



## FREMANTLE HISTORY SOCIETY

Established 1994

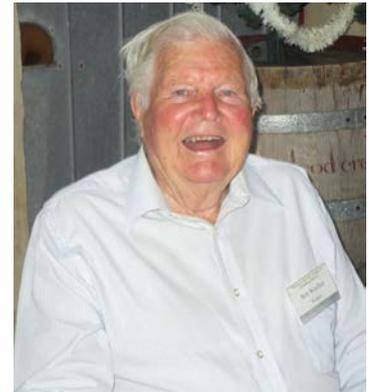
The Secretary, PO Box 1305  
FREMANTLE WA 6959

**Summer Edition, 2015**

Editors: Dianne Davidson, Anne Brake, Ron Davidson



Cup cakes to honour the 20<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations  
Made by our treasurer Pam Harris



Bob Woollett did the honours with  
the candles

### **YOUR SOCIETY IS 20 YEARS OLD**

Ron Davidson and Madison Lloyd-Jones

Stories of Fremantle's West End came to life again at Fremantle History Society's twentieth anniversary and Christmas dinner at Villa Roma, on November 28th.

We were shown into the Villa Roma courtyard where we enjoyed the twinkling lights and resisted picking grapes from the ripe vines draping the night sky. The two long tables set up were scattered with cheerful Christmas crackers, Fremantle History Society magnets (a memento to mark our 20<sup>th</sup> celebrations) and a table at the back of the room held lovely pink and white flowered cupcakes spelling 20.

A few new faces could be seen around the room, and others were very familiar but had not been seen in a while. Conversation didn't stop all evening. Nunzio's food was delicious and having dessert AND a cupcake was a treat. Bob Woollett, who attended with his two children and their partners, was invited to blow out the candles.

After our dinners were demolished, we were very much entertained by one of Fremantle's favourite story tellers, and our guest speaker, Larry Foley.



Irene and Alan Burroughs



Rusty and Jude Christensen



Ron & Di Davidson, Bob Reece



June Hutchison, Larry Foley

Larry (Foley) told us what it was like to be young again and living in Fremantle. His father George had operated out of 50 High St behind gold lettering which said *GEORGE FOLEY Tobacconist and Turf Commission Agent*; alias bookie. This meant considerable status and allowed the family to live comfortably in Ellen Street. Larry's father was killed when his Buick Straight 8 rolled. Cars were not common in Fremantle unless you were a bookie. The crash left the young family fatherless and broke and Larry's family moved in upstairs at the tobacconists.



Larry's mother flashed into action. She put up partitions to make rooms upstairs while downstairs the turf commissioner job continued seamlessly. This despite the fact that Muriel Foley knew nothing about horses and even less about betting on them.

Muriel is captured in this fine studio image by Izzy Orloff (left). Muriel later moved up to 60 High Street and ran the Everton Toffee Shop which became famous among American servicemen for the quality of its sweets.

Meanwhile Larry and his brother Barney played with the Smith children whose father owned the Fremantle Hotel. Being bookies was their favourite game captured here in the 1930s behind the real bookie at 50 High St. Larry



(left) is the bookies clerk and brother Barney calls the odds from the box.

They also swam off the Round House and watched as the freighter *Panamanian* caught fire and threatened the very existence of Fremantle.

The stories continued for 30 minutes and delighted the crowd.

(Photos courtesy the Foley family)

The Society's Christmas and Birthday Party were enjoyed by members, their family and friends.



Madison Lloyd-Jones & David Hutchison



Maia Williams and Sam Wilson



Alison Bauer & Helen Martin

(Photos thanks to Pam Harris)

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

### Executive:

Anne Brake (President) 9336 5206  
Prof Bob Reece (Vice – President) 9335 7892  
Pam Harris (Treasurer) 9432 9739(W)  
Madison Lloyd Jones (Secretary) 0433844290

### Committee Members:

Steve Errington 9367 5504  
Fay Campbell 9341 4102  
Jenny Patterson 9438 3711  
Cathy Hall 0407 086 300  
Peter Conole 9319 1551  
Ron Davidson 9430 6096  
Irene Burrough 9364 6527  
Jennifer Dudley

General meetings are held on the 4th Tuesday (or Sunday) 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 BRIDGES

Don Young, a retired bridge engineer and long-time member of Engineers Australia's Engineering Heritage Panel, will give members and their guests an insight into the history and ingenuity of the iconic Fremantle Bridges at our February meeting

We will start at 5.30 PM 'under' the 'old bridge (Fremantle side – just down from East St Jetty) and move to the new bridge during the evening. Those who are willing and able can walk between the bridges. Others may choose to drive.

