

No. 181



November 2024

FRIENDS OF BATTYE LIBRARY (Inc.)
NEWSLETTER

Our End of Year meeting 19 November 2024

Shane Burke

*Cliff Head on Garden Island (Meeandip): the first British
settlement on the west coast 1829*



Cover image by Lauren Tomlinson - Sulphur Bay, Garden Island.

Tuesday 19 November 2024 at 5.00pm for 5.30pm. 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.

Patron Miss Margaret Medcalf OAM

Committee (2024-2025)

President	Richard Offen
Vice President	Jennie Carter,
Secretary	Pamela Statham Drew
Treasurer	Nick Drew
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Events Coordinator	Helen Mather

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Views expressed in this *Newsletter* are not necessarily those of the Friends of Battye Library Committee, the State Library of Western Australia, or the State Records Office.

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End of Year meeting.

Tuesday 19 November 2024

Great Southern Room, 4th floor State Library of Western Australia
at 5pm for 5.30pm

Our speaker will be Dr Shane Burke

*Cliff Head on Garden Island (Meeandip): the first British
settlement on the west coast 1829*

Help us celebrate the end of another year

After the talk, members and guests are warmly invited to stay on and join us for a catered two course spit-roast dinner which will be served in the staff dining room adjacent to the Great Southern Room.

**The dinner cost is only \$40 per head
Including wine and soft drinks**

We are grateful to Catherine Clark, CEO and State Librarian, for her generosity in making the 4th floor staff canteen again available to us.

Bookings for the dinner must be received by the morning of Friday 8 November as we must provide final numbers to the caterer. Please RSVP to Nick Drew by email at: nickdrew@bigpond.com or telephone 0409 290 895 by 8 November 2024. Payment can be made in advance to the Friends Bank Account: BSB 016 185 Account No 4220 58413 or by card. Or payment on the 19 November at the door by card or cash.

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 our speaker Dr Shane Burke

Shane Burke coordinates the archaeology program at the University of Notre Dame Australia in Fremantle. His research interests include the study of adaptive strategies through material remains, using prehistoric and historic period sites.



Dr Shane Burke(
University of Notre Dame)

He is presently researching the archaeology of the 1829-1830 dated Peel town camp, the Garden Island settlement dating to 1829, Parade Street in Albany dating to 1826, and the 18,000 years BP Quininup Brook site south of Yallingup.

He received his PhD from the University of Western Australia in 2004.

Topic

Shane's talk will describe the on-going research at Cliff Head on Garden Island (Indigenous name Meeandip), the first British settlement on the west coast of Australia dating to 1829. The research has recorded features of local limestone and introduced materials such as low-fired brick, a well, and other artefacts brought from Britain. Early results suggest that areas at the camp existed for domestic purposes, storage of equipment and food supplies, the running of stock, and intra and inter-island communication, but other hypotheses are proposed.



Meeting dates for 2025

- 11 March** Harriet Olney - *The Warburton Indigenous Art Collection*
- 13 May** Sue Graham Taylor - *Centenary of the WA Naturalist Society*
- 8 July** Andrew Gill - *Convict assignment in WA 1842 - 1851*
- 9 September (AGM)** Michael Nind & Kate Gregory - *40 years of the Alexander Library building*
- 18 November** End of year celebration - speaker TBC



President's piece
President's Report - presented at the Friends AGM
10 September 2024

The year 2023/24 can probably be described as 'business as usual' for the Friends of Battye Library.

The Committee has met, as usual, every two months throughout the past year, receiving reports from both the State Library and State Records Office on their activities, overseeing the financial situation of the organisation, so ably managed by Nick Drew, looking for new projects to support and ensuring the general meetings go according to plan. Pamela is our conscientious Secretary and her work has been invaluable in keeping the Friends committee running smoothly. This year we have been delighted to welcome Raymond Marks and Michael Nind on to the Committee.

It is great that Catherine Clarke and Kate Gregory from the State Library, plus Damien Hassan from the State Records Office also attend our meetings, making communication with both organisations friendly and easy. We thank them for their attendance, which makes it a long working day for them. I am most grateful to all the committee members for working so hard and making my life as President so easy.

Due to the ease with which committee business can be dealt with by email, your committee decided to reduce the number of meetings it required each year from five to four (the Constitution requires four per year). It was resolved that the June meeting would be the one to disappear from the calendar, on the understanding that any necessary business would be attended to by email. When finalised, an updated copy of the constitution will be placed on the Friends of Battye Library website <https://www.friendsofbattyelibrary.org.au>.

As many of you know, Maude Sholl left a substantial bequest for the use of the Friends of Battye Library Inc. to help fund projects for the Battye Library of Western Australian History and the State Records Office and we continue to work with these two entities to find new projects to fund.

I reported last year that the bequest is helping to fund the State Library to undertake large-scale digitisation of its at-risk audio-visual collections. 'At risk' refers to audio, video, and film analogue formats (records, tapes, discs, magnetic tapes and film and sound reels) that can no longer be played on devices (tape recorders, projection devices, video, and DVD

players) due to changing technologies and deterioration of physical items over the last several decades. Since then, the library's digitisation of AV materials continues apace – since, well over 7,000 items of video, film and audio formats now having been processed for digitisation

Our programme of talks for the 2023/24 year has included:

Trevor Cross: Scrimshaw: The Folk Art of the Whalers and other Maritime Trades; Kate Gregory: Cracking O'Reilly's Code; David Whiteford (SRO) and Andrew Black (SLWA): Where is Kwakkalup?; John Viska: Historic gardens of Perth; and SRO staff presenting on news from the collections.

Our thanks go to not only our speakers, but also Helen Mather who organises them and the venue and, of course, Nick and Pamela who organise the most welcome refreshments.

We are so lucky to be able to hold all our meetings in the comfortable surroundings of the State Library and we are most grateful to the library team for making us so welcome and providing all the facilities we need, including their staff room for our Christmas festivities.

Thanks, must also go to Heather Campbell, who has continued to manage with aplomb the enormous task of editing our excellent newsletter. Lorraine, who is not only our History Council Rep, but manages our website and Membership Secretary, Cherie, must also be given warm thanks for all the work they put in behind the scenes. Our Vice-President, Jennie, is also ready to take on any task which needs attention, for which thanks also.

Finally, I would like to thank you all for your involvement in this very special organisation. Without you all we would not be able to support the work of Battye Library of Western Australian History and the State Records Office to the extent we do.

Richard Offen



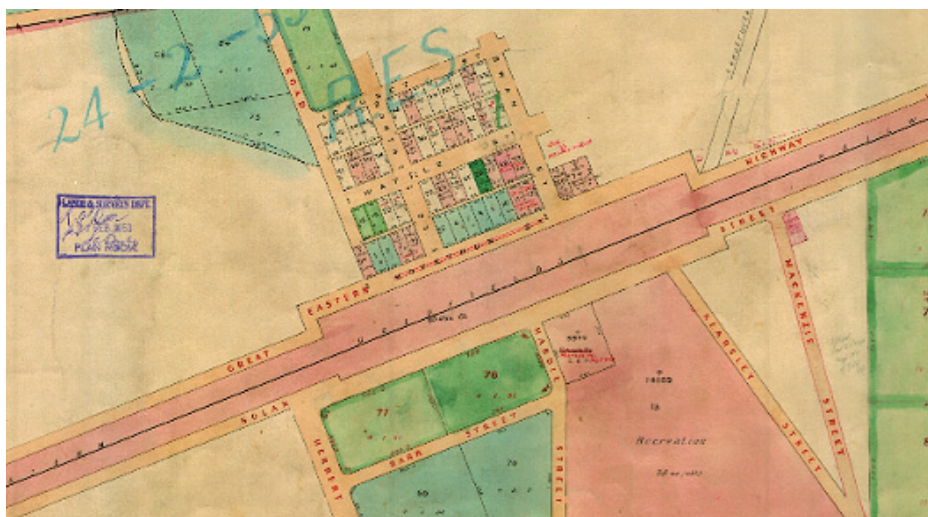
Have you a story to tell?

