

January – March 2023 Vol.13 No.1

## Local History News



West Perth: A brief history Robertson Park – Boojoormelup Lost Vincent: The Tower Hotel Stories from the Suburbs: The murder of Ethel Harris Heritage Hero: Peter Kalaf Can you help? Pickle District Events and programs



Нарру New Year!

During the summer, we have been busy planning for the year ahead.

We're pleased to announce the Local History Awards are on again in 2023. We'll be putting the call out for entries mid-year.

Our local history events recommence in February with a monthly schedule of speakers and workshops held on Wednesday mornings in the Local History Centre. Look for further details in this newsletter and on our webpage.

As we did last year, each local history newsletter will highlight a particular suburb in Vincent. In this edition, our focus is on West Perth.

West Perth is home to an estimated resident population of 5629 people with 2432 residents (about 40 per cent) living in the area north of the Freeway, which is part of the City of Vincent.

Split by the Mitchell Freeway with a foot in both the City of Perth and the City of Vincent, West Perth has many different neighbourhoods and faces.

West Perth is one of Vincent's oldest and most diverse suburbs with a mixture of industrial, residential and commercial areas. This complex and layered history is evident in places like Robertson Park, whose history is featured in this newsletter.

I hope you enjoy this West Perth edition of the newsletter. Also look out for our weekly stories featured in the Perth Voice.

Dr Susanna Iuliano Senior Librarian, Local History Centre

Cover Image: Cyclists on Cleaver Street, West Perth 1920s (COV PHO3362)



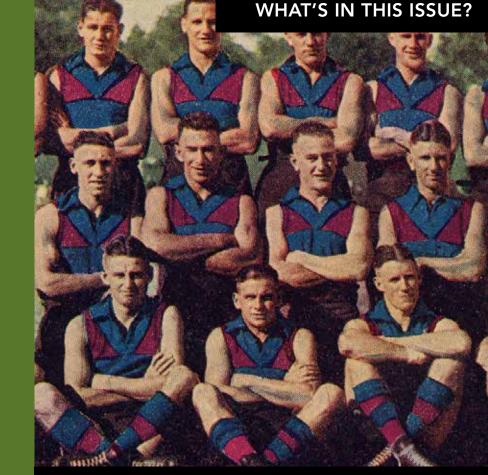
LIBRARY & LOCAL HISTORY CENTRE



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### **CONTACTS & HOURS**

Monday to Friday 9.00am – 1.00pm drop-in; 2.00 – 5.00pm by appointment WEBSITE: library.vincent.wa.gov.au/local-history-centre IMAGE LIBRARY: cityofvincent.imagegallery.me/ EMAIL: local.history@vincent.wa.gov.au CONTACT: Susanna Iuliano, Senior Librarian, Local History (Mon - Thu) Ph: 9273 6534 Catherine Lang, Librarian, Local History (Mon, Wed and Fri) Ph: 9273 6550



West Perth Football Club, 1934 (COV PH01820)

West Perth: A brief history	4
Robertson Park – Boojoormelup	12
Lost Vincent: The Tower Hotel	17
Stories from the Suburbs: The murder of Ethel Harris	20
Heritage Hero: Peter Kalaf	22
Can you help? Pickle District	24
Events and programs	26



# WEST PERTH: A BRIEF HISTORY

### **Early History**

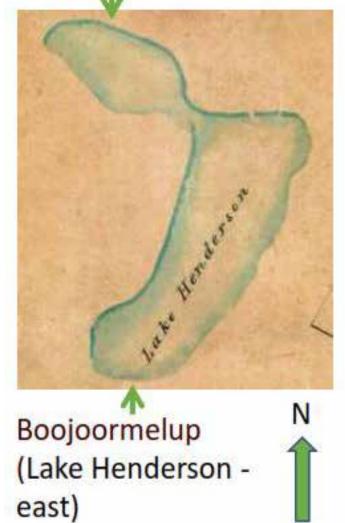
West Perth lies in a chain of seasonal wetlands that were important as food sources and campsites for the Whadjuk Noongar people. The area now known as Dorrien Gardens was once part of Lake Henderson and was known as Goongarulnyarreenup. The present day Robertson Park was also part of the Lake Henderson wetland area known to Noongar as Boojoormelup, which translates to 'place of the eye' or 'place where people see or are seen'. There is evidence via photographs and newspaper records that Noongar people continued to camp and hold meetings in the area up until the 1860s. (Perth Gazette, 22 August 1862).

