

Pratique

Friends of Woodman Point Recreation Camp

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AUTUMN 2021

BERTIE POORE: CENTENARY OF QUARANTINE SERVICE

This year marks the 100th year since Bertie Poore first made the Woodman Point Quarantine Station his family home and life’s work. The Poore family name is now one of many synonymous with the Quarantine Station’s important history and this year is Bertie’s year.



Much has been written about Bertie’s life at the “Station”, as his family affectionately refer to this place. The walls and rooms of the Isolation Hospital display many aspects of his life at the place they called home from 1921 until May 1939 when the likely onset of war necessitated a move to Palmyra.

Commonwealth Government Gazette records show Bertie began work as a Quarantine Assistant on 14 March 1921. Prior to this, his life contained the

challenges and adventures that so many of his generation experienced.

Bertie was born on 8 April 1891 in Portswood, South Stoneham, Southampton, England, the youngest son of a wheelwright/carpenter in a family of six children. At the age of 7, his mother Clara passed away, his father remarrying the following year. From the age of 13 to 16, he served as a naval cadet on the

Pratique - just what does it mean?

Pratique is the license given to a ship to enter port on assurance from the captain to convince the authorities that she is free from contagious disease. The clearance granted is commonly referred to as *free pratique*.

A ship can signal a request for *pratique* by flying a solid yellow square-shaped flag. This yellow flag is the **Q** flag in the set of international maritime signal flags.



From *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*

training ship *Mercury* on the River Hamble at Southampton. At the age of 20, he went to sea in the merchant service and eventually immigrated to WA where he served on many ships in the State Shipping Service.

When war broke out in 1914, Bertie tried to enlist in the Australian forces, but was rejected due to short stature. He then sailed for England on mv *Westralia*, enlisting in the British Army and fighting in trenches in France and Belgium. It was during this time that he met his future wife Lillian Barbara (Babs). They married in 1919, before returning to Fremantle in December 1919.

Following work with the Ministry for Shipping, and at the Mt Lyall processing works in North Fremantle, Bertie applied for work at the Quarantine Station. His life adventure continued there with many stories of friendship and adventure at Woodman Point.

When war broke out again in 1939, he tried to enlist, but this time was considered too old at age 48 and so he continued to serve at Woodman Point until his retirement in 1956.

There are many articles about Bertie's commitment and dedication with it reported that he personally nursed the most smallpox patients in all of Australia. Stories of his personal compassion are well known, with annual visits by the Sisters of the Order of St John of God paying respect to his service to their Order who served at the "Station", and in particular to Sister Barbara who gave her life in the service to others in 1930.

When Bertie retired in 1956, he had given 35 years of service at the "Station",

believed to make him the longest serving of any officer at this facility. The photo below was taken on the day of Bertie's retirement.



To commemorate Bertie's centenary at Woodman Point, a special celebration will see the Poore family come together for a reunion on 28 March at the site where Bertie gave so much of his life caring for others. A report of this get together will follow in a future edition of **Pratique**.

CONTRACTORS COME TOGETHER TO PRESERVE A PIECE OF HISTORY

Recently, Woodman Point Quarantine Station's crematorium played centre stage for the generous effort of several Perth contractors, orchestrated by our very own Graeme Churcher. Graeme is the grandson of Frank John Churcher, Assistant Caretaker from 1919-1921 and Caretaker from 1921 -1924 of Woodman Point Quarantine Station. What others

may not know is Graeme is also a quintessential master planner and, within just a few phone calls, had skilled professionals lined up pro bono to carry out the needed repairs.



The initial assessment team prior to the commencement of chimney restoration. L-R: Keith (RMS), Daniel (Veolia), Dot, (Mercer and Co), Steve (Veolia) and Mike (Friends representative)

The first quarantine buildings were constructed at Woodman Point in 1886 however land was allocated for the use of a quarantine station in 1836 to prevent communicable diseases brought to the Port by immigrants and ships' crews from spreading into the general population. Diseases, such as Spanish flu, leprosy and bubonic plague, were just some of those treated at the Station.

At the time it was constructed, a crematorium was not viewed favourably by the community due to general religious feelings at the time, hence bodies were cremated at night to reduce possible resentment within the community. The Woodman Point crematorium is the oldest in Australia and holds many stories of events that occurred until the last cremation in 1943. The crematorium was used to cremate not

just the bodies from the unfortunate deaths at the Quarantine Station, but also from the general local districts. The Quarantine Station closed in 1979.

The crematorium chimney's brickwork had seen better days and required



reinforcement to avoid future collapse. This was not a simple matter of a ladder and a tube of Selley's 'No More Gaps' – the work involved several steps to ensure it was carried out properly and met the requirements of the historical building codes and procedures. Friends are very grateful to the following businesses and their staff for their valuable contribution and quick turnaround of these important refurbishments.

Cockburn Cement Ltd.

