

Pratique

Friends of Woodman Point Recreation Camp
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AUTUMN 2023

AN INTERNATIONAL VISITOR TO WOODMAN POINT

Dr John McGlashan was the Commonwealth Department of Health’s Quarantine Doctor and was responsible for attending to the care of quarantined patients from 1949 to 1951. Dr McGlashan had an illustrious career in public health care, including an appointment as the Northern Territory’s Chief Medical Officer. The details of Dr McGlashan’s career were outlined in an article published in the Winter 2022 edition of *Pratique*.



It was therefore with great pleasure that Friends hosted a visit on 18 January 2023 to the former Quarantine Station by his son, Keith McGlashan, a retired medical official, who was visiting WA from his home in Vancouver, Canada.

As it was Keith’s first visit to Woodman Point, he was shown around the site by president Gary Marsh. Keith later

commented to his cousin Gail Dodd, that it was an absolute honour to be shown around this place of remarkable beauty and connection to his family’s past. After the tour, Keith visited the cemetery and was very moved by the lives lost and commemorated there.

Following his visit to Perth, Keith spent time in Vietnam with his son Kyle, before returning to Sydney and later to the cold of winter in Vancouver.



FROM THE PAGES OF HISTORY

Commencing a series of articles recalling some of the patients who were nursed and cared for at the Woodman Point Quarantine Station.

William Miller 1849 - 1893

It seems highly appropriate that we begin this new series of historic reflections honouring William Miller, the first recorded fatal casualty at the Woodman Point Quarantine Station. His remains lie in a grave at the first Woodman Point Cemetery, an unmarked burial ground in bushland opposite the activity area where 'The Cube' is now located.

William Miller was from Rothesay, on the Isle of Bute, west of Glasgow in Scotland. Born in 1849, he hailed from a well-known local family who were engaged in the local ship building industry at Rothesay. William left home at an early age to travel the world, eventually finding himself in Western Australia in about 1878. He settled in the north-west of Western Australia where he was highly regarded by his friends for his genial disposition and open and straight-forward nature. In the north-west, William had lived in Cossack, worked in harbour construction and, with his brother, he was also engaged as a 'pearler'.

Around this time, the trading and passenger vessel *Saladin*, under the command of Master F Pitts, was making regular return journeys from Singapore to Fremantle via several West Australian coastal towns. It was widely believed that smallpox was present on the vessel and was responsible for the introduction of the disease into both Fremantle and Perth in April 1893.

William Miller's infliction with smallpox was first announced in local papers on 14 April 1893 when it was reported that he had developed symptoms of the illness at his home in Beaconsfield. Two days later, it was announced that he, along with a Miss Howard who would eventually recover, had been placed in isolation at the Woodman Point Quarantine Station. The epidemic situation had been considered so serious that the local Health Board had "suggested the erection of further premises in that locality; that a covered vehicle should be provided for the conveyance of patients, and should bear a yellow flag, and that all persons be warned not to pass to leeward of the board's conveyances".

By 17 April, it was announced that William's case was "a very bad one, the disease being, undoubtedly, virulent smallpox" and on 18 April, his condition had deteriorated to the extent that he was delirious and in a high state of fever. So serious was this illness that William knew he would not recover from the disease, and he passed away at Woodman Point on the morning of Friday 21 April 1893.

As there was no crematorium at Woodman Point at the time, William was buried later that day with special precautions being taken by the funeral director for his interment. His final resting place was the Woodman Point Cemetery, not far from the detached wards where he had been nursed.

The smallpox epidemic of 1893 caused such concern that advertisements were placed in local papers in an attempt to educate the public and encourage them to seek vaccinations against the disease. One is reproduced below from *The West Australian*, Monday 1 May 1893 page 2.

PERTH LOCAL BOARD OF HEALTH.

THE PREVENTION OF SMALL-POX.

1. Small-pox is most loathsome and fatal, and the most contagious of diseases.
2. Before the introduction of Vaccination, Small-pox killed 40,000 persons yearly in England.
3. Thorough Vaccination in infancy is an almost complete protection against Small-pox.
4. Of unvaccinated people one out of every three attacked by Small-pox dies.
5. Of Perfectly Vaccinated persons only one dies out of every two hundred attacked by Small-pox.
6. Perfect Vaccination is shown by the possession of four well-marked Vaccine Scars.
7. Vaccination is harmless and practically painless.
8. To ensure protection throughout life you should be revaccinated after the age of fifteen.
9. Every soldier and sailor is revaccinated; the result is that Small-pox is almost unknown in the army and navy, even amid surrounding epidemics.
10. You can be vaccinated free of charge at the Town Hall.
11. Should Small-pox break out at

your house or among your neighbours, see at once to the vaccination of the household, and to the re-vaccination of all persons over 12 years of age, and at the same time inform the Medical Officer of Health, Dr. O'Connor, or the Inspector, Mr. C. H. Smith, at the City Council office.

