

Milestones in Geraldton's Municipal History

Prepared by Lorin Cox

The sesquicentenary (150 years) of Local Government in Western Australia celebrations provide an opportune time to reflect on the milestones which have shaped the City of Greater Geraldton. The first major step towards Geraldton becoming a municipality was the commencement of both the Geraldton District Road Board and the Greenough Road Board on 25 January 1871 (*The Western Australian Government Gazette*). Shortly following this milestone the Municipality of Geraldton was declared on the 21 February 1871. The first council operated out of the Pensioner Guard units built in 1854 situated on Gregory Street (pictured in the 1890's, partly demolished).



Historically, the local community have celebrated the anniversary of this important occasion in a number of ways. In May 1921 present and past members of the Council gathered at a celebration held at the Council Chambers on Eleanor Street (Chapman Road), adjacent to the Town Hall to commemorate 50 years of local government (*West Australian* article, 26 May 1921, p.10). On Saturday 20 February 1971 a Centenary Parade and Formal Dinner were organised by the City, along with the installation of a Time Capsule to be opened 21 February 2071. The Time Capsule along with a brass plaque, was installed in the footpath outside the Civic Centre by Mayor Askew and co. Two more time capsules and plaques lie nearby commemorating the proclamation of the City of Geraldton 1988 and the Amalgamation of Geraldton-Greenough 2007.



Since becoming a Municipality, the City has hosted a number of Visits of State including three visits by her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II (pictured in 1963 for the opening of the Civic Centre). In 1907 the opening of the Town Hall also attracted a party of dignitaries including Governor, Sir Frederick Bedford and Lady Bedford. The construction of the Town Hall was quite a significant advancement in Geraldton's early history. Consistently across the years local newspapers have reported that the community have provided visitors with a very warm welcome.

Alterations to the geographical boundaries of the local government area have led to a number of name changes in recent history. The amalgamation with the substantial Shire of Greenough in 2007 saw the Local Government area renamed to City of Geraldton-Greenough. Just a few short years later in 2011, the Shire of Mullewa with its strong, passionate community amalgamated with the City to create the City of Greater Geraldton. Both amalgamations divided local opinion, however, the shared services model has presented many opportunities resulting in some positive outcomes throughout the local government area.

Geraldton has benefited from many State Government initiatives throughout history including the installation of the Geraldton-Northampton railway line in 1879 which was the first Government railway line in Western Australia. The railway line was initiated from a need to transport lead from

Northampton to Geraldton. Deepening and extension of the Geraldton Harbour have since expanded Geraldton's exporting opportunities. Diverse industries have further contributed to Geraldton's prosperity including agriculture (wheat, oats, barley, sheep and tomatoes), tourism and cray fishing.



One major project, the foundations of which recently came to light with the exhumation of the 1994 time capsule, was the Foreshore Redevelopment project. The time capsule buried for the occasion of the official opening of Marine Terrace Central revealed images of the early stages of foreshore works which were followed by the eventual removal of the railway line, implementation of erosion barriers etc. finally resulting in the wonderful foreshore that exists

today. The catalyst for the Foreshore project was that the railway line caused an obstruction to Geraldton's beach front and the trains presented noise pollution problems. Pictured is a train running along Chapman Road in 1997 prior to major works that saw the removal of the line. Today a pedestrian path utilised for walking, cycling, roller blading, skateboarding etc. runs almost exactly the path of the old railway line.

Council has evolved with changing demographics and socially accepted norms. The first Geraldton female Councillor; Jean McKinlay was elected in 1962 and the Council has since seen many female Councillors represented. Council has been required to diversify further to reflect changing demographics in relation to cultural inclusivity. In the 2006 census 70.9% of Geraldtonians listed their birth place as Australia and in 2016 this had dropped to 66.7%. Supported by thriving industry the population growth during the same time period was 11,214 (inclusive of Mullewa and Greenough in 2016).

Since becoming a municipality, the City of Greater Geraldton has come a long way in embracing cultural heritage, in particular, via a strong commitment to the *Reconciliation Action Plan*. This commitment has seen recognition for the local Yamaji peoples established in the form of signage, events and creative arts in all areas of the City of Greater Geraldton.



Image Details

1. First Council Chambers partly demolished 1890's: P 1774 courtesy of courtesy of A. C. Burns.
2. Official Opening of the Geraldton Civic Centre by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 1963: P 1577 courtesy of Mrs Davis.
3. Train along Chapman Road prior to Foreshore development works 1997: P 11805 courtesy of Phil Melling.
4. Launch of Ilgarjiri 2013: courtesy of the City of Greater Geraldton

THE GERALDTON GUARDIAN

Centenary Parade And Dinner

Approximately 60 vehicles, ranging from a wheelbarrow to a low loader decked out and carrying the Geraldton Town Band, will parade through Geraldton's main thoroughfare on Saturday morning to mark the start of the town's observance of the centenary of local government.

The parade will get under way from the assembly point in Anzac Terrace at 8.30 am and the vehicles will move along Marine Terrace to Fitzgerald Street before returning to the council depot.

