

FAMILY AND LOCAL HISTORY NEWSLETTER

Joondalup Library, Local History
102 Boas Avenue, Joondalup, 6027

Monday – Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm
Saturday 9.30am – 12.30pm

Reverend John Smithies Mission Farm

The Autumn 2020 edition of the Family and Local History Newsletter included an article titled Early Education in Wanneroo and Joondalup. The article referred to the Reverend John Smithies Mission Farm as the first school established in the Wanneroo District in 1844. The City has more information to share about this story.

The Mission Farm was built beside Lake Goollelal and was also referred to as the ‘Native Experimental Farm’. The Mission Farm sought to convert Aboriginal people to Christianity and integrate them into white society. Aboriginal adults and children were taught farming and housework skills with the intention of Aboriginal people entering into servitude for colonials.

The Mission Farm dispossessed Aboriginal people off their land, led to the forced separation of families and exacerbated a loss of culture and life on Country. The City’s publication Plants and People in Mooro Country reports that “a significant number of



children at Mission Farm died as a consequence of introduced diseases”. The Mission Farm, like other equivalent educational facilities of this era, was the cause for deep generational sorrow for Aboriginal people. To assist with the healing process, the City of Joondalup is developing a Reconciliation Action Plan to build relationships, respect and opportunities with Aboriginal people.

The City’s Local History collection is located in the City of Joondalup Library - Joondalup and welcomes all perspectives of a narrative, whether written through diaries, letters, transcripts and the like. Often more difficult to capture are those stories told via a storyline or orally passed down through the generations. The local Aboriginal people, until comparatively recently, were rarely given an opportunity to record their views and experiences in ways that are widely accessible to others.

The City’s Local History team is dedicating efforts to strengthen material in the collection that shares Aboriginal history and the Noongar relationship

with the land. Progress has been made in adding suggested resources to the Local History Collection with the aim of building a collection that provides a more balanced view of history and the impact of European settlement on the Traditional Owners of the land. Oral storytelling is also being encouraged so that voices and stories can be captured and preserved for future generations.

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Should you wish to read further about this period in Joondalup’s history, refer to the back page for a list of resources.

Thanks to those community members who reached out with suggestions of books and other materials to add to the Local History collection. Gratitude is also extended to those willing to share their own story so that together a more comprehensive historical repository of information on the region can be developed.



The rise and fall of the Binishells

In June 1977, on a site at Penistone Reserve in Greenwood, Dr Dante Bini threw a power switch. Several hours later a four-storey tall cement structure measuring 36m in diameter and 11m high, had risen on the site. Built by covering a balloon-like membrane in 350 tonnes of concrete, coils of reinforcing steel and an outer membrane (all of which was then inflated), the Binishells, as they were known, were a radical means of quickly building a structure that could be used for numerous purposes.

Two further Binishells were erected for the Shire of Wanneroo. The first Binishell was built in July 1977 at McDonald Reserve in Padbury.

The second Binishell was built in November 1977 at Lisford Avenue in Yanchep. Unfortunately, towards the end of the four days required for the concrete to harden, a power failure at the Yanchep site led to the balloon partly deflating before it had fully set. Some cracking was apparent in the dome. Dr Bini was recalled to the

site to inspect the damage. Three days later a senior manager from the licensed builder, Jennings Ltd, advised that a structural engineer and Dr Bini had inspected the building and had found it to be structurally sound. Some remedial work to reinforce the affected portion of the shell was carried out at the time.

When the Shire of Wanneroo's Binishells were built, there were already more than 500 in use within Australia, Italy, England and the Middle-East. The Padbury and Yanchep Binishells were the first to be built in Western Australia. Of varying sizes, the Binishells were used for a diverse range of purposes, including smaller versions used for low-cost housing.

The larger Binishells, such as those built for the Shire of Wanneroo, were used for recreational purposes. Binishells offered the Shire the opportunity to construct three new recreation centres for around \$260,000 each. At the time, a four bedroom and two-bathroom house cost around

\$30,000 to build. The domes were weather proofed by covering them with a layer of the then revolutionary material of chopped recycled rubber, which was also used for the Binishells' floors. Partitioning was added to create the necessary range of rooms within each structure. One remarkable feature of the method of construction is that it took only six months from the raising of its concrete Binishell to the opening of each recreation centre.

Erected in Padbury, Greenwood and Yanchep in the second half of 1977, the Binishells were used for a wide range of sporting and recreational activities. The opening of the Greenwood Binishell in Penistone Reserve on 11 March 1978 involved demonstrations of gymnastics, badminton, judo and table tennis, plus displays of a wide variety of hand crafts, with most of the groups involved taking up the opportunity to meet at the Centre. Residents of the region were also invited to contact the Shire's Recreation Officer with requests or suggestions for other activities that could be provided.



Construction of the Greenwood Binishell, Penistone Reserve Greenwood, 1977.

