ROUND ABOUT COOGEE

The story of Walter Powell, the old Coogee Hotel and life in the Coogee district from the beginning of European Settlement

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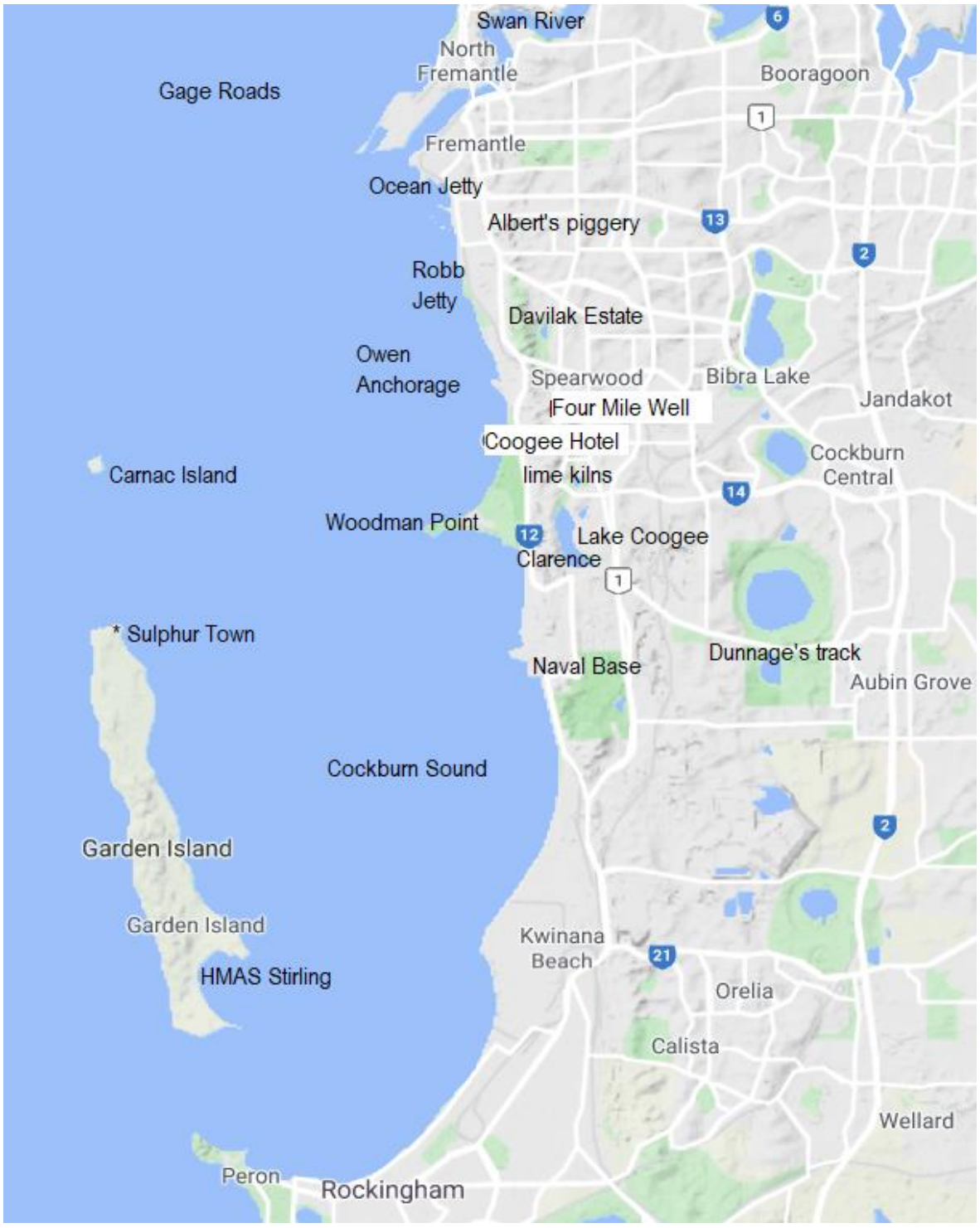

Map of the coast of Western Australia between Fremantle and Rockingham

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INTRODUCTION

Opposite the popular beach at Coogee, seven kilometers south of Fremantle in Western Australia, stands an old limestone and wooden building. This building, the former Coogee Hotel has been there for one hundred and twenty two years. Now an historic landmark on Cockburn Road and a heritage listed building it was the scene of festivities and celebrations as well as neglect over the course of the past century. In its heyday at the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth century it was an important social hub for the residents and workers of the area as well as being home to the owner and proprietor, Walter Powell and his family. In the years after World War I it was for a time a holiday home for orphans and underprivileged children and then following the Second World War a fulltime orphanage for the Anglican Church.

I must have passed it hundreds of times in the car, on my bike and on foot with my husband, Steve and the dog in tow since moving to the area in 1998, one hundred years after the hotel first opened. As the hotel and the small limestone building next to it were the only old buildings remaining in the area it led me to wonder about their history, how they came to be there, and what events they had witnessed over the past century. I was also curious to find out what life was like for the people who lived in Coogee when the hotel was in its heyday and who its customers were.

I discovered in the course of my investigations that what I thought of as a very pleasant but quiet and unremarkable coastal suburb was in the late part of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century a hive of activity. Cockburn Road, originally called the Rockingham Road, is one of the oldest roads in the state, and was just a rough limestone coastal track through dense bush when the hotel opened in 1898. As well as travellers on the road heading south from Fremantle, the hotel's customers included the workers from the nearby lime kilns, men working at the Robb Jetty abattoirs and local piggeries which were operating just to the north of the hotel at the time. Some of the local market gardeners who had settled in the area to the south and east of the hotel were also frequented the Coogee Hotel.

Being the only hotel in the area for many years, the thirsty workers and holidaymakers made the trip along the bush track to Powell's Coogee Hotel to enjoy the local produce, slake their thirst and discuss the issues of the day. It was an important 'watering hole' for both men and

beasts on the road south to Rockingham, Mandurah and beyond in an era when horses, wagons and stage coaches were the main form of travel. The hotel quickly gained a good reputation after it was established in the early part of the twentieth century and it became an important gathering place for people interested in all sorts of sporting activities, especially horse racing and cycling which were very popular at the time.

The owner and proprietor of the Coogee Hotel was Walter Powell. Like myself and many West Australians, Walter Powell was an immigrant. He arrived from England with his family in the early 1880s, just before the boom of the gold rush years kick started the Western Australian economy. He would witness the social, political and cultural changes that occurred at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries after gold was found. As the news of the gold rush spread internationally people from many parts of Australia and the world poured into the colony. Indeed Walter Powell would contribute to the social and cultural changes of the Coogee area by establishing the hotel, thereby creating a place for social interaction. As well as being the venue for picnics, cycling races and horse racing, the lush gardens and fountains surrounding the hotel made it popular with honeymooners. As bathing became more popular at the start of the twentieth century the location of the hotel close to the sheltered beach at Coogee was an added attraction. The area around Coogee, still very much a rural place of bush and market gardens at the end of the nineteenth century, was deservedly known as the 'Garden of the West'.

Fremantle where Walter lived and worked when he first arrived in Western Australia and Coogee where he established his hotel in the late 1890s and raised his family are now where I too spend most of my time. Both places were very different socially and culturally back then of course and I was curious to trace the history of the development of the area from then until now. I discovered in the process a rich and interesting story very much entwined with the history of the development of Western Australia.

In 2001 the old Coogee Hotel and the nearby small limestone Post Office were recognised by the Department of Environment and Heritage as a rare example of a single storied hotel and purpose built post office in the metro area. According to the Department's report, 'no comparable place survives in close to its original form, in a recognised physical and historical context, north or south of Fremantle within the metropolitan region'.[1]

The story of the Coogee Hotel, the family that occupied it and the people who frequented it at

the beginning of the twentieth century deserves to be told, as it is part of our cultural heritage. This book is an attempt to capture the spirit of the times at a crucial juncture in history, as Western Australia was transformed from a small, isolated, struggling colonial outpost of the British Empire into a fully-fledged, prosperous State of the Commonwealth of Australia.

CHAPTER 1

ARRIVAL OF THE POWELL FAMILY IN FREMANTLE

On the last day of June in 1882 the ship *Fitzroy* arrived in Gage Roads off the port of Fremantle, Western Australia. Among the sixty two passengers on board were Walter Powell, his wife Letitia, their two year old son, Walter junior. Walter's older sister Blanche Powell was also on board. Three months had passed since the ship had sailed from Gravesend in England, crossed the equator and made the long journey across the Indian Ocean to Fremantle. The passengers, all assisted migrants must have been keen to disembark and start their new life after such a long voyage. Unfortunately for them Fremantle was in the grip of a bad winter storm and because of the foul weather they had to wait another week to go ashore. In the 1880s, ships arriving at Fremantle had to anchor offshore in what was called Gage Roads, as Fremantle harbour had not yet been built. All passengers and cargo arriving at that time had to be lightered to Ocean Jetty at Bather's Beach, which is located just to the south of where the Swan River meets the Indian Ocean.

Walter Powell was twenty seven years old at the time of his arrival in Western Australia. He would go on to be a successful clerk and merchant in Fremantle and later on establish the Coogee Hotel. His many and varied interests would see him become a very active member of his local community. Walter would also become a member and for a time Chairman of the Fremantle District Roads Board, a trustee of the Coogee Agricultural Society and by all accounts a popular, energetic, creative and hardworking member of the community. This however was all in the future as the Powell family impatiently waited to go ashore.

Finally, a week later on the evening of Friday 7 July, the stormy weather eased enough to allow the passengers to disembark and set foot on Western Australian soil for the first time. The sea was still very rough however and it must have been a nerve racking and anxious end to the long trip. The local newspaper, the *Herald,* reported on the following day that the:

> steam lighter '*Amy*' brought ashore the immigrants per the '*Fitzroy*' on Friday evening last. The weather was very rough, the lighter having much difficulty in getting alongside, and in attempting to do so she ran her stem into the side of the

> ship. The accident naturally caused no little alarm at first, until the extent of the damage was ascertained. Eventually the immigrants, 62 in number, were brought safely ashore by the '*Amy*' and were landed in Fremantle about 6 pm despite the rough weather. The immigrants, who are all nominated are we believe, of a very good stamp, and number 62 in all. The number that embarked for the colony was 67 but we regret to say that five died during the voyage from what was supposed to be gastric fever, one man dying as recently as the day before the arrival of the vessel in port. The '*Fitzroy*' made a very fair passage of 91 days, which would have been shorter had not the numerous burials and the occasional rough weather necessitated her at times heaving to.

At that time being 'of a very good stamp' was important in this small, remote colonial outpost of the British Empire.[1] The *Victorian Express* reported of the new arrivals that:

> Sixty immigrants have landed in Fremantle ex *Fitzroy*. We are not aware of their ages, sex, or other conditions, but, at any rate, they are more desirable than Chinamen.[2]

Hostility towards Chinese people was not uncommon at the time throughout the colonies of Australia. Labour was in short supply in the Western Australia prior to the commencement of transportation of convicts in 1850. To remedy this Chinese indentured labour was introduced into the colony in the 1840s. Competition with the other settlers, especially the Chinese people's willingness to work on Sundays, was resented and cultural differences meant that relations between the two groups were never harmonious. This attitude persisted in the community through the years and would eventually result twenty years later in the introduction of the Commonwealth Immigration Restriction Act or the White Australia Policy during the first session of the newly inaugurated Federal Government in 1901. Although geographically closer to Asia, culturally the people of Western Australia were still very much tied to England, the mother country. At the time the settlers saw themselves as British subjects first, protected by the might and power of the British Empire which was at its height in the nineteenth century. Although there was a growing sense of national identity developing as more 'Australians' were

born in the colony, the rejection of subservience to the British Government was not matched by a rejection of British identity and loyalty to Her Majesty.[3]

The ship that the Powell family and other immigrants arrived on, the *Fitzroy*, was a barque of 572 tons and was a frequent visitor to Fremantle in the mid-1800s. She was known as an 'old favorite trader' bringing much needed supplies to the colony. In 1868 she arrived safely from England with her cargo of brandy, rum, gin, port as well as sherry, claret and champagne.[4] On another trip in March, 1871 she ran into trouble off Fremantle. The Captain, tired of waiting for the pilot to guide him, decided to bring the ship into Gage Roads himself and ran onto the Straggler's Reef off Fremantle. The ship survived the ordeal although the *Herald* reported that she was almost wrecked in the accident.[5] The *Fitzroy* was just one of many ships to encounter trouble on the reefs and rocks off the coast of Western Australia as the presence of many shipwrecks along the coastline attest to.

Although the three month journey from England at the end of the nineteenth century was long and arduous, the five deaths on board during the Powell's trip were unusually high and it was the source of some controversy during the following weeks. The *Inquirer and Commercial News* reported that Dr. Arthur, the Surgeon of the *Fitzroy*, 'intended to proceed against some of the Officers of the latter vessel for alleged disreputable conduct to the immigrants'. Dr. Arthur who was migrating to practice medicine in the colony denied responsibility for the deaths on board stating that he had been denied access to the sick passengers. A week later the *Herald* reported that an 'inquiry into certain matters in connection with the *Fitzroy* took place at the Customs'. As the information was for His Excellency, Governor Robinson, and the most powerful figure in the colony at that time, no reporters were allowed to be present. The *Herald* hoped that the Governor would see fit to make the information available as it was of interest to the general public. In the end Captain Bush and his officers were acquitted of all charges of negligence which were deemed to be totally unfounded.[6] The charges against Captain Bush lingered however and when the *Fitzroy* made her next trip to the colony the following year, 1883, it was reported that the immigrants were the best batch that have come to the colony and that they had enjoyed 'perfect health' during the journey.[7]

Long ocean voyages were not without hazard in the nineteenth century and not all ships completed their journey. In 1887 the ship *Kapunda,* en route to Fremantle, collided with an unknown vessel in the Atlantic Ocean and sank off the coast of Brazil. The *West Australian*

reported on 2 February, 1887 that although a few of the crew were picked up and taken to Bahia, most of the two hundred and seventy seven immigrants (or perhaps it was three hundred and sixty five, the precise number of passengers on board the ship was uncertain at the time) were lost. Most of the immigrants on board the *Kapunda* had been nominated by their friends and family in Western Australia. There were also some settlers selected for the W.A. Land Company and about thirty single girls destined for the Board of Immigration. Among the many immigrants on board were Charles and Martha Brown and their children who had been nominated by Walter Powell. In such a small community the news of the terrible disaster and loss of so many lives hit the people hard as they came to the realization that many of their friends and family had perished at sea.

On that dark, winter evening when the *Amy* finally docked at the Ocean Jetty in Fremantle with her cargo of passengers from the *Fitzroy*, looming over them as they disembarked was the Round House. It is the oldest surviving building on the mainland of Western Australia. Not quite round at all, it is in fact a twelve sided building, the Round House served as the colony's first prison from 1831 until Fremantle Prison opened in 1856. Sitting on top of a steep limestone cliff, it housed undesirable strangers, sailors, Aboriginal people and settlers charged with drunkenness in the early days when Fremantle was a very isolated port, frequented by sealers and whalers.

Beneath the Round House the whaler's tunnel, built by early prison inmates connects Bather's Beach with High Street. The landing place for the new arrivals, Ocean Jetty, was later known as the Long Jetty after it was extended in 1887 to accommodate larger ships. It served Fremantle until the harbour was officially opened ten years later. The remains of this historic jetty, where many of the early settlers and visitors first set foot on Western Australian soil can still be seen in the shallow waters off Bathers Beach. Figure 1 shows the Ocean Jetty and associated buildings roughly as they would have appeared to the new arrivals. The Kerosene Store (now the Kidogo Arthouse) was not built until 1884 so was not there when the *Fitzroy* arrived.

While they must have been relieved at having arrived safely one wonders what the Powell family and the other migrants thought of their new home. The hot, dry Mediterranean-type climate of this part of Western Australia gives way to occasional violent storms in winter, which was the situation in July of 1882 when the *Fitzroy* arrived. For a week after the passengers landed the storm continued unabated. The *Inquirer and Commercial News* reported on Wednesday, 12 July that 'Mr. Flindell's sailing boat was driven under the South Jetty by the

violence of the wind, and that upon striking violently against the piles she stove in her stern and sank at once'. The report continued that the cutter *Will-Watch* made three attempts to reach the island of Rottnest twelve miles offshore, which had served as an Aboriginal prison since 1840, but had to turn back on each occasion, so bad were the conditions. The majority of the population of Fremantle were suffering from colds and everyone was hoping for a change in the weather.

Figure 1 The view from the Round House looking south towards Coogee. Ocean Jetty is on right of photo. The Commissariat building (now the Shipwrecks Museum) is the two storey building on the left of the picture and the Kerosene Store faces the beach on the right. Courtesy of Fremantle Library photo #1611. c.1891.

Coming from the small town of Westerham in Kent, just south of London, to the remote and wild coast of Western Australia at the end of the nineteenth century must have seemed to the new arrivals like arriving on another planet. Known as the 'land of sin, sorrow and sore eyes', the latter due to an eye complaint caused by the glare of the white sand, the place couldn't have been more different from the gentle green land that they had left.[8] The eye problem was so prevalent that when transportation started in 1850 Governor Hampton requested that men with diseases of the eye not be sent, as the glare from the sun and the fine sand of Fremantle were so bad that it would cause further irritation.[9]

The Powell family and the other migrants on the *Fitzroy* were part of an assisted migration

scheme aimed at growing the population which at the time was increasing very slowly. The fifty three years that had passed since the beginning of European settlement in 1829 had seen the non-Aboriginal population grow to just over 31,000. This was mostly due to transportation which from between 1850 to 1868 boosted the population of the colony from just under 5,000 to 25,000 due to the influx of the convicts, all male and some free, mostly women immigrants.[10] This number excludes Aboriginal people who were not counted in the census until 1967, so their numbers at the time are largely unknown. Because of the remoteness of the colony and subsequent high cost of the passage from the United Kingdom, the governments of Australian colonies and the Imperial government paid either in full or in part the passages of selected British immigrants. In 1874 the Western Australian Legislative Council decided to sponsor immigration to overcome the colony's labour shortage.[11] Some of the new arrivals did not stay long however, as they were attracted to the Eastern colonies, which being more developed at the time had better opportunities to offer a new settler. Just prior to the Powell's arrival, between 1877 and 1881 the number of departures exceeded new arrivals in the colony.[12] At the time the colony of South Australia which was settled in 1836, seven years after the Swan River Colony, had a population ten times that of Western Australia.[13] To prevent their departure, all sponsored immigrants landed after 1876 in Western Australia were compelled to enter into an agreement to remain for three years in the colony or refund the whole of their passage money.[14]

Unlike the majority of new immigrants to Australia who were attracted to the Eastern colonies, Walter Powell had chosen Western Australia to start a new life for reasons other than new opportunities and a fresh start in life. He and his family had left their home in England to be reunited with their father, Edwin Henry Powell, and were no doubt greeted by him on that stormy Friday night in Fremantle. Edwin Powell had been in the colony for fifteen years, having been transported as a convict in 1867. By the time that his family arrived in 1882 he had served his time and was now a free man. That night the family would also have met Edwin's second wife Frances Mary Prince and their step-brother and step-sister, Frank who was six years old and the new baby Grace, just six weeks old. When Edwin was transported to Fremantle in 1867, Walter was just a thirteen year old boy and his sister Blanche fifteen years old. The fifteen intervening years must have made the initial meeting a bit formal and restrained but as we will see the Powell family worked closely together in the years to come.

