

The Sea Lion

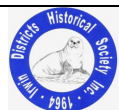


Quarterly newsletter of the Irwin Districts Historical Society Inc

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Diary 2019-2020

Committee Meeting	14 February
Committee Meeting	14 March
Committee meeting	11 April
Easter Market Day	20 April
Sea Lion, Autumn	28 April
Committee Meeting	9 May
Committee Meeting	13 June
Committee Meeting	11 July
Sea Lion, Winter	28 July
Committee Meeting	8 August
Annual General Meeting	TBA
Sea Lion, Spring	27 October
Sea Lion, Summer	28 January 2020



From the Chair
Graham Grundy

Dear Members and readers, welcome to the second edition of the *Sea Lion*. Thank you to those who sent such positive feedback, its much appreciated. Members are always welcome to send us additional information or corrections, so keep the comments coming.

The Christmas sundowner proved very popular, thanks again to Shirley for arranging the White Glove tour and to all the donors of food and drinks which were much appreciated by the attendees.

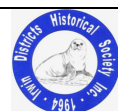
With the recent rumblings on the future of the Fishermen's Hall in mind our feature article in this edition is a brief history of the former Bond Store and in particular its use as a community facility since 1961. The Society has passed a resolution in support of its retention for public use and in particular as a fishing museum, which would be a unique

attraction on the west coast and again we would like to hear from members on this topic.

We are fortunate to have the computer expertise of Thomas who is assisting with the image scanning and adding all our library books to the database. Many thanks for this important contribution. I have written up a little about the database and how it helps us with so much of our history records.

The annual Easter Market day, our biggest fundraiser is coming soon and we hope to raise extra money for the MRCo trolley restorations by running a plant stall as well as the usual teas and sausage sizzle. If your green thumb is itching or you can contribute on the day please contact Shirley or drop us an email to let us know.

Best wishes and Happy New Year,
Graham.



Easter Market Day
Easter Saturday

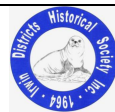
Shirley Scotter

Our annual Easter Market Day will be on Saturday 20 April 2019, from 8 am to 12 noon, in the Old Police Station yard. Stall sites are still available for \$10, and booking forms can be obtained from the Society, either by phone 9927 1323, or email ids@midwest.com.au

We're hoping for some fine early autumn weather, with plenty of great local produce, crafts and other desirable goodies. Don't miss it!



SOCIETY NEWS



3rd Committee Meeting Report

The committee met on 29 November in the Research Room and spent the afternoon working through a very full agenda before adjourning for the sundowner. The main items of interest were as follows.

In **administrative matters**, retiring treasurer Di Knapp was thanked for her service to the members, and Trish Parker was appointed as treasurer. Welcome aboard Trish! The updated membership registers, as required under the new constitution, were adopted, as was a new membership application form, and the current subscription levels were confirmed. It was also decided to take a proposal to the next general meeting to introduce a new membership category of 'Household' for several people residing at the same address. Concluding the recent constitutional changes, a new common seal is to be made in the Society's correct name.

In addition, the xmas closing times were agreed, and it was also agreed to engage a cleaner for a monthly clean of each of the museums to improve their presentation. Volunteer Thomas Perry has commenced data-entry and other database tasks in the museum office, and the committee warmly welcomes Thomas. Arrangements are also to be made to connect the museum to the NBN. Our **Midland Railway 125** projects are getting underway, with conservation work on the trolleys and signal beginning, and planning for the new 'gallery' to house them starting. See also other item on page 4.



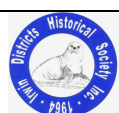
One of the trolleys in our collection.

The **School History Medals** were received from The Perth Mint, and later presented by Deputy Chairperson Bob Cail to Stirling



Easter Market Day 2018

Photos: Graham Grundy



Reader's feedback on *The Sea Lion* No 1

Member 071: "What a triumph. Well done to all involved in its creation. So, impressed." 3/11/18

Member 087: "I am just spending some delightful time reading through the newsletter. It is so damned good, I am enjoying it thoroughly, and learning a lot along the way. Well done, it is fantastic." 8/11/18

Member 045: "It was with great interest that I received the first edition of *The Sea Lion*. ... enclosed is a small donation" 27/11/18

A Chapman Valley reader: "The newsletter looks very impressive", 5/11/18

A RWAHS reader: "congrats on beautiful newsletter & website!!", 7/11/18



Ramsden (primary) and Riley Porteus (secondary). The medals are 99% fine silver with a handsome design and presentation case that we hope all recipients will treasure well into the future.

In our **heritage estate** management matters, avenues for funding updates of both museum conservation plans are to be explored to underpin much-needed building conservation works, but the proposed toilet at Russ Cottage has had to be deferred for the time being.

Both **town halls** were the subject of discussion. **Dongara Hall** is listed in the Municipal Inventory (item #50) and the committee agrees with it being of historical significance, and as such would like to see it being managed, at a minimum, in accordance with the Municipal Inventory recommendations. **Denison Hall**, also listed in the Municipal Inventory (item #72), dominated the conversation, with the committee adopting a policy position of opposing any demolition of the hall, which it considers should also be managed at least in accordance with the Municipal Inventory recommendations. In a more proactive approach, the committee would like to work with any proposal that would see Denison Hall being conserved and used, partly or wholly, for a Museum of Fishing (see pages 9-10 for more on this). Although both halls are recorded in the Municipal Inventory, neither is listed in the Shire Heritage List.