With European colonisation, many of the wetland areas around Perth became farms or market gardens particularly as the demand for fruit and vegetables increased with the arrival of convicts from 1850 – 1868.

The land around Lake Sutherland, (which was below the present day Old Aberdeen Place north of the railway line) was first farmed by market gardener's and dairy farmers Backshall, Golding and Liddlelow before the lake was mostly reclaimed.

Lake Henderson, including some of Dorrien Gardens, was drained in the early 1870s. Joseph Gallop purchased some of the reclaimed land on Cowle Street (No.54/Lot Y207) and grew vegetables on the lakebed. Mr Gallop and other market gardeners in Cowle Street were followed by Chinese market gardeners from the 1890s.

## Goongarnalayarreenup (Lake Henderson - west)



Excerpt from Hillman map of Town of Perth showing Lake Henderson, Lake Irwin and Lake Sutherland, 1845 (SRO 3868 Item 296)



R.J. Bryant's woodyard on Duke Street (later renamed Aberdeen Street), 1905. (COV PHO6084)

#### 1880s - 1940s

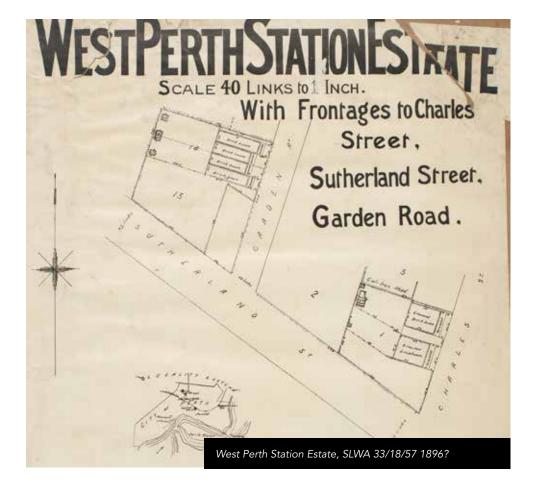
The opening of the Perth-Fremantle Railway in 1881 stimulated residential subdivision in the West Perth area. Newcastle treet became one of the main streets largely due to the tram service established along its length linking the West Perth area to central Perth. Most of the houses were built on the north side of Newcastle Street, with a more commercial focus on the south side.

In the 1890s, Perth spread northwards to Vincent Street and beyond due to the large increases in population and rising affluence as a result of the WA gold rushes. Lots were offered for sale

in the subdivision (Location Ax) in the area south of Vincent Street and east of Oxford Street, including Carr and Cowle streets. Smaller blocks were developed in the Florence Street area on which terrace dwellings and worker's cottages were built. Shops and factories also dotted the area. In the late 1890s, several bakers and a flour milling business set up on Cleaver Street. Herbert Stone's box manufacturing company was established in Fitzgerald Street (south of Lawley Street) in 1896. Around the same time, the Commonwealth Hotel (now the Hyde Park Hotel) was built on the corner of Fitzgerald and Bulwer Streets in 1898.

The West Perth area developed rapidly in the 1890s with a mix of industrial, commercial and residential buildings that were accessible via public transport and in proximity to civic amenities such as schools and churches.

St John's Church of England Day School opened at 480 Newcastle Street in 1890, later renamed the West Perth public school. The Methodist Church built a small wooden chapel at 113 Charles Street in 1890. This original building became the parish hall for the much larger Gothic style limestone church built in 1896. The Anglican Church also built a church and presbytery at 125 and 127 Charles Street in 1897 (rebuilt in 1920) which became a Greek Orthodox Church much later in the 1950s.



In 1913, the Perth City Council purchased the remaining Chinese gardens in the area of the 'Old City' to develop new recreation grounds. In 1917, Lake Henderson became Robertson Park and small remnants of Lake Sutherland were integrated into what became Hamilton Park along Aberdeen and Sutherland Streets. In 1914, Perth City Council also purchased land on the south-east corner of Vincent and Charles Streets for public parkland which became home to the Royal Park Bowling Club.

After World War I, development languished due to two main factors: one was the global economic downturn or Depression and the other, more specific to the area, was the pollution and the noxious odours being emitted from the local industries of the vinegar breweries, pickle factories as well as the tannery south of Newcastle Street. The Sutherland Street drain was also causing health issues as well as emitting unpleasant odours.





