CRADLE OF THE COLONY

A STORY OF GUILDFORD AND THE SWAN VALLEY

FEATURING ITEMS FROM
THE SWAN GUILDFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTION.
WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S THIRD MOST SIGNIFICANT COLLECTION.

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WELCOME TO HISTORIC GUILDFORD

THIS EXHIBITION IS DESIGNED TO GIVE AN OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF GUILDFORD AND THE SWAN VALLEY FROM CAPTAIN JAMES STIRLING'S EXPEDITION UP THE SWAN RIVER IN 1827 UNTIL THE PRESENT DAY.

The Swan River Colony was established in 1829 as a free settlement with British support under Stirling as lieutenant governor. Land was the attraction for new settlers. Stirling elected to take 100,000 acres in lieu of a stipend (payment).

Initial contact with the traditional Aboriginal owners was friendly but following settlement the differences in approach to land and cultural attitudes soon led to conflict. Introduced diseases also had a dramatic impact on Aboriginal society.

The Swan Valley, with Guildford as the planned market town and transport hub, was the agricultural cradle of the new settlement.

Portrait of Admiral James Stirling, First Governor of Western Australia c1840
Courtesy Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, ML 15.

The infant colony struggled to survive until the arrival of convicts in the 1850s.

The next boom period was the gold rush of the 1890s followed by two world wars and a depression in the first half of the 20th century.

Today Guildford is a recognised historic town classified by the National Trust, and the Swan Valley is one of Western Australia's most visited tourism destinations.

Front cover image: View of Swan River taken at commencement of fresh waters, 1827 Frederick Garling. This painting depicts the exploration party shooting black swans and shows the grasslands on the wide river flats created by fire stick farming.
Courtesy State Art Collection, Art Gallery of Western Australia

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SWAN RIVER PEOPLE

40,000 YEARS OF ABORIGINAL OCCUPATION

The Swan River People have occupied land in Guildford and the Swan River areas for more than 40,000 years, as discovered by archaeologists. Early historical reports tell of a country rich in abundance of life, food and people, noting mia mias and camp fires as they came.

Since colonisation, Aboriginals came under restrictions that negated them from freely using land. Such laws provided for the issuing of rations and required permits for Aboriginals to work the lands. The Old Guildford Police Station was not only a lock-up but was used by Aboriginal people to make inquiries for rations.

The Swan River People continued to occupy Guildford through big camping grounds. A main Guildford meeting place was Stirling Square (or Gilly Park as it is known by the Noongars). Important meetings have been held there about land and Native Title and today it continues to be a place of importance for discussing country.

Munji from Pinjarrah wearing the traditional south west Kangaroo skin bookah held in place with a bone pin.
Courtesy State Library of Western Australia 025512PD

ROBERT BANDRY

WILLIAM BANDRY

The young Robert Bandry (Nurigal) and his father William Bandry from Beverley and York, depicted in this 1901 Federation photo taken at Success Hill, were some of the last full blood Aboriginals of the South West. Nurigal came to Perth in 1941 seeking work opportunities, lived at the Bassendean Aboriginal Reserve and is recorded attending the Guildford Police Station for rations. Nurigal, his son Percy Bandry and his son-in-law John Blurton and daughter Gladys, were noted for grape picking in the Swan Valley, as did many other Aboriginal people. Grape picking continues to be one of the jobs Aboriginal families do today.
Courtesy State Library of Western Australia 471B/3

'A RICH AND ROMANTIC COUNTRY'

STIRLING'S ENTHUSIASTIC DESCRIPTION OF THE SWAN VALLEY IN 1827

In March 1827 Captain James Stirling headed an expedition up the Swan River in search of fertile land to establish a British colony.

The party of 18 travelled in two longboats to find the fertile alluvial soil of the upper Swan.

All were impressed with the open nature of the country. From their camp near Ellen's Brook Stirling described:

'the scenery around this spot as beautiful as anything of the kind I have ever witnessed'.

