

The Sea Lion

Quarterly newsletter of the Irwin Districts Historical Society Inc

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Diary 2019-2020

Committee Meeting & Special General 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*

This year the Saturday Easter Markets attracted 46 stall holders and 2,000 visitors and the Society ran its usual morning teas and sausage sizzle but also had a used book and plant stall to raise money for the Midland Railway signal and trolley conservation project which will form part of the 125th anniversary celebrations.

On Easter Sunday, the Society ran two Convict Tours of Dongara/Port Denison with morning tea. The two tours were completely booked and were a great success thanks to Trish Park for organising them. On Easter Monday, members enjoyed a trip to the Bookara Seventh day Adventist Church, the first in WA and were welcomed by owner and restorer Jenny Zalmsta. Members then continued to Greenough Museum gardens for morning tea and a visit to the museum. Thanks to everyone for making the Easter Weekend so successful.

Earlier this month I submitted a grant to the National Library for a *Significance Assessment* of our collection of objects and images. This is the

first stage of a three-step process to give the Society national recognition of its contribution to Australian Heritage but also make us eligible for further federal grant funding to conserve our most significant items.

The Society Chair and Secretary has had a cordial meeting with Shire of Irwin Staff regarding the future of the Fishermen's Hall and the Society will be presenting its plans for the building to Council. In the interim we are finalising the petition and I urge all supporting electors to sign it.

On an historic note, long-time residents will remember the first Easter Market Day held by the Dongara Old Police Station Restoration Committee in 1983. Prime organiser Cheryl Hay-Hendry gave us an all-day affair, food galore including champagne and crayfish donated by our long-time supporter Dr Patricia Kailis, the mock trials with John Rowland, Terry Tighe and Hadyn Ledger, the jazz pianist and long into night we danced to the Mucky Duck Bush Band. In one day, \$20,000 raised and turned into \$30,000 when interest rates reached 17%, and \$60,000 with a matching grant which was used to conserve the building which today houses the Irwin District Museum.

Dongara did it then, can you help us to save another icon and turn it into an asset for Port Denison?





SOCIETY NEWS



Special General Meeting 13 June 2019

A Special General Meeting (SGM) has been called by the committee to consider amendments to the Society's constitution. The principal amendments cover membership classes (new class of Household member, and defining each class of membership), membership applications (removing the need to be nominated), membership subscriptions (providing a 'roll over' for new members who join in the last quarter of a year), the committee structures (defining the number of members, filling casual vacancies, clarifying the election of committee members, and when a member's term begins and ends), open committee meetings (allowing all Society members to attend committee meetings), standards of conduct (civil behaviour and ethical conduct), and honours (allowing awards to be made to members and non-members).

The Meeting will commence at 10:30am on Thursday 13 June in the Day Room of the Old Police Station, and conclude by lunchtime. The June committee meeting will be held before the SGM, followed by a morning tea, then the SGM, then a general update and discussion of Denison Hall and other issues.

Members will receive (or may have already received) by post or email formal notification of the meeting. The quorum required for constitutional amendments is eight, and all members are strongly encouraged to attend and participate.



Easter Saturday Market A Great Success

This year's Easter Saturday Markets was held on a beautiful autumn Saturday morning of the 20 April 2019, in the Old Police Station grounds. A numerous and diverse crowd attended, the museum grounds were buzzing and trade was brisk on over 40 stalls offering a great variety of goods and wares for sale. The morning teas were popular, and the sausage sizzle actually ran out of bread.

Thanks go to MEEDAC for tidying-up the museum grounds and gardens, to the Port Store for the donation of a \$50 voucher gate prize and Dongara Bakery for two \$20 vouchers for gate prizes, and to all of our members who so generously donated their time, not just on the day but for many hours before and after as well. Special thanks to committee member and market co-ordinator Shirley Scotter who put in a huge effort to bring about such a successful day.

The market day is the Society's major annual fund raiser, and this year's substantial income has once again ensured we have no need to review our membership subscriptions.



Easter Sunday Convict Tours

The two bus tours of 'Convict Dongara' on Easter Sunday were both sell-out successes, and given the number of inquiries received both could have been run at least twice-over.

There was a good mix of people on the tours, from older to younger, residents and visitors, which took in known and not-so-well-known sites around 'Old Dongara', the harbourmaster's site at the Estuary and the Denison foreshore panoramically viewed from the Point Leander Obelisk. Some of the stories covered the ex-convict 'man about town' Joseph Walton, builder of the Dongara Hotel and the police station among other things, the raid by escaping convict 'pirates' on harbourmaster Edward Downes at the estuary, the jetty and obelisks built by convict contractors with convict labour, and the convict origins of the name of Port Denison and some of its older streets.

Each tour was followed by a morning tea and chatting about convict history in the museum courtyard, and the 'Convict Tracks of the Victoria District' was open for viewing.

Thanks to **the Shire of Irwin** for use of the community bus, to Mr **George Bass** for covering the fuel costs, and to committee member Trish Parker for making all the arrangements, and of course to our driver, Doopa.



Convict tourers look to the convict-built sandhills obelisk on the horizon over Denison ...