As Refractory Superintendent, Graeme Churcher pulled a team of Cockburn Cement contractors together to deliver an outstanding result for this important part of our history. No doubt his grandfather, who ran the Station for so many years, would have been very proud of Graeme's involvement. Cockburn Cement also supplied the materials for the crematorium chimney repair.

Mercer & Co

Managing Director Tony Mercer gave his

time and expertise to assess the damage and provided a building inspection report while technical writer Dot Longnecker assisted with editing reports and writing articles.

Perth Scaffolding

Owner Barry Lloyd oversaw the fencing of the worksite and installation of scaffolding to provide access at the heights required to get the job done.



Veolia Refractory

Veolia provided repairs to the bricks and mortar of the chimney by applying labour highly skilled in refractory brickwork to remove and replace the lime mortar in traditional methods as were used when the crematorium was first constructed.



Matt Walker Construction

Assisted with the construction of the new morgue pathway.

It has been heart-warming to witness the willingness of today's locals in ensuring Western Australia's quarantine facilities of 100 years ago – along with the memories of those who worked so bravely and tirelessly back then and of those who sadly did not survive – are never forgotten.

Thanks to Dot Longnecker from Mercer & Co. for contributing this article.

VALE IAN DARROCH

It was with deep regret that Friends learned of the sudden passing on 12 December 2020 of our colleague and group historian, Ian Darroch.



Ian grew up in South Fremantle, attended Beaconsfield Primary School and Scotch College, and later graduated from Claremont Teachers College and Murdoch University. As a teacher, Ian served in such diverse locations as the outback of the Northern Territory, the Wheatbelt region of rural Western Australia, and a number of inner suburban schools in both the Fremantle and Rockingham areas.

Ian was a staunch supporter of the Friends of Woodman Point and worked actively with our group to keep the history of the former Quarantine Station alive. His publications *Western Sentinel* (2018) and *The Boonah Tragedy* (2004) bear testament to his love of local Fremantle history and will stand as pivotal reference works on the quarantine history of Woodman Point for many years to come.

Friends extend their deepest sympathy to Ian's wife Faye, his sons Glenn and Brett, and his extended family on Ian's sudden passing.

FROM THE PAGES OF HISTORY

The next in a series of articles of sites at Woodman Point that may no longer exist or may have faded from our memory.

The Isolation Wall

Whilst technically still existing, the Quarantine Station's original boundary wall is today a shadow of its former self.

The original limestone isolation wall was



designed as the eastern boundary of the newly established quarantine station. Described as “not having anything like of the appearance of a prison barrier, although it is supposed to mark the limit of the freedom permitted to quarantined

persons”, it stretched 382 metres across the Woodman Point peninsula from the waters of Owen Anchorage to the north to Jervoise Bay in the south, literally isolating the point “from sea to sea”.

Until about 1900 when the boundary was extended to the east, the wall marked the official boundary of the Woodman Point Quarantine Station.

Constructed in 1887 and stretching the nineteen chains “from sea to sea”, the wall, made of local limestone, cost of £19 12s 6d per chain, a total of £372 10s 4d for the project.

T.W. Whitley successfully tendered for its construction, which included extra foundations, and one small gate and one large gate which served as entry/exit points. At 7.5 feet (2.2 metres) high, the wall was topped with broken bottles and shards glass to deter anyone who might try to scale.

Approximately 80 metres of the original wall remains today, all located on the southern side of the peninsula. Remnants of the glass and bottles that once topped it can still be seen today.



FROM THE PRESIDENT

During the three months since the last **Pratique**, Friends of Woodman Point Recreation Camp have been busy working on various events and projects.

On Friday 15 January, Friends presented Certificates of Appreciation to companies that had so generously donated material, equipment and labour for the renovation of the Woodman Point Crematorium and the construction of the Morgue Trail.

The Crematorium is the oldest in Australia and is an especially important part of the heritage and history of Woodman Point Quarantine Station and we greatly appreciate your support and assistance in ensuring this important building continues to be seen and enjoyed for generations to come.

A huge thank you to Perth Scaffolding, Mercer & Co., Veolia, M J Walker Contracting and Cockburn Cement.

Enjoying the reception at the Isolation Hospital were:



L-R: Tony Mercer (Mercer & Co.), Cockburn Mayor Logan Howlett, Friends President Gary Marsh and Dot Longnecker from Mercer & Co.



L-R: Cockburn Cement Refractory Superintendent and Friends member Graeme Churcher and Colin Powers from Cockburn Cement



L-R: Stephen Scoon, Darshak Shan and Steve Strydom, all from Veolia

Friends have held two general public heritage tours: one on 21 January, the other on 21 February. Both were very well attended. Feedback from guests has been incredibly positive and we have had many enquiries for future monthly public tours bookings. Friends intend to continue to conduct these tours on the third Sunday of each month.

On Sunday 7 March, a busy bee was held at the Isolation Hospital. On a hot and humid day, it was great to accomplish a major annual job - the

painting of the wooden decking that surrounds the Isolation Hospital, in preparation for the year's tours. Many thanks to those members who attended on the day. We greatly appreciate the support of Bunnings, Bibra Lake, who kindly donated 20 litres of decking paint to undertake this job.

