



FREMANTLE HISTORY SOCIETY

Established 1994

The Secretary, PO Box 1305  
FREMANTLE WA 6959

**Autumn Edition  
2011**

Editors: Ron Davidson, Dianne Davidson, Pam Hartree



Lecture Theatre Lionel Samson & Sons Pty Ltd, 31 Cliff Street  
Interiors project 1992 : a photographic archive of Fremantle West End interiors.  
Photograph courtesy of the Fremantle Society Inc.

## **SUPPORT THE FREMANTLE HERITAGE FESTIVAL!**

The Fremantle History Society is playing a major role in this year's Heritage Festival in late May and early June. Our society is hosting three events and sharing another two with the Fremantle Society.

The festival comes at a time when the Fremantle City Council is considering watering down the Heritage Festival by combining it with the Fremantle Festival with which it has little in common. The Fremantle History Society and the Fremantle Society have protested with a joint letter to the Council about this diminishing of the status of heritage in Fremantle. We need good crowds at each event to indicate the degree of support there is in the community for a stand alone Heritage Festival.

Conservation architect Alan Kelsall will talk on limestone restoration in St Patrick's Basilica and compare it with earlier work on the other side of the street at Fremantle Boys' School. Ron Davidson will repeat his popular talk at Fremantle Prison on the love and crime affairs of Kate Leigh, Tilly Devine and Ernest 'Shiner' Ryan. Making Maria Montessori is an evening with sculptor Greg James at his studio in J shed..

On the shared program with the Fremantle Society is a club crawl over four city clubs, an open heritage visit to some of Fremantle's finest heritage buildings including the Talbot Hobbs classic, the Elder building.

The festival program starts with folk singer Bernard Carney at the Town Hall on Friday, May 27th. The Fremantle Society is hoping for a full house.

Free Fremantle Heritage Week programs will be available shortly.



## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Executive:

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

Committee Members:

Bob Woollett	9335 7451
Cathy Hall	0407 086 300
Fay Campbell	9341 4102
Jenny Patterson	9438 3711
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.



## COMING EVENTS

### Fremantle History Society Heritage Week Events

#### Conservation Works at St Pat's

At this meeting conservation architect Alan Kelsall introduce Society members and Heritage Week visitors to the limestone restoration work he supervised at the St Patrick's Basilica recently. But before he does this he will take us to the Fremantle Boys School (now the Film & Television Institute) which represents an earlier method of stonework.

This is an excellent opportunity to view the interior of the Basilica, which has been extensively restored.

**Saturday 28 May, St Patrick's Basilica, Adelaide Street, 3-4pm**

#### Making Maria Montessori

As the title indicates sculptor Greg James has been working on a statue of the famous educational innovator, which will eventually sit on the wall at the Leighton Montessori School.

The visit will be particularly interesting with work on the statue being advanced while we watch. Greg is a great presenter who involves his audience in the project. You will find the process of creating sculptures quite fascinating!

There will be drinks and nibbles to make this a most attractive evening.

**Wednesday 1 June, J Shed, Fleet Street (at entrance to South Mole), 7pm**

#### Sydney and Fremantle's Underbelly

Ron Davidson will repeat his very successful talk about the connection of Sydney's warring underworld queens Kate Leigh and

Tilly Devine with Fremantle criminal and later folk hero Ernest 'Shiner' Ryan.

It's a little known story that makes for fascinating listening – so if you missed it the first time around, take this opportunity during Heritage Week!

**Thursday 2 June, Fremantle Prison, 3-5pm (entry through Main Gate, escort will be provided)**



### **Fremantle History Society/Fremantle Society Joint Events**

#### **Open Heritage Day, Sunday 29 May**

This will be an opportunity to view the interiors of prominent buildings not normally accessible to the public.

We begin with a visit to the Samson House in Ord Street at 12 noon where prominent educator and Fremantle personality Mike Lefroy will guide us through and tell us its story. Then we move on to Lionel Samson & Sons in Cliff Street, the business premises and early home of the pioneering Fremantle business family at 1pm. At 2pm eminent architect Michael Patroni will escort us through the Elder building on the corner of Phillimore and Cliff Street, in which he has a particular interest, being part owner. Then at 3pm we will be introduced to the interior of the Chamber of Commerce at 16 Phillimore Street.

Finally everyone will be invited to adjourn to the Fremantle Society's headquarters in Captain's Lane at the back of the Round House for sundowner and refreshments at 4pm!

