

# Gwalia Newsletter

## Chairperson's Report

The Gwalia Leonora Reference Group (GLRG) is very pleased with the Engineering Heritage National Marker received under the Engineers Australia's Heritage Recognition Programme for the Sons of Gwalia headframe and winder engine.

The Marker was unveiled by Wendy Duncan, MLA, Kalgoorlie and received on behalf of the Shire by Cr Peter Craig, Shire President on 31 May 2015. Ian Maitland, Chairman, Engineering Heritage Western Australia was the driving force behind the nomination.

Conservation work to Burglar Bill's and the Unnamed Camp has been completed, and work has started on the Shift Boss's House and the Function House.

The Sons of Gwalia Underground Mine Model returned to the Gwalia Museum after undergoing much needed conservation work.

A compactus has been installed thanks to a National Library Grant and the archive currently housed in the old Assay office will be relocated.

The Leonora Heritage Walking Trail is well underway and should be launched later in the year.

The Shire's World War 1 exhibition "Miners to War" will be officially opened on Saturday 5 September 2015 in the Old Assay Office, Gwalia.

The Gwalia Leonora Reference Group would like to thank Tralee Cable for her dedication to the Reference Group since it was first established in 2012. Tralee has decided to step down from the Reference Group, but has kindly offered to still volunteer to help out where necessary.

A bold move has been made by the GLRG and endorsed by the Shire to abolish entrance fees at the museum precinct which will encourage more visitors to the site.

There are also plans underway to improve the visual appearance at the new vehicle shed which is also the main entrance to the museum site. We will update you on the progress in the future newsletters.

*Matt Taylor*  
Chairperson  
Gwalia Leonora Reference Group

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## Free Entry Fee To Boost Visitor Numbers

Elaine Labuschagne

The Shire of Leonora Council has endorsed a recommendation by the Gwalia Leonora Reference Group to make entry to the Gwalia museum precinct free from 1 July 2015.

The aim is to encourage more visitors to Gwalia and the museum, and deliver an all-inclusive holistic approach to better understand the early goldmining history and social life of Gwalia. The entire Gwalia is a museum and not only the buildings on top of the hill.

The visitor's experience starts on entering Gwalia ghost town, located approximately 2km south of Leonora. Driving passed the abandoned miners' cottages, there are opportunities to stop and explore how past residents lived, whether it was a miner, his wife and children or the single men staying at Mrs Patroni's guest home. VM & VB Mazza's was a one-stop shop where anything from bread to a refrigerator could be purchased.

Continue the journey up the hill to view the buildings associated with the old Sons of Gwalia mine operations, including the headframe constructed in 1898 and the former miner manager's house now functioning as Hoover House Bed & Breakfast.

Gwalia demonstrates the relationship between the miners' settlement, the mine buildings (mine office and Assay) and mine manager's house on the hill associated with the Sons of Gwalia Mine between 1898 and 1963. Objects are on display throughout Gwalia and photographs in the old Mine Office building illustrate the history of gold mining and social aspects of Gwalia and Leonora. We hope that you will visit Gwalia soon.



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## Friends of Gwalia

We would like you to consider becoming a *Friend of Gwalia*.  
The subscription fees have been amended and are as follows:

Annual Subscription Fees	
Pensioner Membership	\$ 20.00 (inc GST)
Individual Membership	\$ 30.00 (inc GST)
Family Membership	\$ 40.00 (inc GST)
Other donations	\$ (exc GST)
TOTAL	\$

Please see subscription form at the end of the newsletter.

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## Recognition for Iconic Gwalia Landmark

Elaine Labuschagne

The engineering significance of the Sons of Gwalia Headframe and Winder engine was recently recognised when it was awarded an Engineering Heritage National Marker under the Engineers Australia's Heritage Recognition Programme.



**Wendy Duncan unveiling the Engineering National Heritage Marker.**  
*Photo taken by Kate Ferguson*

The research and nomination was undertaken by Engineering Heritage Western Australia. The Shire of Leonora hosted a function in celebration and to unveil the Marker on Sunday 31 May 2015 during the annual Golden Gift weekend.

The Marker was unveiled by Wendy Duncan MLA, Kalgoorlie, and accepted on behalf of the Shire of Leonora by Cr Peter Craig, Shire President.

substantial financial contribution and will supplement a Lotterywest Conserving Cultural Heritage grant for conservation work to save this iconic landmark," said Cr Craig.