[Senior Archivist, David Whiteford, who will be well-known to our members, recently retired from the State Records Office. This is the first of hopefully many articles the newsletter will receive from David in his 'retirement'.

History of a weighbridge – using the Archives

Hines Hill (gazetted as a townsite on 10 June 1910, then being 156 rail miles east of Perth), had 40 names listed in the 1926 *Post Office Directory*. The majority were either settlers or selectors, indicating the relatively new agricultural development of the area. There were a few railway employees, two butchers, a storekeeper and a few others. Although not listed in 1926, there was a hotel and the State Records Office catalogue records a 1902 civil court debt case of Swan Brewery Company vs G H Pearce of the Hines Hill Hotel, and other files provide information on the hotel from 1924 to 1991 (by which time it was Hines Hill Tavern). In 2024 the townsite has very few buildings and the hotel has been closed for some years. The 2021 census records 59 people living in the town and surrounding locality.

A prominent feature of the town was the railway station, Hines Hill being on what was first termed the Yilgarn Railway (to Southern Cross) then



Hines Hill townsite cancelled public plan 1917-1953 – SRO Cons5698 item 0791.

the Eastern Goldfields Railway when it was extended to Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie. The station was opened on 1 July 1894 and had a station master from then until October 1930. It was closed on 5 October 1970 after the new standard gauge railway had opened. While the narrow gauge station was in the town and alongside what is now Great Eastern Highway, the current Hines Hill siding is to the north of the town.

There are few immediately obvious relics of the old railway, but one item does stand out adjacent to the highway and it has a history plaque – a small weighbridge. It can be said that in the wheatbelt railway sidings were sited approximately five miles apart. During the harvests farmers would deliver bags of grain to the sidings and various companies would lease bag stacking sites. Weighbridges were usually provided. These are shown on Western Australian Government Railways (WAGR) progress and improvement plans held by SRO and occasionally specific plan sets of such leases. Eventually bulk handling replaced bagged grain, but weighbridges were still essential and for many years farmers would still deliver the grain in bags until they, too, were able to use bulk transport.



The Hines Hill weighbridge on 8 November 2008 with the former narrow gauge railway yard and the goldfields water pipeline behind.

As a railway enthusiast/historian, I always note the Hines Hill weighbridge whenever I drive through and in 1980 I realised that SRO has a file titled *Hines Hill – weighbridge* (Cons1240 item 1938/00480). This led to a history of it being written and first published in the *New Mercury* (Merredin) newspaper of 19 November 1980 then in *Western Rails* 11/2 July 1989.

Although a small, once very common, and seemingly insignificant structure, the weighbridge is part of the railway and social history of the area and indicative of the wider wheatbelt. In summary, farmers began asking for a weighbridge in 1924 and were finally successful in 1926. A local Weighbridge Committee was formed to manage its purchase at an estimated cost of £386 to be paid off by annual instalments of £40 for 15 years. A 14'x 8' ASCO (Australian Scale Co.) weighbridge of 11- ton

capacity was installed and ready for use on 1 July 1926. The file records financial problems arising by 1935 with the general depression, farmers using other nearby sidings, and many farm ownership changes being given as the reason for the committee being unable to make payments. In February 1936 £95.11.7d was still owing. By mid-1939 the WAGR could not contact the Committee, and the purchase agreement was cancelled by WAGR in July 1939, the weighbridge then owned and managed by them. Co-operative Bulk Handling was granted use of it and then purchased it outright in 1951 for £50. It continued in use until the new grain bins on the standard gauge line were brought into use for the 1966/67 harvest.

The weighbridge stands as a record of farming development and hardship as well as of the railway history of Hines Hill, and as well as the physical item in Hines Hill, its history is permanently recorded in the State Records Office of Western Australia.

David Whiteford



[Our guest writer from the last issue, Brendan Kelly, a Bunbury based member of the Friends is becoming a regular, rather than a guest, contributor to the newsletter. In this issue he looks at a famous West Australian.]

May Gibbs – Amateur Entertainer

The acclaimed May Gibbs is the literary mother of the Australian Gumnut babies, Snugglepoot and Cuddlepoot. However little has been recorded of her theatrical accomplishments as a young woman. An Aquarian by horoscope, May was blessed with the signature characteristics of talent – charisma, ambition, cleverness and ultimately, success. Her family's involvement with the golden days of amateur entertainment in Western Australia in the 1890s is mentioned only briefly in biographies of May. Her career on the stage as an 'amateur' of Perth is worthy of added note.

May's parents Herbert and Cecelia Gibbs moved to Perth in the late 1880s, joining a burgeoning cultural arts scene. Herbert Gibbs sketched as an artist for the short-lived *Fremantle Bulletin*, where the ubiquitous Francis 'Jerry' Hart wrote chatty columns and drove the amateur entertainment

scene. The Gibbs family became attached to the Perth Musical Union and the Perth Amateur Operatic Society, under the pervasive Hart. Jerry Hart's highflying career in Perth theatre circles drove the amateurs to giddy heights. He boldly promoted a special generation of stage-struck ladies and gentlemen.¹

The Perth amateurs pursued amusement of an 'innocent and pleasant kind'. The amateurs were not playing simply for glory; their presence and inner joy on stage was made respectable by raising money for good causes. The typical amateur entertainer was a respectable citizen, and 'the ill-repute that once attached to the stage as a profession or as an amusement' had become less so. With a gentle warning 'we should be taking an altogether one sided view of the question... as in all things, there are the customary dangers of excess'.²

The Gibbs family was progressive in outlook and May's mother Cecelia was an ideal role model for her daughter. Cecelia's own performances on stage were roundly praised during her glory years. She possessed a full alto-soprano singing voice, and her stage presence reflected a mature and confident woman. She fortified her daughter May by her own aptitude. Cecelia and Herbert Gibbs were colleagues and friends, of the dynamo Jerry Hart, whose wife Lilian was equally a gifted pianist. Lilian, under the pseudonym 'Cora', also promoted the cultured class in her *Western Mail* column.

The multi-talented Gibbs family, which included Herbert's ability to design and paint stage sets, put them close to the epicentre of Perth's amateur performers. In 1890, thirteen-year-old May received her first substantial review. At St George's Hall, in front of a large audience, May performed in the *The May Queen*. She aptly played the May Queen, while Cecelia played the Hodge. The chorus consisted of Mrs Rogers' pupils from May's Mulgrave House School. Cecelia was lauded for her 'cultivated contralto voice lowered to a masculine depth', while May 'sang very creditably'.³

Whereas May had already been acclaimed specifically for her drawing gifts, congratulated as 'this clever little lady', her talents were multiple. Labelled with the prediction of 'Further efforts, greater success', May would live up to her potential. It helped that Jerry and Lilian Hart actively identified and promoted May's musical and acting aptitude. Cecelia Gibbs, already experienced in the excitement of the stage, encouraged May to develop her own capabilities. May developed a confident stage

presence as she matured, an outstanding newcomer to Perth's amateur theatre musicals.

After her performances in Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Gondoliers* in 1892, fifteen-year-old May was tagged in a review as the 'clever daughter of a clever woman'. Her mother played by her side, earning praise for the 'ripe perfection and finish' of her singing and acting. She provided the archetype for May. The satire and paradox and whirligig nature of Gilbert and Sullivan stagecraft, fanned by the amateurs, reflected the whim of Perth society. It offered the perfect outlet for artistic expression. For the Gibbs family, it was a favoured pastime.



May Gibbs in *The Gondoliers*, 1892
(Museum of Performing Arts at his Majesty's Theatre, with thanks to Ivan King.)

The Perth Amateur Operatic Society symbolised the cultural essence of the emerging times. At its peak of enthusiasm, audiences that patronised the popular light operas and stage shows of the amateurs felt they knew the leading performers as their own. May Gibbs would say of Jerry Hart:

Our producer Hart, was just out from London, where Gilbert and Sullivan had been going for a long time. He was slight and a marvellous actor, just made for those parts, whose singing, dancing, comedy and originality were all unique and perfect.⁴

Jerry Hart and Governor William Robinson were champions of amateur entertainment.

