

# Friends of MANDURAH COMMUNITY MUSEUM

BUILDING BRIDGES  
TO PEEL HISTORY

Friends of Mandurah Community Museum Newsletter

April 2019

## One Woman's Enterprise in Mandurah: Theatres and Entertainment –1920s – 1940s

In a time where theatres, dancing halls & moving pictures were available in the early 1900s, a lady of unusual and exemplary character came to her peak as an entrepreneur in a small town south of Perth. Her name was Silvina Ruby Hannah Lanyon, and that town was Mandurah. Silvina Ruby Lanyon left a legacy to her descendants in the form of a vibrant history of her achievements in business, her love of Art and her commitment to community and social activities.

Silvina was born in Herberton Queensland in 1883 to parents Mary and William Rowe. At the age of 17 years, Silvina married James Caddy Lanyon aged 19 years at Co-bar, N.S.W in 1900.

James Caddy Lanyon was born in Ballarat to a mining family and with this background, he and Silvina, with other members of their family migrated to the Western Australian Goldfields.

Silvina started to show her skills as a business woman early in her married life.

During 1905 and 1906 James and Silvina (as proprietress) advertised in the local paper of the availability of rooms and dining situated opposite the railway station in "Murrin Murrin".

James worked for the Golden Gate mine and then with the Western Australian Government Railways until his enlistment in 1916 for WW1, and registered at Guildford.

In Midland Silvina operated a confectionary and fruit stall while waiting for her husband's return from the war.

When James returned with shellshock in 1918, the family moved back to Kalgoorlie. James Caddy Lanyon died on September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1919.

Cont. Pages 2 &3.



**From the Editor.** April brings to the museum an exhibition relating to Anzac Day. For several years we have held these special exhibitions regarding Anzac Day and they have always brought people into the museum. We are hoping this will continue.

This month's newsletter takes time out from our Coastal Trading series to bring information gathered by a volunteer Ursula Brimble on Silvana Lanyon, an entrepreneur of travelling picture shows. We have included information of a general nature about moving pictures in Australia and W.A.

Following the completion of our magnificent mural, a mural fact sheet is printed in this newsletter. This sheet is available at the front desk for visitors who are interested in the mural's design.

We include within the newsletter more information which we have been given about the property on Leslie St mentioned in the last newsletter.

*Jan Baker.*

## Special features

**One Woman's Enterprise in Mandurah:  
Theatres and Entertainment 1920s—1940's.  
Ursula Brimble.**

**Museum Mural Fact Sheet.**

**Moving pictures in Australia - Timeline.**

**Update on Leslie St.**

## Regular features.

From the MDO .

Education Matters.

Chairpersons report.

Coming events at the Museum.

Nicholas Reynolds.

Katrina Gauci

Eleanor Kay

**Editor**

**Jan Baker.**

After James' death and burial, Silvina and her family returned to Midland Junction. Silvina applied for a tender to conduct a fruit and confectionary stall in 1921.

Silvina attended a concert in 1922 in Denmark Western Australia, where she is acknowledged with others for her contribution.

In 1923 when Silvina's home burnt down, she received an insurance payout of £550. The money received from the insurance payout allowed Silvina to invest in a mobile projector and van, travelling to country towns around the Peel region.



In 1923-24, Silvina started showing moving pictures at the Mechanics Hall, Pinjarra and the surrounding areas of the mill towns. In 1924 she opened up an "outdoor talkies" known as the "Open Air Pictures" in Mandurah. A guesthouse was opened in 1924 called the "Ol Roy Lodge". The Lodge was run by one of Silvina's daughters Olive and husband Roy Campbell.

Tragedy struck Silvina when in 1925 her son William aged 16 was killed in a shooting accident at Wuraming and is buried in the Dwellingup cemetery.