For those who wish, we will move to The Left Bank for a refreshing after meeting beverage (at own expense).

Meet **under the Old Traffic Bridge** (Beach St) at **5.30PM on Tuesday 24 February**.

## ST JOHN'S CHURCH

CY O'Connor and his family worshipped at St John's. The family had their own pew. His funeral procession, the biggest in the state up until that time, left from outside St John's.

Hear stories about the famous and not so famous that have made up the life of St John's Church in the heart of Fremantle from Peter Reid.

Meet under the Town Hall clock at **12.30PM on Sunday 29 March**.

### FOR THE TOUCH OF A VANISHED HAND

80 of Fremantle's fallen, 1914-1918, are remembered on an Honour Board in St Paul's Church, Beaconsfield. The Honour Board serves as a means to recognise the contribution made by local men, and as a focus for the grief experienced by their families, friends and comrades. As time passes, it is easy for the stories of these men to be forgotten. Alan Pearson will bring these stories to light once again for us. The title of his talk comes from a line in the third stanza of Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem 'Break, Break, Break'.

Meet at **St Paul's Church, 162 Hampton Rd, Beaconsfield** at **6 PM on Tuesday 21 April**. This meeting is part of the National Trust 2015 Heritage Festival



### OFFICIALDOM AND CONVICTISM (Pt 2)

Peter Conole

Under the stewardship of Governor Charles Fitzgerald about half of the convicts already had or soon received 'tickets of leave' soon after arrival. Many were eventually allowed to seek private employment for wages. In terms of convict labour infrastructure projects were the key elements on the agenda. Perhaps the most important was Fremantle Prison. Construction began as early as May 1851 and vital building operations on that formidable stronghold

ended on June 1, 1855 – exactly one month before the Governor and his wife left the colony.

Fitzgerald deserves a lot of personal credit for mobilising all available resources to begin and finalise assorted infrastructure tasks in the colony besides the prison – and for creating a relatively humane convict system. His major working partner Captain Edmund



Henderson (Royal Engineers), the competent Comptroller General of Convicts, deserves equal credit and recognition.

Regrettably we have solid evidence that both gentlemen were unhappy about developments in WA. They were at the centre of stormy deliberations about the workings of the convict system back in England. The situation was bluntly described by Bishop Matthew Blagden Hale in a letter he wrote to a friend in England on November 3, 1857. The bishop was travelling on the transport ship 'Nile' and there had had been serious disturbances on board due to '*desperate characters*' among the convicts. He explained that in the early years low-risk offenders with good prospects of reforming themselves and prospering in the colony had been sent. However, over two years earlier prison officials in England broke their agreement with the Governor and the colonists and despatched numerous hardened offenders who often generated serious law enforcement issues after they arrived.

In 1856 an irate Charles Fitzgerald and Edmund Henderson fronted up to a Select Committee of both Houses of Parliament in London and poured out their grievances (the findings were published in a now hard-to-get

two volume report). Fitzgerald said things had degenerated since the early days and that only the arrival of more free settlers and increased capital investment could ensure the wellbeing of the colony. Henderson deplored a perceived increase in crime and immorality in WA since the change of policy and said that system should be terminated rather than force the colony to accept more hard core criminals. Committee member Horatio Waddington claimed transportation was a bad thing in itself, '*failing to deter criminals at home or reform them abroad*'.

The situation was allowed to drift on and Governor Fitzgerald's successors found them themselves in the position of having to introduce harsher systems for managing convicts. Another Select Committee went to work in London during 1861, but its proceedings were notable for highly divergent views among both members and witnesses on the value of the convict system in WA and no clear decisions were made as to its future.

