



Local History News



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Following a government directive and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Library and Local History Centre

have closed until further notice. Please be assured we are still working behind the scenes to answer your queries and to process and make more of the local history collection available for you to enjoy online.

In this newsletter edition, we hope to offer some distraction and inspire you with stories about the strength and resilience of our local communities during times past. Practicing social distancing to stay safe is important, but we still need ways to feel connected to our communities. We hope the stories in this edition help you feel that local connection.

Dr Susanna Iuliano
Senior Librarian, Local History Centre



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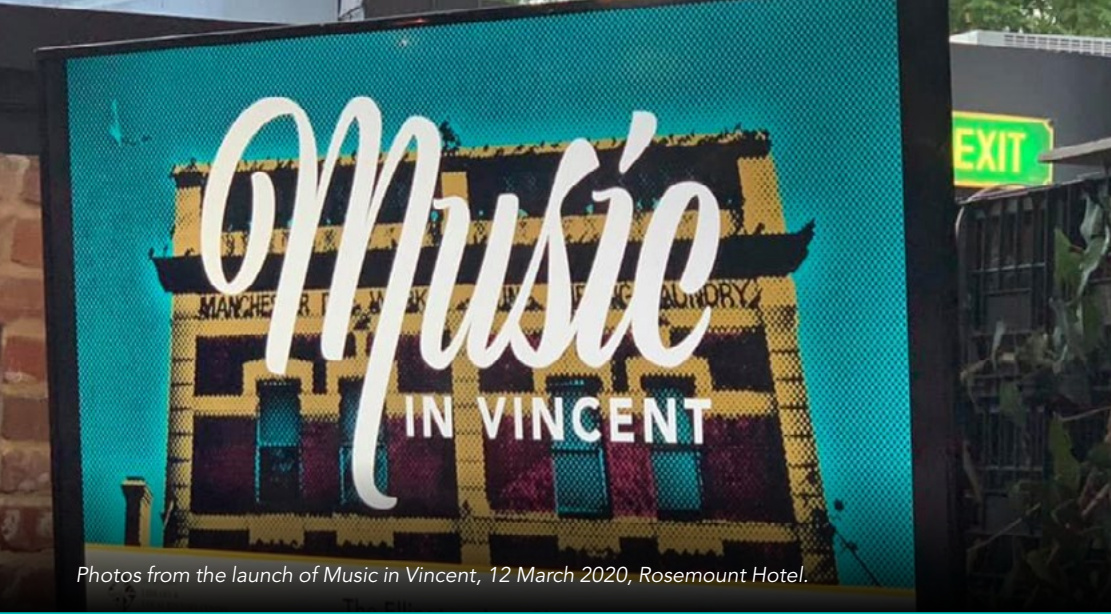
COVER IMAGE:
Mount Hawthorn Primary School Percussion Band students, 1950s.
COV LHC PH04846



Mount Hawthorn resident Nancy Willmott singing at the Pagoda Ballroom, 1955. COV LHC PH00153

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Photos from the launch of Music in Vincent, 12 March 2020, Rosemount Hotel.

Music in Vincent:

STORIES FROM VINCENT'S LIVE MUSIC SCENE

Vincent is lucky to be home to a range of music venues which have played an important part in promoting local music and fostering communities of music lovers over the years.

In early March, prior to the closure of live music venues, we launched the stories collected for the 'Music in Vincent' project at the Rosemount Hotel. This project, showcasing the

stories of key people associated with original live music venues in Vincent, was a collaboration between the Local History Centre and the State Library of Western Australia, with both libraries planning to share and promote the interviews and films.

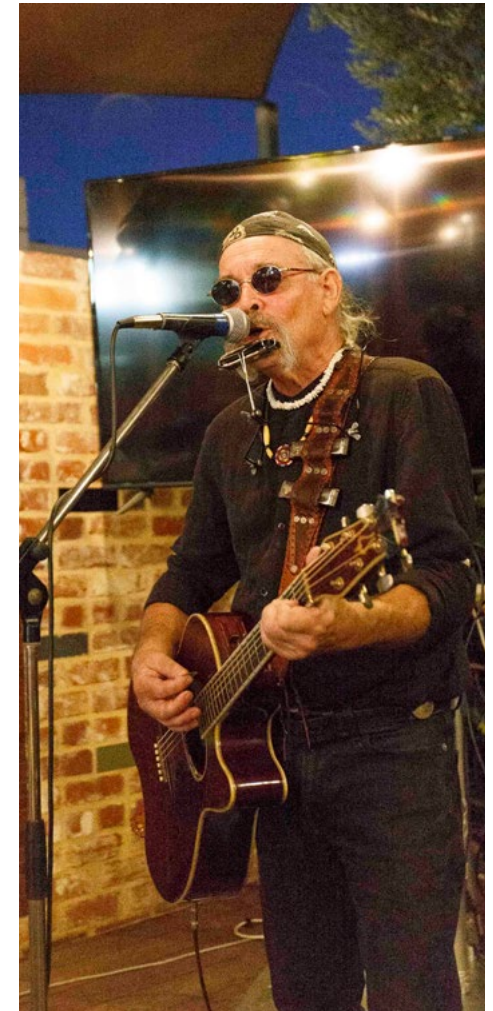
In 2019, fourteen interviews were conducted with musicians, venue owners, program directors, bookers and administrators connected with

