

Royal Western Australian Historical Society's

Annual Pioneers Memorial Service

on Sunday 2nd June 2013 at St Bartholomews Chapel, East Perth Cemeteries,

Citation by Ian Roe and Melford Roe

Good afternoon everyone. Thank you, Lenore for your welcome. It is a privilege for me to be included in this year's memorial service. Without taking away from the significant contribution of the many thousands of pioneers whose endeavours developed this great state, as we have heard, this year the Society is honouring John Septimus Roe and his family.

Before we commence the Citation, there are some "thankyous" to be made. Following the service, we'll have an opportunity to wander around the cemetery and you will notice that many of the headstones and the cemetery in general, are in need of some TLC. Recently, the Septimus Roe gravesite underwent some minor refurbishment, and I'd like to thank Ian and Philip Roe who have been instrumental in getting this work done. I'd also like to express sincere gratitude to the John Septimus Roe Anglican Community School, (in particular Dr Ken Evans, the Chairman of the Council, and Dr Matthew Hughes, the Principal,) for the generous donation that the school made towards the work.

Today is the 2<sup>nd</sup> June and in about a week's time it will be the 11<sup>th</sup> June 2013. If we go back 100 years to 1913, it is the eve of World War 1. Now let's go back 200 years and it's 1813. The Sydney and Hobart settlements have been going for some years; however, in Europe, we are in the middle of the Napoleonic War.

In just 10 years Napoleon had risen to be Emperor of France and conquered most of Europe. But, he has had some setbacks - such as the defeat of his fleet at Trafalgar in 1805 and his disastrous Russian campaign in 1812. We're all familiar with Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture - that famous composition commemorates the Russian victory over the French. Although losing most of his army in the snows of the bitter Russian winter, Napoleon was far from a spent force. By the early summer of 1813, he had rebuilt his *Grande Armee*. But facing him was a coalition of forces from England, Prussia, Austria, Portugal and others. Although Waterloo was still two years away, the battles between the two sides throughout 1813 were some of the largest of the war.

Now let's come back to the 11<sup>th</sup> day of June, not 2013 as mentioned earlier, but 1813. On that day, lying at anchor in Plymouth in SW England was HMS Rippon, a 74 gun heavy cruiser of the British Navy. Although somewhat smaller than battleships such as HMS Victory, Rippon, less than one year old, was an ultra-modern warship of the period. And joining her crew that day was a 16 year old lad, John Septimus Roe - fresh out of school, and about to be introduced to life on board ship, at sea, and at war.

To continue the story of John Septimus, I'd like to introduce to you, Ian Roe, one of the most senior of the Roe descendents, retired farmer and amateur historian, who will continue today's Citation.

### **Ian Roe**

Ladies and gentlemen I welcome you all to this occasion celebrating The Honourable Captain John Septimus Roe the very first Surveyor General of Western Australia who planned Perth and Fremantle and personally led 14 major expeditions and directed many more. He was held in high esteem by his fellow settlers. My intention is to briefly tell the story of his life starting from the very beginning.

There were three generations of Roe clergy who married the daughters of clergy which indicates the Roe family were very religious.

John Septimus Roe was born on the 8th May 1797 at Newbury in Berkshire County, England. His parents were the Reverend James Roe and Sophia. Being the 7th son of a family of 10, he was named John Septimus. As a boy his life was sheltered and deeply entrenched in church life.

At the age of 10 John Septimus was enrolled as a boarder at Christ's Hospital School, London. Because they were a large family, the Reverend James and Sophia were not in a position financially to give the small boy much pocket money, or the little things that would make life easier at a boarding school which in the past had a reputation of being hard and tough on students from outside London. John Septimus persevered and became a brilliant student and was selected to enter the mathematical school and it was there that he qualified for his naval service.

At the age of 16 John Septimus Roe joined The Royal Navy as a midshipman and sailed on *HMS Rippon*, a heavily armed warship under the command of Captain Sir Christopher Cole, and saw much action during the French Blockade and Napoleonic Wars. Roe sailed on several ships taking him to many parts of the world where he was required to survey and map coastlines of various countries. His maps, charts and illustrations drew much admiration from his superiors in the Admiralty. He saw action at the siege of Ava in Burma and received the Burma Medal.

