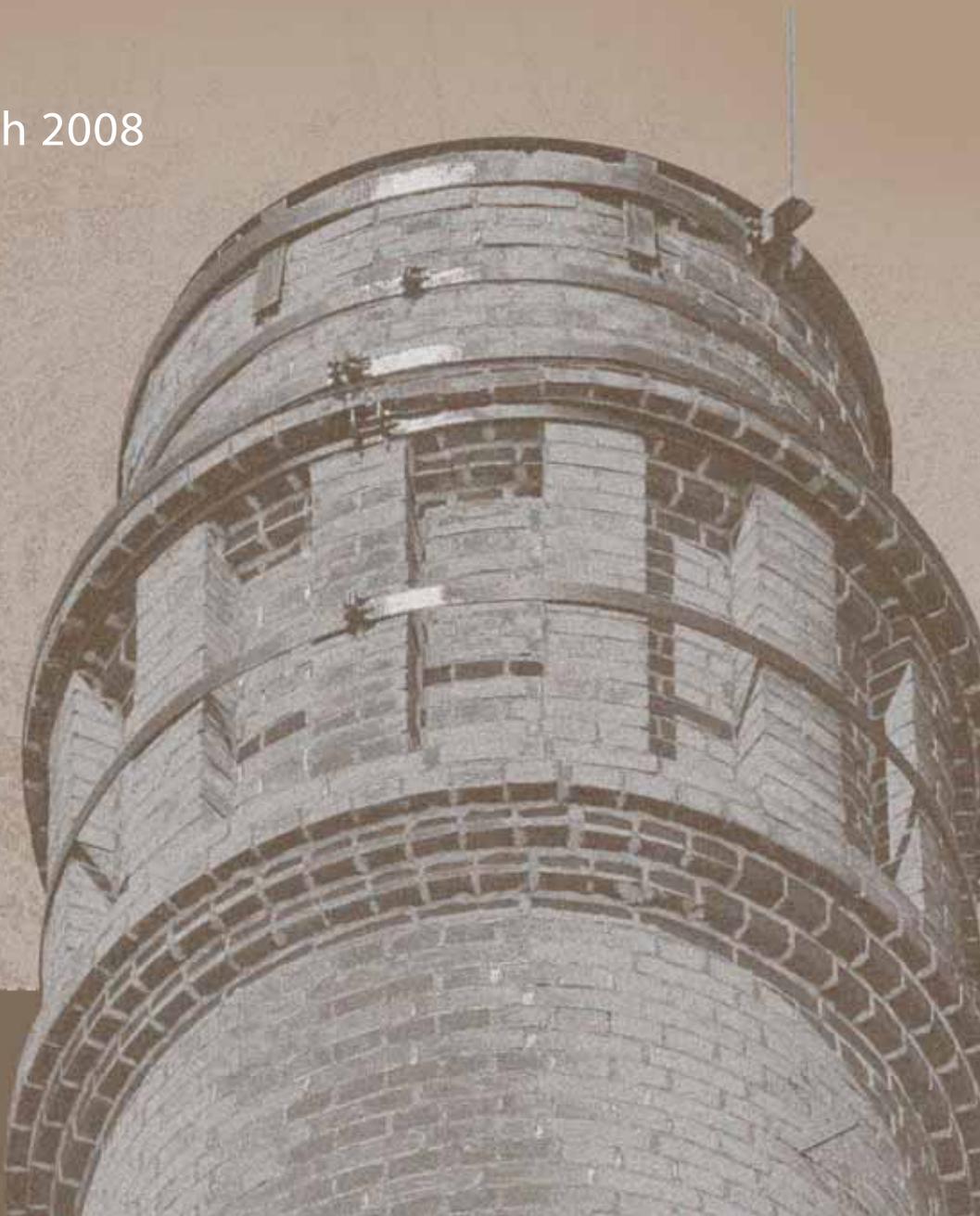


the changing CockburnCoast

Aboriginal and European heritage
in the Cockburn region

March 2008





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Department for Planning
and Infrastructure

and east. Historical and anthropological records document several well-used routes along which Nyoongar people travelled from the south-west to the mouth of the Swan River and beyond.