The next committee meeting is scheduled for St Valentine's Day, 14 February 2019, in the Research Room.



A handsome convict, perhaps looking for an escape route, keeps an eye on the historic maps on display at the sundowner.

Photos Bruce Baskerville 29 November 2018

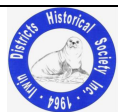


The secretary and our patron survey the table while the crowd is away on the white gloves tour.

Photo Graham Grundy 29 November 2018

Well over 30 people attended the annual sundowner held in the Day Room of the museum. Members enjoyed a convivial evening of good food (including local quandong tarts) and quaffable wines, a white gloves tour showing some of the museum treasures, and the fine company of fellow history lovers as well as a rather expansive talk on coming events jointly given by the Chairperson, Curator, Secretary and our Patron, Dr Nan Broad.

Thanks to Shirley Scotter for much of the organising, and the white-gloves tour, and to everyone who helped with the catering, serving drinks and clean-up afterwards.



Christmas Sundowner convivial get-together



Members get stuck into the food.

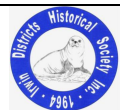


Strategic Planning for the Society's Future *Bruce Baskerville*

The committee has been fortunate to secure the *pro bono* services of Jenny Thomas. Now that the constitutional changes have been bedded-down, Jenny, a trained facilitator, will assist the committee with a strategic planning workshop following the 14 February



committee meeting on pathways ahead for the Society in these rapidly-changing times. This should give us a clearer picture of the opportunities we have, but also the constraints we face, how to determine our main priorities (and avoid burn-out), and what are the resources we need to advance our objectives.



**HEE-HAW, HEE-HAW,
HEE-HAW.....
SHEEEEEEEESH**
Graham Grundy

If I say dial-up and that title suddenly comes alive, you have spent far too much of your life trying to get a computer to do what you needed.

It was the late 80s when we started the IDHS Research Centre and began designing and adding data to our database. As much as the Internet has changed since then, the IDHS database technology has also changed, but the actual data records have remained the same, which I think is a testament to the original design. Subsequent to our project, commercially produced museum databases have become available, but many users have complained of their poor user interface and in fact have actually deterred many small museums from digitising their collections.

Our database is not just a museum database that records the objects in the museum collection, we like to think of it as a history database that can record the objects, but also link them to photographs, people, places and events they were associated with, so when you see an object in the museum it can tell a story of who used or made it and where and how it was used. Once you start accumulating this data, it becomes information because the links work in both directions.

For example, if I start by looking for a person, the database can tell me if that person owned a property, whether we have a photo of the person, any objects in the collection that person donated or used and possibly any events that person may have been involved in. If I start my search with an object, the links would take me back to the person or place where it was used.

The more records we can add such as old rate books, occurrence books, shop records etc. we can start building our records. If you

would you like to contribute a family history, farm or business records, photographs (copies OK) or have time to do some data entry (full training will be given), please contact the museum for more information.



Welcome to new members

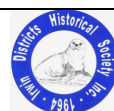
The committee extends a warm welcome to our newest members, and looks forward to seeing them at future events and activities.

Mr Den Howe of Port Denison

Mr Matthew Pavlinovich of Midland, with an interest in Midland Railway Co history

Mr and Mrs Graeme and Diane Turnock of Dongara

IDHS ESTATE & COLLECTIONS



Signal & Trolleys Conservation Progress Report

Graham Grundy

Moving the signal to the Dongara Men in Sheds location has been a challenge. The signal has been in place at the rear of Russ Cottage since about 1976 when it was relocated from the Dongara Railway precinct. The signal was secured in the ground with 4 lengths of 1200mm railway iron bolted to the timber signal and joined by a metal plate welded at the base, a good method of keeping the timber above ground and free from termites. Over the years the ground level of solid clay deposited by the river floods has risen so Den and Bob had to hand dig around the signal while securing it.

We are fortunate to have an experienced crane operator like Peter Dawson of Dongara Crane Hire along with a low loader who was able to lift and transport it to the men's shed. There is not much paint left on the signal and what remains can be scraped off. Tests show it is lead paint so we have ordered full PPE equipment and will be following the safe removal of lead paint procedures.



The signal at Dongarra Shed for Men
Photo: Lindsay Baskerville 17 January 2019

The other two trolleys have been left at Russ Cottage for now pending the restoration of the signal and the small hand trolley. If you have some spare time to assist in the project, please go to the shed and see Den or Robbo. Special thanks for Pete Dawson for his assistance!

FEATURE ARTICLES

DENISON HALL



Denison Hall: A Chronology

Graham Grundy & Shirley Scotter

1851-1867: the first 'Port Irwin' was established at the river mouth, with Edward Downes as the harbourmaster until he was beaten and robbed by escaping convicts in 1859. He was succeeded by John Smith the flour miller. A red ensign was raised to signal passing ships to call into the roadstead.

