



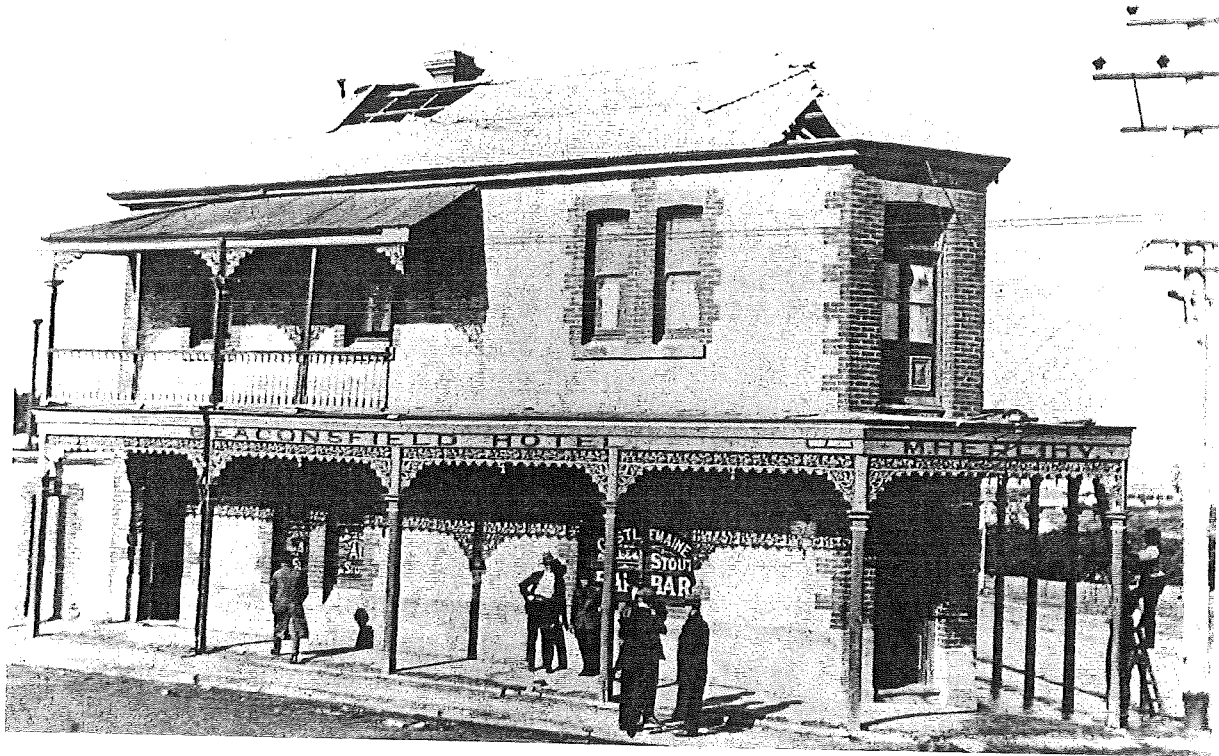
FREMANTLE HISTORY SOCIETY

Established 1994

The Secretary, PO Box 1305
FREMANTLE WA 6959

Winter Edition
2007

Editors: Ron Davidson, Dianne Davidson, Anne Brake



A "Izzy" Orloff photo of the storm damaged Beaconsfield Hotel, 1923
The SP betting kept operating! (Courtesy Dr R Hirsch)

Banquet at the Beacy

The Society's pub social event this year moves to the historic Beaconsfield Hotel (now Moondyne Joe's) where members can enjoy a gourmet two-course meal and refreshments from the bar.