As well as these routes – the most prominent of which is the Bibbulmun track – there were a number of coastal routes which included the Cockburn coast, or North Coogee. These tracks were used for travelling and camping, while camping sites were linked by wetlands and water sources. Such a network indicates a long history of Aboriginal occupation and movement throughout the area (in accordance with Nyoongar life and traditions).

The area around Kwinana and Rockingham lies on a major north-south travelling route, and certain tracks facilitated use of the Cockburn strip by indigenous people before and after European settlement.

While indigenous people used the coastal fringe and dune system in the Woodman Point to Kwinana Beach strip in pre-contact times, both Europeans and indigenous people used the area in later years.

From the beginning of European settlement, the Swan River and other watercourses were of vital importance as communication routes to the new settlers and indigenous people alike. But to the indigenous people the waterways also had strong spiritual significance. That significance is still strong today.

'It was said that a sparrow and a hawk flew to a hole in the earth where the moon rested during the day. That hole was located in the vicinity of North Lake. The two birds stole fire from the moon in the form of a fire stick, and as they flew back along the limestone ridge near the ocean, the bush caught fire. The moon called his uncle, the ocean, to help and the ocean rose and extinguished the fire. Nyoongars were drowned as the lakes in the area were formed, including Lake Coogee.'

(McDonald, Hales and Associates, 1997 : 28-30)

Oral history

We gratefully acknowledge the help and assistance of Neville Collard, Nyoongar birdiyia (Nyoongar boss) in providing us with oral histories pertaining to Nyoongar history in the Cockburn coastal region.





Honouring the past

Neville is the grandson of Tom Bennell, who was Minder of Nyoongar stories until his death in 1989. It is believed the line is descended from Midgegooroo, a Whadjuk Beeliar leader, through his son Yagan.

The Nyoongar six seasons

I'll tell you about the six seasons – the black fella couldn't live here (Cockburn coastal region) all year, they couldn't survive. So they would continually travel up and down the swamp lands, the peat lands, according to the season.

For the Nyoongar, there are six seasons. Birak (November, December, early January), Bunuru (January, February, early March), Djeran (March, April, early May), Makuru (May, June, early July), Djilba (July, August, early September), and Kambarang (September, October, early November).

Djeran, which means fat time, is when the roos and animals are all fat. And hunting in this area was good.

But when the rains came (Makuru), they couldn't live here because of the mud coming down from the river. They couldn't see the fish to spear them coz it was too muddy. Also the kangaroos went into the scrub bush because it got too drafty.

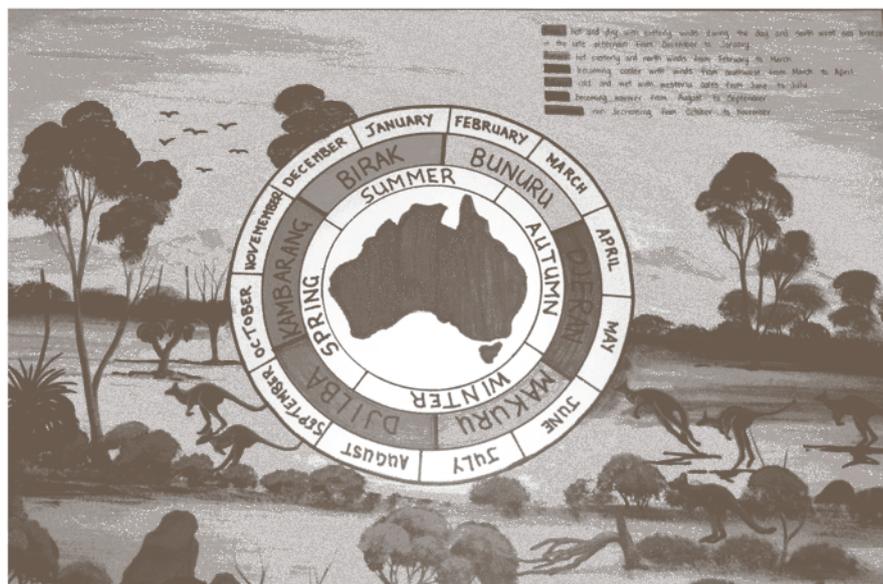
So the Nyoongars had to go into the Morongka or Darling Ranges and the other side of Serpentine coz there are waterholes there and the animals were there. The waterholes provided plenty of water, plenty of food, plenty of

paperbark to build their houses and plenty of bush tucker growing, and possums.

