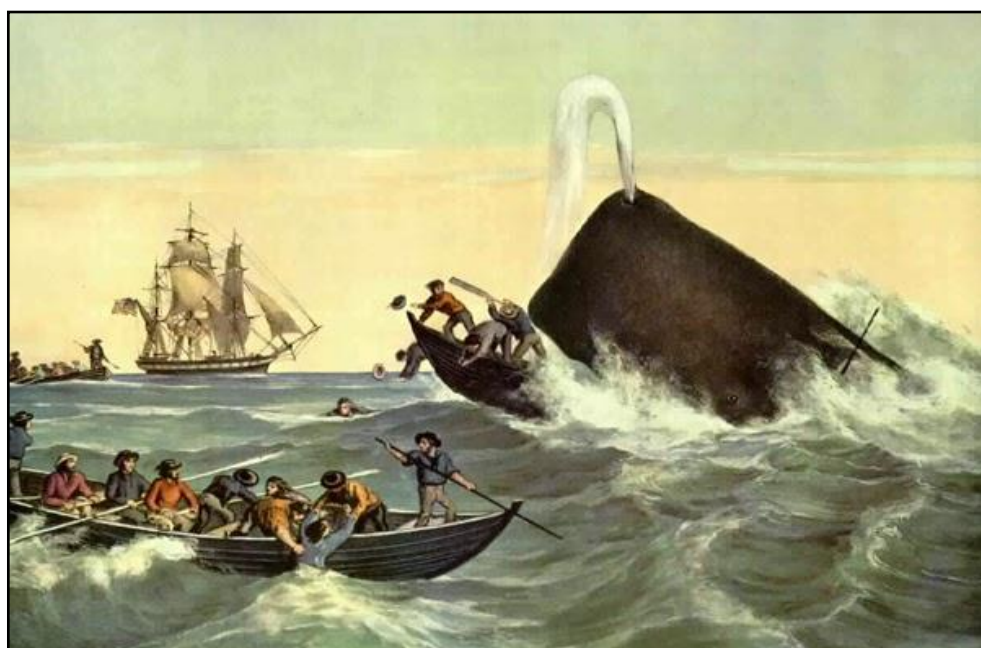


The Skeleton

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
AUSTRALIND FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY
(INC)

Affiliated with WA Genealogical Society (Inc)



Whaling picture from *Comparative Video 101 website*

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WE'RE ON THE WEB

www.australindfhs.org

THE AUSTRALIND FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY INC.

Library and Research Centre

Situated at: Australind Library Complex,
off Paris Road, Australind WA 6233

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Annual Subscriptions: 1 Jan - 31 Dec

Single Membership \$35
Joint Membership \$45

Single Membership (Senior over 60) \$25
Joint Membership (Senior over 60) \$35

LIBRARY HOURS

Tuesday 10 am - 5 pm
Wednesday 10 am - 5 pm
Thursday 10 am - 5 pm
Saturdays by appointment- no extra charge

Non-member Charges

Use of library \$5 per session

A Researcher is available to conduct
research on behalf of the Society

Contact Mr Alan Reynolds via the library on
9796 1050 or email: alindfhs@iinet.net.au

Research

Initial Fee \$10.00 for 2 hrs
Additional \$ 5.00 per hr
Photocopying and Postage extra



Your Contributions . . .

Please email articles for the next newsletter to the Australind website with
'Newsletter' in the Subject line or leave in the tray at the Family History
Library: alindfhs@iinet.net.au . See Disclaimer.

Deadline for the receipt of articles for next edition 'Skeleton'

15th November 2014



Disclaimer

The Society does not hold itself responsible for statements or opinions expressed by authors of papers published in this journal. The accuracy of offers, services or goods appearing here cannot be vouched for by the Society. The Editorial Team reserves the right to condense and edit articles to meet the approved size limits of our Newsletter.

Message from the Editorial Team

Hello everyone

It's great to have Chris Shaw, our President, back and enjoying good health after her operation.

This edition has been dedicated to the brave men who were involved in the whaling industry in the south-west in the early days.

We hope that you enjoy the stories of the relationships which developed between the American whalers and the local settlers, and the reminiscences of those who remembered the whaling days.

The accounts of the young women who married American whaling captains and sailed back to set up homes with them filled us with admiration. Some returned with their husbands on later trips, but most would have never seen their families again.

Thanks to Pam for her assistance with our research and her stories about the Scott family connections to the whaling industry. Thanks also to King Cottage Museum in Bunbury for allowing us to photograph some of the whaling memorabilia kept at their museum and Robert Murray for doing the photography. Also thank you Marg for putting the final touches to this newsletter.

Irma, Anne & Jayne
The E-Team

P.S. The Scanpro microfilm machine is now up and working again.

DATES for your DIARY

Affiliated Family History Conference will be held on 13th to 14th September 2014 at WAGS, Perth.

Christmas Party 9th December.

On request we can arrange appointments for researchers to come into the library on Saturdays (between 10am and 2pm).

Committee meetings: Last Friday of the month. 10am. AFHSoc Library.

WAGS Library open 1pm - 5pm - 2nd and 4th Sunday each month.
www.wags.org.au

TIP: *Don't forget to bring along your USB thumb drive to save files from your web research.*

AFHS SERVICES

Library visit

Affiliated Societies - no charge (show membership card)

Non members - \$5.00 per visit

Membership: 1 Jan 2014– 31.12.2014.

Computer Use

Internet Access 

(includes Ancestry.com + Find My Past and many more)

All users \$2.00 hr

Printouts .30c each

Burn CDs \$1.00 each

Micro Film/Fiche Readers/ Pro Scan

All users \$2.00 hr

Printouts .30c each

Photocopying

A4 B&W single 20c Doublesided 30c

A4 Colour single 30c Doublesided 50c

A3 B&W single 30c Doublesided 60c

Ring Binding

Up to 50 sheets \$2.00

Laminating

Please ask at desk

President's Report

Hello to fellow members and researchers, and welcome to the September *Skeleton*.

Our former President Judy Hawkins has had time away from the Library but is now back helping Irma Walter with the First Ships to Australind project, which is to record short stories about the first settlers..