... and then over the old convict and sandalwood port from the convict-built obelisk on the point

Photo: Hassan Mokak



Easter Monday Bookara & Greenough Tours

The bus trip to Greenough Museum on Easter Monday was a relaxed 'thank you' to members who had put in so much work over the weekend. A highlight of the visit, en-route, was a stop at the 7th Day Adventist Church at Bookara to learn more of its history and restoration. Thanks again to Trish and Doopa, and to Jenny Zalmstra at Bookara and to Gary Martin at Greenough.



Greenough tourers inside the old 7th Day Adventist Church at Bookara with host Jenny Zalmstra.

Photo: Paul Parker



The restored Bookara 7th Day Adventist Church

Photo: Graham Grundy



Reader's feedback on *The Seal Lion* No 2

Member #071: WHAT A TREAT the latest newsletter is!!!!!! Congratulations, magnificent production & content, 7/3/19

Member #047: Fantastic newsletter – congratulations 😊, 14/2/19

Member #052: congratulations to all those involved in the contents of the 'Sea Lion' What a breath of fresh air. I wonder whether we could have this reprinted and sold as a money raiser, 14/2/19



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.

- **Mrs Margaret Jones** of Utakarra
- **Margaret Dawson, Sandie Craig** and **Gaylea McGlue** of Dongara, with an interest in historic buildings, people and fishing

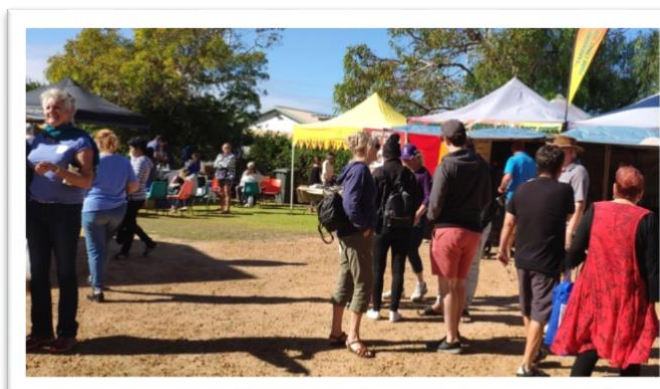
EASTER



SATURDAY



2019



MARKET



DAY





6th, 7th and 8th Committee Meetings Reports

Bruce Baskerville

Reports on the sixth, seventh and eighth meetings of the committee appeared in the *Dongara Denison Rag*. Important items considered were as follows.

Sixth meeting, Thursday 14 March

Approval was given to replace the office computer after its sudden and unexpected demise, a policy was adopted on waiving the room hire charge for a public benefit, donations were accepted of historic carpentry tools, and of papers from the Save Denison Timber Jetty campaign in 2000, a report on the recent Museums & Galleries workshop on advances in new digitisation projects was discussed, and the loan of materials to the School for Anzac Day was agreed, as well as Market Day planning and reporting on the website upgrade. Members were able to attend the second half of the meeting, at which the draft strategic plan was further discussed, and the Society's opposition to the Denison Hall demolition was reaffirmed and the steps forward were agreed (see item, pages 7-8).

Seventh meeting, online, 19-21 March

Considered the options for a new computer, and (in accordance with our 'local supplier preference' policy) agreed to purchase from Infinitum Technologies of Dongara.

Eighth meeting, Thursday 18 April

The meeting agreed on 13 June as the date for a special general meeting to adopt several constitutional amendments, developed a plan for advancing the Midland railway trolleys project, reported on the installation of the new computer system, discussed a report on the recent opening of the new Thungarra Art Trail, and decided to upgrade the lighting in the museum display cases, which will include replacing the old fluorescent lighting with LED lighting for radiant heat reduction and longer-lasting more energy efficient luminescence.



Strategic Planning for the Society's Future

Bruce Baskerville

A workshop to develop a strategic plan for the Society convened on a warm St Valentine's



Day, attended by four committee members and four ordinary members, with external facilitator Jenny Thomas.



Strategic plan workshop attendees, Day Room, Old Police Station, 14 February 2019

Photo: Jenny Thomas

From the workshop came a rough outline of a plan with five goals and a number of actions to implement each goal, all ranked high, medium or low. This outline was further developed by the committee, and considered by the open meeting on 14 March. That meeting endorsed the re-worked version, and recommended it to the committee for adoption. The IDHS Strategic Plan 2019-2024 was formally adopted by the committee on 17 May 2019, and will shortly be available on our website.

The vision is "The Irwin Districts Historical Society is an association of people voluntarily working together in a spirit of stewardship to advance the history, culture and natural heritage of the Irwin Shire as a vital force in the development of a sustainable present and future for the Shire and its people", and the five goals are 'Telling engaging stories', 'Being good stewards', 'Being sustainable in the long term', 'Developing members skills' and 'Socialising among members and friends'.

The strategic plan places history, heritage and stewardship as being at the heart of everything we do, and will guide our work for the next five years.



Member Skills Survey

Julie Nunn

The member's skills survey that arose from the planning workshop was circulated by email and post, and is now closed. Many thanks to all the members who responded.

