

No. 182



March 2025

FRIENDS OF BATTYE LIBRARY (Inc.)
NEWSLETTER

Our March 2025 meeting

Harriet Olney

*This is Different: The Acrylic Paintings of the Warburton
Art's Project*



June Jennings Richards: *The art buyer* (2006)
(Courtesy Warburton Community (Inc).WAC663v2)

Tuesday 11 March 2025 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 (2024-2026)

President	Richard Offen
Vice President	Jennie Carter,
Secretary	Pamela Statham Drew
Treasurer	Nick Drew
Membership Coordinator	Cherie Strickland
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.

Our March meeting.

Tuesday 11 March 2025
Great Southern Room, fourth floor
State Library of Western Australia
at 5pm for 5.30pm

Our speaker will be Harriet Olney

This is Different:

The Acrylic Paintings of the Warburton Art's Project

After the meeting, members and guests are very welcome to join us for a meal at a nearby Perth restaurant. Our Treasurer, 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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Meeting dates for 2025

- 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



About our speaker - Harriet Olney

Harriet started working at the Warburton school in 2013. When this concluded, she continued to contribute as an independent director on the board of the Ngaanyatjarra Council. Since 2021, she has been a volunteer assisting the relocation and conservation of the Warburton Acrylic Collection.



Three women directors 2019

(L-R) Lalla Laidlaw, Harriet Olney and Julie Laidlaw Porter. (Deborah Grant)

Unique among remote Aboriginal communities, the Warburton Arts Project was designed to collect rather

than sell work by local artists. Collecting over a thirty-year period, Warburton Community lays claim to holding the largest collection of Aboriginal-owned art in Australia.

The Warburton Arts Project began in 1989 with a focus on the generation who 'walked the land.' For the purpose of this presentation, they have been defined as artists who were born before 1950 who painted large acrylic on canvas dot paintings representing Tjukurrpa (Dreaming) knowledge required to survive in an extremely arid landscape.

In the decades that followed the focus shifted to include topics of broad interest in the community. Principally, these topics were the history of engagement with the missionaries who had first settled in Warburton in 1934 and increasing intrusions by mining companies.

The Warburton Acrylic Collection has attracted international attention. Referring to high attendance numbers at the Land and Body exhibition in Shanghai in 2011, Frances Adamson, Australian Ambassador to China, reported ‘the response was extraordinary.’ Most recently, Warburton’s art has been included in the Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters blockbuster exhibition travelling in Europe.

The presentation will also cover art produced in Warburton prior to the arrival of the dot painting movement and the community’s long-term plans for economic development.



President’s Piece

Sadly since my last report in the November newsletter we have lost two of our prominent members – Tom Hoffman in October 2024 and Rob O’Connor more recently, on 12 January. Tom, with his wife Penny, have been joint FoBL members for many years and rarely missed a meeting. We will miss Tom and hope to still see Penny at our events.

Rob O’Connor joined the Friends in 1989 and served as a highly valued committee member for fifteen years. He retired from active involvement in 2021 – and that year became our Gem of Time. Both Rob and Tom will be remembered as hardworking, cherished and valued Friends and feature elsewhere in this newsletter.

New Norcia Abbey Bells

As some of you may know, I have been a bell ringer from the age of eight and, probably not surprisingly, one of the aspects of bells and bell ringing that drew me to it as a hobby was the very long and fascinating history of bells and their uses. Here in Western Australia, we have two bells which are significant internationally, as they are the only surviving examples from a very turbulent time in Spain’s history.

Situated on the banks of the Moore River, in the Shire of Victoria Plains, New Norcia is the only monastic town in Australia, with its Benedictine abbey founded in 1848. The first parts of the Abbey Church of Holy Trinity date from 1855-60, constructed of bush stones, mud plaster and roughhewn tree trunks. It originally consisted of a simple cruciform plan of nave, transepts and sanctuary, of classical proportions. The retro choir



New Norcia Abbey Church (Richard Offen)

was added in 1870 behind the high altar and choir screen. Abbot Fulgentius Torres designed the stucco facade with its lofty pediment, and the bell tower with its clock and bells were added in 1907-08.

The Abbey bells were originally supplied to New Norcia in

1879/80, having been purchased in Spain by Dom Salvado's brother. Two of them are important reminders of a turbulent period of Spanish history, all other bells in Spain from this time having been destroyed by the government.

The bells in the north and south tower openings are both normal Spanish-cast bells of their period. However, the east and west bells, are a unique pair. They were cast for the National Militia (the *Milicia Nacional*) in 1843, very shortly before it was suppressed and all their facilities commandeered by the army or other authorities. This was one of a number of actions which sparked the Spanish Civil War. The National Militia was the leading force of the 'Liberales' (the Liberals, later becoming the Republicans) and the Army and Church were the leaders of the 'Conservadores' (the Conservatives, later became the Francoists).

The bells of the National Militia were used in opposition to the Church, in an attempt to impose 'Madrid Time' in place of the clerical Hours as the centre of Spanish daily life. As a result, after the National Militia was abolished, the Army and Church systematically destroyed all their bells. As a result, the two bells of 1843 in the tower at New Norcia Abbey are now the only known survivors from this period of Spanish history.

In 2021, the bells were removed from the



New Norcia Bells at the Wills Engineering workshops.
(Richard Offen)

tower for conservation work, which was carried out by Willis Engineering in Welshpool. Finally, after many delays, the bells were rehung in the tower last December and fitted with electromagnetic hammers operated by a digital control unit. As a result, part of Spain's turbulent history continues to sound forth from a remote church tower in WA ...and they say the State has no interesting history!

Details of the four bells:

<i>No. Opening</i>	<i>Inscription and marks</i>	<i>Mouth Diameter</i>	<i>Approx. Weight</i>
1 South	JHS MARIA Y JOSE AN*O DE 1849 Waist: (Large cross on tapered base)	2½"/64mm	1¾ cwt / 90kg
2 East	CUARTEL DE LA MELICIA NACIONAL DE MADRID AN*O 1843 Waist: (Large cross on tapered base)	2¼"/57mm	2½ cwt / 125kg
3 North	IHS * MARIA Y JOSEPH * SANTA BARBARA * ORATE * PRO NOBIS * AN*O DE 1768 * Waist: (Large cross on tapered base)	3⅞"/80mm	4 cwt/ 200kg
4 West	CUARTEL DE LA MILICIA NACIONAL DE MADRID AN*O DE MDCCCXLIII Waist: (Large cross on tapered base)	2⅝"/67mm	4¾ cwt / 240kg

Richard Offen (President)



Obituaries

Robert O'Connor QC (1941-2025)

Born 6 November 1943 in York Western Australia, Rob was educated at Aquinas College and then enrolled in economics at UWA in 1960. He left before obtaining his degree to work at the Taxation Office, later gaining qualifications in accountancy. He became interested in law and in 1968, while still at the Taxation Office, began a part time law degree at UWA. After being transferred to Canberra, he finished his degree at the Australian National University in 1974 and returned to Perth where he eventually became a barrister and in 1989, he was elevated to Queen's Counsel (QC) in recognition of his high standing in the legal profession.

Also in 1989, Rob joined the Friends of Battye Library and was a highly valued committee member for more than fifteen years. His superb legal expertise was invaluable in preparing the Friends' Bequest initiative and



Rob O'Connor (Legal Practice Board)

when drafting our new Constitution. Rob has given us pro bono legal advice on many issues over the years including our Maud Sholl bequest.

Since childhood, Rob had a fascination for history. He built an extensive book and documents collection, and has written many papers and articles over the years for our *Newsletter* and other publications on a variety of subjects. His interests in naval and military history and his knowledge of early

19th century warfare are renowned and reflected in some of these pieces.

Rob was a member of the State Records Office Advisory Commission (SRAC), and a life member of the Francis Burt Law Education Centre. Among other interests, he has been closely involved with the Nelson Society and the Law History Society of WA as well as being a long term member of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society, the National Trust, and the Returned & Services League of Australia (RSL). For many years he was closely involved in the annual series of lectures named for Lieutenant Frederick Bell VC.

A strong sense of justice and ethics underpinned Rob's life and interaction with people. He was one of the barristers who appeared for sufferers of Mesothelioma in the successful 1988 'Wittenoom Asbestos' case, and he provided his services free of charge to represent refugees in the High Court. He endowed annual prizes at every one of the Western Australian universities and was a board member of the South Perth Hospital as well as a long standing member of Rotary.

