Our July 2020 meeting

Bob Reece

Early New Norcia

Tuesday 14 July 2020 at 5.00pm for 5.30pm in the Great Southern Room
4th floor, State Library of Western Australia.

Please see details on page 3.
Objectives
The objectives of the Friends of Battye Library (Inc.) are to assist and promote the interests of the JS Battye Library of West Australian History and the State Records Office, and of those activities of the Library Board of Western Australia concerned with the acquisition, preservation and use of archival and documentary materials.

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July Meeting

To be held on Tuesday 14 July 2020
in the Great Southern Room, fourth floor
State Library of Western Australia
at 5pm for 5.30pm

Dr Bob Reece

Early New Norcia
the 1867 photographs of WW Thwaites

Details of Bob’s talk are on page 4

After the meeting, members are very welcome to join us for a meal at a nearby Perth restaurant. Nick Drew will take bookings on the night.

Problem with the stairs?
If any members have difficulty with taking the stairs to the fourth floor, please notify staff on either the ground floor reception desk or the Battye Library desk on the 3rd floor for access to the staff lift to the fourth floor.

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About Bob Reece

Dr Bob Reece is Professor Emeritus in History at Murdoch University, Western Australia, where he taught from 1978 until 2012 apart from three years as Keith Cameron Professor of Australian History at University College, Dublin. His first publications were in Aboriginal History, notably *Aborigines and Colonists* (1974) and ‘Inventing Aborigines’ (1987). He was also a contributor to *The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia* (1994). His time in Ireland resulted in three edited collections of Irish convict biographies (1989, 1991, 1993) and *The Origins of Irish Convict Transportation to New South Wales* (2001). His Irish interest was also pursued in ‘The Irish and the Aborigines’ (2000) and a biography of Daisy Bates (2007) for the National Library, where he held a Harold White Fellowship in 2005.


**Early New Norcia: The 1867 Photographs of WW Thwaites**

From the late 19th century until more recent times, the New Norcia Benedictine Mission in the Victoria Plains district of south-western Western Australia was Australia’s best-known Aboriginal missionary institution, often credited with being the most successful. Much of this reputation was no doubt due to the early availability of photographic images of its Yued (Yuat) Aboriginal community, the monks whose mission it was to tend to their spiritual and material needs, and its impressive buildings.

New Norcia is remarkable in the history of Aboriginal missions for its photographs of Aboriginal people taken in the 1860s and 1870s. The Battye Library of Western Australian History in Perth holds ninety-two
collodion glass negatives of New Norcia from the period, while New Norcia’s own archives hold the albumen paper prints made from the negatives. In the past, all of these early photographs were attributed to Bishop Rosendo Salvado’s elder brother, Dom Santos Salvado, who lived at New Norcia from 1869 until 1879, but further research has indicated that this is not correct.¹

As far as can be ascertained, the first photographer to visit New Norcia was an English-born itinerant practitioner from Adelaide, Walter William Thwaites, who spent six weeks at the Mission from late August until early October 1867 and took more than thirty photographs over six days.

Taken collectively, this unique set of images portrays New Norcia at a time when it was beginning to show promise after experiencing many setbacks, not the least being a series of epidemics which decimated its Aboriginal population. The main purpose of this book has been to reproduce definitively the Thwaites photographs, identifying their subjects wherever possible and providing information on Thwaites and his place in the history of early photography in Western Australia. The commissioning of the photographs by Prior Venancio Garrido and their distribution within Western Australia as well as overseas demonstrates the importance attached by both Salvado and Garrido to the use of images to publicise New Norcia’s work and raise funds for the Mission. They express Salvado’s utopian vision of a self-sufficient monastic settlement where monks supervised the work of Aboriginal farmers and trained young Aboriginal people in useful occupations. They also reflect the need to attract more Aboriginal children to the Mission to ensure the viability of its indigenous population.

For the Yued Noongah people, once located on the Victoria Plains but now widely dispersed across Western Australia’s south-west region, Thwaites’ iconic images of New Norcia help to re-create an era when they were brought together in a communal experiment in Christianisation and civilisation by a man remarkable for his enlightened thinking and policies. They also reflect a moment in time when the Yued were undergoing a fundamental transition from hunter-gatherers with their own unique system of cultural beliefs and practices to membership of a dispossessed and institutionalised minority.

For us today, Thwaites’ timeless images of the New Norcia’s Aboriginal community invoke values that go beyond early perceptions of them as positive exemplars of Christianisation and civilisation or as interesting
curiosities to be collected and remarked upon. The images represent long-lost kin to be recognised and treasured by descendants who can see their history being returned to them. At the same time, like all fine portraits, they speak to our common humanity.

 Remaining meeting dates for 2020

8 September (AGM) - Joanne Hyland  What happened to our convicts? recreating the lives of WA transportees.

17 November (3rd Tuesday) - End of year function. Julie Martin  Gogo Station in the East Kimberley 1962-64.

 President’s piece

Dear Friends
It looks as if the worst of the pandemic is behind us and restrictions are easing all the time. One really wonderful result of the lockdown is that our Battye Library has been refurbished in the break and so a lovely surprise awaits you when next you visit. Apart from being brighter and more attractive it will be easier to use and have more terminals for finding things. Family History WA volunteers will be back on the floor and State Records Office materials will now be accessible from the Leah Cohen reading room.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will read more about the marvellous Retro Maps just released by the SRO, they are GPS related so you can just type in your address and look at what was there in the early years. This has been hailed by town planners and architects as an incredible aid to future planning – and you, as a member of the Friends, have helped achieve this as it was part funded by us through our wonderful Maude Sholl Bequest.

The Library share of this bequest money (as you know we alternate between the SRO and SLWA when distributing the yearly interest from this bequest) is to be used to begin digitising selected Anglican Marriage Registers. The State Library will start with the Registers that are easiest to tackle as a pilot project which will give us an idea of cost and time
necessary to digitise each page. We can then plan further digitisation projects more accurately. The work the Friends does is very important and we are grateful to our loyal supporters. Which is also a hint that your membership subscriptions are now due and can be paid using the form on page 37 (see also a notice from the editor on p.36).

Our next speaker is no stranger to you as Bob Reece has spoken several times before and has been a member of the Friends for decades. It was Bob who found the marvelous painting of the Stirling family standing by the Swan river with a mirrored Aboriginal family. It was painted by the wife of our first Architect, Henry Willey Reveley, whose life Bob has also written about.

So I look forward to seeing as many of you who can come to our meeting on Tuesday 14 July.

Pamela Statham Drew.

<br><hr>

Remembering Alison Gregg

Dr Alison Gregg (1939-2020) who died on 1 April was a remarkable woman who achieved so much for children’s literacy and education. She was a renowned librarian, author, teacher, and historian who was awarded the Western Australian Institute for Educational Research Medal in 1995, UWA's Cameron Prize for Research in Education (1994), and the WAIT Alumni Medal for Outstanding Postgraduate Student (1982). Alison was also made a life member of the WA branch of the Children’s Book Council of Australia. Among other works, she co-authored with Paul Dench the book Carnarvon and Apollo: One giant leap for a small Australian town (2010).

Alison was also one of our long-term supporters and, with her husband Jim, was a committee member for many years.

Her lovely smile, gentle charm, and enthusiasm for life, will be much missed by all who knew Alison. Our sincerest condolences to Jim and their children Robin, Catriona, and Michael.
Have you a story to tell?

[Long term member of the Friends, Dr Alex George is one of our most eminent botanists. He was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia medal (AM) in 2012 for his service to conservation and the environment as a botanist, historian and author.]