#### **Club Crawl**

This Club Crawl, organized by Don Whittington and Ron Davidson for the Fremantle Society and the Fremantle History Societies provides a rare opportunity to see and even have a drink in four of

Fremantle's historic clubs.

The Crawl starts at the Wyola Club in High Street at 3.30 pm then goes on to the Navy Club and the Buffalo Club before finishing at the Workers' Club at 5.30pm.

There will be short talks of the rich histories of each of the venues, and some refreshments will be provided.

**Friday 3 June, 3.30pm. RSVP to Don (9335 6091) or Ron (9430 6096).**



#### **Fremantle Society Events**

##### **Songs and Stories with Bernard Carney**

Bernard has been in the Fremantle and WA music industry for four decades. Bernard will tell stories about 40 years in the WA music industry and sing songs from that period. The second half will see Bernard joined by David Hyams and other musicians and play songs from his new CD.

The Fremantle Society will host a bar.

**Friday 27 May, 7.30pm, Fremantle Town Hall. \$14.95 for Fremantle Society and Fremantle History Society members; \$19.95 pre-sale for general public; \$24.95 for general public at the door (\$19.95 for members). For pre-sale tickets contact [jon.strachan@dalystreet6162.com](mailto:jon.strachan@dalystreet6162.com) or at 0417 901 809**

##### **Heritage Q+A.**

The format for this evening will be like the ABC TV program of the same name. There will be a mediator, hopefully Robyn Johnston and six panel members.

Questions will be asked of the panel via email and from the audience.

This is a free event, with a request for donations. Deckchair will operate a bar and the Society will provide snacks.

**Tuesday 31 May, 7.30pm-9pm, Victoria Hall. Doors open 7pm.**

### **Lunatic & Artists**

This is a repeat of last year's popular talk on the Fremantle Asylum and Arts Centre by John Dowson and Rob Campbell.

**Sunday 29 May, 3pm, Fremantle Arts Centre.**

### **Don's Tram Tours**

Experience the story of *Fighting for Fremantle* - the history of the Fremantle Society, written by Ron and Dianne Davidson, which was launched by the Premier late last year. On this tram tour with a difference, Don Whittington will show you what Fremantle would be like had the Fremantle Society not lobbied to preserve so much of our heritage. Don was a City of Fremantle Councillor 1975–1984, including six years as Chair of Planning, during a time when many heritage battles were won. He served as President of the Fremantle Society in the late eighties and currently chairs the Planning and Heritage Committee.

**Saturday 4 June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2pm & 3pm leaving from The Fremantle Arts Centre. Cost \$10. (Bookings essential): [rbelben@iinet.net.au](mailto:rbelben@iinet.net.au) or phone Don and Ruth on 9335 6091 or 0400 201 4441.**



**FREMANTLE HISTORY SOCIETY AGM**

Our Annual General Meeting this year will be held in the big hall of the Film & Television Institute in Adelaide Street.

Eminent scholar and economic historian Reg Appleyard will present a talk about the Fremantle port before the creation of the CY O'Connor harbour.

We will have the usual copious refreshments afterwards – and you might consider nominating for the committee!

**Tuesday 26 July, 7pm, Film & Television Institute, Adelaide Street.**



## **MEETING REPORTS**

### **Curtin Family Home**

Members and friends from the Fremantle Society joined Fremantle History Society members at the February meeting held at the National Trust's Curtin Family Home in Jarrad St, Cottesloe. The very modest house was home to war time Prime Minister, John Curtin, his wife Elsie and their two children (also John and Elsie). After a couple of unsuccessful attempts and a short stint as member in the late 1920s, John Curtin was elected member for Fremantle from in 1934 until his death in office in 1945. He served as Prime Minister from 1941 - 1945. Elsie and their daughter, Elsie, continued to live in the house after John's death. Indeed 5 generations of the Curtin family, from Elsie's mother Annie (Grandma) Needham to great grand daughter Julie (check name) lived in the house which was built for John and Elsie in 1923. It was purchased with funds from both the commonwealth and state governments in 1999 and is now vested in the National Trust of Australia (WA).

Thanks to a federal government Jobs Stimulus Fund grant of over \$500 000, the National Trust has been able to do some conservation and interpretation planning for

the house and implement some urgent conservation works. A series of information panels have been placed in each of the rooms of the house to explain the history of the place and visitors have the opportunity to listen to 'Elsie' take them on a tour of the house through an audio guide system. There is also a booklet on the history of the house and its famous occupants and a comprehensive website.