In 1928 Silvina built her first picture theatre alongside her 'open air picture gardens, called 'The Hotham Valley Theatre' in Mandurah and sold her mobile projector and van to the Kanzler Brothers who took over the picture circuit in the hills.

Holding social dances and pictures was the entertainment of the country towns and was a draw card for those people living out of town. Silvina also had drawn Perth people to Mandurah with her charity fund raising for the RSL and Red Cross.

The Gem Pictures was also under the management of Silvina Lanyon and was showing the acclaimed film 'The Golden Road' in Pinjarra and Waroona. This film had a phenomenal run in the Eastern States and Perth, and was only being shown for a short while in the South West of WA.

It was with this success that Silvina sold her Hotham Valley Picture Theatre to the Tuckey family and started to build the Capital Theatre, also known as the "Memorial" theatre in 1934. Silvina as proprietor, also sold the Gem Pictures in 1930 to Frank H. Green and Louis R. Tapper. The Capital Theatre became a major success and much was written in the papers of the social events, films and people attending this venue.

Silvina was committed to supporting community activities, she held fund raising events for the RSL and Red Cross and through her commitment became a member of the cemeteries board in 1940.

Her companion at her side in Mandurah was Henry Edwards whom she married in 1933.

Silvina had 6 children, her fourth child Ronald George Lanyon born 1910 sadly died at 13 days old and is buried in the Boulder cemetery in the goldfields.

Her daughters were married and settled leaving the youngest daughter Ellen, known as Nell helping with the running of the Capital Theatre.

Silvina's name was still attached to the census with her occupation being recorded as 'Picture Theatre Owner' until 1949.

The Capital theatre was then in the hands of Mr and Mrs Campbell until their departure from Mandurah. Mr Peter Hickey became the new proprietor in 1949.

Silvina died in 1960 aged 77 years and is buried in Fremantle Cemetery.

**Ursula Brimble with contribution of granddaughter Cheryl Brewer.**

**Disclaimer:**

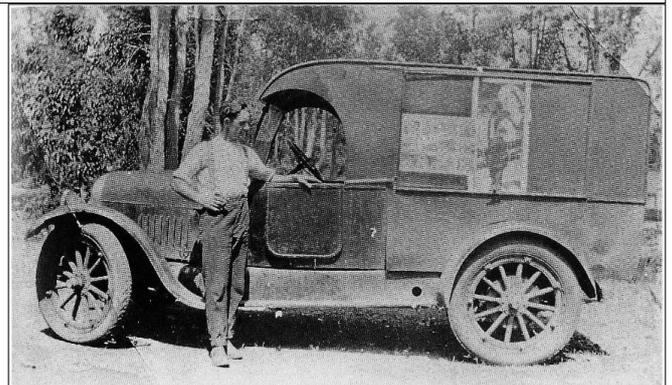
**All information is taken from Trove scanned newspapers of Western Australia between the 1920s and the 1940s. Other information was taken from family documents held at the Mandurah Museum.**

**Photographs: Page 1 - Silvina Lanyon, Page 2 - Staff with Silvina at Myalup.**

**Page 3 - Memorial Theatre with S Lanyon + granddaughters & Harry Edwards.  
Façade of Theatre changing to Capitol.**

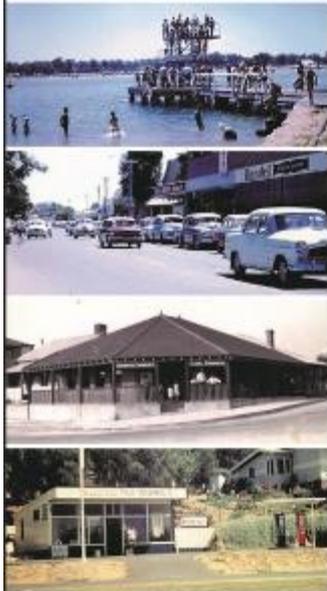


*Capitol Theatre, circa 1938. (Courtesy Mrs Nel Blakeley)*



*Van used to transport moving picture gear. Taken in about 1924, probably at Dwellingup. Pictures were shown in various halls, usually once per week, with the projector and associated bits and pieces set up and dismantled each night. (Courtesy Mrs Nel Blakeley)*

# Contribute to Mandurah's Photographic History



**Donate a photograph to our collection.**

Do you have photographs taken in and around Mandurah that are over 30 years old?

