

The Sea Lion

Quarterly newsletter of the Irwin Districts Historical Society Inc

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Diary 2020

Committee meeting & museum busy bee	13 February
Committee meeting	12 March
Committee meeting	9 April
Easter markets	11 April
Sea Lion, Autumn	April 2020
AMAGA meeting	2 May
Committee meeting	14 May

Our best wishes and our thoughts go to all our friends and colleagues in the broader local history community across this huge continent.

NEWS



**13 February (next)
meeting and busy bee**
Trish Parker



From the Editor
Bruce Baskerville

The few weeks spanning the turn of the new decade have been packed with events for the historically-minded, as is evident in this summer edition of *The Sea Lion*. After the desolation felt in the wake of the late Denison Fishermen's Hall disaster, it has been rejuvenating to have had such an ocean of history and heritage into which to dive.

The terrible fires and all their consequence, especially in south-eastern Australia, that are a hallmark of this summer give us all pause to stop and reflect on the future and our legacies. The impacts on local museums and historical societies are still being tallied, and the losses in local heritage places and historic sites will no doubt be as shocking as everything else we have seen and heard. It can be difficult to reconcile such awful losses with the wealth of historical creativity recorded in this issue, but at such times it is important for us all to draw strength from the sense of community that we see expressed in that creativity. From our own histories we can find the inspiration to make our own futures.

Members are invited to an afternoon of activity and socialising at the Old Police Station Museum on Thursday 13th February. After the committee meeting, we are having a busy bee to clean up the courtyard, starting at 3pm, followed by drinks and a barbecue from 5pm. Bruce Baskerville will give an informal talk on the Pulling the Pots fishing history project.

For catering, please RSVP to Trish on 0427 224 120 or trishpark@bigpond.com





Convict Database Launch Geraldton 10 January

Bruce Baskerville

The launch of Midwest WA Heritage's massive convict database was held at the Geraldton Public Library on Friday 10 January. Expecting about 15 people, over 70 turned-up and the room was packed.

The database is the culmination of over 10 years' work by Diane Evans and Jenny MacKay, with our Chair, Graham Grundy, playing a key role in developing the software and generally supporting the project. The research undertaken for the database has uncovered some 2,000 named, individual men who were transported to WA and at same stage passed through the Victoria District. This encompasses Irwin, Greenough, Geraldton, Chapman Valley, Northampton and Port Gregory, and accounts for 20% of all the convicts sent to the colony. 700 of these men came through Irwin alone.

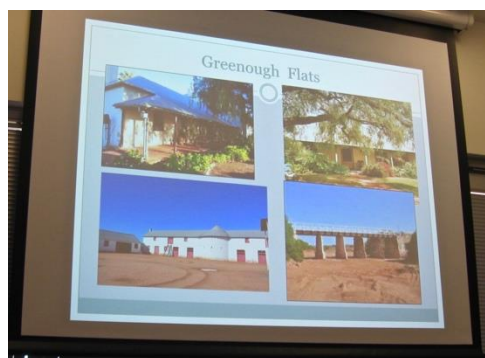


*Jenny MacKay, Di Evans and Graham Grundy
at the launch in Geraldton Library*

Many of the convicts settled and became successful in their endeavours, raised families, became community leaders and created new lives. For many others, however, the going was hard and crushing, and they ended their days alone, alcoholic, homeless, and habitually in and out of local lock-ups. Their details, many of their stories, and even some of their images, are recorded in the database and are now publicly accessible to all descendants, researchers and historians.

The sheer amount of research, hard work and dedication that has gone into creating the

database is breathtaking, and I think it will soon be recognised for the ground breaking resource that has been provided. No other region-wide database, or publication in any format, is like it anywhere else in WA or indeed NSW or Tasmania. To this must be added the outstanding generosity of all who have contributed over the years in many ways to ensure the database is available online free of any charges or fees, which alone is a considerable achievement. This has been a work of passion for all involved, and thanks are extended to Mitchell & Brown Retravision of Geraldton whose sponsorship ensured the few financial costs have all been met.



*Composite of images shown at the launch
illustrating convict places at Greenough*



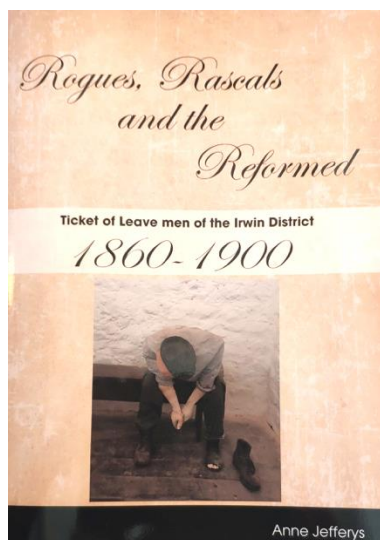
*The crowd starts to build-up at the launch
as seats run out*

The database can be explored online at <https://midwestwaheritage.com/midwest-convict-register/>.



Rogues, Rascals and the Reformed: the latest work from Anne Jefferys

The Society's Immediate Past President Anne Jefferys has not been neglecting her interest in Irwin history since moving to Perth, and recently launched her newest book, *Rogues, Rascals and the Reformed: Ticket of leave men of the Irwin District 1860-1900*.