Swan Brand Pickles at the Perth Royal Show, 1929. (SLWA\_b1921059\_5)

### Post-war West Perth

The post-war period brought waves of immigrants and refugees from Europe and the transformation of single residences into multiple dwellings and flats to accommodate the growing population.

Clubs and social institutions sprang up or grew reflecting the increasingly diverse residents in the area. The WA Italian Club, founded in 1937 on Fitzgerald Street and first known as 'the Casa d'Italia' (house of Italy) was reconstituted after World War II and grew in membership and scope. The club expanded in the 1950s and was rebuilt in 1968 on Fitzgerald Street. It became the centre of sporting, social and cultural life for Italian migrants in Perth. It also became a hub for a variety of subgroups including the Azzurri Soccer Club, based at Dorrien Gardens adjacent to the WA Italian Club, on vacant land, which was resumed by the City of Perth, in Lawley Street that had been part of Lake Henderson.

Apart from Italians, Greek migrants also had a major impact on the West Perth area after World War II. In 1958, the Greek Orthodox community bought the former St Paul's Anglican Church and presbytery on Charles and Carr streets and reconsecrated it The Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation of Our Lady Evangelismos.

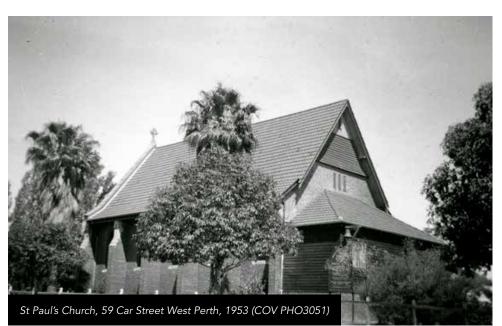


From the 1950s and 1960s, commerce and industry grew further developing into a significant light industrial zone particularly south of Newcastle Street. Shortages of business premises also meant homes, stables and old sheds were converted for retail outlets, workshops and small factories.

In the 1970s, construction of the Mitchell Freeway affected the area when the lower end of Charles Street became an on/off ramp for Freeway traffic. While the Freeway itself formed a physical barrier at the south-western edge of the suburb, this new link gave West Perth residents easy access to the Narrows Bridge and the southern suburbs.

Although the area north of the Mitchell Freeway was geographically split off from the City of Perth, it stayed within the city's governance boundary until the establishment of the City of Vincent in 1994.

After 1994, local government jurisdiction over West Perth was subsequently split between the City of Perth (responsible for the area south and west of the Mitchell Freeway, east of Thomas Street and north of Kings Park Road) and City of Vincent (north of Mitchell Freeway, south of Vincent Street, east of Charles Street and west of Loftus Street).



In the 2000s, the construction of the Graham Farmer Freeway and tunnel in 2000 and its links with the Mitchell Freeway led to the widening and upgrading of Loftus Street. Some of West Perth's homes and businesses were demolished to make way for construction.

The area north of Newcastle Street saw the development of high density apartments and townhouses with retention of the some of the original housing, including the heritage protected Hummerston Lodge at 67 Cleaver Street which has been preserved at the centre of a large residential aged care development built in 2020 (Rosewood Aged Care). In 2021, the Cleaver Street precinct (which includes Strathcona, Florence, Hammond, Ivy streets and Prospect Place) was successfully nominated as a Character Area with design guidelines that encourage retention and renovation of character in the area. The area south of Newcastle Street has been revitalised as an arts precinct branded the Pickle District, which is a nod to its former industrial heritage of pickle and vinegar manufacturers.

Today, West Perth is home to an estimated resident population of 5629 people (ABS 2021), with 2432 (about 40 per cent) residents living in the area north of the Freeway that is part of the City of Vincent.

# ROBERTSON PARK BOOJOORMELUP



## Robertson Park, which sits between Palmerston and Fitzgerald streets Perth, is one of Vincent's most historic parks.

The present day park is located on a former wetland known to Noongar people as Boojoormelup and Goongarnulayarreenup. Areas adjacent to lakes, wetlands and swamps were favoured as camping sites because they provided elevated dry ground close to food sources. Archaeological evidence of Noongar camps and use have been found below the current surface of the park in white sands that were part of the original lake shore. Colonial records also reveal Noongar use of the lake for camping and ceremony, into the late 1860s.