Rob's list of achievements and honours are varied and many, but it was his countless, mostly unheralded, acts of kindness, care, and compassion which were evidence of his gentleness and dedication to others.

Our heartfelt condolences to Rob's daughters, Simone and Stephanie, his son Peter, and his five grandchildren.

Jennie Carter

(With acknowledgements to Ruth Marchant James, and Patrick Cornish for assistance with details of Rob's early life and career.)

Tom Hoffman (1942-2024)

Thomas Willard Hoffman, mostly known as Tom, was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on 11 September 1942. In 1997 he became a proud dual citizen of the USA and Australia describing himself as an American by birth and an Australian by choice. Tom was educated at Sharon Hill High School and Drexel and Temple Universities in Philadelphia. Most of his working life was as an environmental engineer.

Initially Tom was employed by Midrex Technologies, North Carolina, involved in the commissioning of steel mills all around the world, finally arriving at Kwinana in Australia, where he settled quickly into the Australian way of life. After a short stint in Gujarat, Tom returned to Perth and work with BHP, marrying Penny, who he had met in 1991.

In 1994 Tom was sent to Austria with a team of other experts, however he suffered a major stroke in 1995 and returned to Perth and a different life - establishing Pentom Services – a consultancy specialising in fitting industrial projects into a required environment for Western Australia. In 2003 Penny and Tom built a house on the banks of the Murray River, where they lived happily for the next eighteen years becoming heavily involved with the local community and the Edenvale Historical Precinct in Pinjarra. Together, in 2009, they initiated the foundation of the Murray District Historical Society with Tom's contribution including President of the North Yunderup Community Association, historian of the Murray Districts Probus Club, tutor in computer skills at the Pinjarra library, and a member of Friends of the Rivers Peel where he applied his skills, testing water quality in the Murray.

Tom took delight in sharing his love of local history and wildlife, however when he became unable to physically participate in the environment, Penny and Tom moved back to Perth, closer to medical facilities.



Tom Hoffman (Penny Hoffman)

An enthusiastic member of the Friends of Battye Library, Tom also attended RWAHS talks and conferences and though his sight was failing, continued to enjoy reading through 'Audible.'

Tom died on 24 October 2024 and is remembered as a kind, smart man with a memorable sense of humour, who never stopped learning, retaining and sharing his knowledge.

Penny Hoffman



Members' News

Annual General Meeting – changes to our Constitution

At the AGM held on 10 September 2024, members present voted unanimously to amend our Constitution to:

1. Change annual elections for the Committee to elections every two years with committee members to be elected for a two-year term. The reason for this is that our Committee officially meets just four times a year and that important business which may arise outside the scheduled meeting times can easily be held by special meeting attended in person or online. Two-year terms would assist the Committee to operate more effectively.
2. Presidents and Vice-Presidents are to hold that office for no more than six consecutive years. They would be eligible for election after an interval of two years. The reason for this change is to set limits on how often the President and Vice-President can serve consecutively as a way of supporting our organisation's leadership and encouraging fresh ideas.
3. All other office holders are eligible for re-election. Anyone appointed either by co-option or to fill a vacancy will hold that position until the next scheduled election. This is to ensure continuity.

The amendments were subsequently accepted by Consumer Protection Western Australia and have now been incorporated in our Constitution document.

The Committee election held in September was the first of the new system of two-year terms which means that the 2025 Annual General Meeting will not feature an election.

If members would like a copy of the amended Constitution, it can be viewed and downloaded from our website <https://www.friendsofbattye.org.au>

Jennie Carter (Vice-President)



A Note from our Treasurer

This is a friendly reminder to advise that the Friends of Battye Library (Inc.) is endorsed as a deductible gift recipient (DGR) organisation by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO).

This means that when a member makes a donation to the Friends, they maybe able to claim a tax deduction.

By making a donation this assists the State Library and/or the State Records Office in their mission to acquire, preserve and make available for research Western Australian material.

If you have any queries please contact me at nickdrew@bigpond.com



Our Gems of Time (a retrospective)

Gillian O'Mara - awarded 2012

Our Gem of Time retrospective for this issue pays tribute to Gillian who joined the Friends of Battye Library in 1989 and three years later became Vice President – a position she held for a long time, including acting as President on several occasions. She has also been the Friends capable Secretary.

Gillian was part of Rica Erickson's team in producing the first set of the Dictionaries of West Australians in 1979, typing up the cards that prefaced every volume. She twice edited her own volume on Convicts and went on to help bring out the four volumes of the Bicentenary Dictionary and Rica made it known several times that she could not have brought out this widely acclaimed set without her. More recently Gillian has been



a firm supporter of the Library's project to digitise the WA Biographical Index cards.

Gillian's service to the Library and to the Friends has been little short of incredible. Hers is a well-known face in the Family History section of the first floor where she has been a tower of strength to families researching their past, often helping with information from her own research and her own renowned records collection.

Gillian was for a long time the archivist at Mater Dei Catholic College and is an associate member of the Australian Society of Archivists and the School Archives Group. She is also a member of the Wanneroo & Districts Historical Society and the Police Historical Society and has helped with publications for both societies.

Gillian joined the WA Genealogical Society in 1984 and their Convict group, of which she was convenor for many years. She is also a member of the Pensioner Guard group and currently editor of their newsletter. With regard to Western Australia's convicts Gillian is the acknowledged expert. She personally verified all the applications for convict ancestry at the Foundation Day ceremony at Fremantle Prison. Her little publication on the convicts for the Friends in 1991 has been in constant demand and she has produced a revised edition to incorporate new information.

[Extracted from Gillian's Gem of Time citation.]



Blast from the Past

(as a change from Treasures from Trove)

Cyril Lewis Drake

Chief Assistant/Deputy Librarian to Dr Battye, May 1946–54; Chief Cataloguer 1957 to January 1972.

Cyril Lewis Drake was born 6 April 1907 at Muswellbrook, NSW, to Catherine Matilda Lewis, and the Reverend Canon Francis V Drake.¹ He was an outstanding student who attended Newcastle High School,

where he was described as 'a born student ... whose pass for the Leaving Certificate, ranks with the highest in the State'.²

The year 1936 was a busy one for Cyril. In April he was appointed Reading Room Officer at the National Library with the grand salary of £312 per annum.³ He subsequently joined the staff of the Parliament House Library in Canberra and later that same year, in November, became engaged to a fellow staff member in the library, Mary Rose Eccles. The couple were married a few weeks later, on 28 December, by Cyril's father, the Reverend Canon FV Drake.⁴

Mary's father was Mr CE Eccles, Kalgoorlie's Town Clerk; he and his wife and Mary's sister Eleanor, sailed to Sydney on the *Duntroon* to be present at the wedding.⁵

In April 1946 it was announced that:

Mr. Cyril Lewis Drake, of the Commonwealth National and Parliamentary Library staff, has been appointed James Forsyth Librarian of the Queensland University. An arts graduate of Sydney University, Mr. Drake holds the Diploma in Education of the same university. He gained the Woolley Travelling Scholarship, and during 1929-31 did post-graduate work in sociology at the London School of Economics. Mr. Drake succeeds Mr. R. Pennington, who resigned in January.⁶

However Cyril Drake did not take up that appointment. In November 1945 he had not only applied for positions at the University of Queensland and at SLWA but he had also for applied for positions in Commonwealth agencies.⁷ This may have been because the war had just ended and many servicemen would be returning and looking for work. In addition he may have been seeking a better paying, senior position while his children were of an age to settle into new schooling without their studies being disrupted.

In any event it was subsequently announced in May 1946, that:

To help relieve the Principal Librarian (Dr. J. S. Battye) of some of his duties, a chief male assistant has been appointed to the Public Library of Western Australia. He is Mr. Cyril Lewis Drake, of the Commonwealth National Library, Canberra. It is expected that he will take up his new appointment in Perth within a month. Mr. Drake, who is 39 years of age, graduated from the Sydney University in 1927 as a Bachelor of Arts with first-class honours in philosophy and Latin. He was a Woolley Scholar from 1929 to 1931 and carried out post-graduate work at the London University. In 1935 he completed his Master of Arts degree with second-class honours in philosophy and obtained a Diploma of Education at the Sydney University. For the past 10 years Mr. Drake has been a member

of the staff of the Commonwealth National Library, Canberra. He has had training and experience in all branches of library work and is an associate of the Library Association of the United Kingdom.