Western Australian Plant Names and Their Meanings

A particular interest of our former State Librarian FA (Ali) Sharr (1914–2002) was the meaning of the scientific names of our wildflowers, both genera (e.g. Eucalyptus, Jacksonia) and species (e.g. longifolia, erythrocorys). In 1978, the first edition of his book Western Australian Plant Names and Their Meanings was published by University of Western Australia Press. Ali estimated that it explained about 4500 names. It was reprinted in 1988 and an enlarged edition appeared in 1996. In January 1997, in the hope that there would be a continued need for it, he asked me to look after ‘its future welfare’, a duty that I was very happy to take on. With the agreement of UWA Press he formally assigned his rights to future editions to me.

From time to time I checked with UWA Press but it was some years before the enlarged edition sold out. The Press then advised that they would not be interested in publishing another, leaving me free to carry the baton. New plants are continually being discovered in the State, and several years ago I decided that it was time for a new edition. Whereas Ali worked mostly before we had computers and the internet, my task was made easier with the use of such facilities. It involves much bibliographic research into botanical works going back to the 18th century. Most early works are in Latin and this language continues to be the basis for almost all scientific names, so my knowledge of that language was essential. By early 2019 I had checked the existing text (which required very few amendments!) and added many new names. I added a new section listing infraspecific epithets—subspecies (e.g. Isopogon formosus

Francis Aubie (Ali) Sharr. (Battye Library, SLWA 005683D)
subsp. *dasylepis*) and varieties (e.g. *Banksia sphaerocarpa* var. *pumilio*). The Western Australian Herbarium kept me informed of new discoveries and I made the cut-off date 30 April. I published the book through my Four Gables Press, with design by Charmaine Cave, Lesmurdie, and printing by Quality Press, Welshpool.

*Western Australian Plant Names and Their Meanings* by FA Sharr, 3rd edition by AS George, published July 2019, explains the scientific names of all native and naturalised plants in the State. These now total almost 12,000 species though, because some names have been used more than once (e.g. those with the name *australis* referring to our southern geographical position, and many named for James Drummond), the number to be explained is much fewer. Nonetheless, in total the book explains some 1620 generic names, 5715 specific and 895 infraspecific epithets.

For added interest I included facsimiles of the title pages of seven early works in which Australian plants were first named and filled the space on some pages with some of my early pencil drawings of our plants.

The State Library provided a very nice photograph of Ali to form a frontispiece.

[Editor’s note: *Western Australian Plant Names and Their Meanings* is a seminal Western Australian publication and for members interested in obtaining a copy it is available from Alex George, ‘Four Gables’, 18 Barclay Road, Kardinya, Western Australia 6163. Phone: 0410 933718 email: fourgables@fourgablespress.com. Price $40.00. Packing and postage within Australia $15.00.]
[Lindsay Dorman holds a Master’s degree in International Relations from Curtin University. He has a particular interest in the United Nations international intergovernmental organisation and kindly written a couple of articles for our Newsletter.]

League of Nations Union (WA Branch).

As a long serving member of the United Nations Association of Australia [WA Division], I decided to research the history of its predecessor, the Western Australian branch of the League of Nations Union (LNU). Below is just a small part of a much larger and interesting history in which it includes many of WA's well known luminaries of the day.

In the unbridled hope of a world exhausted by first industrialised conflict, World War One (1914-18), the League of Nations was established in 1919, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

Despite the accepted view of Western Australia and Perth between the wars was of a bland, parochial, rurally orientated, consensus-dominated State and capital, the League of Nations Union (LNU) was formed in 1922. Initially there was little support for the League of Nations Union outside the Women’s Service Guild (WSG) in the 1920’s. The average Western Australian male citizen was little interested in non-Western Australian matters in general.2 Despite this assessment, the Perth branch of the LNU was surprisingly lively and complex network of organisations, not including the Returned Services League, churches and political parties.3

The Provisional Committee conducted its first meeting in the Town Hall on Tuesday 1st August, 1922 at 4.00pm. Those present were Professor [later Sir] Walter Murdoch (Chairman), The Reverend C.H.B. Grimes (Secretary), Mr Carson, Mrs Cowan, Mrs King, Mrs Clark, Mrs Macdonald, and Mrs Joyner.4 An annual membership fee was set at two shillings. A later meeting that evening at 8.00pm was conducted under the auspices of the WSG. Women’s organisations were the greatest supporters, which included the National Council of Women. The WSG were responsible for the catering of LNU luncheons.5 At that meeting, Professor Murdoch outlined the objectives of the Union. Although these

3. Ibid #4 p.23.
were not recorded in the minutes, it can be assumed if anything can be assumed, that the objectives would have been to support aims of the League of Nations itself. It was agreed that £2/0/0 was to be sent to London for all the latest literature on the League.  

Professor Murdoch gave radio broadcasts, including one titled, ‘War as an Investment, a Challenge for the Churches’ and also one called ‘Propaganda’. He recommended books to read, which were published in the WSG journal *The Dawn*. These included *Traffic in Arms*, *War Profit*, *Bloody Traffic and Patriotism Ltd*. Beverley Nichols’ *Cry Havoc* was also recommended by Murdoch.

The Director of Education, Cyril Andrews was approached to join the Executive in August 1923. There is no evidence from the minutes that he acceded to the request. The Education Department was receptive to LNU material and co-operated in the presentation of the annual League of Nations Day ceremony.

Lieutenant-Governor Sir Robert McMillan had declined the invitation to become the Patron, however the Premier, Mr Phillip Collier accepted the position in 1928. Collier struck up a close friendship with John Curtin, who owed much to him as advisor and confidant.

The LNU had several prominent figures not only in the general membership but in their Executive. Including those previously mentioned, Professor Walter Murdoch who was founding professor of the University of Western Australia. In 1939 he received the CMG followed by the KCMG in 1964. Professor Fred Alexander, who in the absence of Murdoch on a two year overseas study tour, was Chairman [1926-28].

Alexander recalled in his autobiography,

> [M]y arrival [in WA] in 1924 happened to coincide with local interest in the activities

6. Union Minutes, 28/8/1922
8. Ibid # 4, p27.
of a Perth branch of the Australian League of Nations Union. Suffice to say that by the second half of the 1920s much of my leisure was devoted to the LNU organisation in Perth, [as] Walter Murdoch’s offsider and later Chairman of the branch, and to country lecture tours usually with UWA Extension sponsorship and with contemporary international affairs as the topic of my talks.\textsuperscript{10}

Also among the famous members was John Curtin, editor of the \textit{Westralian Worker} who was a supporter and one time Executive Committee member who provided a badly needed link with the local labour movement. Curtin had been in 1924 an Australian Delegate to the annual conference of the International Labour Organisation in Geneva, Switzerland.\textsuperscript{11}

A member of the first Executive was Edith Cowan who was the first women elected in an Australian Parliament, winning the seat of West Perth in 1921. She was the endorsed Nationalist candidate in an electorate that had a majority of women enrolled voters.\textsuperscript{12}

Bessie Rischbieth was more your typical LNU member in as much as she was associated with an amazing array of organisations and causes. Rischbieth was an Alternative Delegate to the 1935 League of Nations Session of the Assembly in Geneva\textsuperscript{13} which voted to impose sanctions on Italy as a result of its incursion into Abyssinia [Libya].\textsuperscript{14}

As the gathering storm clouds of war appeared in the late 1930s, the LNU continued to be seen to be in the public arena (even though the official minutes ceased to be recorded) with public meetings, lectures’ and newspaper reports by both Murdoch and Alexander throughout the war years.

