

Friends of

# Mandurah Museum

BUILDING BRIDGES TO PEEL HISTORY

3 Pinjarra Road  
Mandurah WA 6210

*Friends of Mandurah Museum*

*Newsletter April 2023.*

## **Volunteer Auxiliary Observation Corps and Mandurah.**

The Australian V.A.O.C. came into existence at the end of 1941, when it was established on similar lines to the Royal Observer Corps in England. It was to be a pre-warning system against possible enemy air attacks and a 24-hour watch on the skies by which its network of observation posts and zone control centres, reported to the R.A.A.F. As the war moved closer to Australia, the efforts of the spotters were concentrated mainly on safeguarding the flights of allied aircraft and supplying weather reports to the R.A.A.F. Areas covered by the V.A.O.C. included a wide radius round capital cities and coastal strips of the coastline of Australia. While in many places, no enemy aircraft came near the posts, there are countless records of the bases guiding aircraft home or to a safe landing place. They were also instrumental in observing some planes actually crash landing. Numerous people were saved by the V.A.O.C groups.

Early in June 1945, the Department of Air revealed that the V.A.O.C. had a credit score of 1,871 aircraft assisted throughout Australia. This total includes a number definitely saved, and many more assisted in a variety of practical ways when in distress. Enrolments in the V.A.O.C. reached approximately 34,000. Victoria and Tasmania contributed 13,913 to this figure. New South Wales, 6,477; Western Australia, 6,139; South Australia, 3,527; Queensland, 3,381.

However, these activities weren't the only public service undertaken by the V.A.O.C. members during this time. The newspapers recorded that they also spotted the onset of fires. In W.A. there was actually an observer post in what was originally a fire-watch tower.

**Editor.** Welcome to our bumper April - May edition of the Friends newsletter.

It is hard to believe that we are once again in the Anzac month. Over the years we have brought you much of the history of both wars and of the Mandurah community and their war efforts. This month is no different. We are enlarging on an article from some years back about Plane Spotting in this issue. As always, our newspaper collections, oral histories and the ever-reliable Trove have provided us with valuable insight into this subject.



We have had many people come to the museum to check out the current exhibition 'Out of the Shadows'. Featured photographs from the opening of this exhibition are further in the Newsletter.

The exhibition opening was attended by many Friends who have been with us almost since our first year of operation.

With the Police exhibition opening last year and continuing into 2023, plus two exhibitions this year and working towards one on the **90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Electricity to Mandurah**, the museum staff and volunteers have been very busy since the start of the year.

More information on the next exhibition is further in the newsletter.

**Editor Jan Baker.**

**Index, this can be found in this publication on the back page.**

Observation posts took a variety of forms, but were almost always, furnished with the same equipment — charts of all Allied and enemy aircraft silhouettes, binoculars, telephones, special message forms, and a clock which was synchronised with Air Force time - for time. As aircraft at that time were capable of speeds of more than 300 m.p.h. the equipment supplied is the essence of the job those watchers were doing.

Within Western Australia, there were Airwatch posts recorded in newspapers from as far north as Dampier, with one post being on a property with many of the indigenous employees taking part in shifts. They were very good at identifying planes. Other posts were recorded down as far as Albany and inland as far as Southern Cross. By no means were they confined to the coast.

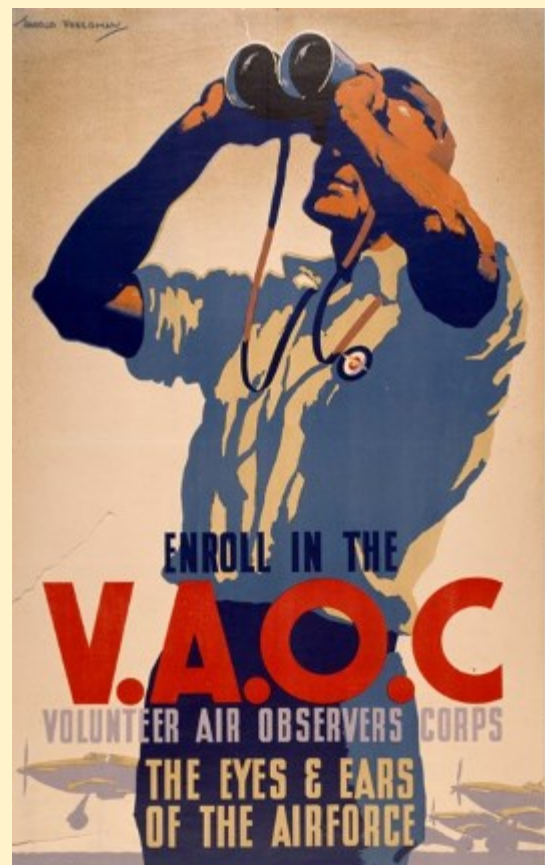
In the early months of 1942, Mandurah commenced their own air watch, with most of the responsibility for recruitment going to a recent arrival, Mr. J. W. Moyses who had moved to Mandurah from Albany. An article of that time states that —“Mr. J. W. Moyses, chief observer, will be glad to enrol anyone. He will often be found at the post, in the old school yard, and lives up two doors past the Power House, in Davey street.”