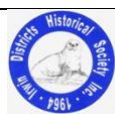


The main choices in the responses to the survey were:

- Data entry
- Museum roster (both museums)
- Assisting with collections/displays
- Preparing and cleaning up after events
- Help with catering, morning/afternoon teas

Most responders were available weekly and for special events

Members who nominated particular skills and activities will be contacted soon, and thanks again to everyone who responded.



Renewal of subscriptions for 2019-2020

All members will receive a membership renewal notice for the 2019-2020 year with this issue of the *Sea Lion*. All memberships expire on 30 June, and members are asked to renew their membership as expeditiously as possible. The renewal form sets out the several ways in which payments can be made.

The constitution sets a final closing date of 30 September (3 months from 30 June) for the payment of renewals, after which any memberships not renewed automatically cease. The IDHS Treasurer eagerly looks forward to receiving your renewal!

IDHS ESTATE & COLLECTIONS



Significance Assessment (SA) grant application submitted

Graham Grundy

One of the priorities discussed at the recent Strategic Planning Workshop, which was mediated by facilitator Jenny Thomas, was the desire to have the Society's collection assessed for its significance.

Museums can apply through the National Library of Australia for a Community Heritage Grant (CHG) for a professional assessment.

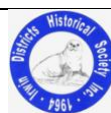
Since it started in 1994 the CHG program has funded 385 significance assessments (SA)s of heritage collections. In each case funding was

given to employ an external consultant to undertake the assessment.

An SA helps explain the meaning and value of a collection and provides further information for its management and interpretation. One important aspect is that the SA determines the most important items in the collection and museums can then apply for further funding to ensure these items are stored and conserved for future generations to enjoy.

If we are successful it will be an important milestone for the Society and the Irwin Community to have its local collection nationally recognised as significant to the history of Australia.

During the application process we were fortunate to be offered assistance and a letter of support from the WA Museum. In future editions we will describe some of the items that we think are of national significance.



What is an IRME, and where did it come from?

Graham Grundy

You have probably noticed images in the *Sea Lion* with the source given as IRME. The IDHS database uses a code to identify each photo, so that in IRME0123, the IR stands for Irwin, ME to designate a Media record and 0123 is the number of the item in the system.

Going through my old files I found the first outline of the IDHS database design dating back to 1992. The IDHS research office was opened about that time and we were one of the first regional based historical societies to get a computer through a Lotterywest grant. Prior to that, much of the information had been hand written on cards and filed into various categories. The photos had been stored in Russ Cottage, not an ideal environment.

Our first task was to try and organize the information we had and to scan the images, to at least ensure we had digital copies if the originals deteriorated. In that era, we also were connected to a BBS (Bulletin Board System) on the Internet run from the Geraldton Museum, an early version of today's chat apps. I remember the 30 metre phone cord to get the computer connected to the phone outlet at the



front office. Telecom wasn't about to install a new outlet!

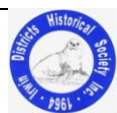
The database contains six types of records: Entities (People and Organisations), Places, Events, Objects, Themes and Media (images, videos and sound).



'Irwin River Estuary', 1995, IRME0231 – screen shot of an image discovered searching on the term 'Irwin River', which found 167 Media, 34 Place, 25 Object and 16 Event records.

One of the main advantages of a database is the ability to search the information for any occurrence of a word or phrase, all the associated records can be quickly viewed. That sounds simple but there can be some traps when people use abbreviations. So, for World War I, abbreviations might be WW1 or WWI so sometimes an agreed abbreviation is required.

So, when you see IMRE as the source of an image, you will know the original is in our collections, and will understand how much our Society has invested over the years in inventing and developing the database system. Currently we have many paper records and other items that need to be accessioned, so if you are interested in helping the Society by entering database records please contact us.



NBN to be connected to the museum and research centre

Tuesday 21 May was something of a red-letter day for the museum when the decision was made to forego the old copper wires and get connected to the National Broadband Network.

The new connections need to be hidden and not damage the historic building fabric, and once the connection is made, our modem speed should be double the current adsl connection.

HERITAGE



Conserving Traditional Heritage Skills

B Baskerville & G Grundy

The WA Heritage Skills Project is being developed to address the increasing shortage of people who are skilled in traditional or heritage skills, especially those needed for maintaining historic buildings. This includes stone masonry, lime slaking and plastering, blacksmithing, traditional joinery and cabinetmaking, shingle splitting, brickwork maintenance and many other old trades.

The demand for traditional skills is rising at the same time as the supply is declining. A key factor is the lack of any training in traditional skills, especially training that includes a trade qualification. This is a problem across Australia and most of the world. Generations of passing on such skills from master craftsmen to apprentice are at risk of disappearing altogether, as are some traditional building materials.

One of the aims of the WA Heritage Skills Project is to develop a traditional skills academy offering certified trade courses using project-based learning and place-centred training, working with restoration and conservation projects on real buildings and structures. It also aims to link retiring trade professionals with younger trades to enable the transfer of knowledge, customs and skills, and develop new employment and development opportunities in heritage precincts.