The book cover features our own down-hearted convict in Cell No 1 at the museum

Anne identifies the 700-odd ticket-of-leavers (convicts who were, in effect, on parole) she has identified in the Irwin District before 1900, and includes potted biographies of many of them. Their stories, taken together, are a window into our local colonial-era history, revealing the immense hardships experienced by many as well as those who forged successful new lives. The Irwin had its angels and its fallen, and many of their stories are deeply moving as well as inspirational. Without convictism, our history would have been very different, and Anne's work shows just how important it is that we understand and value this heritage that still, for some, remains a stain best not mentioned.

As a spin-off from this project, Anne has been able to identify a small group of convicts who later became entangled with the Midland Railway Company (which will feature in our planned Midland Railway exhibition), and also a small group of largely forgotten women associated with convict men, and whose remarkable stories will be explored in a

forthcoming article in our 'Famous Irwinish Women' series.

Rogues, Rascals and the Reformed is available from our bookshop for \$15, either call into the museum or order online (+ \$5 postage) at https://irwinhistory.org.au/?page_id=473



Blessing of the Fleet Port Denison, 11 January

The 2020 Blessing of the Fleet at Port Denison was held on Saturday 11 January at the north end of the marina. The Society had a stall in prime position on the verandah of the Seaz Denison Seafoods, between the Fishermen's Co-op crayfish cocktails stall (too delicious!) and the Shaved Ice stall. Our display attracted plenty of sightseers and chatterers interested in local fishing history. Eight people took the forms expressing an interest in being interviewed for the *Pullin' the Pots* book, and the routes drawn on the map charted the pattern of fishing routes out of Denison.



Our stall, and our neighbours, were busy throughout the morning





The day was warm and sunny, and the sea sparkled as the fleet of 11 boats vying for the best boat prize paraded around the harbour, with the winner being Clay Bass' *Poppa G*, LFBG247 decorated in the dance monkey theme. The rope coiling competitions were a brilliant (and good-natured) display of a traditional and essential skill, with the winners being Deb Norrish (ladies), Clint Chitty and Roy McGuinness (deckies, with some disqualifications for dropping the coil), George Bass, Paul Warnock and Wayne Bailey (veterans) and Jeff Cockman, Luke Parish and Jim Chandler (open). We now have some video footage of the coiling comp in the traditional skills section of our website.



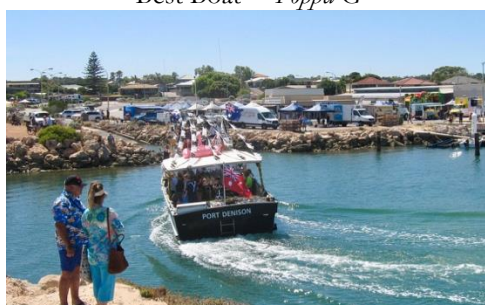
Sea Rescue – keeping it real!
Photos Bruce Baskerville

The blessing was conducted by pastors Jill Clements (Uniting Church) and Doug Higgins (Dongara Christian Centre). This festival was brought to a dramatic close with a spectacular firework display that could be seen all over Port Denison in the still evening air. The Blessing of the Fleet was hosted by Dongara Professional Fishermen's Association, and sponsors included Dongara Marine, Geraldton Fishermen's Co-op, Chimere Abrolhos Pearls, Jurien Marine Supplies, the Port Store, Southerlys, Seaside Signs, Bendigo Bank and the Western Rock Lobster Council.

The IDHS stall was staffed by Nan, Julie, Graham and Bruce, as well as other members who dropped in. Thanks to all for a great day, especially the DPFA, and including Linda who secured the choice site!



'Best Boat' – *Poppa G*



Que Sera – Roaring Twenties theme



Mind Games – Pirate theme



PISCATOLOGY 'MEET-UP' 2 May 2020

'Piscatology' is defined in the dictionary as:

Rare, the art or science of fishing. Origin of piscatology. from Classical Latin piscatus, past participle of piscari, to fish (from piscis, fish) + -logy (study)



Make sure to set aside the afternoon of Saturday 2 May 2019 for our piscatology 'meet up' in Port Denison. The meet-up will be like a seminar or conference, but smaller and less formal. The purpose is threefold: to network with other historical societies and museums in the Mid-West and get them involved, to gather information for the fishing history book project, Pullin the Pots, and to begin sketching



out ideas for a museum of fishing. It should be a fun and thought-provoking afternoon., with a tentative program shown below.

8.00	9.00	Foreshore heritage ramble
9:00	9:45	Coffee on the beach
10:15	10:30	Chapter registration
10:30	12:00	Chapter Meeting, includes business, reports, AMAGA -WA presentation
12:00	1:00	Lunch
1:00	1:10	Welcome
1:10	1:45	Speaker: history
1:45	2:20	Speaker: history
2:20	2:45	Afternoon Tea
2:45	3:20	Speaker: museums
3:20	3:55	Speaker: museums or maritime heritage
3:55	4:25	Panel: all speakers Q&A
4:25	4:30	Thanks, and closure
5:30	7:00	Sundowner

The program is still being developed, and will probably change a little, but the general outline will be as above. Interest has been shown by a number of good speakers, and this will be an opportunity to mix with our colleagues and neighbours from other societies and museums in the region, and show them the charms of Port Denison in autumn.

Image: illustration of a juvenile Western Australian Dhufish, *Glaucosoma hebraicum*. Source: FAO / FishBase. License: CC BY Attribution-Noncommercial



Q&A: The Late Denison Hall Bruce Baskerville

The Society submitted a list of 15 questions to the Shire for the Special Elector's Meeting held in the Council Chamber on Remembrance Day, 11 November 2019.