Painting of internal parts of Isolation Hospital will occur between 9 April to 14 April. To accommodate this, there will be no tours from 30 March to 16 April. The periods before the painting dates are to clear the rooms prior to painting, and to replace displays post painting. If anyone can spare some time in the pre and post-periods to help move displays, it would be appreciated. I will advise via email of dates.

Again, the City of Cockburn have invited us to apply for a community grant. Several projects are being considered, these being the installation of a fire hose and reel at the SE corner of the IH, the upgrading of the rainwater tank to meet current health requirements, and the upgrading or replacement of heritage signage around the Woodman Point Recreation Camp.

On behalf of Friends' Committee and members, I would like to thank Ian Jamieson and Karen Jardine for their service and support to Friends over many years. Their contribution has been much appreciated and we wish them all the best with their new project.

And as always, our continuing thanks to all our members and the staff of the Recreation Camp for your help and assistance over the last three months.

Gary Marsh
President

LATEST NEWS FROM FRIENDS

- ❖ A big thank you to Bunnings Bibra Lake for their generous donation of 20 litres of decking timber finish for our annual painting of the Woodman Point Isolation Hospital decking. Special thanks to Bree Liddington, Activities Organiser at Bunnings Bibra Lake for her assistance with this donation.



- ❖ All back copies of **Pratique**, dating from the first edition in the Winter 2011, have now been submitted to the State Library of WA. They are now available for viewing on the internet through the State Library's site and also through the website of the National Library of Australia.
- ❖ **WANTED** More guides are needed for our heritage tours of Woodman Point. If you are keen to help, please contact our president, Gary Marsh.
- ❖ The next meeting of Friends will be held on Thursday 25 March 2021 in the Isolation Hospital, commencing at 6.30pm. All members are welcome to attend.

UPDATE FROM THE CAMP

The Camp has started the 2021 year as manically busy as we finished the previous year. The demand for places that provide schools and community groups the opportunity to come together has never been stronger. And despite the false start to Term 1 with an unexpected snap-lockdown, we are looking at our busiest March on record. That said, our team of enthusiastic staff are looking forward to the term ahead.

The Doctor's Precinct restoration project continues and remains on-track for the commencement of works before winter this year. A site meeting was held in late February with a range of expert consultants who will guide the construction documentation of the building precinct, which presents a number of its own challenges due to its original limestone and timber construction.

We will continue to provide an update to Friends as this project progresses, and we will arrange a couple of viewings for any interested members after construction has commenced.

The Camp welcomes back a familiar face in Kylie Howe who has returned to her role at the Camp after a couple of years away on parental leave and a period in another role at our head office, having worked at the Camp since the early 2000s. We are excited to have Kylie back with her significant experience at the site.

Finally, whilst one staff member returns, we soon say farewell to Michelle Young who finishes her role at the Camp in April.

In the time Michelle has been at the Camp, she has progressed a number of important projects, including several in collaboration with Friends. I'm sure the many Friends members who have worked with Michelle have appreciated her dedication to the heritage and important ecology of the site.

We hope that we have the opportunity to have Michelle return to the Camp in the future, but for now I'd like to thank her on behalf of the Camp and the Friends' membership for her many contributions over the last few years. We all wish Michelle the very best in her next endeavour.



Matt Hayes
Camp Manager

NEW MEMBERS

Friends welcome the following people who have recently joined our organisation.

- Teri Lewis from White Gum Valley
- Brendan and Barbara Trappe from Beeliam

HERITAGE TOURS

Friends of Woodman Point Recreational Camp operate regular heritage tours of the former Quarantine Station and the Isolation Hospital Museum for community groups.

Morning tea is included in all tours, and if required, lunch can be provided at an additional cost.

Periodic open weekends provide tours for members of the public to visit the site and to learn about this important Western Australian heritage site.

We acknowledge the contribution of our valued volunteer tour guides who lead our heritage tours of the former Quarantine Station.



Jenni



Chris



Suzie



Gary



Neil

We also acknowledge Daniel and the staff of Accolade Catering who provide the delicious lunches enjoyed by our tour participants.

UPCOMING HERITAGE TOURS

March/April 2021

10 Mar Seniors Club
21 Mar Monthly public tour
18 Apr Monthly public tour

May 2021

16 May Umbrella Community Group
18 May Monthly public tour

COMMITTEE 2020 – 2021

PRESIDENT
Gary Marsh



TREASURER
Mike Poore



PAST PRESIDENT
Jenni Carder



**SECRETARY/
MEMBERSHIP**
Ainslie Poore



VICE PRESIDENT
Neil Wilson



EX-OFFICIO COMMITTEE MEMBER
Matt Hayes



MEMBER SERVICES

HERITAGE TOUR BOOKINGS
Jenni Carder



PRATIQUE
Neil Wilson



WEBSITE MAINTENANCE AND DESIGN