The Beaconsfield Hotel, better known as the Beacy, was built at the corner of Hampton Road and Wray Avenue in 1894-5 by one of Fremantle's leading architects, Herbert Davis, who designed the hotel for EW Davies from the well-known family of funeral directors. Davis also created the Union Stores and the Rialto Building and the classical Lilly building in Cliff Street. The Beacy was a typical turn-of-the-century two-storey suburban 'local', with bedrooms, sitting and dining rooms, well-equipped bars and billiard rooms. Later it advertised proudly that it had perfect refrigeration, enlarged bars and the right method of beer extraction. There were some big drinkers in the suburbs!

MEMBERSHIP NOW DUE

The Beacy was also known for more than 100 years as a major social centre, particularly for SP (Starting Price, ie illegal) betting which took place on the footpath fronting the hotel. The bookmakers would post guards, known as cockatoos, to warn them when police were arriving.

There has been a restaurant at the Beacy for decades, under several names. In the seventies it was Capone's, with signs saying 'Be neatly dressed or ELSE.' And why is the hotel now called Moondyne Joe's? From the time of Moondyne the story circulated that he had an escape tunnel which led from the prison to the hotel area. The story gained momentum when a network of tunnels was dug under the prison to establish the Fremantle water supply. But it was never true.

The Beaconsfield Hotel is currently being assessed for heritage listing by the WA Heritage Council.

Our pub lunch will be on Saturday 25 August, starting at 12 noon. Bookings are essential – phone Dianne on 9430 6096 or email ronaldi@cygnus.uwa.edu.au by **Friday 17 August**. Cost \$25. Please advise of any special requirements eg vegetarian option.

Attention Aspiring Performers!

A feature of the pub lunch will be a (pre-lunch) re-enactment of the trial of Moondyne Joe, Western Australia's most famous escape artist. There will be some dressing up, but you can read from scripts – no need for learning lines! We won't have any rehearsals either; just turn up half an hour early to sort out costumes etc. Anyone interested in taking part please contact Bob Woollett on 9335 7451; no previous experience necessary, just a willingness to have a go and join in the fun!



COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Executive:

Dianne Davidson (President)	9430 6096
Anne Brake (Vice – President)	9335 5206
Alison Bauer (Treasurer)	9432 9739
Ron Davidson (Minute Secretary)	9430 6096

Committee Members:

Bob Woollett	9335 7451
Andy Collins	TBA
Val Cousins	0415 419 738
Marilyn Dimond	9335 3609
Cathy Hall	0407 086 300
Sally May	0409 431 844
David Hutchison	9335 1594

Fremantle History Society's committee meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month.

If you have something you would like discussed at a meeting, please contact one of the members at the numbers shown above.

General meetings of the Society are generally held on the 4th Tuesday of the month. Details of these meetings can be found in your newsletter and reminders are placed in the local press. Be sure to check details as meeting dates may differ from this.



COMING EVENTS

Banquet at the Beacy

(See lead story for details - Saturday 25 August - 12 noon. RSVP by Friday 17 August)

Sculpture in September

Our September general meeting offers something quite special. Sculptor Greg James has invited us to his studio in J shed in Fleet Street (opposite TAFE at the entrance to South Mole). Greg has been

MEMBERSHIP NOW DUE

very productive lately but his Pietro Porcelli, who is always on the move in Kings Square, is still a particular favourite with many. Greg will tell us of his meeting with Porcelli's ghost. A number of members want to ask Greg how he does his research, seeking to capture a personality, and how his might differ from the data gathering techniques of the writer of an orthodox history. Greg will also talk about his work on the Bon Scott statue. Greg sees Bon, lead singer from AC/DC, as displaying many characteristics of a Fremantle boy of the sixties even though he originally migrated from Scotland.

Come to Greg's studio at **7pm on Tuesday 25 September**. Usual drinks and snacks afterwards!