Cyril Drake also had, 'a reading knowledge of French and German'.⁸

In the circumstances Cyril Drake may have expected to succeed Dr Battye as Principal Librarian. Dr Battye's health was becoming a concern as he had 'crippling arthritis, diabetes and consequential failing eyesight' which hampered his work as a librarian, Dr Battye also had University and Masonic responsibilities and there was increasing criticism of the backwardness of the State's public library services and Dr Battye's failure to give effective leadership. He claimed life tenure and was sufficiently 'active and influential' to secure a withdrawal of a bill that would place the library under the control of a new board - the *Library Board of Western Australia Act 1951*, under the first State Librarian F A (Ali) Sharr. By 1953, the trustees informed the Premier that Dr Battye was 'no longer in a fit condition to carry out the duties of his office' and an attempt was made to devise revised terms of retirement that would suit all parties. This had just been agreed to by State Cabinet, when Dr Battye died on 15 July 1953, aged 83.⁹

After Dr Battye's death the Library Board gained control of the library, which then closed for a year, for renovation, reopening in 1956 as the State Library of Western Australia and included a section dedicated to collecting Western Australian material – the J S Battye Library of Western Australian History and State Archives.¹⁰



Cataloguing Section, Library and Information Service of Western Australia, June 1969, This image shows Cyril Drake sitting at his desk. (319525PD)

Cyril Drake became the Chief Cataloguer of the newly formed State Library in January 1957 and from that time ran the Catalogue Section with 'exemplary distinction. Apart from the normal work of handling one of the largest cataloguing operations in Australia, two major projects were completed under his direction; the complete re-cataloguing of the stock of the former Public Library and the

planning and production of the Mk II annual Printed Catalogue.¹¹ He retired on 6 January 1972.

In her article 'Recollections of an Accidental Librarian' in the November issue of the our *Newsletter*, fellow staff member Julie Martin speaks of her 'great respect' for Cyril Drake. Her view is supported by another staff member of the time, Ronald P Wright, who was interviewed by Chris Jeffery for the Battye Library Oral History Programme in 1978.¹² Coming from his first year at university, Ron joined the Library in 1932 remaining there until his retirement in 1978. He remembers Cyril Drake as:

[A]n able and energetic librarian who faced a heavy and somewhat unenviable job with limited staff and a growing work load. ... Mr Drake pointed out the deficiencies and urgent needs of the library and ... his office almost filled with books waiting to be catalogued and other problems which made the library's situation apparently difficult. ... As time went on Dr Battye was unable to ascend the stairs to his office, owing to disability with his legs and Mr Drake would consult him with him in his residence downstairs. ... Mr Drake became the chief cataloguer, and this was a role for which he was very well suited for he was an academic librarian and a master of cataloguing and classification, and he later was a very important factor in the development of the cataloguing department and production of the new library catalogue, the book catalogue, and all the other developments which transformed the [catalogue].

On a personal level Cyril and Mary Drake had three children, and the electoral rolls show them living in Melvista Avenue, Nedlands. Mary died in 1976, aged 63 years and Cyril Lewis Drake died eleven years later in 1987, aged 80.

For me this story of Cyril Drake raises many 'what ifs'. As Battye's deputy should Cyril have been made State Librarian, a role for which he was very well suited? If so, how would that this have changed the course of the development of the State Library of Western Australia.

Heather Campbell

1 Ancestry

2 *Newcastle Sun*, 2 February 1924, p. 6.

3 *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, 23 April 1936, No 37, p 689]

4 *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 6 Feb 1937p. 6.

5 'Kalgoorlie Notes', *West Australian*, 16 Dec 1936, p. 5.

6 *Courier-Mail*, 24 April 1946, page 3.

7 Applications for positions by Drake, Cyril Lewis, NAA A1361, 34/1/12 PART 471.

8 *West Australian* 13 May 1946, p. 6 and *Daily News* 11 May 1946, p. 10.

9 Australian Dictionary of Biography.

10 Jamieson, Ronda (2005). 'A people with a past and the J S Battye Library of West Australian history', *Fremantle Studies*, 4: 22–31.

11 Library and Info Service Annual Report 1971-72 p 10.

12 Battye Library reference OH 315.



Recollections of an Accidental Librarian:

[Julie Martin was one of two student librarians to begin their 'apprenticeships' at the State Library. Previous articles 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, working in Northbridge and working in Hackett Hall. Now on to Part 8 ...]

... In Circulation

1963 was a watershed year for me. It was the year I left my teenage years behind and made my first foray overseas, which included air travel and a voyage by ship. It was also the year I sold my Lambretta scooter, passed the motor vehicle driver's test and, with my father's guidance (he was a motor mechanic), bought my first car, a red two-door 1949 Ford Anglia Tourer. As I later discovered, a vital accessory was the crank handle, which, in time, accounted for my then-remarkable right bicep. With its black vinyl roof and plastic clip-on windows, it certainly attracted the attention of the drivers of the sedate Holdens, VWs, Morris Minors and Rovers in the Museum Street staff car park. With winter approaching, I was looking forward to dry journeys to and from work.

Around the same time, rumours were circulating that the student librarians were to be reassigned. I was confident that I would be placed in one of the three subject libraries in Hackett Hall, and it came as a shock to learn that I had been appointed to the Circulation Section. Circulation? Yes, I'd heard of it and had a vague idea of its functions, but at that time, it was situated in an annexe in the city, not in the State Library. Was there parking available for my car, or was I back to a daily commute on the local trolley bus? Nonplussed, I cleared my desk in the Cataloguing Section, said my farewells to friends in the State Library Building, and presented myself at the Circulation Section, located as I

discovered, on the first floor of the former Government Printing Office premises on the corner of Murray and Pier Streets. State Library and State Archives reserve stacks took up the second floor.

I soon discovered that the primary function of the Circulation Section was to provide the stock to establish and maintain public libraries. This meant that the staff, both professional and support, were dealing with a constant flow of new books needing to be added to the central pool. They also had to select and despatch the stock for new libraries and items for the regular exchange of material in established libraries. Other duties included recording the location of all non-fiction titles, training newly appointed public librarians, and looking out for books needing repair or discarding. My two specific tasks were organising inter-library loans and operating the Service to Readers in Extreme Isolation, the latter involving selecting and despatching books to individuals in remote areas of WA.

Circulation staff was small: three 'professional' staff, five library assistants and two storemen, but the section was rarely without visitors. Metropolitan public librarians, such as Bill Chape, John Birch, Cec Florey, Richard Arnold, Marjorie Pole and Ken Leach, were regulars, and there were often new country librarians in for training or the occasional visit from their more established colleagues.

Just prior to my joining the staff, the section had moved into revamped quarters, comprising one large room where we carried out our general tasks and the stack area, where the circulating stock and stock records were located.

Arthur Pugh, one of the English librarians recruited by Mr Sharr, headed the section. He was on leave for most of my placement, and Arthur Ellis, who went on to succeed Leonard Jolley as Librarian at the University of WA, deputised for him. Being one person down, we were extra busy; however, the staff at the time were a close-knit group and pulled harder to keep the section afloat and on an even keel. They were headed by Jenny, who went on to marry a local billionaire's son; Lyn, a free spirit with a big heart; Marsha, who did occasional evening shifts on the reception desk at the State Library and who was tragically killed in a traffic accident in 1964; and the two babies of the group, Carol and Michele. Fred, the lean, hard-working storeman/packer, a thirty-ish father of six and a foundation member of the Sunseekers Nudist Club, supplied constant banter and encouragement.

Mr Pugh, in his Annual Report to the Board, wrote.

The physical working conditions are of a very low standard in an old, dirty and not even fully weatherproof building. Cold in winter and unbearably hot in summer. It is not surprising that librarians, who have ample opportunities open to them in good modern buildings, show reluctance to work in such conditions.

I can attest to his comment. While the workroom had fans and foot warmers, the conditions in the stack area where the bulk of our work was concentrated were, as Mr Pugh stated, unbearable at times. In the summer of 63-64, we girls decided to take matters into our own hands.