It is reasonable to ask: how were local authorities caught out by the decision to send large numbers of serious offenders to WA? There is no simple answer, although we can rule out conspiracy theories to fool Fitzgerald and company. One key factor was political instability in Britain. The Governor got on well with Secretary of State Earl Grey and the latter acted honourably. But after Grey lost office in February, 1852 years of bureaucratic chaos in London followed right up to the end of 1855.

No less than five different Secretaries of State for the Colonies were in office during that period and their staff and advisers often changed with them. In a situation of such administrative instability transient officials in various departments were usually ignorant of the situation in WA and working at cross purposes to boot, with erratic and lamentable results.



## **FREMANTLE TRIED AND TESTED...**

### **(book review)**

Peter Conole

***When war came to Fremantle – 1899 to 1945***, by Deborah Gare and Madison Lloyd-Jones.

The authors of this beguiling book reveal its origins lay in an exhibition called 'Fremantle and War' held at Notre Dame University, Fremantle in 2012. Further to the Notre Dame connection, Deborah Gare and Madison Lloyd-Jones invited students to participate in a remarkable archival trawl throughout Australia for rare and significant images of Fremantle interest.

In visual terms the results are stunning and fascinating stories lie behind each image. The authors provide numerous vignettes and anecdotes which are often very intimate and frequently tragic, particularly those of World War I origin. British historians Stephen Pope and Elizabeth Wheal revealed in 1995 that 332,000 Australian troops took the field in that conflict; nearly 73% were killed, wounded, reported missing or incapacitated by illness, the highest rate of loss of any national army on either side. Over 3000 men from Fremantle and the surrounding areas served in the 1<sup>st</sup> AIF and local statistics will reflect those awful results.

In recounting how Fremantle coped with the war the writers cover recruiting, the despatch of troops and medical staff to the front, community contributions to the war effort and the establishment of a viable military hospital in the port town. Most importantly, the impact of the conflict on local families hangs like a shroud over the narrative. One example out of many will do. On page 49 there is a haunting image of Private Jack O'Brien, who could not have been a day over 16 when he enlisted in 1917. His war grave is shown on the opposite page.

The book is a good focal point for examining home front issues and the authors indicate where extra caches of research material can

be found. Their coverage of World War I is nicely rounded off by mention of welcome home arrangements for the victorious warriors. The conflict had resulted in the overthrow of three despotic empires - we need to remember it was a necessary victory, for historians now know the consequences of defeat will have been disastrous for our country. A chapter on the War Memorials set-up around Fremantle makes for particularly absorbing reading.

The port community was put to the test with equal severity in World War II. Fremantle people "*were uniquely exposed to experiences of war and these were often sobering events*". Three examples will have to suffice. One jolt came in 1941 when news of the loss of the cruiser *Sydney* reached the port. Remarkable photos of the ship and crew members taken before it left Fremantle for the last time require little comment. News of the outbreak of war with Japan came as an even sharper jolt, especially when the press bluntly told readers the enemy's logical campaign of conquest "*leads to Fremantle and Perth*". Chapter Six covers local military and civil defence efforts.

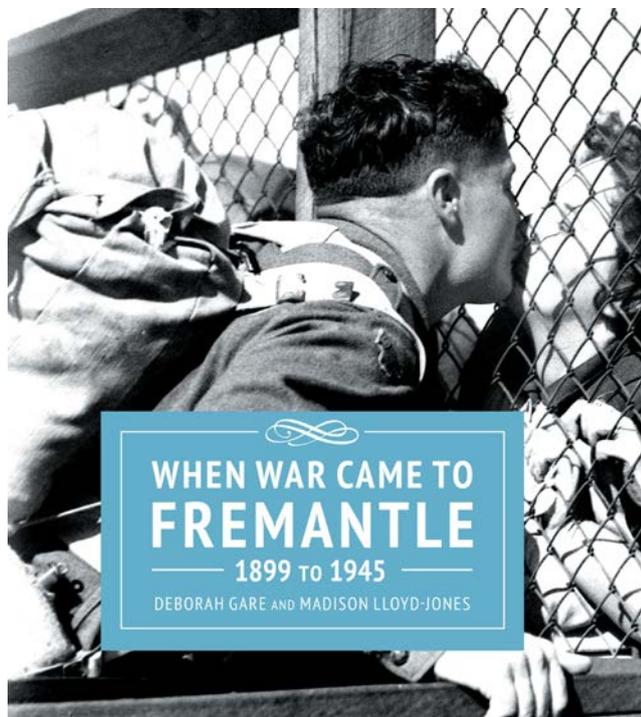
The grimdest part of the saga relates to the return of prisoners-of-war who had somehow lived through the inexcusable barbarities of Japanese captivity. See pages 118-121: Gare and Lloyd-Jones reveal the Federal Government tried to soften the blow by leaking details slowly and making sure healthier men arrived first. That fooled nobody. There were terrible, confronting scenes on the waterfront as crowds gathered to witness the arrival of successive shiploads of survivors.