Written responses to the questions were received on 13 December 2019, and several key questions and responses are re-printed below. The full letter of responses is available as a download from our website.

Q: Did the Shire understand it had the Heritage Council's support to commence demolition of the Hall before it was notified on the Heritage Council's formal decision on 11 October ... ?

A: Yes, confirmed via email on 9 October 2019

Q: did [the Heritage Council] request or advise the Shire that it should provide more time for options other than demolition to be explored?

A: the [Heritage] Council respectfully thanked the Shire [and] encouraged the Shire to give further consideration to the Eastman Poletti Sherwood report ...

Q: Did the demolition order ... include any provisions for an archaeological watch during demolition?

A: the Shire received no requests for archaeological work post the dismantling.

Q: what was the total cost of the private security guards patrolling the Hall site?

A: The Shire has not received the invoice at this time.

Q: Why did the Shire allow its heritage advisory committee and heritage advisory service to lapse in early 2017 and what is proposed to replace these bodies?

A: The Heritage Advisory Committee had little reason to meet ... there is no current plan to replace these bodies.

Q: Why did the Shire remove the Heritage List from Planning Scheme No 5?

A: New planning regulations removed the need for a heritage list to be contained within the scheme ... [it now] only requires a Council resolution [for any change to the List], allowing the list to be more fluid and relevant.



FAHS Report on Bushfires in the South East

This report is from our national affiliate, the Federation of Australian Historical Societies.

Bushfires continue to devastate every state of Australia, and the Federation of Australian Historical Societies acknowledges the hard work of first responders and community members during this time. As the recovery efforts begin the first priority is the safety of our affiliates and their families. Donations for immediate relief and future recovery for affected communities can be made to the [Australian Red Cross](https://www.redcross.org.au/.../disaster-relief-and-recovery-...) who are distributing food and supplies, and reuniting families.

<https://www.redcross.org.au/.../disaster-relief-and-recovery-...>

If you have more time than money to spare, consider donating items now via [GIVIT - Goods For Good Causes](https://www.givvit.org.au/), and volunteering at



your local museum or historical society once rebuilding has commenced. We've seen in the past how bushfires and other natural disasters bring the community together, particularly in hubs like historical societies and regional museums. In assessing the damage to property and collections, [Blue Shield Australia's](https://blueshieldaustralia.org.au/) resources about disaster preparedness and recovery will be helpful to those communities whose history and heritage collections have been affected by this disaster <https://blueshieldaustralia.org.au/>

The Blue Shield Australia website includes links to [fire recovery resources](#) and [preparation, response and recovery resources](#) and also the following:

[Bushfire crisis in Australia](#) (04/01/2020)
[Bushfire recovery](#) (13/11/2019)

We are yet to understand the extent to which our nation's rural and regional heritage has been affected, and the Federation of Australian Historical Societies will monitor this closely in partnership with Blue Shield Australia. If your history group has been affected by bushfire we encourage you to reach out to us or Blue Shield Australia for assistance.

Reference

[e-Bulletin](#), Federation of Australian Historical Societies, Canberra, No 193, 20 January 2020



Blue Shield report on Bushfires in the East

Damage to some heritage property will only be known once affected areas are declared safe, and damage has been assessed and able to be reported. The sheer scale of the fires, the sensitive nature of many of the areas affected and with so many communities and wildlife displaced, the effort ahead is still ongoing and enormous. Australia ICOMOS have updated their [Heritage Toolkit](#) to include a [Rapid Assessment Form for Fire Affected Heritage Places](#) for use by local councils. BSA has added a list of [Recovery Agencies](#) to our website.

From a GLAM perspective there are still no reports (yet) of libraries, archives or museums being damaged. A number of small galleries have sustained damage, but information is brief at this time. Severe smoke did affect [cultural institutions in Canberra](#) in January.

A number of heritage houses have sustained significant damage, especially in Victoria including [Towong Historical Homestead](#). Victoria still has many fires burning but we acknowledge the [East Gippsland](#) region has been devastated. The South Coast Region of New South Wales and Victoria including the towns of [Mogo](#) with heritage houses and [Cobargo](#) and Mallacoota. Some of the [Kosciuszko Huts](#) have been lost but with great work by NPWS and NSWRFs staff on saving so many. There are further reports of the loss of heritage at the [Huts and Selwyn Snow Resort](#) and the [Kiandra Courthouse](#).

While the Jenolan Caves House was saved, there is [significant damage close to the property](#). We are grateful that much of the [Wollemi Pines Heritage Listed](#) area has been protected. There has been significant [destruction and damage on Kangaroo Island](#). There has been an update on [Budj Bim National Park](#) indigenous sites. It has been noted that many indigenous site areas are not yet safe to return to, to make any assessments at this time. We note comments from the [Yuin South Coast of NSW Elders](#) but also acknowledging the immediate and significant human need priority in the region.

Conservation Volunteers Australia has been selected by the Australian Government to coordinate the national environmental volunteering response to the bushfire crisis. You can register your interest as a volunteer [here](#). There are many other groups co-ordinating assistance, with [BlazeAid](#) being just one example.

We would like to acknowledge communities that sustained bushfires months ago, who are now very much in a difficult recovery phase. The [ZigZag Railway](#) is calling for [volunteers and donations](#).

