Kalamunda & Districts Historical Society Inc

The Bulletin

No 305 Spring 2026

Presidents Report
Women at War
How many?
McCullagh Cottage
Annual General Meeting
Events
Demolitions?
Telecommunications in Kalamunda
Creative Arts in the Foothills
You're Invited
Your Committee



After much planning we finally have new display cases in the Post Office.

Kalamunda History Village
Railway Road
Kalamunda WA 6076
Ph; 9293 1371
kdhs@outlook.com.au

Stirk Cottage
12 Kalamunda Road
Kalamunda WA 6076
Open: Sunday 11am to 1pm
Closed January

Presidents Report

President's Report to the AGM 8 August 2026



Some statistics to begin with.
Membership numbers stand at 170 with 70 active members.
Volunteer hours recorded were 4700 of course with many hours done off site.
Visitor numbers to the end of June were 12,906 with monies taken $104,210

Research and Records

Ongoing research by our Archivist in response to enquiries in addition to other research. Examples are the Gibbs family of Carmel. Canning Mills, the Johnson Brothers, Ngilgi.
Research into the Service Women from Kalamunda who served in WW2.
Reprint of *Rails in the Hills* and *A Line on Kalamunda* and *The Zig Zag to Kalamunda* Continuing good sales of our publications.
Quarterly Bulletin outlining news and events as well as research material. Continued indexing of this valuable resource.
Accessioning artefacts and recording information. Digitising accessioning paperwork research of artefacts for example painting of Eliza Mason, WW1 and 2 ID tags belonging to George Schmitt, the leather milkman's money bag, the maul belonging to John Moffatt
Recording artefacts in the storerooms for easier access and for display.
Display of artefacts in the Post Office.
Continuing work on digitising the photo collection.

Social Gatherings and Interchange of Information

Events for the past year

Talks –

- A Film Afternoon Kalamunda Stories
- William Thomas from Thomson's Store
- Basketball and Netball
- A Convicts Connection to Kalamunda
- Women in Telecommunications
- Pedal Organs
- History of Rotary in Kalamunda
- Lawnbrook and the East Gully

Outings –

- Anzac Service at Peninsula Farm

Interchange of Information

- Display at the Kalamunda Show
- Talk to Kalamunda CWA
- Talk to Kalamunda Garden club
- Participation in film Destination WA
- Facebook. Instagram and website dissemination information weekly
- Contribution to RWAHS Affiliates Newsletter
- Attendance at Affiliated RWAHS conference in Cockburn

Management of History Village and Stirk Cottage

The Society manages these two cited under a Lease Agreement with the City of Kalamunda. Monthly meetings with our City Representative are held covering staff matters, opening hours, school visits, filming, maintenance, and the use of the museum site for a particular purpose.
As an element of our Rules of Association, we are required to have a sitting Councilor attend our Management Committee meetings. Our current rep is Councilor Lisa Cooper.
I acknowledge our staff Heritage Officer Lisa Handley and staff members Nicole Theobold, Nicky Mottram, Alison Higgins and Kirralie Granville…. I congratulate them on their commitment, initiative and talents in developing their highly successful education and school holiday programs. The total attendance figure for the Education Program for this past year is 6759.

The Management Committee and Volunteers

My sincere thanks to the KDHS Committee Dianne Harrison Vice President, Paula Wilkins Secretary, Bob Rogers Treasurer, Jeff Harrison Museum Officer, Marcia Maher Archivist, Marie Garwood Collections/Display, Betty Marsh Events/Display, Maureen Robbins Volunteers Coordinator/Roster Secretary, Julie Wood Purchasing Officer. I would like to outline all the things they do but that would take a long time. My thanks also to Councilor Lisa Cooper.
I acknowledge our wonderful volunteers. They perform a variety of tasks both here on the HV site, at Stirk Cottage, in our office at the ZigZag Centre, in the community and at home. All of you are preserving our past but you are about the present and the future. Challenges lie ahead for historians with the advent of AI, but I have confidence in our younger members to meet them full on. Thank you all.
On a personal note, thank you for all your support. We have a wonderful Society, and it is a pleasure to work with you all.