CHAPTER 2

THE LEGACY OF THE CONVICT ERA AND THE POWELL FAMILY

In 1867 at the age of thirty nine Walter's father, Edwin Henry Powell, a surveyor by trade was transported to Western Australia for forgery. He had been sentenced at the Old Baily in London on the 26 February, 1866 having been convicted of 'feloniously forging and uttering a cheque for twenty pounds with intent to defraud'.[1] In his defence he claimed not to have known that the cheques were forged. He spent fourteen months in Pentonville Prison, north of London, before departing on the convict transport, the *Norwood*. It was not the first time that he had encountered trouble with the law, having already served a four year sentence in 1858 for the same offence, to which he pleaded guilty. Because of his previous convictions he received a fifteen year sentence, to be served in the Colony of Western Australia. When the *Norwood* sailed from Portland in April 1867, Edwin left behind his French-born wife, Emilie and their four children, Blanche (age 15), Walter (age 13), Katie (age 11) and Frederick (age 4).

The ship on which Edwin Powell was transported, the *Norwood* (Figure 2) was the second last of the forty three ships to transport convicts to Western Australia. The Swan River Colony was established as a free enterprise settlement in 1829 and was never intended to be a penal colony. However because of its geographical remoteness, harsh climate and competition with the already established colonies on the east coast of Australia, the Swan River Colony failed to attract settlers. The result of this was that capital and labour were in short supply. Although Major Lockyer had brought the first twenty three convicts with him from Sydney to establish a garrison in King George Sound (Albany) in 1826, the settlement lasted just four years before they were recalled to Sydney. In an effort to boost the population and provide the much needed labour and the capital for growth which was so badly needed, especially in the remote pastoral areas of York, the transportation of convicts was introduced.[2] The first convict ship, the *Scindian* arrived in Fremantle in 1850. Transportation had by this time ceased in the eastern colonies of Australia and the Colony of Western Australia was the only place for England to alleviate the pressure on her ever growing prison population.

Not everyone in the colony was in favour of transportation, fearing that such men would contaminate the morals of the community. Despite this 'revulsion of public feeling with regard to

the introduction of convict labour' over the course of the next eighteen years just under ten thousand convicts were brought to Western Australia.[3] By the time that transportation ended in 1868 the population of the colony had grown from 5,886 in 1850 to 24,292.[4]

Figure 2 The convict ship, *Norwood*. Photo courtesy of the Crimean War Veterans in Western Australia.

At that time prisoners with short sentences served their time in English prisons but those with sentences greater than seven years were sent to the Colony of Western Australia. Transportation, no longer acceptable to many people as a form of punishment, was coming to an end and had served its purpose of restoring 'tranquillity and order' in the mother country whilst populating the new British colony.[5] Had Edwin Powell been tried a year or two later or received a shorter sentence then he may never had been transported. He would have most likely served out his sentence in an English prison and his family would have stayed there too.

When the *Norwood* arrived in Gage Roads off Fremantle the convicts would have seen their new home, Fremantle Prison (Figure 3). Situated on a limestone ridge above the town and in prominent view from the sea, it was built of local limestone by the first contingents of convicts. It was known as the Convict Establishment or simply the Establishment until 1867, the year Edwin Powell arrived.[6] Designed by Colonel Henderson who was the first Comptroller-General

of Convicts in Western Australia, it was the longest and tallest prison cell block in the southern hemisphere. As it was based on Pentonville, the prison in England where convicts were incarcerated before transportation, the Establishment may have looked vaguely familiar to the new arrivals.[7] It was finally closed in 1991 and since 2010 it has been on the World Heritage List of global culturally significant buildings. Fremantle Prison still overlooks the town and stands as a reminder of convictism as a form of punishment in times past.

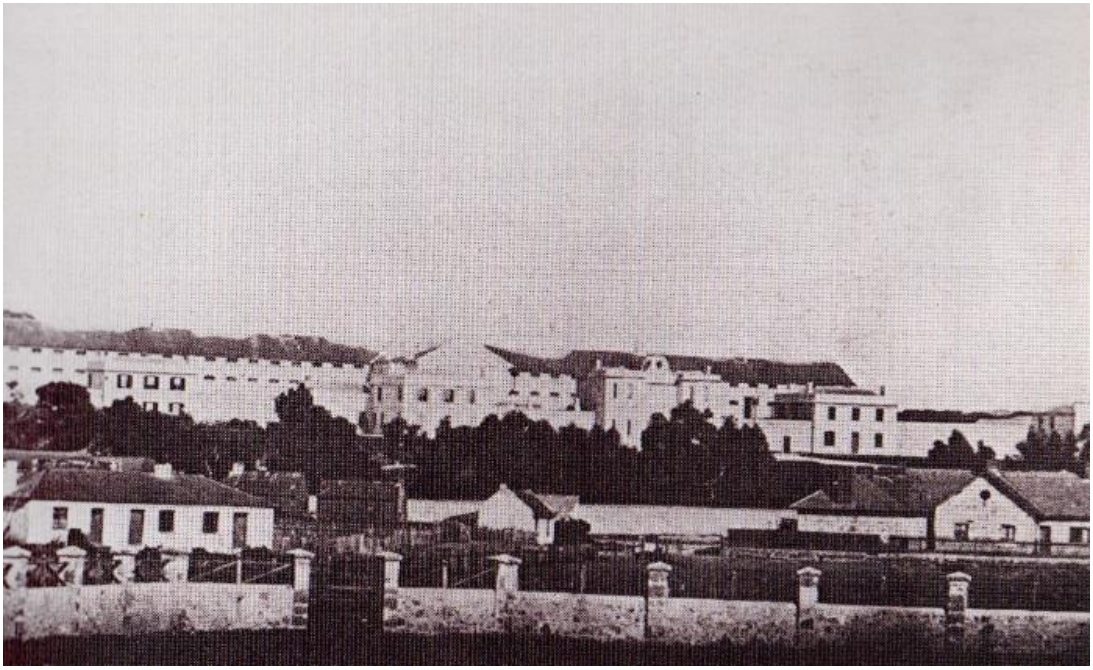


Figure 3 The Convict Establishment, Fremantle in the mid-1860s. Courtesy of Battye Library 5770B/43.

Edwin Powell was just one of two hundred and fifty four convicts on board the *Norwood* when the ship sailed in 1867 with its crew of thirty nine. There were heavy gales in the English Channel and as far as the Canary Islands which would have made the trip uncomfortable and being shut down below at night was 'a little hell'.[8] One of the convicts died of tuberculosis and there were four births in the course of the three month journey.

The *Norwood* was owned by Messrs. J.H. Luscombe of London and sailed under Captain Frank Bristow. The ship's owner, Luscombe had a long association with the colony. He was the Captain of the *Parmelia* which was the ship that brought James Stirling and the first contingent of sixty eight settlers to Western Australia in 1829. The *Perth Gazette* announced that the *Norwood* had arrived in Gage Roads off Fremantle on July 13, 1867 in 'heavy winter weather'.[9]

Also on board the *Norwood* were thirty Pensioner Guards, eighteen of whom had their wives with them and between them there were twenty nine children. Much is known about the voyage of the *Norwood* thanks to Alexandra Hasluck's book, *Unwilling Emigrants: A Study of the Convict Period in Western Australia*. Hasluck's book tells the story of William Sykes who was transported for life for the crime of manslaughter and gives a very vivid account of both life aboard the *Norwood* and the state of the colony in the late 1860s. William Sykes and Edwin Powell were the same age, both thirty nine years old at the time of their transportation but very different fates awaited them in the colony.

Because of the bad weather, the *Norwood* had to wait for the storm to abate before the crew, passengers and Pensioner Guards with their convicts were able to disembark on Sunday, 14 July. The *Perth Gazette* reported that the conduct of the prisoners on board was generally good.[10]

Convicts who were well-behaved generally obtained a Ticket of Leave well before the completion of their sentence.[11] This lessened the burden of the Colonial Government to provide for them as they could find work and provide for themselves. Educated prisoners were generally pounced on as soon as they arrived. One ex-convict, James Elphinstone Roe became one of the sub-editors of the Fremantle based newspaper, the *Herald* in the 1870s. Like Edwin Powell, James Roe was transported for forging a money order. Roe was released on a Ticket of Leave just two years after his arrival in 1862 and worked as a teacher at various schools in the colony. Despite positive reports of his performance and the support of the majority of the Greenough school community where he taught he was dismissed, probably for voicing his views about the abysmal state of the education system in Western Australia. There was a certain prejudice against ex-convicts and the social stigma generally remained with them throughout their lives. As an Oxford educated man, James Elphinstone Roe had much to contribute to the growing needs of the colony. Subsequently many of his proposals for the improvement of schools such as mandatory attendance and a system of school inspections were incorporated into the Elementary Education Act of 1871.[12]

Edwin Powell, a surveyor by profession, was also an educated man. His convict record describes him as being tall, just under six foot, with dark brown hair, hazel eyes and middling stout. He was granted his Ticket of Leave in November 1872, five years after he arrived and received a conditional pardon in 1877. Ticket of leave men were permitted to work for money and acquire property but could not leave their assigned district without the permission of the

Resident Magistrate and had few legal rights. They had to be off the streets by the time the 10 pm curfew bell sounded from the Round House.

A year before his family arrived from England, Edwin, by then aged fifty five was a free man. Having served his fifteen year sentence he received his Certificate of Freedom on the 25 February, 1881. This document was given to a convict at the end of his sentence and stated that the ex-convict had been restored 'to all the rights and privileges of free subjects' effectively now a free person, and could seek out employment or leave the colony. Edwin Powell, although he had been an 'unwilling emigrant' who had been forced by circumstances to call Western Australia home, had made the decision to stay and must have encouraged his family in England to come and join him.[13]

Building a new life was easier for people like Edwin who had an education and a talent for business. Edwin's second marriage to Frances Mary Prince in Fremantle and their two children provided stability which must have helped him settle and make a new life for himself in Fremantle, a very different fate from that of his fellow convict on the *Norwood*, William Sykes. Sykes lacked an education and was classed as a violent offender. He spent his time in hard labour building the roads around Bunbury. Even after he was granted his conditional release he laboured on the railway line between Clackline and Newcastle (Toodyay). He had a wife in England who was still alive, so he lived alone. Having taken comfort in drink, he died of chronic hepatitis in January 1891 having been found ill, helpless and alone in his hut in Newcastle (Toodyay).

Because of the high ratio of men to women in the colony, the British Government offered free passage to the wives and families of convicts to join their husbands in Western Australia. However very few of the women took advantage of this.[14] Edwin Powell's first wife was Emilie Sylvia Godet from Besancon in north east France. She died in England in the early 1870s a few years after her husband was transported to Australia. One wonders if Emilie had lived would the Powell family have perhaps not made the long and difficult journey to a foreign land on the far side of the world to join their father? Edwin and Emilie Powell had four children, Blanche, Walter, Kate and Frederick. The Powell family were living in Westerham, a town in the Sevenoaks District of Kent, England when Walter Powell was born there in 1854. Walter's sister Blanche, who came to Western Australia with him on the *Fitzroy*, was two years older than him. His only other sister Kate (Katie) was two years younger and arrived in Western Australia with

her husband Daniel Arnold in 1883, on the *Fitzroy*. Also on board the *Fitzroy* in 1883 were John Whittle, a coachbuilder and his wife Jemimah who was Walter's wife Letitia's sister. John was employed for a while by Walter Powell after he arrived in Fremantle before John and Jemimah moved to Geraldton.[15] In 1885 the youngest of the family, Frederick Arkley Powell, arrived on the ship *Aikshaw*, so all of Edwin and Emilie's children left England to be together and start a new life in the Colony of Western Australia.

In many respects Walter's father Edwin Henry was a fortunate man. The authorities in the colony had requested as a condition of accepting convicts that only men with sentences longer than seven years be transported.[16] They believed that men with short sentences would receive their freedom sooner and have the opportunity to leave. Had Edwin received a lighter sentence and remained in an English prison he would have been subject to the new penal servitude introduced in 1853 in which there was no prospect of remission for good behaviour. In Western Australia then, as an educated man Edwin Powell had opportunities to make a new life for himself and was destined to be a successful colonist. Convicts who were literate and apparently 'respectable' white-collar, non-violent offenders from British middle-class society had the opportunity to wipe the slate clean and start again.[17]

Once free to work for himself Edwin Powell found employment as an accountant and clerk in Fremantle. In the early 1870s he was working as a commission agent to a sandalwood trader named McGibbon.[18] On the 26 March, 1875 Edwin married a second time to Frances Mary Prince at the Fremantle Congregational Church. Frances, a dressmaker from London, had arrived in Fremantle aboard the *Hastings* just ten days before she and Edwin were married, so they most likely were already known each other or were long time family friends. Edwin and Frances lived in Norfolk Street, Fremantle where one year later on 14 March, 1876 Frank Edmond Powell was born. Another baby, a daughter named Grace Eveleen Powell arrived on the 14 May, 1882.

By 1893 Edwin who was residing and employed at the Stanley Hotel in Bannister Street, Fremantle applied for a license to sell wine and beer.[19] The Stanley Hotel, which he was leasing from Cornelius Glasson had eight bedrooms and five sitting rooms. It appears to have been a fairly rough sort of hotel and attracted the attention of the local police on many occasions. In 1894 at the age of sixty seven, Edwin Henry Powell was employed as a deputy bailiff of the Fremantle Local Court.[19] Having made a successful life in Fremantle he was in a position to nominate his family and sponsor them as migrants. He may have encouraged them to join him

and avail of the opportunities to prosper, as he had done, in the colony. He died in Fremantle in May 1898 at the age of seventy one and was survived by his wife Frances Mary Powell who died in 1911.

Edwin's son Walter Powell was also and educated man. A few weeks prior to his arrival in Fremantle the following advertisement (Figure 4) appeared in the *Herald*.[20]

WANTED by an Englishman to arrive per "Fitzroy," any kind of Mercantile employment. Age 27, married—references produced from first houses in London. Qualifications. French, German, Greek; bookeeping, correspondence, general clerical duties, music &c.
Apply, P.H.W.
"Herald" Office,
Fremantle.
June 7th, 1882.

Figure 4 *Herald* advertisement, 7 June, 1882.

Although we don't know for certain that this was Walter Powell, the description certainly fits. He was at the time twenty seven, married and worked as an accountant in Fremantle after he arrived. Walter's wife Charlotte Maria Powell, known throughout her life as Letitia was born on 18 August, 1854 at St. Pancreas, Middlesex, England to Richard and Jane Warren. Walter and Letitia were married in Haverton Hill, Durham, on 6 October, 1877 when they were both twenty three years old.[21] They had five children. The eldest Walter Richard Edwin (b.1880) was the only one born in England and at the age of two travelled to Western Australia with them on the *Fitzroy*. The other four children were born after they arrived in the colony. They were George Frederick (b.1887), Charlotte Gertrude, known as Lottie (b. 1889), Frank Warren (b. 1894) and Florence Amy, born in 1897.[22]

Blanche Powell, Walters's older sister never married and remained close to Walter. She moved to Coogee with the family in 1888 after working as a dressmaker and helping out in the family run fancy goods store in Fremantle. She was 'very charitably disposed and affectionately regarded by a large circle of friends'.[23] Later on Blanche was the Postmistress at the Coogee Post

Office and Store which she ran with her brother Frederick until she retired in 1927. She died in 1937 at the age of eighty seven having outlived all her siblings.[24]

CHAPTER 3

THE FANCY GOODS MERCHANT OF FREMANTLE

Walter Powell and his family lost no time in settling into their new life in the colony. Five months after he arrived, Walter was importing 'fancy goods' which he sold from premises in Queen Street, Fremantle (Figure 5). The store which he leased from the prominent businessman and ship-owner Captain William Owston was located opposite the newly consecrated St John's Church in King's Square.[1] On the 16 November, 1882 he applied for a license to sell 'wine beer and other fermented liquors, the produce of the colony' at his store in Queen Street where he lived with his wife and young son. He was also managing the business of Wilson and Foley, wine and spirit merchants in Fremantle.[2]

QUEEN STREET, FREMANTLE,

(*Formerly "Miss Lloyds."*

WALTER POWELL,

DESIRES respectfully to announce that he has on sale at the above address, a first rate assortment of TOYS, MIRRORS, BRACKETS, and USELUL FANCY NOVELTIES. Just imported from England, per P. & O. Steamer, also some good lines in DRAPERY, Hosiery, and Haberdashery &c., which he is offering at exceedingly low prices for cash. An early inspection of the same is solicited. A good stock of Groceries, Oilmens stores &c., &c. always on hand, also Ginger Beer in cask or bottle.

Figure 5 The *Herald* advertised goods for sale at Powell's Queen Street store on Saturday 17 March, 1883.

