



# Gwalia Newsletter

## 2013– A Productive Year At Gwalia

The generous financial assistance from the Shire of Leonora in managing and preserving Gwalia has made many projects during this busy year at Gwalia ghost town & museum possible.

The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary weekend to mark the closure of the Sons of Gwalia mine was held in September with 200 people attending. This was the first major event organised by the Gwalia Reference Group with a significant financial contributions by the Shire of Leonora together with sponsorship from local business and community members. The Friends of Gwalia was reinstated and the funds received through subscription contributed towards the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary weekend.

Conservation work was completed to Patroni's Guest Home with \$100,000 assistance from the Federal Government T-Qual Grant for Tourism Quality Products and the remaining \$300,000 from the Shire's own resources. The Shire has invested in obtaining engineer's and architect reports to outline work required to the Sons of Gwalia headframe designed by Herbert Hoover.

Four months of conservation work to the Pink House and De Rubeis camp is now completed. Work was funded through a \$100,000 Lotterywest Conserving Cultural Heritage Grant. The new Gwalia website launched at the end of October was made possible through a Lotterywest Interpretation Grant with a financial contribution by the Shire of Leonora.

An audit of the collection, accessioning and de-accessioning project was done early in the year and significant objects in the museum's collection are being preserved. Thanks to a grant from Department of Veterans' Affairs work to the World War I Sons of Gwalia Honour Board is completed and will soon return to Gwalia.

We would like to thank Bob Biggs who has spent many volunteer hours on the restoration of Midland the woodline engine. Bob Crofts who continues to support Gwalia and provides a wealth of knowledge. The many past residents who contribute to preserving the history of Gwalia by donating objects and sharing their stories. Jacqui Sherrieff for her involvement at Gwalia for the past 7 years.

The Shire appointed Elaine Labuschagne in July this year as Manager Heritage & Economics to developed heritage, cultural and curatorial services within the Shire.

Gail and Gary Ross continues to manage the Hoover House and Museum with excellence. Visitor numbers to the Museum and Hoover House B&B have increased. We value visitors tracing their family history and those just fascinated by the rich history of Gwalia. We hope to see you all back in the near future.

Our first newsletter was launched a year ago and we hope that you will continue enjoying our newsletter sharing the activities at Gwalia.

Wishing you all the best for the festive seasons.

*Jeff Carter*

Chairperson: Gwalia Reference Group

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## And the Whistle blew one more time .....

by Tralee Cable

On the 28<sup>th</sup> September this year many people converged on Gwalia to remember old friends, old pranks, and to reminisce about how things were fifty or more years ago. When Gwalia was alive and rivalries between the twin towns raged.



**Sarah Zimmermann, Jeff & Judy Carter**

*Photo taken by: Anne Skinner*

Stories were rich and often ribald. Tales of the 'Afghan Camp' between the two towns where kids would steal the fresh produce from the rich vegetable gardens, while one or two distracted the hard working Afghan gardeners. The distractions did not always work, and many kids ran home just in time to dodge a 'clip under the ear' from a parent who had just been berated for their wayward children.

The stage shows were an outstanding success, names like Hay and Harris mixed with Lynch and Barden, each outdoing the other in the vividness of their memory. Tales of school days in Gwalia, and sporting carnivals, where, of course, Gwalia ALWAYS beat Leonora (at least that was the case in the stories told on that weekend).

Gaye Harris made every one laugh with her surprise at seeing the once scrawny little Mick Demasson who she teased mercilessly when they were children,



**Bob Mazza shared his stories of Mazza's Store and living in Gwalia**

*Photo taken by: Anne Skinner*

now in the full bloom of life. "Nobody would be game to tease him now – just look at him – we'd be too scared" she said, much to the delight of the crowd.

Terry Demasson had the opportunity to polish up the old shift whistle again, and it screamed the opening and closing of the event. For those of us raised in a different world it was a wonder to imagine that noise twice a day or more, and how it would define the day for anyone in either town.

Lenore Layman co-author of *110° in the Waterbag*, Barry Strickland the producer of the documentary *Hoovers Gold* and Anne Skinner who is writing about Goldfields Men In WW1 shed some light on Gwalia's History.