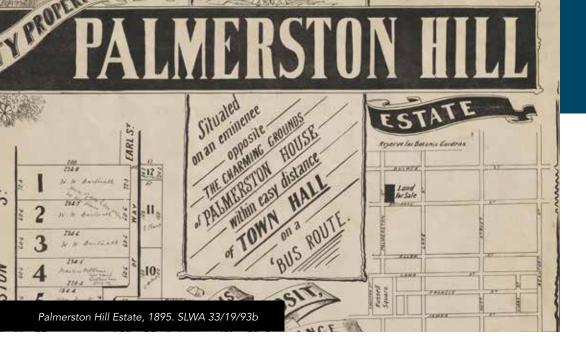
In January 1850, a large meeting of more than 300 Noongar people were recorded at this site including Aboriginal people who travelled from Champion Bay (Geraldton). There were also newspaper references to Aboriginal people camping at the lake, mistakenly reported as Anderson's Lake as late as 1868.

CORROBOREE – On Friday evening, a grand corroboree was held at Anderson's (sic) Lake, at the back of the town, by upwards of 300 natives (sic), belonging to all tribes inhabiting the country for a circuit of 200 miles from Perth. (Perth Inquirer, 23 January 1850).

The early European name for the area was Henderson's Lake (also sometimes mistakenly reported as 'Anderson's Lake) named for Lieutenant-Colonel E.Y.W. Henderson, the Comptroller General of Convicts in the WA in the 1850s and 1860s.



Aboriginal people at Lake Henderson, January 1864. (SLWA: 3451/B 212954P)



From the 1870s, the lake was progressively drained and the area was used for market gardening by British and later Chinese market gardeners. James Fox, a former convict, bought land and build a house on the southeastern corner of the lake in 1873. In 1882, Edward Keane built a cottage (Palmerston Villa or Palmerston House) on the eastern side of the lake and from the mid 1880s the area was further subdivided into smaller suburban lots.

By the early 1900s, more residential housing was built on Palmerston Street and the Fitzgerald Street side of the park was leased by Chinese market gardeners including Lee Hop, who erected a cottage in 1903 which is still standing today. The former Palmerston Villa became Ormiston College and then in 1915, it became the short-lived first campus of Presbyterian Ladies College.

In 1913, the City of Perth acquired some of the land for future parkland. In 1917, it was renamed Robertson Park possibly after World War I English Major-General Sir Philip Rynd Robertson. Around the same time, the Perth Jewish Association bought a lot on the eastern side of the park on Palmerston Street, the site of which became a synagogue (the Little Shule) from 1918 – 1973. In the 1920s, the City of Perth filled in and reclaimed the former wetlands and market gardens to make a children's playground and recreation reserve with tennis courts with a tennis pavilion constructed in 1928. Lee Hop's cottage was renovated for use as a park caretaker's residence and the first caretaker moved in 1928. The 17 tennis courts on Robertson Park were officially opened in February 1929, with the children's playground opened two years later in 1931.

The tennis courts were exceedingly popular with the public and the revenue from court hire helped pay for maintenance of the park. The park also hosted a variety of women's sports including hockey and basketball, as well as a children's library and craft centre, leased by the Little Citizen's League in a small cottage off Fitzgerald and Stuart Streets beside the caretaker's cottage. In 1940, an outdoor theatre located between the children's library and cottage was built and housed the Perth City Band from 1940 until 1970 when Halvorsen Hall was built. In the 1960s until its

demolition in 1973, the cottage was used as an Italian language school run by the Ursuline Sisters affiliated with the WA Italian Club across the road.

Throughout the 20th Century, the southern end of Robertson Park has also had an industrial history as the location of the former Union Maltings factory and bottle exchange from 1905 – 1974.

The 1970s saw the demolition of the playground pavilion, basketball courts and the children's library and theatre on Stuart Street, as well as the synagogue and Palmerston House. The original tennis pavilions were demolished and replaced in 1982.

In the late 1980s, the City of Perth bought the former bottle yard property with a view to extending the park. In the 1990s, the park was neglected and Lee Hop's cottage was almost demolished to allow for the widening of Fitzgerald Street.



