

Friends of

# Mandurah Museum

BUILDING BRIDGES TO PEEL HISTORY

3 Pinjarra Road  
Mandurah WA 6210

*Friends of Mandurah Museum*

*Newsletter June 2023.*

## Power to Mandurah.



Above East Perth power station circa 1920s. Credit Picture Western Power.

In Western Australia our first street light was on the corner of Lord and Wellington streets in 1892 and all Perth (central) streets were lit within a year. This lighting was brought to Perth by the Western Australian Electric Light and Power Company which was located in the city in 1888.

The City of Perth also began construction on the East Perth Power Station in 1913. The four-year project provided Perth with power for decades to come. It was located by the Swan River and the main railway. Production continued from that site until 1982, that's almost 70 years.

By the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were many generators lighting public areas and shops etc. in the outer areas from the city and in the country. Yet there was no permanent power to houses, or indeed to light the streets.

Closer to Mandurah, the citizens of Pinjarra first received power in 1927, which was provided by the Roads Board. However, this was found to be more expensive than initially thought and the Road Board later sold the concession.

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## Changing Museum Hours.

From June 1st, the Museum will no longer open on weekends except by special appointment.

The museum will be open from 10am to 3pm, (note change) Tuesday to Friday.

It is possible to open on Monday by special appointment. (special opening will depend on the availability of two persons.)

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## Regular Features.

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Within Mandurah in the early 1920s, we've found advertisements for 'Tuckey's Peninsula Hotel' which provided lighting within its 'establishment'. This must have been run by a generator. We also know that when Violet Sutton built her Corner Store, a generator was purchased to provide electricity.

The Murray Road Board was the Local Govt. for Mandurah. They called a meeting in the Agricultural Hall Mandurah, on August 26<sup>th</sup> 1932, to discuss a proposal by Messrs. White & Co., electricians of Perth to provide power to Mandurah. This meeting was attended by large numbers of ratepayers, with an outcome of the meeting accepting the proposal.

Messrs. W White and Co. appear to be a well-known firm in Perth. While we can't be sure, a firm of the same name had traded in Hay St, Perth for many years in the business of providing supplies etc. It is possible that with the advent of electricity they also pursued that business. However, what is clear, is a firm named Messrs. W. White and Co. also in Hay St, had traded since the early 1920s in providing electricity to some of the well-known Perth firms and also church establishments. There is an article regarding the provision of lights to the Ambassadors Theatre which had been recently completed in 1928. Messrs. W. White and Co were supplying 22 thousand electric light points. The later history of White & Co., is a mystery, as the last newspaper articles to be found actually relate to the proposal for power to Mandurah.



Early days, building the power station.

Shortly after the ratepayers' meeting the company, which was joined in partnership by Patrick William FitzGerald, commenced building in Davey Street. Electricity didn't commence being supplied to the town until 1933, and shortly after this, Messrs. White and Co., sold their share to Bill (as he was known) FitzGerald.



Early days, Wm White & son.

After his wedding to Pat Bryan, the couple conducted the business, firstly renting a home and later purchasing. Pat FitzGerald had experience in bookkeeping and account management from her father's firm which was the first job printing works in W.A., and had been commenced by her grandfather in 1877. By the time the couple married it appears that Bill had also built ice works next to the power station and they were able to supply a ton of ice per day. According to records in 1933 power went around to the Peninsula Hotel. Pat believes at that time, there was street lighting available around to it on Mandurah Terrace. Several lights were also on

the bridge. From the beginning streetlights were turned on from sunset to midnight. At the onset, just five consumers were on their books.

Prices for electricity were one shilling per unit, the bill was monthly, but there was a discount if paid by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month. Pat used to do all the office work including bookwork, billing etc. At this time Bill read the meters but it fell onto Pat to do this during the war years.

Until the couple were on their feet and consumers had increased, Bill was the only technician on duty and could work from early morning until midnight when, in the early years, the power was switched off. It was nearly five years before they could employ another person to help with running the power station, although from time to time family would help.

With demand increasing the need for more support was obvious, so Jim Orrock was the employed. A Scotsman from Clyde with diesel experience, he had always dreamed of migrating to Australia and did so with his new wife. Jim was to continue to be employed and become a valuable friend up until the concession ended and the S.E.C. took over. He later retired while working for the S.E.C. in Albany.

To ensure profitability, the business expanded to include provision of several different services and were distributors of other items.

By the time World War Two started, there had been requirements for 24-hour power and this commenced in late 1938. To assist with this they installed a smaller engine which managed the midnight to dawn service as the load went down at that time. As mentioned, Jim Orrocks had been employed to assist with running the station, and with his help Bill continued to work during the evenings and into the night. They also carried out any maintenance required.

By the commencement of war, Mandurah Electric Light and Power Co. supplied the power for pictures, both open-air and inside, plus halls for dances etc.

