

Friends of MANDURAH Museum

Building bridges to Peel history

August 2025



Wild and wonderful critters prove a huge hit with kids

By Katrina Gauci

The July school holidays were abuzz with families visiting the museum. More than 130 children took part in *Animal Explorers: Group It Like a Scientist*. Presented by Eco Action (**pictured**), the workshop introduced children to the scientific concept of classification - how scientists group living things. Children then had the opportunity to meet and gently handle a variety of animals, including insects, reptiles, and amphibians. A large, friendly cockroach proved particularly popular.

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EDUCATION MATTERS

with Katrina Gauci

Mandurah Museum has welcomed many children and families coming to see the *Creatures of Our City: Exploring Mandurah's Unique Wildlife* exhibition and take part in the activities on offer. Many students from RT Kids, led by Claire Pannell, visited with their families to proudly show their artwork on display. Their vibrant creations (**pictured above**) - made using watercolour, pastels, and coloured pencils - celebrated Mandurah's local biodiversity and were a wonderful addition to the exhibition. Visitors also had the rare opportunity to view taxidermy specimens of unique species such as the quenda, chuditch, and phascogale, adding an exciting and educational element to the experience. The exhibition will remain open to the public until August 29, giving more visitors the chance to enjoy and learn from this engaging display.

Animal Explorers: Group It Like a Scientist

Presented by Eco Action, this workshop introduced children to the scientific concept of classification—how scientists group living things. The session included a lively puppet show - complete with music - to make the concept fun and easy to understand. Children then had the opportunity to meet and gently handle a variety of animals, including insects (**pictured above right**), reptiles, and amphibians. The session concluded with interactive games, sensory play, and creative craft activities.

The workshop was designed for children aged 4 to 10 years and ran at 10 am on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays during the two weeks of the July school holidays. Sessions were free, with bookings managed through Eventbrite. All sessions

were fully booked in advance. I deliberately increased the capacity from 120 to 180 places, anticipating a number of no-shows based on previous programs. As expected, there was a 41% no-show rate. However, with walk-ins, a total of 134 children attended, exceeding the planned capacity by 11.7%. I am extremely pleased with the attendance, which reflects strong community interest and engagement. These children were supported by 85 accompanying adults, who played an active role in helping them explore the animals, games, and crafts—making it a rich and shared family experience. The presenters were highly accommodating, often extending the session until 11:45 am to meet ongoing demand. Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive. Children were especially proud of

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Above and bottom right: animals represented by the *Creatures of Our City: Exploring Mandurah's Unique Wildlife* exhibit. Right: kids made their own fun with arts and crafts offerings.

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their sock puppet creations, and many families expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to take part. A special thank you to the Museum volunteers for managing registrations during my absence in the first week of the holidays.

The City of Mandurah developed a **colouring competition** based on the *Creatures of our City: Exploring Mandurah's Unique Wildlife* exhibition. This competition was distributed to various locations around Mandurah and encouraged people to visit the museum to submit their entries. 26 were received. It was evident that many children completed their entries with great care. The quality of submissions was impressive, and

judges had a difficult time selecting the winners due to the creativity and effort shown (**winners - page 5**).

Amazing Aussie Animals Quiz

Participants searched the museum to find Aussie animals hidden throughout the space that matched a fun fact, revealing a secret phrase. Quiz solvers then had the option of entering a draw to win a Koala 300-piece jigsaw puzzle. 142 entries were submitted, and the lucky winner- a local girl - was thrilled to win. Thanks to the front desk volunteers for explaining the quiz and offering clues when needed.





CURATOR'S REPORT

with Nicholas Reynolds

Another key milestone in the Museum Service Review was a working breakfast for community herit-

Emily's involvement concluded on June 30, and her contributions have been greatly appreciated.

Professional development and sector networking continued in June, with the MDO attending a seminar on June 26 led by Sue Lefroy, Coordinator of History Great Southern – Kaartdijin Bidji Albany. Sue shared insights from her experience building the Albany Local Studies Collection and offered practical advice on digitisation and document preservation.