five iconic live music venues, past and present. These venues were: The Ellington Jazz Club, The Perth Blues Club at the Charles Hotel, Rosemount Hotel, The Hyde Park Hotel and the North Perth Ethnic Music Centre (formerly at the North Perth Town Hall).

The interviews were conducted by Dr Adam Trainer, filmed and edited by Local History Centre volunteer Chris Murray and transcribed by librarian Catherine Lang and volunteers Liz Millward and Val Elkington.

To read the interview transcripts and see video compilations of interviews with key people associated with each venue, visit the Local History Centre webpage at: www.library.vincent.wa.gov.au/local-history-centre/oral-histories/music-in-vincent.aspx

ABC Radio featured a segment about the project on Jessica Strutt's Focus program. Listen here: www.abc.net.au/radio/perth/programs/focus/live-music/12067744



Rick Steele performing at the launch.





Truck packed with empty beer bottles bound for Robertson Park Bottle Yard, 1968. LHC PH02993

RETURN OF THE BOTTLE-OH

BOTTLE-O!

Collector and Marine Dealers

WHERE THE BOTTLES GO

In the days of their youth most people were wont to sing that old comic song, the first verse of which ran:—

In every town, in every street,
Just like a policeman on his beat,
There is a man you're sure to meet—
He is the bottle-o!
Of bottles he can't get enough,
His sack with them he loves to stuff,
And with a voice that's loud and gruff
He calls out "Bottle-o!"

Now, the people who collect from door to door and the dealers who employ the collectors are licensed by the Commis-

"Where the Bottles Go" The Mail, 4 February 1928.

By Friends of Local History volunteer Michelle Vercoe

The 'WA Containers for Change' scheme scheduled to start in 2020 encourages people to recycle drink containers for a refund of 10 cents. The scheme, which aims to reduce litter and landfill, harks back to the days of suburban 'Bottle Oh's' who collected and traded empty beer and soft drink bottles from the early 1900s through to the 1970s.

In times past, bottle collectors plied suburban streets with carts and later automobiles calling out "Bottle Oh!" to alert customers of their presence. They would buy empty bottles from

households and businesses and sell them to a bottle yard, which would store and sort the bottles before on selling them to brewers or other bottlers. The empty beer bottles they bought and sold were sometimes known as 'dead marines' a term which originated from sailors throwing empty beer bottles overboard. Bottle collectors were known as 'Marine Store Collectors' and were employed by bottle depot owners who were licensed by the Commissioner of Police.

One of the busiest bottle depots in metropolitan Perth was the Perth and Fremantle Bottle Exchange, which operated from 1905 – 1917 behind three houses fronting Palmerston Street, Perth. It was taken over by West Australian Glass Manufacturers Limited in the 1920s and operated until the 1970s. This area now forms part of The Bottle Yard Apartments in Palmerston Street, Perth.



West Australian Glass Manufacturers Limited advertisement in The Mirror, 4 August 1956, p 10.

Marine Collector Barry White with his truck packed with empty beer bottles bound for the Robertson Park Bottle Yard, 1974. LHC PH02994





STORMY WEATHER

The storm which swept through Perth on the 25th of February caused power outages across the metropolitan area and took many locals by surprise. The City lost over 60 trees from parks and verges in the storm, although the exact number is yet to be determined as staff are still cleaning up and assessing the damage that occurred.

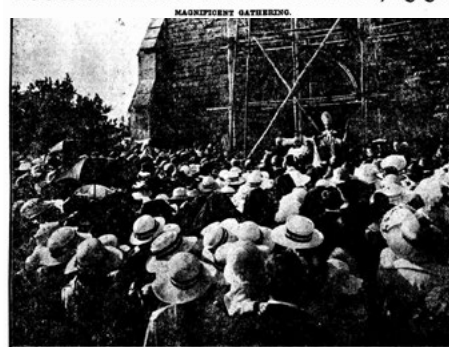
Following the storm, many residents were out and about examining the damage in the streets and local parks including on Charles Veryard Reserve where several large trees

were uprooted by the winds, including a large Rose Gum near the pavilion. February's wild weather inspired us to look for images and stories of past storms, of which there were many.