Due to costs associated with the upkeep of the property, its location in a residential area and the lack of a complete collection of material relating to the Curtin family, the National Trust has decided to lease the house for short term accommodation making it available once a year through a guest curator program and a comprehensive web site. The money raised through the rent will assist in necessary and ongoing conservation works and contribute to the guest curator program.

The most entertaining part of the evening, however, was the chance to hear a number of anecdotes about the Curtins and their life at Jarrad St told by Elizabeth Hof who was the curator who worked with the National Trust on the interpretation planning and implementation. Many humorous, some quite poignant, these stories give an insight into an ordinary man who did extraordinary things and the family that loved and supported him.

### **The Round House Turns 160**

Our March meeting was held at that historic Fremantle institution, the Round House, which is celebrating its 160<sup>th</sup> birthday this year.

Shirley Burbidge, the president of the Fremantle Volunteer Guide Association, presented a very interesting and informative overview of the history of this oldest existing building in Western Australia. It only avoided demolition several times by a hairbreadth!

We all enjoyed the subsequent sundowner at the Fremantle Society's new headquarters in Captain's Lane.

Many thanks to Shirley and the Fremantle Society for making their premises available to us!



### **Sydney and Fremantle's Underbelly**

Ron Davidson had big competition when he spoke on Sydney and Fremantle's Underbelly at the FHS monthly meeting for April at Fremantle Prison. Just three hundred metres away at Fremantle Park Dylan was performing at Blues'n Roots before 20,000. Still the Fremantle History Society offering attracted more than 50 spectators.

The idea for the talk came when it was announced that there would be a new edition of the TV crime series *Underbelly* and it would feature the razor gang wars of Kate Leigh and Tilly Devine, Ernest Shiner Ryan's celebrated Everleigh payroll hold-up and the Fremantle romance of Kate and Shiner. Ron who wrote *High Jinks at the Hot Pool* and other books told how Shiner had become a Fremantle folk hero after a life of crime. He also told us how Shiner won Kate with a painting he did at Fremantle Prison. It was a brief marriage.

Ron will repeat the free talk on June 3rd at Fremantle Prison at 3pm. (see FHS Heritage Festival events in this issue)



**Important letter re Round House article in previous issue!**

Dear Dianne

I've been away and only read your newsletter on Monday this week, which I enjoyed, but would like to correct a common myth about the Powers family living at the Round House for twelve years from 1900.

This I understand comes from a recorded interview of Henrietta Stella Bean in 1976, shortly before her death. Unfortunately her memory wasn't too clear at that stage and while some of her recollections are correct the length of time the family stayed there is not.

The Heritage Guides had someone do a more in-depth research into the family and their time at the Round House. Yes, they did live in the Round House, but research showed that Thomas Powers arrived in Fremantle approx 1894/5, he joined the Police Force in 1896 and started his service with the Water Police on 1 May 1896. He was reprimanded several time during his time with the Water Police for being drunk and also reprimanded for insulting The Revd Basil Arundel in Fremantle in July 1897. He resigned from the Water Police on 31 October 1899 after another incident of being drunk on duty; he joined the WAGR in late 1899.

Passenger lists show that Mrs Henrietta Powers arrived in Albany in 1895. No record of when Thomas Powers arrived, but possibly 1894.

The Post Office Directories 1897 and 1898 show that Thomas Andrew Powers lived at South Beach (Marine Terrace). The directories of 1899 and 1900 show that Thomas Andrew Powers, Police Constable lived at the Round House.

The Post Office Directories 1901-1904 show that James Johnson of the Water Police lived at the Round House. As the lighthouse on Arthur's Head was demolished in 1905 it's highly unlikely anyone was allowed to lived in the Round House at that stage.

The Post Office Directories 1901 -1902 show the Powers family lived in Arundel Street; in 1903-1904 Beach Street, Fremantle.

As he joined the WAGR police in 1899, another government dept., it could have been he was allowed to live in the Round House. He resigned from the WAGR in 1901.

Hilda Alexandra Powers was born in 1902, and twin boys, Andrew and Stanley, born 1904. Andrew was killed in action in 1942 in PNG. So in fact there would only have been seven children living in the Round House during the family's time there. The last three were born after they left the Round House.

As far as I'm aware the Guides at the Round House tell the story as above, but then I've been away from there for quite a few years.

I'll forward my subs and also money for the new Journal shortly.