In 1817 Lieutenant Phillip Parker King, *HMS Dick* 437 tons in the company of masters mates Roe and Bedwell sailed for Sydney.

Rio de Janeiro - disgusted by the slave trade.

*HMS Dick* anchors at Sydney Cove on 3rd September 1817. Roe and Bedwell savour the sights of Sydney, did not like what they saw. Public hangings on Market Day and convicts wherever they looked, some in chains. Aborigines not even covered where Eve placed the fig leaf.

Well received in Sydney social circles.

The little ship *Mermaid* was purchased for 2000 pounds to carry out and complete Mathew Flinders survey work on the Australian coast line. Escapes from death- divine providence intervenes. The *Mermaid* is replaced by 170 ton colonial brig *Bathurst*.

Cairn cross Island, shocking weather. Roe falls 50 feet from top rigging to the deck and recovers to complete survey work. *HMS Bathurst* completes survey. Between 1817-1823 Roe circumnavigates Australia five times. Roe promoted to Lieutenant.

1824 *HMS Tamar* bound for Australia. Voyage took five months - weather extremely bad. Port Essington and Fort Dundas - Proclamation read. Surveying and charting between India, Ceylon and Rangoon.

Surveyed parts of African coast and Arabian coast.

Returned to England late 1827. Took up work in the Hydrographers' Office. Wrote Sailing Instruction Vol 1. Published 1830.

In 1827 Stirling returns from a voyage to the Swan River. Stirling gives a glowing report of the excellent soil and wonderful possibilities. Conditions in England were dreadful, the economy bad, unemployment, poverty - families financially ruined.

Stirling puts pressure on the Colonial Office for a Colony at the Swan River. The Colonial Office agrees on conditional settlers to be self-funded. Roe seizes the opportunity to apply as Surveyor General and is accepted.

The *Parmelia* due to sail for the Colony early February 1829.

Roe has a lady love and wants to marry before departure. Roe married Matilda Bennett on 7th January 1829. 6th February 1827 Roe and Matilda sail to the Promised Land.

On board Stirling gives Roe his instructions. Roe could not depart from the instructions without Stirling's permission however; he was encouraged to be frank with the Governor. From information from the Colonial Office, Stirling listened much to Roe who was not averse to giving his opinion.

The *Parmelia* arrived at the Swan River on 1st June 1829. Roe set up his Bell tent and named it The Surveyors Department and set about carrying out Stirling's instructions.

#### STIRLING'S INSTRUCTIONS

All the territory to be divided into counties, hundred and sections.

Specify quality of soil.

What the various soils are capable of growing.

Report of favourable situations for towns, ports, roads, bridges and other essential Public Works.

Appointed Roe Commissioner of the Board of Land Control.

Assess each settler's assets and allocate land according to the amount invested.

Forty acres for every three pounds invested.

Extra 200 acres for every servant brought out.

Surveyed town site of Perth then the mouth of the Swan River which had navigational problems.

Between 1st June 1829 and 29th January 1830, 25 ships arrived, all with self-funded settlers on board. Roe was grossly understaffed with just 1 assistant who was not well and had to resign. Those that expected a land of milk and honey were devastated at what lay ahead of them. Morale was at an all-time low. Complaints and disputes over allotments and boundaries were almost a daily occurrence. The tasks Roe had to deal with are too numerous to speak of. In 1829 Christmas Day brought forward to mid-October to try to boost morale.

John Septimus and Matilda's first child born on Christmas Day (25th December OR Mid October 1829). First registered white child born in the Colony - a daughter named Sophia.

Between 1829 - 1854 a span of 23 years Matilda gave birth to 13 children.

Sophia Matilda May

James Broun

Eliza Naylor

John Henry Hayden

Lucille Emma Frances

Jessie (didn't survive)

Ellen Elizabeth

William Henry Lyons

Frederick Mackie

Alice Maude

George Harriot

Augustus Sanford Keats

Roe personally led 14 major explorations inland. The most memorable 1848 - 1849 to the Russell Range - 1800 miles there and back on foot.