The business was seriously affected by the onset of war. There were few tourists coming to Mandurah, and many residents enlisted or were called up so demand was down. Need for ice was also impacted badly during the war, however, the use of ice improved after the war finished and was often in great demand by campers and others during the summer months.

After the Japanese attacked Darwin and Broome, street lighting was curtailed. Petrol rationing meant that few people could travel very far, so family members also weren't able to visit



Power Station & Ice Works.



Pat & Bill FitzGerald, Melbourne. Circa 1940s.

during the war. There was an air raid siren at the powerhouse.

Because the business became 'very quiet', Bill signed up for the air force. He went in as an electrician and he worked on planes to start with. When the air force found he had diesel knowledge they put him into power houses in Kalgoorlie & Geraldton. He was eventually discharged while in Busselton.

In 1945, when the war both in Europe and in Asia, had ended, many soldiers returned home, and people recommenced their travels and holidays. There was not the ability to build houses for some years due to supply problems. Sleepouts adapted

for summer visitors or holidaymakers became important to family members, many of whom were marrying. Electricity and ice were in high demand and business picked up.

After years of managing and providing a service to very few, the business was picking up but the time to the end of the concession was approaching fast. Many changes were coming, with all electricity supplies now coming under the auspices of the State Electricity Commission as each private concession wound down. There were also changes to the provision of power, as it converted from D.C. to A.C. which was major change for both houses and street lighting.

Provision of the changes, and the equipment needed would be costly and time consuming. The State Electricity Commission was first legislated in 1945 and was to take over the provision of power around most of the state. They provided Alternating Current which was a major undertaking over the years of transition. In 1975 there was a name change to the State Energy Commission of Western Australia and this continued as a Government body until 2006 when it was once again re-organised into a group of individual bodies, with part being privatised.

The FitzGeralds relinquished their holding, selling the equipment to the S.E.C. Their equipment was aging and some had been second hand when first installed. Documents show they received £11,000 for all the machinery, customer information and goodwill etc. There was a lease agreement also for the land and buildings, with a payment of £2.10.0 per week being made by the S.E.C to the FitzGeralds.

Over the years of the power concession there were many people who assisted or were employed at the power station or ice works. They included such town personalities as Roy Caddy, who talks about getting his 'ticket' to run the engine room. He also assisted with making the ice while his brother-in-law-to-be Terry O'Loughlin delivered the ice. The O'Loughlins continued their friendship with Pat & Bill FitzGerald, visiting them for holidays. Jim Orrocks has already been mentioned for his long contribution to the business.

Finally, in 1951 the power concession was concluded and Bill and Pat FitzGerald continued to operate the ice works and live in their small home next door. In our next newsletter we will bring a short history of the Ice Works.

***The Museum is privileged to have a well-developed history of the Mandurah Power Station, due to Pat returning to Mandurah as a retiree and providing us with an oral history of her times here.***  
***Jan Baker.***

### Tea Trio Set

A tea trio set consists of a teacup, a saucer and a dessert plate, all usually made of bone china and in the same pattern from the same manufacturer.

On display is local resident Loraine Coates collection of vintage and antique trio sets produced in England by Charles Ford, Royal Doulton, Shelley and Wileman. These ceramic companies are known for producing some of the finest tea sets in the world.

The sets on display were produced during the late 1800s and early 1900s. They have delicate designs, intricate patterns and bright, vibrant colours. They would have been used by refined English society at tea parties.

Loraine remembers visiting her grandmother and waiting patiently to have afternoon tea and scones. "It was a symbol that I was old enough to join the adults and I learnt the correct way to behave. I felt very grown up and loved grandma's tea sets."



### Celebrating NAIDOC 2023

Join us at Mandurah Museum as we celebrate NAIDOC week during the July school holidays.

Explore a travelling Art Case we have on loan from the National Gallery of Australia. The art included in the Art Case showcases Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, ideas and stories about land and Country.

You will be able to look and handle each art piece and create your own artwork to take home. This will be a bush mouse from clay and a woven turtle.

**Dates: 4, 5 & 6 July and 11, 12 & 13 July 2023**

Time: 10am-11am

Suitable for children aged 5-11 years.  
Cost: Free

An adult must accompany children and bookings are essential, via [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/celebrating-naidoc-week-tickets-658253282287). (Adults do not require a ticket to attend) For more information, please contact us at [museum@mandurah.wa.gov.au](mailto:museum@mandurah.wa.gov.au) or 9550 3683.

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/celebrating-naidoc-week-tickets-658253282287>



## Celebrating NAIDOC Week

Mandurah Museum is showcasing portraits of some local Noongar people. This exhibition invites visitors to expand their knowledge and awareness of the important roles they hold in our community and their families.

On loan from the National Gallery of Australia are works of art created by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders that provide an insight into the relationship they have with the environment.