Regards  
Elaine (Berry)

## CONGRATULATIONS!

Warmest congratulations to the Fremantle Society for winning the Heritage Council's award for outstanding contribution to heritage by a community organisation.

All those years of fighting for Fremantle's heritage have finally borne fruit.

Well done – and well deserved!



**NAMES – MOSTLY FREMANTLE cont'd**  
Rusty Christensen

'Louie the fly' (a tally clerk, because of his appearance. I knew him well.)  
 'Spiral scissors' (another tally clerk, real name Cyril Spiers. Played the drums in a dance band, a character)  
 'Pallbearers' (I'll walk beside you – when cargo was being moved manually)  
 'Cyclone' (a slow moving depression)  
 'Watsons' (a well known small goods shop in High Street. Always had a pig's head with an apple in its mouth in the window)  
 'The Ceylon crow' (he was dark skinned)  
 'The Blue Lagoon' or 'the smoked ham' (was of West Indian origin)  
 'The swamp hen' or 'swampy' (lived in the swampy bush at the back of Bibra Lake)  
 'Lollyball head' (would be in fashion today – bald as a badger)  
 'Doctor Braund' (Bill Hewson, claimed he had a cure for cancer)  
 'Rough chops' (he seldom shaved. Also responsible for the term 'Roly Bradley socks' because he never wore any)  
 'A red ragger' (a common pre-war term, meaning a communist)  
 'Roy 'coon' Black' (he was dark, a former jockey and a good bloke, as was his son Roy jnr)  
 'Sausages' (was pinched taking some home wrapped around his body)  
 'Jack Davey' (Hi (I) Ho (owe) everybody)  
 'Big hat Smith' (he wore one)  
 'Tent head' (big and empty)  
 'Shag' (he didn't chew his food, just swallowed it, like a shag)  
 'Pot hole' (he was always in the road)  
 'Ernie the dog' (called everybody 'Pal'. He raced greyhounds)  
 'Batman' (couldn't do a job without Robin)  
 'The Loch Ness monster' (we know he's there but we can't find him)  
 'Billy goat Read' (he kept goats in Palmyra)  
 'Marbles' (he was as sharp as one)  
 'Peanut head' (had a head like a peanut)  
 'The cat' (his family name was 'Pussy')  
 'The Maori princess' and 'the ton of fun' (two girls from New Zealand who frequented the wharf providing home comforts to crew members of visiting ships. One claimed she was a princess. The other was a big girl)

'Smokey Woods' (there was 'Smokey' snr and jnr. Both named Frank)  
 'Tom 'Trapper' Reeves' (a personality on and off the wharf, told a good story and sang an above average song)  
 'Jones' cornucure' (cases of jam or preservatives from IXL Jones in Tasmania. The lumpers reckoned if you dropped one on your foot it would fix up your corns)

The foregoing is but a sample of the nicknames used on the wharf. It could be said what I have done so far is a work in progress. Fremantle was a close community in those far off days before it assumed the mantle of a city and the new breed moved in and before political correctness and multiculturalism became the norm. One would hesitate to refer to anyone as 'the queer bloke', 'the fat bloke' or 'two dicks' meaning he couldn't get so silly playing with just one.

The humour wasn't confined to the wharf; it often overflowed into the general populace of the town. There were so many places and names – I will list a few as they come to mind.

'The Tunnel' was the original tunnel under the Round House. The gates were never closed, so it was a meeting and camping place for the 'deroes', 'wineos' or 'plonkos'. Their outdoor living habitat was the three or four wooden lifeboats from the German raider *Kormoran* which was responsible for sinking the HMAS *Sydney* before being sunk itself. The crew came ashore in them near Carnarvon; the lifeboats were brought to Fremantle and left by a stone wall at the seaward end of the tunnel. I assume they deteriorated in the weather where they were.

'Horse and cart' – a bloke who drove the last horse and cart doing deliveries around town for wine and spirit merchants Burns Philp in William Street. He was a mate of

'Colin 'Abo' Crabbe. Crabbie was the last of the bare knuckle fighters in Fremantle, spent

most of the war years dodging the Provos (Military Police) or knocking over US servicemen who for some reason he didn't like. As a young bloke he was really wild, although he must have struck somebody as tough as himself along the way who bit off half of his nose. He had a notorious mate

'Edward Bernard 'Teddy' Sheridan, not as wild as Crabbie though a villain just the same, spent most of the war years in Fremantle gaol, became something of an escapeologist until being shot in the buttocks by a warder as he went over the wall which slowed him down.