The formal ending of the League of Nations and the establishment of the United Nations saw the LNU morph into the United Nations Association of

\textsuperscript{10} Alexander, Professor Fred, “On Campus and Off, Reminiscences &Reflections of the First Professor of Modern History in the University of Western Australia 1916-1986” UWA Press, 1987, p.6.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid #10.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid #10.

\textsuperscript{13} “League of Nations, Mrs Rischbieth Substitute Delegate”, \textit{The West Australian}, 13/6/1935, p.4.

\textsuperscript{14} “Sanctions against Italy”, \textit{Western Argus [Kalgoorlie]}, 3/12/1935, p.2.
Voices that Should be Heard

[Dr Ronda Jamieson is one of Australia’s most notable oral historians. This article is the fifteenth in her series based on the oral history collections of the Battye Library.]

Melville Williamena (Melba) White (1895-1992) – OH386

The previous article in the Friends newsletter was based on 31 hours of tape with Archie Samuel Ellis. When I found there were only two hours of tape with the next person interviewed, Melba White, I wondered how I would be able to write an article of reasonable length. She was interviewed in 1979 and I could not remember the interview. Imagine my delight when reading the transcript in the Battye Library I found I could not put it down and enjoyed every moment of her recall. She was a person of few words but brought so many distinctive locations and ways of living alive.

Melba’s father, William Alexander Caporn, was born in Perth in 1853. Educated at Perth Boys’ School, he worked in the government printing office as a photographic lithographer. Her mother was Louisa Elizabeth Towton, born in 1856. They married in Wesley Church in 1872 and had five boys and two girls, with Melba, born in 1895, the youngest; her eldest brother was then aged 21.

Memories of living in Victoria Avenue, Claremont, were happy ones. The house was close to Claremont baths and the family property ran down to the river where crabs and prawns were caught. An Aboriginal couple, originally from Gingin, worked for the family, with Fanny doing the washing and running messages, and her partner (unnamed)
chopping wood and sweeping paths. Their ‘home’ was a tent on a block next door and they had been living in the area for a ‘long, long time.’ Their evening meal, provided by Melba’s mother, was the same as that of her family. Melba did not know if they were paid for their services, but they were treated as part of the family and their clothes and boots were bought by the Caporns. There was ‘no class distinction’, and their helpers were very upset when the Caporn family left Claremont.

After William Caporn retired, the Claremont property was sold and the family moved into a new house in Queens Park. The move was so they could have a cow, some chooks and fruit trees on the one-acre block, covered in gum trees, scrub and wildflowers. This time their help came from an Aunt whose husband was ‘very cruel’, who came to live with them and stayed for twelve years. Fanny and her partner used to visit ‘every couple of months’, staying for the whole day. They would sit on the back verandah and chat and, as a result, Melba learnt some of their language. One of their grandchildren was called Melba which made her ‘very proud’.

With few people living in Queens Park, there were no shops nearby. Two trains operated each morning and night but there was no station. If someone wanted the train to stop during the night, they swung a light to let the driver know. The Caporns travelled to Cannington by horse and double-decker sulky to shop. Clothes had to be bought in Perth.

William Caporn fought for drainage and footpaths for the area, and shops and a railway station were eventually built, together with a hotel and a hall for entertainments.

Melba went to school in the Congregational Church when she was six and then the Cannington school which involved a three-mile walk. When she was ten a school was built at Queens Park to which Melba transferred, leaving when she was fourteen.

On Sundays, all the Caporn children attended Sunday School and the family went to Church, where Melba’s sister played the organ. It was also a day when no games could be played.

Overall, Melba described her growing up as sharing ‘an ordinary, happy family life’. Her father ‘potted about’ and milked his jersey cow each day, and her mother scalded the milk and made cream. When two of her brothers married and lived in the district, they too each had a cow.

The children all had jobs to do. Their father grew vegetables and his
garden was ‘beautiful’. There were also ducks and chickens to look after. Melba remembered her mother’s home remedies for various sicknesses which she used on her own children and those of neighbours. Her parents’ relationship was ‘a very happy one’.

In time too, a nicer home was built for the family opposite the railway station. They were at the Royal Show when six weeks later, the house was ‘burnt to the ground’. The family moved to Claremont for a year in which time a large block was bought ‘towards Welshpool Road’ and another house was built.

Melba’s mother loved people and enjoyed entertaining. She was ‘Never happy unless she was doing for people or giving them something. She could see the funny side of everything. Full of life.’ Her father was ‘lovable’, believing ‘in discipline but in a kind way’.

There was an interesting point about her father, however:

I can remember my father having a gun and two bullets in the shed. And one day I asked him why they were there, and he said, “Well you two girls, if you come home pregnant, there’s one bullet for you and one for the chap that got you pregnant”.

Later in life Louisa and one of the Shentons went into partnership, buying land in Claremont and reselling it. They owned the Bedford Hotel, and two streets in Nedlands were named after her: Caporn Street and Louisa Street.

After leaving school, Melba was at home until she ‘suddenly got an urge’ to find a job when she was sixteen. She worked for Charles Moores, filing and checking dockets, and when a picture theatre opened, became a box office cashier.

In 1922, Melba married Lesley Hugh White at St Luke’s church in Cottesloe. He worked as a contractor and then foreman for his father, Shirley White, who did extensive work in South Africa and Western Australia, including on the goldfields and building the Bank of New South Wales in St George’s Terrace.

After marriage, Melba did not work but her husband’s health eventually failed and when he was practically an invalid, she went back to work in 1944 in three cinemas. (He died in 1951.) By then, theatres had gardens attached to them and queues of people would form to buy seats. There were permanent bookings for 200 people, but the numbers dropped off once TV came at the end of 1959 and audiences were eventually
reduced to around eight people. The Savoy theatre closed, and then the Broadway. ‘In the end I don’t think we were taking enough to pay the projectionist, let alone myself and the ticket taker.’

With the closure of the cinemas, Melba joined the Friends of Royal Perth Hospital as a volunteer in 1962. She started preparing flowers for patients and then joined the reception service, doing the two services each day. She was later in charge of the flower service and continued in those roles until 1978 and

Loved every moment of it … You come home feeling how very grateful you are for the health that you’ve got. When you see people half your age crippled with arthritis and different complaints and you feel that if you’ve only helped someone once in a day, to me it’s satisfaction.

Ronda Jamieson

Treasures from Trove

[Heather Campbell is not only our Society’s highly competent Secretary, she is also a researcher, historian, and author. This is the second in her series on delving into the wonders of the NLA’s Trove database of Australian newspapers.]

Dr J S Battye – the new broom sweeping clean!

James Sykes Battye was born in 1871 in Geelong, Victoria, to Daniel Battye, a wool-weaver and his wife Maria, both from Yorkshire, England. Before becoming chief librarian of the Victoria Public Library in Perth in 1894, he was an assistant at the Public Library of Victoria. http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/battye-james-sykes-5156

West Australian Tuesday 14 August 1894, page 4

Mr. J. S. Battye, the new librarian of the Victoria Public Library, arrived in Perth yesterday by mail train from Albany, and at once entered upon his duties. Mr. Battye comes with a good record. Although a young man he has been for many years assistant librarian at the Melbourne Public Library, and was considered one of the most capable members of the staff. For some time past he has been in full charge of the leading branch. He is a graduate of the Melbourne University, and passed his University career with distinction."
THE VICTORIA PUBLIC LIBRARY.

The sad and sudden calamity which shut out the light of day to Mr. Basil Porter, the zealous guardian of the Victoria Library, led to the appointment of a new librarian. For four years Mr. Porter has been the guardian of the first public collection of books in Western Australia, and he ever showed an affectionate interest in his charges. The collection grew year by year, and the library, as it now is, would form a very good basis for a much larger and more extensive collection.

