

# Pratique

Friends of Woodman Point Recreation Camp

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WINTER 2020

## A COMMEMORATION AT THE ISOLATION HOSPITAL

March 2020 marked the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death at Woodman Point Quarantine Station of Sister Barbara, a sister of the Order of St John of God, who lost her life caring for a patient, James Sharp, who had disembarked from the vessel R.M.S. *Naldera*, and was subsequently found to be infected with the deadly disease of smallpox.

A paper outlining the events of the time was put together by Sister Mary Eugenia Brennan, a current member of the Order, so that the events of 1930 were appropriately and accurately recorded for posterity. This case was particularly close to the heart of Sr. Eugenia. As a younger sister, she had



personally known some of the other sister-carers who had tended Sr. Barbara during her illness and so, was uniquely inspired to research and write this sad tale.

Sr. Eugenia’s paper, which provides a full account of the story of Sr. Barbara and of all the other people connected either directly or indirectly with that episode in 1930, was researched from records held within the archives of the St John of God

**Pratique** - just what does it mean?

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

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



From *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*

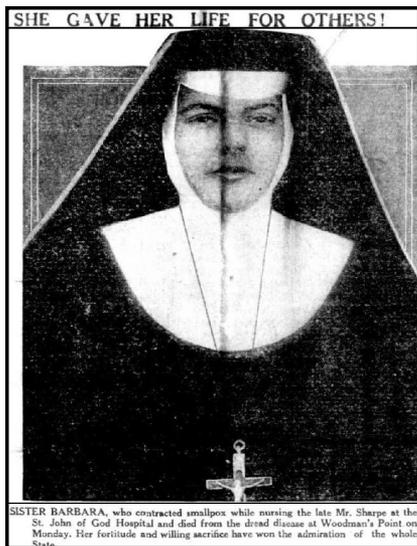
Order and supplemented by other primary records: contemporary newspapers of the day and detailed documentation generated at the time through the processes of the Commonwealth Department of Health. It was presented at an afternoon gathering of health and religious professionals and colleagues and Friends' members on 12 March 2020 and in the presence of descendants of Bertie Poore, who had helped nurse Sr. Barbara, and assisted at her cremation.

It was altogether too ironical that on this very day, a state of emergency was announced within Australia and our State to deal with another contagious disease outbreak, that of the COVID-19 virus.

Mary Gertrude Smith, a local West Australian girl of 20 years, had joined the Order of St John of God in 1927 and, on reception into the community, was given the name Sister Barbara. In November of 1929, she made temporary Profession of Vows at Subiaco and shortly afterwards commenced work as a nursing assistant in the hospital there. However, unlike other Irish-born sisters, Barbara had never been vaccinated against smallpox as Australia did not then have a policy of preventative vaccination.

Barbara, along with five other fellow sisters, was listed among those to be sent into quarantine at Woodman Point in mid-February to care for James Sharp and his wife who was considered a "contact". On arrival there, Barbara and the other sisters were vaccinated against the smallpox virus. It is recorded that she produced a positive Jennerian response, indicating an immunity to the disease, but sadly Barbara had contracted the disease prior to vaccination as could be deduced by the time of onset of symptoms. When

symptoms became apparent, Barbara was taken to the Observation Ward where a diagnosis of smallpox was made on 26 February. She passed away on 17 March 1930, having been tenderly cared for by her fellow sisters throughout her ordeal.



The story of Sister Barbara and her fellow sisters' dedication to the principles of care and compassion is heart-warming and serves as a timely reminder to us all of the dedication of all people who put their own lives at risk whilst caring for others. Following Sr. Eugenia's presentation, the group walked to the nearby Crematorium, where Sr. Barbara's remains had been cremated, for a time of thoughtful contemplation and prayer, and the laying of flowers in her memory.

A copy of Sr. Eugenia's research paper is now held in the Isolation Hospital by Friends and is available for members to read about this poignant episode in the history of the Woodman Point Quarantine Station.

## FROM THE PAGES OF HISTORY

*With thanks to Betty Shepherd for sending this interesting historical article with a contemporary twist, thanks to the Fremantle Society*

### WE ALL NEED A DOSE OF QUARANTINE NOW

Sir Edmund Walcott Henderson resigned as commissioner of police in London in 1886 when crowds smashed up Trafalgar Square. Before then, he had been an eminently sensible and likeable Comptroller of Convicts in Fremantle. He built Fremantle Prison, and for himself the best private house in Western Australia at the time, The Knowle, which still sits in its original location just outside the prison, unloved and unrestored, despite years of lobbying by the Fremantle Society.

150 years ago he was in Fremantle waiting for 65 sappers and miners of the 20th Company to arrive to help build his prison, and was concerned to hear that there were cases of whooping cough on board the *Anna Robertson* when it arrived in Gage Roads. He and the government insisted on quarantine, as memories of the 1848 whooping cough epidemic which had killed so many whites, and Aborigines, were still fresh.

