

Friends



Building bridges to Peel history

Friends of Mandurah Community Museum Newsletter.

Issue February 2008.

In the last edition of the newsletter we looked at the fear of subsequent Fenian attack on Western Australia after the famous rescue of Irish political prisoners from Fremantle prison by the whaling ship *Catalpa*. We finished that article posing the question "What was seen to be the answer to the prospect of ships such as the *Catalpa* raiding the WA coast, and what remains on Garden Island today of attempts to prevent such raids?" As was mentioned in the article, rumours abounded of the Fenians building armoured ships of the kind that the Confederate Navy attempted to purchase privately from Europe during the American Civil War. With the prospect of attack by armoured ships, the only answer for the defence of Fremantle was an armour piercing gun. These are what we saw on the Museum Christmas field trip to Garden Island. Two 1860s vintage 7" rifled muzzle loading, or RML, cannons.

Although somewhat outdated by the time of the *Catalpa* raid, the 7" RML was quite capable of dealing with any small armoured cruising vessels which were likely to appear in the Indian Ocean. Armour plates of the period up to 5" thick could be penetrated at 700 yards range, a thickness of armour that did not exist in the 1880s on small ships capable of world spanning cruises. The unusual appearance of this type of gun, with thin muzzles and thick, bulbous breech ends was the result of their unusual construction methods. Due to the fact that modern high explosives were yet to be invented, gunpowder was used to propel the weapon's projectile. Gunpowder burns quickly, and at the time the gun's shell begins to move down the barrel, immense pressure is exerted on the rear, or breech end, of the barrel. Great thicknesses of metal were needed to ensure that the gun did not burst during firing.

In order to do this, the gun's steel inner barrel, or A tube, was reinforced with successively smaller hoops of wrought iron. The hoops were heat shrunk onto the A tube, compressing and reinforcing the barrel as they cooled and shrank. The forces which the gun had to endure were much greater than those in any modern gun using high explosives which, while more powerful, burn slower, giving more even pressures along longer, thinner, barrels.

The powerful charges used in these guns were needed to make use of their other innovative feature; Rifling. This system improved the range and accuracy of these guns by spinning the projectile as it travelled down the barrel and through the air. The centrifugal force of the spin kept the shell from wandering and wobbling on its path, expending its energy long before reaching a distant target. You may notice in the photo that the shells at the base of the gun have two rows of three studs on their sides. These studs match three twisting grooves in the gun's barrel. When the shell is fired, the studs and grooves give the shell its stabilizing spin. This system was known as "Woolwich" rifling, after the British arsenal where the Garden Island guns were made. The system was far from perfect. As is often the case with governments, the Woolwich system was adopted because it was cheaper than commercial rifling systems.

Welcome all our Friends & Volunteers to 2008 in the Mandurah Community Museum. This year we are striving to ensure at least 5 newsletters come your way. They will contain news of current events and information of historical subjects within the Peel region.

We also hope to focus this year on the Agricultural Hall, it is now 110 years since its opening and during that time the people of Mandurah have used it for many activities. We intend to celebrate its diversity and the success of Mandurah people in combating the closure and demolition of this valuable community icon.

Special features.

Guns of Garden Island

Nick Reynolds.

Opening of Southern Suburbs Railway.

Bob Baker.

Ghosts of Children Past.

Jan Baker.

Volunteering in Nepal.

Phyl Hardy.

Regular features.

From the MDO.

Nicholas Reynolds.
Chairman's Report.

Wayne Beardmore



Problems occurred with the lugs on the shells. They were apt to shear off while still in the bore of the gun, causing the shell to break into pieces or deviate from its aimed course at often alarming angles. This is one of the reasons why RML guns were rapidly outdated.

Fremantle's need of modern heavy guns for defence was identified in 1861 when Lieutenant Colonel Bruce, commandant of forces in the Colony first made the suggestion. Captain Peter Scratchley was sent to report in the same year as part of an Australia wide assessment of the various colonies' defence needs. It was Captain Scratchley who first identified the 7" RML as the best weapon for the job. However, in common with most of Scratchley's work in the other colonies, the actions called for in his report were never undertaken due to the expense involved. It was not until the time of the Catalpa raid that the West Australian coast's vulnerability was revealed.

The British government agreed to supply the two 7" RML (see picture opposite) guns at no cost to the Colony to help offset some of the expense of mounting the weapons. They were delivered by warship and offloaded on the beach at Fremantle. It was here that the project began, and effectively, ended. After lying on the beach for a time, the guns were moved to the volunteer defence force camp at Karrakatta for storage. They lay there, neglected, for a number of years. Around 1900, the guns were declared to be of no possible use due to age, and work was put in place to transport them to King's Park where they were erected on the site of the present day war memorial. During the early 1920s when the memorial was built the guns were sold for scrap. When the scrap merchant found, after cutting the front end of the barrel off one gun, that they were too tough, heavy and unprofitable to move, they were buried in the park.