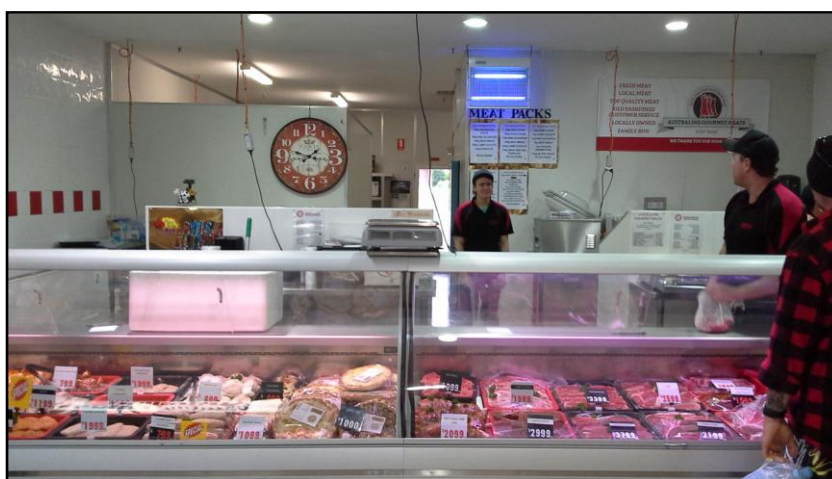
The Sausage Sizzle was held at Bunnings in August at Bunbury and was very successful. Thanks to all the workers who gave their time on the day. From 10am-2pm it was so busy it was difficult to keep up with demand. When leftover drinks and sauces are sold we hope to have made a tidy profit. It was a lovely fine day and all the organising beforehand, serving and cleaning-up went like clockwork. We only have this one fund-raising event a year, and our members are quite happy to volunteer their time. Well done to everyone!

It's now spring and it's lovely to feel the warmth in the air and here in the south-west of WA we have had good rains. However it's not so good for the farmers in the east who have missed out on much-needed rain.

Our Christmas function will be held on 9th December and will be held in the building next to the library. This will give us plenty of room to enjoy each other's company, if numbers are anything like last year! We will let you know more details when it gets closer. Where has the year gone, I might ask?

I would like to wish all our readers a very happy and healthy springtime, enjoy reading the *Skeleton*.

Cheers, Chris Shaw (President)



A big thank you to our friends at Australind Gourmet Meats and Baker's Delight (Treendale) for their support with our Sausage Sizzle.

TALK ON SANDAKAN PRISON CAMP

On Sunday 13th July a few of our members attended a meeting of the Australind District Historical Society held in our library. We were treated to a talk by Ashleigh Hooper, a Year 10 student from Australind Senior High School, who was one of ten selected to go on the Premier's Anzac Tour to Sandakan in 2014. She spoke about the liberation of Borneo and Australian WW2 soldiers who were on the three death marches from Sandakan prison camp. Only six out of over 1,000 POWs survived. The group visited museums, cemeteries and memorials, and walked 7.8km of the actual track. Ashleigh was visibly moved when she spoke of her life-changing experiences there. Next year (1915) the competition will be open to 32 students, who will go to Gallipoli.



Whaling in WA

Early French explorer Admiral La Perouse reported that these monsters of the deep were plentiful in WA waters. Each year between June and mid-August they migrated along the Western Australian coast into warmer waters, returning later in the year with their new-born calves. Whale oil was a valuable commodity, used for purposes such as lighting and lubrication. French and American whaling captains found it profitable to travel vast distances in search of the prized oil.

Whaling was Australia's first industry, encouraged by Governor Arthur Phillips from the time of first settlement. From the 1790s a thriving local trade was operating in New South Wales and Tasmania. Though aware of the profitability of the whaling taking place along our coast by foreign vessels, Western Australia was slow off the mark in establishing its own industry.

Trade with American sea captains visiting our ports was encouraged. However there was some resentment on the part of local settlers over the profits being made by these foreigners. It took a while before two local whaling companies were formed, one at Perth in 1837 and the second at Fremantle a year later. Individuals such as William Habgood, John Bateman, Patrick Marmion, Daniel Scott, and J.J. Harwood were prominent in these ventures, with varying success. Smaller whaling parties were also operating at Port Gregory, King George's Sound and at the Vasse, where Heppingstone was the chief operator.

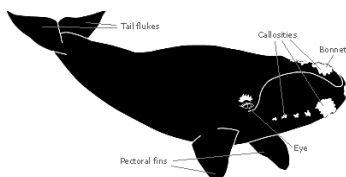
The Whales They Hunted

The most highly prized whale oil was from sperm whales, particularly the oil from the huge head. This oil was waxy and was known as 'spermaceti'. It was used for the manufacture of candles that produced a bright, clear flame and was also used as an oil to fuel lamps.

The American whaling ships sought the sperm whales, which were found further off the coast. Sperm whales belong to the toothed whales, which feed on fish and giant squid and can grow up to 50 feet long.



Sperm whale



Southern Right whale

The bay whalers in their small boats chased the less valuable 'right' whales, so-called as they were the ones which were 'right' to catch. They were slow-moving black baleen whales which fed on krill and grew up to 60 feet in length.



Humpback whale

The most common whale found along the WA coast is the humpback whale, which grows up to 50 feet and reaches weights of forty-five tons.

American Whalers at Port Leschenault

For years the few locals at Port Leschenault, as Bunbury was known, had a cordial relationship with the American whalers, who replenished their fresh water supplies at the bay, and depended on fresh produce grown by the settlers, who in turn were pleased to have a market for their mutton, potatoes, butter and cheese. The Americans made sure that their ships carried boots, ropes, knives, tools, calico, tea, tobacco and other essentials, to be bartered for the fresh food they needed to keep their crews healthy. American coinage was the common currency for some of these transactions. The ships sometimes stayed in the bay for several seasons, delaying a return to their home ports in New England until their barrels were full. Some captains even brought their wives and purchased land close to the beach, becoming welcome members of the little community.

The relationship between the Americans and the locals became strained however when Governor Hutt imposed a £6 piloting charge on foreign ships going in or out of Koombana Bay. As word of this imposition spread, the Americans avoided Koombana Bay, calling instead into ports further south such as Geographe Bay, where no such taxes had been imposed.

Relics of Koombana Bay Whaling

The local Koombana Bay whaling industry began in 1844 and reached its peak in the 1850s. However, few relics remain in the area.



Try-pot

At Bunbury's King Cottage Museum we can see some whalebones and a large iron try-pot, as well as a telescope said to have been the property of Robert Scott, used to spot whales as they entered the bay. The wrecks of two American whaling ships, the *Samuel Wright* and the *North America*, wrecked during a severe storm in 1840, lie beneath the carpark opposite the Dolphin Discovery Centre. An unknown sailor's grave is marked in the same area.



Robert Scott's Telescope

A few headstones in pioneer cemeteries remind us of the dangers faced by those adventurous individuals who risked their lives every time they left the beach to join the hunt. Today we are aware of the activities of the large Japanese factory ships, which until recently pursued whales in the Southern Ocean. Modern technology ensures the safety of those involved in the modern whaling industry.