Julie Hassell altering stock records in Circulation Services, Library and Information Service of W.A., 1964. (319450PD)

When we could no longer delay shelving the new and returning material into the main sequence, we advised the men of our intentions, closed the door into the stifling, airless stack, stripped to our underwear and working in teams, got through the task as quickly as possible. At the conclusion, after downing pre-prepared ice-cold lemon squash, we signed off for the

day, desperate for home and a shower. I pitied my fellow bus travellers. Yes, without access to parking, I was 'back on the buses', my Ford Anglia parked forlornly on the verge of my home during the week.

It's possible to sum up my eight-month placement in one word ... FUN. We were a hard-working, light-hearted team, unconcerned by rank or status. Our tasks were not complex but needed attention to detail and accuracy. And we had the bonus of interesting and genial visitors.

Sixty years on, now retired and involved in family history, I discovered my paternal grandfather, who died when I was a baby, was a member of the compositing staff of the Government Printing Office, rising to the position of Foreman in the Confidential Room. It was affecting to discover we had both walked the floors of the same building in our working lives, albeit in different roles.

Julie Martin

Have you a story to tell?

Volunteering at the Hereford Cathedral Library

[A contribution from past staff member, Anne Gill, who worked at the State Reference Library in two stints from 1972-76 and 1989-2006. Anne worked as a 'student librarian' in the Battye Library, while completing her library qualifications through the Library Association of Australia. At that time Battye Library included the State Archives which was Anne's first experience of working with archives. After a period away she returned to WA in 1989 and joined the State Archives, working on the Supreme Court Records project. Following the passing of the State Records Act in 2000 Anne was a member of the Recordkeeping Services team in the State Records Office of WA. While completing her library course in the 1970's Anne read about Hereford Cathedral's unique chained library and longed to see it, never dreaming that one day she would be a volunteer there.]

I have been volunteering at the Hereford Cathedral library and archives since 2013, spending one or two mornings a week in the reference library.

Hereford is a medieval city in the west of England near the Welsh border. There has been a place of Christian worship on the cathedral site for 1300 years although the present cathedral building dates from the twelfth century. Since



The chained library at Hereford Cathedral.
(Website accessed 2/2/2025.)

the mid-1990's the library has been located in a special purpose-built wing of the cathedral complex. On the ground floor are two of the cathedral's treasures: the chained library and the Mappa Mundi. The Mappa Mundi is a world map dating from c1280 and is the largest surviving medieval world map. The chained library holds over 1500 rare books including 229 medieval manuscripts, the oldest of which is the Hereford Gospels dating from the eighth century. Very few chained libraries have survived, and the Hereford collection is the largest remaining, complete with all its chains and the shelves designed to hold them and enable access to the

books. The books were very valuable and were for shared use by the cathedral clergy, hence they were chained to the shelves.

Upstairs is the modern library which is open to the public and much of the collection is available for loan. The library's staff comprises a librarian, an archivist and a library/archive assistant. When a volunteer is on duty we work in the reading room which is located upstairs above the chained library; we welcome visitors who may include researchers, local historians, family historians, students working on projects relating to the cathedral, on their own assignments, or people who want somewhere quiet to read, study, or write. A staff member is always on hand to answer research questions, retrieve material from other floors such as archives or rare books (including books from the chained library) or to supervise any access to rare or fragile material.

So what do I do? As a former archivist myself, my skills have been very useful to the archivist and while on duty at the library desk my main task has been to input details of archival records onto the library's catalogue and more recently into the archives database, thereby making these records available online. I started by listing all the tithe maps held by the cathedral. These date from the 1840s and show the estates, farms and the fields of the different parishes and the amount of tithes they were legally required to pay.

For the last couple of years, I (along with several other volunteers) have been inputting the details of the 3,250 medieval deeds into the new archives database. The originals are all in Latin but fortunately there's a transcript in English. They date from the twelfth century and include grants of land, or



Illuminated manuscript, ref 0 8 5 09ri
By permission of Hereford Cathedral and the Hereford Mappa Mundi Trust

properties, to local citizens or leases with annual payments in money or in kind (a load of corn or wheat etc) or one rose at the feast of John the Baptist, or a pair of white gloves! The rent for two meadows in 1225, for example, was two pence annually. Spices were also valued highly in the medieval period and often the annual rent was one clove, one pound of cinnamon, or one pound of pepper.

As well as rents and grants the deeds include notifications to the Dean of the cathedral from the Bishop of Hereford or the Archbishop of Canterbury, or his staff, sometimes on behalf of the king or the Pope. Many of the deeds involve ongoing disputes between various people and the Dean and chapter of the cathedral. One such dispute went on for twenty years! It occurred in the fourteenth century in the aftermath of the plague and was between the vicar of one of the city churches and the Dean. It involved trips to Rome and Avignon to appeal to three different Popes and was finally and formally settled by the king!

During World War II these medieval deeds, along with other important documents held by the cathedral and other institutions in England were taken to Wales to be stored in safety in a disused mine. Before the deeds were returned to Hereford in the 1950s, they were catalogued and calendared in English by the staff at the National Library of Wales. I hope they realise how much their work is appreciated!

Over the last decade I have worked on various records, all different, all very interesting. I have enjoyed it immensely and am so glad the archivist at the time (I have now worked with four archivists here!) was prepared to take me on as a volunteer. I feel very privileged. If medieval history is your thing, this is a good place to be!

Anne Gill



To be a Station Master

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

I have thoroughly enjoyed Julie Martin's series of articles on her library career and hope you don't mind me indulging in this piece.

When at high school in the early 1970s, one of the thoughts for my future was to become a Station Master on the WA Government Railways. My developing interest in the railways of WA, and of seeing the state, fuelled this thought but, fortunately, no steps were taken to achieve this goal and I became a librarian/archivist. I say fortunately for three reasons. One is that by the end of the 1980s the Station Master was an extinct profession in WA. The second is that, as I became more aware of the operations of the railways, the complexity of work and regulation an SM had to deal with (including mathematics which was never a strong point) meant that I felt it would not have been the profession for me. Third is that my career has been with the Battye Library and the State Records Office of WA, and I have been able to indulge in my interest in railway history privately and with the sources and knowledge available to me in those collections. I was very fortunate to have been accepted as one of six Library Board cadets in the 1975 intake and as I stated in my brief retirement speech last year, I am STILL amazed at that having happened to me. I think it was a guidance officer at my high school who suggested applying for the cadetship – although it could have been the school librarian as I was one of the few students to help in the library. My orientation year, prior to the three-year course at WAIT (as Curtin University was) was in the Battye Library and that was even more fortunate and served to reinforce my new career goal.

Narembeen, on the Narrogin to Merredin ‘outer loop’ via Kondinin, had a station master from 1927 to 1985. In 1958 the SM would have had a rather cramped office as shown in this photograph, which shows (from left) the ‘out-of’ shed for parcels, passenger waiting shed, and station



Narembeen Station 1958: from WAGR images in WAGR photo albums held by SRO (as yet unprocessed)

offices. A new brick station building was provided two years after this photograph was taken and could well have housed the author should he have proceeded with his earlier ambitions.

Of course, the Western Australian Government Railways was always one of the

largest employers in the state and I have alluded to some of the staff records available in the State Records Office in previous SRO segments in this newsletter. The Station Master was often considered a pinnacle of the community in any town or centre and Jeff Austin researched the names of the SM at every station that had one, resulting in the publication of *Station Masters of Western Australia* by Railway Heritage WA in 2011. WAGR staff and other records in the State Records Office, and staff appointments published in the WAGR's *Weekly notice* and *The Western Australian railway gazette* (and variant titles) in the Battye Library were Jeff's main sources.

In the March 2024 issue of this Newsletter I mentioned the siding Caretaker, a local person appointed to manage some aspects of receipt and delivery of parcels and goods where a Station Master was not warranted. Now I'd like to cover some other aspects of railway employees – and I promise this is my last article on WAGR staff.