Hart cultivated connections across the community, government and administrative classes, as a newspaperman and impresario. He was a one-man publicity machine, a showman, publicist and opportunist, an advertising man who had become stage-struck. Hart played a key role in

making Perth amateur theatre not only relevant, but also celebrated, with his band of talented amateurs. The class of ladies and gentlemen that he influenced, which included May Gibbs and her family, were happy to follow his self-possessed get-up-and-go.

By the end of 1895 Perth had largely outgrown its taste for amateur entertainment. The old Musical Union, and Amateur Operatic Society had become less prominent. The 'general race for wealth', in an altered community after the great gold discoveries, had taken away the time for genteel engagement in musical arts. Whereas it was hoped that there would be 'a revival of a charming and defined art', the departure of Jerry Hart to England in 1896 punctuated the end of an era.

Nonetheless, in the second half of the 1890's, May Gibbs and her family continued to immerse themselves in cultural interests across Perth. Although times had changed – statehood, the gold boom, talk of federation, modern times, an old queen (Victoria) – entertainment was still sought after. The need for amateur amusements had perhaps diminished, but enthusiasm had not. At the end of 1899, May appeared in a production *The Grand Duchess*, described by a critic in the Perth *Argonaut* as 'the best amateur show yet seen in Perth'. May had a more minor part:

The maids of honor, Mesdames W E Cooke and Kerferd and Misses May Gibbs and Lela Hill, have nothing much to do beyond look attractive, and this they manage to accomplish in fine style.⁵

Life would subsequently change for May Gibbs. In 1900, still only 22-years-old, she sailed with her mother to England. Her reputation thereafter would be founded in her literary renown and as a visual artist. However her formative years as a stage performer, exposure to adult players and the self-assurance she gained, unquestionably contributed to her personal growth and special distinction.

Endnotes:

1. Brendan Kelly, 'Francis Jerome Ernest Hart', Brendan Kelly in *Early Days* 102, 2018, pp.49-61.
2. 'The Theatre', *Western Mail*, 22 June 1889. p.6.
3. *West Australian* 22 May 1890 - Page 3.
4. Maureen Walsh, *May Gibbs - Mother of the Gumnuts*, 1994, p. 39.
5. 'From the Circle', *The Argonaut*, 2 December 1899, p 6.



[Raymond Marks joined the Friends Committee in 2023 and was elected again in 2024. The following is Raymond's perspective and thoughts on history and the Battye Library.]

History and the Battye Library in an Age of Information

Our history can influence our understanding of where we, as a community, have come from and who we are as a society.

We have all heard the saying that we live in an age of information. An understanding of what that means seems to be intuitive. We live in a time when individuals, it seems, are almost attacked by a constant flow of information especially from electronic devices. But what is information? How does it influence the way Western Australians view themselves as a people?

Information is defined by information philosophers in what they call the General Definition of Information (GDI). The GDI is:

Information = Data + Meaning (Luciano Floridi, *Information a Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford UK, 2010)

Data is 'stuff arranged to attract and carry meaning'. It can consist of pigment on a page, pixels on a screen, or perhaps coloured mud applied to a cave wall.

Meaning is a little harder to define. One useful definition of meaning is 'what it expresses or represents'.

So there is two parts to information, one tangible and the other intangible. The tangible data is created by an Intelligent Living Being (ILB). The meaning is also applied to the data by an ILB or by agreement within a group of ILBs. For example, a group of chemists could agree that the data 'Ca' has meaning of the substance calcium.

We could deep-dive into discussion about intelligence and life, but let us give our attention to history.

The Battye Library is one of the most important institutions in the state of Western Australia. It holds an archival collection of data contributed by Western Australians, including those of indigenous origin. This data is collated, catalogued and stored securely by the State Library of Western Australia (SLWA).

The huge store of data in Battye is accessed by historians and other researchers seeking to document our origins. They prepare text for books, motion pictures, television, podcasts and so on. The selection of data from the archive, be it written text or photographs, or perhaps even stored garments, is as the researcher chooses. The researcher is an ILB. Meaning is then applied to the data selected also by the researcher.

While some meaning may be contestable, primary meaning is generally unassailable. By way of explanation of 'unassailable', consider that there is data on the various records that attract the meaning that this author's great grandfather WH Marks was observed to board a ship called the *Lincoln* in England in the year 1865 and was sighted leaving the ship at Port Adelaide South Australia later that year. A secondary meaning could be that he had emigrated to Australia and given other data on the record from observations made in later years, this meaning could perhaps also be considered as unassailable.

Historians collect archival data from various sources like the Battye Library and prepare a history around a subject or theme. These histories are developed to explain how we, as a people, came to be who and where we are now. The data is chosen selectively to understandably 'winnow' large amounts down to a manageable volume. For instance, in writing a narrative about a certain Western Australian district between 1880 and 1920, it would not be of interest to write about every person who inhabited the area in those forty years. It would be a tedious read. In a further effort to make the narrative attractive to read or view electronically, decision-making and motivations would be discussed by the historian with human drama highlighted. These writings would be done filtered through the popular public narrative of the day.

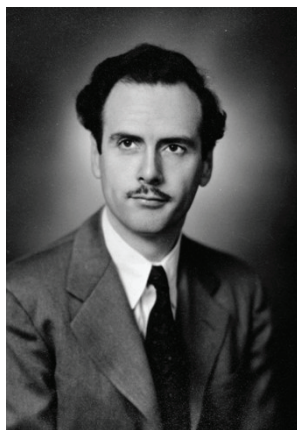
The popular narrative has been observed to change from one era to the next.

In the early years of Western Australia, say the Victorian era (circa 1820 to 1910), the prevailing attitude driving colonisation and immigration was one of taking civilisation to less 'civilised' peoples. The Christian faith was identified as going hand in hand with civilisation. A history written in those pre-electronic days would reflect this understanding. Discussion of motivation and outcomes, especially those related to human failings, would assume that the uncivilised peoples would generally be benefitted by the actions of the Europeans.

The same data selected by a modern historian would be given meaning that is filtered and adjudged through a current public narrative. This would typically reflect the post-modern victim views of the 2020s. The data has not changed, but the prevailing public values are influencing the choice of, and meaning applied to, the data. Hence the resulting historical narrative is different when compared to those of earlier eras. Furthermore, in future eras it will be changed again to suit.

This brings us to the age of information.

In about 1837 the electric telegraph was invented and for the first time in human history significant quantities of data could travel faster than a human. The amount of data that can be sent has accelerated over the years. In the mid 1890's radio was invented and then television in the 1920's. In the 1990's a Canadian academic named Marshall McLuhan recognised that radio and television was not inert to popular culture when he asserted in the 1960s that 'The Medium is the Message'. This was developed further by Neil Postman in the 1980s (Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Methuen, London UK, 1987). It became apparent to all that the data being generated was at times deliberately designed to attract meaning that was deceptive, and at times erroneous, if it benefited the owners and controllers of the medium by which it was broadcast. With the advent of the World Wide Web, and social media in particular, we see the participation rate of transmission has increased dramatically, and historical content has become easier to prepare.



Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980)

It was recognised in the early 2000s that mass media erodes complex thought. Bruce Charlton wrote: 'The model of complexity being internally-generated, and simplicity being a selection effect of the environment, may explain why the exponential increase in the availability of information with the vast growth in the Mass Media has been associated with an obvious, qualitative collapse in the complexity of personal thought, private conversation and public discourse.'(Bruce G. Charlton, *Addicted to Distraction*, University of Buckingham Press, Buckingham UK, 2014).

With this cyber-space media we see the emergence of a plethora of popular simplified narratives based on data that is being manipulated to allow multiple single-interest groups to make their case for almost anything. The controllers of the media are the ones who benefit the most. The Medium is the Message.

To safeguard the integrity of history and make it possible for future generations of historians to write meaningful, integral history based on unassailable primary meaning, it is vital that we protect the data stored and curated in Battye. I trust that in this way, future generations will be able to decide history for themselves and work out how we, Western Australians, arrived here.