If you do, we would love to hear from you!

We have an extensive range of historical photographs and are passionate about preserving Mandurah's rich history. We are always keen to add new photographic treasures and their stories to our collection.

We are looking for photographs of landscapes, buildings, interiors, people at work, groups, sport and recreation, events etc.

We welcome donations from the community and non-residents to help people understand life in Mandurah through the ages.

To donate photographs and for further information please visit the Mandurah Community Museum, 3 Pinjarra Road, Mandurah or Email: [museum@mandurah.wa.gov.au](mailto:museum@mandurah.wa.gov.au) or phone 9550 3680

Donation forms are available at the City of Mandurah website [www.mandurah.wa.gov.au](http://www.mandurah.wa.gov.au)



**Education Matters.** In this newsletter you will find several projects Katrina has prepared and worked on over the last several months. Also mentioned is the Anzac Display opening shortly which Kat is working hard on.

As Katrina has been on holidays over the last several weeks, there won't be a report from her but she will provide us on what happens with all these events coming up in our next newsletter.

Schools continue to visit us at the museum and we also have a expanding community of older people who really enjoy a visit to see items which they have used in the past.

One such group came through last week and spent quite a long time here, this included having morning tea in the Local Studies room while we told them a little about the museum and events around here.

As an update on the Mural, volunteers have been excited to hear from visitors that they are seeing the mural and that it is bringing them in to see our museum.



## Brief timeline of moving pictures coming to West Australia.

Travelling picture showmen were once common in Australia. Living out of caravans or even tents, they serviced the rural areas that did not yet have their own permanent cinemas, often providing variety acts as part of the show.

- 1896, First moving pictures shown in Melbourne. One year after Lumiere Brothers show film in Paris. Also first showing in Perth to a street audience in from a Barrack Street Hotel onto a wall opposite owned by a photographic studio. This was taken on tour around the state until by 1902 it had been to the extreme north-west.
- 1897 (Approx) regular showing held to seated audience in Cremorne Gardens to the rear of Cremorne Hotel and Theatre.
- 1906 Australia makes first feature film in world. 'The Ned Kelly Gang.'
- 1900 – 1910 Travelling showmen commence touring in WA, some using horse & cart with primitive equipment to show films.
- 1910 600 seat picture theatre built in Dundas. (West of Norseman)
- 1913 Reported to be first wireless station (see 1924 6WF)
- 1910 – 1920 Australian film injury leaping ahead.
- 1920's Arrival of sound. This decade sees American film taking over due to cheapness of movies flooding Australian and English markets.
- 1923/ 24 Silvina Lanyon purchases a mobile projector and van.**
- 1924 6WF launched by Westfarmers, later to become ABC radio.
- 1927 First full length feature talking film is "The Jazz Singer."
- 1929 Talkies or movies with sound first come to Perth.
- 1910 – 1960 Heyday of film within this State, by 1960 with television arriving .
- 1959 Channel 7 Perth launched.
- 1960 ABW 2 Perth begins transmission. (ABC)
- 1967 BTW-3 Bunbury, first regional television station in WA.