1867: After a temporary jetty was built at the foot of Herbert Street, in Arurine Bay, south of the estuary, residents of Dongarra petitioned Governor Hampton for permanent jetty. Ben Mason won the contract for £1,350 (about \$150,000 in today's currency). He built the first stage of the new jetty from the foot of William Street.

1868: Samuel P Phillips of 'The Grange' and Daniel Scott of Geraldton floated a company to build a tramway from the new jetty to Dongarra town. The plan was abandoned after fires, floods and rust destroyed crops along the Irwin flats, leaving Phillips in financial difficulties.

1868-70: With the tramway plan abandoned, three large new stone warehouses were built around the foot of the jetty by Francis Pearce (Southerly's site), Samuel Moore (Port Store

site) and George Shenton (beach pavilion site).

1868: The new Port Irwin town plan was surveyed and named 'Denison' in honour of Governor Hampton's old boss in Van Diemen's Land, Sir William Denison, who had just retired from the post of Governor of Madras. William Street also honours Denison, and several other streets bear the names of his sons (George and Samuel streets still survive)

1870: Weekly shipping services were in operation by the schooners *Amy* and *Dawn*, and the schooner *Rose* commenced the export of sandalwood (stored in the warehouses) from Denison to Singapore.

1873: Port Denison was a regular stop on the coastal shipping route. An example of the trade is shown in the cargo discharged on Denison Jetty by the *Mazeppa*, sailing from Geraldton to Fremantle, in October 1873: 52 tons of flour, 50 bags of potatoes, 55 bags of sugar, 12 boxes of candles, 4 bales of tobacco and 3 quarts of rum, while 3 passengers were taken on-board bound for Fremantle.

1870s-1880s: shipping numbers doubled, and it was not unusual to see three vessels at the jetty in one day.

1890s: larger steam vessels began to come onto the coastal route (the first steamer was the *Xantho*, wrecked off Port Gregory in 1872), and with them the need for a **bond store** became apparent. Irwin merchants had to pay customs duties on imported goods when they landed in Fremantle, before they were sent to Denison. This left them out of pocket, and there were complaints that goods were tampered with between Fremantle and Denison. The solution was to have a bond store in Denison where customs could be paid on the arrival of the goods at the jetty.

1892: Samuel J Phillips of 'The Grange', campaigning for election to the seat of Irwin, promised Irwin merchants and settlers he would have a bond store built at the port.

1894: Mr TR Risley won the contract £1,256 (about \$162,000) for jetty improvements and building the store at the bottom of William Street between the foot of the jetty and the warehouses. This store is now the Denison Hall, and was opened in 1895. An annual contract was let for horse-drawn trucks to move goods between the jetty and bond store. Imported goods were held in the store until the owner paid the customs duties.

1894: The new bond store was adjacent to the Dongarra Light, which stood on the high crest of William Street and aligned with a light on the end of the jetty to guide shipping through

the reefs. These lights were tended by the harbourmaster, whose cottage was on the corner of William Street.



The new Bond Store on the right, with south and east facing sliding doors, jetty with cargo crane, and Shenton's Store on left. IRME 0646

1894: The Midland railway line opened, with the new railway station at Dongara now linked directly to Geraldton and to Fremantle via Perth. The old tramway proposal was resurrected, with a plan to run the tram between the bond store and the railway station. However, the potential for Denison to grow as a major sea and rail interchange was undermined by, on the one hand, the fierce competition that erupted with the railway able to offer cheaper rates and a more reliable service overland not affected by the weather, and on the other, the increasingly larger, faster long-range steam ships that could afford to by-pass Denison which was too shallow for the larger ships.



Section of a plan of Denison 1890s – red square is Hall site, red line shows Dongarra Light site, blue arrow marks jetty, and green arrow follows proposed tram route. The word 'Beach' refers to Beach Street, the older name for this part of Point Leander Drive. IDHS Map Collection

1905: Denison Harbourmaster Thomas Hughes recorded 177 vessels coming into port.

1908: Hughes recorded 161 vessels coming into the port. The decline in commercial shipping was slow but inexorable.

1917: The last recorded commercial ship entered Port Denison and moved cargo from the jetty.

1929: Denison residents formed the Dongarra Beach Improvement Committee. Their aim was to refurbish the bond store, now unused for over a decade, as a public hall. They raised funds with an annual New Year "Dongarra Day" sports day on the beach, and dances in the Dongara Hall, and sought to ban netting in the bay to protect fish numbers.

1930s: Denison became a popular tourist resort for day trippers from Geraldton, honeymooners, and farming families from along the Midlands railway line and the Murchison goldfields. Several boarding houses (such as Winnie Leitch's in Moore's old warehouse), shops such as Sloper's (in Pearce's old warehouse) and new foreshore camping facilities (bush bowers), were built to cater to the seaside holiday makers.

1939: The bond store, refurbished with over £100 (about \$8,800) raised by the Committee and donated labour, was formally opened by the Chairman of the Irwin Road Board as the 'new' Dongarra Beach Hall, with a new timber dance floor installed. Tennis Courts were built on the west side of the Hall, and a merry-go-round and a public bathing shed were built on the beach front. Weekly dances and socials entertained holidaymakers and locals alike.