The botanist Charles Fraser reported favourably that the land was highly suitable for farming because of the:

- superiority of the soil
- abundance of fresh water
- the open country with ten trees per acre and
- the river for transport

The party exchanged gifts with the Swan River Aboriginal People who had lived in these traditional camping grounds for at least 40,000 years.

Expedition members were unaware that the pristine landscape had been crafted by centuries of careful Aboriginal fire stick farming and that the rich soil was largely confined to the river floodplains.

View across the coastal plain, 1827 Frederick Garling. This scene from the foothills illustrates an area recently burnt by a low fire evidenced by the lack of understorey and the absence of skirts on the shorter grass trees. These Swan River Aboriginal People's land management practices led EW Landor in 1841 to state: "The whole of the middle and upper Swan resembles a vast English park".
Courtesy State Art Collection, Art Gallery of Western Australia

Swan River, preparing to encamp for the night, 35 miles up, 1827 Frederick Garling. This pre settlement watercolour painted by the ship's artist Frederick Garling shows the dense bush and a patch of open grassland maintained by regular controlled burning.
Courtesy State Art Collection, Art Gallery of Western Australia

SWAN RIVER COLONY

AN OMINOUS BEGINNING

Captain James Stirling's glowing report, and fears the French might have designs on the west coast, led the British Colonial Office to support a colony on the Swan River. This was the first settlement of Australia by free colonists. Land was granted based on the value of the capital and labour the settlers provided and subject to development of the properties.

The first ships of colonists arrived at the Swan River on HMS *Sulphur* and *Parmelia* in June 1829 with Stirling the designated lieutenant governor. The colony was defended by a detachment of soldiers from the 63rd Regiment under Captain Frederick Irwin.

Even by allocating exceptionally long lots with narrow river frontages (essential for transport) Stirling soon exhausted the viable land.

His claims of safe anchorage at Fremantle were dashed when the ship the *Marquis of Anglesea* was beached and wrecked on September 3, 1829.

The 450 settlers brought out by Thomas Peel in 1829 - 1830 were soon destitute due to his poor management and the lack of suitable farming land. Many from Peel's group later settled in Guildford in 1830 - 1831.

Detail from Panorama of the Swan River Settlement by Jane Eliza Currie Courtesy Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, ML 827

The *Marquis of Anglesea* was wrecked at Bathers Beach, Fremantle and is depicted on the point in the painting above. All hands were saved. Later the hulk was converted into Governor James Stirling's Fremantle office, the Harbour Master's office, the Post Office, a prison ship and as a colonial store. Anglesea Point and Point Marquis at each end of Bathers Beach are named after the ship. Fremantle was a dangerous place to land, particularly in winter.

A period cartoon by William Heath of destitute settlers with the wreck of the *Marquis of Anglesea* in the background. This London cartoon was commentary on the difficulties being experienced by the young colony.
Courtesy National Library of Australia

GUILDFORD

THE INLAND PORT

The colony's first official towns were Fremantle, Perth, Guildford and Kelmscott. All were located on the Swan or Canning Rivers, which were the only viable transport links. Guildford was to be the inland port for the proposed Swan Valley agricultural region. To alleviate the critical land shortage Stirling sent a young junior officer from the 63rd Regiment, Robert Dale, across the Darling Scarp to seek farmland. He found extensive tracts of lightly wooded grasslands created by Aboriginal fire stick farming in the fertile Avon Valley.

Requiring no clearing or fencing, the fertile land was a gift to the struggling colonists. This was soon allocated and used as pasture for sheep rather than farmed.