In the steam locomotive days, water supplies at regular intervals for the locomotives were a necessity. The WAGR had many dams and bores from which water was pumped to tanks at the station or siding and from these tanks the crews would fill the loco tenders. This process required a pumper who would work at a small pump house at the dam or bore to ensure there was a good supply in the tank. Dams and tanks were often located at remote sites and a search of the SRO catalogue 'Pumper AND Cons3393' reveals examples such as Stake Well between Cue and Meekatharra, Moyagee (Mount Magnet – Cue), and Paroo (Meekatharra – Wiluna). While not all of the Cons3393 WAGR record of service cards for pumper staff are identified by location, many are. While some men may only be recorded at one site, others such as John Purchase had a number of moves. John pumped at Bunbury, Collie, Wagin, Lake Matilda and Narrogin, perhaps being fortunate in only having one posting outside of a town (Lake Matilda, near Kendenup). Sometimes the staff records can lead to other sources for family history. Sydney Atkinson was a part-time pumper at the Ajana dam, at the end of the line north of Geraldton, from December 1933. His card records his enlistment on 25 January 1941 so leading you to research defence personnel records.

For anyone researching WAGR staff, there are many names in the SRO catalogue but there are some large staff record card collections which have not yet been individually catalogued but are available in A – Z sequences on microfilm in the Battye Library - Cons5660, 5661, 5662,

and 5663 and should not be neglected for such research. Unfortunately, the original cards no longer exist and indexing of the names from the microfilms is not an easy task.

I'll end this piece with a note on the earliest, and some unusual, WAGR staff records. Prior to the record of service cards, the railway employees were recorded in very large bound volumes. The first government railway line opened in 1879 between Geraldton and Northampton and SRO has a volume covering 'persons engaged' from 1879 to 1896 – Cons1748 item 01. This volume was initially used as the Northern Railway register so, as well as recording the Northampton railway, as the then isolated system grew to include lines to Mullewa and Walkaway so did the volume. Even farther north, it also records the Cossack – Roebourne tramway in the Pilbara which was under WAGR control from 1886 to 1909. Item 01 records staff up to about 1902. The government railways arrived in Bunbury as an isolated system in 1885 with the opening of the Bunbury – Boyanup railway, being finally connected to Perth in 1893. Cons1748 08 was originally the 'Bunbury' volume and records the first 15 staff of the line, and it then became a general Traffic Branch volume for the whole system. There are many other volumes in the SRO collection and many years ago a WA Genealogical Society volunteer, Rosemary Downing, undertook to index all the names in these volumes, covering employees from 1879 up to 1905 with some individual records going to about 1910. *Western Australian Government Railways employees* was published on microfiche by WAGS in the early 1990s, and can be found in the index stands in the microform alcove in the Battye Library. Each entry records the starting date, position and place, and the SRO consignment and item number and all of these can be found on microfilm.

Happy Researching.

David Whiteford



Nellie Wigglesworth - a Belle of Perth.

[Brendan Kelly, a Bunbury based member of the Friends has become a regular contributor to our Newsletter. In this issue he looks at the career of talented artist, Nellie Wigglesworth.]

Across Perth in the 1890s, the excitement and whirl of the flourishing amateur entertainment scene put stars into the eyes of many young men

and women. As soon as a precocious and talented child was identified as being competent by their aptitude and skills, they were permitted on stage. To have parts filled by children was commonplace, where the child was capable and had the required self-assurance. The remarkable Mary Ellen 'Nellie' Wigglesworth was born in April 1872 in Yorkshire, England, the sixth child of Edward and Anne Wigglesworth. Her Aries birth sign would not be ashamed of claiming Nellie as being 'typical' of the sign, great faith in the self and an intense desire to be the best. Her stellar career as an amateur performer was full of flair, fun and high achievement.

Nellie's family moved to Western Australia in 1884, shortly after her twelve birthday. Edward Wigglesworth had been enticed from England to manage the Perth Gas Company. Nellie arrived in the colony, part of a big family in a household where there were rules and requirements, but also encouragement, inspiration and lessons in practical living. The Wigglesworths provided soundly for their children. Nellie received a decisive education at the progressive Bishop's Girls' College in Perth. She was an outstanding pupil, and her musical talent and presentation set her aside. She grew into a confident young woman, who could act, sing and possessed charisma. She would become a belle of the Perth theatre.

Nellie Wigglesworth emerged with the Perth Amateur Operatic Company, under the influence of the pulsating promoter Francis 'Jerry' Hart and his equally energetic wife Lilian. The Harts were gifted performers and leading journalists. Patronised by Governor William Robinson and the prominent Hensman and Onslow musical families, the Perth amateurs rose to accomplishment and distinction. The network of cultured citizens and their sons and daughters, adept in the performing arts, stretched across eminent Perth society. Being taught to play an instrument, recite, sing or act was a vital component of their children's education. The number of stagestruck ladies and gentlemen, of all ages, of varying talents, was measured in scores rather than dozens.¹

At the Girls' College prize night at the end of 1886, Nellie stood out in music and art, as well as academically. Over the next two school years she continued to achieve success in all subjects, particularly the arts, as she developed as a singer with a first-rate voice. The school and its tutors trained her in the acting arts, about the part being played, to project, to sing and speak. She became a proficient entertainer with not

only the voice, but the persona. By 1889, Nellie's formal education at the Girls' School had completed. She debuted at the Town Hall aged seventeen into the vibrant world of the amateur entertainers, now as a young woman and not as a child. She was a gifted and vivacious talent waiting to be 'discovered'.²

The amateur societies and salons, troupes and operatic companies of Perth were a product of the presiding class, publicised and promoted

by the generous reporting of entertainment journalists. In Perth, the talent pool arose by osmosis. The better class of educated citizens was determined to present their children as a finished product. In vast columns of print, newspapers reported the names of influential Perth people who had any part in a play, recital or concert. The Prinsep family, Mrs Gibbs and her daughter May, the Leakes, judges, public servants and business people enthusiastically joined in producing their own entertainment. Mr FD North, who was a Civil Servant, served as ADC to Governor Robinson and married into the Hamersley family. FD was a capable singer

Perth Amateur Operatic Society.

PATRON:
His Excellency Sir W. C. F. Robinson, G.C.M.G.

ST. GEORGE'S HALL, PERTH.

Monday, June 20th, and Succeeding Nights. 1892

Production for the first time in Western Australia of Gilbert & Sullivan's Opera.

THE GONDOLIERS,
OR, THE KING OF BARATARIA.
IN TWO ACTS.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The Duke of Plaza Toro (a Grandee of Spain)	MR. FRANCIS HART	MR. D. G. GAWLER
Luis (his attendant)	CAPTAIN CROOK	MR. F. D. NORTH
Don Alonzo del Bobero (the Grand Inquisitor)	MR. MORRISON	MR. JACKSON
Marco Palmieri	MR. D. B. ORD	MR. HILLMAN
Giuseppe Palmieri	MR. DRUMMOND	MRS. GIBBS
Astoria	VEGETABLE GONDOLIERS	MRS. E. SHERNTON
Francesco		MISS PALINSEFF
Giuseppe		MISS WOODLEYWORTH
Amabile		MISS NORTH
Octavo		MRS. LEAKE
The Duchess of Plaza Toro		MRS. JACKSON
Carolina (her daughter)		MISS GIBBS
Giannina		
Teon	CONTADINI	
Francisca		
Victoria		
Giulia		
Inez		

Chorus of Gondoliers, Contadine, Men-at-Arms, Herald and Pages.

ACT I—THE PLAZZETTA VESICE
ACT II—PAVILION IN THE PALACE OF BARATARIA
(An interval of Three Months occurs in Act between Act. I. and II.)
Dated, 1750.

Opening puncture at 8 pm. & 8 o'clock 10.30 pm

Program of The Gondoliers 1892, (Museum of Performing Arts His Majesty's Theatre. Courtesy Ivan King.)

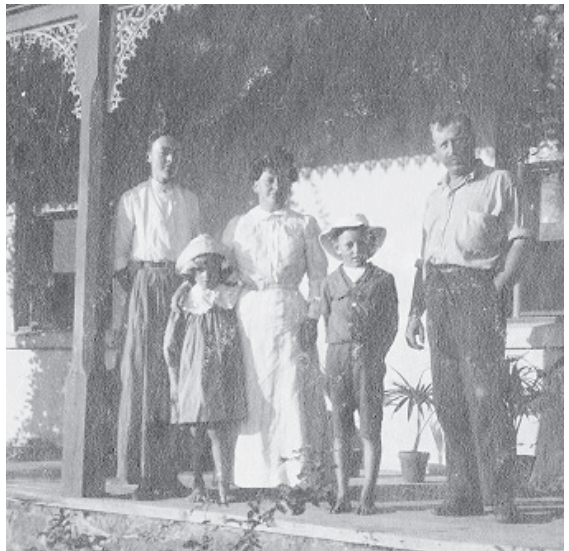
and he and his wife Flora advanced the appreciation of music, as part of the Amateur Operatic Society. Anybody with aptitude could be an amateur performer.