Later that week, the MDO also attended a general meeting of the Rockingham Historical Society, where I delivered a presentation on the history of the HMAS Cerberus and its significance in warship design. With Emily Anderson's departure, a new Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) representative was needed for the Museum. I have resumed the role, so if anyone has any safety concerns please discuss with me.

The past two months have been a busy and productive month for Mandurah Museum, with a number of important workshops and activities. On June 3, the Museum hosted a Volunteer Feedback Workshop as part of the ongoing Museum Service Review. This provided a valuable opportunity for volunteers to share their insights and help shape the future direction of the service. Volunteers who were unable to attend in person were invited to submit their feedback in writing. The Museum was also the venue for a Culture Feedback Session, involving the Heritage and Community Capacity team. This session reported back on the results of the City's most recent workplace culture survey.

age groups on June 11. Representatives from the Mandurah Historical Society, Friends of Mandurah Museum, and Mandurah Environment and Heritage Group attended. The session was a valuable opportunity to gather perspectives from our community partners. On June 17, Jude Thomas, Director of Place and Community, visited the Museum to view the archaeological exhibition which was part of heritage month. She was very complementary about the quality of the display. At the end of the month, a handover meeting took place between the Museum Development Officer and Emily Anderson, who has been working from the Museum one day per week to support cataloguing using the Spydus system.

Prize winners



A colouring competition based on the *Creatures of our City: Exploring Mandurah's Unique Wildlife* received 26 entries. The quality was impressive. Congratulations (**clockwise from**

top left) to 5 years and under prize: Australian Animal Bucket winner - Alby; 6-9 years prize: Small Brown Turtle - Zaelee; and 10-12 years prize: Wombat Stew Book - Evelyn.

Brothers return from *War without end*



By Heather Harvey

Three brothers from Mandurah went off to fight in World War One. They were Rollo (*above left*), Hugh and William Muir (*above right*). Rollo Moncrief Muir was born May 4, 1892 at Southern Cross in Western Australia. Hugh Monteith Muir was also born in the Yilgarn in December 1893. William Hope Muir was born at Yalgoo in 1898. The three boys were all students at the Dalrymple school here in Mandurah after parents John and Ann moved the family. A countrywide sense of anticipation meant that volunteering in the AIF (Australian Imperial Force) enabled possible overseas travel which was out of the reach of some young men at that time.

Private Rollo Muir AIF 283 was badly wounded at Gallipoli, transferred to England and admitted to the London General Hospital. While recuperating in

England Rollo met Irish-born widow Kathleen Josephine Spray. They married at Islington in England and Rollo became stepfather to Kathleen's four young children. The 16th Battalion was withdrawn from Gallipoli and reorganised into the 4th Division fighting on the Western Front. In 1917 private Muir joined the 4th Division in France. Private Muir was again injured at Bullecourt, taken prisoner by the Germans and died. He was buried in the Garrison Cemetery, Venden, later reinterred at the Hamburg Cemetery, Ohlsdorf, a cemetery cared for by the Imperial War Graves Commission. Kathleen Muir continued to live in England and died in 1928, aged 43.

In 1914 Hugh Monteith Muir worked at the Western Australian Government Railways and Tramways. He enlisted January 18, 1915, aged 21,

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Above, Flora Muir nee Sievewright, wife of William Muir, who tragically died during childbirth along with her child. Right, the home service record of Hugh Muir.

Home Service Club
W.M.S.

RECRUITING TENT,
BLACKBURN HILL CAMP, WA

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES.
AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE

Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad.

No. Name in full { Surname *Muir* (R.S.)
Christian Name *Hugh Muir*
Unit *22 Depot* 5th M.D.
Joined on *17/5/17*

Questions to be put to the Person Enlisting before Attestation.