## Get Hooked on Fishing Kids Clinics

**Have fun learning to fish.  
All fishing equipment and bait is supplied.  
Certificates and prizes awarded.  
Sausage sizzle lunch included.**

**What's On: Fishing Clinics**

**Where:** Mandurah Community Museum, 3 Pinjarra Road  
**Dates:** Tuesday 16, Wednesday 17, Thursday 18 April  
**Fishing Clinic:** 10.00am-2.30pm (Choose a day)  
**Ages:** Suitable for 6-12 years  
**Cost:** \$10.00 per child

**Book early!** (Note: parents must accompany children)

To book call the Mandurah Community Museum on 9550 3682 or email [museum@mandurah.wa.gov.au](mailto:museum@mandurah.wa.gov.au)

Mandurah Community Museum | 3 Pinjarra Road, Mandurah

## MDO Report.

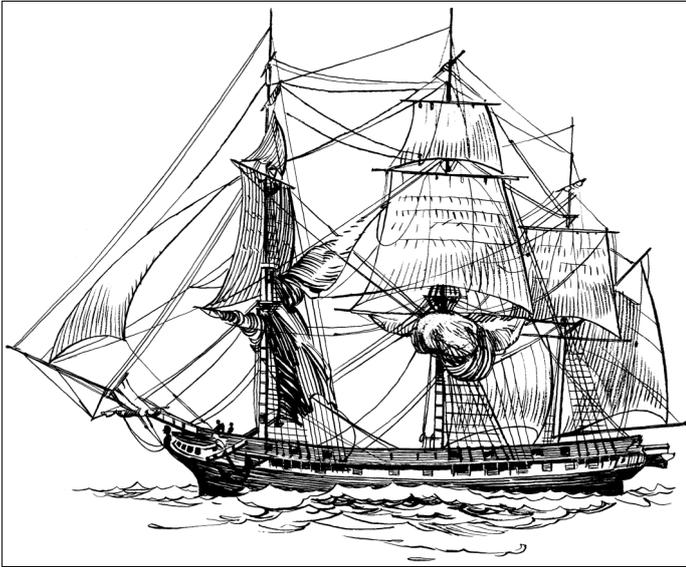
With the ongoing work on the redevelopment of the Museum's Courtroom gallery, which has been my main focus of late, I thought it might be of interest to give you all a peek into the interactive game which will be available for children (and adults too!) to play on a touchscreen device in the gallery. In it, players will take the part of one of Thomas Peel's settlers on the dangerous voyage from the UK to Mandurah. Here's what will be said on the introduction screen for the game:

### Swan River Mania!

"Can you imagine leaving everything you know behind and moving to a new, unexplored country? In this game, you can put yourself in the place of a settler moving from England to Western Australia in 1829. Will you play the role of a rich landlord or a poor farmer?"

You'll have to buy supplies, listen to tips from people along the way and make choices which will affect you on your journey.

With all this, and a little luck you just might be able to find that farm of your own which you've always dreamed of..."



The players will go on to have the opportunity to seek advice and learn from characters in the game:

Will Kipps, sailor. "Many delays and disasters can happen at sea. When you reach your destination, look out for bad weather. Only rarely will it pass when on a lee shore."

Josiah Cole, merchant. "Be careful with your supplies, don't let salt water get to them, or they may spoil."

Will Brewer, dock worker. "I don't like the look of your ship's crew, they look pretty angry to me. Maybe you better see if you can convince Mr Peel to pay them a bit more for this dangerous voyage?"

Agnes Billinghamurst, Inside cabin passenger. "I don't much like the amount of time Miss Banks is spending with the captain of this ship. Perhaps I should have a serious talk with her father before she decides to get married..."

Frederick Ryan, sailor. "Be careful of which barrels of wa-

ter you open. Like this one..." He shows you one with a funny smell. "They'll make you sick for sure."



Chester Maynard, Ship's officer. "Hmm... I think we should tell the captain to change course. We're headed for the doldrums. If we go there, we'll have no wind to get us to our destination on time."

Will the passengers arrive safe? Will they be able to make a new life for their families in Peel's settlement?

You'll have to play the game to find out!