In 1829 Guildford was surveyed as a townsite and vital river port servicing the agricultural expansion of the colony. From Guildford the colony's only created 'road' went to York then south to the safe anchorage at Albany.
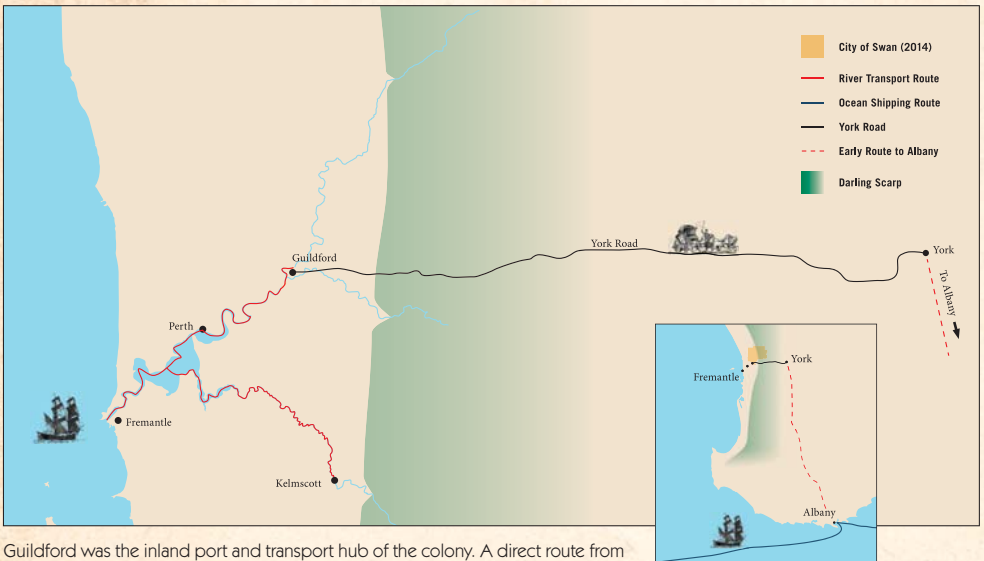
Guildford was the inland port and transport hub of the colony. A direct route from Perth to Albany was not established until after the arrival of convicts in 1850.

GUILDFORD

HARDSHIP AND CONFLICT

The acute shortage of money and labour meant even the landed gentry had to work hard to survive. Kangaroos were shot for food and the traditional Aboriginal hunting grounds were soon lost to the developing farms. Spearing of settlers' stock by Aboriginals soon led to mortal conflict and relations were tense. Bad press in Britain meant negligible immigration.

By 1832 the colony was in dire straits so James Stirling, now the designated governor, left Captain Frederick Irwin in charge and returned to London seeking financial support.

Unsuccessful, Stirling returned in 1834 to find the colony in a state of virtual war with the dispossessed Aboriginal people.

He mounted a punitive raid known as the 'massacre of Pinjarra' killing between 15 and 30 people. The warriors fought back, killing Captain Theophilus Ellis and wounding another.

By 1837 self sufficiency in wheat and flour production was finally achieved but there were no markets for the surplus and other food was in short supply.

William Cruse's reconstructed watermill today
Courtesy Poul Kirk

Lt Henry Bull's restored two storey house built in the mid 1800s Courtesy Poul Kirk

CRUSE'S WATER MILL

BULL'S HOUSE

Ellen's Brook at Belhus photographed in May 1866 showing the bridge and road built by convicts and Aboriginal prisoners. William Cruse's watermill built in April 1837, visible at the end of the bridge, ground wheat into flour. The road and part of the original bridge are still present.
Courtesy State Library of Western Australia 21405P

THE 1840s DEPRESSION

THE CALL FOR CONVICTS

Governor John Hutt
Courtesy Constitutional Centre of
Western Australia

Governor James Stirling departed in early 1839 and was replaced by Governor John Hutt (1839 - 1846) who then had to guide the colony through years of worsening depression.

Farming continued in the Swan Valley but the long sandy lengths of the ribbon land grants were relinquished. This poor land was exchanged for less acreage at inland locations. Some settlers moved to their new holdings and the population of Guildford and the Valley decreased.

During his period as governor, Hutt oversaw the election of the Guildford Town Trust (the forerunner of local government), schools for white and Aboriginal children, the introduction of a steam powered saw and flour mill in Guildford and the commencement of sandalwood exports.