Raymond Marks

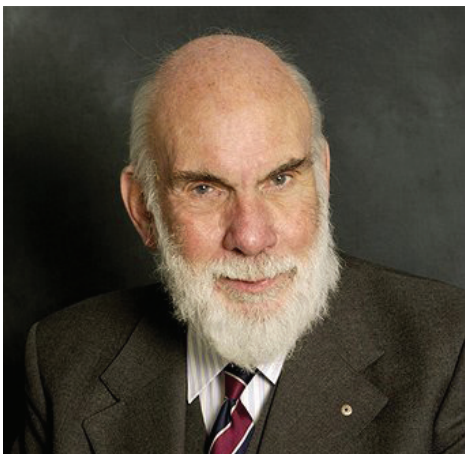


Our Gems of Time (a retrospective)

**2005 – Geoffrey Curgenvan Bolton, Emeritus Professor, AO,
FASSA, FAHA (5 November 1931 - 4 September 2015)**

[A long time colleague, Dr Lenore Layman, wrote a fine tribute to her friend for the Royal Western Australian Historical Society and kindly let us reprint it as an enduring citation for the Friends.]

Remembering with affection a fine scholar, teacher and friend



... they will maintain the fabric of the world; And in the handiwork of their craft is their prayer. (Ecclesiasticus 38)

Geoff had an illustrious academic career. After first class honours and an MA degree at the University of WA, he won a Hackett Studentship to Balliol College, Oxford, where he completed his doctorate. He returned to Australia to take up a research fellowship at the

Australian National University, followed by a senior lectureship at the newly established Monash University before being appointed to his first Chair of History at the University of Western Australia in 1966. He took up the Foundation Chair of History at Murdoch University in 1973, later becoming head of the Australian Studies Centre at the University of London, Professor of Australian History at the University of Queensland, and then Professor of History at Edith Cowan University. In 2006 he was named West Australian of the Year.

Geoff devoted his life to history. It was of unceasing interest to him and, in turn, many histories flowed from him in books, articles, interviews and talks - at least fifteen books as well as a great many other publications of all sizes in which he assisted. His output was abundant and continued until his death, with his authoritative biography of Paul Hasluck (2014) his last major work. Few scholars could claim such a prolific and varied output, one that testified to his intellectual ability, energy and dedication.

Like other leading historians of his generation he spanned imperial and Australian history, a man of wide knowledge which he always wore lightly and with wit. He has been Western Australia's leading historian of his time and will be sorely missed.

Open-minded and ever alert to new approaches to history, Geoff pioneered many new areas in Western Australian historical writing. His 1953 MA thesis, 'A survey of the Kimberley pastoral industry from 1885 to the present', and his first book *Alexander Forrest. His life and Times* (1958), were path-breaking regional and biographical studies. *A Fine Country To Starve In* (1972) tackled the devastating impact of the 1930s depression on a primary agricultural State, drawing on oral interviews to capture the personal experience of the catastrophe. He became an early practitioner and leader of the oral history movement.

Spoils and Spoilers: Australians Make Their Environment, 1788 to 1981 (1981) introduced environmental history. *Daphne Street* (1997), his close-grained biography of the street where he grew up, was another departure into new (and personal) territory. He wrote on Aboriginal-settler relations with sensitivity.

His biographical studies, both lengthy and brief, captured the characters and influence of a multitude of past West Australians. He was central to the life of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, writing 86 entries over the years. He made major contributions to the State's political history, notably in the form of collaborative biographical dictionaries. Following

in the footsteps of Kimberly, Battye and Crowley, his brilliantly-titled *Land of Vision and Mirage: Western Australia since 1826* (2008) was his endeavour 'to summarise and interpret the history of Western Australia since British occupation and settlement' for his generation. In all these ways he shaped the understanding of WA history.

Geoff was a brilliant lecturer with such an encyclopaedic knowledge and prodigious memory that he could step into any breach at the last minute and deliver an erudite and entertaining talk. Some amazing talks were delivered from the back of an envelope! He rarely said no to the continuous flood of requests for lectures, book launch speeches, interviews on diverse topics, after-dinner speeches, committee membership or chairing, and so forth. He seemed to enjoy making himself available and giving his time and considerable authority to worthwhile enterprises. If his support could help, he provided it. His intellect and the speed of his mind enabled him to undertake far more than others could. He collaborated on so many projects at the same time that it would have been difficult for anyone else to keep track!

He mostly had admirers, but listened carefully to those who occasionally disagreed and was always a kind and supportive senior historian. Geoff was not only respected but also held in great affection. He was warm and friendly, a favourite with students. His histories are widely read because he could engage his readers with knowledge, charm and a splendid turn of phrase. Although Geoff was already in his 80s, he had numerous histories in the planning stage in his head and intended to keep writing. We will never learn about these topics, alas, nor read the fascinating memoirs he planned. And there will be no more interesting talks or endless flow of anecdotes and aphorisms; no more nuggets of information instantly recalled and appropriate to the occasion. It is very hard to believe that such a wealth of knowledge and such a lively mind has gone. We will miss him so much!

Dr Lenore Layman



Treasures from Trove

[This is the fifteenth article in the series by Heather Campbell delving into the wonders of NLA's 'Trove' database of Western Australian newspapers.]

The Victoria Public Library opened 26 January 1889 in a building leased from the Western Australian Bank in St George's Terrace. The library moved to new premises on the corner of Beaufort and James Streets in 1897.

The Public Library and Letters to the Editor. A selection, 1893-1898, covering both locations.

Medical books at the public library (1)

To THE EDITOR [*West Australian*, 20 April 1893, p.3]

SIR, Having a slight headache, and knowing that to be one of the symptoms of small-pox, I was anxious to make further enquiries, and visited the Victoria Library, which I have hitherto understood to be a public library. The medical works appearing in the catalogue are few, and in reply to my enquiry I am told by the librarian that I am not permitted to peruse them unless I am a duly qualified practitioner. His language was as courteous as the enormity of my offence merited. If these regulations are framed in the interests of morality, my grey hairs might have pleaded for their relaxation on this occasion, while I agree that such works might prove too strong meat for children. Perhaps the committee-of-management (?) have read somewhere that a little 'knowledge is a dangerous thing', or, if you will allow me to hazard another conundrum: is the regulation framed in the interests of the medical profession? It is always unwise to be in



Victoria Public Library, St George's Terrace, 1897.
Western Mail, 13 February, 1904, p.24.

opposition to one's doctor, therefore, while enclosing my card, I have thought it discretionary to subscribe myself here as ENQUIRER.

Medical books in the public library(2)

To THE EDITOR, [*Daily News*, 22 April 1893, p.2]

Sir,— If 'Enquirer,' who writes on the above subject in this morning's issue of the *West Australian*, ever visits Adelaide, he will find that permission to read the medical books in the Public Library there is subject to special regulations. 'Enquirer' hints that this is done in the interests of the medical man. To say the least this is open to question. Is 'Enquirer' not aware that non-professionals who try to be their own lawyers, engineers or architects, generally have great reason to regret their presumption? And if this is to be expected in their case, how much more is it likely to be so in the case of those who try to undertake so difficult and delicate a matter as doctoring themselves. In fact it is generally known that self-doctoring usually results in some serious, perhaps even irreparable injury, the cure of which the professional man has ultimately to undertake often under very serious disadvantages, due to the patient's maltreatment of himself.—Yours, &c, NON.PROFESSIONAL, Perth, April 20.

Newspapers? Yes and No

The Victoria Public Library (Newspapers, Yes!)

To THE EDITOR [*West Australian*, 24 November 1893, p. 7]

SIR, For some mysterious reason the authorities of the Victoria Public Library do not see their way clear - or do not want to take in the leading papers from the eastern colonies and what is still worse, the local papers are not to be seen in this so-called 'free' institution. Well, sir, as one who has been through a considerable number of the smaller towns in the eastern colonies, I must put Perth down as being the first place with a population of over ten thousand people, that hasn't got a free reading room, supplied with the leading Australian as well as the local papers. Men coming from the other colonies, and who have always enjoyed the privileges which a free reading room affords, think very hard of buying papers, especially in a place such as this, where the cost of living is so high and wages are so low, to say nothing about the unemployed, of which there are a considerable number in Perth. Surely the authorities can see the necessity of such a reform in the existing state of affairs. Yours & c, REFORM. Perth, November 22.