Generally the volumes have been well selected, and the standard authors and authorities in most branches of literature are to be found upon the shelves. To meet the demands of a not extraordinarily large number of readers it was not absolutely necessary that all departments should be equally well filled. In some of the sections there is a weakness out of all proportion with the strength of other and more popular departments. The poetic works on the catalogue are noticeably sparse. Good editions of a few by the great poets of England are upon the half empty shelves of the poetry presses, but with the exception of Tennyson, Swinburne, and Robert and Mrs. Browning, but few of the modern poets are represented. The regions of theology and philosophy have not been widely ranged for contributions to the collection.

There are indeed a few works treating on religious and philosophical topics, but they do not show many signs of use, nor have the volumes of poetry the appearance of being largely read. Possibly it is this fact which may have led the selection committee to refrain from augmenting the number of volumes which lie peacefully upon the shelves under these headings.

The new librarian is Mr J.S. Battye, BALLB, a member of the staff of the Public Library of Melbourne. Immediately on his arrival in Perth and his installation into his new position, he started to put his house in order. Not only has he caused a thorough cleaning up, by the removal of accumulations of dust, but he has altered the arrangement of the presses in order to make room for about a dozen more to
be placed along the walls. A number of the chairs - not by any means too comfortable - are being repaired. A portion of the newspapers and periodicals have been removed to one of the small rooms, and the table is no longer littered with the ephemeral literature both of this and other countries.

These are not, however, the principal improvements which have been effected. They are not the reforms which appear most important to the librarian, who has been accustomed to quite a different system to that which obtained here. He was quick to give expression to his views and to commence the extended task of carrying out his expressions. There are about 6,500 volumes on the shelves, and these have been divided under twenty-six general headings or divisions, marked by the Roman capitals. The presses are identified by Roman numerals. The shelves are distinguished by the ordinary letter - "lower case," as the compositor would say - from "a" to "i," there being nine shelves in each press. The books bear the Arabic numerals. A book, for instance, marked thus "R.IV.h.9" would at a glance show that its proper place was, first, under the eighteenth division, secondly in the fourth press of that division, thirdly on the eighth shelf and fourthly in the ninth place on that shelf. When, therefore, a book is required its place can be found without a moment's delay. The system allows of an enormous expansion, and is capable of being used for a collection of 60,000 volumes without confusion arising.

Besides re-ticketing the volumes, Mr. Battye is also re-cataloguing the whole collection, and on a principle which is in vogue in Melbourne and other of the larger libraries. The book catalogue has been superseded by a system of cataloguing by cards. Cards containing the names and particulars of the works are written and placed in alphabetical order. They will be contained in a small frame, which will give sufficient room to permit of the face of each separate card being exposed to the eye of the reader, but not sufficient space to permit of any single card being extracted from its proper place. The beauty of the system is that no matter how large the library may grow the catalogue can keep pace with it and the alphabetical order of the index be preserved. In the Melbourne Public Library, with its enormous collection of books there are about 180,000 cards, and these are kept in correct alphabetical order without the slightest difficulty, and are an invaluable help to the public.

Before leaving Melbourne, Mr. Battye guided through the press an enlarged edition of the catalogue of the Lending Department of that
library, the whole of the matter for which had been prepared by him in the manner described above, the number of cards written being about 25,000. For it must not be supposed that each book is represented by one card only. The average is three cards to each book. Take for instance the work on Switzerland by William Beattie and illustrated by W. H. Bartlett. First of all a card a written with “Switzerland” as the principal word. Another contains the name of the author in large letters, and a third the name of the illustrator, when the illustrator is a man of any importance, whilst each card bears full particulars of the book. If, therefore, a reader desires a work on Switzerland, Beattie’s book can be found at once. If the reader asks for it by the author’s name the card will show at once where the volume is located, and if it be the pictures which have impressed him who requires the volume and he remembers the illustrator, he has but to give the name of Bartlett and the work can be found for him at a glance. In some cases as many as twenty cards will have to be written about a single book, such for instance as a volume containing some of Molliere’s plays, when there will have to be a card bearing the name of each play. The work of cataloguing on this exhaustive principle will take nine or ten months to complete, but as progress is made the cards which are written may be used to index the books. In addition to this work Mr. Battye has completed a new stock list, and under his system on taking stock once a month will be able to detect the absence of any book should it disappear from the library.

The great want is more room. The accommodation for readers is inadequate. The attendance averages 110 to 120 a day. Many of them are newspaper readers, perhaps the greater proportion, and they should have a room to themselves, where the constant turning of the crisp pages may not irritate the nerves of the student, poring over some volume of “forgotten lore.” In the reading room of a reference library absolute silence is most desirable, but the by-laws of the Victoria institution permit whispering, so long as it does not create annoyance. But the difficulty is where to draw the line, and it would no doubt be in the interest of the reader of books if absolute silence were enjoined.

The committee deem themselves fortunate in having secured the services of Mr. Battye, who has already proved that he combines with a knowledge and love of books an energy and industry which fit him for the care of the best monument to the Queen’s jubilee which the people of the colony could have raised, the Victoria Public Library.

From the Australian Dictionary of Biography

Dr Battye personally selected the basic book-stock and by 1903 had raised the number of books to 50,000, and to 100,000 by 1911. By 1953 he was suffering from poor health and the Premier was told that he was ‘no longer in a fit condition to carry out the duties of his office’. As he had life tenure, retirement arrangements were under discussion when he died in July 1954. [http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/battye-james-sykes-5156](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/battye-james-sykes-5156)
Well, thank goodness for online catalogues and keyword searches I say! Wonder what happened to that lifetime of cards!

Heather Campbell

This month in WA history

[The two marvellous little books, Date it! compiled by AH Chate, Bruce Graham, and Glenda Oakley, and Glenda’s follow up, More dates!, both published by the Friends, are handy references for the period up to 1989. Here is a selection for the month of July.]

1619. 29th – Houtman’s Abrolhos Islands charted and named by Frederik de Houtman.

1829. 20th – Horse race meeting on Garden Island. Capt Mark Currie defeats Lt. William Preston.

1832. 1st – First census in WA carried out.

1833. 11th – Yagan is murdered. His head was later sent to England.

1839. 9th – the first performance of the play Love a la Militaire staged in Leeder’s Hotel.

1855. 23rd – Arthur Kennedy appointed Governor.

1857. 25th – Matthew Hale consecrated as first Anglican Bishop of WA.

1868. 21st – The Legislative Council under its new constitution is opened.

1869. 21st – The WA Government offers £5,000 for the discovery of gold.

1877. 17th – Eyre telegraph station opens.

1878. 22nd – The James Service is wrecked off Mandurah with the loss of 24 lives.

1879. 26th – The first Government railway the Gerardton-Northampton line opens.


1889. 1st – Great Southern railway officially opened.

1896. 31st – Opening of the first section of the Library, Museum, and Art Gallery on the corner of James and Beaufort streets.
1900. 31st – WA women vote for the first time. WA decides in favour of joining the proposed Federation of Australian States.
1902. 31st – Foundation stone of WA Parliament House laid.
1907. 1st – Fremantle railway station opened.
1914. 31st – Leaders of both political parties pledge support in the event of war.
1920. 1st – Edward, Prince of Wales, arrives in Perth.
1924. 3rd – First meeting of the WA Naturalists’ Club.
1926. 20th – Severe flooding causes the collapse of the Fremantle bridge.
1937. 127th – Opening of London Court shopping arcade.
1942. 30th – Japanese aircraft bomb Port Hedland.
1954. 15th – Death of Dr James Sykes Battye.
1958. 19th – Last tram runs. (the tramcar is preserved at Whiteman Park).
1963. 20th – First stage of the Ord River Scheme opens.
29th – Discovery of the Batavia, wrecked in 1629
1970. 8th – Minimum age for consuming alcohol is lowered to 18.
5th – Sunday liquor trading in hotels begins.
1979. 12th – Debris from US space station Skylab falls in southern WA.
1981. 6th – The Friends of Battye Library holds inaugural meeting.
1983, 24th – First legal game of ‘two-up’ played near Kalgoorlie.
1986. 7th – Brian Chambers and Kevin Barlow are hanged in Kuala Lumpur after being convicted for drug trafficking.

