



FREMANTLE STUDIES DAY

Sunday 24 October 2021

1.00pm – 5.00pm

Woodman Point Quarantine Station

In the midst of the COVID pandemic the 2021 Fremantle Studies Day explores issues of migration including the need for and consequences of managing the arrival of people into Australia, the potential for issues like racism to emerge and the impact of other cultures on the very fabric of our town. What better place to hold this than the Woodman Point Quarantine Station, built to protect the nation from the ravages of the Spanish Flu.

Cost: Members \$20, non-members \$25
Venue: Woodman Point Recreation Camp (previously WP Quarantine Station)
 end of O'Kane Court, Coogee
Bookings: ESSENTIAL. Entry is via a code you will receive on registration.
 By Tuesday 19 October to secretary.fhs@gmail.com

PROGRAM

Neil Wilson	Hidden history in our midst – the Woodman Point. Quarantine Station
Tarryn Lawrie	Fremantle: Homebase for the Commonwealth Customs Service in Western Australia
Michelle McKeough	The case of Ah Keo, 1901: How the death of one man to bubonic plague exposed the worst of our post-colonial prejudices
Susanna Iuliano	More than concrete and columns: Italian migrant influence on place making in post-war Fremantle



The recipient of the inaugural Ron and Dianne Davidson Research Scholarship will be announced on the day.

<https://fhs.org.au/2021-ron-and-dianne-davidson-research-scholarship/>

Hidden history in our midst – the Woodman Point Quarantine Station – Neil Wilson

The coastal heath to the south of Fremantle hid, for nearly 100 years, a community health facility barely known even to locals, some of whom lived within a stone's throw of its limestone and asbestos structures. Only today, as the world faces another medical pandemic, we can perhaps have any real understanding of the magnitude of its importance, of its contribution to the health, safety and wellbeing of the western gateway to Australia, and of the courage and compassion of the small group of Western Australians who lived and worked there.

The former Woodman Point Quarantine Station, established in 1886, remains to this day largely intact, but with a different lease on life. It's like a time capsule – a piece of living history that still boasts Australia's first crematorium, an air raid shelter, a fumigation chamber, wooden paneled dormitories and a dining hall of breathtaking architectural splendour. Neil Wilson will outline its history and operations, and tell the stories of some of those who passed through this facility at a time when Fremantle faced the scourges of bubonic plague, Spanish influenza and smallpox on its very doorstep.

Born, raised and educated in the Fremantle area, **Neil Wilson** spent his working life in education-related fields, firstly as a teacher of geography, social studies and French, and later in education administration areas such as curriculum development, recruitment, promotions and staffing. An avid genealogist with over 40 years' experience, Neil is a member of several family history and local history associations. He has a deep connection with the former Woodman Point Quarantine Station spending much of his early childhood there at the home of his grandparents: his grandfather was the officer in charge of the Station for 24 years until 1963. He is currently vice president of the Friends of Woodman Point Recreation Camp.

Fremantle: Homebase for the Commonwealth Customs Service in Western Australia – Tarryn Lawrie

With the federation of Australia came changes to the administration of customs in Western Australia. The Collector of Customs under Commonwealth jurisdiction became responsible for ports around WA, and customs officers took up duties as guards of the Western Australian coastline. The busy port of Fremantle became the epicentre for customs activities in the state.

These activities included the control and restriction of 'prohibited' migrants, the seizure of enemy ships at the outbreak of war, and the discovery of illegal drug shipments. Drawing on documents and photographs from the National Archives collection, this paper explores the role of the Commonwealth customs service in Western Australia.

Tarryn Lawrie is a senior archival officer at the National Archives of Australia Western Australia Office. She has a postgraduate diploma in archives and records, and coordinates and curates local exhibitions and public seminars on various topics. Working to assist members of the public with researching family history and specialised topics, she has a fascination with the history of customs and quarantine in Australia.

The case of Ah Keo, 1901: How the death of one man to bubonic plague exposed the worst of our post-colonial prejudices – M McKeough

During the final years of the nineteenth century, an international pandemic of Bubonic Plague reached a newly-federated Australia via Sydney in January, 1900. The West Australian experience not only gave emphasis to a crisis of sanitation and health, but exposed the worst prejudices of its colonial beginnings.

When the plague reached the Chinese community, Western Australians began to display the social vilification that had coloured Sydney's recent experience of plague. Members of the recent Chinese diaspora from the Western Australian goldfields settled in the city in a community of their own and were laid open to slur and invective in the newspapers and in the courtrooms.

This paper uses, at its centre, the case of Chinese plague victim, Ah Keo, who was taken from the city 'to a lonely place in the bush' to die under a tree. It also examines the ugly controversy that surrounded his death, and of the further deaths of his countrymen; revealing the experience of Chinese immigrants during a crisis which has remained unexamined in current historiography.

Dr Michelle McKeough is an historian working in Western Australian history. She is a contributing author of *Voices of the West End* (Fremantle: Maritime Museum of W.A., 2012) and author of *Rescues, Rogues and Rough Seas 150 years of Water Police in Western Australia*. (Fremantle: W.A. Water Police, 2000). Michelle's thesis (Murdoch University, 2016) examined three times of crisis in Fremantle during the twentieth century: The Bubonic Plague; The Great War and the Depression Era. She is currently writing a history of the pandemic of Bubonic Plague experienced in WA between 1900 and 1906, due for publication later this year.

More than concrete and columns: Italian migrant influence on place making in post-war Fremantle – Susanna Iuliano

Wherever they went around the world, Italian migrants made and remade spaces around their homes and neighbourhoods which set them apart as distinct. The Italian presence in Fremantle was no less visible than in other 'Little Italies' across the globe. From the early days of their migration to Fremantle in the late 1800s, to the heyday of Italian migration to Western Australia in the 1950s and 60s, Italian migrants left an indelible stamp on the port city. This paper explores the ways Italians in Fremantle created an Italian ambience which influenced the cultural and built environment of Fremantle. It will examine some of the daily and seasonal movements and activities of Italian migrants in Fremantle which helped define places as 'Italian', as well as the more permanent ways Italian migrants changed the shapes of Fremantle houses, buildings and streets where they lived and worked.

Dr Susanna Iuliano is a Fremantle girl who has researched and written the histories of Italian migrants locally and around the globe. She did her doctoral research in Canada on Italian migration to Canada and Australia and has worked in a range of federal and state government and academic roles relating to migration and multiculturalism and in the field of migration research. From 2005-2010, Susanna was a research fellow at the University of Western Australia working on the 'Italian Lives' project which documented the histories of Italian migrants in Western Australia. From 2014-2018 she was Battye Historian (Special Projects) at the State Library of Western Australia. In 2019 she completed her library studies to become a 'mid-life librarian' and currently manages the Local History Centre for the City of Vincent. She is author of three books *Italian Lives in Western Australia* (which won the Premier's Award for WA History 2010); *Fremantle's Italians* (2011) and *Blessing of the Fleet: A History of Fremantle's Festa* (2018).