**Beverly Lynch and Gaye Harris**

*Photo taken by: Anne Skinner*

The Dinner Dance was also an outstanding success, with almost 130 people enjoying the evening and the three course meal under the Roof of what is by day "Ken's Shed". Jeff and Judy Carter toiled many hours for weeks before the event to provide a wind free environment that became magically a delightfully old fashioned hessian lined venue by night. Fairy lights and candles to eat and dance by, a band playing familiar songs from the Tram. Delicious food provided by Australian Camp Services that still has diners talking.



**Terry Demasson & Bill Johnson**

Lyn Hazelton regaled us with her new song – The Little Red House, which is based on the pink house in Gwalia, and for the first time sang the song she wrote about the event called "And the Last Whistle Blows".



## ...continued

Gary's hard work and determination in cleaning up the precinct in the weeks before the weekend, was visible. The market stalls in the recently restored Patroni's Guest House were a little undersubscribed and a number of those who had planned on having a stall chose not to make the trek, when such an exciting football game was on. Those who did come offered beautiful work.

Our own Deeva Muir became an 'artist in residence' and worked on some of her paintings while visitors enjoyed the works she bought to display and sell. Of course there was our very own book stall and Gwalia Gold Bars of soap for sale.

Fiona's food van was incredibly popular, and Prat and Steve ran a delightful 'cake and tea shop' in one of our humpies. Allan, Rita and Hamish, unsurprisingly, were a huge hit with the kids with their lollies and ices.

The Curtin Volunteers were, as always, a fabulous boon and to keep families and children amused with tug of war, egg and spoon races, three legged races, sack races, face painting and balloon creatures. Most of their time, however, was spent washing dishes, and they did so cheerfully and willingly, and in this way endeared themselves to those of us who would otherwise have spent the weekend with our hands immersed in hot soapy water.

The Great Beyond and the Outback Gallery from Laverton both had a very strong presence and many of the 'grey nomads' who attended our weekend gained some great knowledge on places to visit in the great outback, while the Outback Gallery had on display the most amazing selection of indigenous craft - from baskets and carvings, to didgeridoos and paintings. Kathy Cox held her hand craft stall and offered us pretty knitted scarves, and hand made pot holders. Her raffle and money chain raised over \$50 which was donated generously to the Gwalia Museum. Arlene Collins had an amazing display of "Leonora Tip Art" with her Gwalia folk art painting on old Metters Stove doors and shovels

Leonora Fire Brigade are to be congratulated on their very effective Burning Car demonstration held at the close of the event, and were there a poor soul trapped in the vehicle, I have no doubt they would owe their life to Gavin and his stalwart team.



**Lenore Layman & Barry Strickland were the guest speakers**

*Photo taken by: Anne Skinner*



**Margo Patroni in front of Patroni's Guest Home**

*Photo taken by: Anne Skinner*



**Don & Donna Reid who conducted tours of the Mine Office**



**Lorraine & Peter Passeri travelled from Mandurah**

*Photo taken by: Anne Skinner*



**Bob Biggs & Bill Robertson past Gwalia residents**

*Photo taken by: Anne Skinner*



**Joan Barden whose father was the last Sons of Gwalia Mine Manager**



**Children enjoying the air rifle activity****Leonora Fire Brigade demonstration**

*Photo taken by: Anne Skinner*

**A captive audience during the stage shows**

So far as the local kids were concerned, the highlight of the weekend was the air rifle shoot that the Leonora Rifle Club held. Lyn Duncan, her son and Russell Taylor gave local kids the opportunity to shoot targets, under strict supervision, and with expert tuition. An added bonus was a sausage sizzle for the Rifle Club, which due to Lynn's cooking talents was well patronised.