From his store in the heart of Fremantle Walter Powell would witness the growth in prosperity of the port town. Less than sixty years had elapsed since Captain Charles Fremantle, without regard to the fact that the land was already occupied by the Whadjuk Noongar people, had hoisted the flag on Arthur Head, a place that was known before European settlement as Manjaree. By re-naming and subsequently mapping the area, the whole of the west coast of New Holland, as it was known at the time, was claimed for His Majesty, King George IV. The Swan

River Colony, under the command of the Scottish naval officer, James Stirling, was founded on the basis of a land grant system. Land ownership being a powerful motivating force, new settlers were enticed half way around the world to start a new life in a far off land. Stirling who arrived on 2 June, 1829 aboard the *Parmelia* with the first contingent of sixty eight settlers had conceived the idea of a free settlement to claim, as he saw it, the unoccupied western half of New Holland.[3] More settlers quickly followed as reports of 'Swan River Mania' reached England but because of the isolation, lack of fresh food, outbreaks off scurvy and dysentery, sandflies and initial disappointment with the fertility of the soil, word eventually got back to London and the trickle of new settlers slowed.[4] Of those remaining in the colony, many took to drink and lawlessness prevailed. Just prior to the Powell's arrival, Fremantle in the late 1870s was described as consisting of:

> one principal street made up of hotels and stores and a few Government buildings, including the Imperial convict depot, a lighthouse and a number of private dwellings all glaring in whitewash. A few churches made up an apparently sleepy but really flourishing township, which might be described as a city of public houses, flies, sand, limestone, convicts and stacks of sandalwood.[5]

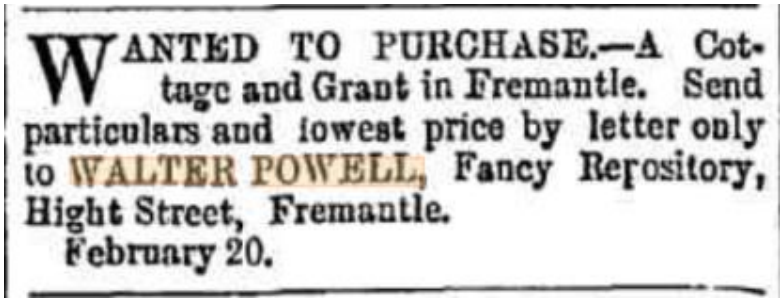
This then was the town to which Walter Powell and his family arrived in the early 1880s to start a new life. Western Australia was still a remote outpost of the British Empire whose main exports were sandalwood, wool, horses and pearl shell.[6] The population of the colony at the time was just over 31,000 which was less than two percent of the total European population of Australia at the time.[7] Fremantle, the gateway to the colony, was still a small port town with a population of around four thousand inhabitants.

Things were starting to change however as mining, pastoralism and pearling were taking off in the North West regions of the Kimberley and Pilbara. Following the completion of the rail line between Fremantle and Guildford, government stores and workshops were constructed in Fremantle in 1886 and this boosted the business of the port town.[8] The Federal Hotel and the Fremantle Town Hall were both completed in 1887. Shops and offices such as the Higham's Buildings lined Market Street, today's popular 'cappuccino strip' and the new St John's Church in King's Square was consecrated just days after the Powell family arrived.

As business picked up in Fremantle there was money to be made in the 'fancy goods' trade. In December 1885 just three years after setting up his business in Queen Street, Walter Powell announced the opening of new enlarged premises at High Street. There was a shop on the corner of Market Street and High Street which housed the National Bank of Australasia, Fremantle's first bank (Figure 6).[9.]

Figure 6 High Street Fremantle in 1895, looking west to the Round House. The National Hotel from which Walter Powell operated his business is on the right of the photo. The Long Jetty can be seen at the top of the photo on the left. Courtesy of Fremantle History Centre.

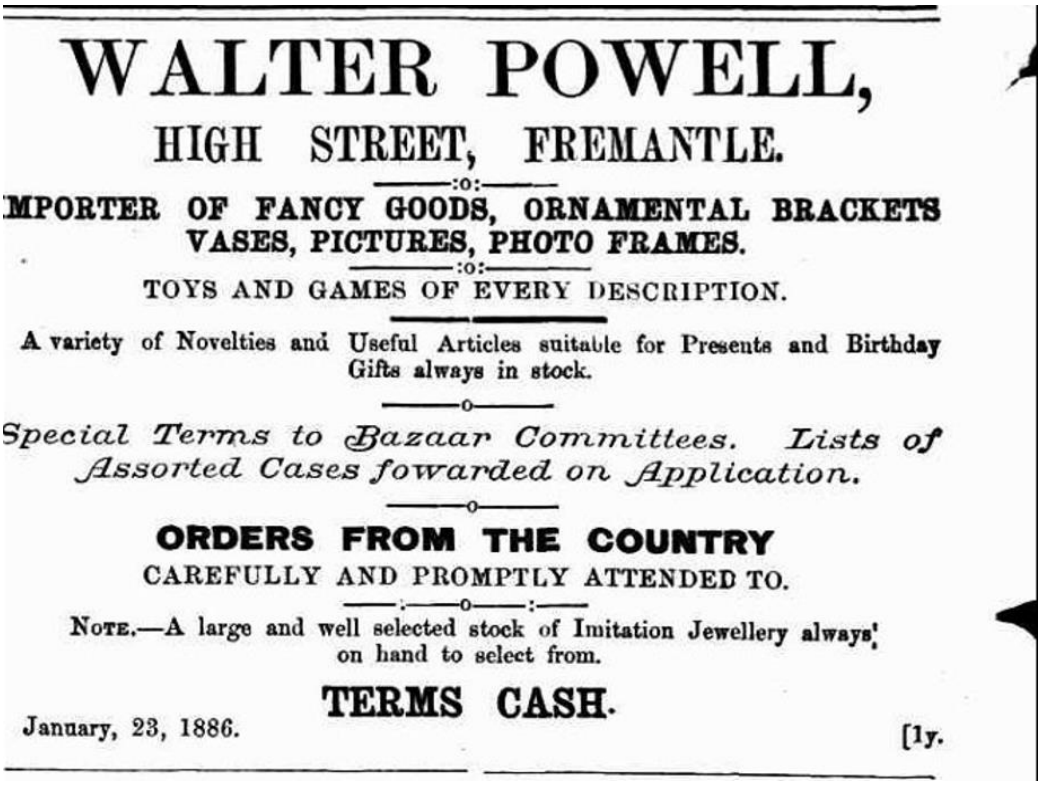
When the bank moved further down High Street to new premises in 1886, Walter Powell leased the building from J. J. 'Jack' Higham, a well-known local businessman. From 1886 until 1890 the Powell family lived and worked in these premises which consisted of a store and three rooms.[10] The living space may have been a bit crowded for the growing family and Walter Powell was on the lookout for a new home (Figure 7). Two more children had been born to Walter and Letitia since the family arrived in Fremantle; George Frederick was born in 1887 and Charlotte Gertrude (Lottie) arrived in 1889.



WANTED TO PURCHASE.—A Cottage and Grant in Fremantle. Send particulars and lowest price by letter only to WALTER POWELL, Fancy Repository, Hight Street, Fremantle.
February 20.

Figure 7 Advertisement in the *Herald* on 27 February, 1886.

As well as selling 'fancy goods' (Figure 8) the store was also a depot for the sale of bibles in several languages for the British and Foreign Bible Society, whose purpose was to distribute the bible as far and wide as possible.[11] The National Bank building was extensively remodeled in 1895, with more floors added and it was turned into a hotel. Despite the notoriety of its first landlord, William Conroy who was hanged for shooting Councilor John Snook at the opening celebration of the Town Hall in 1887, the hotel survived through various owners and disasters and is still operating after 125 years as the popular National Hotel.[12]



WALTER POWELL,
HIGH STREET, FREMANTLE.
IMPORTER OF FANCY GOODS, ORNAMENTAL BRACKETS VASES, PICTURES, PHOTO FRAMES.
TOYS AND GAMES OF EVERY DESCRIPTION.
A variety of Novelties and Useful Articles suitable for Presents and Birthday Gifts always in stock.
Special Terms to Bazaar Committees. Lists of Assorted Cases fowarded on Application.
ORDERS FROM THE COUNTRY
CAREFULLY AND PROMPTLY ATTENDED TO.
NOTE.—A large and well selected stock of Imitation Jewellery always on hand to select from.
TERMS CASH.
January, 23, 1886. [1y.

Figure 8 Advertisement for Walter Powell's new High Street premises, 1886.

The change in the appearance of Fremantle accelerated even more when commercial quantities of gold were found in the Kimberley, Southern Cross and the Yilgarn districts in the late 1880s and early 1890s. These finds boosted the economic growth that Western Australia so desperately needed to survive.[13] As news of the first gold discoveries were starting to filter through, adventurous miners and speculators arrived from overseas and the eastern colonies in the hope of finding their fortune. Many of the 't'othersiders, especially from the colony of Victoria which was in a state of economic depression in the 1890s, entered through the port of Fremantle.[14] The local townspeople and merchants began to realise the future possibilities of prosperity as the new arrivals swelled the population, thus creating new opportunities for growth. By 1903, Australia had become the world's largest producer of gold, half of which came from Western Australia. Gold overtook wool and timber and comprised eighty eight per cent of the total export income of Western Australia. Albert Calvert, a mining engineer who visited many times during the 1890s described the effect of the' Roaring Nineties' on the inhabitants of the colony in his book *My Fourth Tour in Western Australia:*

> The air in Perth is full of the yellow fever. Its germs, in the shape of talk of reefs, leases, claims, yields, trial crushings, camels, syndicates, stocks and Company flotations, are as thick as a London fog … It is impossible to speak for two minutes with anybody, from a Cabinet Minister to a cow-minder, without referring to the omnipotent subject that lies closest to the hearts of all.

This new found wealth enabled the government of Western Australia to raise loans in London to finance public works such as Fremantle harbour and the Kalgoorlie water pipeline. The amount of money spent on railways also increased substantially resulting in the construction of a railway line across the Darling Ranges and south from Beverley to Albany.[15] There were now jobs to be found in the works programs put in place under the Premier, Sir John Forrest as the Fremantle harbour, the Mundaring weir, the Kalgoorlie pipeline and a comprehensive railway network to link the newly established townships were put in place. Charles Yelverton O'Connor, whose contributions to the colony is legendary, arrived from New Zealand with his large family and was appointed to the position of Engineer-in-Chief to begin planning for a much needed new harbour at Fremantle.

The influx of new settlers influenced not just the economic life of the colony but also its cultural, social and political life. The opening of the harbour made Fremantle a much more cosmopolitan place than it had been in times past and the expansion of rail and telegraph lines allowed the unprecedented movement of people and ideas. In Fremantle the population almost trebled from 5607 to 14704 in the ten years between 1891 and 1901.[16] With the growth in prosperity of the local merchants the town of Fremantle had started to grow and by 1892 it was said that the 'sweetest indication of prosperity is the almost weekly additions to the architecture of Fremantle'.[17] No longer a 'land of sand, sin sorrow and sore eyes' the colony was starting to thrive as the effects of the discovery of gold started to be felt. Some new grand houses belonging to the Fremantle elite, the 'merchant princes' as they were called, appeared on the higher ground surrounding the town as their wealth grew.[18] Walter Powell a hardworking, ambitious and enterprising man arrived in Fremantle at a fortuitous time.

Before the gold rush the colony, small and isolated from the rest of the world was still quite socially conservative. May Vivienne, a widow and opera singer who travelled extensively in Western Australia in 1899 wrote in her book how Australians still thought of dear mother England as 'home'.[19] However a sense of national pride and separate identity was developing as the proportion of the population born in Australia increased. By 1901 sixty nine percent of the population of Western Australia were Australian born, although many were 't'othersiders from the Eastern colonies. Society was very much male dominated as men outnumbered women by two to one and forty percent of the population were under fifteen years of age.[20] The editor of the *West Australian* reported a 'strong and growing disposition to be impatient with the old settler element in the colony'.[21] From the beginning of settlement in Fremantle the powerful merchant families had dominated the commercial life of the town. By the 1890s criticism of the patriarchy in the local papers was becoming more prevalent as the old values of a subservient society crumbled, especially in Fremantle where the 'tight little merchant community' who had held power and privilege for the last three decades of the nineteenth century had their authority questioned for the first time.[22] Although the colony had a Legislative Council of elected men since representative government was introduced in 1870, it was still effectively an 'exclusive debating society'.[23] Prior to this between the years 1829 and 1870 the Governor had sole power and reported directly to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London. Western Australians

were starting to assert themselves and wanted a greater say in the politics of the day and a more democratic society.

The period immediately after the Powell's arrival was marked by agitation for self-government. There were signs that the colony was maturing and had grown sufficiently large to manage its own political affairs when it was granted responsible government in 1890, marking the end of the colonial period. Sir John Forrest, who was born at Bunbury, was the first Premier. Both Walter and his father Edwin had signed petitions which were supportive of this move to self-government.[24] In Fremantle the granting of responsible government was celebrated with the planting of the Moreton Bay fig at the intersection of Adelaide Street and Parry (formerly Edward) Street. The tree was planted by His Excellency the Governor, Sir William Robinson using a gold plated spade which disappeared following the ceremony.[25] The Proclamation Tree (Figure 9) as it is known is still there and the port of Fremantle has grown be a thriving and vibrant city and a 'place of consequence' as predicted by Captain Fremantle himself when he visited the colony a few years after it was established.[26]

Figure 9 The Proclamation Tree in 2020. Photo by author.

Fremantle was the first town in Western Australia to have its own water supply and Perth and Fremantle were by the 1890s connected by the telephone[27]. However there was still much work

to be done and diseases were prevalent. In 1883 just a year after the Powell family arrived there was a measles outbreak in the colony. Mortality among adults was very heavy especially in Fremantle and the outbreak nearly wiped out the remnant of the Aboriginal population in the district according to a report by the Colonial Surgeon, Dr. Alfred Waylen.[28] Sanitation in the late nineteenth century was sadly lacking and cases of typhoid were common. The findings of a government commission of the state of Fremantle in the mid-1880s was damning on the state of the port city. Waylen's report documented how the baker's yard on High Street was 'covered in large pools of animal filth and sewage, and the cesspit … smelling very foul, the well here is within fifteen yards of the cesspit' while the cleaning out of another domestic cesspit in Pakenham Street 'occupied the time of one man for three weeks, working every night'. The dire conditions of sanitation, probably no different to many port towns and cities at the time, were not improved until after 1901 when bubonic plague arrived in Fremantle on ships coming from Sydney. This resulted in the Municipal Government and the Central Board of Health making vast improvements in the infrastructure of the town which resulted in better, more hygienic living conditions for the locals.

As the winds of change were blowing through Fremantle, changes were also in store for Walter Powell and his family. The *Daily News* reported on Tuesday 23 June, 1891 that the 'Unreserved Sale of Toys and Fancy Goods' was to be held at the Oddfellows Hall, in William Street, Fremantle. Walter Powell, proprietor of the Fancy Repository on High Street was retiring from the trade. The auction included glass show cases, rocking horses, model sailing yachts, toy horses, horses and carts, wheelbarrows, cricket ware, footballs, wood and tin tops, ornaments, desks, work boxes, vases, toilet sets, pictures and much more.

The Powell family was moving south to Coogee, or as it was known at the time, the Four Mile Well, on the old Rockingham Road (now Cockburn Road) to start a new life. While we don't know why Walter Powell decided to retire from his business, which appears to have been thriving, perhaps the timing was right. The National Bank building, which was both his home and store, was owned by J. J. Higham. It was sold in 1891, extensively renovated and new floors added to become the National Hotel. Also, the Powell family was entitled to land. As part of the assisted migration scheme under which they arrived, each adult immigrant was, after two year's residence, entitled to select up to fifty acres of the unimproved Crown lands. In August 1890, Walters's wife Letitia Powell took possession of Cockburn Sound location 417.[29] Walter's sister

Blanche bought an adjoining block, number 418, and moved with them to Coogee (Figure 10).

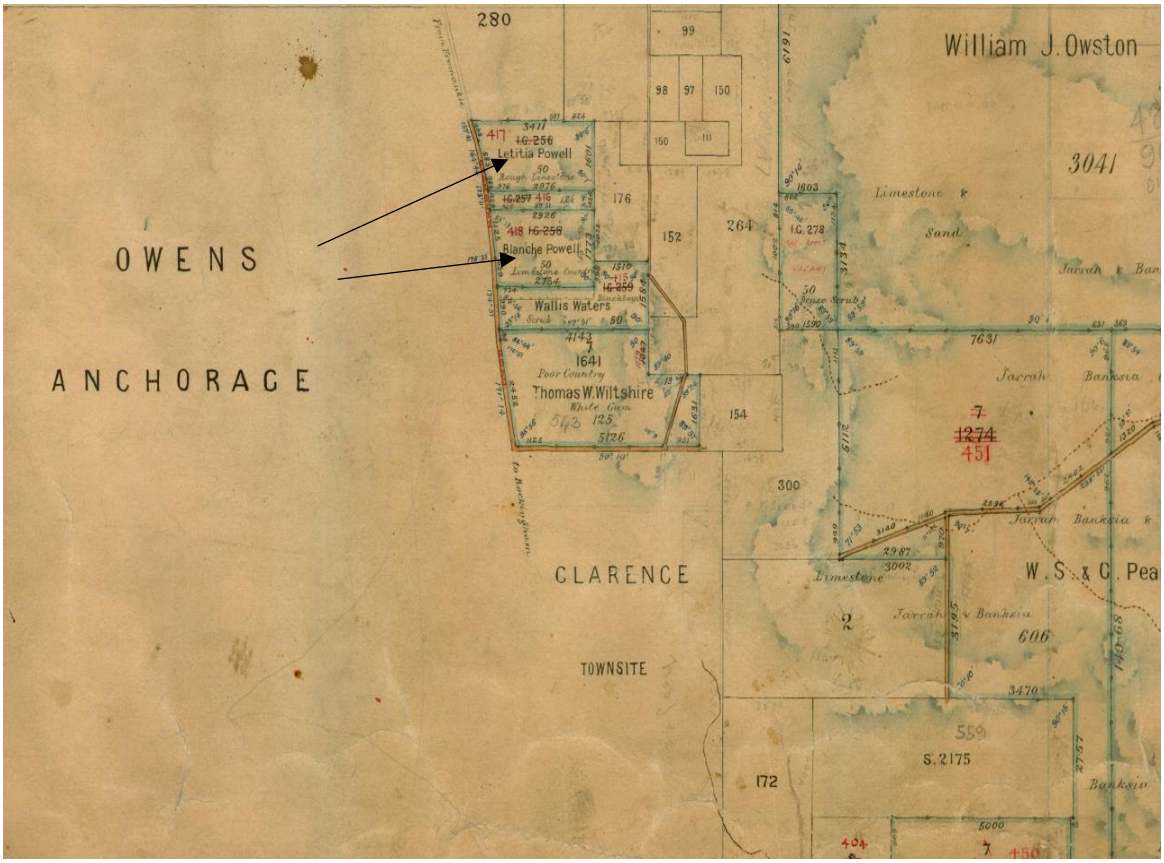


Figure 10 The Powell family land grant at Coogee. Lot 417 is in Letitia's name and Lot 418 belonged to Walter's sister Blanche Powell. Thomas Wiltshire to the south of the Powells arrived with them on the *Fitzroy*. Courtesy of City of Cockburn Library.