"The Shire of Leonora recognises the significance of the Sons of Gwalia headframe and has made

Ian Maitland, Chairman, Engineering Heritage Western Australia, welcomed guests and gave the historical background to mining at Gwalia. He said that "Our engineering heritage, particularly in remote country areas, often does not receive the same attention as some other forms of heritage. The Engineering Heritage National Marker is awarded to the Sons of Gwalia headframe and winder engine, and pays tribute to our forefather engineers."



**Jim Epis, CEO and Peter Craig, Leonora Shire President in front of the Sons of Gwalia Headframe**

Francis Norman, President of Engineers Western Australia Division, explained the Engineers Australia Engineering Heritage Recognition Programme to the approximately 40 guests. He said the programme focused the attention of both engineers and the general community on the role played by engineers and engineering in the development of the nation and encouraged the physical conservation of Australia's important engineering heritage works.

The Oregon timber headframe was designed in 1898 during the period Herbert Hoover served as the Sons of Gwalia mine manager. The headframe is about 19 metres high with a 45-degree runway on the same incline as the mineshaft. It is the only large timber incline headframe surviving in Australia, and one of only a few remaining timber headframes of any size from the 19th century.

The timber headframe and winder engine worked together to transport people, timber, horses and ore in and out of the mine workings below. The headframe guided the hauling ropes between the winder and the ore carts in the shaft and enabled the carts to be elevated so the ore could be discharged at a convenient height above ground.

The two cylinder 1000 horsepower steam-powered Fraser and Chalmers engine was capable of hauling 1500 feet per minute. It is the largest of its type in Australia and is a good example of the technological achievements of more than a century ago.



**Ian and Ursula Maitland, Francis and Rebecca Norman, Elaine Labuschagne at the ceremony. Photo taken by Kate Ferguson**



## Cottage Conservation

Elaine Labuschagne



**Daren and Pete from Butson's Building did the work on Burglar Bill's.**

kitchen table. In the kitchen is a brick-lined chimney and external metal flue. Walls are covered with newspaper and a homemade shower is in an alcove in the same room.

The cottage was damaged by a severe storm in 1987 and substantially reconstructed. Before the recent work the building was restored in 1996 by volunteers Maxine Cable, Graham Canning, Jeff Hayles and Bev Taylor under the Leonora Tourist Committee's innovative auction Adopt-A-Cottage programme.

Under the same programme the Unnamed Camp was restored by Graham and Dalm Dawes in 1996. Now almost twenty years later the Unnamed Camp has received much needed work.

The packing boards floors have been repaired and windows reinstated. The internal walls were re-lined with hessian and corrugated iron. The building is now watertight and secure.

A number of the miners' cottages at Gwalia have been given a new lease on life over the past years. Work was completed to Burglar Bill's in April 2015 and the Unnamed camp in May 2015.

The front yard of the property known as Burglar Bill's is fenced with old bed frames and contains many bits and pieces collected by the former resident of the cottage. The front verandah, entered via a small gate, is covered by a skillion roof supported by timber posts.

The timber framed, corrugated iron clad two-roomed cottage retains some of its original furniture with two beds in the bedroom and a



**Repairs are done to the front fence at Burglar Bill's.**



**Stephen from Peacock Building reinstating a window in the Unnamed Camp.**



**The completed interior section of the Unnamed Camp**

## Sons of Gwalia Mine Model Returns

Elaine Labuschagne

The Sons of Gwalia Mine Level Model was built in London for Bewick Moreing & Co's 1938 AGM. It was then shipped to Perth, where it was on display for a time at the Industries Exhibition Hall in Barrack Street before being brought to Gwalia and used for plotting future development of the underground workings of the Sons of Gwalia Mine, particularly in relation to the new internal shaft, No. 30 level.

The Sons of Gwalia underground Mine Model returned the Gwalia Museum late last year after extensive conservation work was carried out over a 12-month period.



***The Mine Level Model after conservation work was carried out. It is on display in the old Mine Office building.***

The Model was packed into a purpose-made crate and supported by foam sections to protect it for transport to the Materials Conservation Department of the Western Australian Museum in Fremantle.