Imagine, however, the dangers faced by the crew in a small wooden whaling boat, needing to get close enough to plunge a harpoon into the creature, then attempting to bring it back to shore for processing. It was not a job for the faint-hearted. A whale boat could be overturned by the flip of a whale's mighty tail. At times the crew would be forced to abandon the chase after being towed far off the coast by an oversized whale, or the whale would sink while to be being towed back to shore and could not be retrieved. A successful day's hunt was a rare event celebrated in the community



Axe from the "North America" wreck

Whaling at Port Leschenault

"There she blows! There she blows!"

The shout from the lookout posted on the hill above Koombana Bay was the signal for the tiny community at Bunbury that the chase would soon begin for that leviathan of the ocean, the whale.



Sightseers would gather to watch the spectacle. Women clutched their shawls against the fresh sea breezes, their faces reflecting the concern for the menfolk about to engage in this dangerous undertaking. Members of the local Aboriginal tribe flocked down to the beach in anticipation of a fine feed that day. While some settlers were not averse to eating parts of the whale meat as a change from their monotonous diet, Aborigines would feast on the flesh for days, competing with one another for the tongue of the whale, viewed as a rare delicacy.

The crew and their helpers would race down to the beach where the sturdy whale boat stood ready for launching, already stocked with a harpoon attached to 200 fathoms of rope, neatly coiled in the forepart of the boat, and a hatchet to hack through the rope in the event of an emergency. Lined up close to the beach were the try-pots ready to receive chunks of whale blubber, with fires set beneath them in anticipation of a catch. If successful, a long day and night were ahead, hacking up the whale and rendering down its blubber into oil in the giant pots, then draining it off into barrels. This had to be done quickly, otherwise too much of the oil drained out of the carcass into the sand. The whale oil provided a valuable supplement to the meagre incomes earned by local settlers from their farms, and offered employment for the young men of the area.



"Whaleman's Lament"

*Tw'as on the briny ocean
On a whaleship I did go,
Oft times I thought of distant friends,
Oft times I thought of home
Remembering of my youthful days.
I grieved my heart full sore
And fain I would return again
To my own native shore.*

*If I ever return again
I solemn vow I'll take
That I'll never go a-whaling
My liberty to take.
I will stay home
And I will roam no more
For the pleasures are by few my boys
For from our native shores.*

There was a rigid taboo against singing shanties outside the framework of work. To sing a shanty when there was no work involved could mean courting trouble.

(Patricia C McLossack & Frederick L McKissack book, *Black Hands, White Sails*, 1999)

WORDSEARCH

D H L A I N O L O C O L O N Y	AMBERGRIS	COLONY
S N O I S I V O R P P I S G U	HARPOON	BARREL
L O V N N M B L U B B E R S O	WHALE	CARGO
I P I D S D L E R R A B W P N	BALEEN	SPERMACEI
L A N L P F U B N O O P R A H	LESCHENAULT	ILLUMINATION
L A E Y T L F S S W H O N W E	KOOMBANA	PROVISIONS
U M E M O E K T T Z G A E E O	TRYPOT	COLONIAL
M B L Y P N E J I R B M K L C	YANKEE	WRECK
I E A H Y S M U A M Y N T A E	CORSETS	
N R B O R I H C O A A T P H A	FLENSING	
A G W O T N M O L Y I J U W N	OCEAN	
T R C E I G K G U R F T T R X	BLUBBER	
I I T E C A M R E P S A T E H	OIL	
O S T L U A N E H C S E L C M	LUBRICATION	
N L U B R I C A T I O N D K Z	INDUSTRY	

WEB CORNER

*** Remember to visit our own AFHSoc Website administered by Chris Riley***

www.australindfhs.org

Aberdeenshire Library and Information Service - Local Studies

Family history resources - parish registers of baptisms, marriages & burials up to 1854, census records (1841-1901), local newspapers from 1747 to the present day, maps of the counties of Aberdeen, Banff and Kincardine from the 19th century to the present day -

www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/libraries/information/local_studies.asp

Irish Catholic Registers

Ancestry has added over 700,000 entries from Irish Catholic registers - www.ancestry.co.uk

National Archives of Ireland Genealogy

Free access to census records 1901 & 1911, Tithe Applotment Books 1823-1837, Soldier's Wills 1914-1917, Calendar of Wills & Administrations 1858-1922 & more.

<http://www.genealogy.nationalarchives.ie/>

Inmates Register 1860-1872 Ballarat Benevolent Asylum (Victoria)

If you have anyone in Victoria you can't locate, they might have been here. This Asylum assisted orphaned children, the poor, the aged and infirm, and maternity cases. Lists birthplace, arrival in colony, age, parents and lots of other info. <http://goo.gl/UwLNDv>

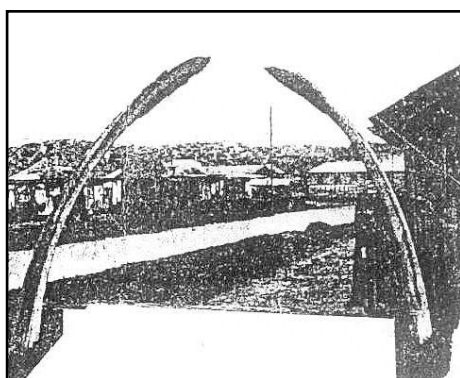
New Zealand, Archives New Zealand, Passenger Lists 1839-1973

Images & index of the ship passenger lists of outbound & inbound passengers at the various ports of NZ. <http://familysearch.org/search/collection/1609792>

Locals Involved In The South-West Whaling Industry

Bunbury owed its first real start to the whaling industry, which was mostly in the hands of Americans. It is interesting to note that the arrival of ships was notified to settlers by flags or fires on Lighthouse and Stirling Hills. The whaling industry declined when the Civil War broke out in the U.S.A., and our sole reminder of it, nowadays, is the Whalebone Arch still to be seen at the corner of Wittenoom and Symonds Streets. Mr Jas. Wenn, who still lives at South Bunbury, placed them there nearly 60 years ago, assisted by the late Mr. Leddie. The former gentleman, a cooper by trade, came here in connection with the whaling industry, being employed by Hapgood (Habgood) and Viveash, of Perth. A Mr Buswell also arrived at the same time. At the foot of Lighthouse Hill were carried on the operations for the recovery of the oil. The town flourished on the sale of fresh food and vegetables to the whalers, and, incidentally smuggling was rampant. The trade was mostly carried on by means of barter, calico, dungarees, tobacco, etc., being mostly in demand by the settlers.

(Bunbury Herald, 7 November 1917)



Whalebone Arch

JAMES KAY CHILD

James Kay Child was the first settler to attempt bay whaling in the Leschenault Inlet. He arrived on the *Henry* in 1841, the same ship as the Rev. Wollaston, bound for the Australind settlement. He was only 22 years of age, sent out by his father in the hope that the warmer climate would cure his tuberculosis.