Work produced by students at Coodanup College, Greenfields & South Halls Head primary are on display, as well as Aboriginal inspired artwork from RT Kids.

Everyone is welcome to come and view the display.

**When:** 4 - 21 July  
**Opening** Tuesday - Friday 10am - 3pm  
**Cost:** Free



**Where:**  
Mandurah Museum  
3 Pinjarra Road  
Mandurah WA 6210  
Phone: 9550 3683  
[mandurah.wa.gov.au](http://mandurah.wa.gov.au)

## WELL, WELL, WELL.

Written by Julia Lindley

Having recently been asked about the history of Peppermint Grove Farm (*Originally being home to the unfortunate Leah Fouracre. See Museum Fact Sheet for her tragic tale.*) I decided to take a drive down The Old Coast Road to view the remains of the farm. Noticeable in the background was the remnants of its well. This started me on a trail to locate any of the **once so important wells** in the Mandurah area that are still visible or visitable by the public.



### Peppermint Grove Farm Well

Remains of the well behind a protective fence.

It was described as having 'beautiful, clear water', a drink of this good cold water meant much to the hot, dusty traveller of those early times. (*Hasluck, Alexandra*)

**Located on the Forrest Highway, Waroona near Peppermint Grove Road.**

In the early days of the Peel settlement (starting around 1841) a Perth to Bunbury track was surveyed. Along this route was to travel bullock teams, coaches carrying mail and often solitary riders and convict gangs there to build bridges and do repairs etc. The most critical element for travellers and their animals was water and so where none was available from fresh springs it was necessary to dig and build wells. Often these were accompanied by small inns and stopovers.

The natural springs and wells were spaced out with about a ten mile gap – being the distance most animals were capable of travelling in comfort. (*Museum Fact Sheet on The Old Coast Road*)

Today, one of the most obvious and visible wells is that at the north-east corner of **Falcon Reserve, Cobblers Street Falcon**. Originally built around 1890 by Seymore and William Ward whose family lived in the Pleasant Grove locality, it is a cylindrical, 6 metre deep, limestone stock well and it had great community significance at the time as it was both a locality marker and with a windmill attached, a supplier of fresh water.

It was restored by the Falcon Progress Association in 1977 using stone taken from the ruins of Cox Cottage located opposite the site.

Most of the once existing wells along the route have been filled in, built over and covered by roads only to be lost to any history loving researcher.



### Hall's Cottage Well

7 Leighton Place, Halls Head, Mandurah

A trip to Hall's Cottage near the Mandurah Bridge will reveal the old well used for fresh water by its many occupants. The windlass, used for drawing up the water looks a little worn but the well is still visible along the back fence line of the cottage.

*Halls Cottage is open to the public most Sundays between 10.00am—3.00pm.*

## Harry Perry Park

Another remnant limestone well is that which was constructed near the southern end of the now "Harry Perry Park" in Madora Bay. It is still visible today although in a sad state of repair and with its information plaque missing.

This site is rather different in that it was the **Karinga Road Camp Site**, part of a network of seasonal Noongar camps along the coastal plain. For millennia this site had supplied food from the natural vegetation as well as its soak being a major water source. Obviously the first colonists took advantage of the knowledge the local people had when finding their water.



Once white settlers arrived they converted the soak in to a limestone well. Today you can go to its leafy corner near Mandurah Road, sit on a bench seat and envisage the past.

The well has been sealed off but a second limestone circle a couple of metres away marks where the water was pumped for the livestock to drink.

**No signs remain of its Indigenous history.**

**Recent news is that the City of Mandurah has commissioned a new plaque to be made explaining the importance of this area to the Bindjareb Noongar people.**



*Of interest is the story Nicholas Reynolds (MDO of the museum) tells of the depression which can sometimes be seen in the grassed area of Dalrymple Park near the museum. This marks the location of the well that was sunken in 1852 for the Police Barracks and used by other buildings that followed. This original well was converted for the reticulation of the current park and its casing is hidden beneath the lawn. In the 1980s it was decided to increase the depth of the well and one of the workmen sent down with a jackhammer was somewhat startled when the hammer disappeared through a 2 foot wide cavity. On poking his head into the hole he discovered a small limestone cave lay beneath. The well was successfully deepened and still operates today but with a modern electric pump.*



## Wells Lost

Until recent times it was possible to view two other of the original water sources for the town as they lay behind the Sumadera Bakehouse (Lot 13 and the adjoining block) in Mandurah Terrace. In their day, these supplied much of the town water plus the Peninsula Hotel, the latter being piped across the early footbridge to the "Pen". Scheme Water did not arrive in Mandurah until the early 1970's so the district was dependent on rain, bore and well water. Most homes were self-sufficient.

