



CITY OF VINCENT
**LIBRARY &
LOCAL HISTORY CENTRE**

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Local History News



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We're pleased to announce that the City of Vincent Local History Awards is on again in 2023.

In this edition of the Local History Newsletter, our focus is on Mount Lawley.

Mount Lawley is home to an estimated population of just over 11,000 people with approximately 3,500 people (roughly 30 per cent) resident in the area south of Walcott and east of Norfolk Street running across to the Swan River that is part of Vincent.

We've uncovered some great stories about Mount Lawley which we hope you enjoy in this edition.

Look out for our weekly stories featured in the Perth Voice. Don't forget to enter the 2023 Local History Awards. Entries close 29 September.

Dr Susanna Iuliano
Senior Librarian, Local History Centre

After a brief hiatus in 2022, we are putting the call out for written and photographic entries. Anyone can enter, provided the photos or stories relate to people, places and events in the Vincent area.

We are calling for stories and photos, both historic and contemporary. Further details about how to enter are available in this newsletter.

When we last ran the awards in 2021, we received some great stories and images relating to all suburbs in Vincent, including Mount Lawley which falls partly in our patch.

Cover Image: Poppy Kalaf at the Bluebird Tearooms, 661 Beaufort Street Mount Lawley, 1958 (COV PHO6418)



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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

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WHAT'S IN THIS ISSUE?



Wedding portrait of Mabel Grace Wardell-Johnson of Mount Lawley, 1929 (COV PHO2308)

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MOUNT LAWLEY: A BRIEF HISTORY

This brief history focuses primarily on the southern portion of Mount Lawley that falls within the City of Vincent.



The River Estate Mount Lawley, c 1910 (State Library of Western Australia)

Early history

The Mount Lawley area is home to several Aboriginal cultural heritage sites, the Swan River itself and the area down by river at Banks Reserve is noted for its significance as a Noongar meeting place and camp site with a mythological connection to the Waugal rainbow serpent, creator and protector of waterways. 'Warndoolier' is the Noongar name that appears on early maps of the area around Banks Reserve.

Following European colonisation, the eastern portion of the district was parcelled up as Swan Location A5 and the track connecting Perth and Guildford (which later became Guildford Road) was an important transport route.

Early colonial land holders included Peter Wicks (until 1836) and Sir William Henry Drake (until 1881) after which it passed on to several different investors and remained undeveloped, as did the rest of Mount Lawley which was retained as Crown Land in this early period.

In 1871, the City of Perth was established with its northern boundary at Walcott Street. The construction and opening of the Fremantle to Guildford railway in 1881 improved access to the area and hastened development.

The area where the tracks crossed Guildford Road was a dangerous intersection to many known as 'Fenian Crossing', named for the Irish convicts who built it. The frequency of accidents led to the eventual construction of the Mount Lawley Railway Bridge (Subway) in 1907.

1890s – 1940s

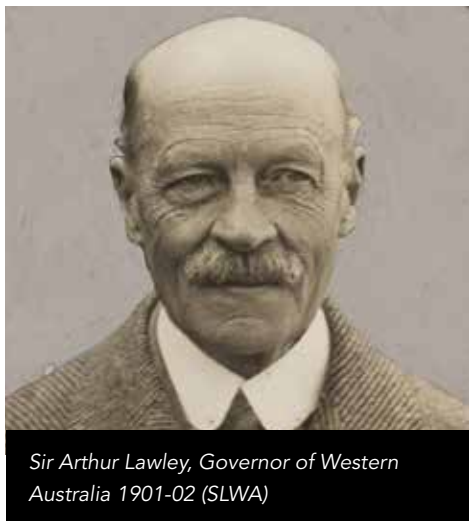
The mining and investment boom of the 1890s stimulated residential development in Perth, including in the Mount Lawley area. Tent cities sprang up along the river in Mount Lawley and subdivision of crown land and farmland took place in proximity to the railway line and the newly established tram service which ran along Beaufort Street up to Walcott Street.