It wasn't until the 1970s that the guns were re-located by the Military Historical Society and reinstalled in the park overlooking the Swan River. By the early 2000s the temporary wooden carriages that the guns had sat on began to deteriorate badly. Being naval in origin the cannons were offered to the navy for installation in their present site at Garden Island. Here they have come full circle to rest in sight of the waters where the Catalpa sailed, the vessel which provided the original reason for their long voyage to Western Australia.

Nicholas Reynolds.



7 inch gun at Garden Island

OPENING OF THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS RAILWAY

December 23 2007 was the long-awaited day for the opening of the Southern Suburbs Railway from Perth to Mandurah.

Jan and I had received an invitation from Mandurah Council to be on the first train from Mandurah to Perth and had decided to take advantage of this.

At Mandurah a stage and big screen was set up so we locals were able to watch the progress of the first train using the CCTV images from the stations and along the Freeway.

We all lined the Mandurah platform to cheer in the first train with all the dignitaries on board. The opening ceremony, which followed, was a laid-back affair enjoyed by all present especially Alannah MacTiernan who received the loudest cheer.

We were lucky enough to be in the front carriage for our trip to Perth. The driver's communication door was left open for the trip and the event staff offered kids the opportunity to travel in the cab. After the little kids came the BIG KIDS. This big kid was in the cab from Warnbro to Rockingham and "was forced" to blow the horn.

A plug for Mandurah. In addition to the Transperth Local services, Mandurah Council has inaugurated a free shuttle service from Mandurah Station to Mandurah Foreshore using 2 ex CAT DAB busses running every 20 minutes. Since the opening they have been forced to supplement the CATS with two 50 seater school busses.

Take a trip on the train to or from Mandurah and enjoy the experience. It's worth it!

Bob Baker.



History is made in Mandurah as lucky locals greet the arrival of the first official train to leave Perth for Mandurah, 23rd December, 2007

MDO Reports. Welcome to a New Year and another edition of the Friends of Mandurah Community Museum newsletter! The year ended on a busy note and has certainly begun in the same way with the Perth to Mandurah railway bringing us many new visitors. Read on to discover the effect this has had on the Museum.

First I'd like to mention a project that we touched on in the last edition of the newsletter. The Mandurah Community Museum's current Indigenous Oral History program has now concluded successfully with a well attended Museum Indigenous Advisory Group meeting which was held in the week immediately before Christmas. The lunch was held with two purposes in mind. Firstly to present finished oral histories and transcripts to participants, and also to hold another meeting of the advisory group. It was a great day to share a yarn and listen to excerpts from the histories which were played to the group by Dr Mary Anne Jebb who undertook the project. Bill McLarty and Ross Walmsley also attended to collect their separate oral history transcripts.

The acceptance, input, & understanding of how the project will contribute to the knowledge of Indigenous history by the community at large & also how the histories serve as a repository for the Indigenous community are good indicators of the widespread support this project had.

The Indigenous advisory group meeting which occurred in tandem with the oral history lunch helped finalise the update to the Manjar Gallery which will be implemented shortly. The group suggested that the text for the front of the oral history interactive unit be revised, with more emphasis to be placed on quotes from oral histories originating from the newly completed project. This has been completed and given to the display designers to process and turn into a graphic panel for the front of the unit. Final installation will be completed shortly when all display panels are delivered to Creative Spaces.

The Museum was present on the platform at the official opening of the Perth to Mandurah railway line. Photographs of the event, first train arrival, and first train departure were recorded. A concerted effort has been made to collect memorabilia from the opening to ensure that a complete record of the day will be retained.

The Museum prepared for the influx of visitors to Mandurah by promoting itself through the City's two visitor centres. Use was made of the Holiday Homes exhibition images to mount a display at the main visitor centre on Mandurah Terrace. Our other Toucan display board went to the new Welcome Centre at the transit station. This board mounts a display of historic photographs of Mandurah drawn from the Whitehead collection. The entire set of brochures included with this board had been used up in just over two weeks, which goes to show just how successful this particular display has been in promoting the Museum to visitors.

And now for the statistics! Taking into account walk-in visitors not attending the Museum for any special programs or exhibitions, we have experienced an increase in first weeks of January of 90% over last year. Impressive figures which show the effect that the train has had on both us and the City. With visitor numbers staying well up since the end of the school holidays, we can look forward to another year of increased visitor numbers.

Nicholas Reynolds.

Ghosts of children past in old schoolroom.

A delightful experience was given to the cleaning ladies of Wednesday by an enterprising grandmother.

We were going about our dusting in the schoolroom (rather late I might add) when a Grandmother and three children came in. They wandered round looking and talking and then the children sat at the desks and were told by Grandma to say their two times tables. This they did, bringing back memories from my own schooldays. It was said at the same pitch and same volume as then and of course all of us there couldn't resist joining in – yes we could all remember them.