The [Australian GLAM peak](#) bodies and Blue Shield Australia will meet during the week of 20th January 2020 to discuss and update on the current situation and focus on planning for future support for affected communities and cultural heritage sites. We thank the national and international cultural heritage community for their ongoing support and concern.

Reference

[Bushfire Crisis in Australia – update](#), Blue Shield Australia, 20 January 2020

IDHS XMAS SUNDOWNER 2019



FEATURE ARTICLES

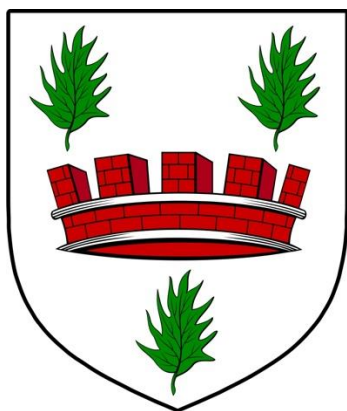


The Irwin Arms of Captain FC Irwin *Bruce Baskerville*

'The Irwin Arms' was an early name for the Dongara Hotel in the 1860s. Pubs with names like this traditionally displayed the coat of arms of their namesake on the hotel sign board. Whether that tradition was ever observed at the Irwin Arms is a moot point, but if it was, what would have been shown on the pub sign?

The shipwrecked explorer George Grey gave the name Irwin to the river in 1839 in honour of his friend, Major Frederick Chidley Irwin KH. The Major, at that time, had just returned from London after being reappointed commandant of the British garrison in the colony. He served twice as Acting Governor.

Irwin was the son of a renowned scholar, the Reverend James Irwin, of Raphoe and Enniskillen, in County Fermanagh, Ireland. The family was of Scots descent, and part of the Protestant ascendancy that ruled Ireland at that time.

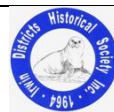


A red mural crown between three holly leaves

The coats of arms of the various Irwin/Irvine/Irving families have traditionally shown holly leaves, and the arms shown above were used by the Irwins of Enniskillen. The red mural crown between the leaves is a symbol of both municipal authority and a distinguished military officer, both apt for Major Irwin.

Whether the Irwin Arms in Dongara ever displayed a heraldic pub sign is unknown, but if it did then it is likely to have been very similar to this heraldic shield.

FAMOUS IRWINISH WOMEN - SECOND IN THE SERIES -



ISABELLA WALDECK 1859-1905 *Dr Nan Broad*

Women are unsung heroes in history, invisible inside a dwelling only known to care for a husband or parent, produce children and keep house. We know what they lived in, from tents and bough sheds to houses, how they cooked and what they cooked, on open fires or black wood burning stoves in dark kitchens, meat and flour turned into bread, cakes and puddings with few vegetables and little fruit.

Women in colonial times still forfeited their property and possessions to their husbands, could not write cheques nor could they vote. Despite these strict social practices, women very often took over the business of their family amid enormous odds, both physical and psychological. Some surely would have 'gone under' but the few we do know of succeeded, for history always remembers the victors.

On such amazing woman we know little about beyond her statistics and where she lived. Isabella Brand was born in Stirlingshire, Scotland and emigrated in 1859 with her mother and three brothers. Her Scottish father arrived at Fremantle in 1855, convict no 3354, on the 'Stag', and obtained his ticket of leave one year later. After his family joined him, it increased with two more children, all living on a small tillage lease at Greenough called *Ironbarks*.

The Waldecks also arrived at Greenough in 1859. Frederick and Fredericka (née Kniest) had come originally from Germany to London. From there they sailed to Perth by 1836 as catechists to the W.A. Missionary Society whose aims were to give spiritual guidance to the colonists and to convert the Aborigines. After a short period when the whole project foundered, these two young people married and lived in Perth where Frederick ran a tailoring business.

At this time the Waldecks converted to Methodism under the guidance of friends who saw a better method of expressing their religious beliefs through the teachings of John Wesley: believing in the Bible, free will and a

methodical belief in a moral form of social justice. This was a personal religion, with meetings held in the open or in public halls and led by local preachers.

People have always needed to revere an ideal or mythological figure (I suspect today it is money) and the displaced colonists in the Swan River and beyond desperately needed spiritual guidance. The Anglican hierarchy often did not meet the ordinary people. After all the Bishop and his See resided in India and dictated orders from that distant land. Frederick Waldeck became a Methodist lay preacher and spent the remainder of his life ministering to his fellow colonists, in religious practices, in neighbourly actions and by taking the role of medical practitioner in the district.

Settling at Greenough as farmers 23 years after their arrival on the other side of the known world, Fredericka had by then given birth to 11 children. How did she manage to carry a child every second year while maintaining the home and bringing up the family? They loaded furniture and household goods and children onto one of the coastal cutters and sailed to Champion Bay from where they would have had to hire a wagon or dray to convey the cargo to the Greenough Flats.

Once there the whole family would have worked at clearing the land, ploughing with a single furrow implement and sowing grain by hand. Harvest was also done by hand and the seed heads loaded into bags for sale. No doubt Fredericka and her girls were working alongside the men at this time while living roughly until their house was built. They called the property *Mt Pleasant*.

Isabella Brand and her mother would have been involved in similar activities besides the normal household chores. Wheat was taken to the mill and flour, bran and pollard brought back to sustain the family, the fowls and the pigs. Orchards were planted and the fruit preserved, vegetable gardens established, cows kept for milk, butter and cheese, soap handmade and tobacco grown for men's smoking and to cure scab in sheep. Both sheep and cattle were slaughtered regularly so that a household was virtually self-contained.