An early home in the area was Hallyburton House built in 1893 at 49 Walcott Street. It was the first house fronting Walcott Street built from wood for James (a stone-mason) and Janet Hallyburton (a local midwife). It was known to locals as 'the lighthouse' because the light in the turret could be seen from down the hill in Highgate.

In 1901, Mount Lawley was formally proclaimed as a suburb named in recognition of Sir Arthur Lawley, Governor of Western Australia from 1901 – 02.



Hallyburton House, 49 Walcott Street c 1970 (COV PHO1776).



Sir Arthur Lawley, Governor of Western Australia 1901-02 (SLWA)

By 1906, the tram lines had been extended along Walcott to York Street, the extension underwritten by private developers Copley & Robinson who were responsible for subdivision and sale of much of the Mount Lawley area. By 1924, a single track extension was constructed from the terminus on the corner of Lincoln Street in Highgate along Lord Street via the Mount Lawley subway to Maylands. The tram hastened residential growth and business development along Beaufort Street.

In 1911, builder Simon Bremner Alexander constructed the Broadway Building (later known as the Alexander Building), a two storey shopping and residential complex. Directly opposite in 1914/5 he built the Lyceum Building which housed shops, the Lyceum Theatre (renamed the 'State Theatre' in 1922 and the Astor in 1941) and a picture garden. Alexander was a well-known builder/contractor in Perth who also constructed the Fremantle Railway Station, Perth Modern School and additions to the WA Museum and Police Court buildings on Beaufort Street. After his death, his son refurbished the Beaufort Street buildings in the late 1930s with an art deco style facade designed by architect Richard Summerhayes.



Tram line on Beaufort & Walcott Streets (COV PH01772)

Mount Lawley's rich art-deco heritage dates from the 1930s when a number of private dwellings, flats and commercial premises were constructed in the art deco style.

During the 1930s, flats became popular with several blocks erected in the Mount Lawley area including the Waihemo Flats at 686 Beaufort Street and the Roslyn Flats at 94 Walcott Street.

In 1934, the Clarke Building at 639 Beaufort Street was built for William Beattie who ran a wine saloon. It was later run as a pub under various names including the Flying Scotsman and is today 'The Elford' named for George Henry Elford who ran a printing business turned wine saloon at 483 Beaufort Street in the early 1900s.

Other notable Mount Lawley buildings dating from the 1930s include the former 'Star' motor garage and petrol station built in 1938 on the south-east corner of Walcott and Beaufort, (later Planet Video and now a Mexican restaurant). The service station heralded the advent of the motor car and the increasing road congestion of William, Beaufort, Lord Streets and East Parade which became major traffic arteries in and out of Perth.



Lyceum Buildings, Mt. Lawley and the Lyceum Theatre, 1928 (SLWA)



Lyceum Buildings, Mt. Lawley and the Lyceum Theatre, later the State Theatre and its art deco renovation, 1939 (SLWA)



Star Garage and Service Station on the south east corner of Walcott & Beaufort Streets, 1932 (SLWA)

Another landmark building from the 1930s is the Forrest Park Methodist Church at 41 Walcott Street. Built in 1933, the Gothic style building operated as a church until 1982 when it was deconsecrated after the amalgamation of the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches in Australia led to rationalisation of Uniting church assets. The building was converted for use as a restaurant and later as a dental surgery (operating today as the Walcott Street Surgical Centre).

Forrest Park, across from the church on Walcott and Harold Streets, was established as a recreational reserve in the early 1900s. It was used for a variety of sports including lacrosse, rugby, cricket, football and soccer. In 1913, the fences and gates surrounding the park were in disrepair and local residents complained of stray cows and horses in the park, including racehorses being trained there by a horse trainer who lived nearby. In March 1914, there was a public outcry after Perth City Council allowed Seventh Day Adventists to camp at the park for their annual conference. Several years later in 1922, similar complaints were aired when 400 delegates set up camp in 130 tents for another Seventh Day Adventist conference. The Sunday Times editor wrote, "*Forrest Park is considerably used as a playground for young children as well as a sports ground for older boys and girls, and the residents in this*

district feel very sore about them being deprived of their rights." (Sunday Times, 12 March 1922).