Key to the enormous momentum was vivid newspaper reporting, led by Jerry and Lilian Hart. They produced column after column of reviews, critical observations and stage side gossip. The papers were eagerly read by the amateur theatre players of Perth. For youthful men and woman, or their elders, being recognised for stage presence created an aura of fame and distinction. The novel world of news transmission brought instant recognition, and the daily editions of newspapers were enthusiastically received. Updates and fashions from interstate capitals

and London were fitted to an eager readership. The attraction of the applause and celebrity of the amateur stage reached out across the city.

From seventeen to twenty-seven years of age, Nellie became a prominent female player of the amateur theatre that proliferated in Perth. Attractive, not tall, but well-proportioned, with deportment and style, she had abundant self-confidence. Nellie was presented into society, from a respected family, with a degree of sass and flair that would serve to enchant her enlightened era. Western Australian statehood and the fabulous gold rushes created a booming economy, presenting endless opportunities for Nellie to display her musical talents. She acted, sang and performed with the who's who of Perth amateurs, as well as in professional casts. Nellie's career was enacted in the public eye and her celebrity played out henceforth. Sometimes with publicity not within her control.

In 1893 a young man Bernard Smith, a Perth post-office letter sorter, was committed for trial on a charge of illegally opening a letter addressed by Mr FD North to Nellie. The oversized envelope contained a letter and some promotional photographs. The case was played out publicly in Perth's newspapers, Details of post office management procedures were heavily questioned. Bernie Smith received his own moment of fame, or infamy. For Nellie and her parents, it was perhaps unwanted publicity, as the newspapers carried just a hint of the unusual. From March until after Easter, in columns of newsprint, the case bounded to and fro, mostly about post office dealings, much to the embarrassment of the bureaucrats. It was a story eagerly followed by chattering Perth. Ultimately the jury



Nellie (Wigglesworth) Ross and her family and governess, from the left: Miss Fernibough, Mollie, Nellie, Don and Charles Ross at 'Glen Lossie', Kojonup, c.1909. Nellie is 37 years of age. Photograph supplied by Susan Bilney, Kojonup Historical Society.

retired and after ten minutes deliberation acquitted Bernard Smith, who was discharged from custody, undoubtedly traumatised by the whole experience.³

The case may have upset Nellie's equilibrium for a moment, her prominent family undoubtedly looking on. However, her career was destined to succeed. Nellie's personality among her young peers and approval of the seasoned ladies and gentlemen amateur performers helped her to shine. She reached 21-years old with remarkable years to follow as a singer and actor in light opera. Her circle of friends and acquaintances intersected with theatre movers and shakers in the boom State of Western Australia. In 1894, her appearance in the show 'The Handsome Ransom', composed by William Robinson with Jerry Hart as librettist, placed her in rare company. Until she married Charles Knox Ross in December 1900, Nellie's career thrived unabated, within a once-in-a-generation group, in an extraordinary time.⁴

Brendan Kelly

Endnotes

1. *West Australian*, 18 December 1886, p.5.
2. *West Australian*, 27 May 1889, p.3.
3. *Western Mail*, 8 April 1893, p.40.
4. *West Australian*, 28 December 1900, p.4.

Further references

Ancestry. incl. 1881 England Census [database on-line], retrieved January 2023.

Articles by Brendan Kelly published in *Early Days*, 'Francis Jerome Ernest Hart'(102:2019), 'Gerald Raikes – A Discreet Silence'(106:2022), and 'Cora – A Presswoman of Repute' (107:2023).



News from the State Library

Exhibitions and Public Programs

Hello, this is Sam Lovell

Friday 21 March – Sunday 27 July 2025, Ground Floor Gallery

The State Library's new exhibition provides an in-depth look at Kimberley icon Sam Lovell's trailblazing contribution to WA's cultural tourism industry. Discover Sam's life as a drover, road builder, tour guide and country musician. A master storyteller, Sam's life follows the twists and turns of government policy and the evolution of agriculture and tourism in the North West.



This exhibition has been curated with guest curators Sarah Yu and

Sam Lovell in 2017. Photographs, film, oral history and wider State Library collections tell the story of Sam's life as well as the story of the Kimberley through the eyes of Sam himself.

Bart Pigram using collections donated to the State Library by Sam Lovell in 2017. Photographs, film, oral history and wider State Library collections tell the story of Sam's life as well as the story of the Kimberley through the eyes of Sam himself.

Join us to celebrate the opening of this exhibition on Thursday 20 March 6-8pm. This opening event will feature musical guests and a curators' talk delving into Sam's exceptional and rollicking life's journey. Please book through the State Library website.

Women in focus at the State Library

Visit the State Library from March to July for a series of exhibitions, talks and events centred on women who have made an inspiring contribution to Perth and Western Australia. These are stories of leaders, mentors, rebels and changemakers.

WA Women's Hall of Fame: Roll of Honour

6 March – 6 July 2025, Ground Floor and Level 2, State Library of Western Australia



Young May Holman, First Labor woman Parliamentarian in Australia and the Commonwealth, 1919, Battye Library, SLWA, 3550P.

The WA Women's Hall of Fame recognises over 300 women for their inspiring work and achievements. This exhibition spotlights inductees whose legacy lives on through the Roll of Honour and in the State Library's collection.

Jobs for the Girls

a photographic display in the State Library theatre foyer, charts the way women have used their wardrobes to stamp their identity working inside or outside of the home. A compelling story about the influence of fashion and aesthetics on attitudes towards women sourced from the State Library's photographic collection.

Women in Conversation at the State Library

State Library Theatre

Hear from remarkable Western Australian women who have made an impact in their personal, professional and public lives and actively build communities. Speakers include:

- 3 April – Professor Paola Magni – forensic scientist, crime scene investigator and advocate for the prevention of family and gender-based violence
- 17 April – Amanda Healy – CEO and founder of Kirrikin social enterprise
- 15 May – Dr Sandy Chong – businessperson, philanthropist, educator and global citizen
- 29 May – Jessica Gethin – award-winning conductor, musician and artistic advisor

The Australian Dream? with Tim Ross

Friday 28 February, State Library Theatre

Sat 1 March 4-5:30pm and 7-8:30pm, State Library Theatre

From the 'burbs', to the bush, to the inner city, Australians are obsessed with the idea of home and the dream of home ownership. Architecture and design enthusiast Tim Ross casts his discerning eye across the archival treasures of our much-loved public libraries and uncovers the telling images that reveal a multi-decade story of Australian homes - how they're sold to us, why we buy them, and how we make them our own. Ross explores the reasons why home ownership is such an all-consuming distraction among Australians and uncovers some of the unique and special ways we have built in this place.

This is Tim Ross doing what he does best: telling human stories anchored by his passion for Australian design, previously showcased in his ABC TV shows *Designing a Legacy* and *Streets Of Your Town*.

Kinjarling/Albany Then and Now: historical panoramas exhibition

The State Library is partnering with the Curtin University's HIVE (Hub for Immersive Visualisation and eResearch) and the Western Australian Museum to develop *Albany Then and Now* (working title), a major exhibition at the Museum of the Great Southern from December 2025 to June 2026 as part of the Albany 2026 Major Events program to mark the Bicentenary. The exhibition will feature photographic panoramas from the collections of the State Library and Western Australian Museum as well as the Robert Dale engraving of King George's Sound from 1834 held by the National Library of Australia. The heart of the exhibition will be a large 180-degree curved-screen projection experience narrated by local Menang people and historians, sharing the stories of the place from a variety of perspectives. The State Library is also working with the



View of King George Sound/Mammang Koort and Princess Royal Harbour, c.1919. EL Mitchell, SLWA, 8956B/1881-1882, 1886.

Menang community to better understand the Menang stories and ensure their preservation. Storylines, the State Library's online archive sharing collections about Aboriginal history, is being explored with the Menang community and will help to play a role in documenting Menang stories of Kinjarling.