12. Any Patient suffering from Small-pox should be removed to Hospital; or, if kept at home, must have a separate room and nurse.

REMEMBERING OUR HISTORY

The first article in an occasional series remembering moments in time that are close to the heart and soul of Woodman Point's long history.

March 1943 marked the beginning of a significant period in Woodman Point's medical and nursing history. The Quarantine Station was about to commence its longest period of quarantine lock-down and experience the last deaths and subsequent cremations to occur there.

The Pacific trading vessel *Suva* arrived in Gage Roads in late March with confirmed cases of smallpox onboard. Those already showing signs of the disease and those considered contacts began to land at Woodman Point on 26 March and were placed in either the Isolation or the Observation Hospital, The Quarantine Station began to prepare for a lockdown, taking on additional local staff to assist with running of both hospitals, the dormitory buildings and the dining hall. By 2 April, 17 people were

assisting with the operation of the Station now caring for a total of 52 patients.

The first of five deaths occurred on 30 March when crewman Samuela Waleda aged 23 passed away that evening. His body was taken to the Station morgue where it was prepared for cremation the following afternoon. Roy McIntosh, the Station officer-in-charge, read a Christian burial service and oversaw the cremation that commenced at 2.30pm and took 11 long hours to complete. The following evening, 1 April 1943, Chief Officer Arthur Waters, aged 36 years, also succumbed to the disease and was cremated later that night, with Roy McIntosh again conducting a Christian burial service prior to cremation. These two deaths marked the beginning of a harrowing and sad 10 days for Station staff when a further three men died from smallpox: Eroni Builoto, aged 25 and one of the ship's cooks on 5 April and Rosaca Cigilau aged 20, a steward, on 9 April. The final death to occur in the Station's history was that of crewman Osea Tuvoqa, aged 20 years, on 11 April 1943. All were buried in the Woodman Point Military Cemetery, though the remains of Arthur Waters were later exhumed and reinterred in November 1944 at Karrakatta Cemetery.

The end of March 2023 will mark 80 years since this fateful time.

Pratique commemorates this moment in quarantine history and remembers the crewmen of the *Suva*, and the staff of Woodman Point Quarantine Station who cared for and endured the sadness of their passing. Friends honours the memory of the crewmen from the *Suva* by its regular maintenance of their grave and by recounting their story to all who tour through the Isolation Hospital. May they

all continue to rest in peace, knowing their story has not been forgotten.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

We are delighted to announce that one of our members, Gail Dodd, has nominated Friends for the Volunteering WA 2023 Group Volunteer Award. This is a highly prestigious local award and, if successful, would provide Friends and our volunteers with tremendous recognition for their dedication in preserving the heritage and history of Woodman Point. Many thanks to Gail for the nomination and the time taken to produce a very comprehensive and complimentary application.

On 15 February, an extraordinary meeting of Friends was held to consider strategic and forward planning strategies. Unfortunately attendance was a little low due to other commitments of members, but the meeting was a fruitful one nevertheless. Many thanks for their input to all who attended, and to Gail Dodd who minuted the meeting's actions.



The meeting considered such items as:

- how to increase membership numbers, especially active membership;
- how Friends should be conscious of, and celebrate special events and anniversaries;

- continued promotion within the community of the group and its activities, especially its history tours;
- ensuring active support to the Woodman point Recreation Camp administration and staff;
- continuing our research for relevant archival records and to reach out to other like-minded groups such as other quarantine stations around Australia, and government agencies such as the National Archives of Australia;
- continuing to improve our museum record-keeping and historical displays;
- continuing to seek grant funding opportunities wherever possible.

With the successful application for a City of Cockburn grant at the end of last year, Friends have recently purchased new equipment to assist with maintenance of the Isolation Hospital: a new vacuum cleaner, a window washer and a five-step ladder. Further funding from the grant will enable us to purchase much-needed shelving to store our supply of *The Boonah Tragedy* and *Western Sentinel* books in the storeroom.

At the January meeting of Friends, it was agreed that we would introduce Wednesday mornings between 8am and 12 noon as Friends Morning. This is where anyone can turn up at Woodman Point and share activities with other members and a way to become more involved with Friends. So come along, share a cuppa with us and, if you want, help out with small jobs, such as archiving documents, reading or just sharing stories.