From 1908, the south eastern corner of Forrest Park Reserve was the site of Norwood State School. Later in the late 1940s, Norwood State School was converted Forrest Technical High School which was a high school for boys that helped relieve pressure on the crowded Junior Technical School on Newcastle Street. It was not until much later in 1955 that another public secondary school, Mount Lawley High School, was established in the area.

Other schools established in the Mount Lawley during this earlier period included Mount Lawley Primary (State) School on Second Avenue in 1912, and Perth College the private Anglican girl's school which moved to its Mount Lawley location on Lawley Crescent in 1916.



Wedding at the Forrest Park Methodist Church, Mount Lawley, 1960s (COV PHO4079)



Forrest Technical High School, classes 2C and 3B, 1949 (COV PHO3976)

From the early 1920s, Mount Lawley was also home to a hostel for children who were wards of the state awaiting placement with foster parents or waiting to appear before the Children's Court. The hostel was located on the corner of Walcott Street and Lord Street and was run by the Department of Community Welfare. Over the years it was known variously as the Government Receiving Depot, the Child Welfare Reception

Home, the Mt Lawley Reception Home and later the Walcott Centre. It stopped being a residential facility in 1984 and housed the Community-Based Offenders Program until 1993. It currently houses the Central Metropolitan Youth Justice Services run by the Department of Justice to help divert early and minor young offenders from the formal judicial system.



Mount Lawley Reception Home, 1975 (Dept Child Protection)



The Sunday Times, 18 August 1935.

1950s – 2000s

Population growth in the post-war period saw the corresponding development of new homes in the area, including more modest homes for returned servicemen and new migrants from Italy, Greece, Croatia, Poland and Eastern Europe. Housing shortages and lack of building materials in the early post-war period led many residents to undertake makeshift alterations to increase living spaces to accommodate more than one family.

Building supply shortages also affected businesses. Former soldier and Mount Lawley resident and businessman Solomon Bercove was fined by Perth City Council for not adhering to building plans for the shop he constructed at 628 Beaufort Street in 1946 due to shortage of materials. Undeterred, the Bercove's opened the 'Mount Lawley Frock Shop' in 1947 and operated the business until the early 1960s when it became 'Highgate Furnishers' and later a restaurant.

Next door at 623 Beaufort Street, the Balshaw family established 'Balshaw's Florist & Garden Centre' in 1962, moving from their original premises in Fitzgerald Street, where they previously traded as 'Morley Park Florist'. The family owned business

celebrated its 70th anniversary in 2021 but recently closed its Mount Lawley premises in June 2023.

Another family business on Beaufort Street was the Bluebird Tearooms at 661 Beaufort Street, run by Despina Kalaf and her family from 1954 to 1972. (See full story in this newsletter). The Bluebird was located next door to the Astor Theatre which had become a rundown shadow of its former self by the 1950s and '60s with falling cinema attendances due to the introduction of television.

In the late 1970s and '80s, the Astor was threatened with demolition until it was leased and refurbished by Entrevision Cinemas who returned it to its former art deco glory in 1989. The Astor was classified by the National Trust in 1988 and listed on the State Register of Heritage Places in 1999. While the cinema's commercial fortunes have waxed and waned, it is a significant icon on Beaufort Street drawing audiences for live music, comedy and community events which helped spur the revival of Beaufort Street as an entertainment precinct in the 1990s and 2000s.

In the 2009, Western Australia's first 'town team' the Beaufort Street Network was formed to enhance and promote



Beaufort Street Festival Poster 2010 (COV Local History Collection)

the amenity of the area. The group was active in reinvigorating Beaufort Street through different initiatives including the annual Beaufort Street Festival which ran from 2010 to 2016.

Today, Mount Lawley (inclusive of City of Perth, Bayswater and City of Vincent areas) is home to an estimated resident population just over 11,000 people with approximately 3,500 people (roughly 30 per cent) resident in the area that is part of the City of Vincent, south of Walcott and east of Norfolk Street running across to the Swan River. The suburb has a

much higher proportion of professionals (38 per cent of people over 15) and tertiary educated residents (46 per cent) with considerably higher median personal, family and household incomes relative to the state and national average (ABS 2021). It also has a much higher proportion of flats and apartments relative to the Western Australian average (27.6 per cent of occupied dwellings are flats or apartments compared with 6.5 per cent for the state average) and higher property values reflected in higher median weekly rent or mortgage repayments.