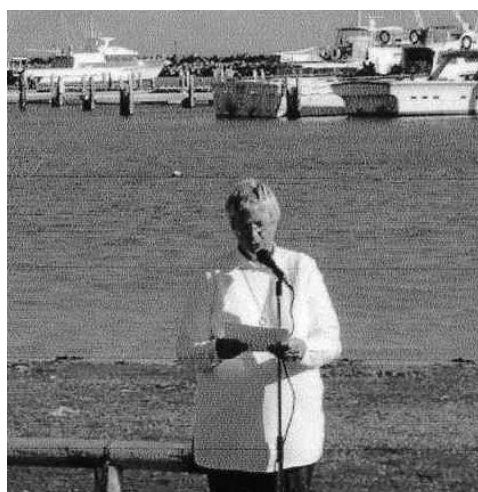
Although currently focused on building trades, the Project is also aware of similar needs in all areas of heritage conservation, including traditional boatbuilding, fishing practices, sail making and net making and repair. The Society is currently working with the Project to encourage the selection of a site with the Irwin Shire that would be suitable for a traditional trade skills training project.



Shipwreck Walk at Denison *Graham Grundy*

The Shipwreck Walk on the Denison foreshore will be well-known to members and many visitors, with its 15th anniversary next month.

The sixteen plaques were curated by the Society in 2004, with each plaque sponsored by a local donor. Our long serving former Society President Anne Jefferys, along with Shirley Scotter, did the research for the project. Anne persuaded sixteen local businesses and residents to sponsor the plaques along with a concrete plinth. They were installed by the Shire, and officially opened in June 2004.



Former IDHS President Anne Jefferys at the opening of the Shipwreck Walk, June 2004

The Shire has recently commenced relocating three of the shipwreck plaques as part of a project to remove some car parking on the north side of Denison Hall and extend the lawns. The removed plaques are being stored in the Shire yard until they can be re-installed. The work has exposed the poor condition of some of the plaques, and need for maintenance works. Removing some plaques may affect the proper sequence of plaques if the walkway route is changed, and the order in which the plaques are returned to the walk is very important.

Members are encouraged to 'take the shipwalk', and increase awareness of the plaques and their stories among residents and visitors.

The Society is currently in discussions with the Shire about the work.

FEATURE ARTICLES

DENISON HALL



Denison Hall: A Campaign Update

The Society has long supported the conservation and adaptation for new uses of this historic public building, and it is worth recapping what we have done since February.

Denison Hall: Statement of Significance

The former Bond Store has historic significance given its connection to the development of sea transport in the district, especially the remnants of the nearby second jetty with which it is visually linked. The building also has social significance for its connection to the Dongara Professional Fishermen's Association and its use for social functions for many years.

Irwin Municipal Inventory 1998, HCWA Place No 04046

In March, our planning meeting reaffirmed the Society's opposition to the proposed demolition of the Hall because of its historical values and heritage significance, and our preference that it be kept and conserved as a public building. We also reaffirmed our support for a museum of fishing.

We then wrote and formally advised the Shire of our position, and requested they rescind their decision to demolish, and instead work towards adaptation and conservation of the historic building. It was also agreed to sponsor a petition to the Shire along the same lines, and to issue a media release to increase public awareness of this issue.

The petition to save the Hall was launched just before Easter, and signatures of both local electors (the blue-coloured petition) and visitors and non-residents associated with the Shire (the orange-coloured petition) continue to be collected.

The media release was issued on 8 April to local media outlets throughout the North Midlands and Batavia Coast. It was published in several local newspapers and received front-page coverage in the 10 April issue of the *Midwest Times*.



On 11 April, our chairperson and secretary met with the Shire President and Acting CEO to discuss ways forward. There appear to be differing views about how much historic fabric remains in the Hall, so the Society asked the Shire to engage a qualified heritage architect to independently identify and expertly assess the fabric of the building before any work commences on the place.

The Shire also indicated it is willing to consider our ideas for conserving and adapting the Hall as a key part of a Museum of Fishing and public meeting space. This has been discussed in various ways among members and local residents, and several key points have emerged:

1. Need to retain the 1894 Bond Store building and the significant changes to it over time
2. We are not seeking to restore it to its 1894 condition, but instead to conserve and adapt the building for contemporary uses.
3. Additions or extensions to the building could provide for public meeting rooms or spaces (i.e. still be available as a public hall), as well as a Museum of Fishing
4. The Museum of Fishing should be able to accommodate at least one fishing boat (museums displaying whole boats have been identified in Darwin, Sydney and Fremantle)
5. The tram line and connection with the 1867 jetty should be made clear, and there should be interpretation of all the phases in the history of the place.

Our main motivation remains keeping this key part of Denison's built heritage as a port town, and taking seriously the long and significant history of fishing that has shaped the society and economy of the Irwin coast and beyond. A more sensitive approach to the Hall will also have important potential for tourism and economic development.

A fortnight ago, the Society was advised of the support of the Dongara Professional Fishermen's Association for retaining the Hall and the idea of a museum.

Following the Special General Meeting on Thursday 13 June (see page 2), there will be a general discussion of the Museum of Fishing idea, and the main ideas to be presented to the Shire. All members are welcome and especially encouraged to come along.

The *Burra Charter* is the standard of practice for heritage work in Australia. It includes definitions of key terms used in heritage work, such as:

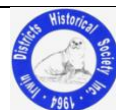
Adaptation means changing a place to suit the existing use or a proposed use.