1942: part of the jetty was deliberately destroyed to prevent its use by any invading Japanese forces.

1950s-1960s: Port Denison continued to be a popular holiday destination for Midland Railway Company workers, the families of girls boarding at the Dominican Ladies College, Dominican nuns, and Benedictine brothers and their charges, as well as many others. Travellers continued to arrive by train to Dongara Station, and were then transported to Denison by the local carrier, Criddle & Son.

1959: The old jetty, while a picturesque tourist drawcard, was replaced by a new jetty built at the foot of Henry Street (now Leitch Street).

1961: The Dongara Beach Association was granted a formal lease over what was now called Denison Hall, and undertook fundraising events to again upgrade the building and pay for its maintenance to continue its use as a public place.

1960s-1970s: the growing crayfish industry was able to use the new jetty, while Denison Hall continued to be used for myriad public

uses, including dances and socials, religious carnivals, public meetings, showing films, and as the Denison polling place.

1973: The official name of Denison was gazetted as Port Denison, superseding the many older informal names. The term 'port' emphasised its commercial revival with the development of crayfishing.

1974: Denison Hall became a major venue for indoor events during the annual Blessing of the Fleet (later the lobster festival) that commenced in 1974.



Fisherman's Hall on left, late 1990s

Photo: Kathy Samulkiwicz

1996: Dongara Professional Fishermen's Association renovated the Hall, replacing the wall cladding and roofing, and it became known as the Fishermen's Hall. It continued to be used for community events.

2003: The shipwreck walk opened north of the Hall, with many of the ships commemorated being regular traders on the old coastal run into the port.



Denison Fisherman's Hall in 2006, with original 1894 roof form still visible.

Photo Bruce Baskerville 25 August 2006

2013: Port Denison Foreshore Masterplan proposes to either retain the historic framework of the Hall as a sort of shelter shed, or demolish the Hall and re-use its materials in a "heritage wall/windbreak" structure to offer broad vistas from Southerly's tavern and the 'commercial precinct'.

2018: proposal made to demolish Denison Hall.



2013 proposal for a 'heritage wall/windbreak' on a demolished Denison Hall site.

Image: Port Denison Foreshore Masterplan, October 2013, Shire of Irwin & RPS: 17



2013 proposal for retaining the historic frame of the Hall as a 'shelter'.

Image: Port Denison Foreshore Masterplan, October 2013, Shire of Irwin & RPS: 13

After a long and chequered history, initially as a bond store but for much of its history as the principal public building in Port Denison, the old hall is once more fighting for its place on the beach.

It was built in 1894 because local people wanted it, and local people saved it in, at least, 1930, in 1939, in 1961, in 1974, and 1996. It is the last building left of the once bustling commercial port and train-linked seaside resort.

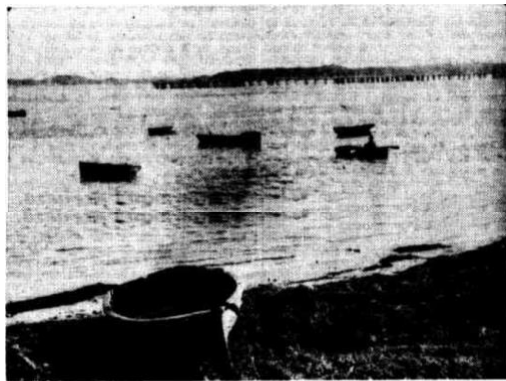
Now, in 2019, Denison Hall should be celebrating its 125th anniversary as Denison's oldest and most highly valued and respected public building.



Dongarra Beach in the 1930s, as told by 'Fisho'

The *Western Mail* was a weekly illustrated news magazine published in Perth between 1885 and 1955, mainly for country markets. One of its more significant audiences was country women, who were encouraged to write for the *Mail*, especially through a social group called 'Virgilia' that also raised funds for charities. One 'virgilian', pen-named Fisho, lived in Port Denison, and her often vivid descriptions of Denison life are best told in her own words.

"I am not a farmer's wife, but a fisherman's wife. I have a cool, brick bungalow, built about 50 yards from water's edge. It is very nice in summer, as one has not far to go have a nice, cool dip. ... we arise early on a beautiful calm morning. Just take a peep out the bedroom window. Oh! How lovely! Looking directly out you see the blue, sparkling sea ... two or three small motor boats glide out, maybe one or two yachts, so pretty with their full white sails. ... You see the jetty ... it has rotted and parted with old age: all the old timber has been removed and a swing bridge has been put across. You see folks dotted all along, some fishing, some enjoying the beauty of our ocean ... before breakfast, a lovely cool dip. How nice and refreshing! Such clear water. No danger of sharks and quite safe for children.



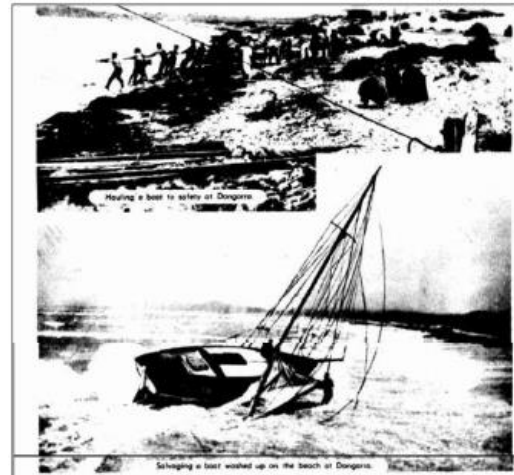
Port Denison, near Dongarra.