STORIES FROM THE SUBURBS: ALVAN HOUSE



28 Alvan Street Mt Lawley, 1964 (SLWA)

Tucked away in heart of Mount Lawley on the corner of Alvan Street and Queens Crescent sits a rambling house built in the early 1920s as a residential home that became a hostel for Aboriginal youth. The house was bought by the Department of Native Affairs in 1950 and converted for use as a hostel for Aboriginal girls aged 13 to 18 who were brought to Perth from the country to attend high school or training under the guardianship of the Commissioner for Native Welfare. From 1950 – 1958 it was known official as the 'Native Girls Home' and unofficially as 'Alvan House'.

The hostel accommodated up to 20 girls supervised by live-in guardians and selected on their "exemplary character and scholastic attainment or special ability." Community opposition to the hostel was immediate with Mount Lawley ratepayers protesting that the hostel would "establish a prohibited area in the centre of one of the most highly rated areas in the district" attract "undesirable people" to the street and cause depreciation of their property values (The Daily News, 7 October 1950).

Despite the protests, which were taken all the way to State Cabinet, the hostel remained. Throughout the 1950s, the Department of Native Affairs/Native Welfare generated and promoted positive stories about the hostel and its residents reporting on the various academic, vocational, sporting and social activities the girls undertook. In 1954, this included serving tea to Queen Elizabeth II at a garden party at Government House during her visit to Perth.



Dining room of Katukutu Aboriginal Men's Hostel, 17 Almondbury Road Mount Lawley 1960. (SLWA)

Remember the Alvan House outcry? – Well, let's look now

A LITTLE more than two years ago the establishment of Alvan House—the Mt. Lawley home for girls with native blood—caused a minor upheaval in the community.

But the girls who have passed through Alvan House in that time have more than justified their supporters' faith and have won admiration from some of those who opposed the project.

Most of the opposition came from Mt. Lawley ratepayers who objected that, among other things, it would cause depreciation of neighbouring properties and would also attract undesirable people to the neighbourhood.

It all developed into a yes-no issue, with ratepayers being petitioned and counter-petitioned on the proposal. The pe-

Daily News, 17 Feb 1953

In 1959, responsibility for running Alvan House passed from government to the Baptist Union of Western Australia. It became a hostel for young Aboriginal men from country missions coming to the city to look for work or training. It was managed by Baptist Minister Robert McKeich and his wife Betty who had established the Katukutu Employment Hostel for Aboriginal 'working boys' at rented premises in nearby Almondbury Street in 1958. In 1961 Katakutu moved to 28 Alvan Street. It provided short-

term hostel accommodation for up to fourteen male Aboriginal youth of working age, with an average length of stay being nine months. It had six bedrooms (four doubles and two sleeping three or more), three bathrooms and toilets; a lounge and dining room; separate staff toilet; table tennis/pool table; television, 'radiogram' and library. Katukutu operated under a funding agreement with the Department for Native Welfare until 1972 and then it was government run until the early 1980s.

LOCAL HISTORY AWARDS 2023



Robert Finley with his camera, 1960s (Photo courtesy Gina Fraser)

The Vincent Local History Awards is back! The Awards encourage current or former residents to share their photos and stories of people, places or events in the Vincent area.

Dust off your old photos or snap away and submit recent images of the Vincent area that have a special meaning or significance to you. Get writing and share your memories and stories of life in Vincent with us. Great prizes to be won.

Entries close 29 September 2023.

For more information drop in or call the Local History Centre or visit: library.vincent.wa.gov.au/local-history-centre/local-history-awards

LOST VINCENT:

THE BLUEBIRD TEAROOMS

To inspire you to put pen to paper and enter the 2023 Local History Awards, here is an edited excerpt from Peter Kalaf's entry in the 2021 Vincent Local History Awards about a local business his mother ran on Beaufort Street.