With a small population, Mandurah supplied daytime service with mostly women volunteers, who included Mrs Stinton, Sib Scott, and Hilda Cooper. We know of Mr Davey and Mr Moyses but have been unable to find any more names of volunteers. However, it is recorded that by 1944, shifts for this activity were only required every 10 days, so there must have been more people. As ever, the museum would like any information relating to that so we may record the names of these valuable wartime citizens for posterity.



It is interesting that the actual hut used for this activity was on the school grounds (now the Mandurah Museum), and there is a record of a siren being placed in the Power House. During 1944, the Spotter group held a fund raiser picture show — “The Battle of Britain”, which was sponsored by Hobart and Edith Tuckey who provided the grounds, plant and picture.

The V.A.O.C. was largely disbanded in November 1944. Recognition and praise flowed to all who had been involved in this extremely important, but largely forgotten organisation during the war.



Well known local resident Mary Lyon recorded in her oral history, her father Harold Woodley Davey, was one volunteer. Mary has been a member of Museum Friends since early in our inception.



*[Mary's father] he was in the what they call the spotters, there was a little building [down] near the old bridge and it was manned pretty well 24 hours a day, they'd take it in turns to do shift work and that, to report any planes over Mandurah and of course most of them were our own planes, but they had to make sure of that, and I think there was one or two occasions there was an odd plane miles up in the sky that was spotted that they didn't really know where it came from so, so I can remember my father going down there and doing his shifts down at the spotters.*

Mary Lyon when interviewed by Eleanor Kay 2009.

Also another member of the original pioneer family Cooper, Hilda, was an aircraft spotter, she remembers in her oral history. [Interviewer questions have been summarized and placed in square brackets.]

*[where?] "In Mandurah. This air force chap came down, and he gave us a lesson or two. And as I say we set up on the corner near the bridge in the school grounds. Binoculars were supplied."*

*[no uniform?] "Only a badge I think."*

*"A few went over. [aircraft?] I remember a bomber and I remember a tiger moth and a few went over. We recorded them."*

*"You told them (headquarters) what you thought it was and if you told them if in any way they were carrying on different, suspiciously."*

*[information to Perth?] (by) phone*

*[Paid?] It was more volunteer*

*[supervisors?] Yes, two officers used to come down, maybe every couple of months*

*Yes, I used to go on duty with Sib Scott. She was a mate of mine. We used to go on duty together and we used to take our lunch and all that down there. The men mainly did the night. But there wasn't a lot of us, you know.*

*[How Long?] On the certificate it's got twelve months, but I was there longer than twelve months. I know I was there all the time I was pregnant and before that.*



Hilda Cooper, plane spotting during World War Two



Hilda when interviewed by Eleanor Kay in 2007.



## Museum Development Officer. Nicholas Reynolds

On the 9th of March the museum hosted another instalment of the Mandurah library's writers in the Library series of public talks and this was an innovation which I think really worked well for us. The library had a number of authors speaking over the 2023 writers in the library celebrations and one of the presentations was on a new WA history book on the background of roads boards in WA.

Chris Berry gave us a very informative presentation drawing on his deep experience as a local government officer of long-term standing and a great reputation in WA on this anniversary of the founding of the roads boards back in the 1870s. He put together a definitive history of local government in WA. It's written in an engaging manner.

Chris won the Ernest Lee-Steere prize for the best book published on West Australian history during 2022. Both the Mayor and the CEO Mark Newman were present and enjoyed the talk and hopefully if there's any other relevant writers in the library sessions coming up in the future then the library will be keen to host these at the museum as well. I've ordered a copy of Chris's book for our local studies collection.

## Peel Chapter meeting

Saturday the 4th of March saw the latest Peel chapter meeting of the Australian Museums and Galleries Association. Vince Taylor kindly hosted us at the old Blythewood homestead in Pinjarra. As always, our discussions on the issues and successes that each museum and Historical Society in the Peel region has had over the previous four months is the highlight of these meetings and catch ups.

At the time one of the issues which we discussed was the government's funding or lack thereof for the Trove website which is organised and managed by the National Library of Australia. At the time, without additional funding, Trove would have ceased operation at the end of the current financial year although we did discuss that there was apparently a method to archive the website where there wouldn't be any additions to it but it would still be available to view.

Fortunately, as of this week the Federal government has announced funding which will secure Trove onwards into the future and this is very fortunately recurring funding which should hopefully prevent any situation like this cropping up again.