Accompanied by a servant William Allan King and under the friendly eye of Rev. Wollaston, James Child soon quit Australind and set about building a warehouse in Victoria Street. Bunbury at that time was a small scattered settlement. Much of the trade that occurred was with the American whalers who frequented the bay, so bartering was very much a feature of Child's business. In 1843 he opened the town's first brewery for colonial (sugar) beer. (Wollaston journal Vol.2 UWA Press 1992 p.81.) As can be imagined, this beverage was highly appreciated by the American whaling crews.

In May 1843 the Rev. Wollaston recorded in his journal that "Child is enabled to enter the bay whaling by taking an experienced American into partnership and he sees after all the work. The men are also paid by shares of oil. Whale oil, if fresh used from the animal, is excellent for frying." The experienced headsman employed by James Child was William M Stafford.

WANTED - FOR THIS SEASON'S BAY WHALING, FROM 6 TO 8
HANDS. APPLICATION TO BE MADE ON THE SPOT TO W M
STAFFORD, OR TO THE UNDERSIGNED, J. K. CHILD.
BUNBURY, MAY 15, 1844.

(Inquirer, 22 May 1844)

James Kay Child contd...

As well as operating his Bunbury store and partnering the whaling enterprise, Child also developed a property at Minninup, a few miles along the coast south of Bunbury. An orchard was planted and produce was traded with the Americans. However, Child's health continued to deteriorate, and he died at Minninup in 1846, at the early age of 27 years. His friend Rev. Wollaston acted as executor and his goods were sold by auction.

.....

In 1844 a letter was published in the *Perth Gazette*, from outspoken Scottish solicitor William Nairne Clark (whose later claim to fame was his involvement in WA's only fatal duel, when he shot merchant George French Johnson). In these extracts from his letter, Clark was scornful of the speculators back in England who were involved in the failed Australind settlement scheme, but praised the independence of John Scott, about to commence whaling at Leschenault.

...The commencement of the year 1844 has witnessed the formation of an association at Leschenault for the purpose of whaling in Koombana Bay.

...The projector of this new whaling establishment is Mr John Scott, the tenant of part of Sir James Stirling's estate at Leschenault, and he is well supported by other parties in the district.

...The men elect their own headsmen and steersmen in the different boats, and may make them a present at the end of the season in addition, to their shares, but they will not be bound to do so in their articles of agreement.

There will be two boats of seven oars, each, and one of five oars, with a corresponding complement of men, and a building will be erected on the beach so soon as the requisite permission is obtained from the Local Government. The establishment has something new in its formation, in as much as it offers the encouragement of a share of oil to any native that can pull an oar, or give other requisite assistance. The boats and gear are in a state of preparation; try-pots and casks have been already found; and the necessities of life will be furnished by colonial produce, consisting of flour, potatoes, cured beef and pork, butter, cheese, and vegetables of many kinds.

The establishment requires no money from parties in England or elsewhere, and cannot be accused of "puffing" for the purpose of deceit.

All that is gained will be carried to the credit account of the Colony. All that is lost, if the whales are frightened by this din of preservation, and swim away from the coast, will be a few months labour who might perhaps be less beneficially employed.

Yours obediently, WM. NAIRNE CLARK

(Perth Gazette, 6 January 1844)

ROBERT HEPPINGSTONE

In 1841 settler George Layman of Wonnerup was speared by a native, following an altercation. A year later his widow Mary Layman married Robert Heppingstone (Jr.), who earlier had arrived at the Vasse with his sister Charlotte to take up land at Wonnerup. Around 1847 Heppingstone took up a share in the whaling industry at Castle Rock, near Dunsborough.

List of the Whaling party at the Vasse 1848

R. Heppingstone, Master: Articles signed before the Resident Magistrate :
Chief Headsman-Frederick Palmer
Second ditto.-William Amsley (Known also as 'Amersley' or 'Hammersley')
Boat-steerer-Edward Albert
Cooper-George Smith
Cook-William Hollands
Pulling Hands - Henry Barnett
John Muro Praevo
Michael G. Brady
John Spraknaw

(Government Gazette, in The Perth Gazette, 29 July, 1848)

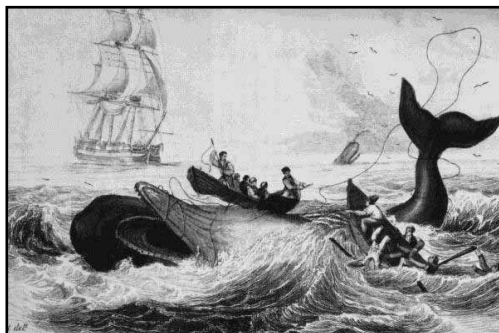
Vasse

Preparations are being made for whaling at Castle Rock. Mr. Heppingstone has engaged the services of some very efficient headsmen, and proposes, we believe, to carry on a three-boat fishery. With the high prices for oil at present ruling, there is little doubt that with ordinary success the speculation will prove a profitable one.

(Inquirer, Wednesday, 4th May 1853)

In 1858, a boating accident occurred when Heppingstone's whaleboat was swamped by a wave, resulting in his death along with another crew member, an Aboriginal. Three others were rescued.

[NOTE]: Heppingstone's father Robert (Sr.) was also drowned when he was swept off rocks whilst fishing at Cape Leeuwin in 1835.



More Memories Of Whaling, By Bunbury Old-Timers

THOMAS MARRIOTT - AND BUNBURY'S FIRST BAND

Thomas Marriott was in his nineties in 1907 when a reporter from the 'Bunbury Herald' paid a visit to him and his wife, who were still hale and hearty after more than 65 years of married life. The occasion was the death of Robert Scott, the son of Bunbury's first settler, John Scott.(extract)

"I arrived in Perth in August 1844, and left for Bunbury in November, 1845."

"Where did you first meet Mr Scott?"

"On Eelup farm. Mr and Mrs John Scott were like a father and mother to me. I used to help them reap. Robert Scott did not leave the old farm till just before he married."

"At what time did he start whaling?"

"He started that while he was still on the old farm, that is before he got married. John Scott, Jr, Robert Scott and John Stafford were the crew of the whale boat. The whales then came into the bay. They could be seen blowing from the lighthouse hill. Sometime afterwards they formed themselves into a stronger party and had two whale boats. An old whaler, Hammersley (Amsley), a coloured man, who had been on American whalers, was the skipper. They got a few whales. Sometimes they had an exciting time and had to cut free as whales were towing them away far out to sea. More than once the whales capsized the boats. However, they always brought full numbers home, none of them getting worse than a ducking."

"Where did they get the harpoons and other gear?"

"Before 1842, two or three American whalers were driven ashore on the north beach. The settlers got harpoons, iron pots for rendering down the whales, and other gear from the wrecked vessels."

"Didn't the whalers have a band?"