Jenny Lewis

Women of War from Kalamunda

BLAMIRE, ELIZABETH AMY



Service Royal Australian Air Force (WAAAF)
Service Number 111830
Date of Birth 07 Apr 1921
Place of Birth KALAMUNDA, WA
Date of Enlistment 27 Oct 1943
Locality on Enlistment KALAMUNDA
Place of Enlistment PERTH
Next of Kin BLAMIRE, ROBERT (Kalamunda)
Date of Discharge 02 Sep 1946
Rank Aircraftwoman (Telephone Operator)
Posting at Discharge 10 STORES DEPOT

BRYCE, ANNETTE
Service Australian Army
Service Number WFX39120
Date of Birth 31 Aug 1923
Place of Birth KALAMUNDA, WA (Parents Felix and Hazel Bryce. Felix died 1925 Hazel became Lyons)
Date of Enlistment 12 Apr 1943
Place of Enlistment E GUILDFORD, WA
Next of Kin CRAIG, JOHN (Husband 1944)
Date of Discharge 02 Sep 1944 (Compassionate – marriage)
Rank Private
Posting at Discharge 2/1 AUSTRALIAN GENERAL HOSPITAL

Annette worked in non-medical roles in medical units, married a US serviceman during the war and joined him in the USA after WW2. Her history is described in this extract of her obituary in 2016.

Craig Obituary

Craig, Annette Bryce, 93, of Louisville, Kentucky, much loved mother and grandmother, departed this world on Friday, November 18, 2016, at the lovely Gardiner Home, Hospice of the Valley, in Phoenix, Arizona, where she was surrounded by loving family and compassionate staff. Annette was born in Kalamunda, Western Australia (WA), on August 31, 1923, and grew up in Perth, WA. She attended business college in Perth, which prepared her for her future career as an Administrative Secretary. During WWII, she served in the Australian Army Medical Women's Service. It was during this time that she met her future husband, John William Craig, who was stationed near Perth, WA. They met for the first time at a Red Cross dance for American servicemen. They saw each other across a crowded room, and their love for each other was ignited. Annette and Johnny were married in Melbourne, Australia, on June 10, 1944. Annette came to the USA to join her beloved husband in Louisville at the conclusion of the war. In her career, Annette was an Administrative Secretary for the KY Mental Health Manpower Commission, and later, at the Mall of St. Matthews. She was a member of St. Mark's United Methodist Church, where she was a choir member, and belonged to the Women's Circle. Her Australian heritage was very important to her, and she passed this love on to her daughters and grandchildren, who were enthralled by her many stories about growing up in Perth, WA……

Source: https://www.highlandsfuneralhome.com/memorials/annette-craig/2776856

John Paskulich

How Many??

Kalamunda History Village visitor numbers keep increasing each year!

July 2025	Gen Admission 749	Ed Prg	605	Total Visitors 1,354
July 2026	Gen Admission 1,125	Ed. Prog	494	Total Visitors 1,619
Aug. 2025	Gen Admission 385	Ed. Prog	954	Total Visitors 1,339
Aug.2026	Gen Admission 487	Ed. Prog	923	Total Visitors 1,410

Well done to everyone who keep our Village beautifully presented.

Paula Wilkins

Verandah Rescue at McCullagh Cottage

What began as a simple plan to replace one broken floorboard on the McCullagh Cottage verandah soon turned into one of those classic History Village jobs: lift one board, discover another problem, and before long the toolbox is open, the kettle is on, and the volunteers are wondering just how far the rabbit hole goes.

In this case, the broken board led to a much more serious find. One of the verandah support poles was rotten right through and had become unsafe, so the job quickly shifted from a small patch-up to a careful piece of verandah surgery. The roof had to be lifted just enough to allow the old pole to be removed and replaced, and fortunately the team had the perfect piece of equipment on hand: an Acrow prop recently donated by our own volunteer Deb.