Walter continued to work as an accountant with Higham & Sons for some time and commuted between his home at Coogee and Fremantle. A few years later however he left the Higham's employment to concentrate on developing the Coogee Hotel. The *West Australian* reported on Tuesday 18 June, 1895 that:

> A very pleasant gathering of the members of the firm and employees of Messrs. M. Higham & Sons was held at the office of the firm Fremantle, on Friday evening last, to bid farewell to Mr. Walter Powell, who, after a service of some eleven or twelve years, is now severing his connection with the firm. Mr. T. Abbott, on behalf of the firm and employees, presented Mr. Powell with some very handsome souvenirs, and

> expressed the sincere regret of all concerned that circumstances over which they had no control compelled them to part with such an old and valued servant, who had always given them the greatest satisfaction. The health of Mr. Powell having been drunk with due honours, the company dispersed, Mr. Powell taking with him the best wishes of all.

Apart from running his Fremantle business, Walter was also a member of the Fremantle District Roads Board from 1887 to 1900 and acted as Chairman for six of those years from 1893 to 1899. He was also appointed to be the Road Board delegate to the Fremantle District Board of Education which looked after the interests of the local Coogee school.[30] The Fremantle District Roads Board was gazetted in December 1871 when the Municipalities and Local Roads Boards Act was passed by the Legislative Council.[31] The Act gave some measure of power to the local Road Boards which were the forerunners of the Shire Councils we have today. Originally the Fremantle District Roads Board was responsible for roads and bridges in an area which stretched from the Swan River at Fremantle south to Rockingham and east to Bull Creek, an area of two hundred square miles. By the time that Walter Powell became Chairman of the Board in 1893 the size of the district under the control of Board was greatly reduced, as the Jandakot area developed in its own right and formed its own road board.[32] It was hoped that the development of new roads would open up the area and attract settlers to the district with the aim of increasing the population and developing the land.

The Roads Board was also responsible for the maintenance of wells, one of which was the Four Mile Well, essential to stock in the days when horse drawn vehicles were the norm. Although the Board received some money from the Government it relied on revenue collected for cart and dog licenses and was hampered by a constant lack of funds.[33] The Board members comprised mostly of leading Fremantle businessmen, who were also major land owners in the Road Board area, so they were reluctant to introduce rates, which was a tax on land.[34] The issue was resolved by Lucius Manning, owner of the vast property of the Davilak Estate, centered on what is now Manning Park to the south of Fremantle, who suggested that the cost of cart licenses be doubled, which brought the issue to a conclusion.

Walter Powell, set on developing his wife's property at the Four Mile Well, was not shy in using his position as Chairman of the Fremantle District Roads Board to aid his cause. The

Inquirer and Commercial News reported on Friday 11 September, 1896 that at the monthly meeting of the Board, Chairman Walter Powell and the Board approved the 'construction of 10 chains of Powell Road near the Four-Mile Well' at a cost of fifty pounds. Powell Road is still there today opposite the old Coogee Hotel and gives access to Coogee Beach. The Fremantle District Roads Board was the forerunner of the Cockburn Town Council, now known as the City of Cockburn.[35]

Three years later in 1899 Walter Powell and other Board members were accused of using their position on the Roads Board to serve their own interests in relation to the development of Russell Road to the south of Coogee.[36] An angry Jandakot settler suggested that it would be more appropriate to call the Fremantle District Roads Board the Coogee Roads Board as the members were preoccupied with ensuring that the traffic be diverted so as to pass the Coogee Hotel at the expense of the development of the inland Forrest Road, which was the more direct route from Jandakot to Fremantle and would serve more usefully the settlers of the area. However by this time Walter's main focus of attention was on the development of his hotel at Coogee and at a Board meeting held on the 6 June, 1899 he resigned his position on the Fremantle District Road Board.[37]

CHAPTER 4

THE OLD ROCKINGHAM ROAD IN THE 1890S

Walter Powell, having retired from the fancy goods trade and freed himself from his work commitments in Fremantle concentrated his energies on developing his wife's property at the Four-Mile Well on the Rockingham Road (present day Cockburn Road). The Four-Mile well and the road that led to it was European in origin but most likely had ancient Aboriginal precursors as the Noongar people moved up and down the coast between the estuaries and water sources. The original road is marked on an 1831 survey of the Cockburn Sound District as the Fremantle and Clarence Road. Over the years the road was gradually improved, first by convicts in 1853 then again in 1871 in the first year of operation of the Fremantle District Roads Board.[1] The *Herald* reported on Saturday 5 August, 1871 that a trip was made by a newly arrived Thompson's Road Steamer, property of the Rockingham Timber Company, from Fremantle to the Four Mile Well and back with complete success, much to the astonishment of the locals.

When the Powell family moved to Coogee there was already a small building at the Four Mile Well belonging to the Roads Board, which was later developed and improved to become the Coogee Hotel.[2] At that time the road was still just a rough bush track. The *Inquirer and Commercial News* reported on Wednesday 14 July, 1886 that it continued to receive complaints about the condition of the road between Albert's Piggery in South Fremantle and the Four Mile Well, where several vehicles, possibly heavily laden carts heading to the markets at Fremantle had recently come to grief. In those days the road or track was frequently in danger of disappearing under sand drift, a common problem in the coastal areas from the early days of the colony.[3]

The journey between Fremantle and Coogee in the late 1880s and early 1890s must have been an interesting experience. As the road left Fremantle heading south towards home, Walter would have passed Albert's Piggery which was located on the old Rockingham Road near the junction with modern day Clontarf Road. It was one of the many piggeries in the area at that time and was home to Afghan cameleers who had arrived from Karachi in October 1887, as part of a consignment of three hundred camels and forty four cameleers.[4] Although camels had been used in Eastern Australia by early explorers such as Burke and Wills in 1860, their use as a pack animal was not initially appreciated in Western Australia. The first load of camels were brought

out speculatively and a camel sale in Beaconsfield in 1887 attracted many spectators but few buyers.[5] Consequently there was not a lot of work for the Afghan men and they found themselves living in dire circumstances. Some of the cameleers were sent out to cut wood around Hamilton Hill and others were asked to work in the piggery, which must have been difficult for them as Muslims from what was at the time British India. By January 1888, as they were unable to get food, the starving and destitute men resorted to fighting among themselves.[6] Meer Dost Khan's Company were responsible for them and wanted to repatriate them to Karachi. However the men wanted to go to South Australia where camels had been used since the 1840s and there was work to be had. After a court hearing by Resident Magistrate Fairbairn it was agreed that rations could be issued to the men to prevent them from starving to death. An attempt was made to find work for them locally as the government was unable to afford the transport cost of repatriation. As for Albert's Piggery moves were afoot by 1895 by the ratepayers of Fremantle's south ward to remove noxious industries from the area in order to beautify it.[7]

Eventually as the gold rush took off in Western Australia the value of the camel as a pack animal was realised and many more were imported from Karachi and South Australia. So many arrived that the quarantine facilities at Woodman Point were at full capacity and the surplus animals were moved to Davilak Estate, the Manning family estate since 1866 (Figure 11). For three years the Manning's property was used for camel camps.[8] The hastily built fencing was less than adequate and some camels escaped their quarantine paddocks to settle down at night to sleep on the cool limestone of Rockingham Road (now Cockburn Road). Many a traveler's horse shied in fright as the grumpy camels bellowed at being disturbed from their sleep by an unwary late night rider on their way home from Fremantle.[9] Having participated in their own demise by transporting the materials used in the building of railways, the camels were no longer needed and were let loose in the bush where they thrived. Consequently Western Australia is now home to the largest herd of feral camels in the world and has almost half of Australia's feral camel population.[10]

In 1896 Davilak Estate was the scene of a murder when an Afghan cameleer, Abdul Hoosin, was found dead at Lampey's Hollow. The ensuing police investigation and inquest identified the murderer far too late because by the time they put two and two together the culprit, a fellow Afghan, had fled to Karachi and Abdul Hoosin's murderer was never brought to justice.

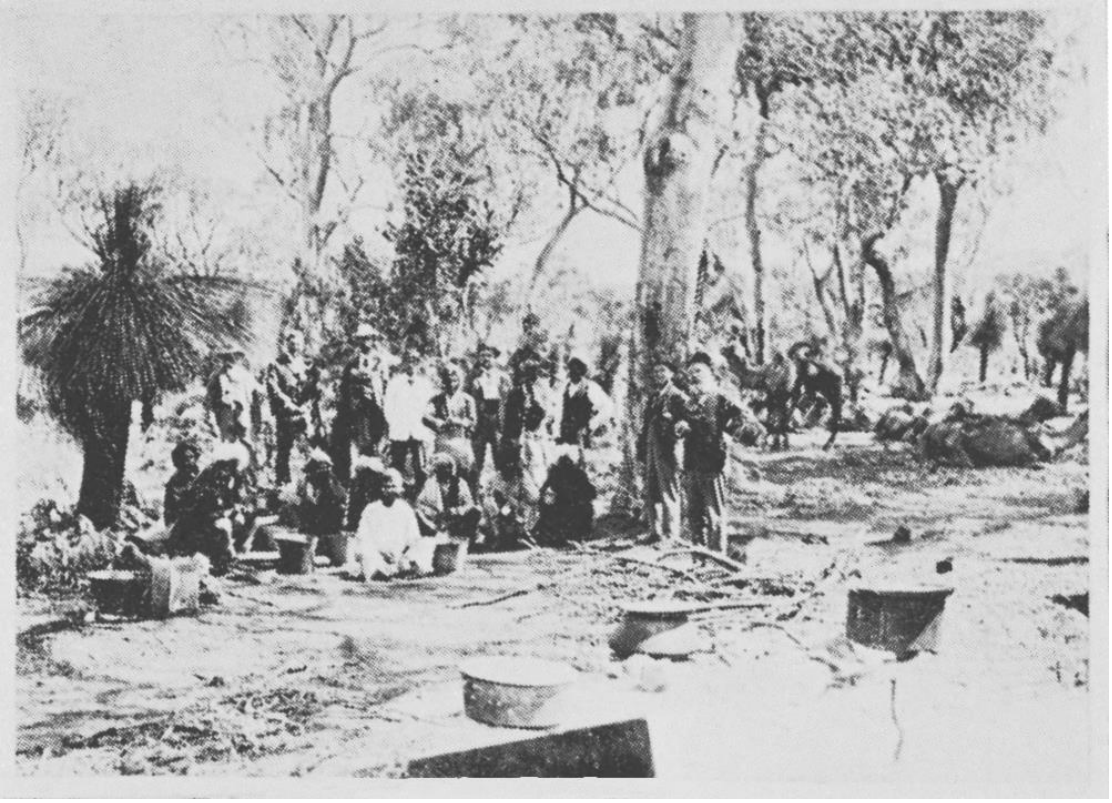


Figure 11 Camel Camp at Davilak, 1897. Courtesy of City of Cockburn Library.

Also near Albert's piggery there was a native camp where Aboriginal men who were well known to the locals of Fremantle were living:

> in a most pitiable condition, suffering from influenza and no one to give them relief. The neglect shown now to these unfortunate people, although ample public provision has been made for them, is a positive scandal to the country.[11]

The men may have been Aboriginal shepherds who worked in the Cockburn area in the 1860s and 1870s. As the north of Western Australia was being developed by pastoralists the Aboriginal men came into conflict with the new settlers over access to land. As a result of this many of them were seen as troublemakers and were brought south and imprisoned on Rottnest Island. When they were released from prison, being a long way from their home in the north, they were left to fend for themselves. Lacking the means to return to their native lands, some of the men, too old or ill to make the journey home, settled in bush humpies in the area to the south of Fremantle.[12]

Just past Albert's piggery Walter Powell would have passed by the Fremantle Smelting Works which was established in 1898 near Island Street to process the ore from the mines at Kalgoorlie. Belching out thick, black smoke, the pollution from the Smelting Works was the subject of many letters of complaint to the Fremantle District Roads Board.[13]

Further south at Robb Jetty, then known as Owen Anchorage Jetty, Walter's journey towards home would take him past the slaughter houses of Forrest, Emanuel and Co. and Connor, Doherty and Durack who supplied the people of the colony with their meat. This conglomerate, known as the 'Kimberley Meat Ring' had a monopoly on the meat trade as they owned the pastoral stations in the North West.

The Owen Anchorage Jetty was first built in 1877 to cater for the sailing ships arriving with cargoes of jarrah and sandalwood from the southwest of the state.[14] While suitable for sailing ships, the water was too shallow to allow for the larger steamships to dock. The arrival of steamships coincided with the development of the Kimberley region as a cattle grazing region, and in 1887 the first steamship, the *Australind*, arrived at Owen Anchorage with twenty nine bullocks from Fortescue and fifty sheep from Cossack. Until the jetty was extended in 1894, swimming cattle ashore was the only way to get them off the ships at Robb Jetty.[15] The cattle were slid down greased chutes and had to be swum ashore, guided by men on horseback. This occasionally led to loss of the cattle through drowning or shark attacks, so offloading of the cattle at the jetty was a huge improvement for all involved, not least the animals (Figure 12).

The land surrounding the jetty was used for quarantine and grazing the animals before slaughter. Before the age of refrigeration - Fremantle Freezing Works didn't open until 1921 - the whole area from the Newmarket Hotel in South Fremantle to Coogee and inland as far as the Davilak Estate and south to Lake Coogee was used to pasture cattle and sheep before slaughter.[16] With so many animals in the area accidents were not uncommon and driving cattle through the busy streets of Fremantle was less than ideal. In the early 1890s a man was killed when a bullock being driven through Fremantle rushed at him and knocked him down.

Figure 12 Cattle at Robb Jetty and ships in Owen Anchorage in 1890. Courtesy of Fremantle History Centre.

As well as the slaughter houses at Robb Jetty there was a bone mill, a blood manure factory and skin-drying sheds which were there until the 1990s. Robb Jetty survived until 1975 when it was finally demolished and all that remains today are some of the sections of the jetty pylons which can be seen in the shallow water. Of the abattoir only the tall red chimney remains, the buildings having been demolished in 1994.

Looking west out to sea in the early 1890s, Walter Powell would have seen many tall-masted sailing ships anchored in Owen Anchorage, which provided safe anchorage for ships in the days before Fremantle harbour was opened in 1897.[17] The whole area must have been a bustling, noisy, dusty and smelly place. There would also have been men busy at work on the railway from Fremantle to Robb Jetty, which was being constructed at the time and opened 1898. Next to the slaughterhouses there was an explosive's magazine where the dynamite which was used in the mining industry was stored. In 1903 the magazine was moved south to Woodman Point following an explosion which resulted in the night watchman, Thomas Whelan being blown to pieces.[18]

Further south on the east side of the track Walter Powell would have passed the Manning family property, known as the Davilak Estate.[19] The estate (Figure 13) which stretched from

South Fremantle as far as the Coogee Hotel was established on land that Charles Alexander Manning had bought from George Robb in 1860. The twelve room house was built by convicts and was home to the Manning family. At the time it was run by Alfred Manning and his sisters Azelia and Olive and their young brother Lucius Manning. Olive later married C.Y. O'Connor's son, Frank and Azelia married John 'Jack' Morgan Ley, a customs officer, in 1900 at Davilak House, the remains of which can still be seen in Manning Park.[20] Azelia Ley built a new house to the north of Davilak House which was completed in 1923 and is now the Azelia Ley Homestead Museum. Azelia, widowed in 1927 lived there until her death in 1954.

Figure 13 Davilak Estate, (now Manning Park) in 1900. Courtesy of City of Cockburn Library.

Finally Walter Powell would have arrived home to the Four Mile Well where his wife Letitia, and the children were waiting for him. At the time Letitia, as well as caring for the family, was operating tea rooms and making a living selling light refreshments to the travellers on the road, no doubt helped out by her sister-in-law, Blanche and the older children.

As Walter approached Coogee, the low scrub gave way to taller trees which met overhead reminding one of a 'pretty English lane'.[21] At Coogee the sweep of sandy beach along which the swell of the Indian Ocean carelessly beats was 'pretty and restful'. It was, according to Walter Powell, with its fresh sea breezes, one of the healthiest places in the world. Fish, poultry, fruit and vegetables were plentiful. Vines did well along the limestone ridge and a bottle of Coogee wine, although made by hand and less than two years old was most acceptable.[22]

Coogee or the Four Mile Well, although only four miles from Fremantle, was still a lonely and isolated place though. Men sometimes camped in the thick bush near the well, especially those who wished to avoid the attention of the local police. One such man was a fugitive named Jarvis, who managed to evade the law by camping near the Four Mile Well in 1888 before being eventually captured.[23]

CHAPTER 5

EARLY SETTLERS OF THE COOGEE AREA

Before the Powell family and the other European settlers moved to the Coogee district in the 1880s there had been several attempts made to populate the area. The district was first surveyed in the 1830s by the colony's Assistant Surveyor, Thomas H.C. Sutherland.[1] One of the earliest European settlers was Thomas Peel, an English land speculator with an ambitious plan to invest in the transportation of people, equipment and animals and establish a settlement in the colony.[2] Peel arrived from England on the ship, *Gilmore* on the 15 December, 1829 with the first one hundred and eighty two settlers (Figure 14). Arriving too late to claim one of the much sought after land grants on the Swan River, Thomas Peel settled for land in the vicinity of Woodman Point just to the south of the Four Mile Well. He named the place Clarence and developed the coastal track to Fremantle to widen it and make it fit for horse and carts as part of his 'location duties', which at the time required that settlers had to improve their land within three years of taking possession.[3]

Two more of Thomas Peel's ships arrived carrying the next contingents of settlers, first the *Hooghly* in February 1830 then the *Rockingham*, the last of Peel's ships arrived in May 1830. The venture was flawed for many reasons and ultimately it was a failure for Thomas Peel and the unfortunate people who had arrived so early on in the settlement of Western Australia. Geographically, Woodman Point was not a good choice for Peel as the poor soil, lack of food, water and appropriate shelter not to mention the presence of disease doomed the project from the start. Thomas Peel, partially because of the hurried nature with which arrangements were made, was ill-prepared for the difficulties that he faced in this new land, so different from the lush, green fields of his home in Lancashire, England. Winter had already set in as the last ship the *Rockingham* arrived in Cockburn Sound. The ship was driven on shore near Rockingham in a fierce north westerly gale, giving the township of Rockingham its name.[4] Peel left the area to take up land further south in what is now Mandurah where he lived until his death in 1865. Of the other settlers at Clarence, those who survived the dysentery and scurvy that plagued the settlement moved on and freed from their indentures, found employment elsewhere.