"Yes, these whaling boys had a fine band, about 20 performers all told. That was before 1850. They had fifes, a slide trombone and other brass instruments. They had at first no drum, but they made one themselves. The frame was a flour cask. On a still night on the water I have heard that band miles away. Hammersley (Amsley), the coloured man, was drummer. He could play the violin too. He was Bunbury's first bandmaster."



"When they got the whales what did they do with them?"

"They got them ashore and rendered them down for oil in the iron pots I mentioned."

"Now to come back to Bunbury's first settler, Robert Scott, what did he do after he married?"

"He farmed then practically all his life. He had a property near Minninup and another on the Blackwood."
(*Bunbury Herald*, 8 April 1907)

[NOTE]: Crewmen kept their personal goods in a wooden box, known as a locker, under their bunks. Often they held a small musical instrument such as a fife. Music was an important part of their recreation, with ballads sung on deck, and sea-shanties giving rhythm to the tedious jobs of hauling ropes.

ROBERT SCOTT



Following J. K. Child's unfortunate demise, his whaling enterprise was continued by an American, William M. Stafford, with varying success. In 1844 another small company operated by Robert Scott entered the industry. The two operators were highly competitive.

Some of Scott's descendants recalled that Aboriginals who worked on 'Eelup Farm' were a great help when the Scotts began whaling, because of their superior vision. They were posted along the coast between Bunbury and Minninup, and when an Aboriginal saw a whale blowing he sent signals along the line to the waiting crews at Lighthouse Hill. A grandson of John Scott told of an Aboriginal named Namarat. With a telescope that John Scott had bought from an American sailor, Namarat was given the job of lookout on Lighthouse Hill. When he sighted a whale he would point the telescope in another direction to deceive other waiting whaling crews. Another Aboriginal, Jim Crow, who also sighted whales, had a habit of pursing his lips. He would stand on Scott's toes and purse his lips in the direction of the whale without saying a word.

The Scott crew would set off with a barrel of 300 to 400 fathoms of coiled rope in the bow. One of the crew stood behind the barrel with a harpoon attached to the rope. When the harpoon was embedded the whale would make off. A turn of the rope around the bollard and the whale would tow the boat until exhausted. The cutter, which kept up with the chase, took over when the whale began to sink and towed it to the beach, where it was cut up and rendered down in the try-pots. The crew put the oil in barrels made of American oak. J. F. Wenn did the coopering in those early days. Large quantities of the oil were sold to American whalers, some was sold to local settlers for their lamps and some was sent to Perth and Fremantle by coasting vessel.

Whales were caught off Minninup Beach. The American whalers called in for the rendered down oil and to barter for any food supplies that were available, especially potatoes and other fresh vegetables. The whalers, when coming in for oil, used flat bottomed boats to come close to the shore. They loaded the barrels of oil from drays backed into the sea. The oil so saturated the drays that it was a constant job for the men to keep the nuts and bolts tight. The whalers usually brought their own barrels, but at times when these were not available, they had supplies of readymade shooks of American oak from which the settlers assembled their own barrels. Expert coopers were scarce in those days so the settlers had to learn to make the barrels themselves.

Whaling provided income, a market for bartering goods and excitement for early Bunbury settlers. All that remains of the industry today are the odd huge back-bones, bleached and weathered on the beaches of Geographe Bay.



Robert and Jane Scott

(Verna Glossop, *Bunbury's First Settlers*, 2000 p.24.)

JAMES WENN

[Carpenter and boat-builder, employed by William Ramsay as a whaler captain in Bunbury.]

James Wenn arrived in the Simon Taylor with his parents in 1842, aged 7. When interviewed in 1907, Mr Wenn had clear memories of early Bunbury. He recalled that at that time, inner Bunbury was just a swamp. He described his father's connection to the whaling industry as follows:-

"Who started the whaling industry?"

"The first man to really take it up was Bateman. There was also a whaling station at the Vasse which was carried on by Vivash and Apgood (Viveash and Habgood). Their station was at Quindalup. There was another whaling station at Castle Rock, near Cape Naturaliste. My father was cooper for the whaling party at Quindalup. He carried it on after Vivash and Apgood left. There was also another party at the same place carrying on the same business. The latter was called 'the opposition.' I remember that my father's boat went out one day and fastened on to a right whale, which capsized the boat. Before then they had driven a harpoon into it. The opposition boat was also out and instead of helping the crew of Wenn's boat, all of whom were struggling in the water, they went in pursuit of the whale. All the crew of Wenn's boat were drowned except one, who had almost reached the shore when he was killed by a shark. This unfortunate man's name was Jack Portsmouth. As Wenn's party had first harpooned the whale, the court ordered it to be given to Wenn, so the opposition gained nothing by their inhumanity. The next whaling season my father went to Hamelin Bay for Vivash and Apgood. They did very well there.

(Bunbury Herald, Friday 7 June 1907)

In response to the above comments by James Wenn, a correction was published shortly afterwards in a letter from Mrs Jane Scott, wife of Robert Scott.

...The first whaling industry was started by a Mr Child, whose remains are laid in Picton churchyard. He was also the first storekeeper in Bunbury. Then, Mr Scott, (my husband's father) and a Mr Witt, who came out in the ship Diadem in April 1842, started an opposition party either in 1843 or 1844. My husband and his brother, and a Mr Stafford, an American, who understood winning, carried it on for Mr Child. Then my husband and his brother left Mr Child and carried on the enterprise for their father. Yours etc., JANE SCOTT, Bunbury, 22 June 1907.

(Bunbury Herald, 24 June 1907)

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African-American Crew Members

During the nineteenth century work on the American whaling ships was a dirty and dangerous job. Long periods were spent at sea in cramped conditions. It was difficult to maintain a permanent workforce, with crew members frequently jumping ship at distant ports. The crews were quite cosmopolitan, consisting of men from various ethnic backgrounds. Because of the dangers they faced, the men out of necessity mostly worked co-operatively, regardless of race.

African-Americans were a common sight on these ships. Their contribution to the success of the American whaling industry is well-recorded. They formed a large proportion of many crews which came to Australia. Quaker sea-captains opposed to the slave trade in the southern states, frequently employed slaves who were on the run. They were regarded as excellent workers, so it is not surprising that they were sought as crew members in the local bay whaling industry in WA.

WILLIAM AMSLEY, WHALER

William Amsley, born c1822, arrived in WA on the whaling ship *North America* (Captain Grinnell, Warren, Rhode Island, U.S.A.) in 1843. During a cyclone in April, the ship was wrecked in Koombana Bay, along with Captain Coffin's ship *Samuel Wright*. The *North America* wreck was bought at auction by Captain Scott of Fremantle.

