harbour Trust (now Fremantle Ports) in 1955 when it issued a report claiming the place was too damp for a museum and urging demolition. It was saved by then Mayor WF Samson who declared in the *West Australian* (19 July 1955) that 'Fremantle would not be Fremantle without the Round House. The Round House is part of our heritage.' There was a further attempt to at least remove it from its original location by the Fremantle Harbour Trust; in 1966 it proposed that it be moved to the grounds of the Fremantle Arts Museum which was then in its planning stages. (Dianne Davidson)



COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Executive:

Anne Brake (President)	9336 5206
Prof Bob Reece (Vice – President)	9335 7892
Pam Hartree (Treasurer)	9432 9739(W)
Dianne Davidson (Secretary)	9430 6096

Committee Members:

Bob Woollett	9335 7451
Fay Campbell	9341 4102
Jenny Patterson	9438 3711
Cathy Hall	0407 086 300
Peter Conole	9319 2191
Ron Davidson	9430 6096

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.

The Fremantle History Society committee consists of a **President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer** and no less than 2 and no more than 8 **committee members**. This hard working team organise all the meetings for the year, Fremantle Studies Day and the production of the Fremantle Studies Journal. The committee also respond to a number of requests and lobby on behalf of the Society on a range of topics. And its fun!

If you would like to be a member of the executive of a committee member, we would love to have you. Complete the nomination form attached to this newsletter and return it to the Secretary at the address on the front page by **Tuesday 29 June**.



COMING EVENTS

Curtin Family Home

John Curtin was without doubt an ordinary man who did extraordinary things. As member for Fremantle, Curtin became the Prime Minister of Australia and steered the country through the dark days of World War II. The modest home in Jarrad St, Cottesloe which he shared with his wife Elsie and their two children has recently been restored by the National Trust with the assistance of the federal government's Jobs Fund Scheme.

Members and guests are invited to the home to see the house, hear stories about the lives of the Curtin family and learn about the future for this significant property. There is the chance to listen to an audio tour where 'Elsie' takes you through the house.

The tour and talk on the Curtin Family Home will be followed by our traditional refreshments.

Tuesday 22 February, 6pm. 24 Jarrad St Cottesloe. Parking is across the street on the verge. DO NOT park directly in front of the house.



John and Elsie Curtin's grandchildren outside the Jarrad St home, 20010 (G Pickering / NTWA)

The Round House turns 160

Come and help celebrate the Round Houses 160th birthday. Beth Bax from the Fremantle Volunteers Guides will give members and their guests a tour of this fascinating site and insights into its history.

Following the tour we will move to the Fremantle Society's new premises next door in Captain's Lane to enjoy some conviviality.

Sunday 27 March, 4pm. The Round House, Arthur Head, Fremantle.

April meeting – to be confirmed. Details will be forwarded closer to time.



SAVE THE US NAVY LAUNDRY! Madison Lloyd-Jones

While the Fremantle City Council's debate over the preservation or demolition of the American Laundry on the Arts Centre site may have snuck up on many of us, it has been so encouraging to read and listen to the many submissions put forward by local and professional historians about the significance of this site.

I agree with many others that this structure, commissioned and used by the United States Navy during their war time stay at what is now the Fremantle Arts Centre, is

such a rarity and should be preserved. So little evidence is left of the American presence and of war time conditions – although you wouldn't know it now, on the grounds of the Arts Centre, the Americans had also constructed naval stores for supplies and transport storage and servicing, recreation facilities, additional barracks and even a gas chamber! According to John Dowson and Rob McCampbell, this was used as a training facility 'to help locals prepare for a gas attack by the Japanese'. Maintaining the laundry site provides a rare glimpse into what once was.

The American presence in World War II was significant in Fremantle; beyond defensive contributions, the Americans had an acute influence on the Fremantle homefront - including economy, culture, social activity, military activity, gender relations and even in some instances on the landscape itself. Any opportunity to remember and connect with these past experiences is valuable. Historical preservation becomes increasingly important when we consider how far removed younger generations of Australians are from these experiences, and sadly acknowledge that we are losing veterans and civilians that can relay firsthand accounts of this period. While much work has been done, particularly by this Society and the Local History Collection to preserve oral histories, memorabilia and photographs this information has few opportunities to be displayed. I think it would be wonderful, as Cathy Hall, Wendy Markmann and others have suggested, if the Laundry site could be used as a local Museum displaying images and oral histories that tell Fremantle's homefront story.

Obviously, there are various ways in which the Laundry could be used, but first it needs to be saved.