Once the work began, it became clear the verandah had a few more secrets to share. Some of the timbers making up the balustrades were bent, tired and rotten, so recycled jarrah was sourced for the repairs. As anyone who has worked with jarrah will know, “recycled” does not mean “ready to go”. There was plenty of measuring, cutting, trimming, planing and patient persuasion before the timber was ready for installation.

Bit by bit, the verandah front took shape again. In the end, all of the main timbers across the front of the verandah were replaced, giving McCullagh Cottage a sturdier and much safer welcome for visitors. Much of this hands-on work was carried out by two of our recently joined members and volunteers, Graeme and Stuart, who certainly did not ease themselves gently into Village life.

With the structural work now done, the verandah is ready for its final flourish. As the weather begins to fine up, the painting phase will get under way, and before long the cottage should be looking fresh, sound and ready to face many more seasons.

It is another reminder that behind every well-kept corner of our Village is a team of volunteers willing to roll up their sleeves, solve problems as they appear, and keep our local heritage standing strong.

Jeff Harrison

Annual General Meeting

Thank you to those who attended our AGM in August, we had 26 people with 10 apologies. We awarded Jeff Harrison a Honourary Membership, and Sheila Jackson was thanked for her service as a committee member.

JEFF HARRISON - HONORARY MEMBER 2026



Jeff has a long connection to History Village starting in the 1990s through his wife Dianne who was our Secretary in the late 1990s. Jeff joined the Society again with Dianne in 2016 and soon joined the Committee. He took on the role of Museum Officer after Peter Watson's retirement. This is one of the most important roles in our Society and a very demanding one. It involves a sound relationship with the City of Kalamunda attending monthly meetings with City Reps and dealing with other City staff as required. Jeff has many skills that he uses constantly to make History Village a better place. Volunteers do a lot of tasks off site and Jeff, and his trailer are a common sight having been collecting and transporting items to the Museum. He also takes good care of the gardens at Stirk Cottage. Jeff is a great support to me personally as President and I can always rely on him for help and advice.

Congratulations Jeff on receiving Honorary Membership of the Society

SHEILA JACKSON



Sheila is retiring from the Committee this year after serving 12 years. Her roles on the Committee were Volunteer Coordinator and Staff Liaison Officer. In addition to these important roles Sheila has taken on board all matters relating to our publications, that is liaising with our Fran Bolland our book person and keeping up book supplies to our retailers. I am happy to say that she will continue to do carry on with this work. We all know Sheila's love of numbers and statistics, and I am sure she will continue to provide us with those as well. Sheila was stalwart of the Education Program and the Sunday Roster. We thank you Sheila for your great contribution to our Society and to the Museum.

Events

Thursday 24th October is a visit to Milton Park, formerly called Cardidr. Afternoon tea will be available for $3.00. Please register for this event, for catering purposes.

Saturday 14th November; Walking down memory lane with Pat Hallahan

Thursday 3rd December; Christmas party.

DEMOLITIONS?! What? Where? Why?

What's this topic got to do with us and our Historical Society? Well, first point that I would make is that history is not just about looking back but also looking forward. Our latest Census will eventually show how many people now live in the City of Kalamunda, and where they are now living. And where they will likely live in the future.

So, how does this all operate? The City of Kalamunda's Planning Department does us the courtesy of letting us know which houses are going to be demolished. Our role is to quickly track down those properties, simply take a photo and note the age of the building, and also the size of the land. Our Society has no ability to prevent this demolition unless it is listed on the State Heritage Council's database (such as the Carmel Primary School which will never be demolished!) Some significant buildings which have been demolished in the last five years are as follows:-

- Altona Chicken Hatchery at 344 Hawtin Road Forrestfield which had been there since the 1950s
- The Forrestfield Library in Strelitzia Road Forrestfield. Built in 1980, it has now been replaced by a large regional-based Police Station and the library has happily re-opened inside the Forrestfield Forum next to Dome. Maybe a win-win!
- The Alan Fernie Pavilion at the Pickering Brook Club. It was in poor condition and generally unused.
- The railway control tower off Abernethy Road. The arrival of the Metronet's Airport Line right through to High Wycombe brought many major changes, which are certainly not complete yet. Watch this space.
- An old house at 125 Stanhope Road, Walliston. This was significant for several reasons: it was built by the first soldier/settler, Alexander Scott, was about 100 years old, and it was the childhood home of our own long-term Society member, Norma Walsh (nee Scott). Now that one really was a bit sad.