Then the children were asked to say them quietly and listen really hard while they did so. At the finish we all felt we could hear children from the past days at school in Mandurah joining with them to once again please their schoolteacher.

Try it when next you are in the classroom.

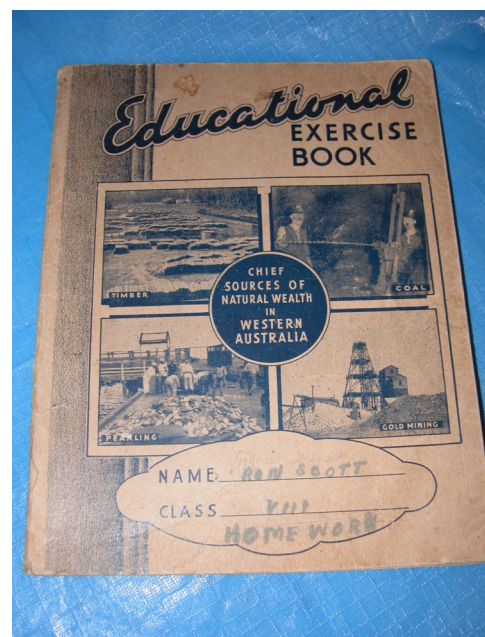
The museum is indebted to those past students of the school who lent their time and memories to the creation of this area. I am sure they too would love to know that children today can be enthused with a past memory.
Jan Baker.

Hal Sutton, "There were only 42 children went to school. That was from the whole of Mandurah."



Nobby Cooper "Mrs Delly (Dalrymple) had this damned old bamboo stickand they used to put the Maps on the edge where they put the chalk, some of the kids'd sneak in and put them behind these Maps up top high up and old Bob (Dalrymple) would go to give someone the cane and he'd run around in circles and ...

Nobby Cooper believed he started school when only around 4 years old, His 14 month older brother started and Nobby just tagged along, did a few hooks and things (writing).



Ron Scott went on to run Scott's Transport.

Volunteering in Nepal. Early last year my daughter Vickie decided to organize a holiday in Nepal with some of her friends who worked with her at Bunbury Hospital. Tom & I put up our hands and said we would like to go to Nepal as it was over 18 years since we had been there. We had always said that we would like to return again and trek in the mountains. We left everything to HER.

While she was deciding on the itinerary, we got this telephone call, asking if we would we like to go to a health camp? I thought about massages or learning yoga. No, No, Not that sort of health camp, a medical camp.

The annual 3 day camp was organized by Ecological Protection Forum-Nepal with 12 Canadian, 5 Australian, 1 UK and over 80 Nepalese volunteers. Over \$4300 USD worth of medicine was purchased for the patients. The camp was held in the mountains (Scary bus trip) about 9 hours drive from Kathmandu, in a secondary school right in the middle of rice fields. This was chosen as it had a large open space for registration and the children's programme. The school had 8 class rooms, no electricity, no running water, 2 toilets, 1 chalk board at the front of each class room, mud floors but great scenery in the rice fields.

A queue started at 3am on the first day (some had walked for 3 hours to reach the camp). The doctors and dentists saw 3344 patients over the 3 days. 1700 women were seen by the 4 gynaecological doctors with 82 women being referred for free surgical treatment in Kathmandu.

The nearest nursing hospital was at least 6 hours walk from the village, so women's health issues were targeted as there was an urgent need in this area. The men were more likely to go to the towns for employment so had access to medical facilities, but the women are left to tend the rice fields, often having their babies 1 day and going to work in the fields the next.

With no medical experience Tom & I were assigned a job in the children's programme, where we helped in a variety of activities that taught dental and personal hygiene principles to the children. These activities became so popular that on some days, we had over 400 children wanting to participate in the games and activities. It was very hectic but a lot of fun doing the 'hokey poky' and trying to communicate with the children and the appreciative Nepalese people.



The camp was a great way of seeing the Nepalese people away from the tourist areas and getting to know a little more about their way of life. Vickie is thinking about going to the next camp later in the year. *Phyl Hardy*

Nepal, people waiting for medical attention

Do you have any old photos of Mandurah or the Peel that you can loan to the Museum so that we can record them for History? The photos will not be damaged and would be returned to you after they have been scanned into our data base. Are you able to identify this house that we believe to have been in Tuckey Street. The photo was taken in 1950 and is the Thomas and Pulford families outside the property that the holidaying children used to enjoy visiting, to look at the garden ornaments.

If you can help with either of the above please telephone the Museum on 95530 680.



Friends Members. To all those members who have re-subscribed - thank you.

Those members due for subscription will receive a reminder with this newsletter.

Should you not be a member and wish to continue receiving copies of this newsletter, can we encourage you to join. Membership of the FRIENDS is for a minimal cost of \$10.

