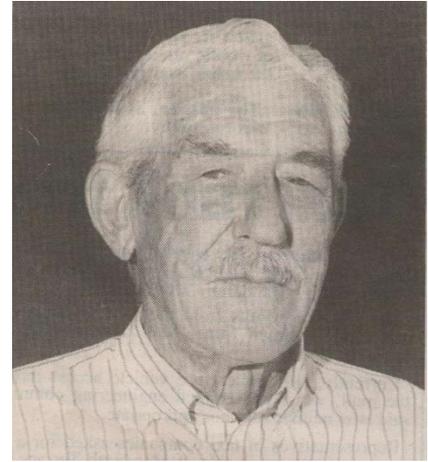


Len Howard

Len Howard was born in London in 1914 and spent much of his childhood exploring the River Thames near his London home.

Joining the merchant navy as a young man, Len Howard first visited Fremantle in the mid-1930s. During World War 2, he twice survived when ships he was on were torpedoed. He emerged from the war a dedicated member of the Communist Party and an active trade unionist. Later he modified his political views and became involved in the green movement as a supporter.



At the end of the Second World War he married Doreen, a widow with a 3 year old son. Len already had a daughter from a previous marriage. In the 1950s Len migrated to WA with his wife Doreen and 5 children as part of the '£10 Pom' migration scheme. Len found work as a bricklayer. He worked in many jobs in the building trade, some of them on projects in the State's north-west. In 1958, Len and Doreen bought a house in Queen's Park, a suburb of Perth. They spent many weekends camping along the Peel -Harvey estuary. This is where they developed a love for Mandurah.

On retirement in 1974, Len moved to the beachside suburb of Falcon, south of Mandurah. Mandurah was becoming very popular and the area was growing quickly. It was then that Len Howard began his greatest challenge, to protect the Peel Harvey Estuary.

In 1976 the Peel-Preston Preservation Group was formed, with school teacher Brian Devereaux and Len Howard as the initiators. Their goal was to see a multi-use, multi ownership national park on the stretch of land between the estuary and the sea south of Mandurah.

Len Howard began running a campaign to protect the Creery Wetlands from a canal development in 1985. Much of his struggle was with the local council. The impact of Len Howard's campaign through the Peel Preservation Group, was not confined to just environmental issues. It changed the face and direction of the city council. The battle over the Creery Wetland resulted in the biggest conservation win ever in the Peel region.

Len Howard's homespun advocacy appeared in newspapers and talkback radio. The algal problem in the Peel-Harvey Estuary dates back to the 1960's but the problem increased significantly in the 1970s and 1980s. The mounds of rotting algae along the shoreline of the estuary resulted in the Peel Inlet Management Authority removing it with tractors equipped with rakes. This was only a 'cosmetic' operation and the Peel Preservation Group under the leadership of Len Howard was involved with the discussions. Eventually the Dawesville Cut, a project to flush the estuary, was given the go-ahead in the late 1980s.



Len Howard cont'd

The development of canal areas was still the biggest issue for Len Howard and the Peel Preservation Group. They battled to stop the development of the Mandurah Marina Development by the Rule Group. This was given approval after an assessment by the Environmental Protection Authority and the State Planning Commission. Not all of the campaigns spearheaded by Len Howard were successful but this did not stop future efforts. His opponents were wealthy, influential and determined but Len never gave up. He lost many battles but won the respect and support of the people of Mandurah.

Len Howard fought to preserve the environment before it was fashionable and spoke out in favour of the environment in respect to the Dawesville cut, the Peel Regional Park, Port Mandurah, Point Grey, the Creery Wetlands and Lake Clifton, among others.

In 1994, Len Howard was made a life member of the Peel Preservation Group, as was his wife Doreen. That year he retired as the President of the Peel Preservation Group, but continued a stream of letters and telephone calls to politicians, councillors, land developers and journalists. His work was recognised widely and Len was awarded the inaugural Bessie Rischbieth Award by the WA Conservation Council. Four years later, in 1998 Len was recognized as the Australia Day "Citizen of the Year" for the City of Mandurah.

Len Howard died of cancer aged 83 in 1998. His legacy lives on through the many people who worked with him and the work of the Peel Preservation Group.

In 2001, Erskine Conservation Park was renamed Len Howard Conservation Park.

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3. The West Australian 21-4-1998 p9 "Mandurah Mourns Champion of the Peel"
4. The Preservation Times Vol2 No3 June 1998 "Eulogy for Len Howard"
5. Coastal Times 31-8-1990 "Len's Message for Peace"
6. The Preservation Times Vol3 No3 June 1997 "Doreen's Story"
7. The Preservation Times Vol3 No1 June 1998 "20 years ago"
8. Coastal Times 31-8-2001 "Park in Honour of Green Battler"
9. Mandurah Telegraph 18-5-1993 "Wetland Sacred?"
10. Coastal Districts Times 28-12-1990 "Preservation Group appeals against EPA"
11. Mandurah Telegraph 17-8-1988 "Howard warns on Soldier's Cove"
12. Burgess, Jill "Mandurah – Water Under the Bridge" Mandurah: Town of Mandurah 1988