'Drowsy Dongarra', *Western Mail*,
4 May 1939: p13

We see a little old Chinaman who sells crayfish, also two or three cool little cottages, belonging to old men, who can tell interesting yarns about the good old days. ... We are now



standing on a jut of rocky ledge which is out over the water [Point Leander] ... the blue and green water underneath ... little crabs running about on the rocks, tiny fish darting here and there ... look to the right, see the curve of the beach, the sheds and camp frames, the road winding among the houses. There are red roofs, green and white roofs ... We return to the house and have lunch on the wide, cool verandahs."



'Coastal Storm Damage | Hauling a boat to safety at Dongarra | Salvaging a boat washed up on the beach at Dongarra', *Western Mail*, 18 February 1937: p67

A few years later, Fisho wrote:

"The summer holidays bring quite a lot of folks to the beach. This is the only time of the year we see so many people, so there is someone to see and speak to nearly all day long. ... I have been having a swim at least three times a day of late, and am I sunburnt! I am like a snake – shedding my coat. We have a new dance hall at the beach now, and have had some happy dances. I was at one last night, and am starting to get gay again. It makes one rather tired. ... I was drifting around among the fish on the ocean the other morn ...

Well Virgillia, I must away. I can see a small daughter making her way to the sea, so must catch her 'ere she gets there."

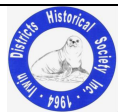
References

'What Virgilians Say | Dongarra Beach', *Western Mail*, 21 January 1937: p44
'Doings at Dongarra', *Western Mail*, 2 march 1939: p39



"An expanse of bare reef ... see the coral shine ... a bay in the circle of reefs ... on and on until the coastline seems to end in the sea". Description of Denison coastline by Fisho, Western Mail, 21 January 1937: p44

Picture: Bruce Baskerville, 26 December 2018, from Point Leander



A Museum of Fishing?

Bruce Baskerville

The idea of a fishing museum has been discussed, on and off, within the Society for a number of years. This reflects the quantity of artefacts and material we have in our collections associated with fishing (not just cray fishing), and the knowledge that there are likely to be some significant collections of material and memorabilia in private hands that may one day need a public repository.

The recent proposal to demolish the Denison Hall has been the catalyst to give more serious thought to this idea, especially as so much of the built heritage of the fishing industry has been lost in recent years, and cray fishing in particular has undergone many changes over the years.

Fishing has a long history on the Irwin coast especially around Arurine Bay, the estuary and the reefs. It is evident in the very name 'Dongara', from a Noongar word for sea lion, in the names inscribed on the fishermen's memorial, in the skeletons of lost boats still to be found, in the yellow submarine, and in a whole local culture and way of life for both

commercial and recreational fishers over many generations.

A museum would not be an epitaph to a fishing industry and culture that is past, but could instead be a steward and custodian of its traditions and memories as it rejuvenates itself with each new generation. It could be a living keeping place, where an enduring legacy is valued. There is no specific museum of fishing anywhere in WA – and now it's time may have come.



The crayfish factories at Seaspray Beach that operated between 1959 and 2010 – once a major economic and social institution in the shire, now gone without a trace (Municipal Inventory Item #54).

Photo: Bruce Baskerville 25 August 2006

The committee first put into words its support for the idea of such a museum at its November meeting, and it was a topic for much discussion at the sundowner, with more

ideas suggested by members since. Some of these are:

- The natural history of the reefs and coastal environments, and changes over time
- Look at the long-standing multicultural character of the fishing industry
- Something about building and keeping boats and fishing gear, including pots
- Traditional fishing practices and customs
- Fishing stories can link the present day and pre-colonial Indigenous times
- Connections between Port Denison, the Abrolhos Islands and coastal fishing camps
- Traditional cooking, eating and recipes for local seafoods
- Changing environmental impacts of fishing practices
- Women fishers and fishers' partners
- Technical and professional innovation in local fishing industries
- Seasonal migration of fisheries workers and contractors along the coast
- Changing economic and financial impacts of fishing on coastal communities like Port Denison
- Local art, photography and literature on fishing, marine life and oceanic and estuarine environments
- Record the place names of fishing grounds and spots

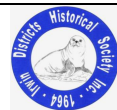


Port Denison fishing fleet in the harbour, 1980

Photo: Orthophotomap, Port Denison Sheet 3, Dept of Lands & Surveys, 21 January 1980, IDHS Collections

We remain very interested in exploring partnerships to take this idea further – and developing a major community, educational, cultural and visitor experience as part of a conserved and valued historic Denison Hall. Keep the ideas coming in!

