

Friends



Building bridges to Peel history

Friends of Mandurah Community Museum Newsletter.

Issue April 2009.

Characters of Mandurah: Martin Reynard.

One of the common comments that I find when reading about the kind of place pre-war Mandurah was is this: It was a place where people could be themselves. This easygoing, accepting atmosphere lead to a number of interesting characters making Mandurah their home over the years. One of the most interesting was Martin Reynard. "Old Martin" as he was sometimes known, was a veteran of the Russian Civil War who had suffered a head wound in that conflict. As we mentioned in our last newsletter he did for a time live in the loft of Cooper's Mill, retiring there every night by pulling himself up a rope attached to the top. He appears to have been under the impression some person or persons were "out to get him." His nightly routine gives some hint as to another of his remarkable features: physical strength. With his Russian background one of his favourite pastimes was teaching the boys around town how to wrestle. He would travel by foot long distances and refuse any friendly person who offered him a lift. Martin's prowess at swimming was something else which he was proud of. He would swim from shore until he was out of sight and then continue, often times not returning for hours. These impressive feats were also accompanied by others which could cause suspicion. During the war years his habit of building rock cairns on the beach and estuary foreshore lead to rumours that he might be an enemy spy. His habit of pushing his way to the front of the queue on pension day at the post office also caused some friction with the community! But Martin's ways were accepted. From what I've described so far you might think that Martin's dress would be a little rustic. Far from it. He was immediately recognisable around town for his immaculate white suit and pith helmet. So official looking was he that fishermen on the old traffic bridge used to mistake him for a fishing inspector and make sure that their catches were legal! In his formal dress around town Martin often found himself rather warm on a hot day. His solution? **A quick dip in the estuary. After immersing himself, suit and all, in the water he'd emerge and continue about his business.** Thus, Martin continued about town, often taking
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Special features

Characters of Mandurah: Martin Reynard.
Nicholas Reynolds

Convict teacher; Robert Mewburn.
Jan Baker.

Aboriginal Mia Mia.
Donated by Stan Richards.

Farewell Sarah.

Regular features.

From the MDO.

Nicholas Reynolds.

Projects of Volunteers.

Jan Baker

'Friends' Chairperson reports.

From the Visitors Book.

Education articles. Setting the record straight.

Last week we mentioned Eliza Tuckey started the school, in fact Mary Ann Tuckey began a private school with the assistance of Eliza Hawley (her future daughter-in-law).

It was Eliza Tuckey (nee Hawley) who was subsequently appointed to the post 1869 on the enactment of the Elementary Education Act.



To Be Heirs Forever, by Mary Durack.

The title is taken from part of an advertisement for the Swan River Settlement in London, 1828. This book which Mary Durack states was written in response to a one woman play she wrote for Nita Pannell and is dedicated to that actress. (Interestingly at the museum we have several items which originally belonged to Nita.) The book is copyright 1976 so of course it is not new.

I recently saw a play in Broome written for children by Mary Durack and this caused me to be interested in the author again. I hadn't read her before but remembered her as being somewhat iconic and vaguely caused me shame that I had not read her *Kings in Grass Castles*.

I am glad to have read 'To Be Heirs Forever', growing up in Bassendean and living later for almost 40 years in the Swan Valley it educated me in how all the area names had come about. What I did not expect was the personality which I was to discover in Eliza Shaw, this indomitable lady who came within 6 months of first settlement of the Swan River saw, and experienced it all. Living until 1877 well after convicts had been introduced and left again she saw changing lifestyles and events which we could only read of. What is wonderful is that she documented many of these changes and was a prolific letter writer who always reflected optimism in this State's future.

Through all that happened to her she appeared to keep continuous optimism, hope and connection with the colony. To say that life was difficult for her is possibly an understatement; she continued to work a farm in the Swan Valley until into her 80s. That she had not been trained for farm life is a given and that she embraced both farming and housekeeping in a land far away from her loved ones shows her as a truly incredible person.