Mum had the Bluebird Tearooms next door to the Astor Theatre from 1954 – 1975. Dad used to help her in the shop until he died in 1971. We all used to help. My father was unemployed so that was our only income. My mum had the shop, I was selling papers and my sisters were both working in shops. The shop was before the arcade – we had a double window shop at 661 Beaufort Street. The door at the back went into the back of the open gardens with access to the picture theatre.

When they bought the shop, it had been closed for years and the rats were bigger than cats... there were even rats in the oven! Ken Hatfield the QC used to come in for dinner every Tuesday. He looked at the oven and had a word with the landlord Mr Alexander (who owned most of Mount Lawley and half the city) and he changed the ovens.

Before Mum took on the café, it was only open once or twice a week. Mum opened it for breakfast, for the movies and at night and weekends. She even catered for parties. Mum would leave home at 6am to walk from Cleaver Street to Newcastle Street, get a tram along Newcastle Street and then another tram to Beaufort Street carrying whatever bags of stuff she needed. It drove Mum insane. Later she went for her driver's licence when she was 42 and became self-sufficient and drove our old Holden to work. Later she had a 20-foot-long yank tank, then a '68 Chevy Impala. She didn't stop driving until about 1984.

After school, I would sell newspapers in Leederville, then get a tram to the shop in Mount Lawley and I'd be in the shop until 10 o'clock at night. We ate dinner in the shop and we'd get home at 10 or 11 o'clock. We'd work Saturdays and Sundays until 10 o'clock too. All we were doing as kids was working. I never had time to study. The teachers would ask, 'Why haven't you done your homework?' When would we have time to do it – at 2am in the morning?

Mum cooked all different kinds of food – Greek, Italian, you name it. She spoke 6 languages including several Italian dialects so she would

get a lot of Italian customers who would come in after the movie matinees and we'd have everything from minestrone to rissoles. She made the best ham and salad sandwiches. She made Greek egg and chicken soup (Avgolemono), rissoles, steak, whatever – she mixed it up.

People came far and wide to taste mum's chocolate coated ice creams. By mistake once, she bought a big tin of chocolate and she didn't know what to do with it. She would take a lump of chocolate, put it in a bowl of boiling water to melt and then we'd dip the cold ice cream into the hot chocolate. We'd leave them to dry and then harden in the freezer. People used to try and copy us, but they didn't know how to do it. It was art. You had to have the hot water at the right temperature to keep the chocolate soft. The dipping only worked with really frozen ice cream.

We'd fill a fridge of chocolate coated ice creams and sell them for sixpence; doubles sold for a shilling. We'd do a whole tray of ice creams and put them in the freezer. In one movie session, we'd sell maybe 30 or 40 ice creams at interval. The movie interval was only 10 minutes so you had to sell everything in one hit. We had lollies, ice creams and cool drinks.



Peter, Despina & Julie Kalaf at the Bluebird Tearooms, 1960 (COV PH06413)

I could open 12 bottles in one hit. I was quicker than everyone at serving. When *The Godfather* came out in 1972, it was so long they had pre-drinks, intervals and people had coffee afterwards, so you got the customers three times.

In the early 1970s, it became harder to make a living when the Astor picture theatre stopped people going out of the theatre to our shop. They cut off our legs by having a kiosk in the theatre and making people stay in the theatre. In 1975, it got to the stage where mum sold the business for virtually nothing, (about \$7000) and she retired.

HERITAGE HEROES: THE MOUNT LAWLEY SOCIETY

The Mount Lawley Society was founded in October 1977 to advocate for heritage protection and promote local history education and community spirit in the suburbs of Mount Lawley, Inglewood and Menora.

For almost fifty years, the society has been researching, collecting and sharing the history of people, places and events in the suburbs. The society has been active for many years in hosting talks, talks, quiz nights and hosting other heritage events as well as publishing an informative quarterly newsletter variously called Mount Lawley Matters (1979 – 2015), Our Heritage (2016 – 2019) and From the Verandah (2019 to present).