And then we come around to Djilba – that means good time – and the Kambarang – which means all good. That's the time when all the blossoms are yellow, all the yange bushes are full of goodness – you pull the roots up and it tastes like coconut – melon berries, kikon berries, coal berries, quandong, sandalwood, all these.

Kangaroo eat blossoms, possum eat blossoms, Nyoongar eat blossoms, Nyoongar eat kangaroo, possums – they all connect.

So this time of year they'll be starting to move back to the coast. It's getting hot – the fish traps are clearing up so they walk all the way to places like Point Walter where the Nyoongar could fish and the lakes where they could catch duck and where the roos and emu would come.



Waugal beliefs

In Nyoongar mythology, the Waugal – or Rainbow Serpent – is the creator of the land (including the water courses) and all living things.

The Swan and Canning rivers and their tributaries, as well as the Murray River further south, the Moore River to the north and the strings of coastal lakes



are interconnected through the water table. They are regarded as sacred to the Rainbow Serpent.

Traditionally, Nyoongar people camped close to water sites as an important food source and, in some cases, for spiritual healing powers.

Therefore, waterscapes are typically part of the sacred geography of Aboriginal Australia and have cultural heritage values recognised by the Aboriginal Heritage Act in 1972.

In light of the mythological significance of the area, protection of the eastern face of the limestone ridge along part of the Cockburn coast will play an important part of future planning processes, because the ridge is associated with a creation myth for the western chain of the Cockburn wetlands.

In addition, groundwork in the coastal dune system will be monitored in case buried skeletal material, or other sub-surface archaeological material, is uncovered during excavation.

Oral history

Fishing and hunting in the lakes

In the lakes, they would have done fishing by spear. The Nyoongars would have watched the pelican. When the pelicans are in the lake, they all start at one end, all line up, then start swimming to disturb the water and drive the fish in front of them. Anything that jumped out of the water, they'd eat 'em. Nyoongars then did the same thing, using palm leaves and driving the fish into shallow water where they'd spear 'em.

The Nyoongars would also build traps in the reeds. They'd push the reeds apart, making the opening narrower and narrower (like a cone) and the Nyoongars would watch the duck go into the reeds and then go and grab 'em.



Honouring the past

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The other way they'd do it was, you know those big water reeds which are like big hollow tubes ... well that was a snorkel and so they'd get underneath the water and breathe through the tube as they went towards the duck. And the duck would think it was another duck coming in to have a feed. And then they'd grab it.



Oral history

Dreaming stories

Old Aboriginal people tell me they can go into dreaming where they leave their body and go to visit their relations – and they see the ground below them. White people call it transcendental travel. It's unbelievable to watch.

That's how the Nyoongar could see the shape of the land and give names to places according to shape.

The creation of Garden Island (Meandip)

In Nyoongar language the crocodile is called Meandip – that's the same name for Garden Island. I'll tell you the story of how the island got its name.

The crocodile Meandip came here and the Nyoongar said, "This is the Nyoongar land and we don't want you here – you are a bad man – you've got to go back to your land." But the crocodile said, "I'm not leaving." And so the Nyoongar decided they would call on the Waugal to help them. The Waugal said he would fight Meandip and the winner would keep the land.

And so they fought all the way round the mouth of the Swan River to Cockburn Sound where Garden Island is. Now the Waugal got the better of Meandip, put a foot on him, pulled a whisker out of his face and tied him up. And when you look at the island from up high to the south-west, you can see the white cliffs (his teeth), the knob, that's his crown and then there's the rest of Meandip's shape. That's how Garden Island got its aboriginal name – Meandip.

If you go the top of the Round House and look at Garden Island, you can see the shape of Meandip.

Oral history

Campsites

The Nyoongar people travelled the land with the seasons. They would stay at campsites maybe a couple of months before moving on to the next site. Some parts of Bibra and North Lakes were for men only (including for initiation).