Madison Lloyd-Jones (far right) with Fremantle Society President Jon Strachan and Fremantle History Society committee members, Cathy Hall and Anne Brake with the laundry building in the background. (Roel Loopers)



FREMANTLE HERITAGE GUIDES

Beth Bax

The Fremantle Heritage Guides were formed in 1998 under the auspices of the Fremantle Tourism Association. A licence covering the Round House, the grassed area, Whalers' Tunnel, the gun deck and the Gunner's Cottage was issued by the Fremantle City Council to operate the area as a tourist attraction between 10.30am and 3.30pm each day.

In 2000 the Guides became an incorporated body under the name Fremantle Volunteer Heritage Guides Association Inc. Our purpose is to pass on the history of the Round House and Arthur Head to tourists and of course to fire the cannon each day at 1pm. This has become a great tourist attraction. Using shipping movements sent to us each day we have revived one of the old customs of raising the flag for the country of origin as the ship comes into port. The flag is raised to the top of the mast as the ship enters the harbour and is flown until it reaches its berth.

Guiding is a very rewarding occupation as we are able to pass on the history of the early settlement and at the same time we meet people from all over the world. We have made many changes inside the Round

House, adding displays, information and many pictures depicting the early days of the port. There are plans for two more displays in what was the Guards' Quarters.

We are always in need of more guides and welcome any newcomers, supplying them with a partial uniform, free parking and a comprehensive history of the Round House.



EATING AND DRINKING IN EARLY SWAN RIVER COLONY

Bob Reece

During the early years, Moore enjoyed relating how he responded to the daily challenge of finding something that could be prepared by his cook, Hetty, for the dinner table at 'Millendon'. In his earliest report to his family on 28 December 1830 he wrote:

Our food is bread & coffee for breakfast, rice & pork for dinner, bread & coffee for supper. We sometimes but rarely have a little addition of fowls or fish but frequent shooting by a small party of soldiers here has made cockatoos (*the principal food*) rather scarce.

On 31 March 1831 he wrote:

I have just been out trying to forage something fresh for dinner and have brought in two cockatoos, two pigeons and number of fresh water shell fish ...so I shall fare sumptuously. I have described our usual meals – loaf bread ...and coffee for breakfast at 8; dinner on rice, pork and bread at one, and supper, about seven, of bread and coffee. Butter I have seldom tasted since I left Ireland; fresh butter but twice. It is surprising how indifferent people become to many things which we almost consider as necessary articles at home.

On 22 August 1831 he described what he had eaten at the house of a longer-established settler family nearby, possibly the Tanners:

Dined after church service yesterday on delicious kangaroo tail soup, a fine haunch

of ditto, lamb, a pair of fowls, ham and sausages, turnips, lettuce, onions, fruit-pies and plum and custard puddings. Just think of such fare on the Swan River, and confess whether your organs of taste can resist an extra humidity 'from bare imagination of the feast'. You know, however, that I *care little for these things, and detail them merely to show you that we have not always hard fare* [my emphasis].

In January 1832, however, he expressed some regret that what were regarded as the 'necessaries of life' at home were unaffordable at Swan River:

If I indulge in such things I must pay heavily ... I have not tasted butter except for 8 weeks before my cow died, nor milk except some goat's milk in my tea. Fresh meat I have not tasted save when we shot a bird or so. It is now 1s 10d per pound. Eggs I have not tasted save at as it were by stealth. They are 6d a piece. Potatoes I have not tasted save the 'eyeless ends' of those for seed ... I paid 35s for the last [quarter], none to be had since. I have just this day opened small barrel of pork which I brought from Ireland. It is still delicious. With economy I hope it may last a month.

Within a month, things were looking (or rather, tasting) better:

Dinner time. I have just despatched a young fowl with some salt pork, rice, red cabbage & vinegar. Pork fat and our wild celery make capital parsley and butter'. With the exception of the potatoes, I question if you could have a much better dinner.

By January 1833, Moore's neighbour Henry Bull's farm was producing enough food to make his establishment virtually self-sufficient. This is his account of the dinner to which he sat down with seven others:

I wish to tell you what we had for dinner to shew our state of living. Almost everything was the produce of the farm – a roast goose stuffed with sage & onions, a pair of boiled ducks, a tongue (salt beef), potatoes & other vegetables, butter & onions, parsley & butter, a fruit dumpling, a tomato pie, cheese, two rock melons & a water melon,

with colonial beer and (Cape) wine. All these with the exception of the salt beef and wine were the produce of the farm.

