

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



P02141.01 Up on the plains near Walkaway in 1988.

The Northwest Stock Route and the Bicentennial Cattle Drive

The Northwest Stock Route is one of the oldest stock routes in Western Australia and was the only way for European settlers to communicate overland between the Swan River and Champion Bay in Geraldton from 1850 – 1867. Although the route is best known for droving cattle, it was frequently used by the mail service, travelers, pastoralists, dignitaries and played a vital role in the development of Western Australia after European settlement.

The route extends approximately 350km north from Perth to Walkaway following a line of watering holes and river crossings.

It is also known as the Old North Road, the Old Perth Road, the Coastal Stock Route, and the Old Stock Road. Farther north the route is known as the Old North Stock Route, or the Champion Bay Stock Route. The name given to the route depends on the section of the route referred to and how it is known locally.

The route closely followed tracks and watering holes known to Aboriginal people between Perth and Geraldton. The herds of cattle had a devastating effect on Aboriginal people's traditional way of life. Water holes were drained

or fouled, and food sources were eaten or trampled by the stock, forcing many Aboriginal people off the land to work on nearby stations.

In 1839, George Grey was the first European to travel the route. He and a crew of men had sailed to Bernier Island north of Shark Bay on an expedition to investigate Aboriginal culture, and the geology and botany of the land. They became shipwrecked near Shark Bay during a severe storm and lost most of their provisions. The expedition was abandoned and Kaiber, an Aboriginal man from Swan River, guided the men home



Welcome to the Family and Local History Newsletter Spring 2023

along the watering holes and chains of lakes passing Wanneroo and Joondalup that later became the Northwest Stock Route. The exhausted party stopped at Lake Joondalup where the Mooro people gave them food and shelter.

Aboriginal people played an important part in the European exploration of Australia due to their connection to the land and their ability to locate food and water. The Northwest Stock Route passed through the lands belonging to the Whadjuk Noongar people, the Yued Noongar people, and the Amangu Yamatji people (also known as Wilinyu) and followed the water sources they used.

By the mid-1840s the herds of cattle at Swan River had outgrown the known grazing land around the colony and new pastures were sought outside the settlement. In 1848, Assistant Surveyor Augustus Gregory took an expedition of settlers north towards the Murchison River in search of new pastures. Gregory reported suitable land had been found near Champion Bay and proceeded to survey the route between there and the Swan River. In 1850, this track became the Northwest Stock Route and led to the development of mining, agriculture, and pastoralism in the region from Perth to Geraldton.



P02141.193 On 16 September drovers and cattle leaving the Burns Beach campsite and heading to Wanneroo.

Forty years later, on 10 October 1889, John Forrest, Commissioner of Crown Lands, declared the route in the Government Gazette of Western Australia:

A Stock Route and Commonage for travellers and stock described as a strip of land 40 chains wide, starting from Dongara, and following the coast road towards Perth, through Yardanogo, Woodada, Three Springs, Lower Hill river ford, Namban, Mimegarra, Hatch's ford [sic], Moore river [sic], Boongarra, Pipidinney [sic] and Joondalup, avoiding all locations by passing to the Westward of them, to the South-West corner of Swan Location 108, near Joondalup Lake.

The southern portion of the route began at Star Swamp in Waterman/ North Beach and led to a 5,000-acre reserve at Sorrento with holding pens for cattle and a travellers stop. Water was available from a spring at nearby Marmion. The route continued north to Lake Joondalup, to water and travellers' stops located where Neil Hawkins Park, and Drover's Place (Wanneroo) stand today. Farther north the route crossed Moore River and finished at Walkaway south of Geraldton. The three-lane track; two tracks for cartwheels and one for trailing cattle, was used from the 1850s until 1894 when Midland Railway opened a rail line from Midland Junction to Geraldton.



P02141.78 Horses and riders at Lake Indoon in 1988.



P02141.40 River crossing in 1988.



P02141.198 On 16 September 1988 Wanneroo Road was closed for the arrival of the drovers and cattle

Bicentennial Cattle Drove

Nearly a century after the route was gazetted, the people of Western Australia began planning events to commemorate the state's Bicentennial year in 1988. City of Wanneroo Deputy Town Clerk John Watson proposed to re-enact the cattle drove along the Old North Road (as it was known locally) as part of the City's celebrations.

The City of Wanneroo held a meeting with Wanneroo pioneer Ernie Chitty and the Wanneroo Horse and Pony Club and the Harness Society to discuss the idea. In October 1987 the group made a reconnoiter trip to gauge the possibility of travelling the route and the logistics involved.

In early 1988, the Stock Route Committee was formed, and planning began. Using old maps, a route was chosen through rough terrain where no signs of the old route remained. It was decided the route would start at Walkaway and pass through The Spring, Irwin Park, Mt Adams Road, Green Grove, Woodada, Lake Indoon, Three Springs, Bluegum Thicket, Fatfield, Katoora Soak, Cooljarloo Swamp, Lake Walyengarra, 9 Mile Swamp, Walbaroo Pool, The Junction, Boongarra, Pipindinny, Burns [sic] and finish at Wanneroo.

Preparations for the mammoth adventure were of military scale. Expressions of interest went out to the public for experienced riders, support crew and to seek sponsor support. The committee contacted each shire and permission to enter properties along the route

was received. Emergency services were engaged.