Studies Day at Fremantle Prison

This year's Fremantle Studies Day will be held at the Fremantle Prison on **Sunday 28 October**, and will be jointly hosted by the Fremantle History Society and Fremantle Prison. Details will be circulated closer to the time, but put the date in your diary **now!**



MEETING REPORTS

Talbot Hobbs' Fremantle, 1887-1938

A large crowd filled the pews at Scots Church for our May meeting, which formed part of our contribution to the City of Fremantle's Heritage Week. Architect John Taylor, who has been researching the work of renowned Fremantle architect and World War I soldier John Joseph Talbot Hobbs, presented a fascinating and informative illustrated discussion of Hobbs' contribution to the development of architecture in Fremantle during this formative period in its history.

After John's talk the more enthusiastic partygoers among us adjourned to the Norfolk Hotel for dinner and drinks!

Many thanks to Reverend S Bonnington of Scots Church for making the venue available for our meeting.

Fremantle: a personal love story

Ron Davidson told the story of writing a love story, his book *Fremantle Impressions*, at the Society's July meeting at the Town Hall. The meeting was also part of the Fremantle Heritage Festival and attracted an audience of more than 50. Ron told how the story started when he as a kid and suggested that his father should honk a group of Fremantle lumpers moving frustratingly slowly in front of their car. His father told him, 'You don't honk Fremantle people' He wondered why...

Like the book, Ron's talk meandered through the streets and the times of Fremantle with great ease moving from the time of the Yagan back to the present and off again to other places with much humour and obvious passion.

After the talk a number of those attending brought copies of the book with the profits going to the History Society's publication fund. Many thanks to the Fremantle Arts Centre Press (as it was then) for this generous offer.

AGM and Memories of the Mighty Maggies

Our AGM was held this year at the hall on the historic North Fremantle Oval, home of football for 112 years. The meeting was attended by over 50 members and guests despite the wet and blustery weather and an unfortunate clash with the North Fremantle Precinct meeting.

Guest speaker was Baden Pratt, author of *The Mighty Maggies*, who told the surprising story of the North Fremantle Amateur Football Club - the team that wouldn't die. Baden, who was president of the club for ten years, gave a wide-ranging talk via

Powerpoint, and showed how closely linked the club was to the surrounding community.

North Fremantle was one of the senior clubs in the final decade of the nineteenth century. Then came WW 1 and the team was wiped out: nine members were killed in France; others were wounded. The club was never allowed back into the top competition and had to stay with the amateurs, a fact which still generates some angst. But they remain a successful local team and a special sort of community centre. People still go to their matches, which is rare these days for a suburban team.

Thank you, Baden, for a most entertaining half-hour. Even some members who protested they didn't like football came along - and loved it.



President's Report 2006-2007

Dianne Davidson

It's been an interesting year. We lost our fall back regular venue for meetings – the Maritime Museum closed its function room for renovations, then began using it for other purposes. So we've been forced to bestir ourselves more and organise meetings in various places around town, which has kept us on our toes.

In early 2007 we scored a notable victory when after years of lobbying we finally saw the appointment of a historian on the Fremantle Prison Advisory Committee, and we look forward to working with Dr Bill Leadbetter to promote more research into the history of the Prison.

We've continued our involvement with heritage issues around Fremantle, in particular the Fremantle Ports and ING proposed development on Victoria Quay – we're supporting the Fremantle Society in its push to get ING to conform to City of Fremantle planning policies and to the Waterfront Masterplan adopted by the State government years ago, which specify that

there should be no buildings on the quay more than 2-3 stories. We also backed the FS in its call for an electors' meeting on the development, and that will take place next Tuesday at 7pm at the Town Hall.

(NB The Town Hall meeting was packed, with standing room only. Whether the resolutions passed asking that the WA State Planning Commission respect the planning policies of the City of Fremantle and the recommendations of the Waterfront Master Plan produce any result remains to be seen.)

We've also continued to financially support the City of Fremantle's Heritage Week Local History Awards, and taken part in the planning of Heritage Week and in the judging of the awards.

We've had successful social events, with our curry lunch at the Flying Angel and our Christmas dinner at the Sail & Anchor attracting good attendances, and our wake for the National Hotel at the Fremantle Club in April was probably our most successful function ever.