The Victoria Public Library (Newspapers, No!)

To THE EDITOR [*West Australian* 27 November 1893, p. 6]

Sir - In your paper of this morning I notice another letter in reference to the Victoria Library, and as my experience of similar institutions is perhaps equal to that of the writer of it, I venture to say that in my opinion it should not contain a newspaper of any description whatever, but should leave these, as well as all which may be desirable as regards light literature, to be supplied by the Mechanics' Institute. I may add that any persons anxious to improve their education may now do this, if they can only visit the Victoria Library, without interruption. Yours, etc., VIATOR. Perth, November 24

The Victorian Public Library, Sunday Afternoon Closure

To THE EDITOR [*Western Mail* 30 June 1894, p. 12]

Sir, - I am glad that your correspondent, 'Working Man,' has drawn attention to the closing of the library on Sunday afternoons. I have for the last few Sundays greatly missed the opportunity previously afforded of visiting the library. I trust the committee of management may see their way to arrange for the library being again thrown open on Sunday afternoons, as there are many who avail themselves of the opportunity, and especially at this time of year when the weather is so uncertain. I am, &c, CONSTANT READER. Perth, June 28.

The Victoria Library, in support of the Bashful Reader

To THE EDITOR. [*West Australian*, 17 November 1894, p. 6]

SIR, - There are many alterations in the management of the Victoria Library which prove the committee were wise in their choice of a successor to Mr. Porte, but do you not think it is a mistake to remove all the 'illustrateds' from the long centre table to the 'table round' in one of the corners, where it is surrounded by a few elderly gentlemen whom the bashful reader does not like to disturb in the midst of their studies and meditations, and to avoid this he goes without the periodical he might have wished to see. There are many who are unable to extract any good out of a book except in the privacy of their chambers and who use the public library for the sole purpose of peeping into the periodicals. Could you not induce the librarian to restore the magazines and papers to the long table where they can be easily seen and taken without disturbing half-a-dozen or more of the regular readers. Yours. etc.. NEWSPAPER READER. Perth, November 16.

L'ami Des Femmes and Dr Battye

Victoria Public Library.

To THE EDITOR. [*West Australian*, 8 September 1898, p.3]

SIR - Of late we have heard a good deal about the improvements which have been made in the Public Library. These are very good indeed as far as they go, but they do not go far enough. There is one conspicuous fault. I refer to the want of the ladies' room or table, which it is customary to have in large libraries. It is not pleasant for a lady to go into the library and, if she wishes to read, be compelled to sit at a table with a lot of men. Therefore the fair sex are noticeable by their absence. The matter might be easily remedied by placing a notice 'ladies only' on one of the tables. Yours, etc., L'AMI DES FEMMES. Perth, September 1

Victoria Public Library.

To THE EDITOR [*West Australian*, 9 Sept 1898, p.7]

Sir - I notice in this morning's issue of your paper a letter signed 'L'ami des Femmes', complaining of the absence of a ladies' compartment at the Library. If the writer had ever visited the institution (which seems doubtful) he ought to have noticed that the compartment at the north-



Victoria Public Library 1898.

SLWA Ref: 976B/3 in series by Charles Walker, Views of the Victoria Public Library.

west end of the room is shut off by a large glass screen, which bears an inscription 'Re-served for ladies'. The portion referred to has been so reserved ever since the re-opening of the Library. Yours, etc., JAS. S. BATTYE, Perth, September 8.

Victoria Public Library.

To THE EDITOR [*West Australian*, 12 Sept 1898, p.2]

SIR, - I beg to apologise for having stated that there was no ladies' compartment at the library. There is one; there is also a notice, in handwriting, though it is rather a small one (about 4in. by 3in.) which perhaps accounts for the fact that I did not notice it on my first visit. I would suggest that a large printed notice be substituted lest others fall into the same error as myself. I hope that when Mr. Battye reads this explanation he will be convinced that it is not through want of visiting the library that I have made this mistake - Yours, etc., L'AMI DES FEMMES. Perth, September 9.

Heather Campbell



Recollections of an Accidental Librarian

[Julie Martin was one of two student librarians to begin their 'apprenticeships' at the State Library. Previous articles in this series have been about Francis Aubie Sharr followed up with details of Julie's early working life as a librarian, some of the personalities of the time and working in Northbridge. Now on to Part 7 ...]

... Cataloguing rules!

As Christmas 1962 appeared on the horizon, I was less concerned with the holly, reindeer and Santas in Boan's windows than with the two messages on my desk.

I had ambitiously attempted four units in that year's LAA Registration Examinations, and the first of the two notes informed me that I had failed Cataloguing and Classification B. The other told me to report to the Chief Cataloguer after the Christmas/New Year holiday break; my term in the Bibliographical Centre had ended. I'll never know whether the two events were a coincidence, or the latter resulted from the former. Nevertheless,

early in January 1963, I reported as instructed, and my third year as a student librarian began.

For the uninitiated, cataloguing is a discipline that requires great discipline, and those responsible for the description, subject analysis, classification, and authority control of library materials are often viewed by outsiders as pedants. But they need to be for it is they who set the standard of a library service. They are the ones who provide the key that unlocks the contents of a library.

I knew from my studies that cataloguing 'requires scrupulous attention to detail and thoughtful exercise of judgment,' and I wasn't sure I had the

necessary personal qualities to succeed. Nevertheless, despite finding its processes daunting, I was prepared to give it my best shot, especially as it was sure to help me pass the unit I'd failed.



Cataloguing Section, Library and Information Service of WA, 1964, Ref: 319443PD, slwa_b3430631_3.

At that time, the Library Board's Cataloguing Section occupied a small room on the eastern side of the old Victoria Public Library building. It was accessed from the Library's foyer and sandwiched between it and the bindery.



Cataloguing Section, Library and Information Service of Western Australia, June 1969. In this image Julie Martin's desk is vacant. Ref: 319525PD, sl_3430666_3.

Mr Drake, the Chief Cataloguer, who appears in both these accompanying images, sat at a large desk at the head of the room. Flanking him on either side and facing one another were my opposite number, Colin Cole and me.

The other four in the room were library assistants. Their role was to either catalogue the adult fiction and junior books,

which only required simple cataloguing or type the catalogue cards or stencils for the Library Board's printed catalogue.

The section ran like clockwork. Every Friday morning, the State Library subject librarians choose their allotted number of titles from the items awaiting cataloguing in the Accessions Division. To these were added an agreed number of non-fiction titles destined for the public libraries, usually the items most requested by their library patrons. This weekly 'mix' was then brought through to the Cataloguing Division.

Colin was a genial companion, and when the new items arrived, we competed for the books that appealed to us. Fortunately, for the most part, we had different tastes. Being more experienced, he generously took on the items with complex authors or subjects. Cataloguing the 'mix' began on Monday morning, and we had four days to complete the task.

Surrounded by the current editions of Dewey's Decimal Classification, the Library of Congress subject headings and the ALAA filing rules, I began the process of descriptive cataloguing, which included learning the order in which the information was recorded as well as the standard abbreviations and punctuation, then analysing the contents to give me the necessary information to select one or more subject headings and a class number.

Although mainly a sedentary occupation, Colin and I often needed to use the resources in the Bibliographical Centre to check how other libraries had dealt with the items we were cataloguing, especially the accepted forms of corporate and institutional authors. We were, therefore, bobbing up and down throughout the day, checking bibliographies or the existing main catalogue for standard entries.

One of the benefits of being a cataloguer was having access to popular non-fiction titles before they hit the library shelves. This was my first sensory experience of newly published fiction and nonfiction in bulk. Their smell and feel were intoxicating; if I needed to be convinced I was in the right profession, the proof was on the shelves before me. It was accepted practice to borrow titles we were interested in while they were in the cataloguing section, and I availed myself of that privilege on many occasions.

While we worked through the week's titles, the Chief Cataloguer checked our work and later discussed any changes he had made, explaining his

reasoning. Friday was housekeeping day, filing entries into the main catalogue, withdrawing cards from the old public library catalogue, and attending to items found to have cataloguing errors or whose classification or subject headings needed reviewing.