The drovers chosen for the trip were Harry Gratte, Vince (Vin) Camisa, Brian Pollitt, Graeme Frusher, Robert Thompson, Trudi Camisa and Rodney Atkins. It was their responsibility to safely drove about 20 Hereford cattle along the route. Cheryl Wildmore and Judith Bull led the riders. Ernie Chitty was nominated as head drover because of his lengthy experience riding horses and mustering cattle. Unfortunately, Ernie had to withdraw and Harry Gratte took his place.

John Watson, Paul Higgs, Bob Ruscoe, Brian Smith, Ian Roy, Bill Hyde, Pat Houlahan, Harry Leaver and Daphne Gratte were the support crew. Their responsibilities included checking the next day's camp, carting water, organising stockyards and fodder for cattle, and coordinating food deliveries from the Country Women's Association of Western Australia (CWA) and local community groups along the route. It was also their job to set up camp including showers and toilets, count riders in and out of the drove, and organise media opportunities and community events. The support crew were the 'go to' people for the trip.

Each rider was responsible for their own horse's health and wellbeing and veterinary services were on call if cattle or horses needed attention. Horses went through two months of training to learn how to eat from feed bags and 900 horse feeds

were provided. In keeping with the Bicentennial theme, all aspects of the drove were made as true to those experienced by early drovers as possible. Participants slept in bush camps and used hessian walled showers and post hole toilets.

One hundred and twenty people participated in the drove and ranged in age from 15 to over 60 years. The youngest rider on the route was Martin Herring an experienced horseman, who completed the drove on his horse, Tina. Participants came from as far north as Geraldton and as far south as Pemberton and Newdegate. Many of the riders were young women.

The 430km drove started on 26 August 1988 at Walkaway Recreation and Sporting Grounds and ended 22 days later on 16 September at Wanneroo Showground. Although everything was well organised, things did not always go to plan. Vehicles broke down or got bogged and cattle and horses strayed away from camp. Last minute changes were made to camping spots and tracks due to bad weather and changes in the terrain. Drinking water was occasionally scarce. Heavy rain, blowflies, ticks, and prickly scrub made some parts of the trip a challenge.

Night camps were a highlight for the participants who sang songs around the campfire and shared some good old-fashioned yarns. The riders were met along the way by local communities and school groups who had come to celebrate their arrival.

On the final day at 12.30pm the drove led by two mounted police arrived at Wanneroo Showground and a mass bush dance celebrated the end of their journey. Locals and thousands of school children attended the event and joined in the community picnic and festivities.

A year later in May and June 1989, following in the success of the Bicentennial Cattle Drove, a small group of participants commemorated the event by planting a circle of six approved trees at 21 of the camping spots from Wanneroo to Walkaway.



P02141.75 Riders' camp near Lake Indoon in 1988.

This year marks the 35th anniversary of the Bicentennial Cattle Drove. The re-enactment was a phenomenal undertaking and relied on the passion and teamwork of all participants for its success. The relief and elation at completing the drove was summed up by Bob Ruscoe in his diary:

At 9.30am and off on time. Down to Wanneroo Road – police closed off Burns Beach Road and Wanneroo Road down to the Pine Plantation. All well. Plenty of media interest along Scenic Drive. Good entrance, all okay. Grand parade – victory run well received. Good lunch. Wonderful people. Good to meet with earlier riders. It's hard to believe it's all over... Many genuinely wanted to do it again next year!

Tips for Preserving Military Flags, Medals, and Uniforms

Flags

Textiles are very vulnerable to light, humidity, extreme temperatures, dust, insects, and pollution.

To preserve your ancestor's flag, purchase an acid-free flag box and acid-free tissue paper. Place the acid-free tissue paper between the folds of the flag.

Medals

Wear cotton gloves whenever you handle medals. This will help to prevent corrosion. Wrap the medal in acid-free tissue paper or a well-washed, preferably undyed fabric such as handkerchiefs, cotton sheets or tea towels.

The Australian War Memorial website has a very informative article on the best way to look after your ancestor's war medals.



Military Uniforms

Remove dust and dirt from a uniform by butting pantyhose over the nozzle/mouth of a hand-held vacuum cleaner. Place the vacuum cleaner on the lowest setting and gently clean the uniform. If possible, find a drycleaner who specialises in cleaning antique clothing or consult a conservator.

Lay the uniform flat in an acid-free garment box. Place acid-free tissue paper between the folds of the uniform. Use the acid-free tissue paper to pad the arms of the uniform.

The Centenary of ANZAC Tasmania Remembers 2014 – 2018 website has a helpful article "Caring for military memorabilia, medals and photos: Tips on how to preserve their legacy."



The City of Joondalup acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this land, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation. We recognise the culture of the Noongar people and the unique contribution they make to the Joondalup region and Australia. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging and all Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Aboriginal History W.A. Website

During NAIDOC Week 2023, the West Australian State Government announced that a free online resource has been made available to assist Aboriginal families establish links to children sent to Perth orphanages and missions from 1868 to 1920.

The Perth and Swan Orphanages and Mission Index is a searchable database holding information on children submitted to four institutions in Perth and the Swan Valley.

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