-Tram No. 105 on Beaufort Street heading for destination 18, Inglewood, 15 July 1958. (Battye Library, SLWA 136072PD)
News from the State Library
Events, exhibitions, projects, acquisitions

Events

Your Library with Dr Kate
Battye Historian, Kate Gregory, has been regularly presenting during the Focus program on ABC radio. Since people can’t currently access the heritage collections, Kate has been sharing collections and stories to radio listeners. So far Kate has talked about:

- Mary Ann Friend’s journal
- Raymond Stanley Stewart’s toilet roll diary (WWII)
- John Boyle O’Reilly’s manuscript book of poetry
- Joseph Talbot Hobbs’ WWI diaries
- Rica Erickson - Trigger plants sketches
- William Shakespeare Hall - letter from Andover 1864.
- The Coffee Pot scrapbook
- Travel log by Katherine Shenton

Information about the about the latest and past shows and links to the digital items are available through the SLWA website: https://www.slwa.wa.gov.au/slwa-on-abc-radio

Lieutenant Raymond (Ray) Stanley Stewart of the 2/28th Australian Infantry Battalion was captured on 27 July 1942 in Egypt, Ray was held as a prisoner of war in Europe from 27 July 1942 to 1 May 1945. He kept and hid his diary. (Battye Library, SLWA ACC 5062AD/3)
Exhibitions

Staged to Sell
Due to the situation with COVID-19, a planned exhibition for the ground floor gallery was shifted to an online format. Staged to Sell: iconic advertising from the Stevenson, Kinder & Scott Photographic Collection

“Taken between the late 1960s and the 1990s, the featured photographs paint a visual story of life in Western Australia during this period. The post-World War II period was a time of great social and economic change in Australia. A sense of optimism increased consumer confidence and advertising of goods and services expanded. In this environment, Stevenson, Kinder & Scott were commissioned to photograph consumer goods ranging from household groceries to furniture, vehicles, fashion, fast food, drink, and leisure and fitness activities.”

Further stories are being added to the online exhibition.

Projects

National Redress Scheme
Since mid-January 2020 the State Library has received, managed, and responded to 56 [year-to-date 13/5/20] requests for information from the National Redress Scheme (NRS). We provide responsible access to records in our collections to assist redress processes all in accordance with the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018.

Peter Edwards, Librarian in the Heritage team, manages the research and prepares the response to each request for information. The nature of the research is - as Peter puts it - simple but time consuming; requiring interrogation of the library catalogue, checking through each section of the manuscript note (finding tool/collection index) for the relevant archival collections, and then manually searching through a variety of archival materials for relevant information before providing digital copies of relevant records to the NRS. The archival collection and indexing work of dedicated staff over the course of many decades cannot be overstated as it now provides us with the opportunity to contribute to NRS processes and positively impact the lives of individuals it touches.
Heritage team and SLWA social media

Stories from the nooks and crannies of our history

In May 2019 a member of the State Library’s Facebook audience asked a question about the current location of a suspected graveyard that was shown in an 1885 panoramic photograph of Wellington Street, Perth. Our Communications staff raised the question with our Heritage Team Librarian, and then it was off to the races! A series of responses to the initial question on the graveyard soon developed into a collection of (in some cases) serialised Facebook posts concerning various elements from Western Australia’s history.

The stories led to the (re-)discovery of a fabulous 1907 photomechanical print by Felix Whitwell of the new Barrack Street Bridge [Call number: 3740B], and the promotion of many digitised heritage materials including many maps, photographs, and documents.

![New barrack Street Bridge, 1907, by Felix Whitwell 3740B](image)

Our online audience actively engaged with the stories and materials, sometimes adding their own stories and historic photographs in the comments sections. The stories covered the history and mysteries of the Barrack Street Bridge, the tale of T’othersiders, Sandgropers, and
secession, the public baths of Perth (and the definition of “flapdoodling”), the rabbit proof fences (including the murderous story of Snowy Rowles), revealing the erosion at Cottesloe in 1929, and confirming the location of the Canning Humps. These stories, combined with great social media management by our Communications team, generated the initial surge of online audience engagement and promotion of digital connections with collections.

![The Canning Humps, 1909 - courtesy of the State Records Office 1D/40 Sheet 2 [Tally No. 506560]](image)

**Storylines**

Storylines has become the central point for thousands of Aboriginal people accessing the State Library’s heritage collections and a safe place to store records of people, place and history. The archive has continued to grow over the last year and has now increased to a total of 10,548 items.

Through the last year the Storylines team has travelled extensively to consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Traditional Owners and Aboriginal families. Family history workshops sessions were conducted in Perth, Geraldton, Carnarvon, Kalgoorlie, Karratha, Roebourne and Manjimup. The Storylines Facebook page was relaunched with massive success, now hosting a community of over 4,000 members. The page has achieved significant digital repatriation of Indigenous photographs back to Community reaching over 68,000 people.
Music in Vincent Video Interview Series

In 2019 the State Library began working with the City of Vincent Local History Centre on a collaborative project focussing on local music venues in the Vincent area. Thirteen video interviews were filmed with musicians and other music industry personnel including venue managers, booking agents and community arts professionals. These videos focussed on five key music venues that have operated in the Vincent area over the last four decades: the Ellington Jazz Club, The Charles Hotel as the home of the Perth Blues Club, the Hyde Park Hotel, the Rosemount Hotel and the North Perth Ethnic Music Centre. The thirteen full-length interviews resulting from this series have been retained by both City of Vincent and the State Library as digital videos, audio recordings and PDF transcripts. In addition, five short digital videos were created around each venue to promote the series and were released online via the City of Vincent Local History website.

Updating and digitising Cartographic Notes

For many years the collection of Cartographic Notes (CNs) have served to help both clients and staff in understanding of, and finding items in, our extensive map and plan collections. They have operated as a complementary tool alongside the online catalogue and remain vitally important as finding tools for anyone accessing us cartographic collections. With more and more emphasis on provision of digital access to resources we have commenced a project whereby the CNs will be reviewed, updated, digitised, and then attached to the relevant catalogue records. The Heritage Team Librarian is managing this lengthy project and continues to review and update CN entries against library catalogue records. A yet future time will see between 60 to 70 updated and digitised CNs added to the online library catalogue.
Updating and digitising Manuscript Notes

Manuscript Notes (MNs) are to the archival collections as cartographic notes are to the map collections. They are a finding tool of high importance containing—in many cases—granular level information about their archival collection and the individual items within them. For a long time, the manuscript notes only existed as hardcopies available to researchers on the 3rd level of the State Library. As digitisation started to grow the State Library started digitising the manuscript notes and attaching them to their respective archival online catalogue records. This MN digitisation initiative continues seeing each Manuscript Note reviewed, updated (if necessary) and then saved in a format suitable for online access prior to being added to the online catalogue.