A horse and buggy will be included in the parade to indicate how the town council has progressed in the 100 years of local government.

TIME CAPSULE

Another highlight will be the burying of a special time capsule in the footpath beside the Geraldton Civic Centre on Saturday.

This capsule will be set in concrete beneath the footpath and above a bronze plaque commemorating the 100th anniversary of the town of Geraldton, opened on February 21, 1871.

Then at 7 pm guests will begin gathering in the library at the Civic Centre for drinks before moving into a special buffet dinner in the reception room.

The guests will include present and past members of the Geraldton Town Council and the Geraldton Municipal Council.

FORMER MAYORS

Two former mayors, James McAloer, who was in office from 1945-1953 and Mr Charles Adson-Clarke, whose term extended from 1968-1969, are expected to attend.

Former councillors include Messrs T. E. Major of Geraldton (1936-1940), J. Doherty of Attadale (1949-50), J. Rieuper of Geraldton (1957-62), F. Wright of Geraldton (1965-66), C. J. Raynor of Geraldton (1964-65), E. Skinner of Attadale (1946-49), F. Devaquina of Geraldton (1954-57), O. G. G. of Geraldton (1953-54), C. W. Midwaters of Attadale (1960-68), T. G. of West Midland (1950-51), D. C. Johnson of Perth (1962-54), R. of Geraldton (1927-50), L. W. Shephard of Geraldton (1928-29 and 1938-36), J. Hatch of Geraldton (1956-59), J. S. Cream of Geraldton (1963-70), W. Dailmore of Florist Park (1951-54), S. J. of Geraldton (1951-58), M. G. Worrall of Geraldton (1968-64), P. Wilson of Dianella (1954-58), S. E. Rundle of Geraldton (1945-48), J. Easton of Geraldton (1948-50), R. W. Maalen of Moonyoonooka (1962-53), F. R. Lemon of Geraldton (1954-61), M. H. Fathers of Geraldton (1951-56), W. B. Wentake of Geraldton (1956-59), W. A. Heath of Geraldton (1964-68 and 1968-70), F. T. Hunt of Bentley (1964-68), R. J. Dunn of Geraldton (1941-44), B. J. Barden of Geraldton (1967-58) and C. B. Clarke of Geraldton (1959-63) and Mesdames J. McKinlay of South

is to become the new offices for the Geraldton Tourist Bureau. The site will be marked with a bronze plaque.

Looking Back To The Start

When local government came to Geraldton 100 years ago, the first tender called by the local authority of that day was for a wheelbarrow.

The population of Geraldton then was 400 compared with some 15,000 today and rates paid were \$160 as against the bill of \$389,000 met by today's 3987 ratepayers.

The total budget for the council one hundred years ago was \$575 of which \$20 was for furnishing of the council centre in Gregory Street. The total budget of the council this year is \$1,200,000.

The council's programme of works covered the works programme of a century ago as against this year's programme by the council of \$350,000. Traffic licences then amounted to \$30 as against today's \$170,000.

Property owners in Marine Terrace paid \$1.25 in rates per block — today's average rate per block in the terrace is \$600.

Happy Boys Caused Big Disaster

LONDON, February 18 — Two boys threw a scarf and a windbreaker into the air — and caused the throx Park disaster in which 66 football fans died, an eye-witness said today.

If they had not bent to pick them up, the crowd could have kept moving down staircase 13 and no one would have been hurt, he told the Glasgow inquiry.

STAIRCASE James Lowrie (22) of Glasgow said the boys were going down the staircase in front of him after the Rangers-Celtic match on January 2.

Asked why the boys tossed the scarf and windbreaker into the air, Mr Lowrie replied: "It was just excitement."

When they bent down to pick them up they were pushed down the stairs by the crowds falling on top of them, he said.

Fake Notes Still Flood Victoria

MELBOURNE, February 18 — Victoria is still being swamped with fake notes. Sixty-five of the forged notes have been passed throughout the State so far this month.

This is only eight less than were detected for the whole of last month.

CONCENTRATING

The note pushers are concentrating on small businesses, mainly milk bars and shops selling mixed goods.

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GERALDTON MUNICIPALITY.

JUBILEE CELEBRATED.

The jubilee of the municipality of Geraldton was celebrated last week. The town was incorporated in 1871, prior to which the affairs had been administered by the Town Trust. Then the population was about 500; now it is about 4,200. The annual rateable value is £42,000, and the rate is 3s. 3d. in the £. The annual income from rates is about £7,500, whilst the gas and electricity undertakings bring in about £9,000. The property owned by the council is worth about £35,000, including the Town Hall, which will accommodate 1,100 people, and which was built in 1907 at a cost of £5,000. There are 38 miles of streets, of which 13 have been metalled, 12 gravelled, and one formed.