Italian language school students in their first communion dresses outside the school at 170 Fitzgerald Street, 1962. (COV PHO5936)

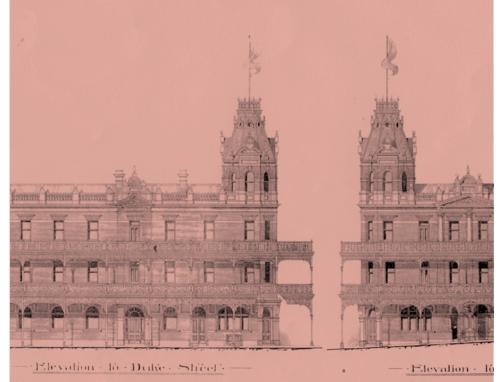
Following the split up of the City of Perth in 1994, management of the park shifted to the newly created Town of Vincent, who leased the tennis courts and proposed the sale of the former bottle yard land. A portion (40 per cent) of the former bottle yard land was sold for development of an apartment complex, which was completed in 2017. Part proceeds of the sale funded park refurbishment including wetland landscaping, heritage interpretation and signage and restoration of Lee Hop's cottage.

The park was listed on the City of Vincent's Municipal Heritage Inventory in 1995, and State Heritage listed in 2007 (site #08705). In 2010, its significance as Noongar meeting, camping and hunting place was recognised. Robertson Park/ Boojoormelup is also a Registered Aboriginal Site (#17849).

To learn more about the history of Robertson Park, read **Robertson Park/ Boojoormelup, Perth: A Pictorial History** by Chris Hair online or in the Vincent Local History Centre. Also available online are the recollections of local residents **Reg Axford and Harold Mundy; Bill Chiew** and **Elza Hughes**.

# LOST VINCENT The tower hotel

- Próposed · Holél · West · Perth · — - Por J.C.Chipper · Esg. - Scale · — - Eight Féel Io an Inch · —



Drawing plans for the Club Hotel (later Tower Hotel), West Perth (COV PHO3277)



The Tower Hotel, originally known as the Club Hotel, was a three-storey landmark hotel which stood on the corner of Charles and Duke streets in West Perth from 1898. It was demolished in 1973 to make way for the Mitchell Freeway's Charles Street off-ramp.

What is the history of this former West Perth landmark?

An impressive building in its day, it was designed by prominent Perth architect and World War I Lieutenant General Sir Joseph John Talbot Hobbs for John Charles Chipper in 1896.

Chipper was born in Perth in 1847 and was the son of the first paid police constable in Perth. He had previously been the owner of the John Bull Inn, which was named the Criterion Hotel in Howick Street, later Hay Street, from the early 1870s.

Chipper opened the Club Hotel, also known as Chipper's Club Hotel, in May 1898 advertising it as 'the finest residential hotel in Perth'. Chipper was the proprietor until 1899. It was renamed The Tower Hotel in 1912 and was run by a succession of different publicans and their families, most of whom were short lived staying on only a year or two in most instances.

THE CLUB HOTEL. Corner of Duke, Charles, and Aberen Streets, West Perth. J. C. Proprietor. The New Three-storeyed Hotel is, Without Exception, the FINEST RESIDENTAL HOTEL In PERTH. Easy Communication with the City by 'Bus and Rail. Three Lines of Omnibuses Converge Close to the Hotel, and it is also Close to the West Perth Railway Station. Two Magnificent Balconies Around Two Sides of the Large Buildings. BEAUTIFUL VIEWS. Superb Fittings and Furniture. Every Form of West Australian Sunday Times, 29 May 1898, p 1

### A CHANGE OF NAME.

The Club Hotel, at the corner of Charles and Duke-streets. West Perth, has had its name changed to that of the Tower Hotel. George Auburn's name, however, still figures over the door, while, as in the past, only the very best of wines, beers, and spirits are stocked. Old and new friends will be made welcome.