The society has a large collection of photographs of Mount Lawley dating from the late 1890s which can be viewed and purchased on

their webpage. They also have a comprehensive webpage, Facebook Page and Instagram account with lots of great local history information.

The society was originally located in the City of Stirling's former community Centre on Alvan Street, moving to the Mount Lawley Bowling Club on Rookwood Street in 2000. In 2023 they moved to their current headquarters at the Forrest Park Croquet Club where they hold regular talks as part of a guest speaker series.

The Society are hosting us for talk 'Treasures & memories of Mount Lawley in the Vincent Local History Collection' as part of their speaker series at 7pm on 28 August 2023. For more information visit: facebook.com/mountlawleysociety/



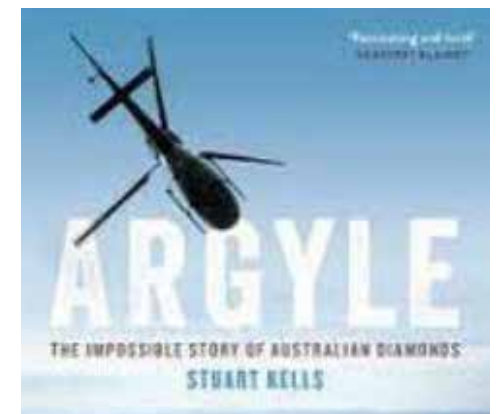
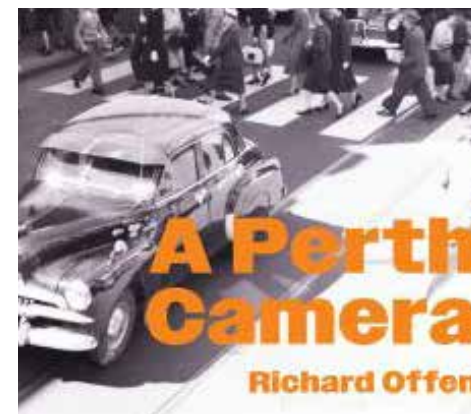
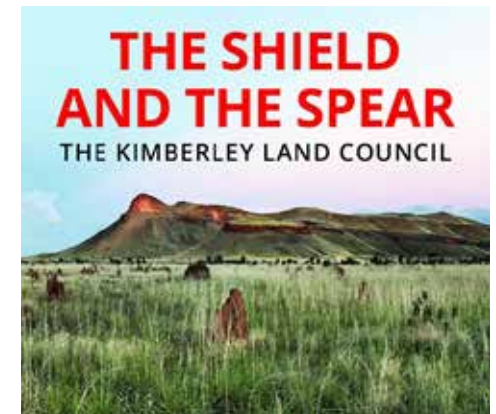
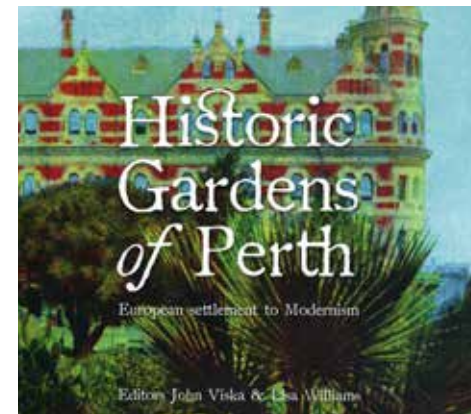
Cars driving on Guildford Rod under Mount Lawley subway, 1954 (COV PHO4226)