Isabella apparently had strong ideals and her Methodist views abhorred alcohol. She is credited with opening the taps of several hogsheds of whiskey in the house of a wealthy

settler and locking herself in her room until the uproar subsided. Obviously undaunted by the male attitude, while a passenger in a boat she discovered several bottles of whiskey which she quietly dropped over the side. On the loss being discovered the men dived to retrieve the bottles and Isabella described this as one of her 'most trying times of bravery'.



Isabella Brand and Henry Fletcher Waldeck at Ironbarks for their wedding reception in 1867.
IRME2262

Henry Fletcher Waldeck and Isabella Brand were married in the Mechanics Institute at Greenough in 1867 with a reception at her parents' home. Both were strictly teetotal and practicing Methodists like their parents. They lived on and ran *Bonniefield*, a property just north of Dongara where Fletcher, as he was known, after farming duties engaged with most of the public offices in the district. He belonged to the Irwin Road Board, the school board, the Mechanics Institute, the Society of Good Templers and became a Church Steward in the newly formed Methodist Church. He also ran the pound (held frequently to auction off all unmarked stock which had strayed).

All these institutions were well known and well documented as always with public affairs. What was Isabella, the strong-minded wife engaged with at this time? Household duties of course and giving birth to eight children, one of whom died aged three. Nothing is written or known

of her activities or her attitude to all around her or her ability to cope with deaths and droughts and personal disasters during those 16 years.

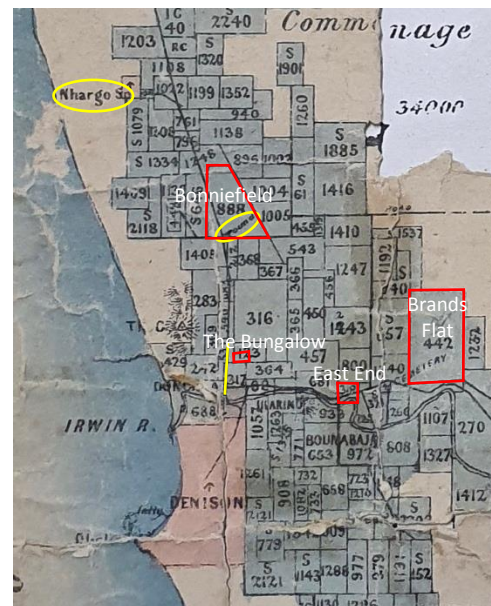
However, she was thrown into the forefront of history the day before her last child was born for, in 1883, Isabella's husband died prematurely. One can only imagine the trauma of the death bed and the drama of the premature birth to follow. The only thing to do was continue with life, taking solace from the Methodist deity and Methodist followers who rallied to assist her. Isabella survived, as did the newborn child, and now she had to run the household and the farm.

This sounds very possible in the present era but go back in time and face the times of the 1880s. Male dominance was supreme and in colonial Australia this dominance was heightened. Men sometimes refused to take orders from their male superior and would certainly not take orders nor listen with any respect to a female boss. How did this young woman understand the intricacies of farming: the animals, particularly the workforce of horses, the implements to be used, the carts and drays to be serviced, the plants to be grown at what time?

How did she manage the finance, not having authority to exchange cash in the ordinary manner of business, or pay the men their salary? How did she fit all this into her already overloaded twelve hours of daylight or even fix the candles for dim evening activities? Certainly, she may have had house help and the older children were always expected to carry out tasks suitable to their age and strength. The burden of responsibility could have broken Isabella so readily, but it did not.

In 1884 she had to face the loss of her son, Clarke Laurance and, as expected of this stalwart woman, she soldiered on. Apart from her father in law, Frederick, the Elders of the Wesley Church helped where they could while two eminent businessmen of the Irwin district became her closest advisors. Francis Pearse prevailed on her to buy *Nhargo*, an adjoining property to the north of *Bonniefield* while he and Edward Clarkson proceeded to follow the progress of the railway line being constructed from Champion Bay to meet the Midland Railway Company line coming up from Guildford.

The northern line was to pass down through *Bonniefield* and Pearse and Clarkson suggested that Isabella plant acres of crop for hay and tender to the railway to supply fodder for the working horses. This she did, winning the tender and then buying Lot 442 on Brands Flat (opposite Obawarra) for more land, reorganising all properties to maximise the crops. The detail of this is mindboggling as grain, further men, horses and machinery must be purchased and organised, harvest completed and the hay sheaved and stooked followed by the detail of supplying it to the railway gangs.



Places associated with Isabella Waldeck, shown on map dated c1880. IDHS Maps

Don't forget the household and the growing family to feed and care for. As if this were not enough Isabella sent her older sons to *Nhargo* and provided accommodation at *Bonniefield* for the Supervisor and Foreman while she trellised in the side veranda into a dining room and supplied meals for the workers – 60 men three times a day. As the line progressed further south, she still sent hay and food down on the train while the two boarders travelled back and forth, obviously preferring their comfortable bed and board to roughing it down the line.