## Mural on Dalrymple Park Wall.

**Charles Olaf Wilson** (1838 – 1926) played a significant part in the maritime history of Mandurah. “Old Mr. Wilson was an unforgettable character as I remember him”, (as described by a past resident). “He was a small man, very spritely for his age, bare-headed and sported a huge yellow beard.” He was born in Scotland, brought up in Stockholm and spent half his time as a shipwright, but apparently had a flare for photography to which he devoted the other half. His parents had been lost in the North Sea when he was a baby and, having no family ties or responsibility like so many young men of his day, ran away to sea. He was 21 and found his way to New Zealand, but did not care much for this country. His often repeated remark was “*It was raining when I arrived and raining when I left.*”

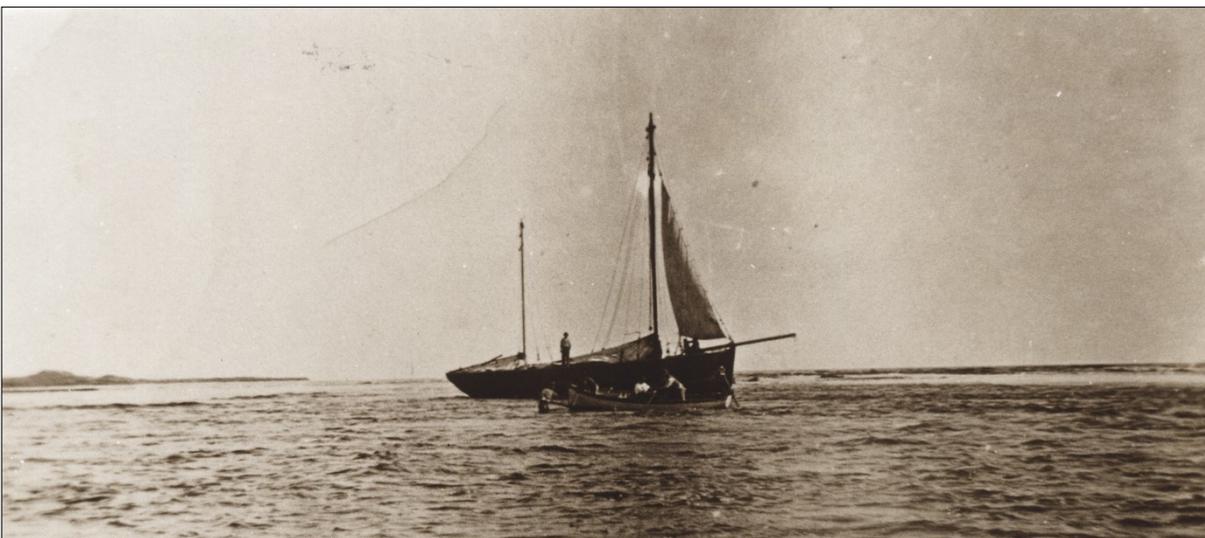


Wilson then made for Victoria and set up a studio in Burke, a terrific contrast to the sea, ships and shipbuilding. Then in the 1890s, he came to Western Australia and its goldfields, eventually settling with his family at Mandurah in 1911. Ironically he was supposed to have travelled to Mandurah by sea with his boys on one of the small cargo vessels owned by a Mr Halliday, a local Mandurah resident. However, Halliday never reached Fremantle to make the voyage back; he was lost at sea. So Wilson took the train to Pinjarra and coach to Mandurah.

### The Leviathan

It was about this time that Bolton's of Fremantle, acquired a timber mill almost at the head of the “creek” which ran in to Soldier's Cove. After virtually rebuilding the mill and installing quite a deal of equipment, the company began to turn out cart wheel fellies, axle boxes, spokes and other equipment for the manufacture of horse-drawn vehicles. It was still the day of the horse and Bolton lost no time in helping to finance and commission Wilson's ship to bring the timber products by sea to Fremantle.