Paperbark was used a lot. They'd take it off the tree, shake the woody bits off it and lie it on the ground to sleep on.

European impact

With the arrival of the white settlers came disease, and the effect on the Aboriginal communities was severe. In 1832 whooping cough was prevalent, followed in 1833 by cholera.



At the time the colony was settled, the Whadjuk leader for the Beeliar territory – which included the Cockburn coastal strip – was Midgegooroo. He and his son Yagan are remembered today as early casualties of the European conflict.

In April 1833, Yagan's brother Domjum was killed, decapitated and his head put on display. In traditional Aboriginal payback, Yagan killed two European settlers, John and Tom Velvick. During the punitive search for Yagan that followed, Midgegooroo was captured and executed. On the 11 July 1833, an 18-year-old

European, William Keats, shot Yagan and removed his head. The conflict escalated and in October 1834 the so-called 'Battle of Pinjarra' took place.

Mia mias (Nyoongar shelters) and worlies (semi-round mias) were easily created out of materials from the land. Tea tree branches were used as the frame and curved into a semi-circle and bound together with grass vine or sinew from the kangaroo tail.

As the men were preparing the frame, the women and children collected branches and paper bark to weave and thatch into the frame of the mia.



Honouring the past

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Aboriginal heritage sites

The following list indicates some of the key Aboriginal heritage sites in the Cockburn coast region. A full list is available through the Department of Indigenous Affairs. You can visit their website: www.dia.wa.gov.au

Lake Coogee

Clontarf Hill

Robb Jetty Camp

Woodman Point

Cockburn Lighthouse

Cockburn Road

Indian Ocean

The sea also holds other significance for indigenous people. Early researcher, Daisy Bates, noted that:

'The Aborigines along the whole line of western coast believe that when the body dies, the spirit goes away westward through the sea to some country far away, and that there the spirit lives in much the same manner as it has lived when in the flesh.'

(Bates, 1992 : 169)

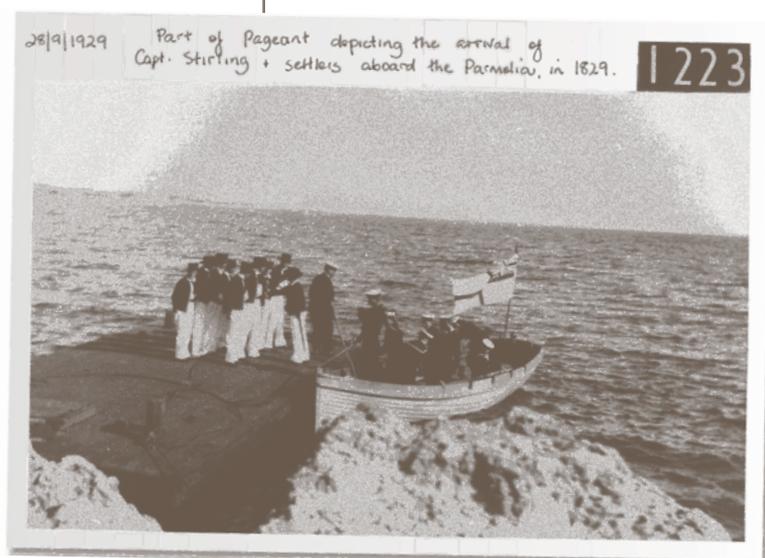
'Aboriginal legend says that Rottnest, Carnac and Garden islands once formed part of the mainland. However, the Waugal (Rainbow Serpent) caused 'the ground to split asunder with a great noise, and the sea rushed in between', leaving the islands as they are today.'

(Moore, 1884 : 8)



European heritage on the Cockburn coast

The first explorers



Long before the arrival of the first white settlers on the Swan River – in fact, two centuries earlier – the Cockburn coast had been explored by both the Dutch and the French. Some of the better known voyages include the Dutch ships *Leeuwin* in 1622 and the *Gulden Zeepaerd* in 1627, and the French ships *Gros Ventre* in 1772 and the *Astrolabe* in 1826.

Many sites on or near the Cockburn coast originally bore Dutch or French names. Garden and Carnac Islands were previously named *Ile Buache* and *Ile Berthellet* respectively, names that had become well established by the time of the arrival of British explorer and the founding father of modern Western Australia, Captain James Stirling in 1827.

