

Friends of **MANDURAH** Museum

Building bridges to Peel history

May 2025



Mandurah history brought to life for National Heritage Month

May proved a busy month for Mandurah Museum, with a flurry of activities for every age - for locals and visitors alike. Museum curator Nicholas Reynolds led an intrepid gathering on a 1.2km heritage walk around some of Mandurah's most storied sites (pictured above outside Halls Cottage; full story - Curator's Report, pg 4). Children and young people got their hands dirty in craft and archaeological activities, learning from museum educator Katrina Gauci, artists and archeologists (full story - Education Matters, pgs 2 - 3).

INSIDE

The archaeological dig weekend
- Page 2

School holiday activities a great success
- Pages 3

Archaeologist, war researcher speak
- Page 4

Friends founder recognised
- Page 6

Volunteer focus: what I am working on
- Page 6

Mandurah young people

Get stuck into history



EDUCATION MATTERS

with Katrina Gauci



Archaeology for Kids attendees had a great time learning from Perth-based Archae-Aus experts, including Dr Fiona Hook, pictured with participants. Photos: Josh Cowley

The smiles on kids' faces eclipsed the setback affecting the May 17 - 18 archaeological dig at Leslie Street that was suspended due to the finding of unidentified building materials.

Archaeology for Kids – dig into the past!

The *Archaeology for Kids* activity was moved from the Leslie Street Centre to Mandurah Museum. The booked-out events saw children learning from the best - experts from Perth-based archaeology company Archae-Aus - as they uncovered and catalogued items hidden in sand. Both the morning and afternoon sessions on both days were fully booked. Despite some no-shows, the activity

was well attended with 65 children accompanied by 42 adults. Feedback was very positive, including, "The archaeologists were so interesting and informative - I want to be one," and "We are going to an op shop to buy a vase and smash it, to do the refit activity (again)."

Archaeology experience for students

Earlier in the week, students also had the opportunity to participate. Dr Fiona Hook provided an engaging introduction to the work of archaeologists and the purpose of the excavation at the Leslie Street site. The first session was attended by 11 Coastal Lakes College Year 11 students and 7 Austin Cove Baptist College Year 11

students. The second session was attended by 17 Mandurah Catholic College Year 9 students, and Coodanup College students – 26 from Year 7 and 5 from Year 12. Students rotated through three interactive activities: **Leslie Street Excavation** – Students worked alongside archaeologists to uncover artefacts, sift through soil, and identify their findings; **Dig Box Discovery** – Students explored artefacts in dig boxes and completed a recording sheet that involved identifying, labelling, drawing, and documenting their discoveries; and **Piecing Together the Past** – challenging students to refit broken artefacts, such as plates,

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Ships crafted during April Holidays. Left and below: Crab Tales activity leaders origami expert Sanny Ang, and artist Sarah Petrich.



pottery, vases, and bottles, using tape to reconstruct the original items. It was a memorable and educational experience that brought history to life, with some teachers and students suggesting it become an annual event.

Archaeological Quiz

Participants searched for hidden images of famous archaeological sites, completing a phrase to potentially win a Dinosaur excavation kit – an activity we first ran during April school holidays. A total of 32 entries were submitted over the weekend. The lucky winner was a local boy, Eoin, who handed in his entry just before closing time on Sunday. During the holidays, 116 entries were submitted. Another local boy was thrilled to win the excavation kit.

April holidays - Build Your Own Wooden Sailing Ship

Children visited Mandurah Museum to learn about the *James Service* shipwreck and craft their own wooden sailing ship. Participants also had the opportunity to walk to Christ's Church to see the historic *James Service* anchor up close. Sessions ran at 10.30am each Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. The workshop was free, with tickets booked through Eventbrite. Sadly, 30 out of the 86 children booked (35%) did not turn up. Fortunately, 39 walk-in participants filled those gaps, bringing the total to 95, which is fantastic.

Crab Tales: A Festival's Journey Through Time

Mandurah Museum was open during the Crab Fest weekend, with stellar

assistance from Friends. Over the weekend we had 234 people visit: 131 adults and 40 children on Saturday; and 47 adults and 16 children on Sunday. Additionally, 23 people entered the Blue Swimmer Crab Quiz, with a LEGO set awarded to a local child winner. A marquee in Dalrymple Park featured activities led by origami specialist Sanny Ang and local artist Sarah Petrich, seeing 50 participants on Saturday, and 60 on Sunday. Children created origami crabs, fish, boats, and decorated wooden dolphins or surfboards.