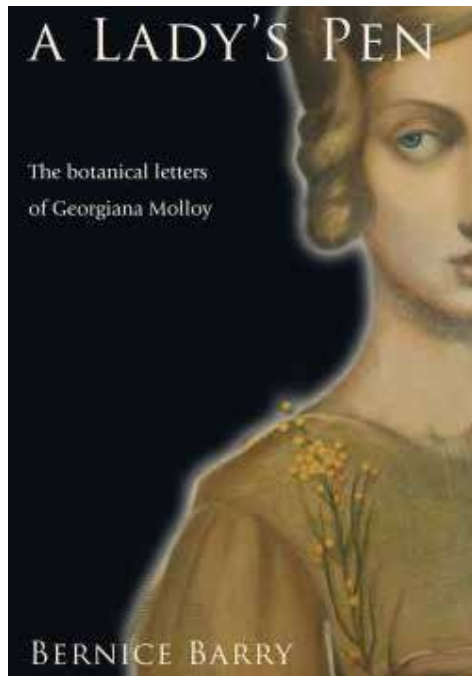
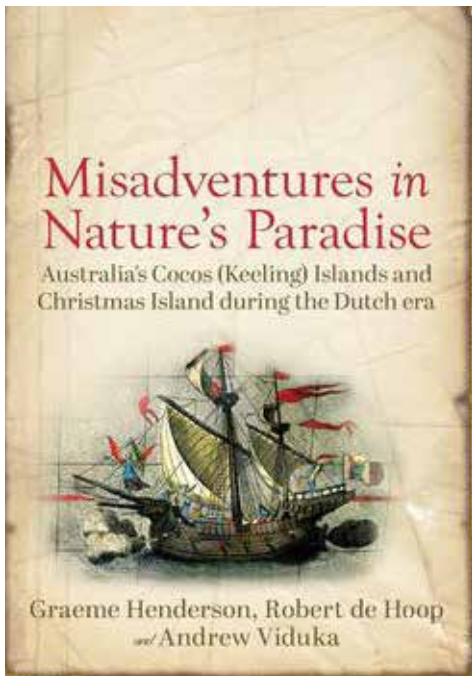
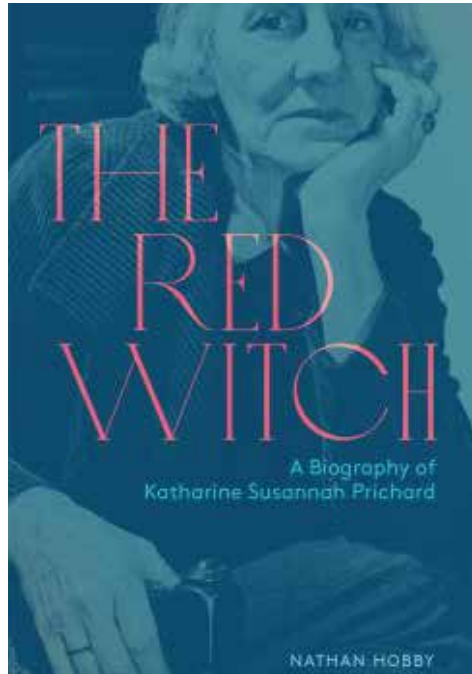
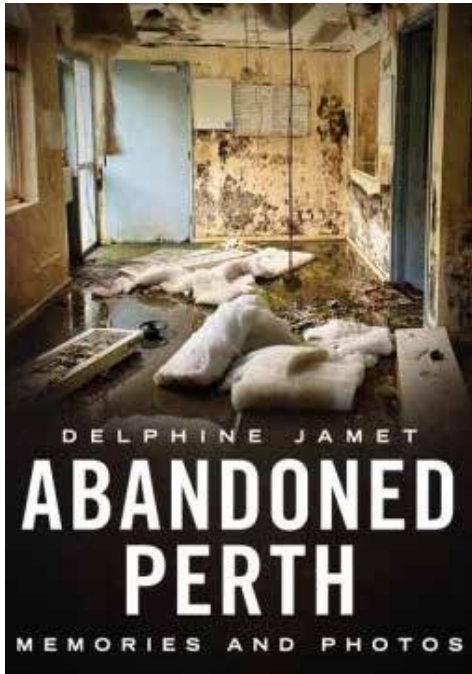
WHAT'S NEW: BOOKS!

Did you know you can now borrow books from the Local History Centre? We recently changed access to the Local History Collection from 'reference only' so that you can borrow books from us under the same loan terms and conditions as all City of Vincent library books.

We have a range of new publications in Western Australian and Australian history, memoir and biography.

New arrivals include: Nathan Hobby's award winning biography of Katharine Susannah Prichard, 'The Red Witch'; Richard Offen's latest book 'A Perth Camera' is packed with wonderful historic images of Perth by the late Ernie Polis; and hot off the press is a new book edited by John Viska and Lisa Williams 'Historic Gardens of Perth'.