Mary Durack achieved a book which is not only well written and highly readable but full of information about the early days of our state. This book will be kept in the museum's Local Studies Collection.

Martin's story continued...

tea at the corner café by the bridge. What became of Old Martin? Some say that one day he never returned from one of his marathon swims. Whatever his fate, with his passing Mandurah lost one of its real characters who made the town the unique place that it was.

MDO Report

We had a great kick-off for our new Interpretation Plan at a public meeting which was held at the Museum on the 17th of March. James Cooper and Jenny Nichol who are working with us on this gave a presentation on the process and how we're going to move forward. The meeting itself was a very productive starting point for Jenny and James which will ensure that those in the community with a stake in history have their voices heard. The community feedback forms produced by Jenny have now been mailed out to those on the Museum mailing list. Anyone who may not have received a copy can get in touch with me on 9550 3681 and I'll and make sure your ideas and opinions are included in the planning process for our Museum. The next step in the process will be a day-long site visit with James measuring up the galleries and Jenny working with the MDO on getting the historical timeline of Mandurah arranged for her to interpret.

With the Stretch Festival fast approaching we now have permission from Christ's Church to borrow Thomas Peel's dining chair and cemetery head board for our display. It's now been confirmed that the headboard in their possession is indeed Thomas Peel's, which is quite a step forward and ensures that it won't be miss identified as just being an old block of wood again! The display itself will be in the style of the borehole exhibition and tell the story of the Peel and Hall family's involvement in the Church. It will run throughout the month of May.

Also as part of the Stretch Christ's Church focus this year a significant commemorative service will be held on Sunday 3rd of May to celebrate the life of George Yaburgurt Winjan who is buried in the churchyard. George Walley, assisted by the MDO has been researching Winjan in order to give a talk during the ceremony. This has uncovered new information which clarifies a point of confusion in *Murray and Mandurah*. Ron Richards was unsure how Winjan could have been reported as being close to death in 1903, but then have recovered to live until 1915. It appears that the George who was sick in 1903 was George Urian, not Winjan. Their names were often confused in reports at the time. George's talk promises to be fascinating and a real touchstone of reconciliation in our community so I encourage everyone to attend.

Sunday May 3 also sees the preview of Archaeology Week which will also be held as part of the Christs' Church festival. Please see the flyer at the back of the newsletter.

Speaking of archaeology and the barracks dig, we finally have with us the report from last year's dig on the Police Barracks site. It's remarkable how Gaye has been able to fit what we found in with our knowledge of the building's history. Her professionalism has really come to the fore in this work. Please call by the Museum if you'd like to read it. An electronic version is now also available .

Education matters

Regretfully, Sarah has accepted a full time job offer from the Bullcreek Aviation Museum. Sarah would like everyone to know how difficult a decision it was for her to make. With the job being full time, and Bullcreek only 10 minute drive for her this was the reason for her decision and she regrets leaving us at this time of great progress. We all wish Sarah the best of luck in her new position and give her thanks for the immense effort that she has put in to the Museum over the last two years.

Tales Of Times Past are very much in need of storytellers, as some of our members are no longer able to go out to the schools to pass on their experiences growing up 'in times past'. It is a very rewarding undertaking, as the children are such keen listeners and really love the stories - we get wonderful 'thank-you' letters from them. If there are any '**Friends**' who are interested in relating and passing on their experiences to the younger generation, and can spare approximately three (3) hours on a Thursday (when required by the schools), please call in and see either Ruth Watson and/or Cherry Burton at the museum on Tuesdays between **10am – 4.00pm** or ring **9550 6981**

Robert Mewburn. Schoolteacher.

Robert Mewburn was born in 1827 at Stockdale-on-Tees, Durham, UK. His occupation in England was as a printer and clerk. Robert Mewburn was transported to Western Australia aboard the *Pyrenees*, Voyage 2, after being convicted of 'stealing boots and larceny' and sentenced to 7 years' transportation. On arrival in Western Australia in 1853 he was granted a 'Ticket of Leave', and a year later, a 'Conditional Pardon'.