Having online (PDF) versions of the Manuscript Notes allows us to provide detailed and easy access to information about the archival collections for both on-site and remote researchers. The latest (at time of writing 13/5/20) Manuscript Notes added to the online catalogue are MN 1248 which provides details on a fascinating set of letters written by Thomas Silver that diarise his war experiences between 1916 – 1919, and MN 62 which lists the details for our extensive and highly popular collection of Fairbridge farm School records.

Digitisation assessment and prioritisation

The State Library holds a large collection of highly significant and valuable rare materials that relate directly to Western Australia’s history as well as several other subjects. The rare materials were relocated to a new rare materials room in 2013. The new room continues to ensure that the rare materials are secured in an environment that will protect them from the ravages of times. Part of the preservation of these precious materials includes an ongoing process of digitisation which not only preserves the original materials but also ensures that the materials can be easily accessed via the State Library’s online catalogue. To assist the Stock Management and Preservation teams, the Heritage Team Librarian currently checks each rare item:

- To see if it is of significance to Western Australia
- To see if it is available online via other organisations;
- For its current copyright status;
- To make a recommendation as to whether a digitised item should be available; online or kept in the “Digital Stack” until a future time;
• To add notes or questions for consideration by the Preservation team; and
• To suggest captions that should be added to the item once it has been digitised.

As one can imagine this is a lengthy project that will take a significant period to complete. However, as the old saying goes *a journey of a thousand miles starts begins with a single step*. It is pleasing to know that the State Library has taken many steps on this journey. We can report that 980 catalogue records for rare books have been assessed along with catalogue records for 67 maps, 22 photographs, 10 ephemera, and 231 music scores.

**Digitisation on demand scheme**

In response to the COVID-19 crisis the State Library quickly developed a digitisation on demand service to provide clients with access to information throughout the time that the Library was closed due to COVID-19 restrictions. This service was free of charge and offered clients the opportunity to request digital access to State Library materials that remain unrestricted by copyright & other embargoes. The service was very successful with State Library staff receiving a high volume of digitisation requests.

**Acquisitions/collection development –COVID 19 contemporary collecting**

**Visual Electronic Diary – by a W.A. Mum**

The State Library has been offered a visual diary about which the writer says, ‘I think to keep my creative juices flowing over the next few weeks (and to keep my sanity), I’m going to do a bit of a visual diary, through the eyes of a mum, and through the eyes of my kids. I guess it’s a pretty significant moment in history, like the photos we see in books we study. These may be the ones my grandchildren look at, as a virtual teacher somewhere in the future reminds them of when Corona came, and how it shifted our world’. The diary is in development or “in media res” right now and will be submitted to the State Library after the COVID-19 crisis ends.

**Pictorial collecting**

Over the last few months Collection Liaison – Pictorial has been focused on the collection of images that capture the social effects of
the COVID-19 pandemic in Western Australia. With contributions from members of the public, library staff and volunteers, as well as purchases from professional photographers, we are building up a comprehensive record of this unique period in our State history, to be preserved in perpetuity for researchers in the future.

Images have been selected to cover all aspects of daily life during the pandemic, both around the metropolitan area and from the regions including the Pilbara. These COVID-19 related photographs include deserted city streets and parks, a variety of “Closed” signs and public health warnings, long queues at Centrelink, cruise ships moored off Fremantle, neighbours socialising at a distance, community initiatives to boost morale, people working from home, virtual birthday parties, and a selection of evocative ANZAC Day driveway Dawn services. They capture the fear, anxiety and despair of lives upturned, but also stoicism, humour, and kindness between strangers. Personal commentaries accompanying the photographs also provide valuable insights into how individuals and families have coped with the lockdown.

The impact of the coronavirus on everyday life in WA will continue to be a collecting focus for the foreseeable future and contributions to this topic can be made via this link on the State Library website: https://www.slwa.wa.gov.au/explore-discover/collecting-wa/covid-19-collecting-drive

Other acquisitions

Notebook of ‘Follow Forrest’ Expeditions of 1974 and 1975

This notebook documents two expeditions to commemorate the centenary of John Forrest’s 1874 expedition from Geraldton to the source of the Murchison River, and then east through the unknown desert centre of WA to Adelaide. Geraldton historian Stan Gratte was the leader of both travelling parties. These personal notes provide background to the trip which Stan had first envisaged in 1971, his plans to organise everyone into four teams (camp duties, vehicle maintenance, scouting, or cooking), and commentary comparing landmarks in 1874 and 1974 and 1975. They set off on Saturday 11 August 1974 from the Geraldton Hotel in 11 vehicles and finished 30 miles north of Oodnadatta. In 1975, they set off from Lighthouse Cottage, Bluff Point on 10 May.

Over the course of the journeys, the travellers were able to find and photograph traces of the original expedition still in existence after 100
years (such as blazed trees, “Forrest’s Fort”, Weld Springs, and a stone cairn) and they left plaques at these important points along the route. Combined with the donation of six related digital documents, this is an interesting collection in terms of both the historical perspective and the 1970s re-enactment of this overland adventure through the rugged country in WA and further east.

**Papers of O’Hare family, Cunderdin**

Edmond (Ned) James O’Hare (1920-2019) came to WA from Queensland c1926-27 with his parents: father (Martin Patrick O’Hare; 1874-1953) and mother (Angela Catherine O’Hare nee Raselli; 1878-1973) and siblings Honor (married name - Pusenjak), Frank, Martin, and Betty (married name- Stokes). His parents took up land in Bilbarin (near Corrigin) at a farm they named ‘Manna Gums’. In 1938 they purchased a larger piece of land (‘Yenelin Farm’) near Cunderdin. Edmond O’Hare was manpowered to work the land during World War II. He and Margaret Mary O’Hare (nee O’Keefe; 1923-2006) married in Melbourne in 1951, returned to Cunderdin and continued to farm at ‘Yenelin’. ‘Yenelin’ is now farmed by Edmond’s son John and John’s son Josiah. This collection adds more to knowledge about life in the wheat belt in the mid-twentieth century – farming and social life – as well as being the history of a family.

**Gardner Family Papers and Photographs**

James Stone Gardner was born in 1891 at Lancashire, England, and migrated with his family (parents – George William and Sarah Stone Gardner - and siblings) in 1909 to Western Australia. In January 1910, the family settled in the district of Yorkrakine, in the northern part of the Shire of Tammin. The farm was named Cringleber, after one of the farms at which the family had lived in Lancashire. George and Sarah bought a second farm, Lyndhurst, at Wagin around 1920. George fell ill in the mid-1920s and returned to England, where he died in 1926. Sarah moved to Inglewood about
1925, where she died in 1934. James married Hilda Mary Hothersall in England in 1924 and they returned to Cringleber. Hilda was originally Philip’s fiancée but he was killed in World War One. While the majority of the archive relates to James and Hilda’s family, there are also significant elements of the collection that relate to the activities of his parents, George and Sarah, and his siblings, especially three of his brothers (Philip, Edward and Charles) and four of his sisters (Josephine or Jessie, Anne or Annie, Katherine or Katie, and Louisa or Louie). This collection represents a successful story of family migration but also shows the ongoing connection to England after many years in WA.

**Letters of Reverend Charles Challen**

Reverend Charles Challen was the chaplain of the Fairbridge Farm School, Pinjarra from 1931-34. The family (parents, a 2-year-old and 10-week-old twins) travelled with 13 children on the Largs Bay to Western Australia. The children average 10 years of age. Rev. Challen was Minister in Merredin after his time at Fairbridge and the family returned to England in 1938 on the Jervis Bay. Those letters give news of Rev. Challen’s family as well as many observations about W.A. and Fairbridge. There is a description of the church at Fairbridge under construction; the variety of his busy workload; taking 300 children on a picnic; becoming used to mosquitos, flies and ‘scorching summer sun’ and isolation. There are insightful comments about the children and their needs and that the Reverend and his wife are ‘sometimes puzzled and worried almost to despair’. He alludes to the encroaching effects of the depression and of a pastoral visit to a bush camp at Myalup where about 1000 men are working diverting the course of a river. There are many very interesting observations particularly in the 1932 letter.