Those infected were placed on Carnac Island, and families at Woodman Point, but strangely, unmarried people were set free. All the British mail unloaded was fumigated.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies was furious to hear about the quarantine, and wrote from Downing Street, London that "quarantine is a serious inconvenience to commerce",

and that the Admiralty had no intention of paying for it.

This photograph taken on Monday 23 March shows an empty Fremantle as people self quarantine.



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

How things can change in an instant! Who would have thought at Christmas how our lives could change so much due to the COVID-19. virus? Cancellation of all our tours, meetings and some of our activities.

Even during the isolation period, our group has been busy. In February we held a busy bee to tidy up the Isolation Hospital, the Crematorium and the grave sites ready for the coming tours.



Thank you to all that attended that busy bee.

In early March, we received the donation of a Stokes stretcher and coal basket, the same as would have been used on the *Boonah*. Thank you to Jenni and Michael for setting up the display that incorporated these items.

On 12 March, Friends hosted a special presentation from Sister Eugenia Brennan of the Order of St. John of God and a commemoration service for Sister Barbara, who passed away from smallpox at Woodman Point ninety years ago. Thank you to all who contributed to a successful afternoon.

Two days later on 14 March, we suspended our heritage tours due to COVID-19 and had to cancel all of our booked tours. Thank you Jenni for all your hard work during this period.

Early in May Friends applied for a grant from the City of Cockburn towards renovation of the Crematorium. I am delighted that we were successful. Thank you to Ainslie for her great work on the submission of the application. And thank you to Michael for organising quotes for the painting.

Also early in May, signage showing the names of those buried in unmarked graves was completed and installed. Thank you to Matt and the staff of the Recreation Camp for their work on that project.

In mid May we received a link to photos taken aboard the *Boonah* in 1918/19. These were taken by Sergeant Norman Gillies. Fantastic photos showing life on the *Boonah*. Thank you to Jenni, Chris and Jackie for adding these photos to our collection.

Recently discovered also was information relating to two nurses who served at Woodman Point. Matron Mary Ann Nicolay served in 1893 during the smallpox epidemic and Nurse Mollie Skinner served in 1919 during the Spanish Flu epidemic. Both have interesting stories. Their photos have been added to the display in the Nurses' Room.

Even though we have been in isolation, a lot has happened over the last couple of months. Hopefully, it will not be too long before we can again start tours.

Gary Marsh  
President

**LATEST NEWS FROM FRIENDS**

- ❖ The *Boonah* display has been recently enhanced by Evelyn Seubert's kind donation of a Stokes stretcher and a ship coal basket, similar to those that would have been used on the *Boonah*. These objects were from the personal collection of Earle, former President of Friends, who passed away in 2016.
- ❖ The historic trail around Woodman Point has been enhanced by the addition of new signage at the site of the original Station cemetery in bushland opposite the access road to the dining hall.

In remembrance of those buried in the  
Woodman Point Quarantine Station original cemetery

Name	Date	Age	Gender	Place	Name	Date	Age	Gender	Place
William Miles	17 April 1893	46	Small Pox	Queensland	Charles Gullman	23 November 1924	24	Female	Queensland
Ala Kim	20 June 1894	30	Small Pox	Queensland	John Higgins	24 February 1904	41	Male	Queensland
Ala King	28 July 1896	46	Small Pox	Queensland	Charles Fenton	14 February 1905	42	Female	Queensland
Sammy Wilson	12 April 1900	34	Small Pox	Queensland	Charles Gullman	12 February 1919	25	Female	Queensland
Ala Chan	6 March 1901	27	Small Pox	Queensland	Walter Smith	23 March 1919	25	Small Pox	S.S. Chang
Ala Chan	9 March 1901	26	Small Pox	Queensland	John Smith	2 December 1919	25	Small Pox	S.S. Adams
Anna Buckley	1 April 1901	23	Small Pox	Queensland	Sam O'Leary	23 February 1919	26	Small Pox	S.S. Adams
Ala King	25 June 1901	23	Small Pox	Queensland	John Smith	4 April 1919	7	Small Pox	S.S. Adams
George McInnes	12 May 1901	28	Small Pox	Queensland	Charles Gullman	4 May 1919	7	Small Pox	S.S. Adams
Thomas Campbell	17 February 1903	22	Small Pox	Queensland	John Smith	8 May 1919	7	Small Pox	S.S. Adams
John Higgins	28 February 1903	24	Small Pox	Queensland	Charles Gullman	12 February 1919	25	Small Pox	S.S. Adams
Ala Chan	28 September 1903	32	Small Pox	Queensland	John Smith	23 March 1919	25	Small Pox	S.S. Adams
Ala Chan	6 November 1903	27	Small Pox	Queensland	John Smith	12 April 1919	25	Small Pox	S.S. Adams
Philip O'Leary	4 July 1904	16	Small Pox	Queensland	Ala Chan	1 November 1919	17	Small Pox	S.S. Adams
John McInnes	11 August 1904	17	Small Pox	Queensland	John Smith	12 April 1919	25	Small Pox	S.S. Adams

The new sign acknowledges and remembers the 30 quarantine victims who died in the period 1893 to 1918 and are buried in unmarked graves in this cemetery.