It was Stirling who later renamed *Ile Buache* Garden Island, and with fresh water easily accessible on the island, it may have contributed to Stirling's decision to choose Garden Island as the site of a temporary settlement.

The first settlers

With both the Dutch and, in particular, the French believed to be trying to make claim to Western Australia, the race was on for the British to establish a colony on the west coast. The original plan was to establish a settlement without convict labour.





Honouring the past

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On 2 May 1829, Captain Charles Fremantle declared the Swan River Colony for Britain. A month later, Captain Stirling returned with a party of free settlers and free workers and the new colony was established.

That same year, on 15 December, another group of 169 settlers arrived at Cockburn Sound aboard the ship *Gilmore*, under the command of Thomas Peel (a cousin of British Prime Minister Robert Peel). It was an event plagued by controversy and disharmony – certainly an inauspicious start to the creation of a colony on the Cockburn coast.

Peel had earlier secured an agreement with the British Government for the granting of one million acres (404 694 hectares) of land to assist with a scheme to settle 10 000 people in the district. However, just before he sailed to Western Australia the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Sir George Murray, stipulated that the colony had to be started by 1 November 1829.

That proved an impossible time frame and when Peel arrived late, on December 15, his grant was slashed to just 250 000 acres (101 173 hectares).

Peel was furious with the turn of events, but Stirling eventually persuaded him to take up land along the southern part

of the Cockburn coast. What is now known as Woodman Point originally bore the name “Clarence”, and it was there that Peel established his colony.

The settlement at Clarence was a disaster, with a combination of bad luck and suggestions of poor management plaguing the struggling settlers.

In the booklet “The Ship Rockingham” by R H Shardlow (the ill-fated Rockingham, bringing much-needed supplies and livestock to the colonies, ran aground near Clarence during bad weather) it is stated that:

“There was little shelter in Clarence. Most of the people tried to huddle in a small wooden house washed up from the ship. Others had to sleep in barrels, boxes and under sacks or pieces of canvas.”



Certainly, the lack of food, water and suitable shelter took its toll and the colony, beleaguered by dysentery and scurvy, gradually dwindled until, after two years and dozens of deaths, it was abandoned entirely with the remaining settlers joining Peel in what is now known as Mandurah (Peel Inlet) or the other colonies along the Swan River.

Hamilton Hill - The first successful settlement

In stark contrast to the fate of the settlers at Clarence, another settlement at what is now known as Hamilton Hill flourished.

In January 1830, the ship *Leda*, commanded by Captain George Robb, arrived at Owens Anchorage, just South

of Catherine Point. Robb had been granted a 2000-acre (809 hectare) spread of land and, intending to establish a farm, he brought with him stock, grain and building materials.

Robb, however, did not stay in the colony. Instead, he left his representative, Sidney Smith, to tend to his investments. During the next 12 months, Smith was actively engaged in establishing Robb's farm. In a letter dated 27 August 1830, he gives his address as Hamilton Hill.

It is not known whether it was Robb or Smith who did the naming, but it is certainly Smith who is credited as being the earliest known settler in Hamilton Hill.

The rise and fall of the Manning dynasty

One of the most powerful and influential families to settle in the Cockburn coastal area were the Mannings, a shipping merchant family originally from High Holborn in London.





Honouring the past

On his arrival in 1854, Charles Manning began buying up land around Davilak Lake, eventually creating a massive estate that stretched from the coast to Bibra Lake and down to Coogee. Produce from the estate – including fruit, vegetables, meat and condiments – graced the table at receptions for visiting dignitaries.

Following the marriage of his son, Lucius, in 1866 Manning built the newlyweds an impressive 14-room homestead on the estate. Called Davilak Homestead, the solid limestone and shingled roof house was located to the south of Davilak Lake.

However, the fortunes of the Manning family took a downturn in 1887 following the loss of a large part of their estate when the Government rejected their claim to George Robb's original land grant.