And on Monday morning, the cycle began again.

I had great respect for the then Chief Cataloguer, Cyril Drake. He was a man of few words, so when he spoke, you listened. Scholarly, knowledgeable, hardworking and gentlemanly, he had a dry sense of humour; I recall that some of my early gaffes brought a twinkle to his eyes. Many years later, I discovered he had been appointed in 1949 to the Victoria Public Library as deputy to the then 75-year-old Dr Battye, no doubt with the expectation of succeeding him.

That wasn't to be, and the Victoria Public Library was absorbed into the newly established Library Board of WA under State Librarian Francis Aubie Sharr. Mr Drake, with BA and MA degrees with first-class honours in philosophy and Latin from Sydney University, had later studied for three years at the London School of Economics on a scholarship. Fluent in German and French, he was also an Associate of the Library Association of the UK and had been a staff member of the National Library for ten years. He passed away in 1987, aged eighty, after an exemplary fifteen-year term as The Library Board's Chief Cataloguer.

I believe I made a good fist of my time in the Cataloguing Section, and I know Mr Drake was happy with my efforts as he asked Mr Sharr, in vain, for my six-month 'apprenticeship' to be extended.

And, just for the record, I was successful that year in my second attempt to pass the Cataloguing and Classification B examination.

Julie Martin



Christmas 1918

A time of mixed emotions seen through the prism of Trove

[As we prepare for the end of year and Christmas celebrations, it seems timely to share some newspaper articles on the theme, to remind us of Christmas in times past, and to give Heather another excuse to get into Trove.]

Midlands Advertiser, 27 December 1918, p.1

Soldiers at the Fremantle Base Hospital had their Xmas treat last Thursday. Only the boys and the VAD Workers were there. But they enjoyed the dainty teas and the music and entertainment. Some time ago these VAD's got up a picnic for the boys at the Base. They had a special train car running to Point Walter and these girls and boys frisked about and had a jolly time playing all sorts of games. They didn't play "Kiss in the ring" But coming home it was a lovely moon-light night...

West Australian, 31 December 1918, p.6

Christmas Day at the Sailors' Rest

The customary Christmas festivities were observed at the Sailors' Rest, Fremantle, dinner being served to men off all the ships in port. The hall was lavishly draped with flags and platform, windows and tables were beautifully decorated with palms, plants, greenery and flowers. Many of the men present had served all through the war, and some of them had been torpedoed four times. After a bountiful repast, an excellent concert was given by the Sailors' Rest entertainers and others. Cheers and words of appreciation were given by officers and men for the workers and the people of Western Australia who had so kindly entertained them.

But then the best Christmas present of all for many families....

West Australian, 31 December 1918

Returning Soldiers to Arrive To-Day.

Notification has been received that the soldiers on list will arrive at Fremantle by train from Albany about 6am or 7am today. Soldiers are expected to disembark at Fremantle at 10am to-day. ...

And then Peace on earth, goodwill to Man... until 1939.

Heather Campbell

News from the State Library

Battye Fellowships 2024

The State Library has awarded the 2024 Battye Fellowship and inaugural Fellowship for an Aboriginal Researcher. Dr Shino Konishi has been awarded the Battye Fellowship for 2024 funded by the State Library's Leah Jane Cohen Bequest.

The title of Shino's project is *The 1979 Sesquicentenary: Contested Commemorations of Western Australia's Colonial Origins*.

Shino Konishi is an historian and an Associate Professor in the School of Indigenous Studies and School of Humanities at UWA. Shino is a Yawuru person and specialises in Aboriginal history and colonial history, with considerable research on Western Australian history including a co-authored, award-winning monograph on Wadjemup/ Rottneest Island, articles on histories of Western Australian exploration and early European collecting, the Pinjarra massacre, and the history of Torres Strait Islander labourers in the construction of WA railways. Shino has also just been awarded an ARC Future Fellowship to write an Aboriginal History of Western Australia ahead of the forthcoming Bicentenary in 2029.

Jordanna Eades has been awarded the inaugural Fellowship for Aboriginal Researchers at the State Library of Western Australia, funded through private donations to the State Library.

Shino Konishi,
Jordanna Eades,
Catherine Clark
CEO and State
Librarian, Gina
Pickering and
Dean Chan (L-R)



Jordanna is researching the *Kaniyang Histories of the Blackwood River Valley*. Her project will explore records and private archives especially in the nineteenth century that reveal information about the Kaniyang Noonger people around the Balingup, Bridgetown and Boyup Brook area of Western Australia.

Jordanna is an archaeological anthropologist and Southwest Noongar woman with a passion for engaged research and cultural revitalisation projects with First Nations communities. She has a professional interest in Southwest ground stone tools and Kaniyang Noongar history.

Researchers-in-Residence 2024

The State Library has awarded two researchers-in-residence, funded through the Friends of Battye Maud Sholl Bequest, to examine newly digitised material from the Audio-Visual Digitisation Project. Dr Dean Chan and Gina Pickering have been awarded the residencies to uncover significant audio-visual material, identify new themes and develop curated research on this material.

Dean works in the School of Design and the Built Environment at Curtin University. He is a researcher, writer and consultant specialising in cultural studies, history and theory in the Asia-Pacific region. Dean's PhD is in Fine Arts (Art History) from UWA.

Gina has worked in cultural heritage interpretation for a range of cultural, heritage and collecting organisations for many years. As a heritage consultant Gina has provided expert advice, curated content and audio-visual productions including podcasts and short documentary film. Gina is currently studying for a PhD in human geography at Curtin University focusing on water, family and place in Nyungar culture.

Keepsake: Cherished Family Mementos from the Collection Saturday 29 June 2024 – Tues 4 February 2025

Currently on display at the State Library is the exhibition *Keepsake*, that celebrates precious family mementos in the State Library collections.

Keepsakes manifest in various forms, ranging from treasured heirlooms passed down through generations to everyday items imbued with sentimental value. They can be photographs capturing fleeting moments, letters from the frontlines of war, or simple trinkets evoking family memories. At its core, a keepsake is more than just an object, it is a vessel that encapsulates memories, emotions, and personal narratives.

The State Library of Western Australia fulfills a vital role in ensuring that these invaluable keepsakes, and the stories that they hold, remain safe and accessible to future generations. The Keepsake exhibition examines why mementos and everyday objects often hold the key to family history and ultimately shape who and how we identify ourselves.



An Exploration of Historical Anniversaries and West Australian Collections

The State Library hosted a workshop symposium on *Commemorations and Collections: An Exploration of Historical Anniversaries and West Australian Collections* on 30 August. This workshop brought together about 60 historians and members of the GLAM sector to examine the sesquicentenary of 1979, its limitations and biases, and explore new approaches to West Australian history in current research. A panel discussion reflected on the role of the collecting sector in approaching the 2026/29 bicentenaries of colonisation at both Albany and Swan River.

Questions explored in the workshop included: How have histories of Western Australia changed over time and what is the relationship between changing understandings of the past and collection practices? How can difficult histories be told and commemorated in the post-Voice era? Who have been the custodians of the history of Western Australia and to what extent have custodians of historical memory changed over time? How

can institutions such as the State Library, State Records Office and WA Museum enable Aboriginal people to connect with collections and tell their own stories of these pasts? Should such anniversaries be seen as more than a single date?

Speakers included Associate Professor Shino Konishi, Associate Professor Carolyn Holbrook, Dr Benjamin Mountford, Associate Professor Tiffany Shellam, Professor Clint Bracknell, Professor Jane Lydon, and Associate Professor Jeremy Martens. Panellists were Dr Kate Gregory and David Craddock from the State Library, Sally Anne Hasluck from the RWAHS, Erica Boyne and Corioli Souter from the Western Australian Museum, Gerard Foley from the State Records Office and Duayne Professor Len Collard gave a moving Welcome to Country.