Figure 14 The ships *Gilmore* and *Hooghly* off Woodman Point in 1830 with Peel Town in the background. This drawing was done by George Bayly, an officer on the *Hooghly*. Courtesy of City of Cockburn Library.

The township of Clarence never eventuated and the land lay empty for many years. There is a memorial dedicated to the Clarence settlement which is located just to the north of the Woodman Point ammunition jetty, although the settlement itself, the precise location of which is in dispute, lies further to the south of the memorial.

The 1830s and 1840s saw more settlers arrive in the colony and as they moved into the hinterland new roads needed to be constructed. The *Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal* reported on Saturday 24 July, 1841 that a new line of road heading south from Fremantle to the Murray Bridge (present day Pinjarra) had been marked and cleared. The road retraced two original tracks, the Old Clarence Road (now Cockburn Road) and Dunnage's Track (now Russell Road). There were seven watering places all 'permanent and good' along the forty three mile route and the turn off from the Old Clarence Road, just to the north of Woodman Point, was marked by painted posts. The first of the watering places along the route, just four miles south from Fremantle, was called not surprisingly the Four Mile Well. When the first convicts arrived in 1850 many of them were employed in road building and other public works. Improvements were made to the old Fremantle-Clarence Road as it was called at that time.[5] However the roads

in the Coogee district remained difficult for travel and labour for their improvement was in short supply after the convict era ended in 1868. Because of the strong westerly winds, sand drift was also a big problem along the coastal road and made it hard going for the travellers on their journey to and from Fremantle.[6]

The Powell's fifty acre block were immigrant grants numbers 256, 257 and 258 and were on the west side of the limestone ridge opposite Coogee beach, near the site of the old Four-Mile Well.[7] It was here that Walter with the help of his wife Letitia and their family set about developing the hotel and establishing a new home.

Hotels were often the first buildings to be established in newly settled areas and served multiple functions, providing food and shelter for travellers and their horses. The first pub in the area was on the coast near the wreck of the *James*, a 195 ton vessel which came to grief in May 1830 near present day C. Y. O'Connor beach. Known as Bond's Inn it was run by Henry Rice Bond who had been a 'bobby' in world's first police force in London.[8] Bond, who arrived in the colony with his wife Georgiana as part of Thomas Peel's settlement, operated his licensed victualling house until he died in 1863. There must have been enough passing trade for him to survive in what was a remote spot on the coast in the mid nineteenth century.

As the roads spread out across the colony wells were especially important as a source of water for travellers and their horses. The Chairman of the Fremantle District Roads Board called for Tenders in the *Herald* on Saturday, 10 March, 1877 for the construction and placement of two windlasses and two iron troughs on the Clarence and Four Mile Wells, the wells to be cleaned out and put into substantial repair. However the following November he complained that:

> some evil disposed person has wantonly destroyed the Iron Bucket, recently provided by this District Road Board, at the Four Mile Well on the Fremantle and Rockingham Road, for the convenience of travellers on that road; a reward of £5 will be given by this Road Board to any person who shall give me such information as shall lead to the detection and punishment of the miscreant who committed this crime.[9]

The importance of wells to travellers continued well into the twentieth century, until the advent of motorcars. Over thirty years later, in 1910 the following letter to the Editor appeared in the *West Australian* newspaper: [10]

PUBLIC WELLS,

To the Editor.

Sir, Being on picnic bent, and having to pass by the old 4-mile Well on the Rockingham Road, which well has been available from the early days of the State and wishing to procure water for use further along the road, I was surprised to find that the pump had been removed, although the horse-trough was still there, evidently filled from the adjoining hotel well, but no water for human use was to be got without recourse to the hotel, I wish to know if the Roads Board has sufficient funds to keep the pump in order. As this is the only public well accessible along the road until the ten-mile is reached, perhaps the secretary of the local Roads Board might explain.

Yours. Etc. AQUA PURA. East Fremantle, January 2.

At the Four Mile there was a small building already on the site which consisted of two bedrooms and two sitting rooms in addition to living quarters.[11] Initially the Powell family provided refreshments for day trippers to the area in their tea rooms. Soon however Walter Powell, being an enterprising businessman, saw the opportunity to expand his services to include an Inn or Public House under the name of the 'Traveller's Rest'. He applied for a General Publican's License on 11 August, 1896 but it was refused at the Fremantle Court. Not one to give up easily he applied again the following year. The *Inquirer and Commercial News* reported that on Friday 11 June, 1897:

Walter Powell applied for a provisional certificate for premises proposed to be erected at the 4-Mile Well on the Fremantle-Rockingham Road. Mr. Moss conducted the case for the applicant, who pointed out that within the last six months a very large increase in the population of the '4-Mile' had taken place. Besides, he said, there was no hotel upon the whole line of road between the Port and Rockingham. The bench, however, could not see that a hotel was wanted there, and refused to grant a licence.

At the quarterly sitting of the Fremantle Licensing Court on that day the Resident Magistrate was Mr. Robert Fairbairn. Fairbairn was a member of the recently formed Fremantle

Temperance Alliance whose purpose was to carry on a crusade against the liquor trade. Temperance was particularly strong in Fremantle, where in 1883 out of a population of just over four thousand people, five hundred were wearing the 'red ribbon' which was the badge of total abstinence.[12] Powell's liquor license application was not the only one refused. At the time the large number of applications for provisional certificates for publicans' general licenses were all strongly opposed by the Fremantle Women's Christian Temperance Union. This was due to the fact that alcohol associated crime figured significantly in Western Australia's offences at the end of the nineteenth century.[13]

Drinking alcohol was prevalent from the early days of settlement of the colony. In 1842 Charlotte Bussell, one of the early settlers, wrote that even the 'ladies here are all violent beer drinkers and think it the greatest hardship in the world to be without any in the house'.[14] Congregationalists, of which Walter Powell was a member, were also active on temperance and laws related to licensing and gambling.[15] However this did not deter him from persisting in his licence applications on the basis that the large number of travellers in the area required the convenience of a hotel and a drink of something stronger than tea. In his application Mr. Moss, who appeared before the Magistrate on behalf of Powell, stated that the road was much frequented by picnickers and gardeners who requested 'stronger refreshment'.[16] Despite the opposition of several Fremantle hotel keepers and the fact that the temperance supporting Resident Magistrate, Robert Fairbairn, was once again presiding over the Fremantle Licensing Court, Walter Powell was finally granted a license to sell liquor in March 1898.[17] The license was granted on the condition that improvements be made to the existing building, to be commenced within a fortnight.[18] Walter Powell's difficulties in obtaining a liquor license did not deter him from objecting to others who may have provided competition for his business. When Arthur Thomas McMullen applied for a license on the Fremantle-Pinjarra Road in 1902, Powell had Mr. Moss object on his behalf.[19]

Walter Powell wasted no time in advertising for the work to be done to improve the property. The additions were designed by the well-known architect Frank W. Burwell who also designed the Freemason's Hotel (now the Sail and Anchor Hotel, Fremantle), the Victoria Pavilion at Fremantle Oval, and Owston's Buildings on High Street, Fremantle as well as the Coogee Agricultural Hall, among many other well-known buildings. The result was a handsome building, operational hotel and comfortable family residence. The single story building was built

of local limestone, of which there was no shortage in the area, with decorative stucco moulded arches on the front doors and windows, a corrugated iron roof and bull-nosed veranda (Figure 15).

Figure 15 Decorative stucco moulded arches on the Coogee Hotel. Photo by author.

The *Umpire* reported on Saturday 21 October, 1899 that the Coogee Hotel is 'provided with a fine, large room, in which nearly a hundred guests can sit down to dinner or tea, and as there is a good piano, cyclists and others can have a real good time when they rendezvous there'. Cooking dinner at the Coogee Hotel for up to a hundred guests must have been a monumental task, especially in summer, before electricity and air conditioning were available. There was also a public bar and three rooms for rent, as well as space for the ever expanding Powell family to live.

Walter and Letitia's eldest son Walter Richard Edwin, the only one who was born in England was by this time eighteen years old and about to make an appearance in the Fremantle Police Court. In May 1900 young Walter and some of his friends were fined ten shilling each for trespassing and driving down the rail line between Fremantle and Owen Anchorage.[20] The spirited young Walter found himself again in court for breaches of corporation laws by driving his horse at more than walking pace round a corner, the equivalent of speeding in modern times.[21] The next son George Frederick was eleven years old and their daughter Lottie (Charlotte

Gertrude) was aged nine years. George and Lottie were both born in Fremantle. After the family moved to Coogee the arrival of the last two children, Frank Warren (b.1894) and Florence Amy (b.1897) brought the total number of children in the family to five. In May of that year 1898, Walter's father Edwin Powell, the 'old colonist' died in Fremantle at the age of seventy one.[22]

The running of the hotel was always a family affair. Frank Edmond Powell, Walters's half-brother who in 1901 married Harriet de San Miguel, helped him manage the day to day business while his sister Blanche helped out with the catering. Walter Powell lost no time in advertising for customers. The 1899 edition of the *Western Australian Directory* featured an advertisement for the hotel, (Figure 16) although the distance from Fremantle was actually four miles, not two as stated in the advertisement.

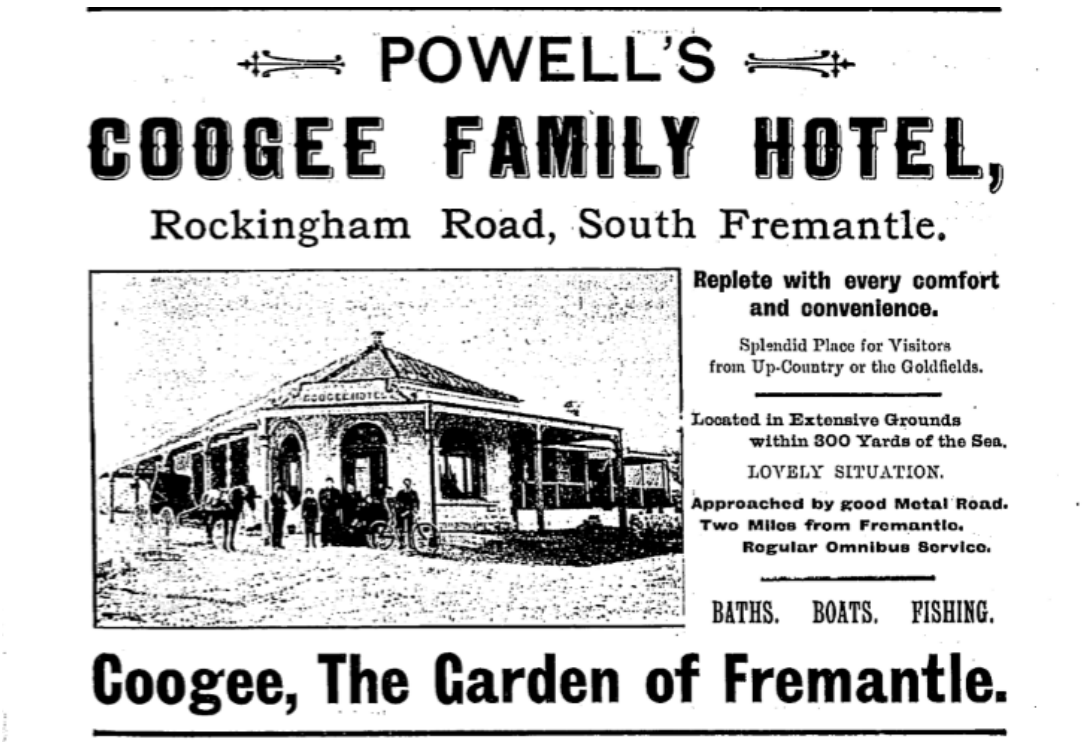
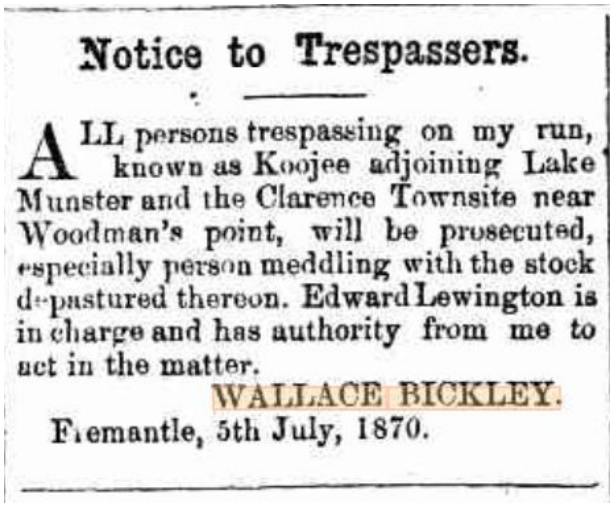


Figure 16 The *Western Australian Directory* 1899, p. 117. Retrieved from https://www.slwa.wa.gov.au/pdf/battye/pods/1899/0095.pdf.

The 'very large increase in population' noted in the liquor license application was due to the fact that around this time Coogee was developing as an agricultural district. Some of the earliest settlers in the district were the Pensioner Guards who were granted land around Lake Koojee (Coogee), also known at the time as Lake Munster, after Prince William, Earl of Munster. The

name Koojee was first recorded as the local Aboriginal name for the area by Thomas Watson, who came to Western Australia with Thomas Peel's group in 1829. Prior to the arrival in the district of the Pensioner Guards the land was owned by Wallace Bickley, an early settler and Member of the Western Australian Legislative Council, who used it to pasture his animals. He did not appreciate trespassers on his land (Figure 17).



Notice to Trespassers.

ALL persons trespassing on my run, known as Koojee adjoining Lake Munster and the Clarence Townsite near Woodman's point, will be prosecuted, especially person meddling with the stock depastured thereon. Edward Lewington is in charge and has authority from me to act in the matter.

WALLACE BICKLEY.

Fremantle, 5th July, 1870.

Figure 17 Notice in the *Herald*, Saturday, 9 July, 1870.

The Pensioner Guards were men who had enlisted in the British Army, some at a very young age, and many of them were veterans of the Crimean War which ended in 1856 and Indian Mutiny of 1857. They were recruited to guard the convicts on the journey from England to Fremantle and also served as an additional military unit in the colony, which could be called on in times of need.[23] Many of the Pensioner Guards brought their families with them as they were granted free passage to Australia. For example the *Norwood* on which Walter's father Edwin was transported had a pensioner guard of thirty men, their wives and a total of eighteen children on board. In order to encourage the Pensioner Guards to settle in the colony they were granted land but they had to live on it and maintain the land for seven years before obtaining the freehold. Despite this about a third of the Pensioner Guards left for the more developed colonies of South Australia and Victoria and some of them returned to England.[23] There were other Pensioner Guard settlements in areas such as North Fremantle, Mill Point and Freshwater Bay. When Fremantle Prison opened in 1860 however, there was a need to have some Pensioner Guards

close by in case of trouble at the prison. Lake Coogee was chosen as it was on the main road south from Fremantle and the settlement was located in an effort to discourage the convicts from escaping along the road to the port towns of Bunbury or Albany.

The remains of an old cottage (Figure 18) and a well can still be seen on the south west shore of Lake Coogee today. It belonged to Pensioner Guard Barney (Bernard) McGrath who came from the small village of Enniskerry in the heart of the Wicklow Mountains in Ireland. McGrath served with the Honorable East India Company (HEIC), 2nd Bombay European Light Infantry and the 106th Regiment.[24]

Figure 18 The remains of Barney McGrath's cottage on the west side of Lake Coogee. Photo by Steve Wells.

The HEIC was the military arm of the East India Company and Barney McGrath had served fourteen years with the HEIC in the East Indies. After arriving in Western Australia he served with the local Private Enrolled Force from September 1881 to March 1887 and was also the Lighthouse Keeper at Arthur Head, Fremantle. In 1881 he was assigned twenty acres of land at Cockburn Sound, Lot number P3 at Lake Munster, now Lake Coogee. The area around the lake

did not flourish however. Perhaps it was too remote and lonely a place back then for the Pensioner Guards and their families.

Another Pensioner Guard who was granted land at Lake Coogee was Henry Dyson Naylor, who was one of the Pensioner Guards on the *Norwood*, the ship that brought Edwin Henry Powell to Fremantle. Naylor never lived on his land at Coogee, preferring the comforts of Fremantle where he lived with his wife and four children.[25] Barney McGrath died on 23 March, 1908 and was buried in the Roman Catholic Section of Fremantle Cemetery. A street in the suburb of Lake Coogee, McGrath Road is named after Barney McGrath and there is a memorial to the Pensioner Guards at the eastern side of Lake Coogee.

Eventually in the 1880s as the population grew and Fremantle expanded, South Coogee developed as people settled on the abandoned lots of the Pensioner Guards.[26] The following advertisement for lot P2 (which was next door to McGraths's Lot, P3) which appeared in the *West Australian* on Friday 21 June, 1895 (figure 19) gives us an idea of the type of market gardening that way under way at the time:

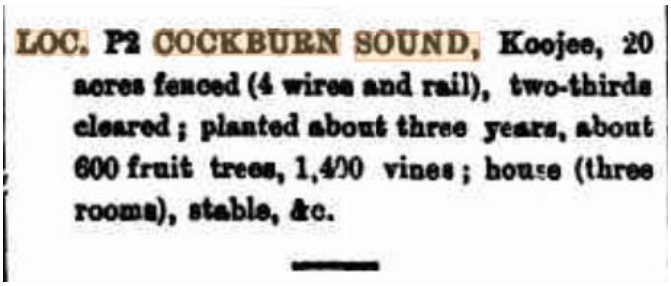

LOC. P2 COCKBURN SOUND, Koojee, 20 acres fenced (4 wires and rail), two-thirds cleared; planted about three years, about 600 fruit trees, 1,400 vines; house (three rooms), stable, &c.