At Christmas 1833, Moore

Killed a fine lamb which was baked into a great pie. This & plum pudding, washed down with ½ a gallon of rum and ½ a gallon of beer was the fare of my people.

He himself dined more grandly nearby with the Bulls and two dozen other guests: A fine roast goose, leg & loin of mutton, ham, vegetables of many sorts, as potatoes, french beans and cabbages. Then there were puddings, not forgetting the appropriate one of a great plum pudding, then cheese and sliced cucumber & onions, then water melon. This with wine & beer was our fare – all colonial except the wine and raisins.

By 1840, Moore was eating extremely well at home but had lost his early interest in relaying the details to his family, other than his successful cultivation of grapes, no doubt because he had lost hope that any of his family might join him. .

An appropriate way to end this account is to leave you with a recipe that says much about the determination of settler women to replicate the British diet in sometimes challenging conditions. As far as I can establish, no colonial recipe book was published anywhere in Australia until 1869, but there must in the meantime have been a good deal of circulation of hand-written favourites. The recipe I now reproduce was first devised (dare I say 'cooked up'?) by George Fletcher Moore's near neighbour and sometime hostess at Upper Swan, Mrs Hester Tanner, and recorded in her compilation of recipes and handy household hints that she commenced in 1831. Innovative as it was in its flexibility about the principal ingredient, neither this recipe nor any of the others in her collection stipulated the use of any ingredient indigenous to Western Australia. Markey was right when he emphasised the settlers' need to re-

create their own British way of life.

My curry:

Take the heart of a cabbage, that is the inside and nothing but the inside, pulling off all the leaves until it is about the size of an egg; chop this very fine; 2 apples in thin slices; the juice of a lemon; ½ teaspoonful of black pepper; 1 teaspoonful of cayenne; 1 large teaspoonful of *my* curry powder. Mix these ingredients well together. Now take 6 onions that have been chopped finely and fried brown; a garlic head about the size of nutmeg chopped very fine; 2 ozs. fresh butter; 2 tablespoons of flour; 1 pint of strong beef or mutton gravy. When these are boiling, add the former ingredients mixed, and let the whole be well stewed together. If it is not hot enough add cayenne and now add a fowl that has been roasted and nicely cut up; or a rabbit, or some loin chops of pork; or mutton, or lobster, or *the remainder of yesterday's calf's head, or anything else you may fancy* [my emphasis], and you must have an excellent curry for the kings to partake of; mark that in this way you can *curry anything* [my emphasis] ... serve it up warm.



NAMES – MOSTLY FREMANTLE Rusty Christensen

When my father first went on to the wharf he also had wavy golden hair (from the Scandinavian in us) which attracted the name of 'Ginger'. For years that was his name, 'Ginger Chris' and it wasn't till hill hair began to go grey that he gradually became 'Old Chris'. He had two brothers on the wharf, Bill and Joni (Jack). They had been 'blue water sailors' prewar, spent the war years in Melbourne and had returned to Fremantle and the waterfront. I don't know how or why, but Bill's pants were always loose and hanging down, so he was called 'Baggy Pants'. Jack took better care of himself and was constantly washing his hands at the facilities provided, so he got 'Washy' and both names stuck.

A nickname was given if a worker had any deviation from the norm in appearance, intellect, work habits, personal conduct, hobbies or associations; they could be bestowed almost instantaneously. Some were insulting, some were brilliant and some were plain humorous. Some of the waterfront invented names were plagiarized and turned up in other walks of life. Most of the nicknames I have gathered here came before automation and technology wiped out most of the work force and 'characters' on the wharves and indeed Fremantle.

My 'Old Man' had many talents, and one of them was giving people nicknames. We lived alongside a small general store; the owner was a rather corpulent fellow and given to exaggerating. He and the old man didn't get along, so he collected two names. 'Mud Guts' and 'Bullshit Bill' was how he was always referred to within the family. I was the youngest and the only one home during the war. Dad was working long shifts and erratic hours. I recall on occasions bursting out laughing at the dinner table and Mother would enquire 'What was the reason for his sudden burst of hilarity?' To which Dad would respond 'Something that happened on the wharf'. Nuff said.

Taking the mickey and using nicknames was a part of life on the waterfront. Some of the standard names have gone the rounds; ones such as 'the judge' (he was always sitting on a case), 'the London fog' (was slow to lift), 'the parcel' (wrapped up in himself) are nicknames used in all ports around Australia, while others are localized names. It would be difficult to try and put them into categories. Back in those days Fremantle was much smaller where almost everybody knew or knew of everyone else, so nicknames were acceptable on or off the wharf. My collection is not essentially wharf specific, although heavily influenced by it. I hope you enjoy it.