**Records of the Save the Guildford Hotel Group**

The historic Guildford Hotel was badly damaged by fire on 1 September 2008. When no action was taken to protect the remaining fabric of the building nor a plan announced for restoration, the Save the Guildford Hotel Group was formed. The group used the democratic process to protest, publicise, and put pressure on State Government Ministers, and...
the Opposition, to make statements, table a Petition and ask questions in Parliament. This collection is a comprehensive record of effective community action to save built heritage in Western Australia.

**Ken Knox photographs, late 1940s-1950s**

Ken Knox photographs, late 1940s-1950s created while Ken was a member of the Western Australian Camera Club from 1948-1962. Ken’s black and white photographs feature a range of subjects including architecture, industry, landscape and portraits, in accordance with themes and creative/aesthetic parameters set by the Camera Club. Ken’s work was highly commended in interclub competitions and exhibitions at locations including Boans Department store, the Kelmscott Agricultural Society, and the Kalamunda Show. The photographs represent both the output of a talented photographer and the influence of the Western Australian Camera Club, which was formed in 1917 to encourage the science, art and practice of photography and the interchange of knowledge amongst members.

**Photographs and papers relating to WAPET’s discovery of oil at Rough Range, 1952-55**

Photographs and papers relating to West Australian Petroleum Pty Ltd (WAPET) and their discovery of oil at Rough Range, 1952-55, gathered by Dr Phillip Elliott Playford (1931-2017) who was an eminent WA geologist and author of many reports and publications on oil exploration in Western Australia. The collection includes photographs and slides of “The Big Strike” at Rough Range; Learmonth Camp; Exmouth Gulf; and WAPET employees including key geologist Murray Johnstone who was a close associate (Phillip wrote the script for Johnstone’s film on the Rough Range oil strike, The Dinkum Oil). Private Archives/Papers include Owen C. Evans’ descriptions of “That Day at Rough Range” and “Drill Camp (Ranger) and Learmonth Humour”; lists of WAPET employees 1952-54; news cuttings, and correspondence between Phillip and former geologist colleagues Owen Evans and Don Stanley, 2003-2005. This collection captures the great excitement at the discovery of Australia’s first flowing oil at Rough Range and adds to the important record of oil discovery in WA in the mid-1950s. It also complements Murray Johnstone’s photographs, papers, and film footage of Rough Range (BA3020).
RetroMaps launched
The FOBS funded project developed by the State Records Office – new Retromaps site – was released by Ministers David Templeman and Dave Kelly on 5 June 2020. You can read the Minister’s statement here, acknowledging the important funding contribution of the Friends to this project: https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2020/06/Online-resource-brings-past-to-the-fore.aspx

The State Library of WA posted about the new RetroMaps site through Facebook and, mainly off the back of that post, the new site got a good workout over that first weekend of release with 16,000 users checking out this new online resource. Public response to the site has been extremely positive. Those that have expressed disappointment are people living outside the RetroMaps “boundary” and whose house is not included within the historical survey plans available through the site. However, urbanised Perth up to the mid 20th Century had essentially developed along the Swan river (and Fremantle – Midland railway line) for very practical purposes. The site shows how the more densely

A WA Government Public Works Department Field Book (State Records Office)
populated areas of Perth looked before turban sprawl.

Just as a recap, the RetroMaps site incorporates over 2,000 historical “sewerage plans” held in the State archives collection and that have been digitised, geo-referenced and added in to a modern mapping platform. The Friends funded the initial digitisation component. Clients can now access these plans from home and search by current street location, fade the historical plans in and out to see how the Perth landscape and individual properties have changed (or not) over time and freely download high resolution copies of plans for their own purposes. The plans span a date range of 1905 – 1971.

The project has been a bit of an experiment by the State Records Office to see how this sort of work could be conducted and what the result could look like, and as a way to engage new audiences with archival materials in a manner that is (hopefully) easy to use. Many more government archives held by the SRO lend themselves to being searchable by location as per the RetroMaps site.

In case you have not yet visited the site, have a look at : https://mapping.sro.wa.gov.au

Damien Hassan, Senior Archivist

**Facebook page**

SRO also has a Facebook site: [https://www.facebook.com/StateRecordsOfficeWA](https://www.facebook.com/StateRecordsOfficeWA). It is certainly worth browsing the site to discover interesting stories revealed by the records held in the State Archives collection which are regular features.

The following story about Charles Kingsford Smith is a recent posting using information from WA Police Department files.

**Flying into danger**

Tried and tested over many thousands of miles, distinguished Australian aviator Kingsford Smith and his crew didn’t express the faintest note of pessimism at the outset of their 12,000-mile flight from Richmond (near Sydney) to London.

“We’ll win through, all right,” Kingsford Smith told reporters moments before flying out on the Southern Cross. But he was wrong.

Only a day later [on 31 March 1929] in the early hours of the morning, the
Southern Cross ran into bad weather in the far north Kimberley. In a report to the Secretary Premier’s Department in Perth held by the State Records Office of WA, Smith described heavy rain and low clouds. Forcing him to fly as low as 50 feet from the ground.

Disorientated after hours of flying and unable to land, Smith and his crew dropped messages from the plane over settlements they flew over, asking to be pointed towards the direction of Wyndham. People on the ground made pointing gestures and directional markers.

Glad from Port George describes the Southern Cross searching in vain for a landing place, coming right down nearly on her roof. It “dropped a hanky with a note weighted in it asking us to lay a strip of calico in the direction of Wyndham and write on it how many miles to go. When they read it they flew away.”

With safety of the machine being Smith’s primary consideration and only 10 minutes of petrol left, the Southern Cross landed safely on a soft grassy swamp. Unsure of what direction to take and with little food, Smith decide to “stand by the machine”. The men’s strength failed rapidly, aggravated by heat, flies and mosquitos. They sighted several planes, but they were more than four miles away and didn’t spot their smoke fires.

It wasn’t until the 12th day that a civilian aircraft the Canberra, sighted the Southern Cross and found the crew alive. Provisions were subsequently dropped and a couple of days later enough petrol was delivered for the Southern Cross to fly.

Sadly, during the extensive search which attracted considerable public and media interest, one of the aircraft participating in the search, the
Kookaburra, was forced down in the Tanami Desert with engine trouble. It couldn’t take off again because of thick scrub and the crew of two, Keith Anderson and Bobby Hitchcock (also friends of Kingsford Smith), ill-prepared for such an event, died before help arrived.

Many sections of the media and public felt that the forced landing of the Southern Cross, which was dubbed the “Coffee Royal” incident after the brew of coffee and brandy which the crew had drunk while awaiting rescue, was a publicity stunt and that Kingsford Smith was responsible for the two deaths. An official inquiry into the incident was convened and while Kingston Smith was exonerated his reputation suffered.

More than 6,000 mourners attended Keith Anderson’s funeral in Sydney. It was an elaborate affair befitting a national hero. Bobby Hitchcock was buried at Karrakatta Cemetery in Perth.

Interested to find out more? The State Reports Office of WA hold fascinating Police Department and Premiers Department files relating to the search available to view.

State Records Office of Western Australia ABC Perth ABC Kimberley The West Australian Aviation Heritage Museum The Kimberley Echo.

[With appreciation to Damian Shepherd, Damien Hassan, Gerard Foley and the SROWA team for preparing this story.]