**John and Mary Moore of Fremantle.  
Mary lived in Gwalia as a child**

*Photo taken by: Anne Skinner*

**Siblings Dianne Hay, Thelma 'Tupp' Biggs, Eva Stokes and Ron Hay enjoyed the reunion**

*Photo taken by: Anne Skinner*

**Bill 'Nobby' Francis and Jan Francis travelled from Rivervale . Bill went to school in Gwalia**

*Photo taken by: Anne Skinner*

So all in all, Sarah Zimmermann and The Gwalia Reference Group – (Gail and Gary Ross from the Museum, Elaine Labuschagne, Jeff and Judy Carter, and Matt Taylor and myself) all say an enormous thank you very much to Jim Epis and the Leonora Shire for their seriously strong support in holding the event, the many sponsors and volunteers who had a part in the success, to all of you who came for a gander, you never know we may be back next year!

**Bev Taylor and Judy Carter and Gary Ross getting into the swing of the 60's themed evening**



## Pink House and De Rubeis open to visitors

The conservation work to the Pink House and De Rubeis started four months ago and were recently completed.

The Shire of Leonora and the Leonora community is very appreciative of the Lotterywest Cultural Heritage Grant of \$100,000 that made the conservation work possible.

Gwalia is a significant heritage and tourism site in Australia attracting national and international visitors and it is important that the cottages are well presented in-line with heritage standards.

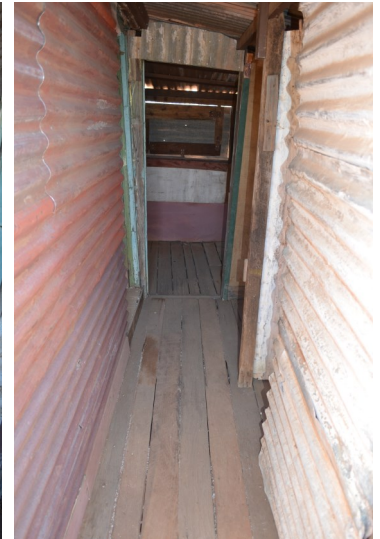
The aim of the conservation work was to make the cottages watertight, structurally sound and accessible to the public. The intent was not for the cottages to look brand new but rather to keep the character by using as much of the original building material as possible.



**Stephen Peacock & Elaine Labuschagne at Pink House**



**The passage in the Pink House before work started in August 2013**



**Work completed to the passage in the Pink House**

The builder working on the Pink House and De Rubeis was Stephen Peacock with experience in conservation of heritage buildings in Sydney and New Zealand. Stephen did an extremely professional job and the Shire is very pleased with the end result.

Both De Rubeis and the Pink House were structurally stabilised, made watertight and the timber elements such as the floors and doors were repaired and in some instances replaced with similar materials. The hessian-lined interior walls and exterior corrugated iron walls were secured and the roof repaired.

Visitors are especially attracted to the Pink House, and can be seen taking photographs of the little pink house with its scalloped details, metal window shutters and resourceful use of old bed-heads as fencing.

De Rubeis is a small two-roomed cottage framed by a tree out the front and a water tank in the corner. The cottage consists of a bedroom with packing board floors and a kitchen with a stove set in an alcove.



**Stephen Peacock at work in front of De Rubeis.**

**Left: The packing board floor in the bedroom Repaired and hessian lining replaced.**

The Pink House and De Rubeis camp is now again open to the public so come along and visit.

## Patroni family visit from Italy - Anita Patroni



**Anita Patroni, husband Enzo & son Enzo in front of Patroni's Guest Home.**

On 1 November Anita Patroni, her husband Athos and their son Enzo, visited Gwalia from Italy to trace Anita's family links to the well-known Patroni family who owned Patroni's Guest Home.

Bonaventura (Ventura) Patroni was the uncle of Anita's grandfather Enrico Patroni. Ventura left the village of Sernio (province of Sondrio, Italy), in 1910.

Bernardina (Dina) nee Bassanelli was also from Sernio, a small village in the middle of a Northern Italian mountain, on the border of Switzerland.

Ventura and Dina were married on May, 5th, 1908, their first son, Amilcare, was born in Sernio, on January, 27th 1910. The Patroni's other son Palo and daughter Ida were born in Australia.



**Ventura & Dina Patroni with sons Amilcare & Palo and daughter Ida**



**The village of Serino in c1900.**

Thanks to a proxy selling, through letters from Sernio to Gwalia, Anita's grandparents bought the old Patroni house in Italy that dates from circa 1600.