AUGUST

WORKSHOP: BRITISH ANCESTRY RESEARCH PROBLEMS, TIPS AND BREAKTHROUGHS

WEDNESDAY 23 AUGUST 2023 | 10 – 11.30AM

To mark Family History Month, come along and share your family history research trials and triumphs. Ian Simon from Family History WA, assisted by volunteers from FHWA, will discuss some useful resources, facilitate the group discussion and assist you with your research.

Where: City of Vincent Library Local History Centre

Facilitator: Ian Simon

Cost: Free

Bookings are essential as places are limited.

Email: local.history@vincent.wa.gov.au or call **9273 6534**



AUGUST

WORKSHOP: GET WRITING!

WEDNESDAY 30 AUGUST 2023 | 10 – 11.30AM

Ever thought of writing stories about people or places in our local area but don't know where to start? Whether you're a complete beginner or need help overcoming writer's block, join writer Melinda Tognini as she guides you through a series of writing prompts that will help you connect with the stories you have to tell. Come along and kick-start your story, or get some tips to polish up an entry for the Vincent Local History Awards.

Where: City of Vincent Library Local History Centre

Facilitator: Melinda Tognini

Cost: Free

Bookings are essential as places are limited.

Email: local.history@vincent.wa.gov.au or call **9273 6534**



SEPTEMBER

WALK VINCENT'S LOST WETLANDS

WEDNESDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2023 | 10 – 11:30AM

Join award winning poet and researcher Nandi Chinna on a stroll through Hyde Park and Robertson Park. Experience her site specific poetry and learn the history of the wetlands.

Where: Walk departs from Hyde Park (Meeting Place Café)

Presenter: Nandi Chinna

Cost: Free

Bookings are essential as places are limited.

Email: local.history@vincent.wa.gov.au or call 9273 6534



OCTOBER

HISTORIC GARDENS OF PERTH

WEDNESDAY 25 OCTOBER 2023 | 10 – 11.30AM

Join garden historian John Viska to learn about the historic gardens of Perth, from European settlement to Modernism. John is the co-editor of the newly published book *Historic Gardens of Perth* which will be available for sale at the talk for \$50.

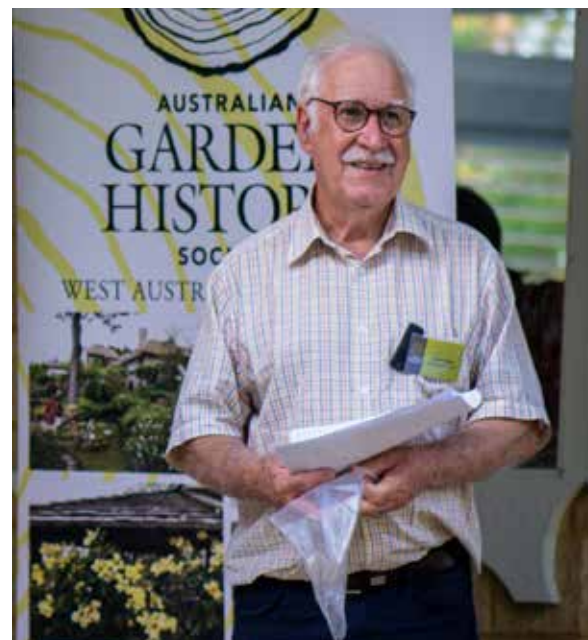
Where: City of Vincent Library Local History Centre

Presenter: John Viska

Cost: Free

Bookings are essential as places are limited.

Email: local.history@vincent.wa.gov.au or call 9273 6534





What are you looking for today?

Search by Keyword or Album



IMAGE LIBRARY

Did you know the City of Vincent Local History Collection Image Library contains over 6000 photos of people, places and events in the suburbs of Vincent?

You can browse by suburb, subject or keyword at:
www.cityofvincent.imagegallery.me/site/welcome.me



Follow the City of Vincent Library on Facebook

Local History Centre

www.library.vincent.wa.gov.au

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