1. What is your Name? *Hugh Muir*
2. In the Parish of *Blackburn* or near the *Torrens* Southern Cross in the County of *West Australia* B.S.
3. Are you a natural born British Subject or a Naturalised British Subject? (N.B.—If the latter, papers to be shown.)
4. What is your age? *23 1/2*
5. What is your Trade or Calling? *Race Driveman*
6. Are you, or have you been an Apprentice? If so, where, to whom, and for what period? *No.*
7. Are you married? *No.*
8. Who is your next of kin? (Address and relationship to be stated) *Wife Rita Annie Muir 1181 Knight St. Perth. W.A.*
9. What is your permanent address in Australia? *as above (B.S.)*
10. Do you now belong to, or have you ever served in, His Majesty's Army, the Marines, the Militia, the Militia Reserve, the Territorial Force, Royal Navy, or Colonial Forces? If so, state which, and if not now serving, state cause of discharge. *Yes 12th Bn. 358 days (10th Bn)*
11. Have you stated the whole, if any, of your previous Service? *Yes*
12. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for His Majesty's Service? If so, on what grounds? *Yes Discharged Rheumatism*
13. (For married men, widowers with children, and soldiers who are the sole support of widowed mothers) Do you understand that no Separation Allowance will be issued in respect of your service beyond an amount which, together with pay, would reach eight shillings per day? *Yes*
14. Are you prepared to undergo inoculation against small-pox and enteric fever? *Yes*

I, *Hugh Muir*, do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and I am willing and hereby voluntarily agree to serve in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.

And I further agree to allot not less than two-fifths of the pay payable to me from time to time during my service for the support of my wife and children.

Date *17/5/17* Signature of Person Enlisted. *H. Muir*

* This clause should be struck out in the case of a married man or widower without children under 17 years of age.
† Two-fifths must be allotted to the wife, and if there are children two-fifths must be allotted.

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being private number 1771, 12th Battalion, 4th Reinforcement. Private Muir headed to Gallipoli from Melbourne on the *Star of England*. Severe rheumatism enabled private Muir to be sent back to Fremantle on the *Themistocles*. He was discharged from the AIF as medically unfit. In 1916 he married Rita Annie Godfrey. Hugh decided to enlist for the second time but asked to revert back to the rank of private. He requested a discharge from the 22nd Depot. He learned of the death of his brother Rollo; his younger brother William returned home with one leg. The three boys parents, John and Ann, passed away in 1925 and 1927 respectively. Hugh was charged with disorderly conduct after a fight on the corner of Murray and Barrack Streets in 1927. He was fined £1-15s-6d. After resigning from the Western Australian

Government he moved to work in the gold fields and then moved to Melbourne. In 1940 aged 46 years he stole three packets of toothpaste and was charged in the Rockhampton Police Court. Drinking was an issue that repeatedly landed him in trouble over the years. Hugh disappeared from the record books after this. The three brothers' stories are different but remind us that you can become a casualty of war long after the fighting has finished. Hugh was awarded the British War Medal. William, the third son of John and Ann Muir, worked as a fisherman in Mandurah. After enlisting in the AIF in May 1915 he joined the 16th Battalion, 7th Reinforcement embarking on the *HMAT Chilka* in 1915 for Egypt, Gallipoli and the Western Front. William was hospitalised in Bristol, England after he succumbed to severe enteritis, influenza, mumps and scabies. He also contracted gonorrhea. His

hospital stays were interspersed with misdemeanors including gambling, having his light on after hours, losing his kit, not complying with orders, and being absent on parade. He forfeited 10 days pay and completed 168 hours of detention. In 1917 William was well enough to rejoin the 4th Division. He recounted the suffering of soldiers in war in a letter to his parents John and Ann. William married Flora Sievewright in 1919 - a tragic marriage as Flora and baby son William died in childbirth. William married again in 1929 to Elsie Burrows. They had two sons, Rollo and Peter, born 1930 and 1931, respectively. William Muir committed suicide in 1934. The burden of war injuries and gastric trouble were overwhelming. Elsie died in 1940; the sons were then aged ten and nine years. Rollo (jnr) died at Mount Claremont in 2001 aged 71 years. Peter's whereabouts are unknown.

MANDURAH

The first ten years 1829 - 1839

By Heather Harvey

French plans for colonisation of Western Australia were circumvented by Captain James Stirling's exploration and ambitious lobbying in Britain to begin settlements in Western Australia. Settlers with capital inspired 'Swan River mania,' partly stimulated by unrest from the French revolution of 1789 - 1799. Promises of prosperity loomed large in the class society of Great Britain. The industrial and agricultural revolutions resulted in unrest and fears of a breakdown in the social order and violent revolution at home.