Today the Patroni family home in Serino, Italy is owned by Anita's brother.



**Tony Bettini sent letters to his mother in Sernio from Gwalia**

Anita even has links from her grandmother Agnese Patroni (nee Bettini) who's brother, Tony Bettini, left from the same village at the age of 17, in 1925. He worked first as a woodman, and then as a miner in Gwalia, send money back home to the family. He died at the age of 32 from "pulmonary exhaustion" and was buried in Leonora Cemetery.

Anita said: "My grandmother was very fond of her brother and she always told me about him in Gwalia. When I was a child she read me many times the letters from there, words full of love for the family. Now I'm proud to own these letters too."

**The Shire of Leonora would like to thank  
Anita Patroni**

**for all the information she has provided together with copies of family photographs that help  
tell the story of Gwalia and the people who once lived here.**



## My families link with Gwalia State Hotel –

by Judy Inveen

My grandfather William Lambert Hunter left New Zealand and came to Australia in the late 1890's to work as a publican the Victorian goldfields. Here he met his first wife Mary and by the early 1900's he managed a hotel in Kalgoorlie.



**Judy Inveen & Robert Abell in front of the Gwalia State Hotel**

Appointed as the second manager of the State Hotel Gwalia he took up the position in July 1905. His wife and both sons died in childbirth in December 1905.

His mother (my great grandmother Anne Sarah Hunter came to Gwalia from New Zealand to help her only son.

Blanche Maude Penny (my grandmother) left Adelaide where she was born to work for her brother as a legal secretary in Perth before taking a position as a governess on a station in Menzies.

She responded to an advertisement for the position as cook at the Gwalia State Hotel and arrived c1907. She and my grandfather were married in Northam. Their first child Iris ( my mother ) was born in February 1910, Enid was born in January 1912 and Robert was born in 1915.

My grandparents made a great success of running the hotel and initiated the building of the staff quarters in 1907 and reading room (the later bar) in 1911. They left Gwalia c1914 when he was appointed State Manager of all State Hotels in Western Australia.



**Mary and twin infant sons are buried in the Leonora cemetery**



**In the Gwalia State Hotel kitchen where Blanche Hunter was once the cook.**

Unfortunately my grandfather died from cancer on 29 July 1918. He had returned to Gwalia to die and his death certificate reveals his death occurred in the Leonora hospital. He was buried in the Leonora cemetery, but we could not locate his grave.

The family owned property at Goomaling was sold and an estate in Greenmount outside Perth purchased which my grandmother and great grandmother ran as a country boarding house until World War 11 occurred. My grandmother lived until she was eighty nine.

As a family stories of the life and experiences in the Hotel were part of our upbringing. All of four grand children of William and Blanche Hunter have made the pilgrimage to Gwalia. During my recent visit it has been my pleasure to donate our family photos, a book with my grandmother's handwritten recipes and newspaper articles attesting to my grandfather's popularity and efficiency.

**The Shire of Leonora would like to acknowledge  
Judy Inveen  
for the generous donation to Gwalia ghost town & museum.  
Thank you for sharing your family history.**

## The Hero of No Man's Land -

by Anne Skinner

*World War One took the lives of almost a quarter of the 85 men listed on the Gwalia Honour Board. Their stories will be featured in the Gwalia newsletter from this edition as Australia begins the countdown to the centenary of the conflict that changed our nation and the world.*

Roy Retchford ran across No Man's Land, stumbling under the weight of his Sergeant as the machinegun bullet tore through his thigh.

It was a moonlit night and the patrol had been spotted as they neared the German wire. The guns opened up, seriously wounding the NCO.

The former Kalgoorlie School of Mines student hefted his Sergeant over his shoulder and carried him back to the Australian lines, without thought for his own wound and with "conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty".

He was awarded the Military Cross but didn't live to receive it – a few months later, on June 3, 1918, he was killed in action at Mont de Merris. He was 23 years old.

The award citation described him as showing "courage and endurance of a high order".