A number of conservators worked on the model. Ulli Broeze-Hoernemann and Richard Garcia carried out a thorough inspection to determine the necessary conservation work.

Richard worked on the damaged wooden casing; some of the timber was covered in a grey film and the brass components were oxidised.

The fragile, acidic paper sections required immediate conservation which was done by Ulli Broeze-Hoernemann. The paper was very dusty because the case was not sealed properly; dead insects were scattered throughout and had to be removed.

Simone Hartnack repaired the cracked glass which had in some areas been badly repaired, and the yellowed adhesive was removed from the glass.

Don Cockrell removed and reapplied the crate panels. Electrical work was required as the electrics were faulty and outmoded. The installation of the new lighting system was carried out by Simmons Electrical. The light is now on a push button to eliminate excessive light that could cause damage to the paper.

The cost of the conservation work was almost \$20,000 and fully funded by the Shire of Leonora's own resources. The next step will be developing the interpretation of the Mine Level Model explaining the history and functionality of this significant object in the Museum collection.

If you have any recollection of this specific Model and photographs please contact Elaine Labuschagne on [mehs@leonora.wa.gov.au](mailto:mehs@leonora.wa.gov.au).



**The custom made crate was built by local Leonora company PMCC to transport the Mine Model.**



## Michael Ratcliffe

Anne Skinner

Former Sons of Gwalia miner Michael Ratcliffe was fatally wounded on a beautiful, sunny day in picturesque rural northern France, just hours before his battalion was due to retire behind the lines for a well-earned rest.

It was 16 June 1918, six days after the 51<sup>st</sup> Battalion's successful attack on the German positions near the little village of Sailly-le-Sec, 27 kilometres from Amiens.

According to the battalion's war diary, the day dawned fine and clear as the men of the 51<sup>st</sup> began moving out of battle zone, to be relieved by the 48<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

The Germans had failed to counter-attack after the Australians captured several key positions, but continued "scattered hostile shelling" of the battalion's position. One of those shells struck Private Ratcliffe, tearing through his buttocks, legs and arm. He was evacuated to hospital where he died of his wound three days later.

The Victorian-born miner had enlisted at Blackboy Hill on August 16, 1915 and embarked from Fremantle on November 2 with the 28th Battalion aboard HMAT Ulysses. Pte Ratcliffe transferred to the 51<sup>st</sup> Battalion the following July and was shot in the forehead in August. Lucky to be alive, he was evacuated to a hospital in Brighton, England.

After his discharge from hospital a month later, Pte Ratcliffe was sent to the vast army training camp at Perham Downs. There, he took full advantage of his respite from the trenches, going absent without leave for three days, for which he lost four days pay.

He was sent back to France in September 1917, where he suffered from trench foot and influenza in the shocking battlefield conditions and was hospitalised several times.

After being wounded in action on June 16, 1918, Michael Ratcliffe, aged 27, died in the 47th Casualty Clearing Station near Amiens. He lies in the Crouy



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

A00946



**The Crouy British Cemetery, where Pte Ratcliffe is buried.**



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

E04661

**Australian positions near Sailly-le-Sec in 1918.**

British Cemetery and is commemorated on the Sons of Gwalia Honour Board.

His effects – a prayer book, letters, a wallet and some photographs – were sent to his eldest sister Nellie in Sale, Victoria.

**The village of Sailly-le-Sec suffered during the war.**

## Management of Mine Accidents

Bob Crofts



*The ambulance used on the Sons of Gwalia Mine.*

In the mid 1930s, the Sons of Gwalia Company employed approximately 500 personnel working over three shifts. At the time, I was employed as a chauffeur to the Mine Manager, and as Ambulance Officer.

As with any mining or industrial undertaking, accidents will occur, therefore facilities had to be available to treat each case before they were taken to a medical officer or hospital. The First Aid room was sufficiently equipped, and we had an assortment of rescue stretchers to cope with any emergencies. There were first aid personnel underground to attend emergencies prior to bringing them to the surface, and to the ambulance room. Qualified personnel were available for surface emergencies.

There was no ambulance in the district, however the Mine had a sedan for the manager's use, and the second one was a tourer. This vehicle had a canvas roof, and the rear panel holding the rear window was detachable. This enabled a stretcher to be entered from the rear of the vehicle and rested across the two seats to transport patients to the hospital. This vehicle was for general office duties, as well as transferring 'sit up' patients to the hospital.