In 1859 Roe takes leave of 18 months to attend to private matters in England, together with Matilda and two daughters. While in England he was called before a Select Committee from the House of Commons. Roe was directed by the Committee of 13 to answer 293 questions regarding the Swan River Colony. Roe stated between 1829-1850 the Colony was failing through lack of satisfactory labour. With the introduction of convicts in 1850 the Colony started to prosper. Roe

said convicts should serve their time and then be free - but not to return to England. Roe told the Committee he blamed the failure of 1829-1850 on hasty settlement, too many of the wrong kind of settlers, lack of satisfactory labour and inadequate support from the Home Government.

On return to the Colony the Perth Gazette stated "The cheers for Roe and his family were an unmistakable proof of the high esteem in which he is held by his brother settlers and of their gratification at his return to the Colony".

Roe, the Colony's longest and most knowledgeable public servant was invaluable to all seven Governors. Some historians claim him as Father of Australian Explorers. No doubt because of his long exploration on land and sea and he taught Forrest and Gregory brothers and others the art of exploration.

1870 22nd July. The death of Matilda aged 62 years. Nineteen days later, after 41 and a half years of service, of a long struggle with determination and dedication to keep the Colony going, Roe resigned from office.

On 28th May 1878 John Septimus Roe died aged 81 years. A State funeral was held with Military Honours on 30th May.

In his lifetime he became involved in many activities:

Member of Legislative Council

Keen horticulturist

Director and Chairman of the first bank

Fellow to the Royal Geographical Society

Justice of the Peace

Vice-President and foundation member of the Weld Club

Chairman and Director of W.A. Mining Company

Fellow of the Linnean Society - classification of plants

Chief founder of the Swan River Mechanics Institute which was the fore runner of the Perth Museum

It was Roe that set aside the reserve now called Kings Park. He also established the Anglican Church of W.A. - settlers named it the Rush Church because it was built in such a hurry.

At Roe's death there was a tribute to his life's work ... I quote: "His hands were clean: he never used the privileges of his office unduly to his own advancement or the advancement of his numerous family. He died full of his years, having done his work among his fellow men with earnestness and singleness of purpose, and was as far as lay in them a benefactor to mankind." Western Australia will long feel the benefit of his unobtrusive service, though perhaps they will not know the extent to which they are indebted to the first Surveyor General of the Colony.

Historian J.S.Battye wrote of him: 'His ability, tact, wisdom and judgement were always at the service of his fellow settlers and no official did more - if any did so much - to further the interests of the colony'.

Matilda, his long suffering wife bringing up her family in the most trying conditions yet, was never failing in her whole hearted support for her husband who sacrificed his adult life to the future of the Swan River Colony.

Thank you for your attention.

I call on Melford Roe to speak about the children of J.S.Roe and Matilda.

## Melford Roe

### THE CHILDREN OF SEPTIMUS AND MATILDA

Ian has been talking about John Septimus, and now I'd like to share with you a little about his 13 children. Matilda Bennett was 24 when she married Septimus at Newbury in early 1829, and over the next 30 years she bore 7 girls and 6 boys.

**Sophia**, named after Septimus' favourite sister, was the first born, and one of the first children born in the new colony, arriving on Christmas Day 1829. At 18 Sophia married Samuel Phillips from Culham near Toodyay, who had settled in the colony some 10 years previously. Samuel had acquired good farming land in the Toodyay valley and had also established a beef grazing property on the Irwin River, near where Mingenew is today. Samuel and Sophia had 9 children, some of whom did not survive infancy, and Culham Homestead, the centre of their family and farming interests, remains to this day. Sophia died in 1902.

**Matilda Elizabeth** was the 2<sup>nd</sup> daughter. At 18, she married Philip John Butler, a 33 year old pastoralist from South Australia. Butler, an orphan, had arrived in that colony some ten years earlier and soon had extensive lease holdings near Gawler and Mallala - some 50 km north of Adelaide. At Yattalunga, just south of Gawler, he built a large impressive two-storey house and for a while, doubting its completion, the locals called it Butler's Folly. After having 5 children at Yattalunga, Matilda and the family moved to England (where she had 3 more children), but, a few months after her 8<sup>th</sup> child, aged 31, she died. Butler re-married and returned to SA, however, his new wife thought that Australia was too much of a wilderness, so Butler sold Yattalunga, and the family returned to England. The Yattalunga homestead is still there. Ten years ago it underwent a complete restoration, and today stands as a grand monument to that pioneering family.