William Amsley remained in WA. He was a skilled whaling hand, and was employed as a headsman by Robert Heppingstone. Later he skippered a boat for the Scott's in Bunbury.

In 1851 William Amsley, - "a man of colour", unsuccessfully took Heppingstone to court for non-payment of his share of the profits. The case failed due to Amsley being designated as a partner, rather than an employee. It is possible that William was from Cape Verde, off the West coast of Africa. He married an Irish girl Johanna Fennell (born c1830) in 1854. Together they had a large family. Several of their sons were prominent athletes & sportsmen.

In May 1859, William Amsley was master of the 17-ton cutter *Brothers*, departing Fremantle for the Vasse.

William died at the age of fifty-one. Johanna re-married in 1876, this time to George Grant in Busselton. He left the marriage some years before the death of Johanna in 1890 at the Vasse. She was supported by her family members following his desertion. At the time of her death, it was reported that Johanna had been a long-time resident of Busselton for upwards of forty years.



Hi-Jinks On Shore

Whaling crews were poorly paid. They were able to book up the cost of clothing they needed, plus tobacco, etc., while on board ship. The amount was then deducted from their wages at the end of their voyage, leaving little to show for all their hard work. Some of the captains were Quakers and ran a dry ship, paying small sums to their crews when they went to shore, allowing them to drink at the taverns or to purchase sly grog. Avoiding the payment of duties by smuggling alcohol and tobacco ashore was a common occurrence with some whaling captains, and difficult to police.

It proved difficult to round the crew at the end of a stay in port. Those who jumped ship needed to lie low for a number of weeks, as their captains would pay for information about the whereabouts of escapees, even keeping an eye out for recalcitrant crew members on return trips. Informing on missing seamen was known as '*crimping*'.

From A Policeman's Point Of View

(As told by Thomas Spence, who left England in 1863 at the age of twenty, and spent many years as a policeman in various parts of WA, before leaving for Victoria, NSW and then up to Queensland, where he eventually owned four pastoral properties.)

...Eventually Mr. Spence joined the police and in that capacity he saw a good deal of the state. Their three enemies, he remarked, were the blacks, the Yankee runaway sailors, and the ticket-of-leave men. Bunbury was a great port of old for the Yankee whalers. Mr. Spence had seen as many as eighteen anchored in the harbour. The captains bought up the orchards there and the men had a wildly hilarious time. The greater proportion were American negroes. When the time came for a vessel to put to sea more than half the crew would be missing. Then the fun would start. The captain would offer from £5 to £15 per head and the search would begin. There was a notorious crimp in Bunbury and, in addition to crimping, he used to plant the men. But he got money both ways. After planting them he used to give the police the "dinkum oil" and then cut the reward-50-50. Mr. Spence said they had some wild times getting the crews on board...

(*Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton, Queensland) 21 December 1922)

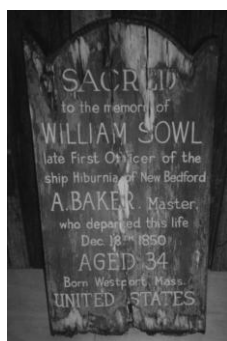
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Local Aboriginal whaling crews received notably lower payments than the south coast crews. An 1850 report from the Bunbury station states that Jack Crow, an Aboriginal man working as an oarsman, was receiving three meals a day, a payment of 2 shillings and sixpence as soon as a whale was grounded and a further sum of twenty shillings (£1) at the termination of the season. This contrasts sharply with the more highly paid Aboriginal workers from Cheyne Beach, 70km east of Albany, who in the following year returned to Albany carrying lays (payments based upon a pre-determined percentage share of the profits) of £15 each.

(Martin Gibbs, *Nebinyan's songs: an Aboriginal whaler of south-west Western Australia*)

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Accidental Deaths In The Local Industry



William Sowl, an American whaler was from Westport, Massachusetts, U.S.A. He lost his life at sea, at the age of 34, and was buried in St Mary's churchyard in Busselton in 1850. This is a picture of the original grave marker which states William Sowl was the First Mate of the whaler *Hiburnia*, (*Hibernia*) that sailed from New Bedford, U.S.A. on a whaling voyage between 1849 and 1853. The ship's captain was Archelaus Baker, Jr. The grave marker has now been replaced with a more robust monument in the same churchyard in Busselton. According to the Westport Historical Society, his American descendants have often enquired about the whereabouts of the grave.

(Picture from Westport Historical Society)

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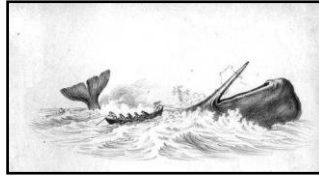
Sadly, in the search for profits, there were reports of lives being lost in the whaling industry -

A whale was captured by the Fremantle whalers on Sunday last, and was brought in, cut up, and tried down, by Monday night, evincing great alacrity on the part of those engaged. We understand it has returned 8½ tons of oil and a third of a ton of whalebone, its value may be estimated at about £250. An accident has been reported to us, which occurred at the whaling station Leschenault, where a man of the name of Harper was unfortunately drowned, whilst in pursuit of a whale.

(*Perth Gazette*, 15 June 1844)

.....

The whale that we mentioned in our last accounts from Bunbury as having been secured by Mr. Heppingstone's party had been previously fastened to by another whale-boat. It went off quietly for the first 400 yards, and then turned round and stove in the boat; three men out of the crew were drowned — namely, M. Bethany (headsman), C. Westall, and J. Nutter; the body of the last mentioned was found.
(*Inquirer*, 25 August, 1847)



Mr. Kerr's whaling party, stationed near the wreck of the *Governor Endicott*, in attacking a whale on the 7th inst., had their boat stove by the fish, and the crew narrowly escaped drowning; it was rumoured two of the party were lost, but we believe this is not correct.

On the 8th instant, Mr. Heppingstone's party secured a right whale, which from the circumstance of its having a harpoon in it, is supposed to be the same which was attacked on the previous day by Mr. Kerr's boat.
(*Perth Gazette*, 21 August, 1847)

.....
We have heard from Leschenault that the gale there was most terrific, while it lasted. Mr. Scott had two large boats, both at anchor, taking in cargo; one, the *Perseverance*, parted from her anchor, drove on shore, and is a complete wreck; the other, the *Antelope*, filled and went down at her anchor, taking with her an unfortunate man of the name of Frantz, who was drowned.
(*Inquirer*, 5 March, 1845)

Following his drowning, Joseph Franz, aged 37, (born Hawkhurst), was buried at Picton cemetery.

.....
A Lucky Escape - Previous to the dissolution of the whaling party at Castle Rock, one of those accidents to which whalers are always subject, occurred. A loose whale struck one of the boats and smashed it to pieces, without, beyond a few slight wounds from splinters, injuring any of the men. As the boat was fast to a whale at the time, some danger might have ensued, from the entanglement of the line, but this was obviated by the presence of mind of the headsman, who cut the rope.
.....