Conservation means all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance.

Interpretation means all the ways of presenting the cultural significance of a place.

Maintenance means the continuous protective care of a place, and its setting.

A fundamental principle in the *Burra Charter* is "do as much as necessary to care for the place and to make it useable, but otherwise change it as little as possible so that its cultural significance is retained".



DDHS Anzac Day events

Shirley Scotter

Dongara District High School's Anzac theme this year was 'Civilians Supporting the Armed Forces', and these photos show the student's displays which include artefacts loaned from the Irwin District Museum collections.



Photos with thanks to DDHS





Grey's Cairn at Yardarino 50 years on *Bruce Baskerville*

This autumn marks the 180th anniversary of George Grey's trek along the west coast in 1839, and the fifty-second year since Grey's Cairn was unveiled by the Society on 9 April 1967 near Yardarino where Grey crossed the river. This was one of the Society's earliest projects to permanently commemorate a significant historical event.

The monument consists of a large upright piece of lime capstone with a central opening centred within a circular concrete plinth to which a stainless-steel plaque is attached (see back cover). At some stage the cairn was vandalised when the top was knocked off and left lying on the ground. This was later re-attached, and the joint marks remain visible. The cairn and plinth are dotted with lichen and weathered with a soft greyish patination.

The inscription on the plaque reads:

This Cairn was Erected by
The Irwin District Historical Society
On 9th April 1967
To commemorate the Discovery and Naming
of
The Irwin River
By Lieut. George Grey
Who Crossed at this Point on 9th April 1839
On his Epic Journey South From
Gantheume Bay to Perth

The plaque has now become a historical document in its own right, and reading it provokes us to think how things have changed since 1967. The event is undoubtedly of historic significance, but what does the plaque not tell us?

Today we wouldn't say Grey 'discovered' the river when obviously it was already well known to the local Noongar people, who named it *Yaranoo muraja*. Yaranoo = flowing + muraja = elbow (probably referring to the water flowing around the bend at the estuary below the Church Street lookout rather than the Mountain Bridge reaches). Grey observed the people and saw evidence of them in the network of *wajjoo* or paths (along some of which he travelled), mias (huts) and fire plumes. Grey did name, or rather, re-name the river after Lt Colonel Irwin, the military



commandant in Perth, and both names co-existed for many years before Yaranoo muraja fell silent.

Grey was making his epic journey because he had been shipwrecked in the Murchison estuary at Kalbarri. He had previously sailed from Cape Town to the Kimberleys where he was speared and fell ill. He recovered in Mauritius, before returning to Shark Bay where one of his three whaleboats was wrecked and no water could be found. He sailed southwards to Kalbarri where his other two whaleboats were wrecked and the stores spoiled. The trek along the west coast was harsh, and one young man named Frederick Smith died of hunger in the sandhills near Jurien. Their trek has epic qualities, but there is also an aspect of blundering, not just in the boat wrecks and frequent separations of his party, but in the desperate hunger they endured, unable to see many of the bush foods around them.

Perhaps the most significant part of the story not told in the plaque is the consequences. Crossing the Yaranoo muraja opened the way to later events, beginning with the colonisation of the district that began just 12 years later in 1851. The country all around Yardarino and the crossing site as well as up and down the Irwin valley was transformed forever.

Grey was later prominent in Adelaide, Cape Town and Wellington, and was a NZ delegate to the Federation Convention in 1891, but he often roused popular opposition, including having Government House Adelaide twice invaded by angry mobs. Grey's biographer says "His abilities were great, but in the final analysis he fell short of greatness for want of that power of self-control and detachment which might have enabled him to recognize and correct his own mistakes."

Grey's Cairn is not just a curiously-shaped rock, but a marker of very complex histories. Next time you stop by to view the cairn and perhaps picnic on the riverbank, take some time to read the plaque and reflect upon and think about both the story it tells and the stories yet to be told.

Reference

'Grey, Sir George (1812–1898)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/grey-sir-george-2125/text2691> published first in hardcopy 1966, accessed online 21 May 2019.



Like a Hans Heysen landscape, a team of Clydesdales and plough, driven by Nelson Healy, at Obawara c1930. Nelson's father Peter Healy, manager and later lessee of The Grange, bought the farm in 1893 from WE Wass.
IMRE 2032



Midland Railway memories from Frances Nicholls

After reading the summer issue of *The Sea Lion*, member Frances Nicholls, now living in Hampton, Victoria, sent these memories.

"I noted with interest mention several times items regarding the Midland Railway. I have many happy memories travelling on it to and from Boarding School in Perth.

I lived at Irwin House from 1931-36. My mother was Esther Temple (Burgess) Russell. I and my 2 brothers were regular travellers. The train would stop at the Irwin Siding for water, and we would board at 10, 10:30 or 11 pm. We needed a step ladder to reach our berths, which I think cost 10 shillings.

Patricia Burgess from Irwin Park would also board, and we would join School friends who had started at Geraldton. Much talking, singing and laughter before sleeping.

Later, and of course the Depression years, the cost of the sleeping berths became too much, and my 2 brothers and I travelled by Day trains. In those days it took all night or all day – very few stations had anything to offer in the way of food or drinks. We had to provide our own refreshments."