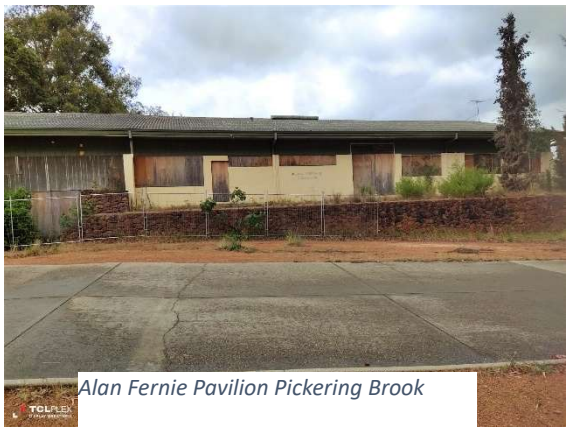
You will know this one!

But generally, the properties we visit, and photograph are houses of varying ages, often not old, but the land on which they stand has become more valuable than previously. Many of the houses in Wattle Grove and parts of High Wycombe were on blocks of one or more hectares. (A hectare is approximately 10,000 sq. meters). Many houses can be built on such plots of land, and this is occurring as soon as deep sewerage is available.

One of the smaller examples of this would be well-recognized by the reader who travels along Maida Vale Road, maybe on the way to the new station. One family lived in one house on 5 acres, on the corner of MV Road and Brenda Street in Maida Vale…Mum, Dad and three children. The house was demolished, a reasonably successful attempt was made to preserve some of the tall trees, and now, Hey Presto…at least 20 houses have been built on this block. How many people have benefited? You do the Maths!

DEMOLITIONS?! What? Where? Why?

Much of the change is occurring in the foothills suburbs (Wattle Grove, High Wycombe and parts of Maida Vale). Like it or not, the hills suburbs have very little deep sewerage yet, so subdivision of



Alan Fernie Pavilion Pickering Brook

blocks and the development of more intensive housing is not yet possible. Blame our ancient rock-hard yards.

So, is all of this Progress, or not? You, dear reader, will have your own strong opinions, I'm sure.

Marcia Maher

Kalamunda Telecommunications 1906 – 2026 pt1

2026 is the 150th anniversary of AG Bell's first patented telephone and the 120th anniversary of the start of Kalamunda's telecommunications.

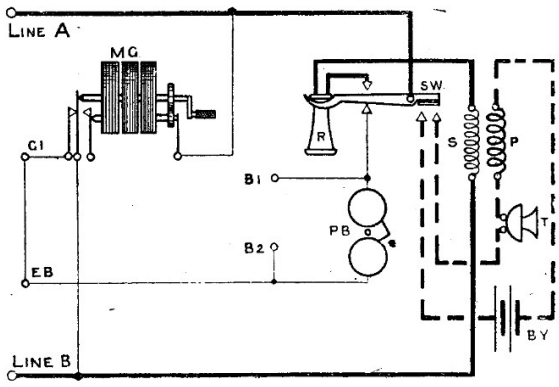
Provision of a telephone service to Kalamunda was underway in 1906 and the first telephone was connected to the (non-official) Kalamunda Post Office (PO) at 63 Railway Road by 1907. The PO was owned and operated by the McCullagh family from 1901. By mid-1908 the Roads Board Office had been connected by telephone to the PO.