Thomas Peel and his colleagues set their plans in motion and cousin Robert Peel, Home Secretary, furthered their interests with the help of agent Solomon Levey. The press at the time said the Peels were given an advantage over other would be settlers. The Peels refuted allegations of nepotism and jobbery. Thomas Peel arrived at Swan River in 1829 with 200 settlers. He took up 256,000 acres from Cockburn Sound south to Peel Inlet and from Pinjarra to the Darling Range. Peel established an unsuccessful settlement at Clarence near Cockburn Sound; its failure owing to unproductive limestone and sand dunes, and deaths due to illness.

Peel's dereliction of duty and incompetence forced



A June 1829 caricature of Thomas Peel.

the governor to intervene, releasing Peel's 'servants' (settlers) from indentures. A successful Mandurah was gradually built on this misfortune. The inadequacies of Thomas Peel and Governor Stirling, and the death of agent Levey in 1833, were antecedents of haphazard development in Mandurah. Many settlers left the area for Fremantle and Perth. Stirling allocated land to his naval officers, who then on-sold it for profit. Henry Edward Hall and his family, servants, livestock, stores and equipment took up 16,720 acres at the Harvey Estuary and Fremantle town blocks, and 200 acres across the river from Peel.

His house still stands, managed by the Mandurah City Council, and is open to visitors on Sundays, and primary school local history excursions. Hall was an example of a successful settler. By the end of 1830 there were 50 people in Peel's illage in Mandurah. An Anglo-Irish immigrant, Frances Corbet Singleton, bought 10,000 acres from Thomas Peel in the 1839, signalling an upsurge in the district's fortunes.

Reference

Harvey, H, The First Ten Years, in The First Fifty Years 1829 - 1879, in *Murray and Mandurah: A Sequel History of The Old Murray District of Western Australia*, 1993, ed. R. Richards, published by the Shire of Murray and City of Mandurah.

‘Thousands of tins’ litter the coast

By Dianne McIntosh

Originally donated to the Museum circa 2011 by Brian Toussaint, this mast collar (*pictured right*) is believed to be off the Barque *Highland Forrest*. The latter was a three masted barque that sank near Port Kennedy on April 29, 1901 after hitting the Murray Reef. No lives lost.

The *Highland Forrest* was built of steel in Scotland in 1884 by Ramage and Ferguson in Leith, Scotland, and registered in Glasgow. The ship was 74m long and 10.4m wide, with a tonnage of 1040 tons. It was carrying general cargo from New York to Fremantle when it was wrecked. The wreck site is located on Murray Reef, within 10 minutes of the Port Kennedy boat ramp. Interestingly, the associated plaque connected to the mast collar misspells the name of the ship and the area where the ship hit the reef. Information on the plaque does not correspond with any other recorded shipping losses. Violet Sutton recalls the *Highland Forrest* wreck being a real picnic for Mandurah. Mandurah locals looked along the beaches and there were “miles and miles” of beautiful timber and “hundreds or thousands” of tins of kerosene. It is interesting to note that there was a shortage of Kerosene statewide in the month that followed. The reason was securely placed on the loss of the cargo of the *Highland Forrest*. Perhaps the shortage was not felt in Mandurah. Violet describes that there “was everything you



could mention, [but] no clothing. There were boxes of soap. People would collect it and were washing their clothes in it.” Violet Sutton’s oral history goes on to say that the Suttons collected a big case of tools or axes. They went round and broke all the cases (boxes) open. Violet adds, “It (the spoils from the *Highland Forrest*) went for miles around the beach. From here to Rockingham.”

References

<https://museum.wa.gov.au/maritime-archaeology-db/wrecks/highland-forest>

Puls, Colin (interviewer). Violet Sutton’s Oral History, Mandurah Museum, 1976.

The Evening Star (Boulder, WA : 1898 - 1921) Thu 2 May 1901, page 3, ‘Kerosene Market.’

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.