Perth Cultural Centre rejuvenation project

The Perth Cultural Centre rejuvenation project construction has commenced after three years of planning. This project has received \$55 million with \$45 million from the State Government and \$10 million from the Federal Government. The construction fencing is now installed, including the central walkway through the Perth Cultural Centre. Demolition work will be commencing in mid-February. The Perth Cultural Centre rejuvenation will feature landscaped, accessible pathways lined with greenery and shaded areas, connecting the Art Gallery of WA, WA Museum Boola Bardip, PICA and the State Library to enhance visitor experience. The Art Gallery's rear area will be transformed into a vibrant, nature-filled hub for festivals, art and community events. All of the cultural organisations in the Perth Cultural Centre will remain open during the rejuvenation works.

New Acquisitions

The Clyde Journal

A manuscript produced onboard the convict transport ship *Clyde*, in 1863, observing the recreations and inner lives of transported convicts. The Glasgow-built *Clyde* left Portland in March 1863 carrying 320 convicts bound for the Swan River colony. The editor and possible copyist John Keeling is recorded as a bookseller convicted for forgery at the Old Bailey in 1862. Contents include poems, stories, humorous vignettes, sanitary reports, jauntily-written accounts of onboard recreational activities (or the lack thereof), a register of births (and one death, the wife of one Corporal Webbe), and various miscellaneous pieces including 'A Glimpse at the Ladies in the after part between decks. By one of themselves', 'London and some of its Lights & Shadows', and similar."

State of the Church in Western Australia

A lithographed print, dated 1840, of a hand-written unrecorded circular appealing for funds and labourers to complete the building of churches in the principal towns of Perth and Guildford.

Western Australia Mission

A single leaf circular attributed to the Western Australian Missionary Society in London, dating 1840/1, detailing the religious activities and needs pertaining to the various districts of the Swan River Colony, including the proposed establishment of churches and desired preaching arrangements.

GRAI 'Our Voices' Oral History Project

A collection of 16 oral histories and photographs by GLBTI Rights in Ageing Inc. has been donated to the State Library as a result of conducting an intergenerational oral history project in 2023 and 2024. The interviews share stories of the resilience of older Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Intersex people as recounted to younger people in their community and was funded by the Department of Communities.

Beth Schultz Collection

Dr Beth Schultz has played a prominent role in the Western Australian environment movement for around five decades. The collection consists of a range of documents relating to forest conservation and management, mainly from the period from the late 1970s to the 2010s.

Betty Martin (nee Rendell) collection of photographs and documents 1945-47

Collection of letters, photographs and ephemera documenting the relationship of Betty Rendell with her American fiancé Warren Shibley, her journey to the United States following WWII, and return home following his ending of the relationship less than two months after her arrival.

Kate Gregory, Batty Historian



State Records Office

News from the Archives

Margaret Medcalf Award 2025

Nominations for this year's Margaret Medcalf Award have now opened. This annual Award recognises excellence in research using the State Archives of Western Australia. The Award honours Miss Margaret Medcalf OAM, Western Australia's second State Archivist, for her valuable contribution to the development of archives in Western Australia.



Miss Margaret Medcalf OAM (SROWA)

Any work completed or published in 2024 is eligible to be submitted for nomination, and anyone, including the author of the work, may submit a nomination.

The winner of this Award receives a cash prize of \$1,000 or shares this prize if there is more than one winner. Works nominated must demonstrate the use and accurate referencing of State Archives.

Nominated works need not be published, may be fiction or non-fiction,

and in any media. Submission of electronic versions of publications are encouraged to assist with judging.

The judging criteria for the Award are:

- Level of use of the State Archives Collection.
- Level of contribution to knowledge (historical, cultural, heritage, etc.).
- Original use of the State Archives Collection.
- Proficient and consistent use of referencing.
- Quality of presentation.

Nominations for the 2025 Margaret Medcalf Award should be addressed to the State Archivist and Executive Director, State Records Office of WA, by email sro@sro.wa.gov.au and close on 4pm **Friday 4 April 2025**. Further information is available on www.sro.wa.gov.au.

Public Programs

The SRO continues its regular sessions on 6PR radio and in recent months has spoken about:

- Acts of public bravery, as documented in State Archives;
- Perth's Theme Parks through the years;
- The history of swimming; and
- Spelunking (better known as Caving) in WA.

In October 2024, the SRO was part of a live audience session for RTRFM's season finale of its Planet Perth podcast, held at Lawson Flats.

This year, the SRO has been assisting *The Guardian* with access to archival records as part of a new multi-part podcast that will be aired in 2025.

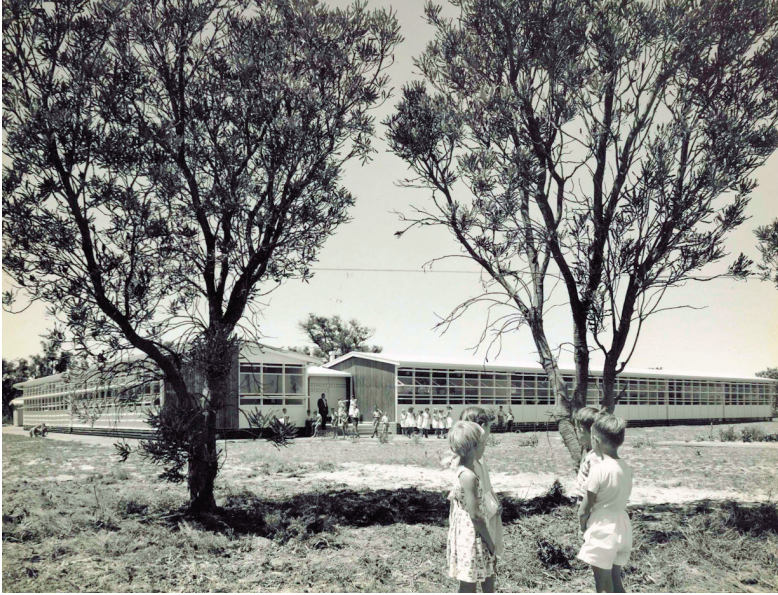
Digitisation

Work on digitising the Colonial Secretary's Office correspondence is progressing well. The SRO aims to digitise the CSO's inwards correspondence for the period 1828-1850 this year as stage 1 of this project, which is kindly funded by the Friends of Batty through the Sholl Bequest. This collection does in fact start just prior to colonisation, with letters dated December 1828 issued to Stirling as he prepared to depart England.

While the CSO correspondence has been well used over the decades, we expect the digitisation of these important records and making them available online will reveal new discoveries and insights that to date have not been examined.

Being Processed

State Archives currently being processed into the collection include a large set of Education Department photographs of many metropolitan and regional government schools, covering the 1950s-1970s. Most of the photos document school buildings (following completion of buildings and works) although photos recording many student activities are also included.



Koonawarra Primary School, Manning (now Curtin Primary School) (SRO)

Supreme Court of WA Criminal Indictment files

The SRO is in the process of adding to our online catalogue lists of individual criminal indictment files of cases heard before the Court of Quarter Sessions and the Supreme Court of WA (Perth and regional sittings). The first criminal sitting at the Court of Quarter Sessions was heard in 1830. So far, cases up to 1850 have been listed on SRO's catalogue. More cases files will be added throughout this year.

To date, locating a specific case file has required going through the Criminal Registers on microfilm in the Alexander Library Building. The Prosecution Project's database (a database operated by Griffith University that lists historical criminal cases across Australia) is a useful adjunct although it does not list the case file numbers.

In carrying out this listing work, the SRO is identifying additional files that list criminal matters that did not proceed in Court for whatever reason (e.g. the Defendant could not be located).

An interesting matter that SRO staff have noticed as part of this work is that by 1837, many Aboriginal men who appeared in Court were sentenced to transportation (typically for a period of between 7-15 years, and usually for charges relating to larceny or sheep stealing). But

transportation to where? This is a little puzzling, given Rottnest Island was operating as a place of incarceration for Aboriginal prisoners. The *Swan River Guardian* (5 October 1837) notes “The query now is, to what Colony are these Natives to be transported? The Government of Van Diemen’s Land will not receive them, as no Aboriginal inhabitants exist on that Island, and it is a question whether the sentence will be approved of in other Colonies, or in England.”

Aboriginal men continued to be sentenced to “transportation beyond the seas” up until 1856, despite the fact that they ended up serving shorter sentences on Rottnest Island. In which case, why were these men being sentenced to another Colony for almost 20 years? Was Rottnest Island as a place of imprisonment considered a stop gap measure at that time? Perhaps someone reading this may have further insights into this.