FROM THE ARCHIVES



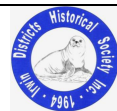
Midland Railway Trolleys and Signal

Shirley Scotter



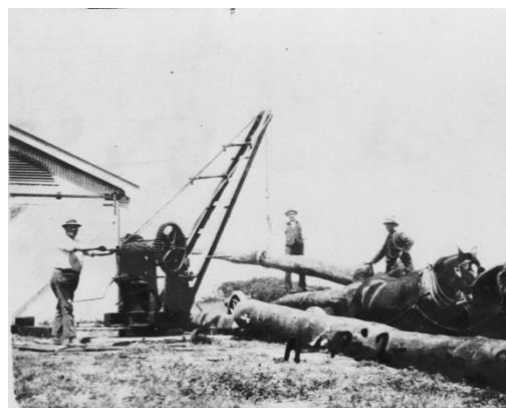
The Midland Railway gang, with a hand-powered Kalamazoo trolley, at the Pettit's Lane railway crossing, c1925. Note the water bags hanging from the front of the trolley, and the gang dog.

IRME 0544



Rail power meets horse power

Shirley Scotter



Jim Bagley and team at Dongara Railway Station Goods Shed, manoeuvring recently-delivered unsawn logs with the goods crane into position to be hauled by a team of Clydesdale horses, c1930. IRME 0539

Jim Bagley was a cartage contractor moving goods to and from Dongara Railway Station in the 1930s. At various times, Mr Bagley was also contracted to grade the Midland railway line fire breaks in the shire.

Bagley's steam engine and graders are now in the IDHS collections, and currently in the grounds of Russ Cottage.

NATURAL HISTORY

INVASIVE SEA-LAVENDER

Anyone climbing or rambling around the rocky foreshores of Point Leander or the marina breakwater near Granny's Pool will have seen an inconspicuous little plant in all its pale-lavender glory around Christmas time. The prettiness, however, belies a more sinister story.

Sicilian sea-lavender (*Limonium hyblaenum*) is from the family Plumbaginaceae and related to the historic garden favourites plumbago and statice. It flowers from November to February, and grows in shallow soils pockets in limestone cliffs and on the fringes of salt marshes. Sicilian sea-lavender is a perennial that grows in clumps or cushions spreading outwards to form dense mats that die from the centre leaving a thick fibrous peat mass. It favours locations where it receives salty sea spray, and spreads by rhizomes as well as light seeds that remain viable in sea water, and that are easily dispersed by wind, animals and vehicles.

As the cushions spread, they crowd out native vegetation, and the plant is now a major coastal weed in South Australia, where it was first recorded in 1889, and Victoria, where it was first classified as a weed in 2008, and is now a major threat to salt marshes. Sicilian sea-lavender was first recorded in Western Australia in 1973 in Claremont and Nedlands, and then between 1981 and 2003 it was found in coastal areas of Carnamah and Northampton shires.



A Sicilian sea-lavender 'cushion'



Sicilian sea-lavender flower raceme

Pictures: Bruce Baskerville, 26 December 2018

From the number and spread of plants I have seen in Port Denison, it has been on the foreshore for some years. I haven't seen it in the estuary marshes (Municipal Inventory item #52), but would be very interested to hear if anyone has.

As indicated by its common name, Sicilian sea-lavender is native to coastal areas of Sicily, and was introduced to Australia as a garden plant (it was promoted on ABC TV's *Gardening Australia* in 2011, and was still being sold by nurseries in SA in 2014). Unlike some weeds, this is relative newcomer to Irwin, and there is still an opportunity to control it before the natural character of Point Leander is further degraded and infestation spreads to the estuary.

The WA Herbarium record for *Limonium hyblaenum* only records its locations in Claremont, Nedlands, Carnamah and Northampton. Port Denison's invasive population has so far escaped official notice, but given the extent of its spread that I saw over Christmas this cannot last much longer. De Vlamingh saw and recorded Leander Point in 1697. It is a moot point whether he would recognise it now, let alone if the saltbush, cockie's tongue and fan flower community is overrun with invasive sea-lavender.



There does not seem to be any organised control of Sicilian sea-lavender in WA, or official recognition as a weed. Citizen Heritage Action methods include digging out the plants, and securing them in dark plastic bags left in the sun to cook before sending the bag to the tip, or cutting off flower or seed heads (February-March) before they can disperse seeds and placing them in a sealed bag in the bin. To read more on this pretty but insidious little weed, click on the links in the references below.

References

WA Herbarium, *Florabase* [here](#) and [here](#), 2019
Invasive Species Council, [Dangerous new weed being sold in nurseries](#), 2014
EPBC Act Conservation Advice, [Subtropical and Temperate Coastal Saltmarsh](#), 2013
RF Parsons, 'Limonium hyblaenum', *Cunninghamia*, No 13, 2013: 275-290

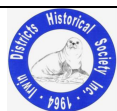
Thanks to the WA Herbarium for assistance in identifying this plant.

GREAT COCKY COUNT

Sunday 7 April is the day for this year's annual Great Cocky Count. If you would like to take part in this excellent Citizen Science project, click here for [information and a registration form](#), or visit the Birds Australia website www.birdlife.org.au.