Matilda's 3<sup>rd</sup> daughter was **Eliza Naylor**. At age 19 she married ex-navy lieutenant George Clifton who was Deputy Superintendent of the Fremantle Convicts. George, by several accounts was an exceptionally brave fellow, at various times taking on mutinous convicts, salvaging valuables from wrecks, and rescuing a grounded ship from certain destruction on the Parmelia Bank. In 1864 George Clifton was appointed the Deputy Super of the Portland Prison in Devon and the following year Governor of Dartmoor. In their 60 years of marriage, Eliza and George had some 12 children, 7 being born in Fremantle, and the remainder in England. It appears that 4 of her boys came back to the colony - marrying local girls and establishing lives for their families in Perth, and in the Wellington and Australind districts.

**Emma Lucille**, the 4<sup>th</sup> daughter, was just 17, when, returning to the colony after 2 years in England, she took a fancy to the First Mate of the ship they were on. Two years later, Emma married her "first mate", James Guy Thomson. Big sister Sophia noted in her diary that "it was a fine day and the wedding went off beautifully. 64 sat down to a handsome dejeuner in a pretty tent erected by Papa in the backyard". For a time, Emma and James Thomson lived at Bolgart before heading south to establish the family property at "Brookhampton" near Donnybrook. Emma had 9 children, the youngest was just two when she died in 1876, aged 39. Today one of Emma's grand-children calls "Brookhampton" home.

Matilda's 5<sup>th</sup> daughter was **Ellen Elizabeth**. Now I've just mentioned the ship-board romance of Emma Lucille, well on that same ship, the "Avalanche" was a sprightly 20 year old lad by the name of Augustus Lee Steere, a friend of the family heading for a new life in the colony, and in 1859, he married Ellen Elizabeth. Together they went farming at Toodyay and York, with Ellen having 7 children. Over the years, the children of Augustus and Ellen extended the initial holdings and added pastoral and business activities. Two of their grand-children paid the ultimate sacrifice in WW2.

The next daughter for Matilda and Septimus was **Alice Maude**, their 10<sup>th</sup> child. At 18 years, she married Dr. George Atfield, some 19 years her senior, who had been the Chief Medical Officer of Prisons in the colony for 6 or so years. Living at Fremantle, Alice and George had 5 children, one of which died soon after birth. With the end of transportation in 1879, the family moved to

England where Dr Attfield established a practice at Brighton on England's south coast. Alice, aged 80, died in 1925, just a few months after her husband. He was 98.

The 7<sup>th</sup> and youngest daughter was **Jessie**, born in 1859. Sadly, Jessie only lived a few months.

Now for the 6 boys - the eldest was **James Broun**. His early adult years were spent in the Survey Department, starting as a junior clerk and rising to the dizzy heights of record keeper. Having a go in his father's footsteps, in 1858 he was 2IC to Gregory in exploring the Murchison and the Gascoyne. However, it appears that was the only bush-bashing he undertook. In 1865 he was appointed Registrar of Births and Deaths, and to that was added Inspector of Prisons, and in the mid 70's was appointed Sheriff - a position he held for some years. He married Alice Stone, daughter of the Attorney General, and together they had 5 children, one of whom did not reach their first birthday. James was highly respected - his obituary stating that he held "a (most) arduous and responsible position", displayed an "iron nerve" and "good discipline" and "a capacity to manage men".

The next son was **John Henry Hayden**. We don't know much about this fellow. He moved to Adelaide and married Wilhelmina Wilson Haining in 1862. The couple appear to have moved around, having one child on a sheep station, and others at Port Augusta, Port Lincoln and Clare. Sadly for Wilhelmina and the children, their dad died at sea off Cape York when only 41. Their children remained in SA - marrying local boys and girls.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> son was **William Henry Lyons**, who, by age 22, moved to SA - maybe to follow his brother, John Henry. In 1864, at Gawler, he married a New Zealand girl, Alice King, and together they had 7 children. William developed farming interests and ran a country store, however, from the mid-1860's it seems as though his circumstances took a turn for the worse. He died in 1890 and his family started a new life in New Zealand.