A daughter later wrote of the action:

The kitchen rafters hung with hams and bacon and there were barrels of pickled pork. Bonniefield had everything needed and she engaged a cook and a waiter from Criddle's hotel. After many weeks she was able to buy her binder and a two-horsepower chaff cutter. The railways bought all her chaff at £12 per ton and she supplied the railways all the way to Mingenew, the train



picking up at the farm all their needs. In 1896 she was able to send we three girls to Methodist Ladies College and my brother Harry to Prince Alfred College in Adelaide.

All this frenzied activity stretched over months as the lines joined near Arrino in 1894. Isabella had made a financial 'killing' and now was able to build a substantial house (still standing but not occupied at the present time). Five years later she lost her third son, Edwin, aged 27. History does not record the circumstances of his death. Practicing Methodism all her life, she gifted a block of land to the Dongara church in 1900 to build a manse to house the Reverend. A special key was made for Isabella to open the finished building, which the Waldeck family still holds.



View from Methodist Manse along Waldeck Street, c1930. IRME0216



Waldeck women on the verandah at Bonniefield, 1904. IRME1765

We presume Isabella continued to farm the properties in a normal manner with the help of her sons and daughters who, no doubt, were married by this time. In 1904 the girls were given cash, and Fred and George took over *Bonniefield*. Isabelle purchased Cohen's Store at the East End for her son Henry. Mother and daughter Fletcherina moved to live at Francis Pearse's *The Bungalow* and the following year, while visiting her daughter in Fremantle,

Isabella contracted influenza. She passed away at the home of her daughter Elizabeth (Lizzie) Uren in Barnett Street Fremantle on 15 July 1905. Isabella was interred in the Dongara Cemetery beside her beloved Henry Fletcher, at a service attended by over 200 mourners, who sang her favourite hymn "The Sweet Bye and Bye" at the church and at the graveside.

So much is not known of Isabella's private ways and thoughts and actions but her record of achievement stands out clearly with hard facts to support the story of a strong, indomitable woman prospering in a man's world. She is known to be supportive of her neighbours and the community in the manner of her faith and of her parental upbringing. For the girl who bravely destroyed someone's whiskey, she progressed a long way while keeping her convictions and her energy intact. Isabella, we should all salute you.

The Waldeck name endures in Waldeck's Nursery and street names in Dongara, Geraldton, Caversham and Mosman Park.

Written with many thanks to Shirley Scotter who provided so much information for this article.



School History Prizes Julie Nunn

This year's awards of the IDHS History Medal for endeavour in school history were made at the presentation nights on 18 and 19 December 2019. The medals were presented by our Deputy Chair Bob Cail, and recipients were:

Primary, Year 6

Harry Lalor-Littlefair

Harry has an inquisitive mind in all areas of history with a genuine interest in our local history during class tasks.

Secondary, Year 9

James Whitmarsh

James has a keen interest in the significant world history events and their impact on future generations.

Congratulations to Harry and James on your achievements, and to all students and teachers who study and enjoy history. Share the passion!



The Sandplain Blues

Bruce Baskerville

This series looks back a generation to the mid 1980s, and reprints articles from the *Dongara Denison News* or *Rag* (the title varies at this time) that still have resonances today. This is the first, and is a companion piece to the scarlet featherflowers featured on the back cover of this issue.

The Sandplain Blues

by Bruce Baskerville, originally published in the *Dongara Denison Rag* on 30 May 1985.

In November last year [1984] I wrote an article in the *Rag* offering an alternative point of view on the submission made by the Shire Council to the Agricultural Land Release Review Committee calling for the release of more land for farming in the Mt Adams/Arrowsmith River area.

Since that time, the Review Committee has released a report for public comment, and a working party recently issued its final report to the [1st Burke Labor] State Government. The final outcome has been an indefinite suspension of the release of further land for farming (with some exceptions) in Western Australia. The Mt Adams/Arrowsmith River area has been saved in its natural condition. However, as the Shire Council has already sought the release of this area for agriculture, there is a possibility that it may one day be released, depending on the availability of climatic data, future Environmental Protection Authority reports, and WA Museum recommendations.

The preservation of the fragile Sandplains environment, and the conservation of the generally bare and almost treeless farm lands are of equal importance to our shire's future.

The Sandplains are not the vast wasteland that they are often assumed to be. The Mt Adams/Arrowsmith River area contains a variety of different environments, each with its own plant and animal communities. Gravelly flat-topped ranges some 200 metres high on the east [breakaways] slope down to a broad sandy plain which is edged on the west by the sand hills and restless dunes that form a coastal

region bordering the Indian Ocean. The Arrowsmith River to the south is yet another distinct wildlife zone, while small springs and swamps dot the area, each having an individual identity of its own.



*A tranquil afternoon on the Sandplain at Six Mile Swamp,
23 August 2017. Photo Hassan Mokak*

The soils of the Sandplain are generally sands and gravels that are, agriculturally, considered to be poor, yet some of the richest development of plant life has occurred here, with many species found only in this part of the Northern Sandplains. About 20 species of *Banksia* are found in this area. Some, such as *Menzies Banksia*, occur mostly between the Hill River and Pinjarra, with smaller number northwards to the Murchison River; while *Banksia elegans* is found only in a number of tiny pockets, one being near the limestone road cutting on the Brand Highway about eleven kilometres south of the Cliff Head turnoff [now Indian Ocean Drive intersection]. This is the only *Banksia* in WA to reproduce by suckers. Scattered forests of York Gums known as quongans dot the sandplains, while another eucalypt, the Illyarrie, is found in only two localities, one being on the limestone hills between Pell Bridge and the Aramal Swamp. Eight species of *Leschenaultia* occur in the area, with the Irwin *Leschenaultia* being found only near the Irwin River. To the south, the banks of the Arrowsmith River are the only home of the Arrowsmith Spider Orchid, although a small number of other orchid species are found in small locations in small numbers on the Sandplains.