Albert Roy Retchford was a 20-year-old locomotive fireman when he enlisted in the first contingent of Goldfields men on September 9, 1914, less than a month after his country entered the war. He embarked from Fremantle as a signaller with the 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion aboard HMAT Ascanius on November 2.



**Lieutenant Albert Roy Retchford MC (third from left in the back row) was killed in action in Belgium on June 3, 1918.**

The Sons of Gwalia Limited		
Roll-of-Honour		
NO	NAME	REMARKS
1	Patrick A W	Killed in Action
2	Brown L	
3	Beson J	Killed in Action
4	Hart W	
5	Dowson M	Killed in Action
6	Carr T	Killed in Action
7	Gooden W	
8	Hadfield R	
9	Stevens J	
10	Cooke J	Killed in Action
11	Williams J	Died of Wounds
12	O'Connor P	
13	Retchford R	Killed in Action
14	Loydstrom J	

**Lt Retchford's name is nr 13 on the Sons of Gwalia Roll-of-Honour.**

Private Retchford was among the first ashore at Gallipoli and was twice mentioned in despatches for "gallant and good work". He was promoted to Sergeant just before the evacuation from the peninsula in December 1915.

In March 1916 the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion sailed for France where it fought in all the major battles of the Western Front, including Pozieres, the Somme and Ypres in Belgium. Roy Retchford rose through the ranks and it was as a Lieutenant that the fatal bullet found him.

Lt Retchford lies in the Borre British Cemetery near Hazebroucke in Belgium. His Military Medal was presented in 1919 to his elder brother Percival, who also served in the war.



## Find us on the Web

The new Gwalia ghost town & museum website was launched on 29 October 2013. This is a multi-functional website that serves as a marketing and educational tool.

You can download documents such as the Friends application form, collections policy and information about the RV site. Learn more about Gwalia, the Sons of Gwalia mine and the working and social life of the residents of Gwalia.

There is an interactive timeline that gives you a glimpse of the history of Gwalia and the mine. Learn about the collections held at the Gwalia ghost town & the museum and tell us your stories.

See [www.gwalia.org.au](http://www.gwalia.org.au)

It still needs a bit of fine tuning so if you have any comments please let us know.

## Working on Gwalia Masterplan

The Shire of Leonora is currently developing a Masterplan for Gwalia ghost town & museum as part of a broader 10 year Strategic Community Plan for the Shire. A component of this Masterplan is the formulation of a long-term strategic tourism framework.



**Pip McCahon, Tralee Cable, Sarah Zimmermann, Kim Hewson, Gary Ross and Judy Carter.**

As the primary tourism area in the Shire, the Gwalia ghost town & museum was selected for strategic review as the preliminary stage in the development of the Masterplan.

The Masterplan is to provide an overarching holistic document that concurrently considers (integrates) the different aspects of Gwalia including tourism.

On 29 November a workshop was held at Hoover House B & B presented by Kim Hewson, from Economics Transition and also a board member of Goldfields Tourism Network.

The workshop was attended by Gwalia Reference Group Members Judy Carter and Tralee Cable, Shire staff Gary Ross, Sarah Zimmermann

and Elaine Labuschagne and Pip McCahon (Senior Project Officer GEDC) .



**Kim Hewson preparing for the workshop**

The group provided valuable input and looked at ways to promote Gwalia as a leading heritage and tourism site and identified future projects.

## Farewell to a friend of Gwalia—

by Judy Carter



**Eric Omodei, in February this year. He still had an excellent memory.**

Mid year marked the passing of a museum and “Gwalia” stalwart in Eraldo (Eric) Omodei aged 92.

Eraldo Domenico Omodei, was born 16 June 1921 in Tirano, Italy. He arrived with his mother in Australia from Italy on 3 April 1928. They were met at Fremantle by his father, who had come to Australia earlier, to work on a mine in Meekathara.

It is in Meekathara where Eric grew up. After attending school in Perth he first worked on a mine outside of Cue.

In 1942 he moved to Gwalia where he first stayed in one of the single men’s rooms at Patroni’s boarding house, before buying a house in Gwalia

Eric worked in the Tool shop, sharpening drills at the Sons of Gwalia Mine. He worked at the mine until the mine closed down in 1963.

