

Friends of Mandurah Museum

BUILDING BRIDGES TO PEEL HISTORY

3 Pinjarra Road
Mandurah WA 6210

Friends of Mandurah Museum

Newsletter April 2022

War news – from Trove. Within our area of Peel, what was happening here, and what would impact on us during April and May 1942. By middle of February, Japan who had entered the war with the bombing of Pearl Harbour, had taken over Singapore. It was just after the collapse of Singapore, that Darwin was bombed.

The tiny pearling port of Broome, Western Australia, became a transit stop on the escape route for refugees fleeing the Japanese advance in the Netherlands East Indies. On Tuesday morning, 3 March 1942, ten Japanese aircraft attacked both the airfield there and the flying boats refuelling at anchor on nearby Roebuck Bay. In an attack lasting an hour the Japanese fighters destroyed 16 flying boats on the bay, six aircraft on the ground, and shot down a DC-3 laden with refugees and a Liberator full of wounded US servicemen. Later that year in July, Port Hedland also was bombed.

Fremantle was to become the second largest submarine base in the world with American, British and Dutch submarines undertaking 416 patrols out of the harbour. The base commenced operating in March 1942, and the first submarines were from the United States. These were protected by a unit of soldiers from the U.S. and was possibly the first big arrival of U.S. troops and ships to Perth. A lesser base was established at Albany.



The Fremantle Maritime Museum, has a post war submarine on exhibition, see above H.M.A.S. Ovens.

Editor. Welcome to our Easter edition. It is an exciting time at the museum, we have just completed our International Women's month exhibition featuring Violet Sutton. As part of that the Friends of the Museum ventured into publishing once again and self published a booklet on Violet. This booklet has been well received and we have several more copies available to purchase.

The museum is now showcasing the Anzac events within the museum. Many of you will remember we published "Remembering Them - Men of World War 1, Mandurah District", several years ago, there are a limited number of these books still available.

To round this off, as part of the upcoming roaming Exhibition, **Remarkable, Stories of Australians and their Boats**, The Friends have self published a second edition of The Canopus by Michael McGhie, more information further in this edition.

Lastly, as part of this exhibition, the Friends are invited to the opening with afternoon tea provided. Following the afternoon tea we will run a short general meeting. Agenda to be provided shortly. **Jan Baker.**

Index.

War News from Trove Jan Baker.
Violet Sutton Julia Lindley: Jan Baker

Regular Articles.

Museum Development Officer Nick Reynolds.
Education Matters Katrina Gauci
Maritime Moorings Dave Austin
From the Editor Jan Baker.

Coming or Current events.

Anzac Exhibition Currently on display
Maritime Exhibition.

Charles & Theo Wearne were on the last ships to leave Singapore on 11th February 1942, and arrived at Fremantle on the 20th of February. Shortly after that, Charles and wife Sue relocated to Mandurah where he became a member of the Auxiliary Naval Patrol and registered his boat *Salamat*, we have documented his work during the war from then onwards in a previous newsletter. By now Western Australia was becoming a stop off point for many refugees escaping Singapore and parts of Indonesia.

Locally, as noted in the South Western Advertiser, the Murray Unit of the Home Guard, were active and practising various procedures. There was also a unit of the V.A.D's (Voluntary Aid Unit) practising on casualties. This is reported on each month in that newspaper.

The Home Guard attended when Neil Morphett and his friend found a precious bale of rubber washed up on the beach near Mandurah. The boys were congratulated on helping the war effort.

Eggs were becoming a precious commodity in England but there now were problems with shipping them, not only because of the dangers to shipping but also due to a lowering of refrigeration space on the ships. To alleviate this, Australia managed to buy from China, eleven egg drying plants which were dispersed to N.S.W. and Victoria. The eggs dried were then able to be shipped taking less room and also not needing refrigeration or having the problems associated with the fragility of eggs.

And on the subject of eggs, in May, discussions are becoming frequent on the need to commence rationing, this was due to the need to both supply our own forces but also to try to send as much as possible to England. At that time, it was unknown just what would be rationed. Later my own mother, like many others was to commence recycling clothing to provide clothes for both my brother and later for myself. We were amongst the luckier ones as Mum had grown up caring for 'chooks' which added to her Soldier Settler parent's income, so had also a backyard chook run.