Attendances at our monthly meetings have generally been up this year, and our Fremantle Studies Day last October also attracted a good audience. The papers given at this Studies Day and the previous one in 2005 are currently being prepared for publication, and we expect Vol 5 of Fremantle Studies to be launched at this year's Studies Day in October at Fremantle Prison.

I'd like to thank the City of Fremantle for generally supporting our activities and helping us financially with the publication of our journal. I'd also like to thank all committee members for their support throughout the year, with special thanks to Bob Woollett who has ably represented us on the Royal WA Historical Society Affiliated Societies Committee; to our super efficient Treasurer Alison Bauer; and to my newsletter co-editors, Anne Brake and Ron Davidson – somehow we've always

managed to get our quarterly newsletter organised!

And, as always – thanks to our members who have supported us so enthusiastically. We hope to keep up the good work.



**Royal WA Historical Society Affiliated Societies' Annual Conference
7-9 September 2007, Mundaring**

The Society is looking for someone to be its second delegate at the above conference. An interesting programme of talks, social events and tours to local places of historical interest has been arranged, and the FHS committee has agreed to assist with the expenses involved.

It is also possible to attend the Conference as an observer and be involved in some of the activities of your choice, perhaps just on the Saturday when Shane Burke will give a talk on 'Archaeology of early settlement' and Crienda Fitzgerald will examine the history of the Woorooloo sanatorium.

Further details about both options can be obtained from Bob Woollett on 9335 7451.



Did Women Contribute Anything to Fremantle History?

The history of Fremantle has been presented generally speaking as a very blokey affair, with heavy emphasis on blue collar trades, unionism, politics and sport. But surely there must have been well known women who played their part in creating the community that was Fremantle, and we would like to hear about them with a view to recording and possibly publishing their stories.

We know about prominent businesswoman Mary Higham, but what about other pivotal figures – nurses, midwives, educators,

feminists, artists, politicians, community activists?

If you know of any women whose contributions should be known and acknowledged, please let us know. Write to us, or ring Dianne on 9430 6096, mobile 0403 026 096, or email ronaldi@cygnus.uwa.edu.au.



Book Review: *Many Years a Thief* (David Hutchison)

Bob Woollett

Interest in the story of John Gavin was initially aroused in stalwart Society member David Hutchison by his reading Paul Buddie's 'The Fate of the Artful Dodger', an account of the Juvenile Immigration to Western Australia from 1842-1851. This set him on the path of extensive research in the State Records Office and some productive consultation with Andrew Gill, the author in 1997 of a comprehensive study of the subject. But somehow the bare facts seemed inadequate, and many of the details necessary to bring the story and people to life were missing. So David found himself considering a fictional reconstruction of the events which, by creating dialogue and probing minds and feelings, would enable him to capture the effect of the tragedy on some of the characters involved and thereby, maybe, promote a greater understanding of the situation. The result was initially the writing of an unpublished novella, entitled 'Many Years a Thief', a term used to summarise the young Gavin's criminal record in a report to the Governor. A revised, longer account then developed which was eventually published under the same title by the Wakefield Press of South Australia and recently launched by the Mayor of Fremantle at a ceremony in the Reception Room of the Town Centre.

There are four main characters in the novel: the mentally disturbed, 15-year old John Gavin, brought to Western Australia from

the Parkhurst Reformatory in England, apprenticed to the Pollard family farm at Pinjarra and now accused of the murder of the young son, George; the much stressed Jane Pollard, farmer's wife and mother of the victim, who is also struggling to cope with a sick baby and the untimely death of her young daughter; the Reverend George King, the conscientious and supportive Rector of St John's Church in Fremantle; and his friend John Schoales, the hard-working, dutiful Guardian of Juvenile Immigrants in the colony.