Figure 19 Cockburn lot for sale advertised Friday 21 June, 1895.

As the gold rush took off and optimistic gold diggers flooded into the colony through the gateway of Fremantle the demand for fresh food increased. Although the first finds of gold were reported in 1885 when Charles Hall and Jack Slattery found 3 kg of gold at the place now called Hall's Creek, things really took off a few years later when Flannigan and Hannan, camped at Mount Charlotte, present day Kalgoorlie, found a very rich source of the precious metal which would result in a watershed in Western Australia's economic development.[27] This in combination with the import tariffs applied to food in the 1880s, making food more expensive locally, lured market gardeners to the area to try their luck at food production on the relatively fertile soil around the lake.

As the community developed a new Coogee Agricultural Hall was opened in 1897 on the Rockingham Road opposite the Woodman Point Quarantine Station. The abundant produce of the area was close enough to the Fremantle markets to make the journey to sell produce worthwhile. Thanks to the labour of the new settlers who included the Newman, Rogers, Allen and Stock families among many others, the area was transformed into a very productive region by sheer hard work. The bush was so thick that it cost fifty to sixty pounds an acre to clear the land.[28] Despite this Mr. Alf Newman, on the 'southern edge of Coogee Lake, expects to have fully 50,000 cauliflowers despite competition from the 'oleaginous sons of Confucius' as the sensationalist newspaper, *Truth,* referred to the Chinese market gardeners at the time.[29]

In the month of February 1897, the first of many annual Coogee Agricultural Shows was held at the newly built hall, which was opened by the Mayor of Fremantle, Mr. Elias Solomon.[30] Despite the heavy workload in establishing his hotel, Walter Powell was on the committee appointed to carry out the building of the hall. Described as 'severely simple in style' due to the limited funds allotted to building it, the opening ceremony was well attended despite the fact that many of the Society's members had resigned over a dispute relating to the location of the hall. Walter also found time to become involved as a trustee of the Coogee Agricultural Society (Figure 20). Miss Powell from the new Coogee Hotel, most likely Walter's sister Blanche, provided the catering as a Fremantle string band entertained the crowd at a dance to round off the evening's entertainment.[31] Later that same year at a meeting at the Swan Hotel in North Fremantle, Walter was elected a member of the recently formed Fremantle Licensed Victualler's Association, among whose many concerns was the increase in the number of 'sly-grog shops' in the colony.[32]

Motor vehicles did not appear on the streets of Fremantle until the early twentieth century, so for nearly a century after European settlement, horse-drawn carts, buggies and coaches dominated road transport in the towns and countryside. For the Mayor and the other dignitaries who made the trip by horse and buggy from Fremantle it must have been an uncomfortable trip along the bumpy limestone track from Fremantle to South Coogee. No doubt Walter Powell would have been among the many locals who used the opportunity to advance their cause on the need for better roads and a rail line to serve the fast growing district of Coogee.

At that time the railway line from Fremantle ended at the lime kilns of Briggs and Rowland, who had 'carved vast wrinkles in the face of the earth' in their search for limestone for building

and agricultural purposes.[33] The two limestone ridges that run parallel to the coastline in the Coogee area provided plenty of material for the lime kilns. Located less than a kilometer south of the Coogee Hotel, the lime kilns had a prominent location at the edge of open, level ground beside the old Rockingham Road. Briggs and Rowland (Figure 21) had successfully lobbied for a train line to be extended to Coogee so that their products could be transported into Fremantle.[34]

Figure 20 Walter Powell (back row, fifth from the left) at the Coogee Agricultural Society Annual Show in 1897. Courtesy of City of Cockburn Library.

By 1905 the lime kilns occupied an area of one hundred and fifty acres in Coogee, producing 8,000 bags of lime per month and high quality Coogee building stone. The kilns were constructed for the purpose of heating limestone to affect the chemical process for converting limestone into quicklime At the height of their business the wood fuelled kilns 'veiled in smoke by day and glowing cheerily at night', operated twenty four lime kilns, employed fifty men, and provided Powell's Coogee Hotel with many of its customers.[35] It was said at the time that there may have been enough thirsty lime kiln workers to support the Coogee Hotel on their own.[36]

As a reminder of times past, a two chambered lime kiln was constructed in the 1980s, near the western edge of Len McTaggart Park, a couple of hundred meters to the south of the Coogee

Hotel (Figure 22). There is also an original lime kiln located around 250 meters to the south of this concealed within an area of densely planted trees beside the western edge of Powell Park.[37]

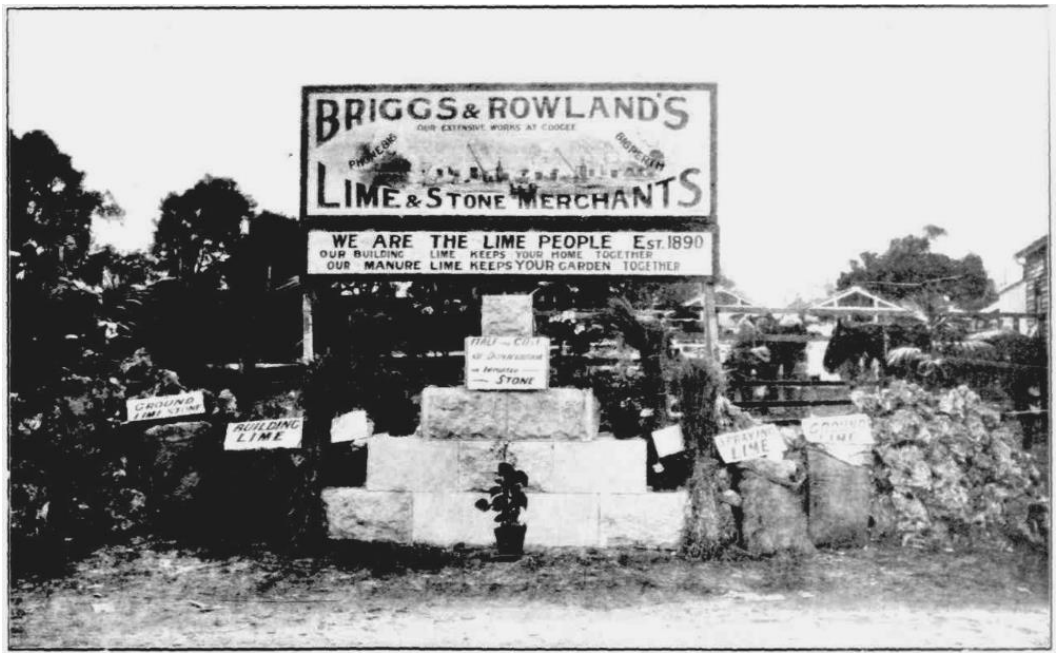


Figure 21 Briggs and Rowland display at the Royal Show 1912. Courtesy of City of Cockburn Library.

As time went on the lack of a passenger train service to Coogee continued to bother Walter Powell. The *Evening Courier* reported that the first consignment of lime from Briggs and Rowland's kilns were shipped from Powell's siding on 25 March, 1903, with the promise of a new platform to be constructed near Powell's Coogee Hotel. This would be a great boon to the people of Perth, Coogee beach being renowned as one of the best in Australia, according to the *Courier*.

Two years later the passenger service was still not available and Walter Powell took the opportunity to vent his frustration in the local paper, expressed in a 'scholarly effusion whose remarks very few persons will be found to disagree with':[38]

> Comparatively few people are aware that Fremantle possesses, within four miles of the Town Hall, a magnificent stretch of sandy beach, lapped by the sparkling blue waters of the Indian Ocean, and forming one of the most perfect bathing and picnic grounds in the world. The beach is so gently sloping that children can wade and paddle about in perfect safety for a distance of nearly 100 yards from the shore, and there is an utter absence of those malodorous perfumes arising from drain-pipes,

decaying seaweed or stranded fish. Coogee Beach, for that is the beauty spot I am referring to, is actually connected with Fremantle by a railway, although the fact is carefully concealed from the public. When a special train is made up for some great national event—such as the Coogee show, held recently—the fact is kept a departmental secret, and the fares are so high that those who cannot afford a cab or a motor-car refrain from visiting the locality. I have resided in the district for a very long period, and for 10 years was chairman of the Fremantle Roads Board. In my sweet simplicity, I thought that when the railway was placed parallel with the main road the cost of maintaining that thoroughfare would be considerably lessened. Visions of catching a morning and evening train also beguiled me into the belief that Coogee and its plucky settlers would be placed in close and speedy communication with the chief port of the State, and that Fremantle people would be able to reach the pretty watering-place as easily and as cheaply as going to Cottesloe Beach. My fondest hopes have been rudely shattered. The train runs twice and sometimes thrice daily, but only for THE CONVEYANCE OF EXPLOSIVES or lime: not a single passenger is allowed to travel. Even His Majesty's mails are not allowed aboard, and although the trains are pulled up in the station-yard, right opposite the post-office, the people of Coogee have only a bi-weekly service ‘taken out by cart just in the same old happy-go-lucky style of 30 years ago. The mail is made up at Fremantle on Tuesdays and Fridays at 8 a.m., so that should your correspondence be posted after 8 a.m. on either of these days a detention of three or four days is inevitable. And yet Coogee is only four miles distant, and there are at least two trains daily! What is the use of politicians talking about throwing open great areas for selection, and inducing people to come here from far-distant countries, when the settlers already on the land cannot use the railway passing their doors? The neglect of this district by the Postal and Railway Departments is shameful, and the apathy of the Fremantle people is even worse. Mr. George is, above all things, imbued with a patriotic desire to make the ‘railways pay, and he may demur at carrying goods and passengers on the short line to Coogee and Woodman's Point, on the ground that some loss might accrue to his department; but surely a composite carriage, hitched on to one train each way, would pay its way? I am quite prepared to be met with a lot of departmental

objections, but they ought not to be insuperable. If Jandakot settlers are to be served in the same way as those of Coogee, all their agitation for a railway will have been thrown away.

Figure 22 Reconstructed lime kilns on Cockburn Road to the south of the old Coogee Hotel. Photo by Steve Wells.

CHAPTER 6

THE HEYDAY OF THE COOGEE HOTEL

With his hotel finally up and running Walter Powell developed a reputation for being a genial host and made the patrons feel 'at home with a good brand of whisky'.[1] Having resigned his position on the Fremantle District Road Board he could channel all his energy into his new business and his interest in all kinds of sporting activities.[2] The Four-Mile Well or Powell's Coogee Hotel as it was then known quickly became a sporting and social hub for the area. By the end of the nineteenth century cycling was becoming a very popular sport for both men and women thanks to the development of the 'safety bicycle' and the pneumatic tyre. The Fremantle Ladies Cycling Club held a cycling picnic at the Four Mile in October 1898 with many more cycling events to follow.

With a new jetty just completed, a sports day was held on 26 January, 1899 what we now call Australia Day but was then known as Anniversary Day. The day's activities included yacht racing, swimming (for boys only) and a greasy pole competition. Walter Powell was there to carry out the duties of secretary to the sporting events and the holiday was rounded off with entertainment at the Coogee Hotel. The Metropolitan Bicycle Club held a road race from the hotel in September 1902 with a dinner in the hotel after the event. Walter Powell was also elected president of the newly formed cricket club at Coogee and vowed that he would undertake to lay down a good concrete cricket pitch in the centre of his racecourse grounds. Whether it was walking matches, pigeon shooting or visits by the East Fremantle Football Club, the event generally finished up at the Coogee Hotel where a hearty dinner and no doubt a few drinks were enjoyed.[3]

Powell's Hotel (Figure 23) was reputedly 'a comfortable and commodious hostelry … excellently conducted'.[4] With the help of his half-brother Frank and his eldest son Walter, now old enough to earn his keep, the hotel served the workers of the nearby lime kilns, the Robb Jetty abattoirs as well as local residents, market gardeners from the South Coogee land holdings and on weekends and holidays numerous picnickers and holidaymakers. It became a popular 'watering hole' and the drive out from Fremantle provided the 'prettiest scenery'.[5] The location of the hotel close to the beach with its lush garden setting made it attractive to newlyweds and it

was soon known as ‘the Honeymoon Hotel’. In April 1900 Mr David Cooper McArthur, a prominent local cyclist and his new wife, Miss Florence Cooper held their wedding breakfast there according to the *Daily News*.

Figure 23 Coogee Hotel in early 20th century. Is that Walter Powell standing in the doorway of the bar awaiting his guests? Courtesy of City of Cockburn Library.

Being a genial host however had its drawbacks. Mr. Moss had to defend Walter Powell in the Fremantle Magistrate’s Court in March 1899 on the charge of watering down the hotel’s whisky:

> WHISKEY AND WATER.
> HIS PRIVATE BOTTLE.
> At the Fremantle Police Court, to-day, before Mr. Jas. Lilly, acting R.M., and Mr. E. Solomon, J.P., W. Powell was charged, under section 7 of 61 Vic. 25, with having sold whiskey adulterated with water so as to reduce it to 29.60 below proof, in his licensed premises …[6]

Acting in Walter's defense Mr. Moss stated that the offending bottle of Stronvaar whiskey was for Mr. Powell's personal use. He claimed that Mr. Powell did not deny the charges but 'so many people asked Mr. Powell to join them in a drink that if he drank the pure spirit each time he would soon be unfit for business'. Powell got off with the minimum charge allowed under the Act, a ten pound fine with two pound costs, as the hotel was generally a well conducted place.

Figure 24 Stronvaar whisky bottle. Photo by Steve Wells

On Monday 20 October, 1902 the *West Australian* reported that the Licensee of the Coogee Hotel, Walter Powell, was fined thirty shillings for Sunday trading which was first banned in 1839. In 1833 'An Act to Regulate the Licensing of Public Houses' was established to ensure that applicants were of 'good fame and fit to keep a public house'.[7] A Licensee could lose his license or be fined for diluting liquors, allowing drunkenness and disorderly conduct, allowing notoriously bad characters to convene there, drinking after hours and refusing accommodation to a traveler and his horse.[8] In 1839 Sunday trading was banned under the Sunday Observance Act. Walter Powell would at various times find himself in front of the courts in breach of some of these restrictions. Despite these minor charges Walter Powell was keen to preserve the good reputation of his hotel. In September 1904 he wrote a letter to the Editor of the *West Australian* complaining that a report on a stabbing incident on the Rockingham Road (now Cockburn Road) suggested that the parties involved had been drinking at his hotel. Powell wanted the report

corrected to state that he had not served them drink as, on arriving at his hotel, they were already intoxicated.[9]

Sadly, amidst all his successes and just as the hotel was getting established, Walter's wife Letitia died at Coogee on 12 April, 1901. Charlotte Maria Letitia Powell, known throughout her life as Letitia died at the age of just forty six. She left behind Walter, her husband of twenty four years, and a grieving family of five children. Perhaps this was in part the reason that Walter moved the family to Coogee given that he thought it was one of the healthiest places in the world, being free from Fremantle's 'malodorous perfumes arising from drain-pipes'. At the time Fremantle was appalling in its lack of sanitation. The *Morning Herald* reported in 1898 that even 'a casual tour of the principal streets of the West End (of Fremantle), will convince anyone that Fremantle cannot claim to be even a moderately sanitary town'.[10] Just after the Powells moved to Coogee an outbreak of bubonic plague hit the port town, which resulted in the death of a total of twenty nine people between 1900 and 1905.[11]

Letitia was a much loved mother to her family. Six years after her death her children placed the following notice in the *West Australian,* which was in 'loving memory of our dear mother' who departed this life:

> Long days and nights she bore in pain,
> To wait for cure was all in vain;
> But God alone, Who thought it best,
> Did ease her pain and gave her rest.
> Worthy of lasting love was she,
> From those she left behind,
> A more loving mother there could not be,
> A mother more true and kind.

Walter's sister Blanche who never married and worked at the Coogee Hotel may have stepped in and helped with looking after the children, the youngest child Florence being just four years old at the time of Letitia's death.

Life goes on however and Walter Powell with his family to support continued to promote his hotel regularly in the local newspapers. The *Mail* carried the following advertisement on 1 July,

1904:

Coogee Coogee Coogee
The Garden of Fremantle is now in full bloom
The place to spend a happy day
Approachable by road rail or sea
Coogee Hotel. W. Powell, Proprietor.

The local Coogee market gardening families, among whom were some of the hotel's customers, had made the area hive of activity and comfortable prosperity was evident everywhere. Despite this they felt that they were being badly treated by the Government and the area was described in 1905 as a 'sadly neglected district'.[12] A reporter from the *Truth* who toured the area in Mr. Albert Stock's buggy, pulled by the reliable 'Stumpy' the horse, was very impressed with bunches of glorious fruit which were being produced.

However in 1907, the tenth Annual Coogee Agricultural Show, usually held at the Coogee Agricultural Hall (Figure 25), was held at Fremantle Town Hall so that a greater number of people would have the opportunity of attending.[13] It seems that Walter Powell's efforts in trying to improve the roads and rail to the area were unsuccessful. South Coogee remained peripheral as Spearwood and Jandakot, with more fertile soil and access to the new rail line boomed as the preferred market gardening areas.[14]

Beach going became even more popular in the early years of the twentieth century. Coogee Beach was touted as an ideal rural weekend resting spot and many families came to camp on the beach and enjoy the 'excellent bush scenery' within two minutes of the Coogee Hotel, where a 'splendid dinner, an interesting talk with the genial proprietor and a tasty cup of afternoon tea could be had'.[15]

Nude bathing was also gaining popularity. The *Daily News* reported on 24 March, 1902 that two women and three men had been charged at the Fremantle Police Court with bathing on the beach near Coogee. The men were nude and the women were 'very inadequately dressed'. At the time, the local police had been instructed to summon all persons bathing without a costume. Walter Powell advertised that they should proceed to Powell's Coogee Hotel where 'stacks of towels and bathing costumes were available' and 'the best of whiskey' was to be had for those that required something stronger than tea to drink.[16]

Figure 25 Coogee Agricultural Show, 1901. Courtesy of City of Cockburn Library.

The Coogee Hotel continued to be a venue for all manner of entertainment. On Sunday 28 April, 1901 a Mrs. Tracey gave a talk on the 'Topics of the Day'.[17] No doubt some of the issues discussed would have included the recent Federation of the States to form the newly founded Commonwealth of Australia, the departure of Sir John Forrest and the first elections to be held in the state of Western Australia, under responsible government.