This painting was commissioned to record the scene of the crime and used as one of the exhibits during the Court case. It is one of a number of “murder maps” held in the State Archives Collection, in this case depicting a human body in the water, a clubbed seal and blood on the rocks.



Painting of murder scene at Canal Rocks in 1868, from Supreme Court criminal file.

Did you know?

SRO often provides assistance to journalist Malcolm Quekett for his weekly series in the *West Australian* (weekend edition) 'The Untold History of WA'. Recently, we assisted Malcolm with a story he was preparing about the different buildings that formed Government House during the 1800s.

SRO Staff



Breaking : Sad news

Valē Ian Berryman 1941 - 2025

History circles were stunned when long-time Friends' member Ian Berryman was suddenly taken ill and died on 12 February, with much more history still to contribute. Ian trained as a scientist with a BSc from UWA and, not long after graduation, left to work in London.

Ian was born in Carnarvon and several of his antecedents were early arrivals at Swan River. In about 1969 he drifted – almost absent-mindedly - from looking for family history notices in English regional newspapers (in big bound volumes out at Colindale) to seeking out early letters from Swan River passed on to newspaper editors by families at home.

The result, ultimately, was *Swan River Letters* with the first volume published in 2002. This was preceded in 1979 by *A Colony Detailed* based on the largely ignored 1832 census. The two books remain indispensable tools for all students of WA's foundation years.

At the Royal WA Historical Society Ian was valued for his meticulous proofreading of the journal *Early Days* which he had earlier edited for three years. He was also working on a revisionist paper on Thomas Peel that he planned to present in July.

Ian leaves a wife, Gerry, and daughter, Caitlin, and will be greatly missed.

Friends of Battye Library Committee.

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

Annual Membership

LIFE MEMBERSHIP	\$500
Ordinary	\$25
Joint	\$35
Concession (pensioner / full time student)	\$15
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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.

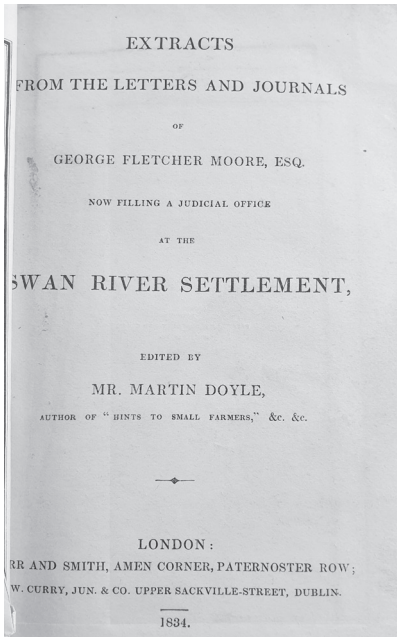
Afterwords

The wonderful George Fletcher Moore. Part 1.

George Fletcher Moore was a 32-year-old Dublin lawyer who migrated here in October 1830 and kept his promise of writing regularly to his father, brothers and sisters back in Ireland. I have never written anything about the 1830s, my favourite decade, without finding valuable input in George's published letters and journals. Soon after Christmas I drifted into studying their intriguing publication history starting in 1834.

But first, on Boxing Day, I enjoyed my annual treat – reading the next in Peter Corris's series of Cliff Hardy detective novels, set in Sydney. Peter had a PhD in history, but also Type 1 diabetes and an ambition to live long enough that his grandchildren would remember him. I have his next six novels lined up with more to find so I might have to speed up my reading schedule, just in case.

In 1834 a little book of extracts from George's letters and journals was published in London without his knowledge and against his express wishes. Ironically, his final words in the book were 'By the way, my own letters are an odd medley: I hope no *stranger* sees them'.



The small book containing 284 pages of extracts from George's early letters.

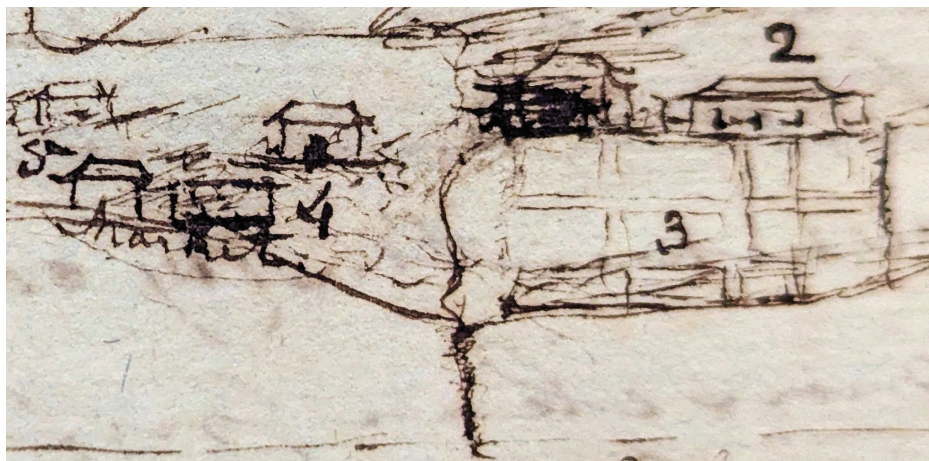
George's letters often included tiny sketches which illustrated what he was writing about but were obviously impossible to reproduce in the 1834 edition. They were revealed in 2006 when Hesperian Press published James Cameron's brilliant edition of the full ten years of George's letters which he called *Millendon Memoirs*, and which included the tiny sketches.

It was while browsing in *Millendon Memoirs* that I spotted that George had cast light on a puzzling early institution, first mentioned by Mary Ann Friend who visited Perth in March 1830. In her diary she recorded:

A Literary Society is established at Perth to which Ladies are admitted as members. I put my name down, was balloted for and elected. I was the third Lady on the books, being preceded by Mrs. Stirling, the Governor's Lady, and Mrs. Roe, the Surveyor-General's Lady. The subscription was 2 guineas. They have already funds in hand and intend immediately to commence building the rooms.

They did – in September 1830 young visitor John Pocock 'peeped in at a room called the Reading Room near the jetty' (see Friends of Battye Library *Newsletter* no.166). On 11 August 1831 George recorded in his journal 'I learn that I have been elected a member of the Institution here.' The editor of the 1834 edition slipped in a footnote: 'A kind of Literary Society', but it had several names in its short life.

From Ian Berryman's *Swan River Letters* we learn that its first secretary, William Stirling the Registrar, called it the Literary Institution. The Letters also include Marshall MacDermott's report from about February 1832 that the 'literary institution is forming a library, and takes several newspapers and periodical works'.



Cristina. Detail from George Moore's tiny sketch from January 1832, showing the pre-fab government house (2), government garden (3) and the Institution (4). (Battye Library.)

It was George who recorded where the little Institution was and confirms it as our first Library. He was then developing a farm on the Swan River, well north of Guildford but wrote in January 1832 that he was looking for a waterside allotment on which to build a town house.

He included a rough sketch of the Perth waterfront to show the family where he was looking and numbered the landmarks. Number 2 was the first Government House, 3 was the government garden managed by James Drummond, and number 4 was the 'Institution (library and newsroom, with a stone jetty or pier projecting into the water nearly below it)'.¹ The sketch also showed the location of Perth's first market.

It was as the Western Australian Institution that it last appeared in June 1833 when secretary Walter Boyd Andrews – Stirling had died in April 1831 – called in borrowed books and advertised the auction of some of the collection. It was 'generally admitted' that it had been 'commenced on too extensive a scale', and was replaced by the Western Australian Book Society in 1835 (see *Newsletter* no.178).

Steve Errington

1. See letter No. 11 commenced 21 November 1831, Acc 263A, Battye Library.



Information about our meetings, upcoming events, and other useful information and resources can be found on our website at <https://www.friendsofbattyselibrary.org.au>. Do let us know what you think at info@friendsofbattyselibrary.org.au.

Lorraine Clark and Cherie Strickland (webmasters)

Membership Subscription (Annually from 1 July to 30 June - GST inclusive). Please see subscription form on page 39 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:

The Secretary,
Friends of Battye Library (Inc)
PO Box 6143
Swanbourne WA 6010.

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
Email: info@slwa.wa.gov.au

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 is co-located with 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
email: sro@sro.wa.gov.au.

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.