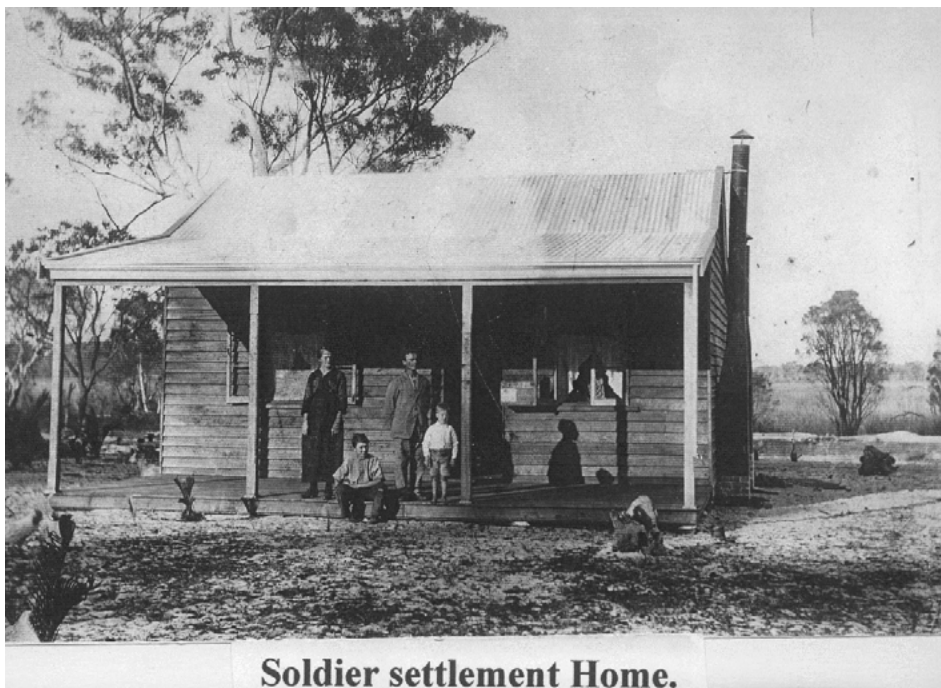


## Kwinana 1918-2018

By City of Kwinana Local History Librarian Amy Price

There are many sites throughout Kwinana significant to Aboriginal culture, and the British presence in Kwinana can be traced back to 1829, to the ill-fated Peel Estate attempts to farm the surrounding districts. However, many local families can trace their history back to a second wave of migration that occurred in the 1920s under the Post World War One Soldier Settlement Scheme and Sir James Mitchell's Group Settlement Scheme. Under these schemes, British migrant settlers received financial assistance for them and their families' passage to Australia, and in return were required to work in small communities in undeveloped areas, such as Kwinana.

Photos provide an indication of what housing and living conditions were like at this time.

