



KNOW YOUR SUBURB

Bentley and St. James

By DR. GEOFF GALLOP, M.L.A.

PERSONAL NOTE

The areas of Bentley and St James hold a great deal of history. Unfortunately, as families move on, there is a risk that the history could be forgotten and not passed on. It was with this in mind that I decided to collect the information and present it to you in this booklet.

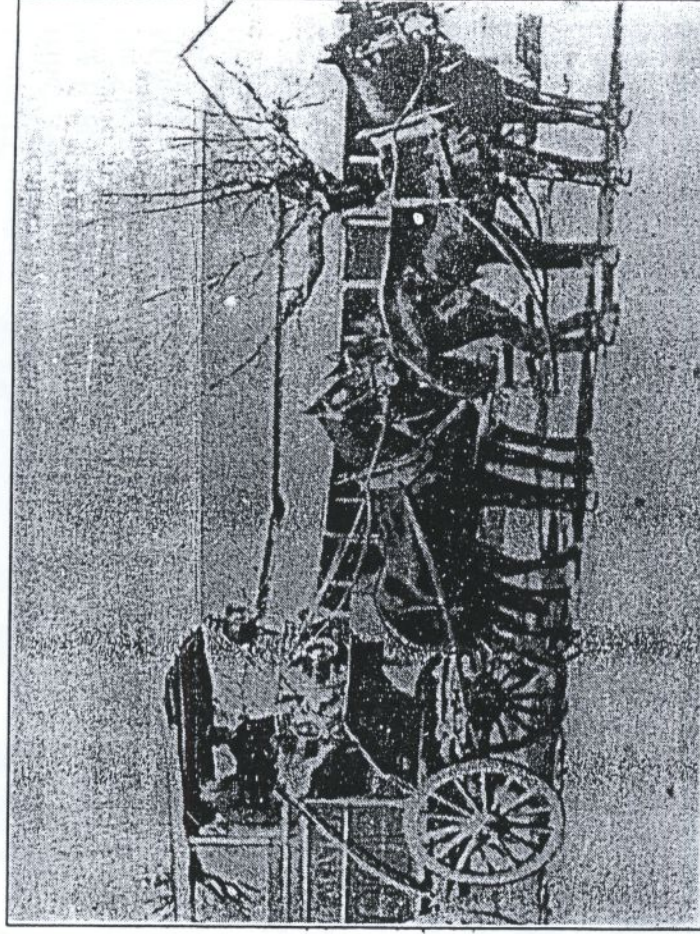
My thanks to the many people who contributed to this project and I certainly hope you enjoy reading about your suburb.

NAMING THE SUBURBS

In 1940 the Nomenclature Advisory Committee chose the name Bentley Park for the area that had been known locally as Bentley Hill for over 70 years. The suffix "Park" was dropped from the name in 1967.

The name originates from the 1860's when what was then called Albany Road was being upgraded by convict labour. A considerable camp was established for the convict labourers on a site near the present junction of Walpole Street and Albany Highway. The warden in charge was John Bentley.

Bentley (1822-71) had arrived



Royal Mail Coach, Perth to Albany (1870-1889) — Courtesy Bentley Library.

in W.A. as an Enrolled Pensioner Guard in 1862. He had formerly been a private in the 7th Regiment and was a veteran of the Crimean War.

Bentley Park was not chosen as a name without argument. In 1939 the Canning Road Board had written to the Nomenclature Committee suggesting St. James Park for an area bounded by Boundary Road, Albany Highway, Welshpool Road, the railway, Ewing Street, Bedford Park and Taree Street.

The Committee did not favour this name and said that if requested it would suggest alternatives with historical or

Aboriginal significance. The Road Board made such a request and Balga Park and Yeoman Park were proposed, but neither were accepted by the Road Board. Consequently Bentley Park came into existence as an officially designated suburb.