As the years went by the annual picnics at Coogee held by the Locomotive Railway Workshop continued to be popular. In 1914 there were speeches from the Government Ministers of the day followed by lunch which was held under a huge grape vine in the garden of the Coogee Hotel.[18] The hundreds of employees who attended had arrived by special train from Midland Junction and were entertained by many sideshows and dancing, although bathing for both sexes was the most popular activity. The *Fremantle Herald* surmised that as the beach was becoming increasingly popular as a pleasure resort, the local Roads Board might well consider the advisableness of making decent approaches to the beach. The reporter noted that the 'Host

Powell, of the Coogee Hotel, had a very busy time, and as usual, did all he could to make the day a success'.[19] Seven years later in 1921 the railway picnics were still going strong. The *Daily News* reported that another enjoyable picnic had been held at Coogee in perfect weather the previous weekend: [20]

> The official luncheon was provided by Mr. Powell, of the Coogee Hotel, and was laid out under the vine trellis on the lawn, the grapes luxuriantly hanging from overhead while flags decorated the sides, conspicuous among them being the Union Jack, Australian Flag and the Stars and Stripes of America. A sports programme was carried out on both days for adults and children …

Figure 26 A day at the beach in 1908. This photo was taken at South Beach. Note the Fremantle Smelting Works in the background. Courtesy of Fremantle History Centre.

Through the first two decades of the twentieth century the hotel continued to attract people from near and far, although there must have been quiet times too during the long winter months, especially when the winter storms arrived bringing bad weather from the North West. Walter Powell had used all his energy and imagination to make the hotel the success that it was. One of his ventures to lure customers to his hotel was horse racing which was a very popular sport at the time and is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

HORSE RACING IN COLONIAL TIMES

Figure 27 Old horse shoes. Photo by Steve Wells

Walter Powell was an enthusiastic sportsman and was keen to make sure that the Coogee Hotel was the venue for a variety of sporting activities. He had a particular interest in horseracing and even rode horses himself at the Cannington Park Turf Club in the late 1890s. His horse, a 'game little seaside mare', named Lottie after his eldest daughter, was a favourite and was often heavily backed at the race meetings.[1]

Horse racing had been an important form of entertainment since the early days of the colony. When the first settlers arrived from England in 1829 the stormy weather prevented the ships from landing on the mainland. A settlement of timber and brushwood huts known as Sulphur Town (Figure 28) was erected on the protected east side of Garden Island and was home for the first three months for the people who had arrived on the *Parmelia* and *Sulphur*.[2] This was where on July 20 of that year Captain Mark Currie defeated Lieutenant William Preston in the first horse race to be held in the colony.[3]

As time went on horse racing continued to be a popular pastime in the colony. It was a chance for people to get together and socialize in the days when the population was small and entertainment was limited. The first horse race held on the mainland was at a place known as the Downs, a mile and a half south of Fremantle on 2 October, 1833, at what is now Fremantle's

South Beach.[4] Captain Taylor of the *Helen* imported Timor ponies for the occasion. The race course was set on a slightly undulating plain skirting the sea and the adjoining hills provided views of the races. The event proved so popular with the fashionably dressed ladies and gentlemen that the *Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal* had no doubt that it would soon become a regular event. The description of the event, with the spectators picnicking on the hill above the course could well have applied to Walter Powell's racecourse, established sixty years later further south at Coogee.

Figure 28 Sulphur Town on Garden Island, Captain Stirling's first European settlement in Western Australia, 1829. Courtesy of City of Cockburn Library.

The beach south from Fremantle, which before Fishing Boat harbour was built stretched all the way to Woodman Point, was popular with horse riders. Charles Yelverton O'Connor liked to ride from his home, Park Bungalow in Quarry Street, Fremantle along the coast with his daughter Bridget every morning before work.[5] It was along this beach near Robb Jetty on a stifling hot day in March 1902 he took his life amidst a public controversy over the presumed failure of the Coolgardie Water Scheme. Although it was a great loss to the State and his Fremantle harbour and the Coolgardie Water Scheme were both successful he felt that his 'brain

was suffering … and he had lost control of his thoughts'.[6] A statue showing O'Connor riding his horse into the water now marks the spot at the beach named after him, although having a great love of horses he had let the animal go free and walked into the water. The beach is still popular with horse riders and the South Beach Horse Exercise Area has been listed on the State Register of Heritage Places since 2007.

Horse racing was popular among all members of the society. The Western Australian Turf Club was established in 1852 and was principally the domain of men of property and status, members of the Legislative Council and pastoralists. It was so exclusive that it was said of it at the time that it was more difficult to enter than Parliament.[7] The Turf Club therefore symbolized the power of the elite in the colony. To counter this, unregistered racecourses sprung up in many locations and at that time the Colony of Western Australia had more racecourses per capita than anywhere else in the world.[8] Unregistered simply meant that the club was not registered with the Western Australian Turf Club and as such gambling, another very popular pastime, was not allowed.

The Fremantle Jockey Club, which was founded in 1884, had a racecourse up and running by 1892. It was established on land excised from the Quarantine Station at Woodman Point (Figure 29).[9] The road to Woodman Point was not an easy one to travel at the time so many racegoers arrived from Fremantle's South Jetty aboard the steamship *SS Cleopatra* for a picnic and a day at the races. The race meetings were very popular and well attended to begin with. However the condition of the track and facilities deteriorated over time to the point where it could have 'benefited from having a little money spent on it' according to the *Inquirer and Commercial News* Turf report of Wednesday 25 November, 1885. Despite the best efforts of the organizers, the course struggled to make a profit and by 1897 it was in debt to the extent of forty pounds.[10]

By 1890 there were reports of disgraceful mismanagement and this combined with the distance from Fremantle and lack of decent roads had been a serious handicap ever since it was established. Despite Fremantle Jockey Club's efforts to turn it into a successful racecourse the July race meeting in 1899 was the last ever held at the Woodman Point Racecourse. The Lands Department had granted the club a ninety nine years lease in 1899 but eventually the Government resumed the land to relocate the explosives magazine from Robb Jetty following an explosion in 1903.[11]

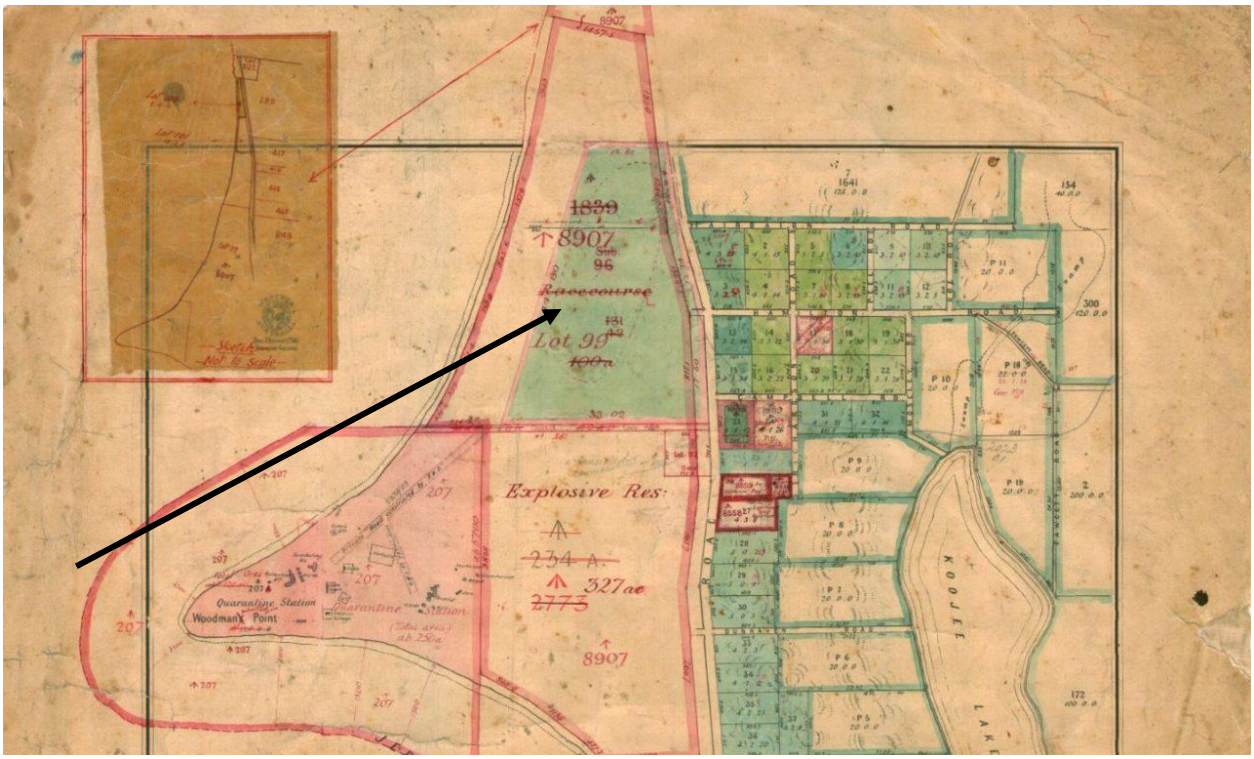


Figure 29 Map showing the location of the Woodman Point racecourse (black arrow), Quarantine Station and explosives reserve 1906. Photo courtesy of the Cockburn Library.

These events may have been what prompted the entrepreneurial Walter Powell to open up a race course behind the hotel and capture some of the Woodman Point race crowd. In March 1899, Walter Powell held a well-attended meeting at the Beaconsfield Hotel of the inaugural Coogee Racing and Sports Club.[12] A race course was subsequently constructed at the rear of the Coogee Hotel and the first race meeting was held on Easter Saturday 1 April, 1899.[13] Four races were run, the maiden pony race, the handicap pony race, the Galloway Handicap, and the prestigious Coogee Stakes Handicap. There was also a pigeon shooting competition on the day. Powell donated all the prizes himself and the bets were settled at the Coogee Hotel following the races. Obviously the 'no gambling at unregistered courses' was not too strictly observed. The racecourse was unusual being shaped like a tennis racket, with the handle being the home strait. A trip to the Coogee races was treated as a day out for many local families, who came to picnic on the hill above the hotel and enjoy the racing, the view of the offshore islands of Garden and Carnac and the cooling sea breeze.

Maudie Tozer, a squatter, was one of the most successful amateur riders. She was a horsewoman of no mean merit, winning the famous Coogee Cup twice in one race meeting,

when the race had to be re-run following complaints of interference.[14] Maudie, who was a bit of a local character and the despair of the stewards, liked to give her many admirers the 'dinkum oil' about her mount.[15] It was quite the usual thing among the local punters to back nothing else but Maudie's horse. Maudie may well have been the granddaughter of William Tozer, shoemaker and expiree who had arrived on the convict transport *Minden* in 1851 and his wife, Brigid Tidings. His son, also called William Tozer had two daughters Liz and Maud who squatted at Banganup Lake on what is now Russell Road. The women reared horses and cut wood and grass trees for charcoal burning, employing wood cutters but doing the carting themselves.[16]

The Coogee race meetings were very popular and well attended despite the fact that at the time Coogee was distant enough from Fremantle, that reports of the first races appeared under a column headed 'Country News'. The Boxing Day races in 1899 were attended by about three hundred people and the *Umpire* reported on the day in glowing terms: [17]

> While holiday seekers were sweltering in the torrid heat of the goldfields and also in the eastern colonies visitors to the Coogee racecourse, only four miles from Fremantle Town Hall, enjoyed one of the most perfect days in the world. The weather was simply delightful, brilliant sunshine, a turquoise blue sky, and a cool sea breeze from the south. Everybody was in a holiday humour, and there was abundance of good cheer provided by Host Powell, of the Coogee Hotel, to whose enterprise the existence of a racecourse at the popular seaside resort is due. There was an excellent attendance, although the strong counter attractions of the Canning Park races and the Fremantle Oval sports had to be contended with. Every available vehicle in town was impressed into the service, and all day long heavy loads of passengers passed to and from the course. The racing was good and several very close finishes testified to the accuracy of Mr. A. W. Whittle's handicapping … In the evening a dance was held in the Coogee Hotel, and so terminated a really happy day.

The meetings were reputedly well conducted and free from 'instances of 'cronk' or fraudulent running, so often met with at pony meetings. By the time that the third race meeting was held in the year 1900, buses and cabs were running from Market Street in Fremantle to the Coogee races every few minutes at a cost of two shillings and sixpence return.[18]

However, the popularity of the Coogee races was short-lived. It's not known exactly when the Coogee racecourse closed down but by 1904 the number of people attending the meetings was down considerably.[19] Walter Powell advertised for tenders from persons wishing to rent the racecourse and form a committee of management for holding Unregistered Race Meetings.[20] He was at the time fifty years old, a widower with five children, the youngest of whom Florence was still just seven years old. Perhaps he decided that there was not much to be gained by persisting with the meetings and he had enough on his plate.

COOGEE RACECOURSE (Unregistered).

TENDERS in writing, will be received by the undersigned up till 8 p.m. on Friday next, the 12th instant, from persons wishing to RENT the above Racecourse, and form a committee of management for holding Unregistered Race Meetings there on. Committee to be approved by the proprietor. Neither the highest nor any tender necessarily accepted.

W. POWELL, Coogee Hotel.

By 1917 changes in legislation in Western Australia compelled all race tracks to register with the Western Australian Turf Club and at that time many of the smaller race tracks closed down.[21]

CHAPTER 8

END OF AN ERA AT COOGEE AND NEW BEGINNINGS

The Coogee Hotel continued to thrive under the watchful eye of Walter Powell during the first two decades of the twentieth century. The hotel was surrounded by lush gardens and Powell frequently advertised Coogee as the 'Garden of Fremantle' and also the 'Garden of the West'.[1] The Railway Institute employee's picnics at the hotel continued to be well attended each year and the host always had a 'hearty welcome' for the holidaymakers.

New settlers were moving into South Coogee and on the east side of the limestone ridge Spearwood was developing as a market garden district. At the time there were no hotels in South Coogee or Spearwood and the market gardeners made the trek along the rough tracks to quench their thirst and enjoy their neighbour's company at the bar of Powell's hotel. The lime kilns of Briggs and Rowland were still operating and the opening of the Anchorage Meat Works just to the north of the hotel in 1914 provided a steady supply of thirsty workers, although Walter may have lost some customers when the Newmarket Hotel in South Fremantle opened its doors in 1912. Walter's customers even included three soldiers who had skipped quarantine at the Woodman Point Quarantine Station, having returned on a ship where small pox had broken out. They managed to make their way to the Coogee Hotel, desperate for a drink, before being discovered.[2]

Walter was by this time in his sixties with grown up children. He passed the responsibility for the management of the hotel on to his eldest son Walter, who was in his early thirties and married to Margaret Love Harvey of Coogee. The next son George ran the dairy for many years at Coogee, on land just to the south of the hotel. His daughter Lottie married James Hoult around 1910, providing us with one of the few photographs of Walter and his family (Figure 30). Lottie's first husband died a few years later and she married John (Jock) McKinnon in 1926. They ran the shop and post office from the small building next to the hotel. They also managed the camping and caravan grounds across the road from the shop when it opened in the 1930s.

Figure 30 This is possibly the wedding photo of Walter's eldest daughter Lottie to James Hoult. Walter is seated on the right of the photo. The girl wearing the white frilly hat standing beside Walter is his youngest daughter Florence. The two men standing behind Walter are most likely his sons, Walter and Frank. Walter's other son George is standing on the left of the photo and in front of him is his wife, Agnes De San Miguel. Photo courtesy of City of Cockburn Library.

In January 1914, Walter Powell and his eldest son were charged in the Fremantle Police Court with having knowingly and carelessly permitted an intoxicated person to remain upon their premises, contrary to section 113 of the Licensing Act of 1911.[3] The charge was dismissed but a second charge of having neglected to keep the licensed premises free from offensive and unwholesome matter was laid. The bathroom according to Constables Chandler and Ryan, was unfit for use and the fowl house which was just forty foot from a bedroom was in a very dirty condition. In his defence Walter Powell stated that the hotel was situated miles beyond the municipal boundary and had no sanitary services. Furthermore, Walter said that he and his family had lived there for twelve or thirteen years and had suffered no illness. They were fined five pounds plus costs or two months imprisonment. There is no record of him or his son going to prison so the fine was paid. The Coogee Hotel, once renowned as a well conducted, comfortable and commodious hotel had deteriorated and let its standards slip. Perhaps young

Walter's enthusiasm for the business was not equal to that of his father.

The second decade of the twentieth century saw more changes coming to the Coogee area. In 1910, the Federal Government decided it was time to build a strong Australian Navy. A plan was put forward to build a naval base at Woodman Point on the old Clarence town site, still unused after all these years. The Henderson Fleet Base, as it was known, was named after the British Admiral, Sir Reginal Henderson who recommended the coastal area from Woodman Point to Point Peron near Rockingham for the base. Land prices soared and some of the local land owners were wearing extra broad smiles according to a report in the *Fremantle Herald* on Friday 13 June, 1913. Jack Visser of the Jandakot Hotel, keen to cash in on the new development tried to get his license removed from Jandakot to Coogee. He was opposed by Walter Powell who would not have welcomed the competition. The *Fremantle Herald* reported on Friday 12 September, 1913 that the 'spectacle of the Parson and Powell of Coogee Hotel in double harness opposing the transfer broke the Court up entirely'. The Parson referred to was the Reverend George Tregear who was the president of the Fremantle Temperance Alliance and was therefore opposed to any new licensed premises being approved.

Nevertheless, Powell's Coogee Hotel did well for a couple of years from the influx of the two hundred or so new Naval Base workers to the area.[4] According to a report in the *Fremantle Herald* on Friday 13 June, 1913 Powell 'looks longingly for the Naval Base pay days and the day following generally appears at his office with that benign countenance of his all wreathed in smiles'. But, the article continued:

> last week he looked ill at ease. When questioned he said he had had a terrible dream in the night. He dreamt that the suffragettes had captured the Base and that the Rev. G. Tregear was the only man left alive.

Many suffragettes were active in the Temperance Movement and Walter Powell would not have approved of any opposition to the sale of alcohol, which was vital to the success of his business.