Another critical well lay within the Corner Restaurant near the bridge (The Bridge, Prontos etc,) however it was filled with concrete by the owner and is therefore hidden. This was the supply Violet Sutton used down the bridge end of town and it was said to have been of very high quality.

All that remains of this well are the top four layers of the brickwork liner which the museum was able to rescue and now archives.



One can but wish that a few more remnants of the past were not lost. Even the most well-known, though not of the watery type, was the **Wishing Well** which was removed for the construction of the 2017 bridge. Its building blocks lie somewhere in the town awaiting reconstruction and despite its original location being difficult to replicate, a place in Dalrymple Park overlooking the point in the Estuary that Thomas Peel chose for a crossing, could be found on which to reinstate it. Its rather politically incorrect plaque could be amended to reflect the thinking of today.



**Peel Memorial Well** Built 1955 by the Mandurah Progress Association and funded by Public subscriptions. The Heritage Council of WA states that the well had historical and social significance. It was removed in 2015.



Local icon removed: The Thomas Peel Memorial Wishing Well was put into storage this week prior to redevelopment works on the bridge.



## MDO Report

During the week of May 15 to 20<sup>th</sup> I was fortunate enough to have been enabled by the City of Mandurah to attend the 2023 Australian Museums and Galleries Association national conference. The conference theme for 2023 was 'Discomfort: Brave Conversations and New Connections in Changing Environments.'

I'll give a few notes from the highlight presentations that I attended below:

Dr Ann Hardy, University of Newcastle, presented on a way to help local history organisations in establishing the Significance of their collections. The pathway to establishing your collection's significance is rigorous historical research. She developed GLAM labs. (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums). Local Governments can purchase digitisation and collection management materials that smaller institutions cannot afford and then loan these out. It saves the community overall as it means each organisation doesn't use Local Government grant funding to buy identical equipment which after a project is over is only used occasionally.

Indigenous academic Craig Richie had some interesting thoughts. He said that the Federal Government has an ambitious Indigenous agenda. Is 'truth telling' retraumatizing if it's just bringing up grievances repeatedly? Truth is about the sheer brilliance of Aboriginal people, their relationship with the land and ability to endure sustainably on it for millennia. He said the key is telling the story of Indigenous people in their own right and not just as victims of colonialism. There is a rising tide of indigenous nationhood in Australia and his project is all about building relationships.

Unlocking the potential of collections through storage facilities was an interesting presentation by Samantha Hamilton and Amanda Miekkeljohn from the Arts Centre Melbourne. The concept of visible and open storage facilities which visitors can be part of was the subject. The Victoria and Albert Museum are also doing this. Arts Centre's collection is under resourced and largely unknown. There was a lack of spaces to test ideas, manage, preserve and make collections accessible.

The project employed 22 people after the organisation recognised its statutory obligations. They had a \$12.5 million budget from many grant sources as the project had a good business case. New ways of business thinking and outreach were required overall as institutions can't rely on government for storage space and other investments.

**Nicholas Reynolds**

## Friends of Mandurah Museum.

The last several months have been busy, not because we have been working but due to the fact that your Chairperson/ Secretary, Treasurer, and committee member have been on holidays, while another committee member has been very unwell. We wish her well and a speedy recovery. We have been away, not at the same time but there has been a certain overlap.

We are hoping to be able to run a general meeting in the July. There are plans for a special lecture to precede this meeting. This will be the last general meeting prior to our A.G.M. and I would like to encourage you all to attend.

It would also be helpful if there were Friends out there who could assist in various roles as many of us on the committee have been doing it for many years and are ready for a break.

Just a reminder, the Friends are here solely to support the Museum in its endeavour to promote the history and heritage of the Peel area. This is done in several ways, one is to raise some funding for purchases which are not considered necessary by the Council but enhance our provision of service, or possibly mean the acquisition of heritage related items. We also assist with the various exhibitions and activities run at the Museum. In this way we combine with Museum Volunteers to aid both Nick and Katrina in their roles.



Lunchtime crowd at Newcastle Museum conference

**Mandurah Museum, 3 Pinjarra Rd,**

**MANDURAH WA 6210.**

**Opening hours, Tue - Fri 10am to 3pm.**

***(Other times by special arrangements)***

**Telephone: 9550 3680.**

**Email: [museum@mandurah.wa.gov.au](mailto:museum@mandurah.wa.gov.au)**

**Internet: [www.mandurah.wa.gov.au/Facilities/Museum/Friends](http://www.mandurah.wa.gov.au/Facilities/Museum/Friends)**

**Friends of Mandurah Museum,**

**3 Pinjarra Rd, MANDURAH WA 6210.**

**Meetings 4 times per year as notified.**

**The mission of the Friends is to provide assistance and support to the Museum in all its endeavours.**

**The 'Friends' also seek to promote the heritage and history of Mandurah, and to assist other like minded bodies.**