We were so pleased to welcome Cr. Green who was present at our recent exhibition for  
**"International Women's History Month."**

## Works at the Museum

The new roofing works which have been ongoing for the past couple of months have now concluded. The works were undertaken in three stages, the first of which involved removing the flat roof which had been causing so many problems with leaks over the last few years over our side entry office and also store-rooms one and two. I think this is the most significant part of the whole series of works and hopefully means that we now have a dry storeroom going forward. The second stage involved taking the tiles off the extension to the main building where the old cells are. In doing this I was sure to have the skylights for the prison cells kept. While we no longer have the original tiles (it's now tin) we do have the lighting as it was and this is something which I negotiated as a heritage element. We had a win there! The third element was re-doing the roof over the megamouth shark and that hopefully will lead to a bit of a reduction in the problems we've been having with pigeons. The final stage has now been completed which was the replacement of the tin roof over the schoolroom annex. While the builders were doing that section, they found some asbestos in the roof but that's now been removed safely.

## New automatic door

Over the last two weeks we've had our new automatic door installed at the front of the museum and we were fortunate enough that the budget for the roofing works extended to enable us to have this upgrade installed.

Our ramp to the front of the museum now aligns with the door space and this will make things infinitely easier for disabled people or people with mobility issues to access and leave the museum. It's also something I've already made use of many times when taking loads or the open signs through the door.





**ANZAC Work**

South Halls Head Primary have been learning about what ANZAC means. On display also at Falcon Library, is work produced by year 1 and year 2 students.

**Curious Community Collectibles  
Gallipoli Collection Falcon Library.**

Dates: 5 April- 1 May 2023

The Gallipoli campaign was an unsuccessful attempt by Allied forces during World War 1 to cut off the sea route from Europe to Russia by taking control of the Dardanelles Strait and capturing the Turkish capital.

On 25 April 1915, the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZACs) landed on Gallipoli near what has become known as Anzac Cove.

During the campaign that followed, around 58,000 Allied soldiers (including 11, 000 Anzacs) and 87, 000 Ottoman Turkish troops died.

Local resident Warren Smith has a passion for collecting war memorabilia. On display at Falcon Library is his collection about Gallipoli, including sand from the actual Gallipoli landing site, Australian Military figurines, medals, coins and badges. The pine cone is from a tree in North Yunderup, that was propagated from pine cones collected by soldiers in 1915 at Lone Pine and planted in 2004.



Cosby was one of our younger participants at the dinosaur activity. Many of the children made masks and coloured their dinosaurs brightly.

Searching for the hidden dinosaurs consumed some time and lots of laughter.

For this period of time, the classroom area has been closed to ensure that the items are ready for each day's production.



# A Light in the Dark

## Electricity comes to Mandurah

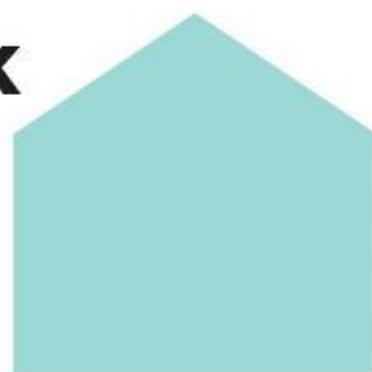
In 1933, Mandurah residents and visitors put away their oil lamps and candles for good! The new miracle of the Industrial Age came to Mandurah in the form of electricity.

On display will be, time saving appliances which made every day work around the house easier and allowed more time for family, including the Eureka vacuum cleaner, Technico lawn mower and electric iron.

**When:** 5 May - 25 June 2023

**Opening Hours:** Tuesday - Friday 10am - 4pm  
Saturday - Sunday 11am - 3pm

**Entry:** Free



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

## April Holidays 2023

Dinosaurs Katrina Gauci (Museum Education Officer)

### Make a Wooden Dinosaur

Children visited the Mandurah Museum to create and decorate their own wooden dinosaur during the April school holidays.

This activity was suitable for 5-11 years. A workshop was held each Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at 10am in both weeks of the holidays. The workshop was free and tickets were booked through Eventbrite.

I was extremely happy with the number of children who attended. 100 children made a dinosaur, attended by 50 adults who assisted.

It was disappointing that several families who had booked did not attend, however we did have several families arriving on the day, not realising that bookings were required. These children were able to fill the vacancies, so this space wasn't wasted.

The feedback from participants was very positive, they were all happy with their dinosaur creation.

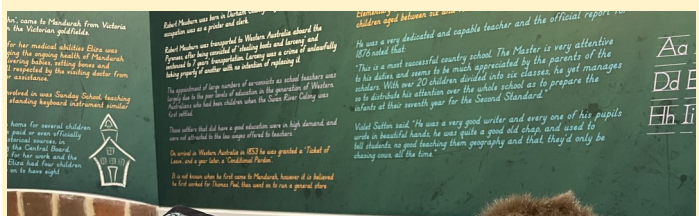
A warm thank you to the Mandurah Men's Shed for making the wooden dinosaur parts for the children to construct.