The story is mostly told through the eyes of Schoales, and he becomes the major focus as we accompany him on his travels to carry out his duties in Pinjarra and Fremantle and visit his sister at Guildford. He is revealed as a serious-minded, compassionate man who holds relatively liberal views for the period and shows genuine concern for the boys under his charge and for the employers to whom they are apprenticed. He feels a particular responsibility for John Gavin and he is at pains to do what he can to ensure the boy's well-being in gaol and, with the assistance of his brother-in-law, Richard Nash, the best presentation of the defence case at the trial.

An interesting device in the writing is the occasional description of Schoales' awareness of his environment, providing what used to be termed 'a sympathetic background', where a person's mood or feelings are subtly reinforced by reference to aspects of the weather or the landscape and its inhabitants. But a more important contribution to establishing the character of Schoales and his fellow colonists is made by their conversation. This reveals a deep mutual respect and is marked for the most part by a restraint and formality which, to the modern ear, seems at odds with the highly charged situation but which ring true for the time. The overall impression created is of a group of people striving to reconcile a desire for fairness and justice in their community with the pressing need to uphold the rule of law and order.

However, the novel is concerned with more than just the portrayal of character. The narrative remains central to its appeal, never being allowed to flag but moved briskly along with commendable clarity and control. The climactic scenes at the farm and the Round House are handled with consummate skill and compelling effect, as is the selection of events in the prelude and aftermath. The result is that, although we may be aware of the conclusion which is foreshadowed by the eye-catching image on the cover, we are still held throughout, if not in suspense, certainly in considerable thrall.

After a successful career in teaching and as the Curator of History at the WA Museum, David has written widely on local history and heritage issues, including articles and essays for various academic journals, and a book, *Fremantle Walks*, a comprehensive guide to the port city. He has also edited another book, *A Town Like No Other*, about New Norcia, and has written poems and short stories. *Many Years a Thief* is his first venture into the field of longer prose fiction. The outcome has been an outstanding achievement, and he is to be congratulated on adding yet another viable string to his highly versatile bow.



The Blocks: an account of life in the Fremantle area in the early 1900s (Pt 4)
Rusty Christensen

As motor vehicles became more available, horse drawn carts gave way to motor lorries which could carry more of the night soil pans. Double racks were fitted on each side of the flat tray of the lorry, the driver in his large leather apron with extended shoulder pads had to hoist the pan to his shoulder, carry it from the property then slide it into the rack. Some of the pans had clip-down lids while others were open. There were many stories and anecdotes about the dunny man swearing and grumbling if the lid on an overfull pan came loose as he

struggled to lift it up on to the top rack. Stories abounded around these icons of their times as they carried out a job that no one today would even contemplate.

Disposal of the night soil was not the high-tech engineering skill of today. Anywhere out of the way of people would do. A sanitary depot was established at the back of the cemetery where it was tipped into pits, the pans cleaned and washed with the ubiquitous phenyle. In the late 1930s the depot was shifted to the Carrington Street side of the cemetery between the administration buildings and Sainsbury Street. An artificial creek was created down the incline to Carrington Street which was well marked by the lush growth on the banks and surrounding area.

I had the good fortune to experience all of the above. Saw the deep sewerage system dug out manually, the advent of the septic tanks, after which they were built into the house. Outhouses became inhouses. As an old tradesman once remarked to me when our society began to become more affluent and enjoy our Mediterranean climate by eating outdoors, 'Things have changed. In the old days, people used to eat inside and go to the toilet outside. Now, they eat outside and go to the toilet inside.' Times really did change, even on The Blocks.

In the early part of the century, Fremantle Council chose to ignore The Blocks, even though they levied rates from the residents with a special levy per can for the night soil. There were no services of any kind in most of the area until Alex Anderson's father George, through agitating for the community, secured a water pipe reticulated to Onslow Street with an upstand and tap. This greatly eased the water carting problem for the locals. He was later elected to the Fremantle Council.

