Patrick Marmion and the Whaling Station

Have you ever wondered how the suburb of Marmion got its name? Marmion was named after Patrick Marmion, a 26 year old clerk from Downpatrick, Ireland. He arrived in the Swan River Colony in 1841 and settled in Fremantle.

Patrick wasn't a clerk for long, however. Records suggest that he was energetic and ambitious. By 1846 we know that he was a shareholder in two mining companies – including the first mining company formed in Western Australia. Patrick Marmion was the licensee of the Commercial Hotel in 1849 and the Emerald Isle Hotel (where the Orient Hotel now stands) in 1852. By then he was described as a merchant.

However, none of these pursuits would have differentiated Patrick from so many other settlers. What did was his venture into the whaling industry.

It is not widely known just how close the Swan River Colony came to economic collapse in the 1830s. Whaling (a lucrative and booming international industry at the time) was seen by many settlers as the answer to the colony's economic woes. The southern and western coasts of New Holland (Australia) are the migratory paths for right whales and humpback whales. In 1837 two whaling companies started up at Fremantle. Patrick Marmion was able to gain the license to operate one of the whaling companies in 1848, upon which he assumed the impressive title of 'master whaler'. He failed to retain the license for the 1849 season and immediately petitioned Governor Fitzgerald for permission to establish a whaling station several kilometres north of Fremantle in what is now Sorrento.

The petition was quickly granted and a shore whaling station was built on ten acres of leased crown land in 1849. Shore whaling involved rowing small shore-based chaser boats to intercept migrating whales. If the whaling crew was successful, they towed the dead whales back to shore for processing. The whaling station operated for three years. In 1852 it was permanently abandoned - possibly as a result of reduced whale numbers combined with skilled crew shortages that were mainly due to men leaving the whaling industry to pursue the lure of gold during the Victorian Gold Rushes.

For many years the abandoned whaling station was a prominent landmark due to the large brick chimney that formed part of the processing works. For decades it was used as a navigation aid for boats. It appeared on maps as 'Marmion's Chimney' as late as the 1930s. According to Henry Hall (Oral History Interview E0499) substantial parts of the ruin could still be seen during the World War II years and up until 1953 when it was finally demolished.

The whaling station was located just south of where the Sorrento Surf Life Saving Club now stands.

There are two memorials located within the City of Joondalup that have been erected in memory of the Marmion Whaling Station. The first memorial is a plaque on a limestone rock that was erected in 1970 in Geneff Park, Sorrento. The second (and more substantial) memorial is a sandstone-coloured monument erected in 1998 by the City of Joondalup. It's located near the entrance to the Sorrento Beach car park, close to the site of the original station. You can view a photograph of the memorial in "Picture Joondalup" on the library website.

Patrick Marmion died in 1856 – just four years after the Sorrento whaling station closed. His legacy lived on through his son William who became a successful businessman and prominent politician in the early years of the Western Australian parliament. His great-great-great grandson, Bill Marmion, is the current Member for Nedlands in the State Legislative Assembly.

Family and Local History Newsletter

Oral History Project

Did you know that the Local History Library has an extensive collection of Oral History audio recordings?

The stories document the history and development of the local area through personal experience and recollection of events.

There are five categories in our collection:

- Pioneers
- Suburb Development
- Education
- War and Military
- Community and Entertainment.

The Oral History CD's are available for loan.

If you feel you have an interesting story to tell relating to the history of the Joondalup region, we would welcome your contribution and set up an interview date. Memorabilia and photographs are also gratefully accepted. Please contact the Local History Library for further information on **9400 4746**.
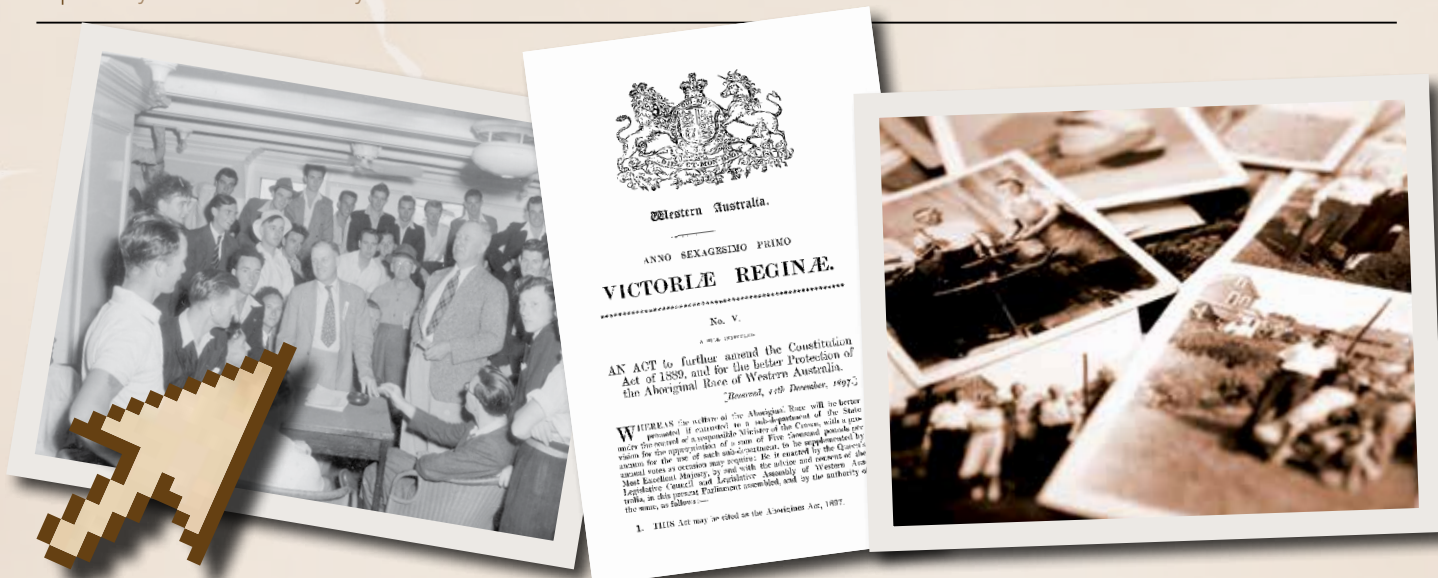