Dominican Ladies College girls boarding the Midland train at Dongara, 1930s
IRME0174

Frances is a long-time member and generous benefactor of the Society, and our thanks go to her for these Midland Railway memories.

OBITUARIES



Lady Doris Brand, 1921 - 2019 'The Supreme Connector'

Lady Doris Brand was the wife of locally-born Sir David Brand, Member for Greenough (which included Irwin) from 1945 to 1975, the first member of the Liberal Party elected to office anywhere in Australia, and WA's longest-serving premier from 1959 to 1971.

An extensive obituary was published in the *West Australian* that is still available online, so here we reprint a small portion of a 1995 interview by oral historian Erica Harvey with Lady Doris in which she recalls her time in Dongara and the beginning of her political life.



Mrs Brand with Road Board members at the opening of the new Irwin Road Board Office by her husband in 1958.

IRME2165



Lady Brand at the unveiling of the memorial bust of her husband in the Irwin Shire Office in 1984.

IRME2339

"EH The focus of the interview is really the political life that you've experienced. Were you aware when you met your husband that he was interested in politics or that politics would

perhaps be part of your life? Was that ever a question?

BRAND No, no, not really. Politics were different in those days. You never heard anything about politics very much really.

EH Was it like the old sort of saying that politics and religion weren't discussed?

BRAND I don't know that it was not discussed but I don't think it was of great interest in those days. Anyway, he came out of the army in 1945 a day before our first child was born and we took over a business in Dongara on 1st February when he was only 18 days old.

EH What sort of business was it?

BRAND It was a very mixed business - groceries, hardware, drapery, vegetables. You name it, it was there.

EH And was this the main sort of general store for Dongara?

BRAND Yes, it was, yes, and, of course, being a holiday centre we used to be open weekends and closed on Wednesdays.

EH Well, that would have been a huge job really, was it? Did you both have any, either of you have any experience at all?

BRAND Neither of us had any experience in business at all and we were only there a few months when David was approached by two Liberal members who came up from Perth to see if he would stand for the party because there was a by-election, and we'd only been there less than six months in the business.

EH That seems quite unusual that, just a bolt out of the blue, because I think you spoke earlier when we first met that Sir Ross McLarty and Ross McDonald came up. Were they the two politicians?

BRAND Yes, yes, that's right, yes.

EH Was this like a bolt out of the blue for you?

BRAND Yes, it certainly was. David's maternal grandfather had been in Parliament just in 1900 or 1901 and I guess the interest had always been there. His family, David's family were very staunch Country Party (as was my mother) but this new party was formed and although David was standing or he decided to stand, his father said, "No, I'm Country Party and I don't like change," but I think he did vote for him in the end. [Laughter]

EH The family ties are too strong.

BRAND Yes, yes. My mother was delighted. She was a Liberal from there on. [Laughter]

EH I'm reading between the lines, really, and asking you were the political connections there, because Sir Ross McLarty and Sir Ross McDonald were very influential?



BRAND Well, there was a gentleman by the name of Irwin Burgess who was a local farmer, and he was in the Voluntary Defence Corps too. He used to come in and talk to David quite a bit. When I thought there was business going on it was politics, obviously. [Laughs] I think that the seed had been sown before Ross McLarty and Ross McDonald did come up and approach him.

EH When did you actually hear the news? I think you were talking to me when we first met about it being a Wednesday and the shop was closed, and you were busy in the shop. Can you describe what happened?

BRAND Yes. We used to close on Wednesdays. I was cleaning windows to do the drapery window out and I saw these two gentlemen approaching. They knocked on the store door and asked could they come in, and we just sat at the counter. There were two stools for the customers to sit on and they sat on the stools and they said, "We've come to talk to you because we want your husband to stand for Parliament." I was absolutely staggered and they said, "We have spoken to him but he said there is no way that he will unless you make the decision." I felt I wasn't really the one to make the decision. Naturally I would have said no, but I knew the interest was there. He was a very popular person, well known right from one end of the electorate to the other, and if that was his choice then there was no way that I would stand in his way. But I eventually had to say, "Yes, all right".

EH And where was David at this stage?

BRAND I think he might have been hiding somewhere [laughs] until they worked me over. Yes.

EH You had a young son, your firstborn.

BRAND Yes, he was only six months old.

EH Now, was this Brian?

BRAND Brian, yes, it was.

EH And you had three children fairly close together.

BRAND Yes.

EH When were they born and what were their names?

BRAND Brian was twenty-one months old when Bernard was born, and he was just on two when Nita was born. So by that time I had decided that business and children didn't mix with politics there as well, so we sold in the June before Nita was born in the September.

EH What year was that?

BRAND 1948.

EH So between 1945 and 1948 had you carried the major responsibility for the store?

BRAND Oh, yes, yes, because David used to be away from Monday till Friday in Perth, and didn't always get home every week. Sometimes it would be a fortnight. Yes, I did have a girl in the early days to help me with Brian. Then we got a manageress into the shop and I was able to sort of be the assistant.

EH Yes, but it still must have taken a lot of keeping an eye on.