SOME GOOD CATCHES

A Yank and an Englishman were one day talking of their fishing experiences, the Yank telling how once when he was fishing, he hooked a big fish and after a big struggle he landed it. The length of the fish was 20 feet. Isn't that a good catch for one man?" he said.

"Well," said the Englishman, "once I was out fishing, and no sooner had I cast my line, than there was a terrible strain, my line went down, down."

"Ah," said the Yank, "a whale I suppose?"

"Eh what?" said the Englishman. "No, I had a whale for bait."

(*Toodyay Herald*, Friday, 15 May 1936)

Marriages Between Locals And American Whalers



From the time of Bunbury's first settlement by the Scott family, cordial relationships were established between the settlers and the whalers, going far beyond pure trade. Diaries record social interactions onshore, with invitations issued by colonials starved of civilised company, and welcomed by crews who were tired of the limited companionship and appalling conditions they suffered on board whaling ships.

Friendships were strengthened during the lengthy stays and return visits of the Americans. There were surprisingly more marriages to American whalers to south-west women than we realise and the following stories are proof of this:-

- Hannah Burnham Bryan, born in Augusta in 1841, married not just one Yankee whaler but two; with both marriages ending disastrously. Her first marriage was when she was only sixteen years old to Henry Mason, Mate of the American whaling ship, *Vesper* on 7th April 1857. They had two daughters Caroline Burnham (born 1858 at sea) and Charlotte Augusta (born 1861 New London, Connecticut, USA - Charlotte is mentioned again later). However, Henry Mason (a skipper of a Yankee whaler) treated his wife badly, finally deserting her. Her mother Ann reputedly travelled to America to bring a destitute Hannah back to WA. On 28th June 1869, Hannah rushed heedlessly into a second marriage to another American sailor, James Brown Travis. They had two daughters, Amanda May (born 1870 in Capel River) and Kate Adeline (born 1872 in Busselton) before leaving her penniless and pregnant. Sadly, Hannah died on 1875 aged 37 years giving birth to a son, Nelson Benedict (born in Vasse).

(Frances Terry, *They Came to the Margaret*,
SW Printing & Publishing Co., Ltd. Bunbury, WA. 1978)

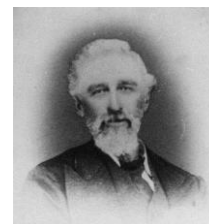
- Captain John Henry Stackpole and Laura Morland Thomson in 1838. John Stackpole's ship *Harvest* was anchored at Port Leschenault in June 1838 when a gale hit the area. He wrote a letter to local harbourmaster Henry Bull, confirming the safety of the bay as a winter harbour. His ship experienced a few more mishaps before it finally left Fremantle in October 1838 for New Port, Rhode Island via the Cape of Good Hope. On board were several passengers and his new wife, Laura Morland Thomson, 16 year-old daughter of Scottish-born Robert Thomson, a farmer on Rottnest Island for a number of years.
- Captain George Lyman Howland, of the whaler *Canton*, married Ellen Scott at Albany. He took Ellen back to New Bedford, Massachusetts, where it is said that she led a lonely life while her husband was at sea. Ellen Howland died at the age of 39, after 13 years of marriage.

(Joan Druett, *Petticoat Whalers: Whaling Wives at Sea, 1820-1920*)

[NOTE: M. W. Clifton, in his Journals in 1842 refers to Captain Howland as "a very respectable pleasant man.]

- In 1860 Henry Melville Adams married Mary Smith, companion to Ellen Bussell's family on their trip to Australia. He was born in 1823 Aberdeen Scotland and trained as a ship's carpenter. Moving to England and then briefly to Baltimore Maryland USA before gaining work on the whaler "Eagle". 'Harry' Adams jumped ship from the *Eagle*, and sought refuge with the Bussell family, who welcomed him as a reliable farm worker. He took up land in the area, and named it 'Maryland'. The property is now known as 'Moss Wood Estate Winery', at Wilyabrup, WA.

- Charles Donat Keyser, born 1829 in Philadelphia, arrived in WA around 1850 on an American whaler and decided to stay. In 1853 he married Catherine Thurkle of Busselton, daughter of a convict Thomas Thurkle, who had served his sentence in Tasmania. Keyser prospered as a timber cutter and builder, constructing timber mills for Yelverton at Quindalup. Catherine bore 15 children. She died at the Vasse in 1886. The family moved to Albany, where Charles prospered as a businessman. He also ran hotels at Grasspatch & Esperance. A few years before his death in 1900 he married Ellen Billings at Esperance. (My Ancestry - Roxane Humphries Ancestry Public Family Tree)



- Sam 'Yebble' Isaacs, who in 1876, alongside 16-year old Grace Bussell, famously rode out into the surf at Calgardup Bay near Margaret River to rescue survivors of the shipwrecked *Georgette*, was born c1845, the son of a Native American mariner who absconded from a whaler in the early 1830s, and his mother was a woman from the Wardandi tribe from the Augusta area. Sam was awarded a medal for his bravery, and his freedom to select a 100-acre block of Crown land of his own selection, on the banks of the Margaret River.

Records show another Isaacs family link to the American whalers who visited south-west WA, with Sam's wife Lucy (daughter of a Major Lowe). She is reputed to have been a former cook aboard one of these ships. They were married in 1870. Lucy M. Isaacs passed away in 1914, while Sam died in 1920.

(Source: Vic Isaacs, at <http://www.wilja.asn.au/georgette.htm>)

- Captain Robert Milroy Brown married Charlotte Heppingstone daughter of Robert Heppingstone, (sr.) and Ann (née McKinley) of Busselton. When aged sixteen, Charlotte was sent home on the *Electra* to Scotland to be educated but enroute was stranded in Cape Town, so Captain Baker took her on to New London, to wait there for a ship to England. However, she never got to Scotland but married Robert Brown instead at Groton, Connecticut in 1842. He was the second mate on the *Electra*.
- In April 1850, Captain Robert Milroy Brown took his wife and children to sea in the ship *North Star*. They eventually stopped at Geographe Bay where they remained for two weeks visiting Charlotte's relatives. On the return voyage (via the Okhotsk Sea, off the Siberian coast) a daughter Mary was born at sea in April 1851. They arrived in Honolulu in October 1851 where they settled and had three more children so Charlotte never again visited Western Australia. Charlotte died at Seattle in 1879.

(Frances Terry, *They Came to the Margaret*,
SW Printing & Publishing Co., Ltd. Bunbury, WA. 1978)

- Harriet Layman from Wonnerup married widower Captain John Prentis Hempstead, one of five whaler brothers from New London, Connecticut. She had sailed to Honolulu with her friend Charlotte Brown (née Heppingstone) and her husband Captain Brown, to help with their small children. There she met and married Captain John Hempstead. After ten years of marriage she died in Honolulu, Hawaii, in 1898.

