

# 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



Hillarys Boat Harbour, 1995.

## Hillarys - from beach shacks to boat harbour

The coastal suburb of Hillarys is located on Mooro Country. Yellagonga was the leader of this region and the Oor-dal-kalla were his family group. The Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation are the Traditional Custodians of this land. They have lived and contributed to the area long before Europeans occupied it.

George Shenton was the first European to occupy land in the Hillarys area. He obtained a lease of crown land, in the mid-1800s that stretched from the coast, north and south of Hillarys, and inland to Lake Joondalup. George Shenton died in 1867, and in the 1880s his land

was one of several large tracts of land sold to the Midland Railway Company. The company acquired the land as part of their contract to build a rail line from Perth to Geraldton.

Later, Tom Simpson a handyman and dairy farmer bought 1,250 hectares of land from Midland Railway Company. In the 1920s Simpson leased his holding known as North Beach Estate to Frank Whitford, a businessman and land developer. Frank was unsuccessful in developing the land and despite the land reverting back to Simpson in 1939, the area continued to be known as 'Whitfords'.

In the early 1900's beaches north of Perth were inaccessible by vehicle. Only determined beach goers hacked their way through the scrub to fish, swim, or camp. War veteran Bertrand (Bert) John Hillary is credited with being the first shack dweller at Hillarys Beach. He and his brother were fishermen during the Depression and cut the original track to Hillarys and built a shack there out of packing cases. Bert had served Australia during the First World War from 1915 to 1916 and was wounded in action at Gallipoli. After losing the sight in one eye, he was repatriated home to his family at 'The Gables' Canning Bridge.



# Welcome to the Family and Local History Newsletter Summer 2022/23

Bert's dirt track opened access to the beach for other fishermen and holiday makers, and a community soon developed. Beach goers pitched tents or built rudimentary shacks made of easily obtained materials including beach timber, hessian, and flattened kerosene tins. Later, corrugated iron and asbestos were used to make sturdier shacks. At the peak of its popularity there were 21 shacks at Hillarys Beach.

Philip Harris remembers holidaying at his grandfather's shack in the 1950s:

*'Yeah, there was a rough track that old Hillary had made ... There was a lot of flat section, with like a little soak with fresh water, and somebody had sunk a forty-four-gallon drum into it ... But when I was out there it was just like a hole in the ground, and somebody'd dug it out ... and the brumbies used to come in there to drink ...'*  
(Harris EO440)

On 8 July 1964, the idyllic lifestyle enjoyed by shack dwellers ended abruptly when a severe storm battered the coast. Heavy erosion of the beach left many shacks tilting into the ocean and others were washed away.



P03143.03: Hillarys beach shacks after a storm, 1964.



P00436.09: Gay Chambers and family at Hillarys Beach, ca. 1955.

In 1969, as part of a state government rezoning program a substantial part of coastal land to the north of Perth was marked for development. During the rezoning phase Whitfords Estate was divided into four suburbs: Kallaroo, Hillarys, Padbury, and Craigie.

In February 1971, the Shire of Wanneroo approved the suburb name Hillarys. The army recommended the name because soldiers had referred to Bert's beach location as 'Hillary's Beach' while on patrol there during the Second World War. That year, plans were approved to extend West Coast Highway from Sorrento to Marmion. This forced the demolition of the remaining Hillarys shacks to make way for roadworks and residential development.



P03271.06: Home under construction at David Crescent Hillarys. 1972.

The first housing estate in Hillarys was named Kingston, and many new residents bought land through the General Agency Company. Only the most basic services and facilities were available to residents during the early 1970s. Tom the Cheap ran a convenience store and unofficial post office from a demountable where the Whitford Library now stands. Fresh milk, bread and vegetables could also be bought from vendor trucks that roamed the suburbs selling their produce. The nearest bank was at Karrinyup.

In 1978, Whitfords City Shopping Centre was completed at a cost of \$15 million. It became the first major shopping complex in the region and included a discount shop, a supermarket, a department store and 50 specialty shops.



P02146.09: Hillarys Boat Harbour under construction, 1986.



Hillarys became the focus of developers again in 1983 when *Australia II*, owned by the Perth Royal Yacht Club, won the America's Cup against New York Yacht Club's challenger *Liberty*. Western Australia was given the honour of hosting the next race in 1987. The state government made plans to develop the Town of Fremantle and construct a marina at Hillarys for the race. In June 1984, unhappy residents organised a public meeting to protest the state government's marina development.