After a rather slow summer for tours, tour bookings are starting to come in. Our public tours in March and April have a steady stream of bookings being made,

and several community groups and a school have booked weekday tours throughout March, April and May.

To further raise public awareness of our tours, Friends made the decision at their January meeting to advertise our tours on community radio. As a result, we are now advertising on Curtin 100.1 FM, and have another planned to be aired in the near future on Radio Fremantle 107.9 FM. We hope these strategies will further add to public awareness and appreciation of our site and all it has to offer.

The job of replacing the tek screws on exterior of the Isolation Hospital walls continues, thanks to the efforts of Graeme Jeisman and Greg Ireland. We are about a quarter away round the building so if you can spare a couple of hours on a Wednesday morning to assist, it would be much appreciated.

Gary Marsh
President

UPDATE FROM THE CAMP

With 260 client groups to the end of February, financially Woodman Point Recreation Camp is looking at a record-breaking year across its accommodation and programs. A very positive recovery after the global COVID pandemic.

Pat McEntee, the Senior Facilities Officer at Woodman Point, who has been employed within the Department for over 39 years, has penned his official retirement with this last day on 28 April 2023. Pat started on 3 November 1983 as a ramp attendant at the Woodman Point Boat Ramps before starting as an assistant warden in 1988 under the

guidance of Kym Lawrence. Kym has also started his official retirement countdown and will retire just shy of 42 years within the Department.

H&H Architects have been given the green light to start the preparation of the 2023 Woodman Point Recreation Camp Conservation Plan with Julie de Jong, Director of H&H Architects, on-site from 8 March 2023. H&H Architects have previously prepared the Camp Quararup Complex Conservation Plan in 2016, the Busselton Jetty Conservation Plan in 2007 and are currently working as the heritage architect for the deconstruction of the Woodman Point Ammo Jetty. Woodman Point Camp management will be consulting with Friends of Woodman Point to assist with the compilation of additional historic data in lieu of a professional historian. Certainly a milestone for the site.

A final completion inspection occurred at the Doctor's Precinct on 23 February with CLPM to consolidate the end of defects. Noted particularly from the meeting was the sacrificial render that was applied to the external walls has already been heavily impacted by rising dampness and has deteriorated significantly. Quotations are being now sought to remove the render in a bid to expose the existing masonry around the Doctor's residence to allow the walls to breathe and dry out. This will most likely also occur around the exterior walls of the Bertie Poore Room.

Several emergency repairs have occurred around the site including a new sewer pump, restorative works to the grease arrestor at the kitchen and various minor works to the on-site residence. The Coastal Bike Ride program that weaves

its way along the coastline to the *Omeo* wreck has also received an upgrade with 25 new bikes purchased to replace the old. The old bikes will be repurposed to communities in need.

Finally I would like to offer congratulations to Matthew Hayes who is currently acting as Executive Director of Sport and Recreation.

Ben Walton
Camp Manager

LATEST NEWS FROM FRIENDS

- ❖ Heartfelt condolences are extended to the family of our long standing member Alby Alfirevich who passed away on 9 January 2023.
- ❖ Sincere thanks to Bunnings Spearwood who have offered to supply paint and labour to re-paint the IH decking in the coming months.
- ❖ Many thanks to the very kind member who donated a new laptop that will enable us to begin the electronic recording of our archival documents and artefacts.
- ❖ The next meeting of Friends will be held at the Isolation Hospital on Wednesday 15 March 2023 commencing at 6.30pm. All members are welcome to attend.

NEW MEMBERS

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

- Frankie Atkinson from Spearwood
- Ryan Dunne from Coogee

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



Kay



Chris



Bernadette



Suzie



Gary



Neil

UPCOMING HERITAGE TOURS

March 2023

19 Mar Monthly public tour
29 Mar Ellenbrook Primary School

April/May 2023

16 Apr Monthly public tour
20 Apr The View Club
21 May Monthly public tour
22 May Rockingham Autumn Club

COMMITTEE 2022 – 2023

PRESIDENT
Gary Marsh



TREASURER
Greg Ireland



PAST PRESIDENT
Jenni Carder



**SECRETARY/
MEMBERSHIP**
Ainslie Poore



VICE PRESIDENT
Neil Wilson



EX-OFFICIO COMMITTEE MEMBER
Ben Walton



MEMBER SERVICES

HERITAGE TOUR BOOKINGS
Jenni Carder



PRATIQUE
Neil Wilson



WEBSITE MAINTENANCE AND DESIGN