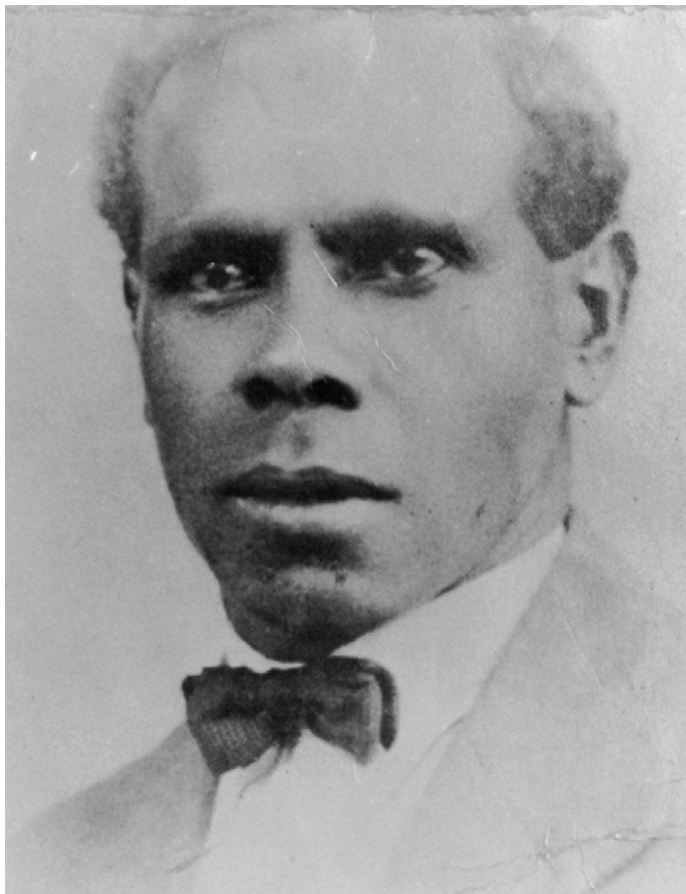


Soldier Settler home 1920s- Photo Gallery



Original group settlement home Wellard 1924, they were larger than the soldier settlement homes.

A Kwinana local with the surname is Thorpe, Sloan, Smirk, Sloan, Key, Mead, Postans, Mortimer, Thomas or De San Miguel may well be able to trace their family history back to one of these early settlers. Although enthusiastic, a combination of lack of proper financing, unskilled workforce and general geographical isolation meant that the Schemes were unsuccessful and most of the farms were abandoned by the 1930s, however cottages named in honour of the Thorpe, Sloan, Smirk, Key and Mead family still stand today; Smirk Cottage now houses the City of Kwinana Museum collections.



Simon Gentle First employee Kwinana road board - 1938 (Doug Waddingham)



Smirk daughters born to Thomas Smirk and Elizabeth (nee Hymus) Kwinana

During World War Two, Gentle Road, Medina was the site of a military personnel camp, housing Royal Australian Air Force officers who manned the Radar Detention Huts on Wellard Road. The huts were an integral part of Australian's coastal defense during the war, used to detect the approach of enemy vessels. The huts can still be visited today as part of the Kwinana Loop Walking Trail. Gentle Road is named after Simon Gentle, who in 1938 became the first Aboriginal employee of the then Kwinana Road Board. The nature reserve adjacent to Gentle Road is also the location of Chalk Hill, the site of an Aboriginal camp during the 1950s and 1960s. After the War, the site of the Army camp was repurposed as an outdoor nightclub known as the Ding Dong.

Kwinana as we know it today has its origins in the 1950s, when the W.A. Government entered into an agreement with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (now known as BP) to resume the failed Group Settlement farmlands and develop Kwinana as an industrial hub. The first suburb on the new Town was Medina. This was opened up as a state housing area and most of the families that moved in were fresh migrants of Anglo Celtic and European descent. The suburbs of Calista and Parmelia soon followed. Many of the City's suburbs take their names from ships and early settlers. A short history of each suburb is included in the educational resources.



Image taken for Head Wrightson Pty Ltd to document the construction work at the BP Refinery, Kwinana, 1967. The photo was taken by David McCowan, of 808 Hay Street Perth.

On 1 July 1961, the District became the Shire of Kwinana following the enactment of the *Local Government Act 1960*. It became a Town on 28 May 1977 and as local population increased, was proclaimed a City on 17 September 2012.

Two significant developments in the City's modern history are the construction of the Casuarina Prison, opened in 1991 to replace the now Heritage-listed Fremantle Prison, and the extension of the Kwinana Freeway in 1993, which provided vital transport connections between Kwinana suburbs and Perth City. The freeway extension is also significant to the history of local Aboriginal people as the development involved the relocation of Noongar campsites where Walley Bridge is today. The bridge takes its name from Theresa and Robert Walley, who were the first Aboriginal family to settle in the 1960's Medina development. For further information about Kwinana's rich heritage, please visit Kwinana Public Library and Smirk Cottage Museum, 5 Beacham Crescent, Medina.

Voices of Kwinana is Kwinana Library's online Local History resource  
[www.voicesofkwinana.org](http://www.voicesofkwinana.org)



# History of the suburbs

## ANKETELL

Anketell was also part of the Cockburn Sound tract of land granted to Thomas Peel. The suburb was named after Richard John Anketell, a Surveyor who was the Engineer in Chief of the drainage scheme for the Peel Estate.

## BERTRAM

Bertram is the name of the original owner of Lot 68 of the Peel Estate, then part of the Group and Soldier Settlement Scheme of the 1920s. He served in the First World War and lived in the area for over 40 years, cattle farming and raising a family.