'Shags' – another institution in town was Swansea cycles, owned and run by the brothers Baldwin, Howard, Les and Rolly, who all had a characteristic drawl. Their shop was in William Street and they had a factory in Newman Street. On the stem of each frame was a swan. They naturally supported the cycling fraternity who referred to them collectively as 'Shags'. **(to be continued)**



## LOCAL HISTORY COLLECTION

Pam Hartree

Family history research is flourishing and the Ancestry.com database continues to be well used.

The issue of the demolition of the US Laundry situated within the grounds of the Fremantle Arts Centre resulted in renewed interest and research in the site and historical plans were used extensively for research. As a result of the publicity several photographs were located which will add to the photographic history of the site.

Reformatting and digitization of the collection continues. In February further copies of the Fremantle *Herald* were microfilmed and this paper is now on

microfilm to 21st January 2001. This reformatting provides easier access to the papers and removes the hard copies from Archive Room. We also continued with the digitization of photographs and a selection of negatives and slides from the Brent Sumner collection, the collection of photographs of National Trust listed properties in Fremantle and photographs taken by Murray Edmonds whilst working for the Fremantle City Council have been processed by Media Fixation. A series of tax maps from the 1970s which were in poor physical condition were also digitized and printed which has helped with access to these maps.

Recently an extensive oral history was conducted by Lorraine Stevens with Ken Posney, former Director of Community Development with the City of Fremantle. The interview provides an insight of the extent of social change in Fremantle over the 30 years that Ken was responsible for community development. It illustrates how the council services have adapted and evolved to accommodate these changes.

It is also planned to conduct two further oral history projects in the next twelve months. Another involving school children from a government primary school will be conducted along with a project to interview refugees who are living in Fremantle. The collection would like to thank the Fremantle History Society who have offered to sponsor the refugee project.

Planning is underway for this year's Heritage Festival and Local History Awards. The festival runs from the 27th May to the 6th June and the Local History Collection has organized three events for Tuesday 31st May. This year we are displaying some of the treasures from the collection which people rarely get to see and we are sure that some of the items will entertain and fascinate all those who come along.

Last month was the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day and to

acknowledge this event a display was created to celebrate Fremantle women from all aspects of life. Women included Mary Higham, Hilda May Walsh, Joan Campbell, Marie Thorne, Dr Dorothea Parker, June Hutchison, Betty McGeever and Floris Mary Shaw to name just a few.

Recent additions to the collection include:

An assessment of the world heritage values of the Fremantle Asylum building, and advice on progressing nomination / by Dr Michael Pearson with assistance from Duncan Marshall. 2008  
LH 727.6 PEA

Bad habits : temptation and the divided self / Joanna Burnett Morrison. 2006  
LH 829.459 MOR

Gilbert Fraser Reserve precinct : conservation management plan / Prepared by Hocking Planning and Architecture. 2010  
LH 712.5 HOC

Interview with Kenneth Robert Posney / interviewed by Lorraine Stevens. 2011.  
OH/POS

'It's still in my heart, this is my country' : the single Noongar claim history / South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council, John Host with Chris Owens. 2009  
994.12004 SOU

Joseph John Talbot Hobbs (1864-1938) and his Australian-English architecture / John J. Taylor. 2009  
LH B/HOB

Prisoner information booklet : Fremantle Prison handbook for prisoners. 1991  
LH 365.9 FRE

Recorded talks for Fremantle Architecture Lectures / compiled by Adelphe King. 1984  
OH/KIN

Ring up the curtain : a short history of Gilbert and Sullivan in Western Australia 1879-1892. Coackley, Bill. 1992.  
LH 792.545 COA



#### FOR YOUR DIARY

**Saturday 28 May** – Alan Kelsall on conservation works at St Patrick's Basilica.  
**3-4pm**

**Sunday 29 May** – Open Heritage day exploring otherwise inaccessible Fremantle buildings. **Starts at 12 noon at Samson House, Ord Street.**

**Wednesday 1 June** – Making Maria Montessori at Greg James Studio, J Shed.  
**7-9pm**

**Thursday 2 June** – Sydney and Fremantle's Underbelly. **Fremantle Prison, 3-5pm**

**Friday 3 June** – Club Crawl through four historic Fremantle clubs. **3.30pm at Wyola Club, High Street**

**Tuesday 26 July** – The Society's AGM in the big hall at the Film & Television Institute.  
**7pm**