The Kalamunda telephone exchange was opened on 16 March 1911 at the existing post office with a handful of subscribers (customers). Operated by members of the McCullagh family, it remained there until the new official PO, further south on Railway Rd, was opened in 1922 under the control of Postmistress Miss Alice Ethel Chambers who served there until 1934. That PO site is now the east car park of Kalamunda Central shopping centre.

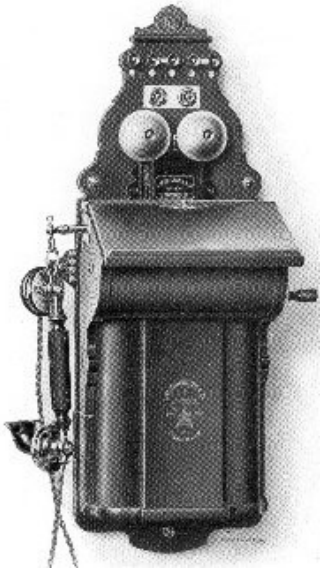
The McCullagh home and shop/PO and Chambers home and 1922 PO have been saved and now form a major part of the Kalamunda History Village displays.

Early technology

From inception until 1955, Kalamunda's prime technology was manually switched, magneto telephony. Telegraph systems usually preceded telephones but because telegraphy required skilled operators, small unofficial offices like the McCullagh's jumped a technology and started with telephones. Telegrams were transmitted verbally over the phone from head office and recorded and prepared for delivery by the local postal staff. The new official PO under Miss Chambers eventually received a telegraph facility which persisted for decades.



Kalamunda Telecommunications 1906 – 2026 pt1



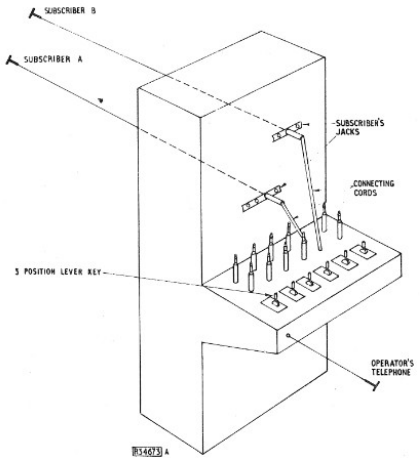
Magneto telephones are very simple. The telephone essentially comprises a transmitter, a receiver, a small AC bell-set, a small hand-wound AC generator, a battery (usually 3 volts DC) and some interconnecting circuitry. The local battery powered the transmitter so speech could be transmitted, the receiver converted the incoming electrical speech signals back to audio, the bell-set rang on incoming calls, and the hand wound generator would signal out, either to call another telephone or alert the exchange operator. Every magneto telephone from the first in 1887 in WA until the last in 1985 used identical principles and were compatible with each other.

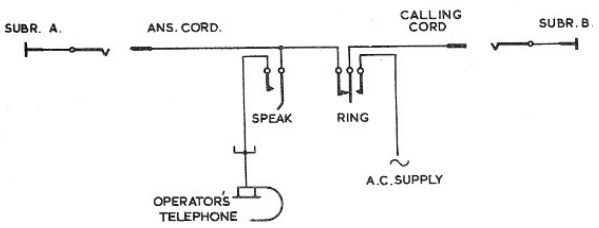


The images on this page, show a magneto phone circuit a “Commonwealth” Ericsson wall phone ca 1910, a British Ericsson wall phone ca 1920s and a 1950s Bakelite table phone. These are typical of customer telephones used in Kalamunda from inception to closure of the magneto system. The telephone circuit is easy to follow. From L-R;. Lines A/B are line connections, The hand generator is next, followed by the receiver above the bell-set, the microphone is marked T (transmitter) and local battery is BY.



The telephone exchange was equally simple. The operator had a local telephone (usually a headset and microphone setup) and all the customer connections appeared on her switchboard. The calling customer wound their generator, this signalled on the switchboard, usually with a shutter operating or lamp lighting. The operator spoke to the customer, asked for the called number, manually connected the calling and called customers’ lines together (usually with plug and cord but other systems existed), rang forward with her generator (or equivalent), waited until the call was answered and then she disconnected and let the call proceed. Note I referred to the operator as female. Women were the preferred choice of operators in WA from the first exchange installed in 1887 until closure in the late 20th c.