This book is a fine contribution to Fremantle history and will surely prove to be of lasting value.

***When war came to Fremantle – 1899 to 1945***, by Deborah Gare and Madison Lloyd-Jones

(Fremantle Press, WA 2014. Hardcover with numerous photographs, bibliography, notes and index. Cost:\$45. The book can be purchased or

ordered from the usual book outlets (eg, Boffins). It is also directly available from Fremantle Press, 25 Quarry Street, Fremantle WA (phone 94306331, or email admin@Fremantle press.com.au).



## FREMANTLE HISTORY CENTRE

A major goal has been achieved with the recent upload of images from our original image database to the ContentDM digital management software. There is now a total of 5512 images online which includes a new collection of postcards. In addition, the collection is negotiating with the National Library of Australia to have our digital collection available through the Trove Database. This development will increase our user base significantly and it will be interesting to see how this access will affect the collection's online user statistics.

Another project was completed which involved a comparison of the City's street names index with that compiled by Landgate. Both sets of data have been merged which has resulted in more information about how and why the City's streets have their current names. This sharing of information has illustrated the

benefit of collaborating with other agencies to ensure that the historical information is as accurate and complete as possible.

The digitisation of oral histories has also been completed for this financial year with a total of 66 hours of interviews was converted from analogue to digital format. Interviews are ongoing and several have been organised for the last half of the financial year.

I recently attended a workshop in Canberra representing the History Society as a result of being awarded a Community Heritage Grant for a significance assessment for the Deckchair Theatre Archives. This training was helpful and highly relevant to many of the issues faced with providing access to digital information in the twenty first century.

New additions to the collection includes

2014 Fremantle History Society : newsletter index 1994-2004, part 1 LH 994.1106 FRE

2014 Fremantle, my place : short story competition 2014 LH 820.8 FRE

2014 *Fremantle Studies* : journal of the Fremantle History Society, Vol. 8 LH 994.1105 FRE

1990 The Fremantle Worker : official publication of the Fremantle Workers Social and Leisure Club. LH 367 FRE

2014 *The Fremantle Workers Social and leisure Club : 1914 - 2014* / Deborah Gare & Jane Davis LH 367 GAR

2014 *George! ; the life and riotous times of George Grljusich* Pratt, Baden LH/GRL

2014 *The Invincibles: New Norcia's Aboriginal cricketers 1879-1906* Reece, Bob LH 796.358 REE

2014 *May's story* Petkovich, Coral LH B/ HYD

2014 *Off to war : WWI 1914-1918* / John Dowson LH 940.4 DOW

2014 *Queensgate site, Fremantle : development plans, 2014*  
LH 711.5 FRE

1992 *Ring up the curtain : a short history of Gilbert and Sullivan in Western Australia, 1879-1892 (Extract)* / by Bill Coackley with Janda Gooding. LH 792.545 COA

2014 *When war came to Fremantle, 1899 to 1945* / Deborah Gare and Madison Lloyd-Jones. LH 940.4 GAR



## **BIKES IN FREQ**

Rusty Christensen

With all the hype building for the forthcoming Olympic Games and trials for the contenders to compete for their country in the various sports I am always intrigued by the cycling. I feel I am influenced by the fact that my old home town was once the hub of hack cycling in Western Australia and produced many fine exponents of the sport both pre-war and in the years following the cessation of hostilities in that fruitless exercise.