From Vernon Pascoe's memories.

Rationing came in at some stage during the war years and meat, clothes and other goods became subject to the system. The first week that meat was rationed Vernon had the job of counting out all the ration tickets at the end of the week. They were small pieces of cardboard and it was quite a tedious job. Vernon believes they sold more meat that week than they had ever sold before in any one week.

In Mandurah, on the last day of January 1942, one of our oldest citizens passed away. Emma Woollams was the wife of Robert Mewburn our first schoolmaster of Mandurah and later of George Woollams. Emma was the daughter of Thomas Eacott and one of the first children to land in this colony.

Fund raising efforts in Mandurah included those of Miss Preston who organized a card evening at the Capitol Theatre. Funds raised were for Red Cross.

The Coloured Star Club, reported about in past newsletters), an activity undertaken by young children was also raising funds. They collected and sold bottles, and sold flowers. They sent most of the money to the Soldier's Welfare, but also were able to hand over money to the Camp Comforts Funds.

MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT OFFICER'S REPORT

In the period that we had in late February prior to unveiling the Museum's very successful Violet Sutton exhibition celebrating Women's History Month, an Olympic Games display was mounted. Planned to coincide with the Beijing Winter Olympics the display looked at the impact that the 2000 Sydney Olympics and 2006 Commonwealth Games had on Mandurah. During 2000, Mandurah was lucky enough to host a leg of the 'round Australia Olympic torch relay. A number of local people were selected to carry the torch, and many have fond memories of the visit. The Museum has the genuine Olympic torch that was carried on the local leg, and also the miniature cauldron which was used to hold the torch overnight. In 2006 Mandurah was selected for a leg of the similar 'round Australia journey of the Queen's Baton, which, while not a torch as used in the Olympics, serves a similar purpose as a worldwide and nation wide lead up to the games. The baton is a replica, whereas the Olympic torch is the 'real deal'. This particular torch was carried by a member of the torch relay team and was made available to purchase at the end of the leg. The City of Mandurah was fortunate to have a torch donated by a participant which is the one now in the Museum's collection.



Left: 2000 Olympics Torch

Right: 2006 Commonwealth games baton

The first meeting of the Peel Chapter of the Australian Museums and Galleries Association, the peak body representing museums in Australia, was held in March at Old Blythewood, Pinjarra. Special thanks go to Vince Taylor for hosting the meeting at the National Trust property which was the home of the McLarty family from 1860.

PTO.



Members of the Gold Star Club during the war years.

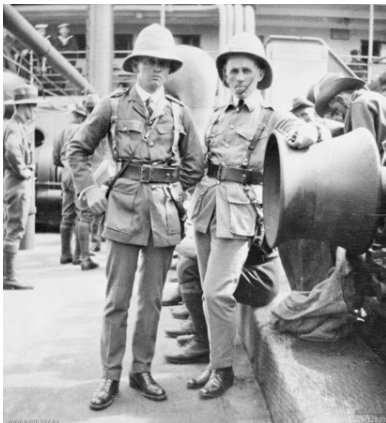
Dawn Eacott, R Scott, D & M Greenham, M Davey.

MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT OFFICER'S REPORT Cont.

It was great to catch up with news from the other museums and historical societies from around the Peel region. Especially useful was the sharing of information on how our various groups are handling the peak of WA's Covid outbreak. Apart from masks and hand sanitiser, it seems like 'business as usual'. John Jackson followed the meeting with a presentation on some of the South West's most famous steam locomotives.



Above: Models, including the Leschenault Lady



Above: Officers of the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force on their way to fight in German New Guinea

The topic, in the lead up to Anzac Day, was the Australian military involvement in the capture of German New Guinea and the defeat of the German East Asia naval squadron. This relatively unknown 'Great Imperial Duty', as it was called at the time, made it safe for the AIF to be sent by ship to the middle east. Only by this victory were the later battle of Gallipoli and the Western Front made possible.