By 1902 only one section, at the western end, had been built on. There were many blocks still vacant, and it was not until 1912-1914 that most had been taken up. Even as

late as the 1930s there was still a lot of vacant land and open spaces which were happy hunting grounds for the younger generation to build cubbies, have campfires and large Guy Fawkes or cracker night bonfires, a custom long ago consigned to the mists of time. The older youths had horses – ponies or hacks, horses being a popular means of transport, and with no restrictions on their stabling many of the local lads kept horses in the back yard and rode them far and wide on weekends and holidays. It was the dream of my life at the time to be one of them, but it never happened. Today's equivalent was a motor bike before being surpassed by fast, powerful cars.
(To be concluded)



A little flight reading

Ron Davidson, another of our authors continues to get glowing reviews for his book, *Fremantle Impressions*. Barry Oliver gave it a great wrap in the *Weekend Australian's* 'A Little Flight Reading' section in the travel pages. Have you got your copy?



Notes from the Local History Collection Alison Bauer

It has been the usual busy time for the staff in the Local History Collection, with record figures for visits and queries. Visitors included staff from Subiaco looking at how we organize our collection and Vasanti Sunderland, who is running workshops (Tales of times past) on an intergenerational, intercultural oral history programme at The Meeting Place.

The Local History Collection organized a series of very successful events for the 2007 Heritage Festival, nearly all of them booked out before the week began. Space restrictions limited attendance to about 30

for each event. On Monday, 28th May, Kris Bizzaca, a well known historical researcher and member of the FHS, conducted a workshop on the process of researching the history of a house, using rate records and other resources. 31 people attended.

Douglas Firth, an experienced book and paper conservator and proprietor of Biblio Folio in Fremantle, spoke to an interested audience of about 20 on Tuesday, 29th May. He discussed the collecting of old books: what to look for, how to assess their condition and how to care for them. On Thursday, 15 people (the limit allowed) crowded into the premises of Biblio Folio to see the fascinating equipment and machines used by Douglas in his work.

Wednesday's event was 'Stepping stones to your past' presented by Lesley Silvester and Mike Murray from the West Australian Genealogical Society. Mike and Lesley run a genealogical research company called Timetrackers. They put on a very professional presentation which was also booked out.

David Ashman, Senior Conservator at the State Library of WA, gave a very interesting and well attended presentation on 'Caring for your family papers' which showed how damage could be avoided and gave simple techniques for the long term preservation of family papers, books and photographs.

The winner of the Local History Award for a published work was Ron Davidson with *Fremantle Impressions*. David Hutchison won the Unpublished Award with 'Bloody Sunday revisited' and John Curtin students won the Young People's Award with History of Fremantle quilts. John Dowson won the Spirit of Heritage Award. The Awards were presented at a morning tea on Monday 4th June which was, unfortunately, not well attended. At a subsequent Heritage Festival debrief meeting everyone agreed that the choice of time for this presentation, which clashed with Descendants' Day at the

Fremantle Prison, had been most unsuitable.

There are going to be changes in staffing at LHC. In February 2006, Loretta O'Reilly went from fulltime to one day per week in order to spend more time looking after her grandchildren. In the first week of July she resigned after 17 years at Fremantle. Kristi McNulty will take on Loretta's Thursday, making her four days per week. Lorraine Stevens will continue her Fridays working on special photographic projects. I have decided to retire after being associated with the LHC since coming to oversee the project to microfilm the Miscellany File in 1999. The plan is to spend time cleaning up my garden, resume my interests in watercolour painting and piano, and practice my languages. In actual fact I shall probably spend even more time travelling and read lots of books! I shall miss meeting all the interesting people who use the Collection but intend to retain my connection with the History Society for a while yet. We have interviewed for my replacement and hope that the new Librarian: Local History will start early September.