You may ask "Where did they race?" with the answer being "On Fremantle Oval" not on the Oval itself but on an asphalt track around the circumference of the now solely football ground. The track was put down in 1898 and was removed in the early 1960s having survived two wars and produced many champion riders including the Smith brothers who held many Australian titles. Unfortunately the records and the names have not survived the passage of time.

In the 1960s the sport was in decline and the powers that be thought it would be a wise move to have constructed a purpose built velodrome. The east and south Fremantle footballers who trained and played on the oval were not sorry to see the asphalt track go. A full blooded bump from Alby 'Nails' Weston, 'Bulldozer' Stevens or George Prince could see the recipient land

unceremoniously on the hack often with the loss of a fair amount of skin and a damaged ego.

Friday night was 'bikes night' in Fremantle in the summer, the trams were packed with supporters of the popular sport who would crowd in to 'the oval' in anticipation of some keen racing, the still standing wooden grandstand would be filled by the early comers and the older generation while the more active gathered on the sloping asphalt concourse in front of the stand. The thrill seekers would gather behind the fence at the top of the straight where the track was steeply banked at the rear of the town end goals and under a huge Morton Bay Fig tree which had a habit of shedding its small, round fruit on to the track. They caused many a prang just where the riders had wound up for the sprint to the finishing line, leaving a tangle of bikes and riders spread across the track, often with the rider still strapped to his machine with arms and legs covered with abrasions of varying degrees. As one prominent sporting character was reputed to have said after one nasty spill "The magpies will clean up the blood, skin and hair in the morning" (unquote)

The sport was hugely successful pre-war not only in Fremantle but in the various large towns - Kalgoorlie, Collie, Bunbury to mention just a few - as well as many smaller centres in between, all of whom sponsored road racing. The *Collie to Donnybrook* springs to mind as one of the classics, now long forgotten as many others are along with the competitors. One old, former rider from Kalgoorlie, Charlie Nalty turned up in Fremantle during the war when nothing much was going on and claimed he had won the Westral Wheelrace in Kalgoorlie in the golden years of the sport in that city. He was a familiar sight around town with his bandaged legs (protecting his varicose veins) propelling his old style racing bike, handing out nuts and dried fruit to the kids and telling anyone who would listen about his exploits of bike racing in the goldfields including of course the prestigious Westral Wheelrace.

In pre-war days (including the Depression

years) sport took a back seat to securing a job and keeping it. There was not the wide range of varying sports and facilities that people enjoy today; football, cricket and swimming also boxing, cycling and foot running (where you might earn a quid) was about the limit of the participating competitive sports. There were others, tennis, golf, sailing (yachting) et al, but they didn't have the pulling appeal for the punters as the aforementioned.

Most kids had their favourite bike rider, Horry Marshall who had won the Melbourne Cup of cycling, the *Warnambool to Melbourne* in 1929 had about the biggest following when he raced on the Fremantle track. Jack Casserly, Dave Stevenson, Harold Willie (who claimed he rode off scratch in a road race with the great Hubert Opperman) Frank (Splinter) Holland, Tom McBride, Ted Powell, Harold Durrant, Tom Norris (pictured) are names that spring to mind.

In the immediate post war years a new generation of pedal pushers emerged including Alf Norris; Ernie and Tom Townson; the enigmatic Waverney Ford; the brilliant but erratic Tommy Grant (who ended his short career when he wrapped himself around a post on the Midland track); track and road champion Norm Burdus; Ernie Togg (Tognolini); Jack Cassidy (who later built the 16 foot skiff Evelin which he skippered to state and national titles as well as founding the very successful Cassidy sails); Phil Kidd a tall bloke who built his own bikes; Joe Casserly; Clarrie and Joe Mincuilla; Maurie Powell; Bill Gilbride; champion rider Geoff Baker ... The list goes on as many of the young blokes in the area were attracted to the bikes.

The League of WA Wheelmen, in an endeavour to promote the sport, brought over from Victoria, a champion of the time, Billy Guyat. It was reported that he was the only rider in Australia to fill in his taxation return as 'professional bike rider'. I remember him riding on the Fremantle track in his all black racing gear; he was a

true professional. Syd Patterson, still considered the greatest sprint cyclist in Australia and possibly the world, also competed on the Fremantle track.