On Saturday 9th of April the Museum Development Officer gave a presentation to the Mandurah Family History Society which, thanks to great promotion, was given to a very crowded room.



Education Matters Celebrating Women's History Month

The Mandurah Museum celebrated Women's History month during March.

This year, pioneering woman of the Peel Region: Violet Sutton was featured.

Violet's incredible story was researched by Mandurah Museum volunteers, Jan Baker and Julia Lindley. Violet's achievements and contributions to Mandurah were told through display panels, photographs, objects and oral histories.

Violet's life was so interesting that the Friends of Mandurah Museum created a 48-page booklet.

On Tuesday 15, March, the Sutton family members were invited to the Mandurah Museum for morning tea to celebrate Violet's life.

It was exciting to see 21 family members, reminiscing when they saw archived artefacts that hadn't been on display before; looking at photographs of themselves as younger people and discussing past events with pleasure and nostalgia.

One family member wrote in the visitor's book, "Fantastic to be able to look back and see what granny & family have done" Another wrote, "Happy Memories".

Councillor Ryan Burns, who has a keen interest in history attended the event and commented, "Lovely to see old Mandurah families"

Snippets of eight oral histories including Violet Sutton and other family members were available on the listening post. This brought the history of living on the farm, the corner shop, social events and other memories of the past to life.

The event was a success. The Friends of Mandurah Museum sold 20 booklets, the feedback we received was overwhelmingly positive, plus everyone enjoyed the morning tea supplied by Mandurah Café Training.

Since the event, several family members have revisited the museum to look more closely at the exhibition as well as the other galleries within the museum.

The challenge for the journalist from the Mandurah Mail was taking a group photograph in the showery weather.

Thank you to the volunteers that were involved in this project for your time and expertise. This exhibition couldn't have been as successful without your involvement.

Violet Sutton (nee Cooper) was born into an adventurous and entrepreneurial family, which may have influenced her success in later life. However, she also brought to this endeavour a humanity and love for family which was supremely her own. Not daunted by tragedy, she knuckled down and throughout her life provided for her family and relations in a unique way all of her own. This, at the same time as helping progress the development of Mandurah from a sleepy fishing/holiday village to the City it is today.

Violet's birth as the tenth of the family of eleven, would have seen her spending her early childhood on the riverfront, living in Eureka Cottage (named after the Victorian miners' stockade) with her parents, James and Ellen Cooper. Violet's mother Ellen (nee Tuckey) had left Mandurah as a child to live on the goldfields of Ballarat in Victoria. After returning home 10 years later she married James Cooper, also a member of a pioneering family in the Peel region.

When Violet Cooper married George Anthony Sutton, she was 23 years old. By the time of George's death some twelve years later Violet had given birth to seven children, the youngest being Patricia who was just six weeks old when her father died.

During her marriage she had been responsible for looking after their home in Hall's Cottage, built circa 1832, which was quite small with only five rooms. However, despite children arriving over the years, she also maintained a presence on her father-in-law's farm. On the death of Henry Sutton in 1922, the family moved into Sutton's Farm where they continued to manage the farm and its employees. Violet cooked for the men and managed the books. Due to Henry's death it was necessary to sell the farm to fulfil his wishes. The farm was sold to Joe Cooper, Violet's cousin, with a caveat that should it be sold again then the Suttons would have first refusal. Sadly, just three years after his father's death, George Sutton also died. For some time after the sale and George's death, Violet continued to manage the farm, its workers, and the buildings. Her daughters remember her as always working, churning butter for sale in the evenings when all her other work was done. Her children also remember her as always being cheerful with a sense of fun which never deserted her in later life.



On the death of Violet's mother, Ellen Cooper in 1929, Violet inherited Eureka Cottage which can still be seen today as an attachment to the Bridge Café. According to her son Hal, there was a large block of land as well stretching from the cottage on Mandurah Terrace round the corner opposite the bridge and along Pinjarra Road towards where the current Post Office stands. With the assistance of her relative Charles Wearne who loaned her £1,750, she then had the "Corner Shop" built. George Sutton had left only £400 on his death.