'The all-night chemist' (he never shut up)
'The mirror' (the union official when asked about a complaint was always 'looking into it')

'Tea bags' (always getting into hot water)
'Thalium' (a slow working dope)
'DDT' (dumb, dopey and tired)
'The vomiting committee man' (always going to bring it up at the next meeting)
'General Motors' ((stock greeting 'How yu' holdin'? for a smoke or loan)
'Undies' (always on the bum)
'The barrister' (spent most of his time at the bar)
'The surgeon' (had his knife into everyone)
'The whale' (when working below, always wanted to come up for a blow)
'Hydraulic jack' (would lift anything)
'Old socks' (always saying 'Well I'll be darned')
'Axe head' (used to readily fly off the handle)
'Sorbent' (always in the toilet)
'The gunner' (always gunna do this or gunna do that)
'The wasp' (would 'sting' you or put the bite on for a loan; he was a 'wineo' and lived opposite us)
'Oigle' or 'the pig' (he looked like one. A true story went about him 'bunkering' a ship where the lumpers had to shovel coal from the coal hulk into huge baskets which were then taken aboard by the ship's gear. A supervisor named Doyle was watching the men at their dirty job when Oigle looked up and said 'What's the oil, Mr Doyle?' Quick as a flash the supervisor replied 'Dig, pig, dig.' There were many stories like that.)
'The mushroom' (a supervisor – you never knew where he would pop up).



LOCAL HISTORY COLLECTION NEWS

Pam Hartree

In December Local History staff and oral interviewer Heather Campbell attended the presentation of the Lance Holt Oral History project. The school children were interviewed earlier in the year but the presentation was delayed as Lorraine Stevens, one of the interviewers for the project, was on extended leave. The mayor Dr. Brad Pettit assisted with the presentation. The school was very happy to be involved in the project and the interviews

provide a different aspect of the sense of Fremantle through the eyes of eleven and twelve year old students.

Recently added to the collection is the oral history of Betty McGeever, who retired as City Librarian at Fremantle City Library in 2005. The interview provides an extensive and detailed history of the library from 1957 and Betty tells the story with numerous anecdotes about people, places and events in Fremantle and the library over the years.

An oral history interviewers meeting was also held in December to discuss future projects and the focus for interviewing in the next twelve months. Interviewers are keen to pursue interviews of people who have come to Fremantle as refugees to capture part of that history and research is being undertaken to find people who may be willing to be interviewed.

Family history queries continue to be a large part of our reference work and research is being assisted by the increasing number of databases which are available online. Staff is constantly updating their skills in using these databases to provide a comprehensive service in this area.

The total number of visits, phone and email enquiries in the quarter was 704.

Recent additions to the collection include:
Early Days : Journal of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society (Inc) : Volume 13, Part 3. 2009
LH 994.1 EAR

Early days of Fremantle : Mr. Hitchcock's reminiscences, early residences and buildings / edited by Bob Reece, 2010
LH 994.11 HIT

Fighting for Fremantle : the Fremantle Society story / Ron and Dianne Davidson. 2010
LH 363.6906 DAV

Fremantle Passenger Terminal 50 years : celebrating 50 years of arrivals and

departures on Victoria Quay / Fremantle Ports. 2010
LH 387.152 FRE

Fremantle Studies Day 2010 [sound recording] 2010
OH / FRE

Freo Yorgas [videorecording]. 2010
LH 305.89915 FRE

Investigation by the Electoral Commissioner into the City of Fremantle ordinary elections, May 2001, under Section 4.96 of the Local Government Act 1995. 2001
LH 352 ELE

The port of Fremantle and the Americas Cup : Fremantle, 1986-87 / by Captain John Barron. 1987
LH 797.14 BAR

Tall timber : brown paper and porridge : a childhood memoir / by Bob Primrose. 2010
LH B/PRI

Tree planting and preservation policy / revised by John Csendes, Parks & Gardens Co-ordinator. 2005
LH 715.2 TRE

Victoria Hall : heritage interpretation plan / Paul Kloeden. 2010
LH 725.8 KLO



FOR YOUR DIARY

Special preview of Curtin Family Home,
Note: this property is not generally open to the public.

Tuesday 22 February at 6pm. 24 Jarrad St, Cottesloe.

Parking across the street. Please do not park directly in front of the house.

Come and celebrate the Round Houses' 160th birthday.

Sunday 27 March, 4pm. The Round House, Arthur Head, Fremantle

April meeting – to be confirmed.