HERITAGE

IRWIN SHIRE MUNICIPAL INVENTORY



Progress on Municipal Inventory update

Bruce Baskerville

The Society wrote to the Shire in September, seeking an update on the review of the 1998 Municipal Inventory and, eventually, the 2008 Shire Heritage List. We have now been advised by the Shire that the review is currently in its third and final stage, collating revised data on heritage places in rural areas. It is anticipated the work will be completed in early 2019.

The Shire will then develop a revised overall Municipal Inventory, upon which the Society will be asked to provide comment before its finalisation. Following public exhibition and eventual adoption by the Council, the Inventory will then be used to develop a new Shire Heritage List as part of a new Local Planning Scheme.

Meanwhile, the current Local Planning Scheme No 5 of 2008 and its Part 7 heritage provisions and heritage list remain in effect.



Dongara Town Hall, Municipal Inventory Item #50, Category 2. Photo Bruce Baskerville 21 August 2017

It is useful for readers to remember that the Municipal Inventory is a larger list from which the Shire Heritage List is drawn as a smaller sub-set. A State heritage registration is an even smaller list. Being entered on the Shire Heritage List provides statutory and planning protections, while a Municipal Inventory entry lacks such strengths but nevertheless provides an important level of social standing and status, is a credible record of the historic significance of a place, and decision-makers should have regard for its importance in any management decisions.

MIDLAND RAILWAY CO SITES



Tuohy Gardens, Midland

The Society wrote two letters in September in support of the Midland District Historical Society's campaign to protect the Tuohy Gardens site in Midland, the sole remaining evidence of the Midland Railway Company in its birthplace. The letters were addressed to the Chair of the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority (owner of the site) and the Minister for Planning, Hon Rita Saffioti MLA, within whose portfolio the MRA is located.

Our letters asked whether the MRA was aware of the historical significance of the site for communities in Midland and all along the line, which dates from 1886; what will be done to recognise that significance in Midland; and what role do historians have in decision-making about this place.

The responses, eventually received on 1 November and 11 December respectively, essentially ignored our questions and instead referred (word-for-word in some paragraphs) to the MRA's Master Plan, guidelines and the Municipal Inventory it developed that say the



name ‘Tuohy Gardens’ should be retained and its history should be interpreted in any new development, including keeping a street corner as open space.



Part of the discarded boarding around the Tuohy Gardens site in Midland, which is owned, managed and currently up for sale by the MRA.
Photo Bruce Baskerville, Halloween 2018

The history and significance of the Midland Railway Company and railway line were simply not recognised by either the MRA or Minister Saffioti.

MRC HERITAGE NOMINATION



Midland Railway Co Precinct, Midland

Our fellow-society, Midland District Historical Society Inc., recently nominated the Midland Railway Co Precinct in the heart of Midland for State heritage listing. In a very short time, the State Heritage Council rejected the nomination. The MDHS Chairperson, Matt Pavlinovich, issued the following media release.

“WA HERITAGE COUNCIL REFUSES TO RECOGNISE MIDLAND RAILWAY’S HISTORY

The Midland and Districts Historical Society Inc. has been unsuccessful with their nomination to the Heritage Council to include the Midland Railway Co Precinct, including Tuohy Gardens, on the State Register of Heritage Places.

The State Heritage Office of WA has advised that while the place may have some cultural heritage value, it is unlikely that it would meet the threshold for entry on the State Register of Heritage Places. The Heritage Council decided it “does not warrant a full

assessment”.

The Society is extremely disappointed and offended that the Heritage Council failed to take into account the historical information which was provided to them as part of the nomination, and saddened that it refuses to acknowledge the contribution the Midland Railway Company of Western Australia made to the development of Midland Junction and the towns between Midland and Walkaway, especially in this 125th anniversary year of the line being opened.

We will continue to vigorously pursue the preservation of Midland’s history and heritage especially our town’s founders, the Midland Railway Company of Western Australia.”

OBELISK HERITAGE NOMINATION AND HISTORIC TOURISM

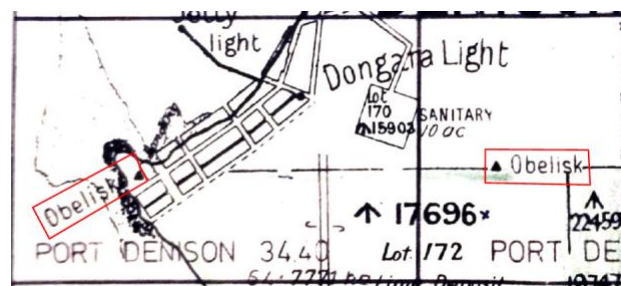
Work on the nomination of the Sandhills Obelisk proceeds slowly. One interesting find has been a feature story in a 1937 issue of the *Western Mail* that refers to the two obelisks as local landmarks.

“In recent years Dongarra has come into prominence among holiday makers for its picturesque scenery, pleasant beaches and good fishing grounds ... Interesting landmarks are the two stone obelisks which guided ships to the jetty in far-away days when camel teams were waiting to be loaded.”

The other landmarks in the story are the ‘beautiful St Dominick’s Convent’, the Irwin River estuary that ‘rivals in beauty some of the rivers of the south and south-west’, the ‘big jetty’, the ‘crayfish shop and crayfish grounds’ and the tennis courts.