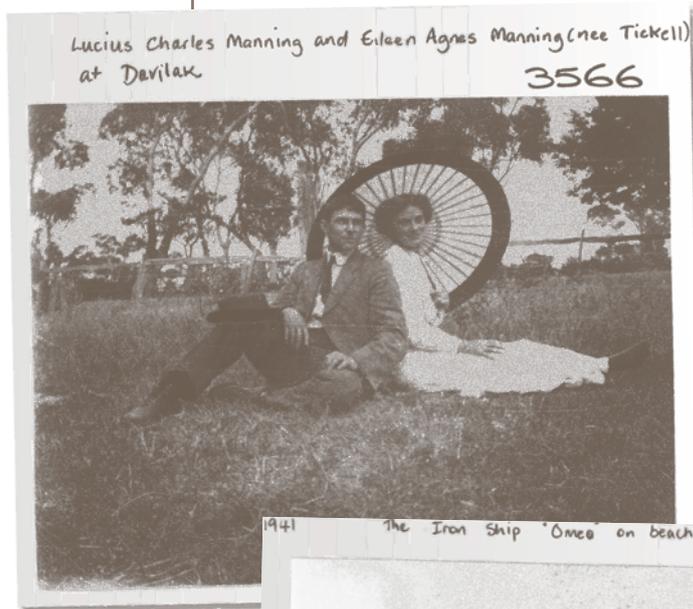
One of the last historical achievements of the Manning family came in 1900 with the construction of the Azelia Ley Homestead, built for newlyweds Azelia Manning and John Ley. Located at 34 Davilak Road on the west side of Davilak Lake in Hamilton Hill, the homestead is now listed as a heritage site.

Oral history

Lucius Manning.
Born 1881 at Davilak Homestead (Fremantle)

An account of early settlement:

During the gold rush of the 1890s there were sometimes 40 sailing ships in Owen's Anchorage... Ships used to come from all over the world and the crews would desert when they reached here and go to Coolgardie. We boys



found an old plank that would sit the three of us, and we would paddle out to the ships at anchor. Mostly there was no one on board, but sometimes there would be a caretaker.

We used to climb up the anchor chain being very careful not to do any damage, and then climb over the rigging. There was one lovely barque called the London Lass which was a great favourite of ours. One day there were five sailing ships driven on the shore by a north-west gale. There were lots of sharks in Owen's Anchorage but we used to avoid them.

(Interview recorded by J.Sleep 1975)

The blooming of a market garden industry

In the 1880s, a small group of pensioner guards from Fremantle established a community around Lake Coogee. Although the village did not survive, the small vegetable gardens and orchards that the settlers created was an indication of what was to come.

The discovery of gold in Western Australia and the subsequent rapid growth of Fremantle and Perth put pressure on for the supply of locally-grown produce. Recognising the suitability of the area for growing vegetables and fruit (just like the pensioner guards some 50 years before), vegetable

gardeners and orchardists flocked to the Cockburn region.

By the late 1890s, the boom was seeing excellent prices achieved for the settlers' produce and South Coogee quickly became the nursery of market gardening in Cockburn.

Settlements later sprung up at Hamilton Hill and Spearwood in response to the growing demand for fresh produce and by 1930 the Cockburn region was well and truly established as an important – and indeed vital – hub for the market garden industry.

The great depression of the 1930s, quickly followed by World War II, halted further development of Cockburn. In post war years, interest in the area rose again. This time, however, most activity centred on housing developments rather than market gardens.

The legacy of the market garden industry continues today, with a mix of market gardeners and hobby farmers still active in the area.





Honouring the past

Oral history

Frank Favazzo.
Born 1931, Spearwood.

An account of market gardening in the Cockburn region:

Cultivating the market garden and digging potatoes was done by hand with a special four-pronged fork. Parents kept an eye on quality to separate 'seconds' from the best quality going to Fremantle market. Seed potatoes were brought up from Albany for the next crop. After potatoes were pulled, onions were planted by hand. The children were bent over all day for weeks at a time pushing in the young onions.

Making olive oil was a special occasion. When the olives were ripe in the winter, family and friends gathered together on a windy night to shake the olives down onto a tarpaulin as the leaves blew away on the wind. A horse was used to wind down the press to squeeze the last drops of oil from the olives, and the olive pressing became a social occasion that went on into the early hours of the morning.