The Corner Shop was a significant building for its time and has remained an attraction for Mandurah to this day. Various newspaper articles mention the shop being built and of it being to a higher standard than most of the buildings in town, including a kitchen, electric lighting and septic tanks. Like

Wearne House and Tuckey's house (all had the same builder), the Corner Shop was tiled with the new clay tiles, which lasted for many years and were only discarded in early 2007 when the then owners replaced the tiles with corrugated iron.

At the same time a residence was built behind the store for the family. It had wide verandahs and fronted on to Pinjarra Road. This residence was described as being quite large "The house was corrugated iron roof and asbestos. It was a large house. It was 1,2,3,4 bedrooms, kitchen, bathroom, dining room and an old lattice verandah around the side and a separate wash house out the back with a copper. (Debbie Elliot).

By the time that Violet Sutton moved into her new home on Pinjarra Road, her two eldest daughters Gwen and Joan would have been in their teens.

In 1935 Violet left Mandurah to reside in Richmond, East Fremantle to spend time with her children and be closer to her sisters.

Following their marriages Gwen stayed in Leslie Street, Mandurah, just a short distance from Violet's home, and Joan resided in Fremantle with her husband.

So it was, that Violet went from managing a farm, to becoming a shopkeeper. In the early days she sold a little of everything, and the store became a landmark meeting point for the whole community and the numerous holiday makers who came to Mandurah for their summer breaks.



Photos this page, Mena and Violet Cooper, The Corner Store & Pinjarra Road, residence of Violet Sutton just visible on left, Agricultural Hall right.

Violet could not have chosen a worse time than 1929 to open a business as Australia was about to go into the 'Great Depression'. However, this was in the days before single mother's pensions and government assistance and the widow had seven children to raise.



Violet was to run the shop intermittently, leasing it to other businesspeople in between times, the first being Jack Wade in 1934.

Early in the Corner Store's life, Violet built onto a corner verandah of the Sutton House creating a small annexe used weekly by a Bank believed to be the Bank of N.S.W. At a later stage, Kevin Green also leased this area for his real estate business.

Newspaper advertisements (West Australian 24th April 1940) show she tried to sell the business in 1940 but did not succeed. On Violet's return from Fremantle during WW2, she ran it again for a period of time. By the end of the war, Violet was in her late 50s and the shop was again leased.

When Violet's sons Tony and Hal bought back the farm she returned to the farm to housekeep for Tony, until he married in 1953. She then returned to live in rooms at her previous home at the Corner Store. Later she moved again to accommodation in her daughter's holiday homes on the western side of the estuary.

After Hal and Connie Sutton moved to their new home, Meg and Percy Tasker with their two daughters, resided at Violet's house, 2 Pinjarra Rd.

Percy married Violet's daughter Meg in 1942 but after his war service he did not leave the army until the early 1950s. He purchased the local newsagency from Roy Tuckey and after renting premises from Roy for a period of time wished to have his own shop.

It was then Violet constructed two more businesses on her last portion of land that she had inherited from her mother, Ellen Cooper.

The first, was a doctor's surgery next to the annexe. It is believed that for some time, Violet had allowed her lounge to be used by Dr Whelan from Pinjarra for his office. By the time the Surgery was built Doctor Webster was servicing the Mandurah Community. Later on this building was in use as a solicitor's office.

The second was the building which became Tasker's Newsagency, for which he paid some rent to Violet. Her son in law Percy Tasker was to use the front area of Violet's annexe on the house, as a display for his shop and the rear to manufacture industrial paint.

After the war, it appears Violet didn't continue operating the Corner Store instead leasing it to a series of Lessees, one often mentioned is a Greek family the Maneas. The store was finally sold in the mid-1970s to the Hummels who at the time were the proprietors of the Brighton Hotel.

Devoting herself to the family, with grandchildren coming along she became an important person in all their lives. Oral histories of several grandchildren show the love and respect they held her in. Parts of these can be heard in the Courtroom.