Reference:

‘Show Time in the Victoria District | The Charm of Dongarra | The Abrolhos Islands’, *Western Mail*, 14 October 1937: p41



Plan of Port Denison showing the two obelisk sites
IDHS Map Collection

TEST YOUR LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

WHAT IS THIS?



Do you know
what this is?

Spring 2018 Answer: The photo from Rail Heritage WA's collections showed the construction of steel spans in the WAGR Workshops Boiler Shop at Midland. The spans are part of the prefabricated concrete rail bridge, opened in 1976, that still crosses the Irwin River carrying the Eneabba-Dongara line that runs through the cutting at East End and then across the southern fringes of the Dongara Flat. To see the original picture, click here: [Rail Heritage WA PO3755](http://RailHeritageWAPO3755)



Summer 2019 Question: The picture above shows, yes, a sign, but do you know where its original location was?

Hint: The building to which it was once attached still stands in Port Denison.

See the next issue of *The Sea Lion* to find out.

ADVERTISING AND NOTICES



The Sea Lion: rate card

Advertisements and notices may be accepted for placement in *The Sea Lion*, at the editor's discretion and in accordance with any guidelines issued by the IDHS Committee, for the provision of history-related goods or services, or goods and services that may be of relevance to our readership.

- Rates: a quarter page \$25, a half page \$50, a whole page \$100, or multiples thereof.
- Content: Advertisers need to supply the final advertisement in either a jpg or pdf format.
- The Society will not endorse, or accept any responsibility for, claims advanced in any advertisement.

All inquiries should be directed to the editor.

[Notice]



Museum Opening Times

Russ Cottage

cnr St Dominic's Road & Point Leander Drive

Monday/Wednesday/Friday

10am - 12 noon

Entrance by donation

Irwin Districts Museum

Old Police Station, 5 Waldeck Street

Monday to Saturday

10am - 12 noon

Entrance by donation,

Research & copying fees may apply

Irwin Districts Research Centre

Old Police Station, 5 Waldeck Street

Monday to Wednesday

10am - 12 noon

Research & copying fees may apply

"Maintaining the identity of the Irwin District"



DISCLAIMER

Opinions and assessments expressed in *The Sea Lion* remain those of their authors, and do not necessarily represent the policies or views of the Irwin Districts Historical Society Inc.



Colours of Granny's Pool, Xmas Day 2018



The Irwin District Historical Society Inc.,
Office Holders for 2018/19

Patron

Dr Nancy Broad

Chairperson

Graham Grundy

Deputy Chairperson

Bob Cail

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Irwin District Museum & Archives

Curator

Shirley Scotter

Russ Cottage Co-ordinator

Bob Cail

Database & Website Manager

Graham Grundy

***The Sea Lion* Editor**

Bruce Baskerville

Membership subscriptions

2018/19 Subscriptions: Associate \$2,
Individual \$10, Corporate \$25.

Address for all correspondence

The Secretary
Irwin District Historical Society Inc
PO Box 347
DONGARA WA 6525.

Email

ids@midwest.com.au

Website

<http://irwinhistory.org.au/>

Registrations

- WA Incorporated Association A0690104G, registered 19 March 1970
- Australian Business Number (ABN) 88 965 371 802, registered 29 May 2000
- ACNC Registered Charity, same ABN, registered 3 December 2010

Affiliations



Honours

Irwin District Museum: Winner, Irwin Shire Heritage Award 2002, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2012 | Runner-up, Museums Australia (WA) Museums Award 2003 | Museums Australia WA Public Program Award 2008

Objectives of the Society



- (1) Encourage the **study and writing** of the history of the Irwin District.
- (2) To **maintain the identity of the Irwin District** by preservation and restoration of buildings and settings of historical significance.
- (3) To encourage the use of **sympathetic architectural patterns** when new buildings are constructed.
- (4) To **discourage the disfigurement** of premises, streets and open places by unsightly and inappropriate advertisements, poles, wires and unseemly structures.
- (5) To encourage the conservation of aspects of the **natural environment** as it affects the character of the Shire of Irwin.
- (6) Collect, classify and preserve **records and objects** relating to the history of the Irwin District. Records may include physical and digital records.
- (7) **Publish** articles and selected records in special bulletins, or in an official journal of the Society or by any other method approved by the Society.
- (8) **Exchange information** among members of the Society, by lectures, readings, discussions and public exhibitions of historical materials.
- (9) **Promote public interest** in and support for the preservation of historical relics, including buildings and sites, the recognition of notable anniversaries in Irwin District and Western Australian history, and the erection of memorials to outstanding persons and events.
- (10) The founding, subsidising or contributing to **scholarships or prizes** to promote this object
- (11) Establish and maintain a **library, reading room, historical museum and Web presence.**
- (12) To join with other associations having similar objectives to pursue **common aims.**
- (13) To **recognise and honour achievement** in advancing these objectives or for outstanding contribution to the study and writing of Irwin Districts and other histories.

Old Beach Houses of Port Denison



*low, spreading, shady, fly-screens, fretwork &
lattice, louvres, verandah'd, by the beach, welcoming
the Denison Doctor. Hot sand. BBQ fish. Summer.*

Maintaining the identity of the Irwin District