The Truth, 14 December 1912

Like many of Perth's old pubs, the Tower Hotel offered accommodation, not just cold beer. In the late 1920s, permanent guests paid 35 shillings a week and temporary lodger's £2/2/ for one of the hotel's 26 rooms as well as its 'excellent table, hot baths and free garage'. (The West Australian, 30 November 1928)

The Keane family were among the more long-term publicans to run the hotel with Patrick Joseph Keane proprietor from 1928 – 1939. In 1937, the hotel underwent extensive renovations, including reconstruction of the main saloon and public bars and bottle department. Patrick Keane died two years later in 1939 and his wife Dorothy Keane became the licensee from 1939 – 1949. During World War II, with a shortage of accommodation for US servicemen in Perth, hotels including the Tower Hotel were asked by the government to make available more rooms for accommodation. Dorothy's licence was renewed with the proviso that she 'do something' about making use of the 20 vacant rooms in her hotel. (The West Australian, 5 Dec 1944)

In 1950, the hotel was updated and repaired and continued to offer lodging, as evidenced by advertisements for house maids and cooks for the hotel in the 1950s. The hotel was demolished in 1973 to make way for the construction of the Mitchell Freeway.

# STORIES FROM THE SUBURBS: The murder of ethel harris



Ethel Harris and Alfred Wilson Smart, The Sunday Tines, March 12 1911.



In 1911, Cowle Street West Perth was the focus of a bigamy and murder case which scandalised Perth. At the centre of the case was Alexander Alfred Smart who was convicted of killing his partner of five years, 25-year-old Ethel Harris, and hanged at Fremantle Prison in March 1911.

Smart, who went by several aliases including Alfred Wilson, worked as a carrier or carter at the Hoskin's & Co foundry in Murray Street, Perth. In 1910, he was living with Ethel Harris at 5 Cowle Street where they were known to locals as Mr and Mrs Wilson. Unbeknown to Ethel Harris, Smart had a wife and five children in Eltham, Victoria. He was also dating a young Perth woman, Mary Pemberthy, whom he had promised to marry when she turned 21.

After Ethel went missing in March 1910, Smart told neighbours that she had moved back to the eastern states. However, he had actually killed her on or around 11 March 1910 with a blunt instrument and then buried her body under the forge where he worked in Murray Street, Perth. A few days later, he married Mary Pemberthy who moved into the Cowle Street home he had previously shared with Ethel. Suspicious neighbours raised their concerns with the police who questioned Smart about Ethel's disappearance. He was subsequently charged with bigamy, confessed and was sentenced to two years in prison with hard labour in Fremantle Gaol.

While he was imprisoned, police began a more intensive search for Ethel Harris' body assisted by several Aboriginal trackers. They eventually located skeletal remains of a woman resembling Harris who had been bludgeoned to death at the foundry where Smart worked. Smart was charged with murder but pleaded his innocence. His trial attracted large crowds scandalised by the bigamymurder plot and by his calm, unruffled demeanour in the witness box.

Smart was found guilty and executed at Fremantle Prison on 7 March 1911.

Local History News

# HERITAGE HERO:

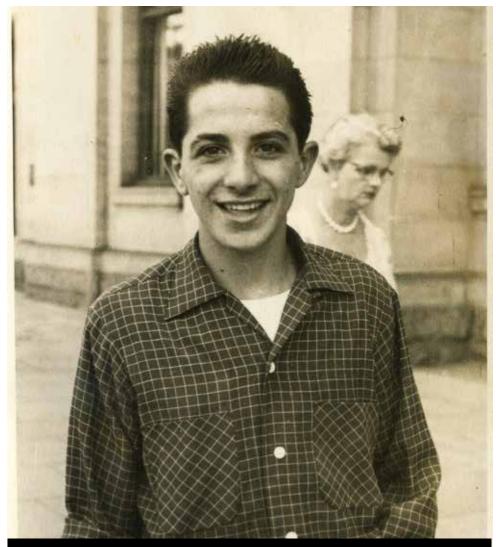
# PETER KALAF Universal

Peter Kalaf, born and bred in West Perth, is a fitting heritage hero for this edition of the newsletter.

Peter was born in 1934 to Despina and Michael Kalafatas, Greek migrants from the island of Castellorizo. The family lived at 31 Cleaver Street West Perth from 1947 – 1975. His father worked for the Water Board and Mac's Joinery in Leederville. His mother ran the Bluebird Tea Rooms at 661 Beaufort Street, next to the Astor Theatre from 1954 – 1975.

Growing up in West Perth, Peter worked tirelessly selling newspapers in Leederville and working in his mum's cafe. After finishing Junior Tech in 1954, he became an apprentice panel beater. He later went on to start his own panel beating business in John Street, Northbridge, where he rubbed shoulders with anyone and everyone in Perth.