In 1936 a new ambulance was purchased for the district, and was initially housed at the Leonora Power House. Eventually, the Sons of Gwalia built a garage at the mine site for the ambulance and I was delegated to maintain and drive it.

We were not fortunate to have the services of the Flying Doctor, as we do currently. The Leonora hospital had one doctor and not many nurses. Often it became necessary to transfer difficult cases such as children with infectious disease by road to Kalgoorlie District Hospital. This presented its own problems as we had to fumigate our van before proceeding home. This was accomplished by placing on the rear floor a dish with Condi's Crystals and saturating it with formalin, causing the crystals to boil and emit a strong gas. The doors were then closed for eight hours.

The chance of an accident with kangaroos or emus, or a mechanical breakdown, owing to leaving most times near midnight, was a problem with the Kalgoorlie journey. As we never had access to mobile phones or two-way radios, it was imperative that we had a backup plan. The Leonora Hospital matron would phone Kalgoorlie advising of my expected time of arrival. I requested Kalgoorlie to phone the licensee of the Menzies Hotel should I be half an hour overdue, and requested they despatch the Kalgoorlie ambulance to rescue my patient and myself. Happily, it never became necessary.

Over the years we attended many emergencies on outback stations and properties through accidents or sickness. The ambulance was only a basic vehicle and, being of wooden construction, proved very dusty on gravel roads. It was not air-conditioned, had no siren or warning lights as today.

After heavy rainfall in the Cane Grass area, the creek across the main road would be under water for days and impassable. On two occasions I was forced to negotiate the adjacent railway bridge with the ambulance as it was imperative that I got my patient through to medical aid. There were 14 gates across the gravel roads between Menzies and Leonora which caused a further delay as, being on my own, I had to open and close each gate by myself.

I continued my employment with the SOG until I joined the RAAF. After returning home from overseas service, I continued my former occupation until the Mine closed in 1963. I moved to Kalgoorlie where I was offered a position of station officer with Kalgoorlie St John Ambulance service.

## The Story of Two Locos Called Leonora

Arlene Collings

When the Sons of Gwalia mine began to be developed in 1898, bush mulga trees were cut for the steam boilers, mining timbers and the gold processing. At first this timber was transported to the mine by camel.

In 1902 a narrow gauge (20-inch) woodline was laid. This initially ran south towards Kookynie for about 56km. The network of woodlines became immense. By December 1963, 120,000 hectares of timber had been cleared.



Midland in 1939

The timber cutters lived in camps at the end of the line. The first steam loco used on this line was "Leonora", built in England by Kerr Stuart and Co, Stoke on Trent. This little engine worked hard until 1915 when it was withdrawn and scrapped.

There were four other woodline engines: "Gwalia" 1902-1940; "Koppel" 1911-1955; "Fowler" 1916-1963 and "Midland" (Ken) 1934-1963. Today remnants of Fowler and Koppel and a restored Midland (Ken) are on display at the Gwalia Museum.

Another steam loco was built by Hunslet Engine Co Leeds, England, and was of a 3ft 6in gauge. In 1884, known as "D6", the locomotive was used as a jetty shunter at Fremantle and sometimes worked on the main line as far as Chidlows Well. By 1900-03 it was working as a shunter on the Bunbury jetty.

In 1903, the locomotive was renamed "Leonora", and was purchased by the Leonora Municipal Tramways. Interestingly, after the tramway opened on 6 October 1903, school children were transported free of charge to the Central School.

The little loco ran on lines between Leonora and Gwalia until 1908 when it was sold to Bunning Bros and used at their Argle, Lyall, Muja and Tullis sawmills until 1951. In 1956 it was sold for scrap.

There were three trailer cars built for the loco by Thomas Wardle and Co of Fremantle. These were double decked; when the line was an electric tram in 1908 the upper decks of these trailers were removed.

And so we say farewell the two locos called Leonora. Both had interesting pasts and enriched the colourful tapestry of life in Gwalia and Leonora.

Arlene would like to thank:

- Jeff Austin from the Perth Electric Tramway Society and Light Railway Research Society of Australia Inc.
- Jenny Mills (Bunnings). The Timber People



Woodline engines 1941/42



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## Can You Help?