(Joan Druett, *Petticoat Whalers: Whaling Wives at Sea, 1820-1920*)

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CAPTAIN FRANCIS COFFIN

Captain Francis C. Coffin was born into a well-known whaling family in Salem Massachusetts. In 1839 he sailed for Australian waters in the *Samuel Wright*. While anchored in Koombana Bay on the 7 July 1840 a gale drove the ship onto the shore, along with another American whaler, the *North America*, under Captain Kempton.

Following the beaching of the *Samuel Wright*, Coffin lived in the relatively undamaged hull for a while, renting out some storage space onboard to the Australind WA Land Company. Both shipwrecks were auctioned quickly on behalf of their American owners. Coffin bought the wreck of the *Samuel Wright* for £305 and used the whale boats and equipment to conduct bay whaling at Bunbury, employing most of his crew. (Clifton Letter Book)

Captain Coffin was appointed as Bunbury's first pilot. He purchased a block of land in Picton where he used timber from the wreck to construct a few rough buildings as living and storage quarters. When he decided to return to the US, he sold the property to the Rev. Wollaston (later Archdeacon), who later built a new dwelling known as "Charterhouse" on the site. "Charterhouse" was named after his birthplace in England.

Mrs Coffin and her son left WA on the *Grotius*, bound for the United States on the 1st March 1842. Francis Coffin left the colony in 1844.

..... Gruesome Find in Sandhills

Old-Time Graveyard discovery in sand hills Bunbury, Wednesday.

The work of excavating sand on the Bunbury beach near the stone-crusher last week brought into view the foot of a coffin very much decayed and broken. The workmen stopped the excavation until arrangements were made for the re-burial at the cemetery.

Many years ago several burials took place at this spot, and amongst those interred there were members of a whaler's crew. The body of a ship's captain, it is stated, was also brought ashore and buried on the sandhills. (*Daily News*, 22 November, 1928)

..... To All Our Members

Some of you may be interested in spending some of your spare time on this:-

WW1 and Trove Newspapers

We all know that it is the 100th anniversary of the First World War. In commemoration, Trove has aimed to put all newspapers published in Australia between 1914-1918 on their website. For those of you unfamiliar with Trove, it is a massive digitisation project being undertaken by the National Library of Australia.

Most of these newspapers need corrections to the printed material, as the electronic scanners rarely read the print clearly. For instance names may appear quite scrambled, and this can throw search results off. Correcting the text does help folk who are doing specific name searches.

As a personal project for myself, and in memory of the members of my family who fell in WW1, I have been working to correct the family notices, obituaries, lists of those injured or killed in action, for the newspaper of my home town. I thought that this may be helpful for other folk researching their families. I like to suggest that if you have some time to devote to correcting Trove newspapers, perhaps for the town that you were born in or that your family came from, or your family name, that this is a fine year to start such a personal and community project.

The rules governing the correction of text of published newspapers in Trove, are pretty straightforward, and can be read on the website.

I hope that some of you will be interested to be involved, or just to have a go, and together we can make a personal contribution to commemorate those who went before. Regards Rowena

Manufacture of Whalebone

The small waist became a desirable feature in the 1800s and no well-bred woman would think of appearing in public 'uncorseted'.



Whenever the word "corset" is mentioned in a historical context, it's almost always described as being "whalebone". Yet this is something of a misnomer: corsets weren't stiffened with whalebone, but with another part of the whale called *baleen*.

Baleen is the feathery, comb-like feature of the mouths of some whales. As a material, baleen is strong and stiff but yielding, and can be cut, filed and shaped. Many things that are today fashioned from plastic were made from baleen, including eyeglass frames, the spokes of umbrellas and parasols, and the blades of folding fans.

Baleen didn't crack like reeds or wood splints (other popular and less expensive options.) It was strong and pliable, and could be split to make the very thin stays that were necessary for corsets.

(Chase & Bradford, *Two Nerdy History Girls* <http://twonerdyhistorygirls.blogspot.com.au>)

Beauty of Figure



It is incumbent upon every woman to secure or retain beauty of figure. A person of good figure will retain her charm of character longer than one who becomes slovenly and unwieldy.

The modern Corset is the chief aid to woman's beauty of figure.

The BON MARCHE carries a splendid collection of the most reliable makes - the kind of Corset that coax the figure into firm, graceful lines. Hygienically made, and extremely comfortable, the most exacting dresser will find a mode that will exactly meet her ideas of perfect corsetry.

(*Bunbury Herald*, 12 September 1914)

By the early twentieth century, however, the price of whalebone had become so prohibitive that it was often recycled from discarded corsets and old umbrellas. Eventually whalebone was replaced by cheaper alternatives of flexible steel and heavy-duty plastic. Corsets made today for the fashion and costume markets no longer contain whalebone.

(*Fishbone - Linguistics and Superstitions website*, 5th August 2012.)

**** WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS ****

622	Ann Fricker	Leschenault
623	Dave Henderson	Leschenault
624	Peter May	Bunbury
625	Janet Painter	Bunbury
626	Laureen Smyth	Eaton
627	Patrick Connolly	Bunbury
628	Chris Morgan	Dalyellup
629	Carol Morgan	Dalyellup

MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Surname	Place	State/Co	Country	Period	Member No.
ALCOCK	Lowestoft	SFK	ENG	Pre 1918	626
CONNOLLY		SLI	IRL	1850	627
COOPER	Lowestoft	SFK	ENG	Pre 1960	626
DENWOOD			ENG		619
DRAKES		LIN	ENG	Pre 1850	625
FLINTOFF		YKS	ENG	Pre 1850	625
HAMILTON	Stockton	DUR	ENG	Pre 1900	626
JACKSON	Bridlington	YKS	ENG	Pre 1910	622
LANGAN		SLI	IRL	1850	627
LAWRENCE	Newport	MON	WLS	1890 +	629
MADDEN		LDY	IRL	1800+	627
MARLOWE	Newry		IRE	Pre 1850	620
MORGAN/TAYLOR		WA/QLD	AUS	Pre 1910	622
PHILLIPS			AUS		619
PHILLIPS			ENG		619
RAINEY			IRL	1800	627
REID		LDY	IRL	1800+	627
ROBBINS		YKS	ENG	Pre 1850	625
ROSSI	Naples		ITALY	1800+	627
ROWE	Colchester	ESS	ENG	Pre 1940	626
SIMS			AUS		619
SMYTH	Rochdale	LAN	ENG	Pre 1960	626

If you would like to contact any of our new members please ring the AFHS library on 9796 1050