On February 24 1919, almost a hundred years to the date, a late summer storm hit Perth felling trees, peeling off roofs and most dramatically striking and shattering the stone cross on the gable of the Sacred Heart Church in Highgate.

The Daily News reported the dramatic incident which confronted parishioners in vivid detail...

Re-erection of the Cross on Sacred Heart Church, Highgate



“Worshippers were assembling for the evening service. The gable overhead was surmounted by a massive cross cut from one piece of Donnybrook stone, weighing nearly a ton. Suddenly, a blinding flash of lightning struck the building and in the next instant there was heard the falling and broken masonry.

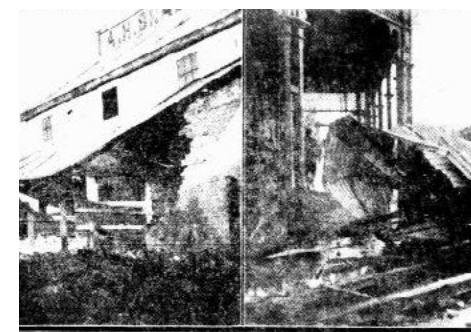
The cross above was shivered into pieces and its descent caused considerable damage to the tiled roof of the sacred edifice. The Rev Father Crowley, who was seated in the sacristy at the other end of the church, was thrown violently from his chair to the ground, apparently by the force of the electric current...”

The Daily News, 24 February 1919.

Two months later, the Archbishop of Perth blessed and erected a new cross on the church before a crowd of local parishioners.



Almost a decade later, another violent storm swept through Perth. In June 1927, Perth suffered what was described in the papers as a “terrific wind and rain storm” which tore the roof off part of the Rosemount Hotel, damaged the hotel’s original verandas and caused an estimated £1500 damage. The Rosemount Hotel’s distinctive federation verandas were permanently removed after this and not replaced, when the hotel underwent an art-deco style renovation later in the 1930s.



TERRIFIC WIND AND RAIN STORM STRIKES PERTH
of up to 80 miles per hour, accompanied by blinding showers of rain, a storm swept through Perth causing considerable damage to property. The above illustration is of two of the buildings which were damaged at West Perth, while the right picture shows portion of the roof of the Rosemount Hotel which was blown in the roadway.



Marjorie Porter and colleagues from the 6th Searchlight Unit in 1943. LHC PH01017

WOMEN IN WARTIME

Last year for Anzac Day, the Local History Centre featured stories and images about the impact of WWII on local families and communities. The hardships and cost of WWII were no less great and are within living memory of many of our local seniors.

Approximately 60,000 Western Australians enlisted in WWII, approximately 13 percent of the population. Women also stepped up as part of the war effort working in industry, serving in auxiliary military units or keeping their families fed and cared for with limited support on the home-front.

Our oral history collection includes stories from local women with vivid memories of living under the threat of war.

Marjorie Williams (nee Porter) was the daughter of Anzac veteran Private Cuthbert John Porter who lived with her family in Anzac Cottage on Kalgoorlie Street, Mount Hawthorn. She was 18 years old when WWII began.

Following in her father's footsteps, she served her country enlisting in the Australian Women's Army Service with the 6th anti-aircraft searchlight unit.

"All in all, for the two and a half years I was in the Army I loved it. [I was in the] 6th Searchlight Unit. I ended up with one stripe by the time we came back from Wagga with our initial training, Lance Bombardier. Then I was given two stripes when I went down to Coogee. Then I was in charge of our unit when I went over to Garden Island. It was really a night time unit.

We all had to learn marching and discipline, and after we were taught to run a big searchlight we ran it on our own. Then men obviously were taken and went up to New Guinea, so we had no men on our searchlight. It takes eight people to put a searchlight up there. There is a spotter, people to man the lights, someone on the phones...there would be 20 to 25 girls with each crowd.

We learned to manage a big generating set and things like that. It was really a man's job, but we did it."

Marjorie Porter (Local History Centre Oral History Interview OH0088).

To address rationing and boost morale in WWII, Australians were encouraged to grow their own vegetables in what were called 'Victory Gardens'. Mount Hawthorn local Ron Ennis recalls his mother growing vegetables during the war in the backyard of their Matlock Street home.