Postcards from the West

The State Library of Western Australia regularly partners with the radio station RTRFM and the latest partnership was the project *Postcards from the West* a musical performance at the Camelot Theatre in Mosman Park. Four artists - *Jameson Feakes*, *Great Statue*, *Pale Ribbons Tossed into the Dark* and *Slow Point*, selected heritage films from the library collections and composed new soundtracks for them. The pieces were performed live at the event, with the films projected onto the original cinema screen in the art-deco theatre. Although an intimate space, the event was well attended and the performances spellbinding. It was wonderful to see the beautiful video recontextualised and showcased in this way.

My Boodja, My Turtle Dreaming - Acknowledgement of Country artwork

The State Library was excited and honoured to reveal the specially commissioned artwork for our new Acknowledgement of Country wall on 20 September 2024. *My Boodja, My Turtle Dreaming* by Joanne Parfitt (artist name: Bungaana) was created for a new Acknowledgment of Country wall to welcome our visitors and provide a deeper understanding of the land and waters of the Derbal Yerrigan/Swan River. The artwork is on the Ground Floor of State Library, just before you get to the café.

Orloff Photography Awards

On 19 September, the 2024 Ilford Orloff Photography Awards Night was held at the State Library of Western Australia. The Awards celebrate the best in Western Australian photography from the past year.



Artist Joanne Parfitt – Bungaan (centre) – CEO Catherine Clark, Aboriginal Engagement Manager Shana Rind with Aboriginal dancers at the launch of 'My Boodja, My Turtle Dreaming'.

Jasmine Skye Smith was named the overall 2024 Ilford WA Professional Photographer of the Year and Portrait Photographer of the Year. Gaia Boronaga won the State Library of Western Australia Narrative Award.

You can see a display of the winners and finalist photographs at the State Library on Levels 1 and 2, running until 18 February 2025.

The awards are named after one of WA's pioneering photographers Izzy Orloff (1891-1981), known for his avant-garde street photography and ability to capture everyday moments.

Perth Cultural Centre - Rejuvenation plans unveiled

The new designs for the Perth Cultural Centre (PCC) rejuvenation project have been unveiled by the Hon John Carey MLA. The Arts and Culture Trust manage the PCC and is home to the Art Gallery of Western Australia, WA Museum Boola Bardip, State Library of Western Australia, State Theatre Centre of WA, The Blue Room Theatre, and the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts.

The \$55 million redevelopment will connect the cultural institutions and transform the PCC into a thriving epicentre of culture and arts. Enhancements to the space include a large viewing screen, allowing Western Australians to gather and celebrate major events. In addition, accessible walkways will allow for easier access and the space will feature lighting integrated throughout the precinct for enhanced

security. A softened urban landscape, with new trees and turf, will provide welcome spaces for reflection, connection and creative exploration.

Engagement and consultation with key stakeholders, including Whadjuk Noongar Elders, has created a design that celebrates the precinct's rich history, stories, and sense of place.

Building works are due to get underway in January 2025.

New Acquisitions

Peter Harper drawing collection

A collection of 246 drawings from the *Post* newspaper of architectural renderings of historic homes located in the western suburbs of Perth. Most of the illustrations are by Peter Harper; ten are illustrated by David Bailey.

De Wit Dutch map

Full title 'Orientaliora Indiarum Orientalium cum insulis adjacentibus a promontorio C.Comorin ad Japan. Pascaert van t'ooster gedeelte van Oost Indien van C.Comorin tot Japan'. A 17th Century Dutch Sea Chart in full unfaded original period hand colouring, published in Frederick de Wit's 'Orbis Maritimus ofte Zee Atlas' with North orientated to the left and Western Australia in top right.

Duval French map

Full title 'Carte des Indes Orientales Par P. Du Val Geographe Ordinaire du Roy'.

Map by Pierre Duval, who is one of the most influential and prolific French mapmakers of the late 17th century period. It does not show the first recorded European discovery of Australia by Willem Jansz on the Duyfken in 1606, although it does include a number of the later Dutch discoveries around the West Australian coast.

Billy Edwards (William Charles Edwards) Private archives

The collection consists of handwritten manuscripts of music created by Billy Edwards. Collection includes typescript copies of 'Letters from Glin Layman to those at Wonnerup house: written while prospecting etc. in the Kimberleys 1886-1892'. Also includes other letters, music scores; poetry booklet *Poems by the West* with author Annie H Mark undersigned and dedicated to Billy Edwards, with unpublished handwritten poem

entitled 'Pierrette'; photographs of Billy and his wife Mary Christabel (nee Walpole), also known as Chrissie.

Daisy Bates images

A collection of six silver gelatin photographs that show welfare worker and anthropologist Daisy Bates with a group of Mirning people at the time she established a campsite near Eucla, a documented event in Bates' life, around 1913.

Bon Scott letter

Letter written by Bon Scott to Allison Britton, one of the founders of the Fraternity Appreciation Society. At the time of writing this letter in 1971, he was still a member of the Adelaide-based prog rock group Fraternity. This letter represents not only a significant window into his earlier career but also a direct link to Western Australia as he lays bare his feelings about his hometown.

This Story interview series

A collection of twelve oral history video interviews with both male and female veterans from Perth, Rockingham and Albany, who were involved in a range of conflicts, including Korea, Vietnam and Afghanistan

Michael Leslie Oral History

Michael Leslie is a nationally and internationally renowned performer of Aboriginal heritage, whose repertoire of performances span stage and film. Michael has been significantly active within community arts programs, and in the representation of performers of various heritages in the arts. This oral history recounts the formative years of the Black Swan Theare Company.

Kate Gregory, Battye Historian



State Records Office (SRO)

News from the Archives

Margaret Medcalf Award 2024

Emeritus Professor Max Angus and Dr Caroline Ingram were joint winners of the 2024 Margaret Medcalf Award.

The joint Award was presented at a ceremony on Friday 23 August 2024, announced by Hon Samantha Rowe MLC, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Culture and the Arts.

Professor Angus was recognised for his book 'Too Far Out: An administrative history of the Ngaanyatjarra homelands' and Dr Ingram was awarded for her PhD thesis 'Women in the Court: An examination of women's trials heard in the Court of Quarter Sessions and the Supreme Court of Western Australia, 1830 – 1890'.

These excellent works were amongst a high quality shortlist for the Award.

This annual award honours the second State Archivist, Ms Margaret Medcalf OAM, and recognises excellence in research and referencing using the State Archives Collection, which is the largest archival collection in Western Australia.

1993 State Cabinet Papers Released

To mark the International Day for Universal Access to Information, the SRO officially released the 1993 State Cabinet Papers from their 30 year access embargo on 25 September 2024.

Following the State election in February 1993, Richard Court and Hendy Cowan formed a Coalition Ministry. Matters discussed at State Cabinet in 1993 included:

- The Mabo case
- The future of Collie Power Station
- The aftermath of the Royal Commission into the Commercial Activities of Government (WA Inc)
- Redevelopment of the WA Museum (Two decades before the New Museum project commenced)
- The future of Stateships.

Public Programs

In recent months, the SRO has participated in 6PR and RTRFM radio sessions talking about matters based on government archives, including the Group Settlement Scheme, history of WA Sandalwood, the Government House Ballroom murder in 1925 and the Perth Prohibited Area.

The SRO has also recently participated in two upcoming episodes of 'Who Do You Think You Are?' which will screen on SBS next year.

What's New in the SRO Catalogue?

The SRO has been adding newly digitised sets of records to the SRO catalogue in recent months, including:

- City of Perth Council Minute Books, 1858-1900
- Perth District Ticket of Leave Registers / Convict Occurrence Books, 1851-1887
- Fremantle Asylum / Claremont Mental Hospital Admission-Discharge Registers and Case Books, 1857-1914
- Public Works Dept Architectural Plans (selected sets from digitised microfiche)
- Town of Cottesloe Architectural Plans for public works, 1924-2005
- Public Works Dept Photographs of 1974 Design for Perth Cultural Centre. [see page 37]

These digitised records are all freely downloadable via the SRO catalogue.