Despite these improvements the colony continued to flounder economically. By 1849 the loud calls for convicts from the pastoral community were heeded. Western Australia was declared a penal settlement with the first convicts arriving in 1850.
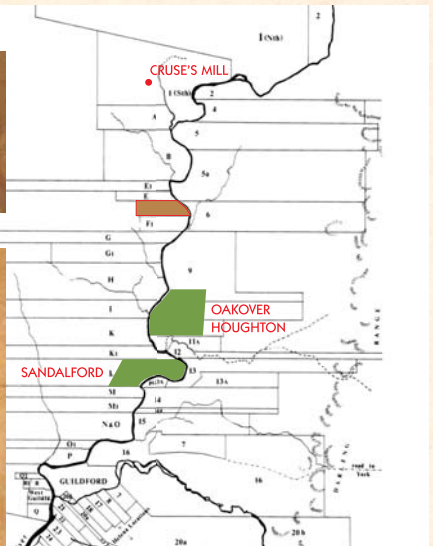
Winemakers producing under the original property names today.

Above: In 1832 the property 'F' was known as 'Albion Town' and subsequently sub-divided into smaller, long lots. Courtesy Swan Guildford Historical Society M2009-16(ii) Photograph courtesy Nonie Jekabsons

LAW AND ORDER

THE ARRIVAL OF CONVICTS

Lieutenant Edmund Du Cane
Courtesy A Hasluck

Guildford was the transport hub for travellers from Fremantle to the agricultural regions and Albany. The three licensed inns generated much riotous behaviour.

The first government building in Guildford was a lockup with a constable's room and two cells. This was built in 1841 by John Welbourne who then became the part time police constable. In 1851 Welbourne was commissioned to expand this building as an L shape with seven gaol cells, a police station/courthouse and living quarters. A brick paved footprint can be viewed in the car park opposite. The new Guildford Police Station complex had a foot and two mounted police officers, one being Aboriginal.

In early 1852 the Guildford Convict Depot was established and army officer Lieutenant Edmund Du Cane of the Royal Engineers supervised bridge and building construction with convict labour. The police complex was again modified in 1853 including the addition of a larger courthouse on the east end.

ORIGINS OF THE OLD GAOL

COURTESY DR SHANE BURKE

1841
Gaol built by John Welbourne
Brick used for foundations

1851
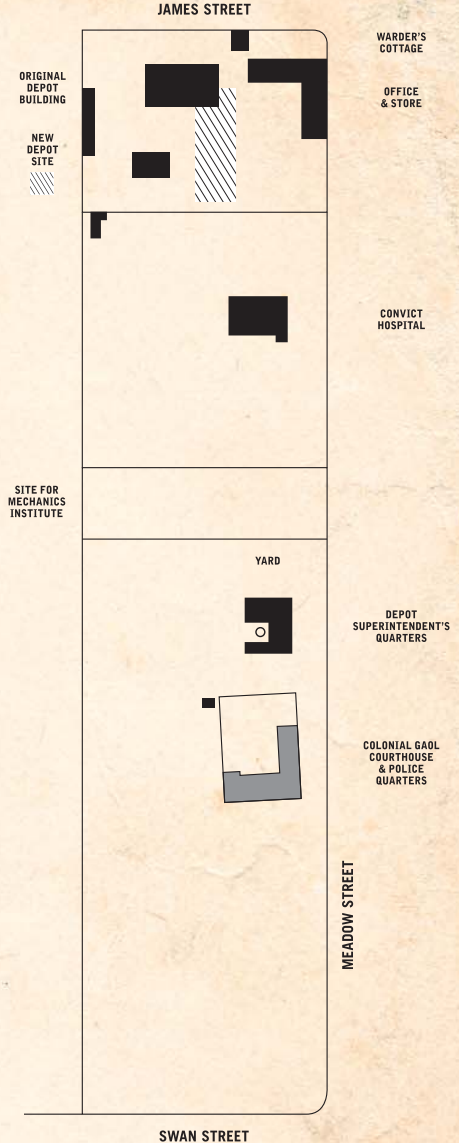Additions by Welbourne
Ironstone used for foundations