Later, as the sport began to wane, the League brought over from South Australia, two top line riders in Jack Kohlenburg and Dean Whitehorn in an attempt to stimulate interest. It seemed it was a case of too little, too late. Whitehorn, with his good looks and blonde hair was an added attraction for some of the female followers but soon followed his mate Kohlenburg back to Adelaide.

Just about everybody in Fremantle rode a *Swansea* cycle including the competitors on the track. *Swansea* was a household name. It was owned by the Baldwin brothers, Howard, Les and Roily who managed their factory in Newman Street. Howard (the eldest) managed the shop in William Street. It was a narrow shop jammed between a saddler's shop and Wrightson's men's hairdressers (still there) while Les was an executive type go between, between the riders and the family business. Among the riders they were universally referred to as 'Shags' as their logo (a swan) was moulded on to the front of every bike they built. The brothers all had a characteristic drawl when they spoke, must have been a family trait.

Not everybody rode a *Swansea* on the track. There were the ones that 'Oppy' rode the *Malvern Star*, *Gordonson*, the *Aussie* and several other makes but the Fremantle manufactured *Swansea* would have the majority among the bike riding fraternity. Freo may have lost something when the old asphalt track was pulled up and replaced by grass but the wheels of progress move on with a new purpose built velodrome for the next generation of wheel men (and women) who are making their mark in the sport which can trace its roots in WA. To the 'Bikes in Freo'.



## FOR YOUR DIARY

**Tues 24 February – Fremantle Bridges.  
Meet under the Old Traffic Bridge, Beach  
St, Fremantle at 5.30 PM**

**Sunday 29 March – St John's Church.  
Meet under the Fremantle Town Hall  
Clock, St John's Square at 12.30 PM**

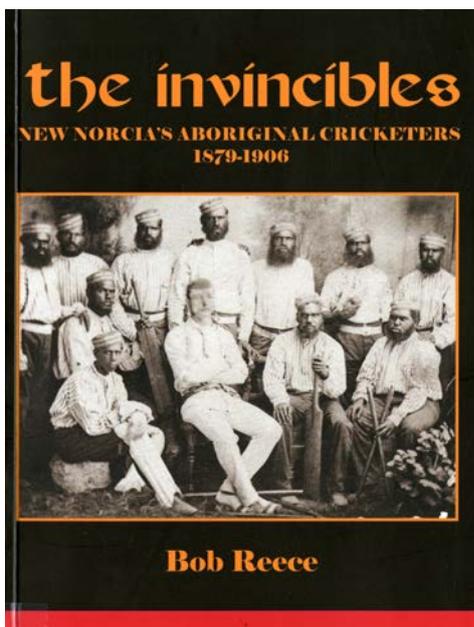
**Tues 21 April – For the touch of a  
Vanished Hand. St Paul's Church, 162  
Hampton Rd, Beaconsfield. 6 PM**

## THE INVINCIBLES

At a time when the Fremantle History Society is flowering with new books our Vice-President's *The Invincibles* is something special.

Prof Bob Reece has described New Norcia's Aboriginal cricketers in the years 1879 to 1906. In their time they anticipated Don Bradman's Invincibles by 70 years. The Aboriginal cricketers often walked for two days to get to a game including some at Fremantle's The Green and The Park.

*The Invincibles* is published by Histrionics and is available at all good book stores. A perfect summer read and also an important message.



This year's Fremantle Heritage Festival will coincide with the 2015 National Trust Heritage Festival giving you more bang for your heritage festival buck. With well over 100 events, spread across WA, many in Fremantle and local areas, there will be plenty to keep you busy in April and May.

Go to [www.nationaltrustfestival.org.au](http://www.nationaltrustfestival.org.au) for more details.



## Fast Forward: Oral History in a Time of Change

The national biennial conference of the Oral History Australia will be held in Perth from 9 – 12 September. The conference themes focus on changes in technology and its impact on recording and application of oral history, although the organisers are keen to consider papers outside of this main theme..

A call for papers is currently out. The deadline for submissions is 1 April. Go to [www.oralhistoryaustralia.org.au](http://www.oralhistoryaustralia.org.au) for further details.