### Dinosaur Hunt

The dinosaur hunt was challenging and took time to complete. It involved reading clues, finding the correct dinosaur that matched the clue and spelling the dinosaur's name correctly in the space provided. The letters in the boxes created the name of a dinosaur. Once this was complete, children received a prize of a small dinosaur.

This free activity was available to do at any time during museum opening hours.

I was surprised by the children's knowledge of dinosaurs and their persistence to complete the hunt. 130 Dinosaur Hunts were completed over the two weeks of the April school holidays.



### Education Matters.

#### Curious Community Collectibles-Honey Month

May is National Honey Month—Falcon Library: 3-31 May.

Honey Month has been held in Western Australia since 2012 and getting bigger every year. It aims to encourage many businesses to participate in the month of May to host events and inform the local community about Western Australian honey and bee products. On display is a selection of local honey, beeswax products, a collection of honey pots and some equipment used by beekeepers. Beekeepers raise and care for honeybees for agricultural and commercial purposes, such as; crop pollination and honey production by constructing and cleaning hives, inducting wild swarms, splitting colonies, collecting honey, and ensuring the overall health of the hive.

#### Do you have a collection you'd like to share with our community?

The Mandurah Museum is seeking expressions of interest from those with interesting collections that would look great on display.

If you are interested, please contact the Museum by emailing [museum@mandurah.wa.gov.au](mailto:museum@mandurah.wa.gov.au) or phoning 9550 3683.

We can't wait to see what you've been collecting!



Above. Izzy is very business like with rubber mallet for securing the wheels on the dinosaur.

Right Lachlan & Brodie possibly had the most colourful

March - 2023 Women's History Month with International Women's Day, was celebrated at the museum on the 8th of March with an exhibition opening.

"Out of the Shadows, the Tuckey Women", is the exhibition name and it celebrates the unsung women of the Peel region who helped shape the area and supported their husband's endeavours while raising significant numbers of children.

Three Tuckey sisters teamed up to present their anecdotal memories of their Mother and Grandmother who had been featured in the exhibition.

Sandra Tuckey, with Gaena George, Jan Cuperus and Councillor Green.



Jim Tuckey, (brother of the three sisters), Cr Green, Melvin & Robert Tuckey.

**Jim Tuckey** and his wife Kay, have been members of the Friends Committee for two years.

Judith Tuckey, Yvonne Zylstra & Joyce Staker also attended.

**Judith Tuckey** kindly loaned the tapestry on display made by Sarah Tuckey. The museum has also been gifted some of Sarah's hand sewn garments.







Trish Gillespie, Kay Tuckey & Sandra Tuckey are pictured in front of the display boards.

Kay Tuckey is a member of the Friends Committee.

Pictured (right) are Di Hanniker, Bernie Smith & Debbie Elliot.  
 (below) Ken Donnohoe is joined by Sandra, Janfrey & Gaenor - the Tuckey sisters.  
 (below right) Marshall Flynn, David George & Keith Hull.



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**Volunteer Auxiliary Observation Corps and Mandurah.** Jan Baker.

**Oral History regarding Mandurah Corps.**

**Out of the Shadows - The Tuckey Women, research for this exhibition.** Staff & volunteers.

**Photographs from the exhibition.** Katrina Gauci.

## Regular Features.

**M.D.O. Reports** Nicholas Reynolds.

**Education Matters.** Katrina Gauci.

**Editor** Jan Baker.

**Friends Talking** Jan Baker.

## Friends talking.

The committee of the Friends met on Thursday 10th April for a routine meeting. There was little ongoing business to discuss, but a decision was made to organize a 'Soup and Toastie' with a talk by Nicholas for the end of the Financial Year. More on this at a later date. While we have some money to spend, we have been delayed waiting to be informed of what kind of display case we can purchase to assist the museum. A decision had been made some time ago to present the museum with one which would be able to display recent acquisitions prior to them being either placed further on display or within our storage.

At the same time, there is an intention to provide a better display case for the books and souvenirs which both the Friends and the Museum have for sale. We hope to be able to organise these purchases soon.

On the subject of books, for the Out of the Shadows exhibition, the volunteers and Friends put together a booklet which is available at the cost of either \$5 or \$7.50 depending on the edition.

Jan Baker - Chair - Secretary.



Left The exhibition opening was attended by many Friends who have been with us almost since our first year of operation. These include several members of both the Tuckey and Sutton families. We were especially pleased to see well-known Ken Donohoe was able to attend.

Right. Your editor Jan Baker and long serving committee member Phyl Hardy.



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

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**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.**