CURATOR'S REPORT

with Nicholas Reynolds

Archaeology Presentation with Dr Fiona Hook

Dr Fiona Hook from Archae-aus delivered an informative and engaging presentation on May 17 on the findings from last year's excavation at Halls Cottage. Attendees, including two young participants, praised Dr Hook for her clear and accessible explanations of the archaeological process and the cultural and historical significance of the artefacts (pictured above, photo by Josh Cawley), describing it as highly informative.

Australians at War - Sandra Playle

On May 1, Sandra Playle, a professional researcher specialising in World War One, delivered an in-

sightful presentation, *They Went with Songs to Battle*. The presentation highlighted the contributions and experiences of Australians during the war, with a particular focus on the exhumation and reburial of the soldiers of Pheasant Wood. The talk was divided into two parts: the first examined the lead-up to the Battle of Fromelles, including the battle itself and the compelling stories that emerged during the research, and the 2009 Fromelles Dedication Ceremony. The second part delved deeper into the battle, the initial burials, the subsequent excavation, and the artefacts uncovered. This section also explored the personalities involved and concluded with a poignant letter from a corporal to his wife and daughter. I want to thank Sandra for delivering

this highly moving presentation.

Archaeological dig

The archaeological excavation was due to take place outside the Lesley Street Centre, roughly where the original 1830 military barracks were built in Mandurah, but was suspended due to the discovery of unidentified building materials.

Guided tour through Mandurah's past

I led a guided tour of historic buildings in Mandurah on May 8 aimed at providing participants with a deeper connection to the local history and heritage of the city. The walk covered a 1.2km route around the old part of town, focusing on historic buildings and sites that highlight the region's cultural evolution – starting from the Anglican church and passing through key historical locations such as the

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Heritage walk participants visit the Mandurah War Memorial.

first post office, the Bridge Café, Tuckey's house, the Brighton Hotel, Hall's Cottage, and the War Memorial. The walk was designed to provide insights into architectural history, the stories of the people who lived and worked in these areas, and the broader historical context of the town's development. The activity was designed to complement the archaeological dig and exhibition, offering a more holistic approach to the region's history.

Museum Service Review

Work on this has also been ongoing during this busy time. The service

review looks at what the Museum is doing now, what it could be doing in the future, what currently works, what doesn't and a plan for the Museum going forward. The results of this process will be very interesting to see. The review will be led by the city's Heritage and Community Capacity team, looking at the functioning of the museum and its place in the broader community. Volunteers have been invited to attend a June 3, 9.30am meeting at the museum to give their thoughts on day-to-day operations, visitor engagement, volunteer involvement, the City Centre Heritage Trail, and the museum's

programs and service offerings.

Peel Chapter meeting – opportunity for volunteers

Back on Saturday March 8 we had our most recent meeting of the Peel Chapter of the Australian Museums and Galleries Association at Smirk's Cottage in Kwinana. Plans are also in place for a 'mega meeting' at our November meeting at the Army Museum of WA in Fremantle. This will be open to all museum workers and will consist of talks and training session of relevance to Museum volunteers, so do keep an eye out for more information closer to the date.

Friends of Mandurah Museum

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The mission of the Friends is to provide assistance and support to the museum in all its endeavours, and to promote the heritage and history of Mandurah.

Membership of the Friends is by a yearly membership fee of \$10 due each August. Meetings are held 4 times per year as notified.

VOLUNTEER HAPPENINGS



Jan Baker (third from left) celebrates with her former museum colleagues and friends after receiving the Local Legend Award from Mandurah Mayor Caroline Knight.

Friends of Mandurah Museum founder Jan Baker was presented with the Local Legend Award by Mandurah Mayor Caroline Knight at Mandurah Museum on May 6. The event was covered on Mayor Knight's social media:



"Jan has volunteered at the Mandurah Museum for more than 20 years, helping to establish the Friends of Mandurah Museum committee and holding several key positions with the group over the years. Jan has contributed to many research projects and exhibitions about Mandurah's history and has collected more than 100 oral histories from local pioneering families to preserve local stories. She's also organised many fundraising events, raffles and even a mullet barbecue which I hear was a real crowd pleaser. Congratulations Jan and thank you for all the amazing work you have done in our community."

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Volunteer focus

Louise Nash (pictured) has been volunteering at Mandurah Museum for six months. Louise says cataloguing and curation are areas of personal and professional interest, and that one day she hopes to be working in the field – at a library or a museum. Along with other volunteers, she has spent the last five months checking the museum's collection items (inset) against its digital record, held on the Spydus integrated library management system. It is a never ending task in the life of any museum. Occasionally, she says, there will be an item that isn't where the record says it should be. Very occasionally, there will be an item whose digital record has gone missing altogether, or vice versa. When Louise isn't correcting and reconciling the record at the museum, she enjoys playing hockey in Mandurah and around Perth.