The diversity of plant species is seemingly endless. The plants provide food and shelter for a large population of animals and birds. Emus amble across the plains as if our sight-seeing while high above them eagles and falcons glide and soar on the up-draughts of the hill sides as they silently search for prey.

What is the future of the Sandplains that make up the southern part of our shire? The use of the northern areas of the shire as agricultural land seems assured. Landowners are becoming more aware of the need to begin conserving their land from the effects of wind erosion, salinization and other forms of degradation through the planting of trees and shelterbelts, the formation of Soil Conservation Districts, and of local Greening Australia groups, and so on. The Sandplains in the Mt Adams/Arrowsmith River area are still largely in their natural state, as they have been for thousands of years. Beekeeping and wildflower picking are two small industries that have grown up on that natural state. Although some criticism is levelled at these industries because little revenue is returned to local communities owing to their itinerant nature, their contribution to the State as a whole is measured in millions of dollars. Tourism is an industry that has begun to evolve, based almost exclusively on McQueens Caravan Park [now Western Flora CP] on the Arrowsmith River – and again it is the wildlife, especially the wildflowers, that have provided the basis for this industry.

There is a growing appreciation of our Australian heritage, especially among city people, who are prepared to travel long distances to experience the beauty of the bush. By preserving the bush that we have left, we will add to the already varied economic base of our shire.

The Mr Adams/Arrowsmith River area sandplains are unique, not just to the Irwin Shire but to the world. By preserving them for the future, we can leave our descendants something more valuable than yet another marginal farming area.

Sources:

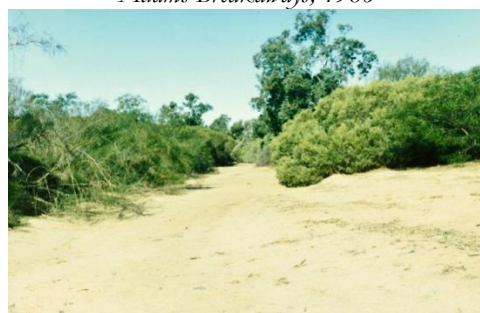
Agricultural Land Release Review Committee, Working Party Final Report, Dept of Lands & Surveys, Perth 1985

Western Farmer, 24 April 1985

Flowers & Plants of Western Australia, Erickson, George, Marchant & Morcombe, Sydney 1983
The People of the Sandplains



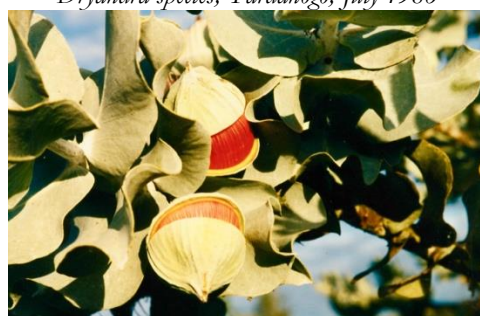
Adams Breakaways, 1986



Arrowsmith River 'delta' behind Cliff Head, (aka Royal Picnic Ground), June 1986



Dryandra species, Yandanogo, July 1986



Mottlecah (E. macrocarpa), blossoming in late afternoon sun, Mt Adams 1985



Sea Lavender continues its march along the foreshore
Bruce Baskerville

The Summer 2018-2019 issue of *The Sea Lion* carried a story on the spread of sea lavender



(*Limonium hyblaum*) around Point Leander and the marina area. No action has yet been taken to at least contain this invasive weed before it reaches the Estuary (Local Heritage Survey item #52), and this summer it is now well entrenched along Point Leander Drive, on the Denison foreshore, as attested by these pictures.

Sea lavender growing freely on Point Leander



Drive, opposite George Street.



Photos Bruce Baskerville 26 December 2019

The Society's identification of the sea lavender as the highly invasive weed *Limonium hyblaum* is derived from the WA Herbarium's identification of the plant. I feel confident that the Herbarium knows what it is talking about.

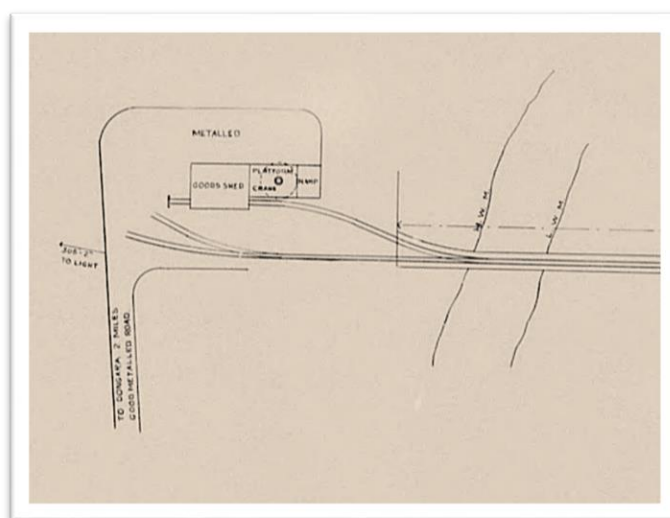
It is puzzling, therefore, to see, in response to a public question to the Shire asked on 23 July as to what the Council would be doing about removing the weed, the response on 27 August was that as the weed is "found commonly found Australia", the focus for weed eradication would remain on "more invasive species". Sea Lavender is highly invasive, so let's hope the foreshore plan includes measures for eradicating this weed before it gets to the Estuary.