1853
Magistrates room added by Du Cane's convict labourers

MEADOW ST IN THE 1850s

COURTESY MICHAEL J BOURKE

JAMES STREET

ORIGINAL DEPOT BUILDING

NEW DEPOT SITE

WARDER'S COTTAGE

OFFICE & STORE

CONVICT HOSPITAL

SITE FOR MECHANICS INSTITUTE

YARD

DEPOT SUPERINTENDENT'S QUARTERS

COLONIAL GAOL COURTHOUSE & POLICE QUARTERS

MEADOW STREET

SWAN STREET

CONVICT ERA

IMPACT ON THE PRECINCT

John Hampton was governor of Western Australia from 1862 to 1868. He expanded public works throughout the colony using convict labour. Guildford benefited with the new courthouse, gaol and police quarters.
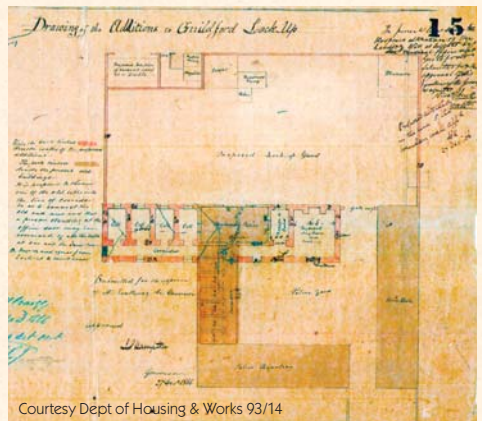
Hampton introduced cut timber 'rounds' for road bases in sandy country. These rounds became known as 'Hampton's cheeses'.
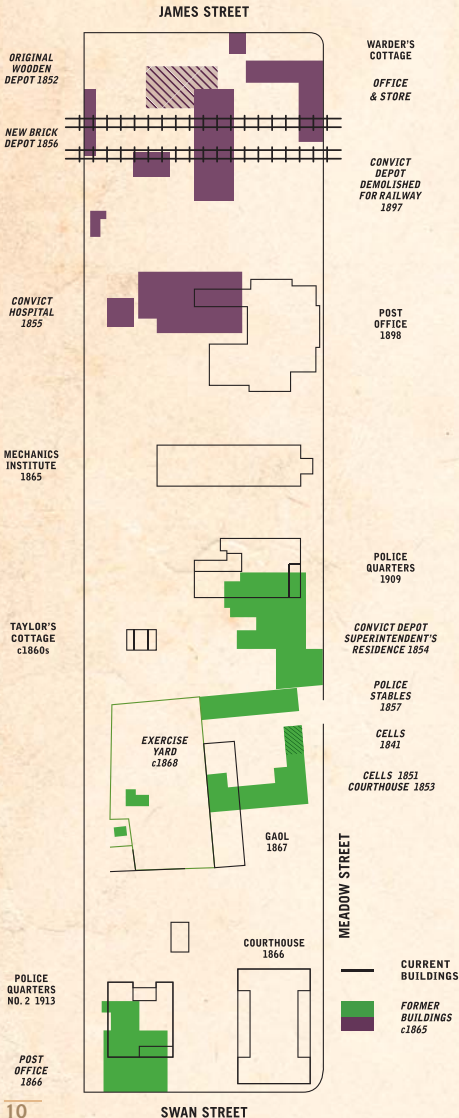

Removing 'Hampton's cheeses' from a road just south of Guildford in 1933. Courtesy © THE WEST AUSTRALIAN

Today the Swan Valley Visitor Centre operates from the courtroom and the Swan Guildford Historical Society uses the three room police quarters and the old gaol to interpret the history of Guildford and the Swan Valley.