The Cockburn industrial era

By the turn of the century, spurred on in no small part by the gold rush, Cockburn's potential as an industrial area was well and truly recognised.

One of the most significant industries – which continued into relatively recent times – revolved around the Robb Jetty abattoir. The slaughterhouses of Forrest, Emanuel & Co, and Conner, Doherty and Durack, literally fed the metropolitan area and Goldfields. These companies were so lucrative they formed a monopoly that no one could compete with.

Nicknamed “The Kimberley Ring” because of the large pastoral properties they held in the Kimberley, these companies controlled the shipping of all stock to Owen’s Anchorage. They also had an interest in a wholesale butcher so they had the whole industry sewn up. Not surprisingly they were viewed with some suspicion, particularly because one of the main proprietors, Alexander Forrest, was the brother of Premier Sir John Forrest.

Another industry to take root during the heady gold rush days was the manufacture of explosives for use in mining. Shortly after the turn of the century, an explosives magazine was built in the sand hills next to the abattoir.





Then, in 1901, the Fremantle smelting works was established south of Island Street. The pollution from these works sparked complaints from nearby residents. It marked the beginning of the industrial age of the North Cockburn coastal strip, and foul smoke from the smelting works was soon accompanied by a host of other polluting emissions.

It was not long before calls came to extend the existing Fremantle to Robb Jetty railway down to Woodman Point as more and more industrial activities, including the lime kilns, were established along the coast. The railway was extended in 1903.

By 1915, shops began to spring up along Rockingham Road in North Cockburn and

larger estates at Hamilton Hill, such as the Manning's, were subdivided into smaller lots as the demand for more housing in the area grew. South Beach became a focal point for families wishing to escape the summer heat, and the Newmarket Hotel (built in 1912) became a popular watering hole.

Disaster struck in the mid-1920s following the outbreak of the cattle disease rinderpest, commonly referred to as cattle plague. Activity in the area was restricted as authorities worked hard to contain the spread of the disease. Fortunately, the source of the outbreak was quickly identified and few livestock outside Robb Jetty and the immediate surrounds were infected.





Honouring the past

Oral history

Mr Fred Smith.
Born 1890, South Fremantle.

An account of the 1922-23 rinderpest outbreak:

In 1897, I went out to Hamilton Hill with my parents and later we started a dairy on the corner of Forrest Road and Stock Road (now Carrington Street). We had 15 to 20 cows and we used to deliver milk on a horse and cart. We ran the dairy there from 1920 to 1926.

I was there when the rinderpest broke out in 1922-23. They had to kill all the cattle and goats and pigs and sheep (not chooks or horses). Some of the dairies affected ... all lost all their cows, but they were all compensated by the government. I lost 64 cows. People with a backyard cow lost theirs, too. After six or eight months we were allowed to start up again, and we started dairying again in 1926.

The speed with which the authorities dealt with the disease also helped ensure the continued development of the horse-racing industry, lead by the Marks family who in 1923 had established Randwick Stable and House on Rockingham Road. In fact, South Beach had been used for the exercise and training of horses since 1833.



Landing cattle at Robb's Quay, Fremantle

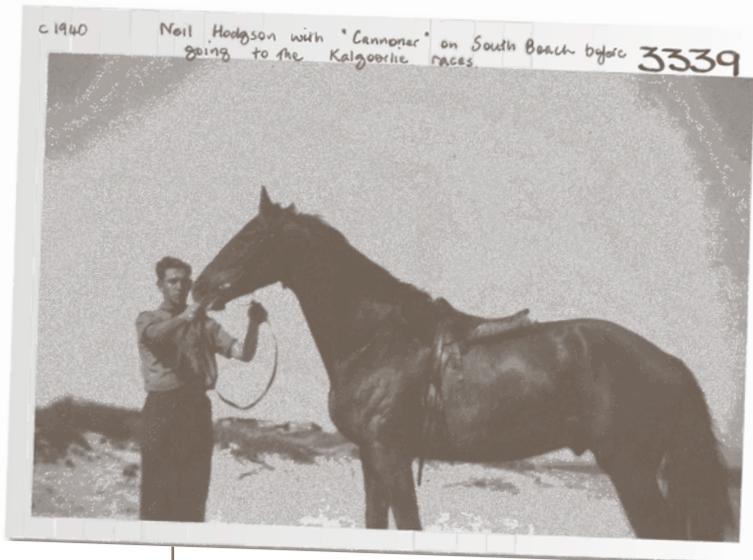
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Oral history

Mr Jim Banks.
Born 1923, Spearwood.