There was a large gathering of present and past members of the council at the celebration held at the Council Chambers, which was presided over by the Mayor. A lengthy toast list was gone through. The Mayor, in responding to the toast of "The Municipality," proposed by Mr. Geo. Baston, the oldest native-born Geraldtonian, said that he thought after the hard times they had gone through Geraldton was on the turn, and was about to come into its own. They had fought hard against centralisation, and they must not relax their efforts. They wanted strong, virile men in Parliament for the northern areas to press for the fulfilment of the works which had not been carried out in the past. Certainly some public works were now receiving attention. He believed that the water scheme would soon be an established fact. Without a water scheme it would be impossible to have secondary industries, but a water scheme would mean freezing works, a butter and bacon factory, wool scouring works, etc. Then, instead of a population of about 5,000, they would have a population of 10,000.

During the evening the Mayor, on behalf of the council, presented Mr. W. McLaren, the Town Clerk, who is leaving to go on the land, with an illuminated address, and congratulations were offered to the new Town Clerk, Mr. M. Glendinning.

See the next page for a refreshed version.

Full Article

Geraldton Municipality. Jubilee Celebrated, The West Australian

26 May 1921 – p.10

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Geraldton Municipality.
NOTICE.
THE half-yearly meeting of the rate-payers and Electors will be held at the Town Hall, Geraldton, on Monday, the 1st June, 1874, at 7 p.m. After the business of the half-yearly meeting the election of a Chairman or Councillor, in the room of the late D. H. Scott, Esq., will be proceeded with.
CHARLES CROWTHER.
Chairman, pro. tem.
Geraldton, April 20th, 1874.

Perth City Council.
NOTICE is hereby given that by virtue of the **MUNICIPAL INSTITUTION ACT, 1871, PART VI.**, the following **BYE-LAWS**, having been unanimously adopted by the Council, and confirmed by His Excellency the Governor, shall be in force, and take effect from the first of **MAY** next (inclusive,) viz :—

1. Meetings of the Council.
2. Duties of the Supervisor.
3. Do. of Collector.
4. Licenses for Vehicles.
5. Name and No. of ditto.
6. Licenses for Saddle Horses.
7. Do. for Cattle.
8. Do. for Dogs.
9. } Jetty or Wharf Dues.
10. }
11. } License for Slaughter Houses.
12. }
13. Herding Cattle.
14. Term of Licenses.
15. Damaging or Destroying Property of City Council.
16. False Weights and Measures, and Adulteration.
17. Selling Unwholesome Provisions.
18. Removal of Nuisances.
19. Straying of Live Stock.
20. Projections from Buildings over Thoroughfares or Footpaths.
21. Drainage of certain low-lying portions of Land.

G. GLYDE,
CHAIRMAN PERTH CITY COUNCIL.
24th April, 1871.

Pleasant Evening To Celebrate Centenary

Last Saturday evening an event of interest took place at the Civic Centre the formal burying of a time capsule containing many interesting documents, which is scheduled to be opened a hundred years hence for the perusal of citizens of that day.

After Mayor Askew had covered the spot with a slab and plaque, guests were received by him in the library. The mayor with Mrs Askew, who wore a pastel blue lurex emplene frock, greeted ex-councillors and their wives and present councillors and wives with a few special guests.

All were pleased to meet visitors who came to Geraldton for the ceremony and chatted

during the serving of sherry.

An interesting interlude came with the reading of the inaugural minutes of a hundred years ago by the town clerk, Mr John Cameron. The minute book and other interesting books had been retrieved from near-disposal and are now historical possessions.

A lavish buffet dinner was afterwards served in the reception room, followed by a number of speakers who related experiences and incidents they recalled from past years.

It was interesting to note that Mayor Askew's father and mother, Mr and Mrs T. Askew, were present.

VICTORIA ROADS BOARD.

The following is the annual statement of expenditure of this Board :—

Geraldton, 9th May, 1871.

SIR,—For the information of His Excellency the Governor, I have the honor to enclose you statement of the expenditure of the money voted for the use of the Victoria Road Board for 1870.

There is some irregularity in the auditing of the accounts, but it is the best I can do under the circumstances, not having any auditor appointed by the Board in 1870. I have had the accounts examined by Mr. John Adam, which I trust will be satisfactory to His Excellency.

I have, &c.,

CHARLES CROWTHER,

CHAIRMAN.

Hon. the Colonial Secretary, &c., Perth.



THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN
GOVERNMENT GAZETTE

[PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY.]

TUESDAY, 24th JANUARY, 1871.

GOVERNMENT GAZETTE.

*Colonial Secretary's Office
Perth, 25th January,*

IT is hereby notified, for general information, that under the provisions of the *Act to establish Local Boards for the conservation, improvement, and regulation of Roads in the several Districts of the Colony,* His Excellency the Governor has been pleased to designate and define the following Districts as Road Districts under the Act, and to direct that the first Elections shall be held at the places and dates hereunto annexed, and to appoint as Returning Officers several persons whose names are affixed against each District :—

ROAD DISTRICTS.

No. 1.—MINES.

Bounded on the *North* by an East and West line from the mouth of the Murchison River ; on the *West* by the sea coast ; and on the *South* by an East and West line through Okajee.

No. 2.—GERALDTON.