The timber, which was felled almost at the mill site, was tuart which abounded along the coastal plain and lent itself well to cart, dray or wagon manufacture, being extremely tough and dense. As the mill was situated only a short distance from the water's edge, a jetty was built and a trolley line run out from the heart of the mill to the jetty, where the ship was to load. It took Wilson more than four years to build his craft and he was almost 85 when he completed it to the stage of launching. It was painted black and from then on it was tagged “*Black Bess.*” He died at the age of 88 but lived to see his pride and joy wrecked on the Mandurah Bar in full view of spectators on the beach who flocked from the town and countryside to watch her breaking up. It was said that the tragedy of losing his beloved *Black Bess* hastened his end.



In 2019 the company **Blank Walls** were selected to complete the work. Their design, which highlights the story of Charles Olaf Wilson and the Leviathan was completed in a shaded spray can style which allowed a realistic portrait of Wilson to be included. Jerome Davenport, the artist who completed the mural divides his time between Perth and London, with a number of his murals featuring historic scenes and historic figures being found in the UK.



**From the chair.** As always, running late with my report, just as well the other members of our friends group do such a great job. I know everyone is so busy these days, wonder how we fitted everything in when our days were filled with looking after children in different age groups, getting them to all their activities as well as everything else associated at the time. I take my hat off to well organized Mums who work outside the home as well. If any of you are in this age bracket I can understand why you can't make it to our meetings.

I wonder how many of you have had the opportunity to see the Mural on the wall facing the river. It is very impressive.

We recently had a committee meeting but will give you all the news from this at the General meeting which we informed you of by post and email last week.

The General Meeting will be in the form of an Exhibition opening with a short talk from Nick and light morning tea - we would like to welcome all our Friends to this our first meeting of the year. It is on 11th of April commencing at 10am.

One of my ventures as a Friend of the Museum is talking to everyone I meet and encouraging them to check the out the Museum. I said at a recent meeting it's a wonder they don't get visitors saying, I was told to come and look by some crazy woman I met on the train (or where ever it was)! **Eleanor Kay.**

**Update on Leslie St property.** We have been told that the property in question is actually number **19**. Dion Layton's boat building and home was next door at number 21 and the Fisheries Inspector also close.

The rock wall originally went half way across the property and also down one boundary from Leslie St to the water's edge.

During the 1950s the Minchinton family from the wheat belt are believed to have owned the property. (Jan Scott, daughter, married to Gary Scott.)

At one time Hugh Gill lived in a small cottage on number **19** close to the water and near to the boat building facility where he worked.

*(With thanks to Margaret Potts, Sandy Tuckey and Jan Scott for information on the property.)*

**INVITATION TO REMEMBER THE ANZACS**

**EXHIBITION OPENING**

**AND GENERAL MEETING OF:**

**FRIENDS OF MANDURAH COMMUNITY MUSEUM.**

**THURSDAY 11TH APRIL, 10AM.**

**WITH SHORT LECTURE BY NICHOLAS REYNOLDS.  
TEA & COFFEE WITH LIGHT MORNING TEA.**

**R.S.V.P. MUSEUM@MANDURAH.WA.GOV.AU,  
OR  
9550 3680**

**From the Visitor's Book.**

From Scotland "Very impressed. We have a local museum at home called 'House of Memories'."

From Dorset "Wonderful glimpse of the past".

And from Perth, "Excellent presentation, Great historical walk through."

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

**Telephone: 9550 3680.  
Email: museum@mandurah.wa.gov.au  
Internet: www.mandurah.wa.gov.au/Facilities/  
Museum/Friends**

**Opening hours.  
Tuesday to Friday. 10 am to 4pm.  
Saturday & Sunday. 11 am to 3pm.  
Closed Mondays and Public Holidays.**

**Friends of Mandurah Community Museum,  
3 Pinjarra Rd,  
MANDURAH WA 6210.**

**Meetings are 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.**

**Membership of the Friends is by a yearly membership fee of \$10 due each August.**