Gleanings from the *Herald* 5 **David Hutchison**

The editorial in the issue of 15 June 1867 continues the campaign for an inner harbour:

In addition to its numerous drawbacks, Western Australia has the misfortune to possess for its principal Port a most inconvenient harbor in which during the winter months, when the North-West winds present in full force, it is no unusual thing to see a ship drag her two anchors after her for considerable distance, or even for chains to part altogether, and sometimes for the hapless vessel to run ashore...the least that ought to be done by the authorities would be to lay down convenient moorings, at which ships might ride out without danger of being blown away ...We venture to say that a Breakwater, carried from Whaling Jetty Bay [Bathers Bay], head in the direction of Carnac, for a distance of

a mile and half, is an achievement quite within the means of the colony...the removal of a portion of the Lighthouse Hill [Arthur Head] for construction of the Breakwater would make ample room for Quays and Bonding Stores...

Note the spelling of 'harbor' and 'labor' at that time, at least in this newspaper.

There is further comment in the editorial in the next issue, of 22 June 1867

The Bar at the month of the harbour has been inspected, and the Commissioners have recommended further precautionary measures. The late storm caused serious damage to the sea wall projecting from Rous Head. We are fully impressed with the feeling, that these works, although affording a convenience for cargo boats to and from Perth are but makeshifts and that ultimately the only secure and least expensive undertaking would be a Breakwater as intimated in our last issue.

During these years, the paper often reported damage to ships at anchor in Gage Roads, sometimes with tragic consequences, as in this item of 29 June 1867

On Saturday 23rd inst., one of the most awful and appalling accidents happened that has ever occurred in the history of the colony. While returning from the Strathmore which he had boarded in answer to signals of distress, and within a comparatively short distance of the shore, within little more than an hour from the time he left his house in answer to the call of duty the Harbor Master—Captain James Harding—and four of his crew had met a sudden and untimely end.

The paper had regular reports of social and cultural events, such as this in the issue of 6 July 1867:

We are happy to announce the commencement of the "Penny Readings" in Fremantle for the winter season in the Reading Room of the Working Men's Association in Cliff Street.

The Association had one of 'a number of buildings' on the site at the corner of Cliff Street and Croke Lane, now occupied at 37-45 Cliff Street by the former Elder Shenton Building, one of J. Talbot Hobbs's designs. This building now houses the offices of the modern Fremantle Herald.

The same issue carried a report of a meeting at the Emerald Isle Hotel, on Monday, 1 July, of:

the Subscribers to the fund raised for presenting substantial marks of the admiration they felt for the courageous daring of John Tapper, Thomas O'Grady, James Casey, Robert Johnson, Ross Hunt and George Trevor Butcher in proceeding to the rescue of the Harbor Master and his crew, capsized on their return from visiting the Strathmore, which had signalled for assistance in the evening of 23rd June. The Rev. J.G. Baxter, Chairman of the meeting...presented John Tapper with a handsome and valuable watch, on the inside of which was inscribed 'PRESENTED TO JOHN TAPPER IN FREMANTLE, W.A., IN MEMORY OF THE 23RD OF JUNE AND OTHER OCCASIONS'...Mr Tapper received it in silence far more impressive than any words...We predicted last week, that, for want of proper means to render assistance to vessels in harbour, we should have some day to witness the destruction of both life and property. Never was prediction fulfilled so fatally and so speedily.

The illuminated address presented to Tapper on this occasion is in the Western Australian Museum's History Collection.

FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 25 August - Banquet at the Beacy - pub lunch and play. **12 noon - Beaconsfield Hotel** (Moondyne Joe's) Hampton Rd. **RSVP by 17 August** to ronaldi@cygnus.uwa.edu.au or phone 9430 6096.

Tues 25 September - Sculpture in September. Capturing our history through sculpture. Greg James will give us an insight into the process at his studio in **J Shed** (opposite TAFE at the entrance to South Mole) at **7 pm**.

Sunday 28 October - Fremantle Studies Day. This year will be held in conjunction with the Fremantle Prison in the Prison itself. A detailed flyer to be distributed closer to time.