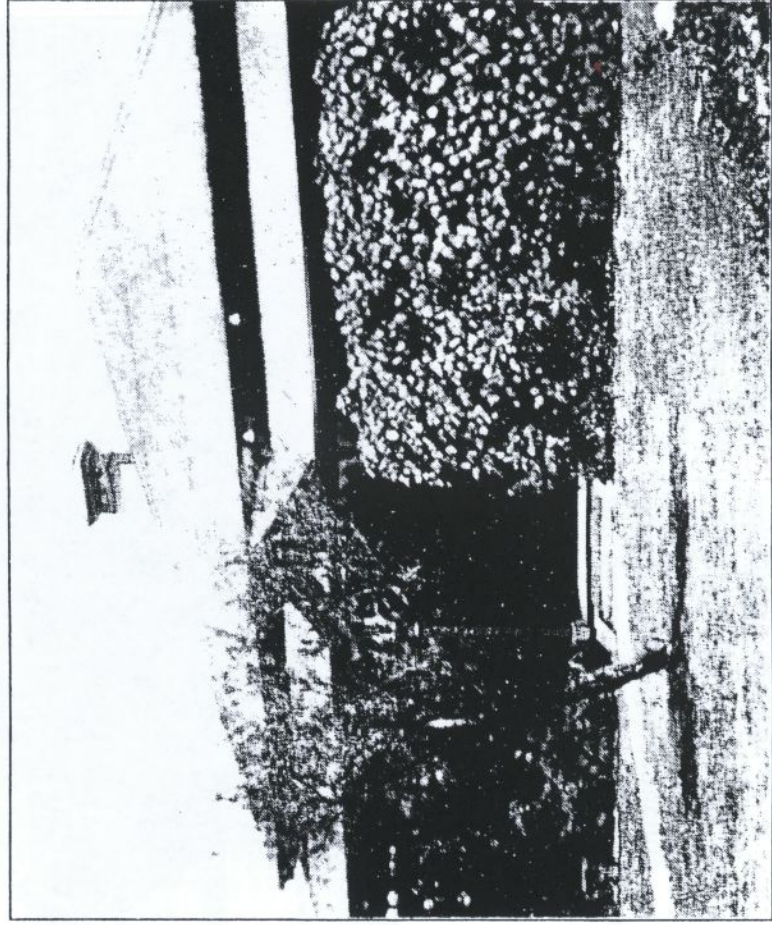
However, in 1957 the northern portion of Bentley and other properties to Hillview Terrace were officially designated as belonging to the Postal District of St. James.

Before this sections of St. James were seen as part of the "Millen Estate" or East Victoria Park.

BEELOO COUNTRY

Before white settlement Bentley and St. James were part of the Aboriginal tribal district of Beeloo. The district was bounded by the Canning River to the South, Melville Water to the West, the Swan River and Ellen's Brook to the North and the Darling Ranges to the East.

A name census taken by Francis Armstrong in 1837 found 32 members of the Beeloo tribe. A leading figure amongst the Beeloo in the early years of the Swan River Colony was Munday. At one stage he was a proclaimed outlaw along with the legendary Yagan.