New lists of archives that have been added to our catalogue include:

- Midland Workshop Machinery Cards and Photos (Cons 7755, 1334 records): these provide a comprehensive overview and photographic record of equipment and machinery in use at the Workshops during the 1960s/70s.
- Lands Dept Photographs (Cons 7733, 1573 records): these document a wide range of activities and processes carried out in the Dept between the 1950-1980s, including field surveys and technical equipment used.
- Arts WA Photographs (Cons 7748, 128 records): photographs of local, national and international artists and festival performances in WA, mainly from the 1980s.



PERTH CENTRE OF CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
Perth Western Australia

ARCHITECTURAL DIVISION

DESIGN BRANCH
1974

Proposed design for the Perth Cultural Centre in 1974, showing a waterway between Wellington and Roe Streets, a sunken railway line, removal of the old Perth Central School (now PICA) and a dominant building to be known as the ‘House of Culture’.

SRO has also completed listing all Colonial / Chief Secretary’s Office correspondence files (Cons 752) which cover 100 years of operations for the period 1883-1983. This consignment of records consists of close to 46,000 files, all of which are now searchable by file title. It was a very large exercise to list all of these records, and it took many years, so we’re glad to see it completed!

The Brisbane Hotel Shooting

We mentioned in the last newsletter a critically important collection of Crown Law Indictment files that SRO accepted as an emergency transfer from the Dept of Justice earlier this year. These files (Cons 7728) include many notable criminal cases between 1894-1947.

Some of these files contain exhibits from the Court case and FOBL’s very own Jennie Carter and Heather Campbell pointed out to SRO the significance of some of the photos included in one case file. Jennie and

Heather have recently been researching historical records in relation to the Brisbane Hotel, Highgate. The case file Jennie and Heather looked at relates to the shooting of Sgt Alexander Mark by Edward (“Ned”) Kelly at the hotel in 1928. Sgt Mark later died of his wounds.

The photos included within the case file are believed to be the only known in existence before the hotel was extensively remodelled in the 1930s.

Photograph from Crown Law Indictment file showing the exterior of the Brisbane Hotel, with veranda, in 1928, following the shooting of Sgt Mark.



Many thanks to Jennie and Heather for alerting us to this information.

For those that may want to learn more about the 1928 shooting, local historian Eddie Marcus talks about the case which you can listen to on RTRFM’s Planet Perth podcast.

Damien Hassan, Senior Archivist, SRO



Friends of Battye Library (Inc) Subscriptions form
From 1 July to 30 June each year

LIFE MEMBERSHIP \$500

Annual Membership

Ordinary	\$25
Joint	\$35
Concession (pensioner / full time student)	\$15
Corporate	\$50
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Account Name – Friends of Battye Library (Inc)

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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.

Thank you for your interest in the Friends of Battye Library, it is much appreciated.

Afterwords - Steve Errington

The fake headmaster of my old school

As I have mentioned here before, I went to Perth Boys School, finishing in 1955. In 1964, when I caught up with Cyril Glew, my former headmaster, he presented me with a copy of John K Ewers' 1947 centenary history of the school. Which I still have – it was only 60 years ago after all. In the back of the book there is a list of headmasters, from which I learned that in 1855, Thomas Charlesworth started as headmaster.

It was a prestigious appointment - in September 1854 the school had moved into a new building which still stands in St Georges Terrace.

Charlesworth had arrived here in February 1852, on the same ship as Revd James Leonard BA who had been sent by the Colonial Missionary Society to take charge of the Perth Congregational chapel. Although he would later let it be known that he had been a Minister in the Church of England, Charlesworth immediately joined the Congregationalists¹. Possibly the attraction was Ann Leonard, James's sister, who had arrived on the same ship (they were married in 1854).

After Alfred Gray arrived in 1853 as Religious Instructor on the convict ship *Pyrenees*, he and Charlesworth opened a Collegiate Institution in St Georges Terrace (where the Concert Hall now stands). In their advertising, both claimed to hold PhDs which was impossible and decidedly puzzling.

Charlesworth was presented as The Rev T Charlesworth, PhD, MA, St Peter's College, Cambridge. He was to give lessons in Latin, Greek and Hebrew; Greek, Roman and English history; and geography including 'mapping and use of the globes'.

The school failed after six months, but as a 'sometime priest of the Anglican Church in England' Charlesworth had preached at the June 1853 opening of an Independent/Congregational chapel in Guildford. In March 1854 he was made its pastor at a ceremony where he gave his reasons for leaving the Church of England and joining the dissenters. But before the year was out, he was back in Perth.

Late in 1854 a vacancy arose as headmaster of Perth Boys. Charlesworth didn't apply. Gray was one of seven applicants but didn't make the short list. But the Board of Education faced a crisis when their chosen candidate rejected their offer. In December James Leonard had joined the Board, and by the January meeting, with the school year about to start, the

Board had before it an application from Leonard's brother-in-law, the Revd Thomas Charlesworth MA who they immediately appointed.

In 1856 Leonard left Perth to take charge of the Congregational chapel in Gawler, South Australia. Charlesworth helped cover the vacancy and, when the Board wanted to move him to the Toodyay school, the elders appointed him pastor to keep him in Perth. This was an unpopular move, many members switched to the Wesley chapel and the Congregational chapel closed.

His headmastership wasn't going well either. At its meeting on 27 May 1857 the Board of Education recommended Charlesworth's dismissal for

Having on a recent occasion evinced a culpable want of judgment in not reporting the gross misconduct of a boy in the School, and his general management being by no means satisfactory.

Governor Arthur Kennedy's response was blunt:

I have long considered this gentleman as unfit for the office he holds and have therefore no hesitation in approving the Board's recommendation.²



Perth Boys School in St Georges Terrace, photographed in about 1860 before the south wing was added. (Courtesy Pamela Statham Drew)

As it happened, Charlesworth had never been ordained and had never been to University. There was no St Peter's College and he is not listed in the ten-volume *Alumni Cantabrigienses* which records all Cambridge graduates until 1900.

At the time of the March 1851 English census Charlesworth was twenty, still living at home in Barking and working as an apprentice in a draper's shop. By February 1852 he was 28, an ordained clergyman with an MA from Cambridge. He died in South Australia in 1879 while working as a homeopathist. The family notice said he was 56 – he had gone through his Australian years pretending to be seven years older than he was.

Endnotes:

1. See the lists of members in Sydney Herbert Cox, *History of Trinity Church 1845 – 1916*, ES Wigg and Son, Perth, 1916.
2. John K Ewers, *Perth Boys' School 1847-1947*, Perth 1947, p. 8

Steve Errington



Membership Subscription (Annually from 1 July to 30 June - GST inclusive). Please see subscription form on page 32 for more details.

Contact details

To join Friends of Battye Library please submit the form available on the website:

Friends of Battye Library website:
<http://www.friendsofbattye.org.au>

For membership information, subscription, change of address etc email Cherie Strickland at *membership@friendsofbattye.org.au*

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 5.00pm for 5.30pm and conclude before 7.00pm, 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 5 February, 5 June, and 10 October. The editor reserves the right to accept or reject articles and notices for publication.

For comments, requests for information, a copy of the Friends of Battye Library (Inc) Constitution, or to send articles and notices for the *Newsletter*, please contact:

Heather at *hgmessina@bigpond.com*

or write to:

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J S Battye Library of West Australian History

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

Retrievals Every half hour during opening hours.

Telephone enquiries (08) 9427 3291 Website www.slwa.wa.gov.au
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Specialist staff: Dr Kate Gregory (Battye Historian)
 Mr John Hughes (Team Leader Senior Subject Specialist)

Volunteers Ring (08) 9427 3266 or email:
 volunteers@slwa.wa.gov.au

State Records Office

The SRO Search Room has co-located to the Battye Library, third floor of the State Library, Alexander Library Building. To access these materials in the Leah Cohen Reading Room a Researcher's Ticket will still be required.

Retrievals

As per usual times for SRO retrievals.

Telephone (08)9427 3600, website www.sro.wa.gov.au
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The Genealogy Centre

Opening hours- The hours that the Genealogy Centre will be accessible will remain the same as Battye Library opening hours on the third floor.

Volunteers from Family History Western Australia, formerly the WA Genealogical Society (WAGS), are available to assist researchers on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 9.30am to 1.00pm.

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