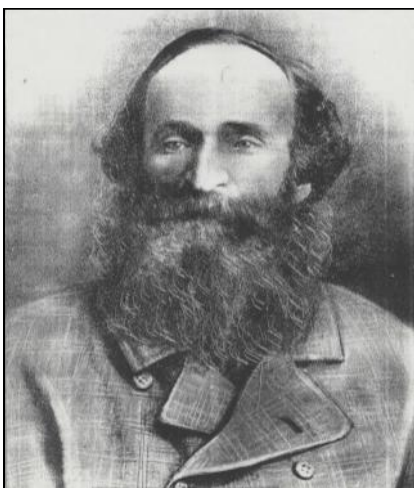
It is not known when he first came to Mandurah, however it is believed he first worked for Thomas Peel who died in 1864, then went on to run a general store also acting as a lay preacher. It is thought that he also acted as an informal schoolteacher; Robert Mewburn married a student Emma Eacott, aged 15 in 1870. The couple had 7 children.

In 1872 he organized a petition for a regular teacher in the Mandurah area, and this resulted in him being appointed government schoolmaster.

In 1876 Mr Mewburn had to erect his own school building and this remained the official school until he died in 1891. His home and school building were where the Mewburn centre is now, the school partly situated between the families on the south (ferry end) and the north (village end) of Mandurah.

Robert was succeeded in teaching for a short period by his daughter Mary Ann Mewburn who taught from 1891 until 1895 resigning due to ill health.

Mary Ann was replaced also briefly by Ellen Mulrooney until 1898 when she was succeeded by William Dalrymple in the late 1890's but more about this headmaster in our next newsletter.



Jan Baker.



1. Photo of Robert Mewburn from scrapbook cuttings.
2. Mewburn house both home and school completed 1876.

References [Erickson, Rica](#) (1983). "Schoolmasters" Erickson, Rica (ed) *The Brand on His Coat, Nedlands, Western Australia: University of Western Australia Press. ISBN 0855642238.*

Aboriginal Mia Mia.

We are indebted to and wish to thank Stan Richards who answered the call of Sarah's wish list from the Christmas newsletter.

Stan with the assistance of Frank Nannup learned the indigenous method of making mia mias. These are mentioned in his book - "Land of Many Breasts, The Bibbulmun People". Copies of this book are available at the museum costing \$10.

Stan has provided us with a description of the Mia Mia and it is reproduced below.

Aboriginal Mia Mia.

This was the kind of house built by the Aborigines of the sandy estuary area (darbalung) of the Bibbulmun tribe. In the forest and hill areas, the "lean-to" shelter was built.

One writer (Hammond) stated that two women would build the mia mia in forty minutes. Only women were allowed to make one.

To begin, two sticks of the kobart bush - about two metres long were pushed into the sand about two metres apart then bent over into an arc and tied together with a strip of "banjin" bark. Then further sticks were set about half a metre apart in a semi circle bent over and tied to the join of the first two sticks.

Thus the framework is complete. Large slabs of Paper-bark from the "kolil" tree were then laid over the framework and thin, pliable kobart sticks were then used to thread through the paper bark and the framework to tie the cover to the mia mia. This was a waterproof and cosy shelter.



Mature Aged Learning. Some volunteers and 'Friends' have started attending the Mature Age Learning Association in Mandurah lectures relating to the history and development of the area. The lectures are given in the Accent building (previously Senior Citizens) Mandurah. The lecturers are Professor Peter Reynolds and Nicholas Reynolds (from the Museum) These are proving to be very interesting and we urge any people who might be interested but unable to attend the whole program to approach MALA to possibly attend those lectures which they have time for or specific interest. Although there is a cost for this it is tailored to reflect occasional attendees.

- Further weeks will include:-
- 20.04 Peel and Eacott: Master & Servant.
 - 04.05 Henry Hall: A settler of Means.
 - 11.05 Western Australia, 1918—2008.
 - 18.05 The Suttons of Mandurah.
 - 25.05 Farming in the Murray.
 - 08.06 The Future.