The Powell family also owned land in the area which was operating as a dairy. It was largely unfenced and the cows often wandered, resulting in more fines at the Fremantle Court. The Coogee lighthouse keeper was kept busy answering enquiries from potential speculators who were interested in 'Powell's five acres'.[5] The Coogee land boom was short lived however as the

First World War approached and with labour in short supply the Naval Base project was abandoned for the time being. By 1918 the Commonwealth Government had resumed much of the coastal land to the south of the Coogee Hotel. Jack Visser of the Jandakot Hotel must have counted himself a lucky man as the Coogee area went into decline following the war as the land remained under Federal control. The Naval Base was eventually built on Garden Island. Named HMAS Stirling it was not officially commissioned until 1978.

In November 1922 after more than twenty four years in the hotel business Walter Powell made an application to transfer the rights and privileges of his Publican's General License to his youngest son, Frank Warren Powell.[6] The hotel continued to operate under Frank's management with the help of his wife, Ruby Burnett. Just two months after transferring the license to Frank, on Thursday 25 January, 1923, Walter Powell died at his sister Blanche's residence the age of sixty nine. 'His work done, he rests in heaven'.[7]

There was a very large attendance at his funeral two days later when he was buried in the Congregational section of Fremantle Cemetery. Apart from his five children, Walter, George, Lottie, Frank and Florence who were all married by this time, his sister Blanche, his brother Frederick, his step-brother Frank and step-sister Grace were all there to mourn their loss. Among the pall bearers were members of the Higham, Hunter, Watson, Triplett, Stack and Pearse families, all leading members of the Fremantle business community. Many of the families from the Coogee area also attended the funeral, along with a representative of the Castlemaine Brewery in East Fremantle. Walter Powell had built the business at Coogee from scratch and made a home for his family and a name for himself as a popular host. Having lost his wife Letitia twenty two years earlier, he never remarried. Working closely with his children and siblings he created a popular social gathering place which was enjoyed by people from near and far. Having worked hard to keep the hotel going for almost a quarter of a century, the genial host of the Coogee Hotel had presided over his last gathering and his death marked the end of a memorable era in the history of Coogee.

Following Walter's death, his sons Frank and George were the proprietors and registered owners of the Coogee Hotel but the licensee was Thomas Gilham. It seems Walter's passion for the hotel and associated sporting ventures did not pass on to his sons. Walters's siblings Frederick and Blanche Powell were involved in running a grocery store and post office located a half a mile to the south of the hotel where Blanche was the postmistress. The year after Walter

died Blanche retired at the age of seventy two and handed over the running of the Coogee Cash Store to her brother Frederick. Frederick, the youngest of the family had arrived in Western Australia in 1885, three years after Walter and worked with the pilot crew at Fremantle for a couple of years before moving to Coogee with the rest of the family. Blanche and Frederick, neither of whom married had run the store together for forty years. When Blanche retired Frederick built a new store next door to the Coogee Hotel.[8] The store, a simple one storey limestone building also served as the post office and housed one of the five telephones in the Coogee area, is still there today, located just to the north of the hotel.[9] Frederick died four years later at the age of sixty five**.**[10] Later on, around 1935, Walter's daughter Lottie and her second husband Jock McKinnon moved in to run the shop, which was by this time owned by the Anglican Church Orphanage Board. It was now known as the Coogee Beach Shop and Lottie and Jock also were involved in the hiring of the campsite across the road, which developed about this time. When Lottie died in 1951 the business passed out of the Powell family's hands.[11]

Meanwhile legislative changes were taking place which would mark the end of the Coogee Hotel as a social gathering place and 'watering hole'. In April 1927, just four years after Walter Powell's death the hotel was assessed prior to having its license renewed. The condition of the hotel at the time was described by the Liquor Inspector as:

> a single storied building with three bedrooms available for letting. There was nobody staying at the hotel at the time and the dining-room did not appear to have been used. The lighting consisted of lamps and candles and the building needed renovating. The population in the district within one mile radius of the hotel was about 100 and within a three-mile radius about 400. According to the lodger's book about 110 persons had stayed at the hotel during the past twelve months. The licensee had been twice convicted of breaches of the Licenses Act once in February 1926 and on the second occasion on Monday last.[12]

The hotel was obviously missing the drive and enthusiasm of Walter Powell whose vision, unique personality, energy, entrepreneurship and many sporting interests had kept it going as a thriving business and social hub for the district for the first quarter of the twentieth century. At the Fremantle sitting of the License Reduction Board Walter's son Frank Powell did his best to

defend the hotel and retain the license. Frank maintained that the place was still popular with picnickers and travellers on the road to Mandurah, as in the days of old. He added that there were four lime kilns within a quarter of a mile of the hotel which employed between fifty and sixty men. The nearby Anchorage Butchering Company was also close to the hotel and employed about eighteen men. Frank also said that he was prepared to spend five hundred pounds to make improvements to the hotel which was still a popular venue for the Locomotive and Metropolitan Railway Picnics, which generally attracted a large crowd. Despite Frank's best efforts and the support of the Chairman of the Fremantle District Roads Board, as well as the picnic secretaries from various organizations, the License Reduction Board revoked the Coogee Hotel license.[13] Compensation would be considered if the licensee wished to put in an application. At the same sitting of the License Reduction Board the Jandakot Hotel was also delicensed but the Naval Base Hotel, located four mile to the south of the Coogee Hotel was to remain.

Liquor licensing has had a long history in the state. The first seven licenses were issued on New Year's Day 1830, just six months after the arrival of the first settlers.[14] In the following years hotels and wayside inns sprang up in Fremantle and Perth. Drink was a feature of the colony from the early days of settlement and by 1833 Fremantle had a ratio of one pub for every ninety people.[15] In the courts, many of the criminal charges were for drunkenness. The rate of alcohol consumption was not helped by the fact that masters, due to a shortage of currency in the early days of the colony, were allowed to pay a third of their employee's wages in spirits.[16]

During the convict era between 1850 and 1868 the number of pubs grew rapidly. When Governor Arthur Kennedy arrived in 1855 he was astounded at the number of pubs and the prevalence of drunkenness in the colony.[17] An Irishman with temperance tendencies, Kennedy as Governor had the power to legislate as he pleased and he moved to reduce the number of licenses issued in order to deal with drunkenness.[18] However this was at odds with the revenue raised from the sale of spirits, which in 1855 was about three times that raised from the sale of land.

From around that time conservative groups, known as Temperance Societies, began to put pressure on the governing bodies to restrict alcohol sales. These Temperance Movements were driven by a Christian ideology which aimed to control any behaviour that they considered anti-social such drinking to excess, gambling and prostitution. In 1854 the first Temperance Hall in Perth had opened to advocate for the value of thrift and sobriety.[19] The Western Australian

branch of the Women's Christian Temperance Movement (WCTU) was founded in 1892. It favoured social purity and rejected drinking, gambling and illicit sexual encounters.[20]

Despite the efforts of these societies drinking alcohol remained a popular pastime in the community. The huge influx of people, mostly men, to Western Australia following the gold rush did not improve the situation. The following report from the *Daily News* on Wednesday 25 April, 1894 gives us some idea of what the local Resident Magistrate, Mr. Robert Fairbairn was up against in the Fremantle Court:

> … John Green, who was put into the dock suffering from two black eyes and a severely cut face, was charged with being drunk and disorderly and assaulting the arresting constable. A fine of £5 with costs was imposed. Mary Butler confessed to a charge of drunkenness. This was her 11th appearance. A sentence of 7 days imprisonment was imposed … Patrick McElvoy, who came out of prison on Monday, was sent into retirement for another seven days for drunkenness; for a like offence Edward Alnor, John Wilke, Alexander Kidd and William Devaski, new arrivals, were cautioned and discharged.

By 1908 twenty eight percent of all offences brought to trial were attributable directly to drunkenness.[21] The Commissioner of Police at the time was F.A. Hare and he demanded that measures be taken to counter this behaviour which included reducing the number of licenses issued.[22] The Fremantle Temperance Alliance believed that much could be done through legislation to keep men moral and temperate by restricting the number of liquor licenses issued. The Fremantle Temperance Alliance was formed in 1895 when the various groups opposed to alcohol consumption banded together. They included the Salvation Army, Sons of Temperance, Church of England Temperance Society, Congregational Band of Hope, Rechabites, Wesleyan Temperance Societies and Women's Christian Temperance Union among many others.[23] Their fears, with some justification, were that alcohol was destroying the fabric of society.

Temperance movements, as the name suggests, started out with the aim of promoting moderation in drinking alcohol, as opposed to total abstinence. However over time the temperance groups' members, dubbed 'wowsers', were convinced that best thing for everyone

was total abstinence and their goal was prohibition, which is the prevention by law of the manufacture and sale of alcohol.

In the wider community many people did not see drinking alcohol or being drunk as a crime. People wanted to have a drink and saw no wrong in it. Beer, it was said 'was the workingman's drink and in a hot climate like this and in a place like Fremantle where the water is bad, men have an excuse for drinking beer'.[24] The struggle between what some people in the community thought of as normal behaviour, such as drinking alcohol and what those with the power to make the decisions on what is anti-social behaviour or a crime in the eyes of the law led to a referendum on Prohibition. In the referendum, which was held in April 1925, the proposal was defeated so the majority of the population, as it turned out, was not in favour of banning the use of alcohol.[25] A pragmatic compromise between the aims of the Temperance Movement and needs of the hotel industry was reached and resulted in the establishment of the License Reduction Board whose brief was to close excess licenses above the statutory number of hotels and also to increase the size and standard of licensed hotels. Unfortunately the Coogee Hotel did not live up to the standards of the Board and consequently lost the liquor license that Walter Powell had so persistently pursued. No longer able to operate as a hotel, the old building lay idle for about four years before it entered the next phase of its life as an orphanage.

CHAPTER 9

SEASIDE HOUSE: THE ORPHANAGE AT COOGEE

In 1931 the Orphanages Committee of the Anglican Diocese of Perth was looking for new premises to replace their holiday cottage at Como.[1] The Committee was responsible for the children of the Swan Boy's Orphanage and the Perth Girl's Orphanage which was later amalgamated to become the Swan Anglican Orphanages and eventually Swanleigh at Midland. Prior to the 1870s abandoned or orphaned children were either ignored or cared for at the Government funded Women's Poor House. In 1869 William Tozer, expiree and grandfather of the famous Coogee horse rider, Maudie Tozer, was jailed for assaulting a policeman. As he was a widower his four young children, one of whom was Maudie's father, were put into the Poor House.[2]

From around the start of the 1870s both the Catholic and Anglican churches were instrumental in setting up the first orphanages in Perth, giving children who were in need, a home and someone to look after them. At the homes they also received a basic education and training with the aim of making them useful and productive members of society. All the girls were trained for housework and could secure good employment in the homes of the wealthy when they turned sixteen. Those showing other talents were trained as typists and dressmakers.[3] The boys were generally trained to do manual work such as gardening, carpentry and milking the cows.[4] Over the years the treatment of the children became more humane and they were given privileges such as annual holidays. An extract from a report in the *Sunday Times* of 2 February, 1941 gives us an idea of what the children, 'these growing saplings of the Middle Swan' had in store for them on their annual holidays:

> The youngsters start the day at 6.30 a.m. when they roll up their blankets and disport themselves under the numerous showers. Breakfast (and a liberal and varied helping is tucked into them) follows with a general clean-up and then a race to the ocean where aquatic gamboling takes place between 10 and 12 o'clock. Lunch follows with a lay-off until 3 p.m., and then more swimming until 4.45 p.m. Tea comes in time to allow an evening by the wireless, in parlor games, sing-songs and boxing and

> wrestling … They go back physically reinforced, to work at the lathe and the saw bench, the field and the dairy, to engage in the more serious business of fitting themselves to become strong and useful citizens of Australia.

The old Coogee Hotel which had lain empty and neglected since it was delicensed in 1927 was bought by Swan Anglican Orphanages for the sum of six hundred and forty one pounds which at the time was considered a bargain.[5] Surrounded by four acres of land, with ready access to the beach and a fresh water well, it was ideal as a seaside holiday home for the children and became the site of their annual summer holidays. The official opening, attended by His Grace Archbishop LeFanu was on January 17, 1931.[6] Starting on Boxing Day each year the girls from the Perth Girl's Orphanage had three weeks holiday at the beach followed by the boys from the Boys' Swan Orphanage.[7] For fifteen years the Seaside House, as it was generally known, provided a welcome break for the children from the strict institutional regime of the orphanage. In the late 1930s a group of Fremantle wharfies, including Albert Stanton who himself had been at the Swan Boy's Home, banded together to form the Swan Boy's Orphanage Lumper's Committee. [8] This Committee co-sponsored the cost of the children's annual holidays at Coogee (Figure 31) and even helped out cooking 'bonzer' meals for the children.

The building was initially only used for holidays at Christmas time and lay empty the rest of the year. In 1946 there were fears that as a vacant building squatters, desperate for housing in the post-war housing shortage, might move in.[9] There was also an increased demand for the services of the home following the disruption to family life and hardship that the war had caused. Apart from caring for orphans, the home provided shelter for the children of parents who were simply unable to provide for them in those difficult times. The decision was made to make it a permanent home and at the end of March in 1946 the supervisor, Mrs. Logan, moved in with the first twenty five children.[10] Over the next two years the property was renovated by the staff and boys and the addition of a bathroom and laundry block and weather-proofing the main building changed the appearance of the original building. The name of the home was changed in 1950 to the Willie A. Saw Seaside House, named after an influential and enthusiastic Board member but it continued to be known as the Seaside House or simply Coogee.

Figure 31 Seaside Cottage 1931 - 1959. The view from the back of the building looking west. Photo courtesy of the Anglican Diocese of Perth, Western Australia, Archives.

The orphanage at Coogee operated for the next twenty two years. By the early 1960s there was a decrease in the number of children needing state care due to a reduction in child migration from Britain and policy changes by the State Government. The detrimental effect of large institutional orphanages on young people was finally recognized and the Government pursued other options for orphans such as adoption. Seaside House closed permanently in 1968 when the Main Roads department announced that it was planning to resume much of the surrounding land on which the hotel was built to build a high-capacity road to Rockingham.[11] The few remaining children at the home were relocated to Parkerville Children's Home in the eastern suburbs of Perth.

The lovely old hotel building was almost lost to development as Main Roads had originally intended to demolish it. Fortunately this didn't happen. Over the following years there were many plans made for the building but despite this, it sat idle and derelict much of the time. For a while in the 1970s it was the headquarters of the Coogee Progress Association. In 1990, Jana Holdings Pty. Ltd. was granted an eleven-year lease with permission to extend and renovate the

existing structure.[12] This resulted in an addition to the north wing of the building, but still the building was not occupied.

Eventually the cultural and historical significance of the building was realized and in 2001 the old Coogee Hotel was entered into the State's Register of Heritage Places.[13] Main Roads sought the help of the State Heritage Office's Heritage Works division to restore it and prepare it for sale. The State Heritage Office's philosophy was that keeping old buildings used and active was the best form of conservation. With this in mind some of the newer additions were removed to restore the original character of the hotel and the much needed restoration of the interior brought the building back to life. Money for the project came from the State Government's Revolving Fund, a scheme designed to reactivate languishing publicly owned heritage buildings to ensure a viable future.[14]

In December 2017 restauranteur Nic Trimboli and property developer Adrian Fini bought the site for $2.3 million.[15] Apart from restoring the building and renovating the interior which was in quite a dilapidated state, their aim was to create something of the original sense of place. With this in mind, much work has been done to restore the building to its former glory. Lush, new gardens have been established around the hotel, where fresh vegetables and produce for the restaurant kitchen reflect the history of the area as a market garden, creating a link to the past. It has become once again a place of social gathering, a place to eat and drink and enjoy the still lovely Coogee beach area. Since opening as the Coogee Common in March 2020, the restaurant has been drawing people from near and far, adding a new chapter to the story of the 120 year old building.

EPILOGUE

As a result of residential development in the Coogee area, there are only a few reminders of the rich heritage of early European settlement, which laid the foundations of modern Coogee. The old Coogee Hotel is one such reminder of what life was like for the people who lived 'Round About Coogee' in the early days of the twentieth century. Other traces of the area's past history include the tall red brick chimney at the Robb Jetty abattoir site, fragments of railway lines and some underwater pylons of the old jetty. The ruins of Barney McGrath's Pensioner Guard cottage are still standing on the south west shore of Lake Coogee.

The 'Garden of the West' is blooming again and the old Coogee Hotel is once more a lively gathering place for locals and visitors alike. Walter Powell's legacy and contribution to the cultural heritage of the Coogee area are still evident. The road opposite the hotel, Powell Road, still provides access to the beach and Powell Park (Figure 32) on Cockburn Road to the south of the hotel is named after him, a reminder of Powell's five acres and the dairy the family owned.

Figure 32 Powell Park on Cockburn Road, Coogee, 2020. Photo by author.

Although I wrote this book mostly to satisfy my own curiosity, I have gained a lot from the process. Delving into the local history has enhanced my sense of belonging and attachment to the place that I have called home for over thirty years. By learning about the early European history of Coogee and Fremantle, I have developed a greater appreciation of the area's unique geographical and cultural attributes. Especially now in the COVID-19 era when many of us are confined to home, it is a great opportunity to establish or re-establish a connection to and appreciation of the place we live in.

Standing on the beach at Coogee opposite the old hotel looking south (Figure 33), the view is not too different from the days when Walter Powell cheerily greeted his customers at the bar of his hotel, over a hundred years ago. It is still a ‘magnificent stretch of sandy beach, lapped by the sparkling blue waters of the Indian Ocean’, as Walter Powell himself described it. The view across Cockburn Sound to Garden and Carnac Islands is largely unchanged. There are no tall masted ships coming through Challenger Passage now but ships aplenty still anchor in Gage Roads waiting their turn to dock in the busy port of Fremantle.

Figure 33 Coogee Beach in 2020. Photo by Steve Wells.

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About the Author

Maeve Harvey lives in Coogee. She worked for many years for the Agriculture Department of Western Australia but her true passion was only realised once she retired. Inspired her primary school geography teacher she returned to academic study, completing a degree in geography and international relations.

Having spent many years walking around Coogee with her dogs she developed a keen interest in the history of her local surrounds. Combining the analytical skills of a scientist and her recently acquired academic studies Maeve set out on a journey to work out "what makes Coogee what it is today". As a result *Round About Coogee* presents a detailed yet very readable narrative about aspects of our history and some of its characters. In the process of her writing Maeve has also gained an appreciation of what it means to be a settler in a new place.

Her narrative captures a world which has only recently passed; a world which is similar but very different to our own. It helped her to appreciate our past and her place in the present.