Please renew your membership

We congratulate the staff of the State Library and State Records Office on the vital work they do in preserving and telling Western Australian stories. Supporting our State collections is the central role of the Friends and your membership is key in ensuring we continue our work. Subscriptions are now due and can be renewed using the following form or contacting us by email at membership@friendsofbattyelibrary.org.au.
Friends of Battye Library (Inc) Subscriptions form
From 1 July to 30 June each year

LIFE MEMBERSHIP $500

Annual Membership
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Joint $35
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The Treasurer
Friends of Battye Library
PO Box 216, NORTHBRIDGE 6865

If paying by electronic direct funds transfer, our details are:

BSB Number – 016-185
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Account Number – 4220 58413

In the reference section, please use your initial and surname as well as ‘subs’ or ‘donation’ to ensure that your payment can be identified.

We need a completed form for our records, so please return it either by post or as an attachment to an email to membership@friendsofbattyelibrary.org.au with your online receipt number.
The Aboriginal Prison in the Terrace

In the 1830s the area around the corner of Pier Street and St Georges Terrace was the administrative hub of the Swan River Settlement. It had the army barracks, the officers’ quarters, the rush church, the Colonial Secretary’s house, government house, the commissariat, the court house and the government offices including the Legislative Council chamber and the Post Office.

And right at the centre, where the Old Deanery now stands, was the Perth Gaol.

It wasn’t much of a gaol. The colony's annual report (the ‘Blue Book’) for 1837 was quite scathing:

There is a Building in Perth called the Gaol and commenced for the purpose of being used as such. But it is very unfitted for a place of permanent confinement, and has in consequence been used as a Commissariat Store, with the exception of one cell for the temporary custody of disorderly persons or prisoners committed for trial, or after summary conviction until they can be conveyed to Fremantle, a second cell is used as a Black Hole for the military.

Ten years later, things began to change. In February 1847 the cells were emptied out and former army sergeant William Burrell was appointed gaoler. It was all about saving money: it was expensive to transport prisoners on remand to Fremantle Gaol, bring them back for trial then return them if found guilty.

Then, in March 1848, tenders were called in the Government Gazette for ‘erecting a Building for the reception of Native Prisoners in Perth.’ Reasons weren’t given but it was probably about boosting the conscripted labour supply in Perth. It was extremely rare for anyone sentenced to imprisonment for the sentence not to include hard labour. All Fremantle male prisoners whether Aboriginal, colonial, visiting sailors or court-
martialled soldiers were mostly employed on public works. ‘Road making’ and ‘repairing roads’ were typical.

But since 1838 male Aboriginal prisoners, whether awaiting trial or after conviction, had been sent across to Rottnest Island.

The oldest known ‘Return of Prisoners’ for the Perth Gaol is that dated 4 April 1849, compiled by William Burrell. It has two parts, the first headed ‘Return of Prisoners of the Aboriginal Race’ lists 18 prisoners. The second part lists 9 European prisoners. All 27 were undergoing punishment with hard labour. The Aboriginal prisoners were from all around the southwest: Bunbury, Albany, Beverley, York, Northam, Toodyay and Gingin.

In July 1849 tenders were called for ‘enlarging the Native Prison in the Perth Gaol’. Later that year the Rottnest gaol was closed and the prisoners were brought back to work on the roads around Perth, especially the roads from Perth to Guildford and Kelmscott.

Lists from 3 January 1850 include 22 Aboriginal men and 11 Europeans. Several of the former were among the nineteen ‘native prisoners’ who absconded from the Guildford Road road gang on 22 February. For many it was their third or fourth escape.

A detail from the 1851 plan of central Perth showing the final layout of the first Perth Gaol which was on the site now occupied by the Old Deanery. The building at the top is the Perth Girls School.
In the absence of detailed building plans it is difficult to follow the changes made to the gaol – except possibly for the February 1849 decision to raise the fence round the gaol-yard by five feet. The only hard information comes from successive detailed plans of the central Perth area. These indicate that the northern building of the complex was the Aboriginal prison.

Extended it might have been but it rapidly became overcrowded. On the night of 1 August 1850 40 Aboriginal prisoners were confined in two rooms, 12 feet by 15 feet and 12 feet by 18 feet.

The arrival of convicts in June 1850 gradually provided the labour for public works. In 1855 the Rottnest Island prison was re-opened and work began on a new gaol for Perth – the 1856 building which is still a very important part of the new museum.

Steve Errington

The State Library Bookshop

Members will have noticed that the shop which used to be situated on the ground floor near the reception desk has been closed. It is not clear at this point, but it is hoped that Western Australian publications may be able to be purchased at the Western Australian Museum when building works have finished.

The Royal Western Australian Historical Society, however, has a bookshop with an extensive collection of WA materials and purchases may be made either in person by visiting 49 Broadway, cnr Clark Street Nedlands, or by browsing the catalogue and ordering online through https://shop.histwest.org.au/books.html. The RWAHS bookshop also sells a range of other goods including archival materials. For more information phone 08 9386 3841 during business hours or email: admin@histwest.org.au.
Membership Subscription (from 1 July to 30 June - GST inclusive)

Life membership $500

Annual membership
Ordinary $25
Joint $35
Pensioner / student / junior $15
Corporate $50

Meetings
General meetings are held each year in March, May, July, September (the Annual General Meeting), and November (also the end of year function). They are held at the State Library of Western Australia and usually begin at 5.00 pm for 5.30 pm and conclude before 7.00 pm, except for the November function which finishes around 8.00pm.

Newsletter
Three issues will be published each year in March, July, and November (flyers will be sent out in May and September). Articles from members and supporters are very welcome and the deadline for copy for the newsletter is 10 February, 10 June, and 10 October. The editor reserves the right to accept or reject articles and notices for publication.

Contact details
Friends of Battye Library website:

   http://www.friendsofbattyelibrary.org.au

For comments, more information, membership forms, a copy of the Friends of Battye Library (Inc) Constitution, or to send articles and notices for the newsletter, please contact:

   The editor, Jennie Carter at bevnjen@gmail.com

   or write to:

   The President
   Friends of Battye Library (Inc)
   P O Box 216
   Northbridge  WA  6865
J S Battye Library of West Australian History

Opening hours

- Mon/Thurs 9.00 am - 8.00 pm
- Friday 9.00 am - 5.30 pm
- Sat/Sun 10.00 am - 5.30 pm
- Public holidays - closed

Retrievals
Every half hour during opening hours when they are resumed after all visiting restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic are lifted.

Telephone enquiries (08) 9427 3291  Fax enquiries (08) 9427 3256
Website  www.slwa.wa.gov.au    Email:info@slwa.wa.gov.au

Specialist staff:  Dr Kate Gregory (Battye Historian)

State Records Office
The SRO Search Room is being shifted to the third floor of the State Library, Alexander Library Building. Once visiting restrictions are lifted, a Researcher’s Ticket will still be required.

Retrievals
The SRO will be co-locating for public access with the State Library of WA in the Battye Library reading room. Further details will be provided when they come to hand.

Telephone (08) 9427 3600, website  www.sro.wa.gov.au, email: sro@sro.wa.gov.au

The Genealogy Centre

Opening hours - When the State Library opens fully to the public, the hours that the Genealogy Centre will be accessible will remain as per Battye Library opening hours on the third floor.

Volunteers from Family History Western Australia (formerly the WA Genealogi- cal Society (WAGS) will again be available to assist researchers on Tues, Wed, and Thurs from 9.30 am to 1.00 pm once the Library reopens to researchers.

Specialist staff for Family History: for Family History information call Tuesday to Thursday on 08 9427 3247 or email info@slwa.wa.gov.au