Violet had been a church goer all her life and she continued to have a role within the Anglican community for many years. She was a member of the Anglican Church Guild, and attended church every week, often taking her grandchildren with her. Her religious beliefs and natural empathy saw her involved in assisting other people as she had been in her early widowhood.

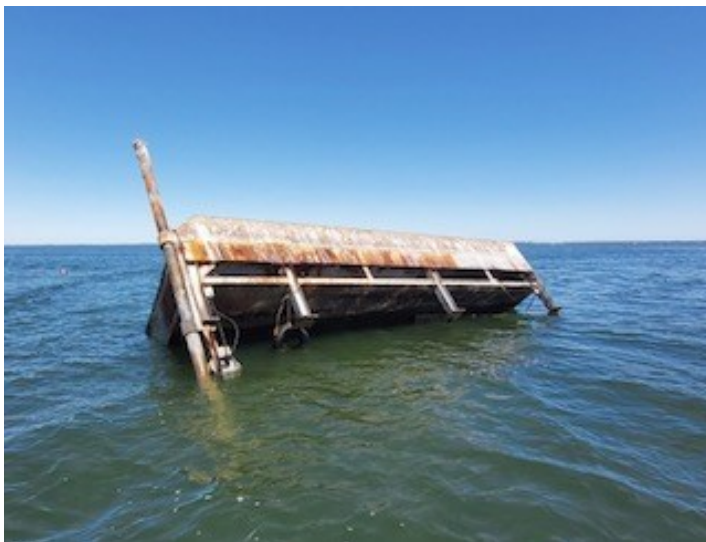
Like many country women, Violet was along-time member of the C.W.A. Her community service included serving on the Mandurah Infant Health Committee and for a time was on the committee of the Agricultural Hall.

When Violet Sutton died in 1981, she was 92 years old. Most of her life had been lived in Mandurah and in the service of both family and community. Violet was the last "Old Mandurah" resident to be buried in the cemetery at Christ's Church on Pinjarra Road.



From the top, Violet Sutton with her grandchildren, Violet & her daughters post WW2, Violet and her family, 1961.

Photos are from those kindly donated by Debbie Elliott and from the museum collection .



The saga ends. Readers will remember from the last issue, we told of the move of a barge which had been anchored for quite a long time off the Old Boat Shed (Maritime Annex). When it was being towed upstream, it sank. This is a photo of that sinking.

Please remember the upcoming, roving Maritime Exhibition from the Australian National Maritime Museum.

Remarkable, Stories of Australians and Their Boats..

As part of Mandurah Museum's displaying of this exhibition, the Friends have undertaken to publish within the museum, a second edition of Michael McGhie's book, *The Canopus*.

Copies of this book valued at \$10, will be available from the exhibition opening date - 6th May, 2022. Profits from the book will be held by the Friends of Mandurah Museum - Maritime, and used to further promote the history of boats and sailing in the Peel area.

SAVING CANOPUS



Michael McGhie

General Meeting of Friends of Mandurah Museum.

To be held following opening of Exhibition **Remarkable. Stories of Australians and Their Boats.**

Date. Thursday 5th May, 2022.

Place Mandurah Museum.

Time 3.30 (following Exhibition Opening.

Agenda. Book Launches.

Also to include, next donation/s for the museum, purchases arranged per Committee Meeting in February. Coming events.

Secretary Jan Baker.



The Mandurah Museum is hosting the exhibition Remarkable.

12 of the most compelling stories canvassed from the breadth of Australia are on display.

The Mandurah Museum will be featuring several local stories. The tragedies of the *Leviathan*, *James Service* and mystery disappearance of *Avaneta*.

Come in and explore the remarkable connections between people and their boats.

When: 4 May-31 May
Opening Hours: Tuesday-Friday 10am-4pm
 Saturday-Sunday 11am-3pm
Cost: Free

Where:
 Mandurah Museum
 3 Pinjarra Road
 Mandurah WA 6210
 Phone: 9550 3683
 mandurah.wa.gov.au



**Mandurah 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

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

Meetings 4 times per year as notified, usually following an Exhibition opening or other event.

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.