- ♦ Denise and Michael Lorentz, who are lovingly restoring the old Station Master's House in Leonora, would like to hear from anyone who has photos of the Station Master's House or of any of its previous occupants. Contact Denise: [0417225679](tel:0417225679)
  - ♦ Robyn Horner is doing research for the Leonora Heritage Trail and is looking for photos of Barnes Federal Theatre and activities held at the theatre. Robyn: 0400572295 or [glenoakptyltd@bigpond.com](mailto:glenoakptyltd@bigpond.com)
  - ♦ Anne Skinner would appreciate any information from family of Gwalia and Leonora men and women who served in World War 1. Also any photos and information on home-coming events and Armistice celebrations. Anne: [sannets@gmail.com](mailto:sannets@gmail.com)
  - ♦ Gail Ross is looking for a photo of Steven Grace. Gail: [museum@gwalia.org.au](mailto:museum@gwalia.org.au) or 0419958199
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## Thank You

- ♦ The Shire of Leonora and the Gwalia Leonora Reference Group would like to thank the following:
  - ♦ For assistance with the Unveiling of the Engineering Heritage Marker
    - ♦ Ian Maitland, Chairman, Engineering Heritage Western Australia
    - ♦ Francis Norman, President of Engineers Western Australia Division
    - ♦ Wendy Duncan MLA Kalgoorlie
    - ♦ Kado Muir
    - ♦ Denise and Michael Lorentz
  - ♦ Newsletter contributions from Arlene Collings, Bob Croft and Anne Skinner.
    - ♦ Anne Skinner for proofreading the newsletter
  - ♦ Tralee Cable for her dedication to the Gwalia Leonora Reference Group
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### Newsletter contributions

If you have memories to share, are looking for a past friend or seeking information on something relating to Gwalia or Leonora, we would be pleased to include it in our newsletter. Please forward them to **Gail Ross, Museum Manager**, along with any suitable photographs. *We reserve the right to edit or to decline to publish depending on the content.*

*If you have family, friends or colleagues that would like to be included on our Newsletter mailing list, please contact our **Museum Manager Gail Ross**.*

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### Gwalia Ghost Town & Museum

Shire of Leonora

Address: Tower Street, Gwalia  
Postal: PO Box 56, Leonora, WA, 6438  
Phone: 08 9037 7122  
Mobile: 0419 958 199  
Email: [museum@gwalia.org.au](mailto:museum@gwalia.org.au)



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### Contacts

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Manager, Gwalia Museum	Gail Ross	<a href="mailto:museum@gwalia.org.au">museum@gwalia.org.au</a>	08 9037 7122
Manager, Heritage & Economics	Elaine Labuschagne	<a href="mailto:mehs@leonora.wa.gov.au">mehs@leonora.wa.gov.au</a>	08 9037 6044

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GWALIA GHOST TOWN & MUSEUM

PO Box 56  
Leonora WA 6438  
museum@gwalia.org.au

## Friends of Gwalia Subscription Form

By becoming a Friend of Gwalia you will play an important role in the preservation of buildings, machinery, objects, photographs and documents associated with Gwalia, the Sons of Gwalia mine and the Leonora district.

You will also help Gwalia share fascinating stories associated with these significant items through your support of public programmes and events.

### Our mission

Gwalia's mission is to conserve, explore and share the cultural heritage of Gwalia and Leonora. With your support, we can achieve our mission.

### Gwalia Collections

Gwalia contains significant collections of buildings and machinery from the Gwalia settlement and the Sons of Gwalia Mine, as well as objects, documents and photographs of these and the wider Leonora region covering mining, pastoral commercial enterprises and community facilities. With your support, we can continue to collect, conserve and enhance our collections for today's and future generations.

### Learning and public events

Through our buildings, exhibitions and displays, public programmes and events, we aim to share the history and heritage of Gwalia and Leonora. With your support, we can continue this work.

*As a subscriber, you will receive a quarterly newsletter, updates of important events and the satisfaction of knowing that you are supporting Gwalia ghost town & museum.*

## I wish to subscribe to the Friends of Gwalia

### Annual Subscription Fees

Pensioner Membership	\$ 20.00 (inc GST)
Individual Membership	\$ 30.00 (inc GST)
Family Membership	\$ 40.00 (inc GST)
Other donations	\$ (exc GST)
TOTAL	\$

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**Thank you for your membership**