Mary Ennis hoeing in her 'Victory Garden' at 33 Matlock Street Mount Hawthorn, 1944. LHC PHO2748

"During the war, fresh vegetables were reasonably hard to get and there were no deliveries because there was petrol rationing and you couldn't drive the trucks around. So most people used to have a little garden in the backyard, with a few chooks and grow their own vegetables... It was their way to help the effort for the war so that everybody could send stuff away to the soldiers... The warehouses and manufacturing were all manned by women. They used to do the lot you know."

Ron Ennis (Local History Centre Interview, OH0188).

"The years 1939 to 1945 brought many hardships including the shortage of food items and clothing. As this was the generation coming out of a depression this was nothing new. Coupons were issued monthly for

tea, sugar and butter. These coupons were issued to all ages and as there were babies in the family, mum could barter with the coupons we didn't require. Most of our clothes were second-hand, but we were always well dressed as shown in photos at that time. In any case, there was very little clothing materials in the shops to be bought, even if there was cash to spare. Jumpers were unravelled and re-knitted, clothes were cut up to make clothes for the young ones crawling, skirts and men's trouser legs were ideal. During the war mum and I used to split the logs into smaller pieces for the old ladies as their men were away at the war. At times when mum did this she was mostly pregnant with one of the brothers. Shortly after the war, things began to change. There was still power restrictions, no street lights and petrol was still rationed, but the social activities were beginning to come alive again."

Janet McCallum, Excerpts from My Life, Local History Award Entry 2019.



Janet McCallum (nee Bryant) seated with siblings at 127 Buxton Street Mount Hawthorn, 1941. Her father's wood yard is in the background.



Marie Slyth standing beside her father's Buick at 10 Strathcona Street West Perth, 1942. LHC PH03486

"The reason why the car's headlights were blackened and why there was white paint around the edge of the wheel hubs was because it was a really scary time – it was war time, WWII. Blackened headlights were not the only things that were blackened out during those anxious years for everybody. All the windows in our house were blacked out with a type of black calsomine paint on the inside. This was to ensure that lights from houses and cars could not be easily seen from any likely enemy aircraft flying over."

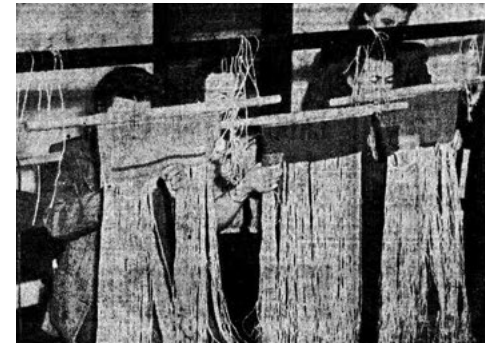
Marie Slyth, Memories of Air Raid Sirens in the City of Vincent, Local History Award Entry 2019.

WAR WIDOWS' GUILD IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The impacts of war were hard felt by women, particularly those who had lost their husbands. A basic widows' pension had been introduced in Australia during WWI. Following WWII, war widows received a pension of £2.10 per week which was more than a civilian widow's pension, but still less than half the basic wage. In 1945, Victorian war widow Jessie Vasey established the War Widows' Guild of Australia to support and advocate for improved benefits and opportunities for war widows. Its first branch was in Victoria, and within two years the organisation had spread across Australia.

The Western Australian branch of the War Widows' Guild was established in 1946 in an old drill hall on Lord Street, Highgate. Women were offered courses in weaving items such as rugs, scarves, tea cloths and linen mats which were initially offered for sale in a small room off the hall on Lord Street. Failure to attract sufficient customers saw the Widows' Guild move to the Esplanade

W.A. WAR WIDOWS LEARN WEAVING



The Daily News, 23 July 1947.

Kiosk on the Esplanade Reserve from 1949 to 1963. This kiosk has an interesting and varied history from the time of its construction in 1928 to the present day. It was later called The Florence Hummerston Kiosk and was relocated to Elizabeth Quay in 2015 where it presently houses a restaurant/café.

Local writer Melinda Tognini has written an engaging and comprehensive history of the War Widows' Guild in Western Australia, *Many Hearts, One Voice*. If you'd like to know more about the history of the organization, Melinda's book is available for loan in the Vincent Library, or for purchase via Fremantle Press. Melinda has also written an excellent summary of the organization on her blog: www.melindatognini.com.au/a-time-to-remember-70-years-of-the-war-widows-guild-in-western-australia



Celebrating Vincent Seniors

JANET MCCALLUM

Janet McCallum celebrated her 90th birthday on March 26, 2020. Born and raised on Buxton Street, Mount Hawthorn, Janet's memories of life in the suburb from the 1930s to the 1960s are as vibrant and engaging as she is in real life. Janet has beautifully documented her life story, in words and images, and has generously shared them with the Local History Centre over the past few years. She was a long standing member of the YAL – Young Australia League – and was instrumental in documenting the history of the Perth YAL in Murray Street, Perth.