Many thanks to Matt Hayes and the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries who organised and provided the new signage.

- ❖ The next meeting of Friends will be held on Thursday 30 July 2020 in the Isolation Hospital, commencing at 6.30pm. All members are welcome to attend.

### UPDATE FROM THE CAMP

I write this update to you from my office within what is now a very quiet camp.

There have been some eerie reminders in recent weeks about the role of this historical place in protecting Western Australian community from deadly world pandemics. During the state emergency response to COVID-19, Woodman Point Recreation Camp was called upon by the Premier to provide protective accommodation for a small group of 'rough sleepers' from the Fremantle area, with the view to limiting the risk of transmission within this at-risk community.

The group arrived on the morning of Good Friday 10 April, and left the camp on Friday 15 May, some five weeks later. The group were generally grateful for the support provided to them during this time, and many of them have since been able to find ongoing housing

arrangements. (I do now wonder if I am able to be considered a 'Quarantine Station Officer in Charge'?)

We are unlikely to see the return of our primary client market for some months to come, particularly given that schools, our primary client base, are still not permitted to take part in excursions or camps. We have a number of casual instructors and cleaning staff who are eagerly awaiting a return to work, and the camp is liaising with other branches within the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, to prepare for the return of camp events and the implementation of several COVID-19 Action Plans.

Having said that, bookings for Terms 3 and 4 this year have been flooding in, and all camps in our network are at capacity during that time. It will be a very busy second half to the year, pending, of course, any return to social restrictions in the future.

May I pass on my thanks to all the Friends' members on the ongoing work the group has been able to achieve. It has been very pleasing to see the level of enthusiasm and energy that has grown within the Association. Congratulations also to Ainslie and the committee for recent success in grant applications to support the objectives of the group.

Matt Hayes  
Camp Manager

**NEW PHOTOS FROM THE BOONAH**  
Sergeant Norman Gillies, of the Australian Flying Corps, was on board the HMAT *Boonah* on its return voyage

from Durban to Australia in November 1918. He disembarked in Adelaide and was quarantined on Torrens Island.



The photos taken either on the *Boonah* or at the Torrens Island Quarantine Station in South Australia are from the Norman Gillies collection, courtesy of Maurice Austin.



**Snoozing on a paravane, *Boonah***

The full collection of Norman Gillies' photos can be viewed online at <http://empirecall.pbworks.com/w/page/139892598/HMT-Boonah-quarantined-at-Torrens-Island%2C-1919>



**Washing day on the *Boonah***

## CREMATORIUM IMPROVEMENTS

Friends are delighted to receive further support from the City of Cockburn, with another successful Community Grant application awarded recently. This grant funding will contribute towards maintenance costs of the Crematorium.

Built in 1901, the Woodman Point Crematorium holds great historical significance, and will significantly benefit from a paint job and rust-proofing. Thank you to Gary, Mike and Ainslie for their contributions by way of research, quote attainment and application submission which led to the successful grant.

Friends would very much like to thank the City of Cockburn for their contribution towards the preservation of the Crematorium. We have been very fortunate to receive the City of Cockburn's support over many years.

We look forward to completing this important site work and sharing the outcome with our members and wider community. The Crematorium is often cited as an unexpected highlight from those who partake in our tours, due to its pre-eminence as the oldest crematorium in Australia, and its remarkably unique bush location.

## NEW MEMBERS

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

- Jacky Lomas from Dawesville

## HERITAGE TOURS

Friends of Woodman Point Recreational Camp operate regular heritage tours of the former Quarantine Station and the Isolation Hospital Museum for community groups. Morning tea is included in all tours, and if required, lunch can be provided at an additional cost.

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

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



Jenni



Chris



Ian



Karen



Suzie



Gary



Neil

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

## UPCOMING HERITAGE TOURS

June 2020

July 2020

**In light of the COVID-19 alerts, heritage tours have been suspended until further notice.**

**COMMITTEE 2019 – 2020**

**PRESIDENT**  
Gary Marsh



**TREASURER**  
Mike Poore



**PAST PRESIDENT**  
Jenni Carder



**SECRETARY/**  
Ainslie Poore



**VICE PRESIDENT**  
Neil Wilson



**MEMBERSHIP**  
Ainslie Poore



**EX-OFFICIO COMMITTEE MEMBER**  
Matt Hayes



**MEMBER SERVICES**

**HERITAGE TOUR BOOKINGS**  
Jenni Carder



**PRATIQUE**  
Neil Wilson



**WEBSITE MAINTENANCE AND DESIGN**