Jim Banks, who won the Perth Cup in 1950 with champion horse Beau Vasse, was the owner of Randwick Stables throughout the 1950s until the late 1990s.

They were good days, it was a very good set up. There were blacksmiths and saddlers and hundreds of horses stabled all throughout the area. Some trainers would walk their horses from as far away as White Gum Valley to be trained on South Beach.



It was a beautiful sight. There were horses and trainers coming and going all the time. Sometimes the owners of the horses would come down to the beach and watch the horses being trained, galloping along the sand and swimming in Cockburn Sound at daybreak.

The final notable achievement during the early industrial era was the construction of the South Fremantle power station, which was officially opened to supply the South-West with electricity. The power station was closed in 1985 and is now listed as a heritage site.

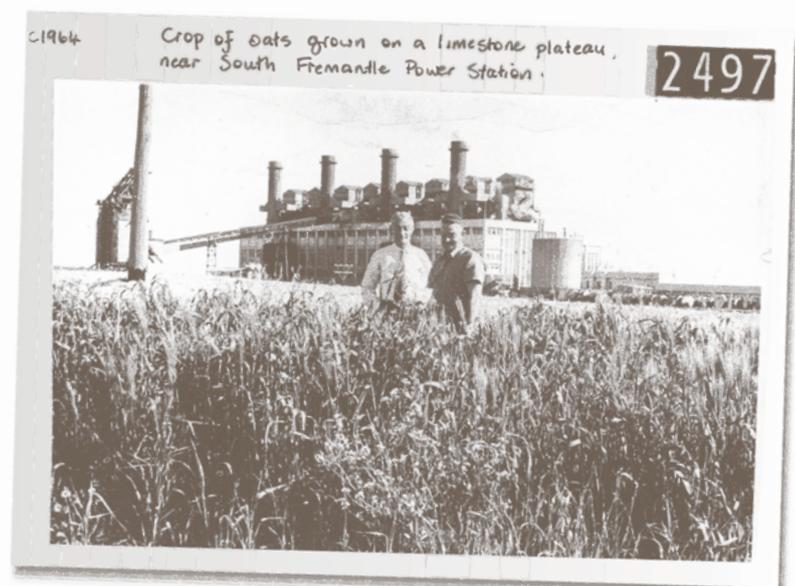
Oral history

South Fremantle power station

Oral accounts of construction and maintenance.

Construction

Harry Fletcher: *I went down there in early '49 before the first unit – that's the 25 000 kilowatt – had been completed. It was still under early construction under limited cover from the weather. Ah! It was just a wind-swept desert with flying beach sand because the beach was in such close proximity and the sand dunes had been flattened. Piles had been driven into the sand to create a decent foundation upon which the cement floor was poured. But there was difficulty as I was saying in keeping sand out of some of the precision bearings and working parts of the turbine owing to inadequate cover.*





Honouring the past

Operations

Stan Rutley: *They'd come and rouse you out of bed at about 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning to go out there and rake the seaweed. It used to get on the seaweed screens and over the top of them and going into the pumps that provided the water for the condensers and you had to get down there to the raft outside the grating with a rake and try and rake the seaweed off and when it was raining, which it mostly was, usually raining like blazes, it'd go straight down the back of your neck. That was one of the most horrid jobs I had as a cleaner before I started on the shift work.*

European heritage sites

Sixty-three sites in the Cockburn coast area have been identified as having historical interest and significance. Copies of the Municipal Heritage

Inventory may be viewed at the Council Offices and Cockburn Public Library. Following is a selection of sites of particular interest:

Azelia Ley Homestead and Davilak House

Randwick Stables and residence

South Fremantle power station

New Market Hotel

South Beach horse exercise area

CY O'Connor statue

James shipwreck

Diana shipwreck

Robb Jetty

Marks House

Healy Road Residence