Denison Hall site and its archaeological potential

Bruce Baskerville

The Eastman Poletti Sherwood heritage report on the Hall, before its demolition, noted that: "Of the photos we have seen, there are none that would support the theory of the railway turntable still being in existence under the driveway, but care should still be taken, nevertheless, with any future ground works, as there may be other archaeological features to be uncovered and recorded; possibly even retained." Note the response to the archaeology question on page 5.



Extract from Public Works Department plan of the former Bond Store & Goods Shed, later Denison Fishermen's Hall, showing the trolley rail system in the 1890s.

Reference:

Dongarra Jetty Extension Contract, Drawing No 2, PWD 7544, State Records Office of WA



FROM THE ARCHIVES



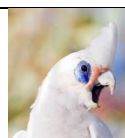
Blessing of the Fleet, 1975



Blessing of the Fleet in 1975, with Michael Kailis of MG Kailis 1962 Pty Ltd presenting the prize to John Cole, skipper of the Silver Trevalley, for best dressed boat in the Fleet.

IMRE 2248 | photographer Jeff Lysle

THE CAVORTING CORELLA



Things that go bump in the

Apparently, so a recently visiting Corella tells us, there has been some unusual bumping around in the vicinity of Mountain Bridge. While flying over that lovely spot, looking for some tender electrical wiring to chew, our cavorter espied a well-known local contractor's vehicle make the slightest, just the slightest, gentlest, most accidental little bump against a historic old farm building. The building shuddered, it shook, then it slipped gently, ever-so gently, off its stumps and on to the ground. Bump. Ooops. It had never happened before in one hundred years. Gosh, how that cavorting corella squawked!

TEST YOUR LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

WHERE IS THIS?



Do you know where this is?
Summer 2019-2020
Question



Summer 2019-2020 Question:

No, it's not in Port Denison, but it's not that far away and its now in the local museum collections in that town. And what is or was Blue Wave?

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

Spring 2019 Question: Where was the rocky seaside ledge?

Answer: Point Leander before the breakwater construction started in October 1977. The first picture (IRME1926) was taken 43 years ago by former IDHS president Harry Leaver, moments before the first truck load of rubble was tipped into the sea off the point. The second picture of the Point (IRME2669) was taken in 1920, possibly by Tom Reynolds.

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.



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.



*Microflora and fungi on the banks of
Sandplain Creek.*
Photo Bruce Baskerville 1986

[Notice]



Museum Opening Times for January 2020

Russ Cottage

cnr St Dominic's Road & Point Leander Drive
Monday/Wednesday/Friday
10am - 12 noon, 2pm - 4pm
Entrance by donation

Irwin Districts Museum & Research Centre

Old Police Station, 5 Waldeck Street
Monday to Saturday
10am - 12 noon, 2pm - 4pm
Entrance by donation

"Maintaining the identity of the Irwin District"



The Irwin Districts Historical Society Inc., Office Holders for 2019/2020

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Graham Grundy

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Bob Cail

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Shirley Scotter (Trish Parker *pro tem*)

Russ Cottage Co-ordinator

Bob Cail

Database & Website Manager

Graham Grundy

The Sea Lion Editor

Bruce Baskerville

Membership subscriptions, 2019/20

Associate \$2, Individual \$10, Household \$20, Corporate \$25.

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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

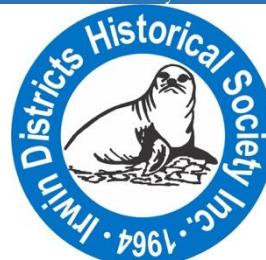
Affiliations



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



- I. To Encourage the study and writing of the history of the Irwin Districts.
- II. To maintain the identity of the Irwin Districts by preservation and restoration of buildings and settings of historical significance.
- III. To encourage the use of sympathetic architectural patterns when new buildings are constructed.
- IV. To discourage the disfigurement of premises, streets and open places by unsightly and inappropriate advertisements, poles, wires and unseemly structures.
- V. To encourage the conservation of aspects of the natural environment as it affects the character of the Shire of Irwin.
- VI. To collect, classify and preserve records and objects relating to the history of the Irwin Districts. Records may include physical and digital records.
- VII. To 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.
- VIII. To exchange information among members of the Society, by lectures, readings, discussions and public exhibitions of historical materials.
- IX. To promote public interest in and support for the preservation of historical relics, including buildings and sites, the recognition of notable anniversaries in Irwin Districts' and Western Australian history, and the erection of memorials to outstanding persons and events.
- X. The founding, subsidising or contributing to scholarships or prizes to promote this object
- XI. To establish and maintain a library, reading room, historical museum and Web presence.
- XII. To join with other associations having similar objectives to pursue common aims.
- XIII. To recognise and honour achievement in advancing these objectives or for outstanding contribution to the study and writing of Irwin Districts and other histories.

The Floral Emblem of Our Shire



The Scarlet Featherflower
(*Verticordia grandis*)
Adopted by Irwin Shire Council in 1975

Photos Bruce Baskerville, near Warradarge, 27 December 2019