## CALISTA

Similar to the adjoining suburbs of Parmelia, Medina and Orelia, Calista is named after a ship which brought colonists to Fremantle, arriving in 1829. The first ship to reach the Swan River was the HMS Challenger. After anchoring off Garden Island on 25 April 1929, its Captain Charles Fremantle declared the Swan River Colony for Britain on 2 May 1829. The Parmelia arrived on 1 June, HMS Sulphur on 8 June. Three merchant ships arrived shortly after: the Calista on 5 August, the St Leonard on 6 August and the Marquis of Anglesey on 23 August.

## LEDA

Leda is one of several suburbs of the Town of Kwinana named after a ship which brought colonists to the area, this one in 1830. The suburb name was approved on 18 March 1969. In Greek mythology, Leda was the mother of Helen of Troy (among others), sired by the Greek god Zeus in the guise of a swan.

## MANDOGALUP

The area of this suburb was originally referred to as '7 Mile Camp', but when a townsite was declared here in 1923 it was named 'Balmanup'. Lake Balmanup was an alternative name for Mandogalup Swamp. In 1945 it was found that the townsite was more commonly known as Mandogalup and it was changed to Mandogalup in 1946. It is an Aboriginal name, the meaning of which is unknown.

## MEDINA

Similar to the adjoining suburbs of Parmelia, Orelia and Calista, Medina is named after a ship which brought colonists to Fremantle, arriving in 1830. It was the first of these suburbs to be so named. The name is believed to be derived from a river on the Isle of Wight. The street names of Medina are taken from the passenger lists of those early ships.



## CASUARINA

Casuarina was also named after a ship, this one used by a French expedition to explore the Western Australian coast. Casuarina trees are commonly known as she-oaks, ironwoods or beefwoods and the ship was named after the wood from which it was made. In 1828, Thomas Peel and three others formed a consortium to found a colony at the Swan River by sending settlers there. This part of Cockburn Sound was part of a large tract granted to Peel in 1830.

## HOPE VALLEY

Between 1882 and 1886, a small community developed in this area, with Postans the first settler calling his property 'Hope Valley'. George Postans was one of the first convicts to be transported to Western Australia in 1850 and bought 100 acres of land in 1882 after receiving his ticket of leave. A group of neighbouring settlers built homes and established small mixed farms in the area, naming their community after the Postans property.

## NAVAL BASE

This suburb takes its name from the Naval Base for which land was resumed here in 1915. The base never eventuated, but the name given to the land allocated for that purpose remained.

## ORELIA

Similar to the adjoining suburbs of Parmelia, Medina and Calista, Orelia is named after a ship which brought colonists to Fremantle, arriving in 1829. This area began to be developed in 1952.

## PARMELIA

Similar to the adjoining suburbs of Medina, Orelia and Calista, Parmelia is named after a ship which brought colonists to Fremantle, arriving in 1829. The Parmelia arrived on 1 June, bringing the first 96 settlers to the new Swan River colony. Included on board were the new Governor and wife, James and Ellen Stirling.

## POSTANS

This suburb name commemorates George Postans, one of the first settlers in Hope Valley. He was one of the first convicts to be transported to Western Australia in 1850 and bought 100 acres of land in 1882 after receiving his ticket of leave.

## KWINANA BEACH

The suburbs of Kwinana and Kwinana Beach were named after the SS Kwinana which had been destroyed by fire, towed to Garden Island, broke loose during a storm and subsequently run aground on the beach near Kwinana in 1922. The remains of the ill-fated ship were blown up in 1941, but some wreckage remained to become part of the jetty. The 'Beach' part of the townsite name Kwinana Beach was added in the mid-1950s to distinguish between the coastal area and the town which was at that time confined to the Medina area.

## KWINANA CITY CENTRE

Planning for this central area, located between Sulphur Road to the north, Wellard Road to the south and between Meares and Gilmore Avenues, commenced in the late 1960s. Opposition from local businessmen was originally strong, but the Council and community were keen to have a City Centre area with retail and entertainment venues. Facilities including the Recquatic Centre, Kwinana Tavern and The Hub shopping centre were opened in the early 1970's.

In more recent years, the City has undergone a multi-million dollar transformation, including expansion updating of the shopping centre (now the Kwinana Marketplace), building of community centres, youth space and the Kwinana Adventure Park.