THE PLANS FOR THE 1867 GAOL EXTENSION

Courtesy Dept of Housing & Works 93/14

JAMES STREET

ORIGINAL WOODEN DEPOT 1852

WARDER'S COTTAGE

OFFICE & STORE

NEW BRICK DEPOT 1856

CONVICT DEPOT DEMOLISHED FOR RAILWAY 1897

CONVICT HOSPITAL 1855

POST OFFICE 1898

MECHANICS INSTITUTE 1865

POLICE QUARTERS 1909

TAYLOR'S COTTAGE c1860s

CONVICT DEPOT SUPERINTENDENT'S RESIDENCE 1854

POLICE STABLES 1857

CELLS 1841

EXERCISE YARD c1868

CELLS 1851
COURTHOUSE 1853

GAOL 1867

MEADOW STREET

COURTHOUSE 1866

CURRENT BUILDINGS

FORMER BUILDINGS c1865

POLICE QUARTERS NO. 2 1913

POST OFFICE 1866

SWAN STREET

THE GUILDFORD COURTHOUSE

REGIONAL CENTRE FOR LAW AND ORDER

The Guildford Courthouse with a three room police quarters was built in 1866 by private contractors and convicts. Formally opened in early 1867 with a ball for 200 guests, it relieved the adjacent gaol and police station in which magistrate's courts had previously been conducted.

With the completion of the Perth Town Hall and its new clock in 1870, the old Perth clock was installed on the roof of the Guildford Courthouse. A hurricane in 1872 caused the timepiece to be relocated over the court entry.

The Courthouse was the centre of law and order for the region but also hosted meetings of the Swan District Roads Committee, and was used as a polling place for elections and civic celebrations.

In the early 1900s separate police quarters were built and later the magistrate's rooms facing Swan Street became a police station. The Guildford Courthouse and police station closed in 1969 and relocated to the Midland Courthouse.

Post 1872 hurricane modification.
Courtesy Swan Guildford Historical Society PH 2000.617
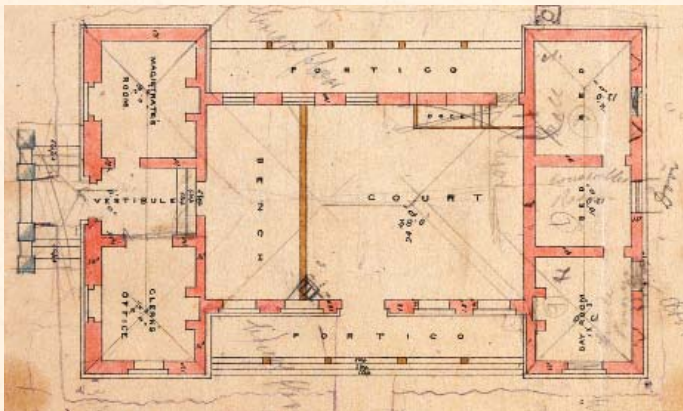
1865 plan of the courthouse before construction in 1866.
Courtesy State Records Office of WA Cons 1647 PWD 93

Below: The Guildford Courthouse c1871 photographed from Stirling Square with the clock mounted on the roof ridge.
Courtesy State Library of Western Australia 2586B/19a

THE CONVICT ERA 1850 - 1868

A PERIOD OF GROWTH AND EXPANSION

Governor Arthur Kennedy 1856 – 1862
Courtesy Constitutional Centre of Western Australia

Almost 10,000 convicts escorted by 2,000 retired British soldiers known as Pensioner Guards, many with their families, and other new settlers arrived during the boom 'convict era'.

Convicts served their sentences as prisoners but were given conditional release on 'ticket of leave' and then on conditional pardon but having to remain in Western Australia until their original term expired.

The very capable architect and engineer Lieutenant Edmund Du Cane was posted to Guildford in early 1852 to establish the convict depot.

Using convict labour he improved the roads, and built Barker's Bridge and soldiers' houses.

In a mini building boom, houses in Guildford were now regularly built of brick rather than wattle and daub.