BRAND Oh, yes, yes. Yes, it did, and I did all the books so it was a fairly busy life and quite a relaxation to get out with three children. [Laughs]

EH I can imagine. It was a house attached to the shop?

BRAND Yes. Yes, it was all in one building, yes. It had to be in those days.

EH And is it still there?

BRAND Yes, yes. The business is still there but it isn't as house and shop any longer. They knocked the walls out and extended because it's quite a huge business now.

EH How did you feel about moving to Perth?

BRAND Well, after getting out of the shop we lived down at the beach part for a year and then David became a Minister and that demanded all his time practically being spent in Perth, so we shifted to live Perth in 1950."

Lady Doris' many community roles included Patron of Swan Districts Football Club, the Spastic Welfare Association WA and the Sir David Brand Cerebral Palsy Centre (whose newsletter is named 'Brand News'). She was an inaugural Life Member of the Liberal Party (WA). She is remembered by the Lady Brand Village at Mandurah and Lady Brand Drive in the Mandurah suburb of Greenfields. Her social skills and sense of humour lead one writer to dub her 'the supreme connector'.

There is a story (that I have been unable to verify) that when the Dongara hospital in Blenheim Road was being planned it was intended to name it in honour of Lady Doris. Perhaps the time is now opportune to honour that pledge.

References

- Patrick Cornish, 'Obituary | Liberal Party Stalwart | Lady Doris Brand', *West Australian*, 22 April 2019: 62
[Verbatim Transcript of an Interview with Lady Doris Brand, b1921](#), WA Parliament/Battye Library, December 1995: 10-14
'What's in a Name?', *Brand News*, No 9, The Ability Centre, Mt Lawley, March 2019: 2
Graham Grundy, 'Sir David Brand Sculpture Finally Returns Home', *The Sea Lion*, Vol 1, No 1, IDHS, Dongara, Spring 2018: 4-5



**Mr Jack Pickering,
1930 - 2019**
Bruce Baskerville

Jack Pickering was the longest-serving Shire Clerk and later CEO of the Irwin Road Board later the Irwin Shire Council, serving from 1955 to 1997.

Jack, son of Thomas and Phyllis Pickering née Mitchell, was born at Mullewa Hospital in 1930, and died in Geraldton in 2019. He grew up on his parent's farm and went to primary school in Mullewa. When his father went to work in Geraldton for the WA Government Railways, the family moved to Geraldton and Jack attended Geraldton High School.

He left school in Year 11 and entered his first local government position in the Town of Geraldton as a Wages and Cost Clerk, gradually over the years becoming a senior member. He spent a short time in 1950-51 working for the *Kalgoorlie Miner* as a reporter and accounts clerk, before returning to the Midlands and to local government as Assistant Roads Board Secretary at Morawa Roads Board. In 1954 Jack applied for the position of Secretary to the Irwin Roads Board and at just 24 became the youngest person in Australia to be appointed to such a position. In 1961 when the Roads Boards were upgraded to Shire Councils, the position of Board Secretary became Shire Clerk. In 1995 Shire Clerks became Chief Executive Officers (CEOs).



A young Jack Pickering with team mates in the Irwin Districts Football Club premiership team in 1959.

IRME1427 (detail)



Jack Pickering at the unveiling of the memorial bust of Sir David Brand in the Shire Office, 1984.

IRME2339

Over the years Jack has been involved with the acquisition of private land for public uses along the foreshore at Port Denison, the estuary and the Racecourse. He was also involved in the inception of the Denison Bowling Club in 1961, and the Health Centre (now Public Hospital) in Blenheim Road. He has negotiated many grants throughout the years, such as those for the Port Denison Retirement Village, the construction of Kailis Drive (1997) into Port Denison and the Port Denison Marina (1979).

My earliest personal memories of Mr Pickering are as a boy in the 1960s when the Public Library consisted of several bookcases just inside the Shire Office front door. Being a born bookworm I spent many hours sitting there on the hard floor reading, mumbling 'good thanks Mr Pickering' in response to his occasional passing greeting. In 1975, after a campaign by the GSHS school bus students, an Irwin Junior Shire Council was formed and Mr Pickering attempted to train us in proper meeting procedures and the ways of local government. He was always Mr Pickering to me, and it seems a little strange now writing this and simply using his first name.

Anyway, Jack enjoyed the sports of cricket and football and in later years the occasional game of bowls. He played for the Australs in Geraldton and was a representative at country week for Dongara. He played football for Brigades in Geraldton and then for the Irwin Districts Football Club, the premiership Team in 1959.

Jack met his wife Patricia (Pat) Reeve in Dongara in 1955, and they married in 1958 in St John the Baptist Anglican Church, Dongara. During the 1960s they lived in the Shire Clerk's Residence on the corner of Hosken Street and



Moreton Terrace (now the Op Shop), where they raised three sons before in the mid-1970s moving to one of the first houses built around the Pearce Road-Richardson Road junction, the first new estate in the town, and which was then known as Dongara Heights.

Jack formally retired from the Shire on 1 October 1997 not long after the shire clerkship was retitled CEO, making Jack Pickering unique as Irwin's one and only Shire Clerk. Jack and Pat retired to live in Mount Tarcoola, Geraldton, where he died on 20 March 2019. Jack Pickering is remembered in Pickering Drive, Dongara, and is named on several surviving foundation stones and plaques such as that still on the Shire Admin building wall for the opening of the new Office in 1958.