The above images show the basic concepts of a corded manual switchboard. Left is a typical board layout and right a single line diagram of how the cords make a connection between customers and operator.

The following image is of Kalamunda exchange in 1937. It was located at the front of the post office building. Cabling is on the back wall, a small early switchboard on the left wall and the main switchboard to the right. The operator is believed to be Miss Doreen Penrose.

The small board is interesting. It may be the 1911 one from the original post office.
They used a simple cordless switching arrangement. Usually configured from 4 to 10 customers.
An image of one from a contemporary catalogue is shown below left.

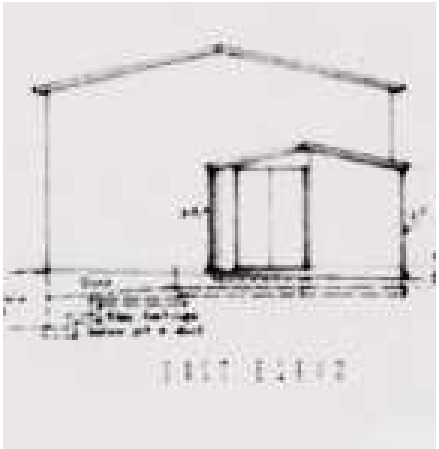




Kalamunda's automatic (dial) telephony history

Kalamunda was converted to automatic telephone switching on 12 December 1955. A brand-new exchange with 600-line capacity was constructed on the PO site. It was a substantial brick structure located to the right rear of the post office. No complete images are available of this auto exchange, but a portion can be seen in the following photo (directly behind the PO veranda) and one of the original drawings is to the right. The manual exchange in the PO persisted into mid-1956 as a trunk exchange until the Perth Main Trunk Exchange could be equipped to serve the area's needs.





John Paskulich
To be continued

Clever Creative Arts in the Foothills

For many people living in the foothills of Kalamunda in the 1920s, there was little time for artistic pursuits. But a search as to what arts and crafts were done shows quite an astonishing range. Maybe it's because there was, of course, no TV and most often no wireless, that other activities were possible. Dressmaking, cake decorating, embroidery and knitting, rug-making, and many other Hands-On activities.

Mrs Alice Constandt's love of the prolific local wildflowers was translated into something of real and sought-after beauty. Orchids galore - Spider orchids, Donkey orchids, Enamel orchids, as well as kangaroo paws, Leschenaultia, Myrtle and Smokebush, Buttercups…you name it.

The sandy land was a truly prolific gardener! Mrs C took the opportunity to create something really special. Her daughter, Molly, says, "We 'd pick lots of flowers and then my mother's hobby was to press them. She used to insert many flowers in between the pages of an old book, then they would be put under a cushion on the chairs, so when we sat on them, they'd be pressed. But later on, she got what they called a letter press, and she would screw this thing down tightly. It was quite a size. With these flowers she would make booklets and cards and things like that. She used to supply a Mr Anderson in a fancy shop in Perth. She used fairly stiffish cards to make the covers, and she'd get the printer to put on 'Souvenir of Perth' in gold lettering. She would buy an ordinary white drawing book and take out the center and make six pages, then put this cover on, and in the book, she would tie a little gold ribbon". The booklets and cards, of course, were generously festooned with colouful pressed wildflowers.



Elsewhere in the oral history, Molly says with the benefit of loving hindsight, "That was Mum's hobby. I think it kept her sanity actually!"

NB Sir William Richard Campion was Governor 1924-31

Marcia Maher

Kalamunda & Districts Historical Society

Invites you to attend

2026 Sundowner

and Christmas Party

Thursday 3rd December

5pm to 7pm

Enjoy music by Kalamunda Sings

A light supper and Drinks provided



RSVP asap 9293 1371