**Frederick Mackie** was the 4<sup>th</sup> son of Matilda and Septimus. Like his older brother, Frederick initially tried his father's profession, for in 1866, at the age of 23, he was 2IC on the Charles Hunt expedition to the Lake Lefroy and Coolgardie regions. The Hunt party extended a previous track along a string of wells, which some 25 years later would be followed by prospectors heading for the eastern goldfields, and again later would form part of the route for Kalgoorlie pipe line. In 1871 he married Sarah Jane Clarkson and settled into farming and grazing in the Wongan Hills area. At 33, he died unexpectedly on his property, leaving his 30 year old widow with three young children. It must have been a terrible year for Sarah, for within a few months, their baby daughter also died. After some years, Sarah remarried, living to a ripe age, only dying in 1912. The two boys went on to have families and properties of their own, forming an extensive branch in the Northam and Grass valley areas that are still there today.

The youngest of the sons - George and Augustus are to me, the most colourful.

**George Harriott**, the 5<sup>th</sup> son, appears to have had quite the adventurous career. Following a short apprenticeship, he carried the chain (as they used to say in the world of surveying) for John Forrest throughout the South-West. Leaving his father's profession behind, he headed north to the Kimberley and Pilbara, developing pearling, trading and pastoral interests – operating pearl luggers and leasing Thangoo Station, some 50 km south of Broome. There is a fascinating account of an adventure he had involving piracy – first having his vessel overrun by his Macassan passengers off Broome - the captain being killed and the mate severely wounded, and then, after obtaining another boat in Fremantle, he tracks down the culprits in the middle of the Dutch East Indies and sees that they are brought to justice. Pearling and pirate adventures aside, George Harriott had an extensive family and many hundreds of his descendents can be found across the north and throughout the state. He died at Queenscliff, Victoria in 1924 and is buried in the local cemetery. By one account George Harriott was "a fine big burly figure of a man - a gentleman all through, and a pioneer among pioneers." More detail about George and his descendents can be found in a little book titled "Proud Heritage" by Sister Kelly.

Last, but far from least, we come to **Augustus Sanford** - son number 6. Augustus has been described as "lawyer, pearler, mariner, daring exploiter of the rivers of the East, mining investor, and judge of the Supreme Court of the North-West". Augustus was admitted to the Bar in 1873, aged 21. It appears that office work didn't appeal to the young "Gus", as he became known, because after practicing for just one year, he went north pearling with his brother George. When pearling hit a downturn, and a number of other ventures proved futile, Gus, following somewhat in his father's footsteps, studied navigation and gained his master's ticket. For 7 years he skippered a steamer trading around the Far East and the South Seas. In the mid 80's, Gus settled down and opened a legal practice in Roebourne, married Mary Newman in 1888 and together they had two sons - both serving in WW1. He was appointed by special commission as a judge of the Supreme Court for the NW. With the discovery of gold in the Pilbara, Gus was quick to extend his business interests, becoming a director of several public gold companies - even travelling to England to gain investor support. In 1897, on being appointed the Police Magistrate in Perth - a post he was to hold for 13 years - Augustus built a comfortable house on the river. Although no longer in the family, that house, beautifully restored and maintained, remains to this day. Mary died in 1908 and Gus in 1921.

So these were the children of Matilda and Septimus - all but one growing to adulthood and making a valuable contribution to the country. Time today doesn't allow me to include much about their life experiences, however, the simple facts I have mentioned highlight lives which included – pioneering at it's most basic, starting out with little, miles from a town, and for the women, marrying at a tender age, spending many years bearing 8, 10, 12 children, losing 2-3 babies before they can walk, widow-hood came early for some, success didn't come easily, and not to everyone. To me, it can be said about the early settlers and this first generation born in the colony, that they had fortitude, courage, and resilience. They were responsible, capable, innovative, loyal, and industrious. Their hard work helped build the state. However, their accomplishments and reputation is not vicarious. We can admire them and be grateful for what they achieved, honour them with services such as this, but their standing, their distinction does not rub off on us, their descendents. We must forge our own path, build for ourselves and make our own mark. Thank you.