Can You Help?

This photograph was taken on 6 March 1992 during the official opening of the new Mullaloo Surf Life Saving Clubrooms. The photograph shows the front entrance of the club with two rows of unknown surf lifesavers in patrol and competition gear holding the club flags. Formed in the 1960s, the Mullaloo Surf Life Saving Club celebrated fifty years of service in 2011. The club was awarded Surf Life Saving Club of the Year for Western Australia over three successive years and recognised as the Australian Club of the Year in 2005 – the first West Australian club to do so.

Can you help identify these unknown persons?

If so, please contact **local.history@joondalup.wa.gov.au** or call **9400 4746**.

City of Joondalup LIBRARIES

Introducing the Find & Connect Web

The Find & Connect web resource aims to document all the organisations and institutions that provided out-of-home 'care' in twentieth century Australia. The main purpose of the web resource is to let people who were in out of-home 'care' (and their families) know where and how to access records. It also provides a contextual history of out-of-home 'care' – the policies in place at different times, the main events and legislation, and influential ideas and practices.

The web resource contains historical information on Children's Homes and other out-of-home 'care' institutions, links to photographs, newspaper articles, legislation, oral histories and support services. All the information on the web resource is in the public domain; there are no personal records or information on the site.

Launched in November 2011, the web resource – which remains a work in progress – is made up of eight state and territory web sites. Historians in each state and territory are adding extra information and links to each of the sites, often in response to input and feedback from the community through the 'Does this page need updating? Tell us about it' link that appears on each page. We very much appreciate extra information relating to Homes that help us improve the entries.

We will continue to update and add to the web site for the rest of the project, which is funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) until mid-2014. Why not take some time to visit the site? You might learn something about this little known part of our history, or be able to tell us something we don't know. The WA section of the Find & Connect web resource is at findandconnect.gov.au/wa

If you are a Forgotten Australian or Former Child Migrant phone support is available from the Find & Connect support service on 1800 16 11 09 (freecall).

(This article was supplied by Sal Orpin, Communications and Liaison Officer, Find & Connect Web Resource).

Forces War Records

Forces War Records (forces-war-records.co.uk) is a comprehensive subscription based website that allows you to access over four million British Armed Forces personnel exclusively cross matched with over 4000 Regiments, Bases and Ships of the British Armed Forces going back to before 1630. However you don't necessarily need to subscribe to the website to obtain information about your ancestor.

Forces War Records allows you to have a free P.O.W. search and a free Medieval search. When you locate an ancestor, the website gives a detailed description of the war that he fought in. It also lists the serviceman's rank (e.g. archer), captain, commander, regiment, record year etc.

The Forces War Records website also has a number of useful links to aid family history researchers. It is well worth a look.

New Acquisitions

The Joondalup Local History Library recently received the following donations from one of its family history researchers:

- The monumental inscriptions of Surrey on microfiche: Godalming, Hambledon, Chiddingfold and Dunsford.
- Surrey Parish Registers on microfiche: Godalming.

These items can be viewed in the Local History Library.

If you have genealogy items such as microfiche, CD-ROMs etc. that you no longer require, please consider donating the items to Local History.

Historical Societies and Local History Libraries in Australia

If you have an ancestor who lived in a country town in Australia, it is worth joining the local historical society. Local Historical Societies contain a wealth of information about the town, its residents, what life was like in the olden days, maps, photos, rates books, family trees, artefacts etc.

Many of the local historical societies are run by volunteers. By joining the society, you will be helping them to continue their important work such as transcribing information about the people who lived and worked in the town and surrounding countryside.

Local History Libraries also contain an abundance of information about their community. Go online and have a look at the library's website. It will give you a good indication about the type of information that is available in their collection.

If you are planning to visit your relative's home town, you might like to consider the following:

- Check the opening times and location of the Historical Society/Local History Library/Town Library.
- Does the Local History Library/Historical Society have a catalogue that contains items that are of interest to you?
- Are there any online photograph collections (such as Picture Joondalup) that you can view prior to your visit?
- Do you need to pre-book a computer? Does the organisation charge a fee to pre-book a computer? How much does it cost to print/photocopy in black and white and in colour? Do you need to bring correct change for the photocopier/printer?
- Take a USB so that you can download photos, digitised maps, scanned documents, oral histories etc.
- Bring a camera so that you can take photos of old buildings, headstones etc.