Despite public resistance, in June 1985, construction began on the marina and the development of Hillarys Beach Park north of the site. The Whitford Volunteer Sea Rescue Group headquarters north of the proposed marina was also upgraded in preparation for their role in the race.

On 15 November 1987, Hillarys Boat Harbour incorporating Sorrento Quay were completed, making it the first major marina in the north metropolitan area.

The Hillarys Boat Harbour complex attracted other businesses including Underwater World (AQWA) in 1988, and Hillarys Yacht Club and Hillarys Harbour Resort in 1989. Hillarys Boat Harbour became a popular destination for tourists, locals, and boating enthusiasts. One of the most popular events held there was the Channel 7 Masters Choc Milk Carton Regatta. Prizes were given to entrants for the best vessel made of milk cartons and winners of other novelty races on the day.



P02848.14: Masters Choc Milk Carton Regatta, 1996.

In September 2020, Hillarys Beach Park north of the marina was upgraded with the opening of Whitfords Nodes Park health and wellbeing hub. The hub includes a Jacob's Ladder style fitness staircase and outdoor warrior course. A children's playground and ample picnic and barbeque facilities complement the park and provide a relaxing location for the whole family.

Hillarys has blossomed since the halcyon days of beach shack living into to a vibrant suburb and world class tourist attraction. It's glittering beaches, popular marina, beautiful parks, and stunning residential areas continue to draw crowds locally, interstate and internationally. After more than 50 years of European settlement Hillarys is a highly prized place to live, holiday or visit for a spectacular experience.



P03145.15: Hillarys Boat Harbour, 2008.



P02690.01: Underwater World, 1990.



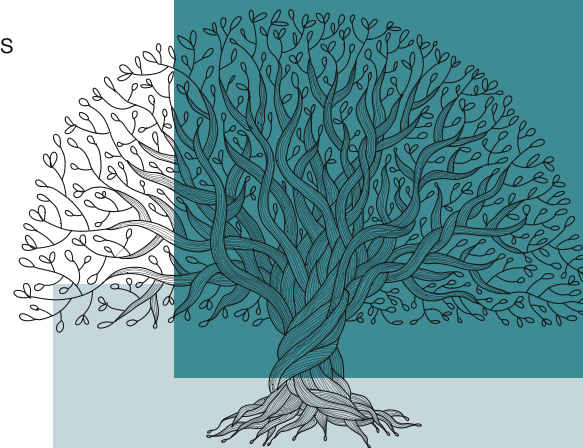
## Your Life

Genealogists are often so busy trying to find and record the details about their ancestors' lives, that they forget that their own history will eventually become family history.

In 100 or 200 years, our children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews will be struggling to understand our lives and what we were really like. Hence, it is also personally beneficial to reflect on your own life and experiences.

### Here's a list of topics to consider writing about for the future generations of your family tree:

- Your full name and when and where you were born.
- Your siblings' names, and when and where they were born.
- Your parents' names: when and where they were born; what they were like; the kind of work they did; special memories about them. Do the same for your grandparents and great-grandparents.
- How your parents met.
- Your childhood: the games and books you liked; your hobbies, sports, and activities; where you went to school; favourite and least favourite subjects in school; what you wanted to be when you grew up; your jobs around the house; trouble you got into.
- Your high school years: school subjects you excelled at and struggled with, sports and activities, jobs, friends, and dates, learning to drive, how you got along with your parents.
- Your university education/degree, TAFE qualification; years training as an apprentice; job training, and/or transition into working life.
- Your working career including any experience serving in the military.
- Adult relationships and/or how you met your spouse.
- Where you settled as an adult, your friends and activities, religious life, travel.
- Being a parent: when and where your children were born, their names and why the names were chosen, what you loved and didn't love about having children.
- Life lessons you've learned and advice you'd like to share.
- Family stories passed down to you, that you in turn want to pass down to others.
- Medical struggles that might also impact others in your family if you feel comfortable sharing them.
- Of course, your genealogy discoveries.



City of Joondalup  
**LIBRARIES**

#### Joondalup Library, Local History

T: 08 9400 4746

E: [local.history@joondalup.wa.gov.au](mailto:local.history@joondalup.wa.gov.au)

102 Boas Avenue, Joondalup, WA, 6027

PO Box 21, Joondalup, WA, 6919

[joondalup.wa.gov.au](http://joondalup.wa.gov.au)



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