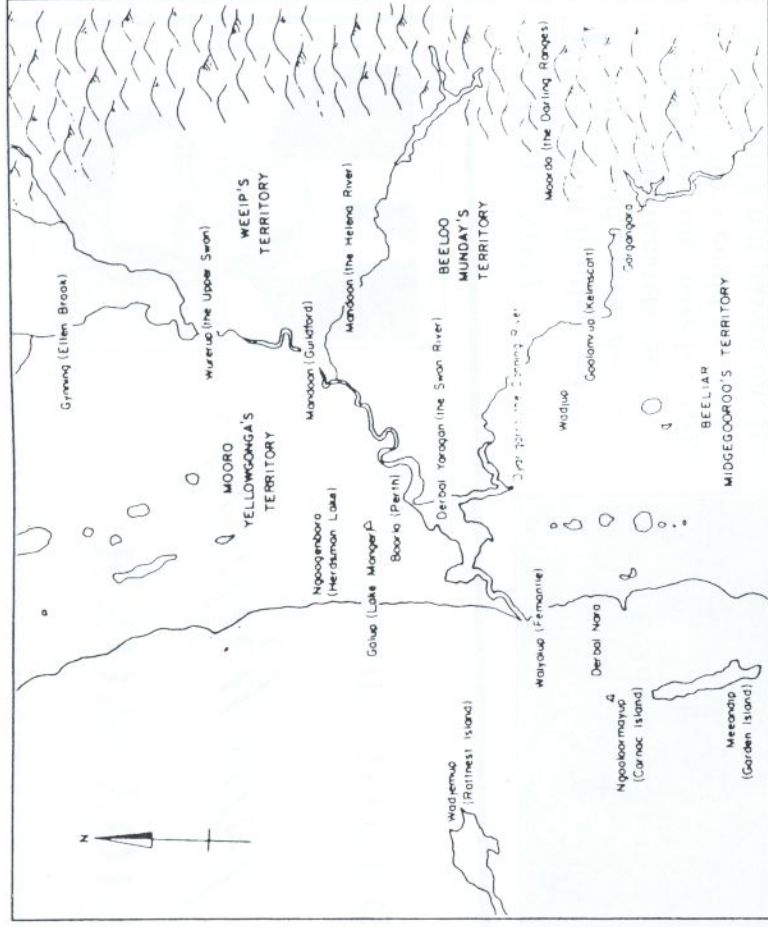
Canningford House — Courtesy Mrs O. Treasure.

CANNING LOCATION 2

The land where Bentley and St. James are now situated is located within the original grant of 5,320 acres made to James McDermott in 1830. It became the property of Samuel Bickley who sold it to Henry Manning in 1854 for 532

pounds, the equivalent of two shillings per acre.

The Manning family held the land until 1885 when it was sold for roughly one pound per acre. Within a year it had been sold again for a 100 per cent profit. The new owners, the Sydney and West Australian Freehold Land Company, sub-divided it into 19 allotments.



Aboriginal Territories 1829

Courtesy Mr Neville Green.

Fred and Harry Liddelow purchased "Canningford House" and established a large dairy near where the Highway Drive-in stands today. They milked about 250 cows daily, transporting the milk to Perth by train.

In 1905 Hickey's Piggery was established opposite the dairy.

POST-WAR EXPANSION

Until after the Second World War most of the Bentley and St. James was vacant bushland. After the war the districts took their shape as residential suburbs.

The State Housing Commission played a major role. From 1944 to 1986 the Commission built 987 housing units in Bentley and 835 in St. James. Most of these have been for rental. The War Service Commission also built 188 homes in the two suburbs.

In 1946 Claude Hendley bought the site on the corner of Albany Highway and Alday Street for his butcher's

shop. The shop opened the following year with the Hendley family living at first in a garage behind the shop. This was a common characteristic of life for the post-war pioneers with tents and rented caravans also being used for accommodation whilst new houses were built.

Amongst the pioneers in St. James were newly arrived migrants from Italy. Assisted by Fr. Frank O'Connor from the Catholic Parish of East Victoria Park, a secondhand army marquee was purchased and erected in the rear of Mr. and Mrs. Sarich's property at 5 Warwick Street for use as a Church. In her history of the Santa Clara Parish, Sister Mary Albertus Bain described the importance of the "tent" in the following terms:

"The tent, which could hold sixty people, was crowded with excited parishioners, not only because they had a church of their own, but they saw it was a sign of lasting stability for them in this new land."

The tent at Warwick Street was also used by Mr. Fred Carden as a venue for teaching English to the newcomers.

In 1952 the Catholic Church purchased an acre of land in Palmerston Street from which was developed the present Santa Clara school-church complex.

A Congregational Church also started with a marquee but shifted to a new building "The J. D. Reeves Memorial Church" in Queen Street in 1953. The Baptist Church was established in the early 1950s with the Hall being officially opened in 1955. St. John's Anglican Church in Coolgardie Street also commenced services in 1955.

In the 1950s Bentley and St. James were alive with children



Children returning from school, Manning Road 1962 — Courtesy Bentley Library

and schools were established to cater for the needs of the district - Bentley Primary (1952), Santa Clara (1954), Millen (1958) and Bentley High (1960). Bentley High is now Canning College, one of the State's two senior colleges (since 1982).