Eric belonged to the United Order of Druids and was a volunteer fire fighter, but it is Eric’s role as museum volunteer that he would be most remembered for.

Eric volunteered many hours to man the museum and entertain all visitors. He was always full of interesting history snippets for anyone who would listen. He managed to part with some of his treasures donating it to the museum so they could be appreciated by visitors.

His great sense of humour and grasp of English grammar were trademarks of his daily life. He will be missed by all who knew him.

## Can you help?

### Volunteers needed at Gwalia ghost town & museum

We are looking for volunteers who are interested in helping to conserve the timber water and woodline carts in the museum collection. The carts are an important part of Gwalia’s history, but in desperate need of maintenance work.

If you have woodworking skills, but also prepared to learn the correct conservation principles under guidance of a museum professional, we would love to hear from you.

It will only take a couple of hours here and there and you will have the satisfaction that you helped to preserve important museum objects.

**Some of the timber carts at the museum**





## Thank You

We would also like to thank the following organisations and individuals for their kind donations towards the 50th anniversary weekend held in September 2013.

- ◇ The Shire of Leonora
- ◇ Goldfields Agnew Gold Mine
- ◇ CAPE CRUSHING & Earthworks
- ◇ Independence Group
- ◇ Goldfields Crane Hire
- ◇ Serco
- ◇ Leonora pharmacy
- ◇ Leonora Motor Inn
- ◇ Gav's Auto Electrical
- ◇ Donovan Payne Architects
- ◇ Leonora Paining Service
- ◇ Weldpower Pty Ltd
- ◇ White House Hotel
- ◇ Greg & Maree Sbizzirri

Thank You for the following Grants Received for work at Gwalia:

- ◇ Lotterywest for Conserving Cultural Heritage grant—Pink House & De Rubeis
- ◇ Lotterywest for Interpretation grant—Gwalia website
- ◇ Department of Veteran's Affairs—Sons of Gwalia Roll-of-Honour

We would like to thank everyone who donated photographs and objects the past year. We are still processing the donations and will report back on some of the interesting objects and photographs received.

### 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 our 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.***

### Gwalia Museum + Hoover House B&B

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)  
Web: [www.gwalia.org.au](http://www.gwalia.org.au)



### Contacts

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0419 958 199



GWALIA MUSEUM + HOOVER HOUSE B&B

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## Friends of Gwalia Museum Subscription Form

[museum@gwalia.org.au](mailto:museum@gwalia.org.au)

By becoming a Friend of Gwalia Museum you will play an important role 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 Museum share fascinating stories associated with these significant items through your support of public programmes and events.

### Our mission

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

### Gwalia Museum Collections

Gwalia Museum contains significant collections of buildings and machinery from Gwalia townsite and the Sons of Gwalia Mine, as well as objects, documents and photographs to these and the wider Leonora region covering mining, pastoralism, 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 Museum.*

**Funds generated through the Friends of Gwalia will remain separate from other Shire funds and will be used for specific targets set by the Gwalia Reference Group each year.**  
**The target for 2012/13 is a weekend event on 28 & 29 September 2013 to mark the 50th anniversary of the closure of the Sons of Gwalia Mine.**

## I wish to subscribe to the Friends of Gwalia Museum

Title _____	Annual Subscription \$20.00 (inc GST)
Name _____	Other donation \$ _____
Address _____	TOTAL \$ _____
Suburb _____	
State _____ Postcode _____	
Home Phone _____	
Mobile phone _____	
Email _____	

I have enclosed a cheque/money order for this amount payable to the Shire of Leonora ☐

OR I wish to pay by credit/debit card

☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

Name on card \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry date \_\_\_\_\_ Today's date \_\_\_\_\_

Do you require a receipt? ☐ yes ☐ no

*How may you be able to assist Gwalia Museum? (please circle)*

Volunteer museum work / Volunteer for activities and events / Other \_\_\_\_\_

*What is your association with Gwalia/Leonora? (Where you lived and/or worked, with dates etc)*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_