Peter's energy and enthusiasm for work is matched only by his passion for local history. He has a sharp memory for detail on just about any place or person in the Perth area, and a keen eye for local memorabilia. Peter's generosity in sharing his books and photos and papers with us makes him our latest heritage hero.



Peter Kalaf in Forrest Chase Perth, c 1956 (COV PHO6421)

In addition to the many great photos and stories Peter has shared with us, his collection of post-war Universal Business Directories (the predecessor to the Yellow Pages) has been an immensely valuable addition to our Local History Collection. We use them almost daily for locating the addresses of former businesses in the Vincent area.

#### Thank you, Peter!

Local History News

# **CAN YOU HELP?**

### THE PICKLE DISTRICT

The area referred to today as the Pickle District is a burgeoning arts hub and former light industrial area east of Loftus Street and south of Newcastle Street, abutting the Mitchell Freeway to the south and east.

The name was inspired by the historical presence of vinegar and pickling factories in the area from the 1920s.

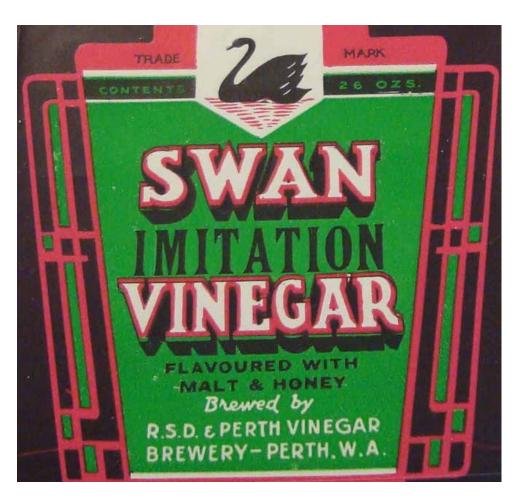
The two main factories in the area were the WA Vinegar Brewery on Golding Street, and the Swan Brand Factory which manufactured sauces and pickles at 567 Newcastle Street from the 1920s to the 1960s.

If you have any old Swan Brand or WA Vinegar Brewery bottles or labels similar to the ones below, please contact us. We'd love copies for our Local History Collection.



Assortment of Swan Brand labels and jars.

Local History News







## FEBRUARY

### TALK: WOODLINES OF THE WA GOLDFIELDS WITH PHIL BIANCHI

#### WEDNESDAY 15 FEBRUARY | 10 – 11.30AM

Between 1900 and 1964, over million tons of firewood and timber were cut and delivered for woodline companies, mostly by migrant workers. The industry provided cheap and readily available fuel for the development of the WA goldfields. Join local historian and author Phil Bianchi for a talk about the history of this vital industry.

Where: City of Vincent Library Local History Centre Presenter: Phil Bianchi Cost: Free Bookings are essential as places are limited. Email: local.history@vincent.wa.gov.au or call 9273 6534



### MARCH



### TALK: MY FATHER, JACK SUE

### WEDNESDAY 15 MARCH | 10 - 11.30AM

During World War II, Jack Sue was part of the RAAF's Z Special Unit serving behind Japanese lines as a secret agent for which he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for exceptional bravery.

After the war, Jack lived a life of action and adventure as a dive store owner, tour guide and musician before his death in 2009. Join Barry Sue for a talk about the life and times of his father, Jack Wong Sue.

Where: City of Vincent Library Local History Centre Presenter: Barry Sue Cost: Free Bookings are essential as places are limited. Email: local.history@vincent.wa.gov.au or call 9273 6534

## APRIL



### TALK: THE PRIVATE LIFE OF A WAR MEMORIAL

### WEDNESDAY 26 APRIL | 10 - 11.30AM

Join local history legend Anne Chapple OAM and filmmaker and writer Dawn Farnham for a behind the scenes talk on the making of a documentary about three generations of Porter family women and their special connection to ANZAC Cottage of Mt Hawthorn.

Where: City of Vincent Library Local History Centre
Presenters: Dawn Farnham and Anne Chapple
Cost: Free
Bookings are essential as places are limited.
Email: local.history@vincent.wa.gov.au or call 9273 6534



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### Local History Centre

www.library.vincent.wa.gov.au Email: local.history@vincent.wa.gov.au Phone: 9273 6090 Address: 99 Loftus Street, Leederville, Western Australia, 6007 () @vincentlibrary () @cityofvincentlibrary () @CityofVincent



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