The Guildford Convict Depot served to imprison convicts used in road construction gangs and to hire out those granted 'ticket of leave' who were employed privately throughout the Swan Valley. These 'ticket of leave' men were largely merged into society by the 1860s when Governor Arthur Kennedy (1856 – 1862) made it easier for them to buy and farm land.

The Meadow and James Street intersection c1871 with the Mechanics Institute central and the convict depot to the right on the corner. Courtesy State Library of Western Australia 747B/2
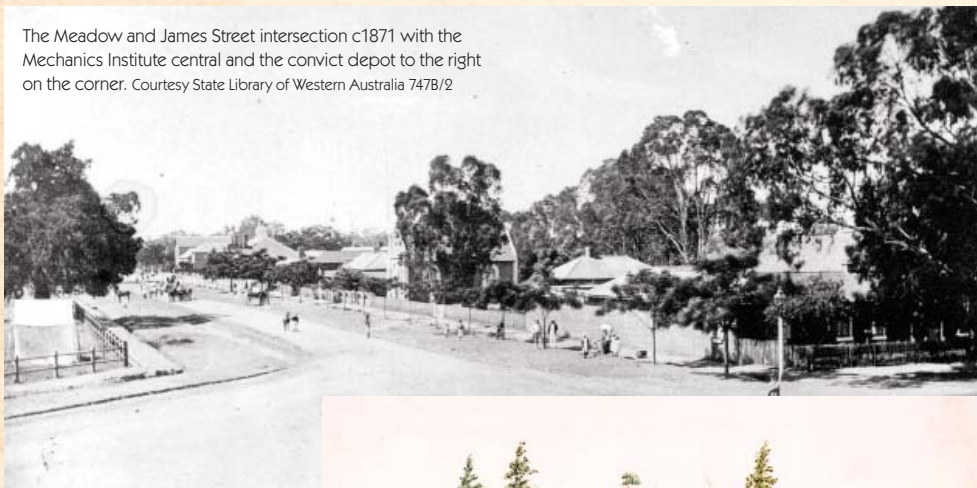
An 1859 image of the Pioneer steam boat approaching the port at Barker's Bridge, Guildford.
Captain Henry Wray, courtesy National Library of Australia, an5758278

THE ARRIVAL AND IMPACT OF RAIL

GUILDFORD, A FASHIONABLE PLACE TO LIVE

'Our fast flourishing and delightful little town'

- a local resident 1868.

By the end of the convict era in 1868 the vine industry in the Swan Valley, based on dried fruit and wine production, was well established. The main winemakers located on the Swan River were:

Dr Waylen (Garden Hill)

Dr Ferguson (Houghton)

William Harris (Rainworth)

Joseph Hardey (Peninsula Farm) and

John Wall Hardey (Grove Farm).

Guildford experienced a building boom, the streets were paved and drained and the electric telegraph arrived in late 1871.

People were living in an orderly, pretty town in a rural setting on the Swan and Helena Rivers when the railway was opened in early 1881. The line was then extended to York, initially down the centre of James Street in 1882, creating much disruption for other road users.

The port and river traffic declined as goods and people now travelled by train. Daily passenger trains commuted to Perth.

The Sainsbury family home on the corner of James and Market Streets backs onto the Swan River at Guildford Bridge.
Courtesy Swan Guildford Historical Society PH 2000.375