Jan has been a regular attendee at the Local History Centre's memoir writing workshop group where her quick wit, sharp memory, humour and grace have endeared her to all. Happy Birthday Jan!

Jan's stories and images are available in the Local History Collection. You can also hear Jan talking about Mount Hawthorn's history on 6PRs Suburban Focus program recorded in September 2019 at: www.6pr.com.au/podcast/memories-of-mt-hawthorn/



Vincent Heritage Hero

CHRIS MURRAY

Our autumn 2020 Vincent Heritage Hero is Chris Murray, a former BBC and ABC camera operator who has lived in Mount Hawthorn since the 1970s. Chris has been volunteering with the Local History Centre since 2016, blending his passion for film and photography with his enthusiasm for the local community. He has contributed to a number of photo and video projects with the Local History Centre and most recently, he filmed and edited the Music in Vincent interview series in collaboration with Local History librarian Catherine Lang

and Adam Trainer from the State Library of Western Australia. Chris was integral to the project – we simply could not have done it without him. He contributed countless hours of his time and displayed endless patience and goodwill to help us produce a great series of filmed interviews about live music venues in Vincent and we consider it so fortunate that he has chosen to share his three decades of broadcast television experience with the centre as a volunteer.



WHAT'S NEW

COWLE STREET PORTRAITS

The Local History Centre was recently offered a series of portraits of the residents of Cowle Street, West Perth. The photographs were taken by student photographer David Forrester-Walker who was a resident of Cowle Street in 1986. The 38 black and white images offer a glimpse into the homes and lives of Cowle Street residents, both young and old at a moment in time.

Unfortunately, only some of the people and places in the images have been identified. We will be featuring these photos in our 'Flashback Friday' Facebook posts over the next few months.

If you recognise the people or homes in these photo, please contact us so we can put names to faces.



CAN YOU HELP?

Kyilla Primary is celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2020. The school is wanting to hear from former students, particularly those from the 1940s, 50s and 60s. The Local History Centre is collaborating with Kyilla Primary to collect stories from former students about their time at the school.

If you are a former student, please get in touch with the school or with us at the Local History Centre to share your story.

Can you help?



Kyilla Primary School Students, Year 2 1952.



Contemporary Collecting

YOU CAN HELP!

Our Local History Collection is filled with treasures of the past – but what about the history that is being made around us today?

Future generations will want to know about our personal, family and community perspectives and responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important for us to collect stories, photos, documents and perspectives on what is happening locally in our homes, streets and suburbs during this significant period of challenge and change.

So what can you do to document our perspectives on the present for the future?

- Snap away with your phone or camera, and share your images with us. We've included some local snaps from the suburbs to inspire you.
- Keep a diary of your life during the coronavirus pandemic. Whether you record it digitally or old school style on paper does not matter – just write it down.

- There are some great local initiatives encouraging people to keep a record of their thoughts such as 'Journals of the Pandemic' (@journalsofthepandemic). Keeping a diary is a great way to maintain your mental health and produce something that may be treasured in the future.
- Collect and share 'ephemera' about COVID-19. What is 'ephemera' you ask – it's the bits and pieces of paper that we accumulate in everyday life or that are put on walls or in our actual or virtual mail boxes (posters, flyers, ticket stubs etc.).

Share your photos, diaries or ephemera with us now or later after you've had some time to reflect. We will be putting the call out for entries in the Local History Awards in July – we would love to receive contemporary submissions in the photo or written entry categories.

Send your photos, stories or ephemera to: local.history@vincent.wa.gov.au



What are you looking for today?

Word or Album



CITY OF VINCENT
LIBRARY &
LOCAL HISTORY CENTRE

EVENTS & WORKSHOPS @ THE VINCENT LIBRARY & LOCAL HISTORY CENTRE

All scheduled Library and Local History Centre events and workshops for the April-June quarter have been cancelled as part of the City's response to COVID-19. We will keep you updated regarding future events and workshops.

In the meantime, stay tuned to the Local History webpage and Vincent Library Facebook page for details of online content to help you stay connected during this temporary period of physical isolation.

Website: www.library.vincent.wa.gov.au/local-history-centre.aspx

Image Library: www.cityofvincent.imagegallery.me/



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