## THE SPECTACLES

The name Spectacles derives from the names of two swamps in the area, Large Eye Swamp and Small Eye Swamp. These swamps had been collectively recorded as 'The Spectacles' since 1841 when the first survey of the area was undertaken by Surveyor Thomas Watson. It was approved as a suburb name on 14 March 1978.

## WANDI

The name 'Wandi' commemorates a highly regarded Aboriginal stockman who drove sheep in the Cockburn Sound area for Anchorage Butchers in the 1920s.

## WELLARD

Wellard was also part of the Cockburn Sound tract of land granted to Thomas Peel. John Wellard was one of the first settlers in the area. He built 'Serpentine Farm' now 'Lowlands Homestead' in 1860, situated about 7.5 km south-east of the present day Wellard.

Information with assistance from the Western Australian Department of Land Information Geonoma database.

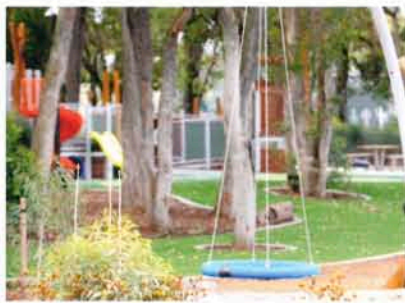


## Kwinana in the 21st Century

From humble beginnings as a Shire built to support local industry in the 1950s, Kwinana is now a thriving metropolitan City. Between 2011 and 2036, Kwinana's population is forecast to increase by 53,510 residents (174.32% growth). Kwinana is also a wonderfully diverse community, with over a third of residents born overseas.

Families, business and investors continue to be attracted to Kwinana's beautiful green landscapes, modern facilities, affordable living and endless opportunities. A multi-billion dollar revitalisation program has provided exciting new infrastructure, adding to the appeal of this vibrant City. Kwinana

now boasts many state-of-the-art community facilities including the Darius Wells Library and Resource Centre, Zone Youth Space, Kwinana Marketplace and Adventure Park.



Kwinana industry continues to be a major contributor to the success of Western Australia at national and international level. The Kwinana Industrial Area is one of the most affluent areas of employment in the state, generating 26,000 jobs and \$15billion to the economy each year.

The intimate, country feel of Kwinana remains strong today, providing a welcome escape from the hustle and bustle of Perth City life – yet just a short train journey away. Visitors to Kwinana will notice the warm community spirit and buzz of activity that makes the City a fantastic place to live.

## Want to discover more of Kwinana's vibrant history?

Explore community heritage online at [www.voicesofkwinana.com](http://www.voicesofkwinana.com) or visit us at Kwinana Public Library.

Further reading: *Kwinana: third time lucky* by Laurie Russell



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## History of the suburbs



## The origins of Kwinana

The history of Kwinana goes back to 1829 when Lt. James Stirling established the Swan River Colony. The first settlers were off-loaded from the transport ship *Parmelia* onto Garden Island after she ran aground and from there they were later taken to the mainland. There were several attempts during the next century to populate the area with farming, but many were unsuccessful.

The district derives its name from the Steamship *Kwinana* that was wrecked along our coastline in 1922. The local post-mistress at the time, Clara Wells, marked the mail bags 'Kwinana Wreck' and hence the name caught on and Kwinana was established.



Despite these early attempts to settle in the area, it was not until the early 1950s that the shores near the wreck gained worldwide attention following an announcement by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (now BP) that they were to build a giant petroleum refinery in the area. The establishment of this industry not only commenced development of what is the most important industrial area in Western Australia today, but it also marked the beginning of residential areas planned to house the mass of workers. The first suburb to be created, Medina, was opened up as a state housing area, and predominantly the families that moved there were newly arrived migrants of Anglo Celtic descent. Calista was settled shortly after and then in the following years the surrounding areas of *Parmelia*, *Orelia*, *Wellard* and *Leda* were established.

The Kwinana City Council had its beginnings with the passing of the Kwinana Roads Districts Act of 1953 on 15 February 1954. The district was originally administered by the Commissioner until a board of seven members was elected on 11 February 1961.



After the proclamation of the Local Government Act of 1960, the Kwinana Road District became the Municipality of Kwinana and two additional Councillors were elected in 1970 making a total of nine Councillors – the present number. In 1977, the Council acquired its present status when the Governor changed its status from a shire to a town. Kwinana's status changed to a City in 2012.