Spotlight on Volunteers. Eddy Bryant: A quiet achiever. Over the years Eddie has turned his hand to many things, patiently working away to complete one project after another.

One area which has been worked on by others but never really finished is the conservation and protection of the many maps held within the Museum collection. Recently Eddy has taken up this challenge and spends some of his time every week covering and finishing this vitally important work.

Volunteer Project. Coming along very nicely is a project to map both Eastern and Western Foreshores of Mandurah in the 1950s. Ruth Watson and Cherry Burton are two of our Tuesday volunteers who are using their memories of the time and their extensive network of friends to fill in blank areas. It is hoped to be able to produce this map at a later date as a poster or like item. For the moment the map can be viewed in the passage where the stationary is held. Please feel free to view this at any time and provide more information or even photographs of the shops or houses in this area at that time.

For some time now we have been assisting with and trialing cataloguing under a new system within Spydus which is a library cataloguing system used by Mandurah libraries. City of Mandurah decided to have our catalogue available in the open domain such as was possible for library items, this component of Spydus has been developed especially for Mandurah but is now under observation by other library areas who also manage Local Studies and Museum items. Wednesday volunteers were recently specifically trained and have now worked extensively in this area finding all the bugs and difficulties a system developed for trained cataloguers may cause to our enthusiastic 'amateur' volunteers

Julia Lindley has once again gone on extended leave and has been developing a better 'how to' process on cataloguing and prior to leaving put this onto paper in a folder to assist all volunteers to be able to do the processing of artefacts. Also heavily involved in this process were Phyl Hardy and Cheryl Brewer who have entered data, provided input and will be continuing with the cataloguing in Julia's absence. It is hoped when the final version is completed we might run a course for other interested volunteers.

From the Visitors Book.

"A credit to the community and volunteers."

We welcome volunteers and are extremely lucky with all those that help us here. Many of us find that this is our 'social centre' for company and stimulation.

Chairpersons Report. Tuesday 17th of March saw a record turn-up of 'Friends', volunteers and interested parties to a meeting relating to future planning for the museum. On this page we feature some photos of those attending.

We were shown some other museums plans and given information relating to the process, shortly all those who attended will receive a questionnaire on important areas, events and activities which might be showcased at the museum.



**Mandurah Community Museum,
Welcomes Volunteers**

If you are interested please talk to
Nicholas Reynolds, 9550 3681

Or

Call in and see how friendly we are!



DIG ARCHAEOLOGY!

As part of the Stretch Festival, director and current principal author at the WA Maritime Museum, Graeme Henderson, headlines a series of three talks on the rich archaeological history of the Peel Region. Graeme's talk will cover the fascinating and controversial history of the slave ship, James Matthews, and the story behind how it came to be wrecked off our coast. Shane Burke, archaeology lecturer at the University of Notre Dame, will talk about the latest finds from his ground breaking dig at Clarence, Thomas Peel's first settlement from 1829. Gaye Nayton, consultant archaeologist, will present on the results of the dig on the Mandurah Police Barracks of 1854, a gem concealed just below the surface in the heart of Mandurah's bustling CBD.



**At Christ's Church
@ 1:30 PM**

Sunday, May 3rd 2009

**GRAEME WILL BE
SIGNING COPIES OF HIS
BRAND-NEW BOOK ON THE
JAMES MATTHEWS!
COPIES CAN BE PURCHASED
AFTER THE TALK.**

Christ's Church:

FROM STRUGGLE COMES STRENGTH

Join us for our exhibition, and learn about the fascinating history of Christ's Church, and its place in the early European history of not only Mandurah, but of Western Australia itself. On display will be objects on loan from that church,



that have rarely been seen. These items were used by Thomas Peel during his controversial life as a failed English gentleman, on the edge of European 'civilisation' during the settlement of Western Australia.



Please join us during the 1st - 29th May,
at the Mandurah Community Museum

10 am - 4 pm Tuesday to Friday

11am - 3 pm Saturday - Sunday