References

'Vale Jack Pickering', *Dongara-Denison Rag*, April 2019
Country Roads and Byways of the Irwin District, Irwin Shire Heritage Committee 2003

NATURAL HISTORY

CHARLES DARWIN RESERVE

The Charles Darwin Reserve is a 68,600ha private conservancy owned and operated by Bush Heritage Australia. About 60km east of Perenjori, it was formerly White Wells Station, and was once part of the Irwin Shire (then called the Irwin Road District) before the areas east of Strawberry were separated to form the Upper Irwin Road District in 1901.

The history of extensive land clearing throughout the North Midlands (and the south-west of WA more generally) makes the Reserve an important refuge for animals and plants that were once widespread in the pre-1901 'greater Irwin'. Charles Darwin Reserve falls largely within the Southwest Botanical Province, Australia's only internationally recognised biodiversity 'hotspot'. The plant species diversity in the Southwest Botanical Province is higher than in tropical Australian rainforests.

Charles Darwin Reserve provides habitat for over 230 animals including mammals, reptiles, birds and amphibians, and over 680 plant species have so far been recorded. Animals include the Mallee fowl, Major Mitchell cockatoo, white-tailed dunnart, spiny-tailed skink and the nationally vulnerable Shield-backed Trapdoor spider. The Reserve's

vegetation communities still evident in today's Irwin Shire include sandplain kwongan, Callitris woodland and York Gum woodland. Rare plants include the Nodding waxflower, the Fragrant China Orchid and the White Wells Wurmbea Lily.



Fragrant China Orchid

[Florabase](#)

The property was purchased in 2003 by Bush Heritage Australia with a donation from Chris Darwin, a great-great-grandson of eminent naturalist Charles Darwin. Chris and his wife Jacqui "encourage like-minded individuals to take the leap: move from wealth to significance, because it's something that you'll never regret."

Since then, feral goats have been eradicated, and a cat eradication trial is in its sixth year. The Reserve is also part of the 30-year Climate Change Observatory Project measuring how native species are adapting (or not) to hotter and drier weather.

The sheep are gone, but there's no shortage of animals roaming the ancient woodlands and wildflower'd plains. Bush Heritage's [Charles Darwin Reserve website](#) includes a Community History Site, and if you are unable to visit the Reserve in person then the website provides a virtual tour of its natural and cultural history.

References

Will Hansen, '[My Happy Place](#)', *Bush Tracks*, Autumn 2019, Bush Heritage Australia
Western Australian Herbarium (1998-). *FloraBase—the Western Australian Flora*, Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions <https://florabase.dpaw.wa.gov.au>

LATE NEWS



Federal Election: No interest in local history

Our Society is affiliated with the RWAHS, which in turn is a member of the Federation of

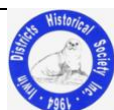


Australian Historical Societies (FAHS). FAHS surveyed all the main parties contesting the recent federal election, asking them about their community history and heritage policies. No responses were received from any party or candidate. A dismayed Don Garden of FAHS said "Once again history and community heritage is left in the wilderness. Community arts and community environmental programs receive assistance, but history is overlooked. While all parties pay lip service to the importance of our history, and praise us all for preserving it for them, they have not been prepared to help in any material way."

Reference: [FAHS e-bulletin](#), No 187, 15 May 2019

TEST YOUR LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

WHERE IS THIS?



Do you know where this is?
Autumn 2019 Question



Is it where triffids hang out? Is it where soylent green is made? No, it's neither of them, but this long emerald-lit passage connects two parts of a very well-known Dongara landmark. See the next issue of *The Sea Lion* to find out.

Summer 2019 Question: What was the original location of a sign, now in the museum collection? **Answer:** Knowler's House, 56

Point Leander Drive, Port Denison, opposite Denison Hall. Built in the 1930s of limestone rubble (rendered in the 1980s), Municipal Inventory Place No 72, Category 5 'Significant contribution to local character' (2005).

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]



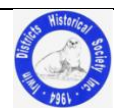
Museum Opening Times Russ Cottage

cnr St Dominic's Road & Point Leander Drive
Monday/Wednesday/Friday
10am - 12 noon
Entrance by donation

Irwin Districts Museum & Research Centre

Old Police Station, 5 Waldeck Street
Monday to Saturday
10am - 12 noon
Entrance by donation

"Maintaining the identity of the Irwin District"



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Address for all correspondence

The Secretary

Irwin Districts Historical Society Inc

PO Box 347, DONGARA WA 6525.

Telephone

08 9927 1323

Email

ids@midwest.com.au

Website

www.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

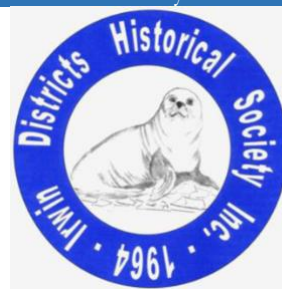
Affiliations



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.

*Grey's Cairn,
nr Mountain Bridge, Yardarino*



Maintaining the identity of the Irwin District