Guildford became a fashionable place to live and many 'Nor Wester' pastoralists retired here with their fortunes and built large mansions overlooking the river. In 1897 the convict depot was demolished and the new dual track railway realigned to its present route through what was then the south of Stirling Square.
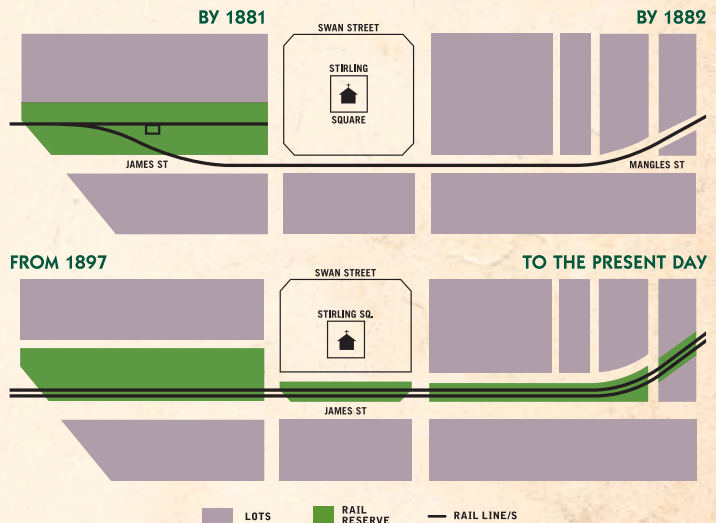
THE 1890s

THE GOLD RUSH

The private Midland Railway Company was reconstituted in 1890 to build a line north to Walkaway. After completion in 1894, the government set aside land to move the Western Australian Government Railways workshops from Fremantle to Midland. The following year the town site of Midland Junction was gazetted.

Guildford grew, becoming a mix of working and wealthy people. The prosperity experienced during the 1890s gold era was reflected in construction in 1898 of a new Post Office, the Peerless Flour Mill, the present railway station and a new façade on the Guildford Hotel in 1899.

By 1902 electricity replaced the oil lamps as street lighting and the massive government railway workshops were under construction.

With the completion of the Midland to Geraldton link, more trains rumbled through Guildford. Rail links to Albany and Kalgoorlie followed soon after. Courtesy Carnamah Historical Society

The colony's population had grown from 35,000 in 1885 to more than 180,000 and as the surface gold ran out many prospectors took up small farms in the Swan Valley.

At the beginning of the new century Midland grew and Guildford stabilised. Life in the Valley was peaceful and prosperous as ominous war clouds formed over Europe.

The Guildford Hotel as photographed in 1886 and before the addition of the new facade and belvedere.
Courtesy West Australian Newspapers Ltd HIST5208

A train on the new dual track rail carrying pipes for the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme photographed from the Post Office tower c1900. Courtesy State Library of Western Australia 1797B

1900 TO TODAY

GUILDFORD A NATIONAL TRUST LISTED HISTORIC TOWN

Houghton Vineyard 1897
Courtesy Swan Guildford Historical Society PH 2001.30
Background image courtesy of David Baster

Croatian migrants packing grapes for export at Millendon in the 1940s. Courtesy Miocevich Family, Swan Guildford Historical Society PH 2001.17

The Swan Valley was the cradle of the colony's agricultural survival. Following Federation in 1901 many of the larger mixed farming properties in the Swan Valley were subdivided into farmlets used mainly for grape growing.

Despite a world war and a devastating depression, by the late 1930s more than 1,200 hectares of vines were producing export quality table grapes, dried fruit and grapes for wine production. More than half the vineyards were operated by southern Europeans, notably Croatians, with viticultural experience.

A second world war then also plagued the first half of the 20th century.

Consolidated into the Shire (now City) of Swan in 1970 the Swan Valley region is today still important for food production and now as a major tourism destination. Pressure to increase urbanisation of the Valley has been resisted and the fertile land remains productive, as it had been for Aboriginal people for thousands of years. Community spirit and vigilance remain as the main protections of heritage values.

Walter Padbury's 1898 Peerless Flour Mill destroyed by fire in April 1975. Courtesy Fred Bishop

1900 TO TODAY

GUILDFORD A NATIONAL TRUST LISTED HISTORIC TOWN

The Guildford Hotel prior to the disastrous fire in September 2008. *Courtesy City of Swan*

The heritage listed Guildford Hotel awaiting restoration in 2013. *Courtesy Poul Kirk*

James Street Guildford today is a thriving commercial and tourist strip. *Courtesy City of Swan*

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