In 1982 the Yanchep Binishell was closed. \$70,000 of work was undertaken to add a second floor inside the shell to enable the provision of a library, additional craft rooms, storage and office facilities. In 1984 apparent movement of the Yanchep structure resulted in the Shire engaging civil engineers to monitor it for the next 12 months however, the recreation centre continued to operate.

The Binishells were particularly important to playgroups operating in the Shire, with over 200 children attending weekly playgroups at the Padbury centre alone. They were also used to provide holiday programs, as well as continuing to offer a wide range of sports and recreational activities.



Padbury Binishell at McDonald Reseve Padbury circa 1986.

The operation of the Binishells was interrupted in September 1986 by the collapse of a Binishell at Pittwater High School, in Sydney, only a short time after it was vacated by students. The three Shire of Wanneroo Binishells were closed the next day. Initially it was hoped that they could be inspected, found to be safe and then reopen within a week. However, in April the following year, the buildings remained closed at the behest of the Health Department while an investigation into the reason for the collapse of the Pittwater Binishell was ongoing. Transportable buildings and the Shire's mobile library were brought in to provide alternative facilities. Most of the sports competitions moved to outdoor facilities as better weather approached.

In September 1987 the Binishells remained closed. Reports to the Shire of Wanneroo by the same consultants who investigated the collapse of the Pittwater Binishell indicated that the

Greenwood and Padbury Binishells were structurally sound and did not need remedial work to further stiffen the structures. However, the Yanchep Binishell needed significant work to ensure that it could operate safely. The main difference between the three Binishells was that the Yanchep Binishell had a flatter curvature at the top of the dome which weakened it. The same issue was identified as a main cause of the weakness in the Pittwater structure.

The Shire decided to demolish and rebuild the top of the Yanchep Binishell using conventional building techniques at a cost of \$400,000. The Yanchep Binishell eventually reopened on 5 November 1989.

In March 1988, the City of Wanneroo determined that reopening the Padbury and Greenwood Binishells would cost up to \$450,000 and that the Padbury structure would need to have

its waterproof membrane replaced within three years - costing another \$120,000. The cost to reopen the Greenwood Binishell meant it never reopened. In October 1989, it was demolished. The Padbury Binishell reopened in April 1988 and operated until the City of Joondalup Leisure Centre Craigie was officially opened on 2 April 1993. The Padbury Binishell was eventually demolished in October 1993.



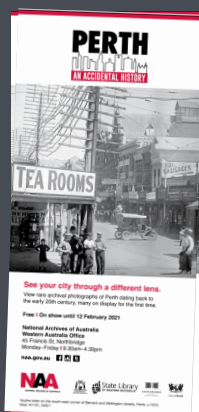
**Demolition of the Greenwood Binishell
3 October 1989.**

Are you interested in old photographs and the history of Perth?

Take your family to Perth: An accidental history exhibition before **12 February 2021**. The photographs may bring back memories of living in Perth that you can share with younger generations.

Weekdays 9.30am – 4.30pm, Free

National Archives of Australia
Western Australia Office
45 Francis Street, Northbridge



What's your family history?

Joondalup Library's Local History collection hosts information about Aboriginal culture and the early development of the City of Joondalup and Wanneroo areas.

Does your family have Aboriginal connections to Joondalup, or links to its early settlement history? The City would love to hear from you.

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Should you wish to read further about this period in Joondalup's history - the following resources are being sourced and acquired:

- City of Joondalup. Learning about Bushland
Visit joondalup.wa.gov.au
- Collard, Neville. 2010. *Plants and people in Mooro Country: Nyungar plant use in Yellagonga Regional Park* / [City of Joondalup]. 581.63 PLA
- Haebich, A. 1999. *The Stolen Generations: separation of Aboriginal children from their families in Western Australia*. Q 362.8499 HAE
- Hawtrey, C.L.M. 1949. *The Availing Struggle: A Record of the Planting and Development of the Church of England in Western Australia, 1829-1947*
- Hetherington, P. 1992. Aboriginal children as a potential labour force in Swan River Colony, 1829-1850. *Journal of Australian Studies*, 16 (33): 41-55
- Informit – Indigenous Collection (RMIT Education). Online resource. Visit joondalup.wa.gov.au
- Journal - Reconciliation News (printed copies) and access to online resource.
reconciliation.org.au/resources/?download_search=reconciliation+news&download_category=reconciliation-news#ra-downloadables-wrapper
- Mitchell, J. 2011. *In Good Faith? Governing Indigenous Australia through God, Charity and Empire, 1825-1855*.
press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p5051/pdf/book.pdf?referer=245

Finding ancestors who do not appear in census records

In the past it was common for several generations and branches of a family to live close to each other. If you can't find your ancestors in census records, try searching for their relatives or known associates who lived in the same town. Once you find these people, browse the adjacent census pages in search of your ancestors.



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