BROWNIE TOWERS, DUMOND STREET

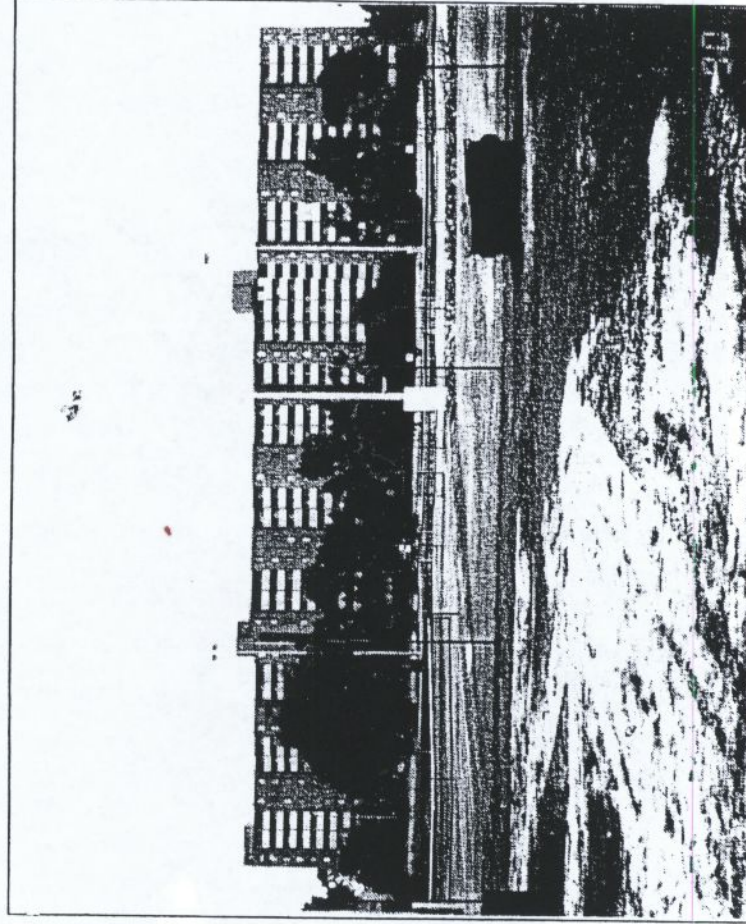
The Brownlie Towers project is an integral part of

Bentley. Brownlie Towers was officially opened on December 14, 1970. However, the first tenants had moved in during March of that year.

The Towers was named after Mr. R. W. Brownlie who was Chairman of the Commissioners until he retired in 1954.

Initially, the land on which the Towers is built was used as a

Continued next page



Brownlie Towers — opened in 1970.

quarry but history does not show when the quarrying stopped. It could have been some time in 1962 when an appeal to grant a further quarry permit was lost.

The Towers was built by the then State Housing Commission. The architect was a Mr Denis Borrow and the Supervisor Mr Bill Bejemen. Preliminary work included removing the fill from the old quarry and refilling with compacted material and a million or so bricks were used in its construction.

The first manager of the towers was Mr Don Blair. The rents at the outset were \$13.40 for a two bedroom unit and \$11.50 for a one bedroom unit.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Major new residential, educational and commercial developments which

have commenced in recent years and have given Bentley a new look have been Swan Cottage Homes (1960), Rowethorpe (1961), Western Australian Institute of Technology - now Curtin University (1967), La Plaza Shopping Centre - Perth's second oldest centre (1969), Bentley College of TAFE (1974) and Technology Park (1985).

There has been little change in the residential character of St James. However, in 1979 the Hendley family developed a Shopping Centre on the land they owned on the Alday Street/Albany Highway corner.

Interestingly many of the street names in St. James commemorate British Prime Ministers and Members of Parliament, most notably Walpole, Pitt, Melbourne, Palmerston, Beaconsfield, Gladstone and Salisbury.

At the 1986 Census there were 9,263 persons living in the 3,181 dwellings in the two suburbs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND REFERENCES

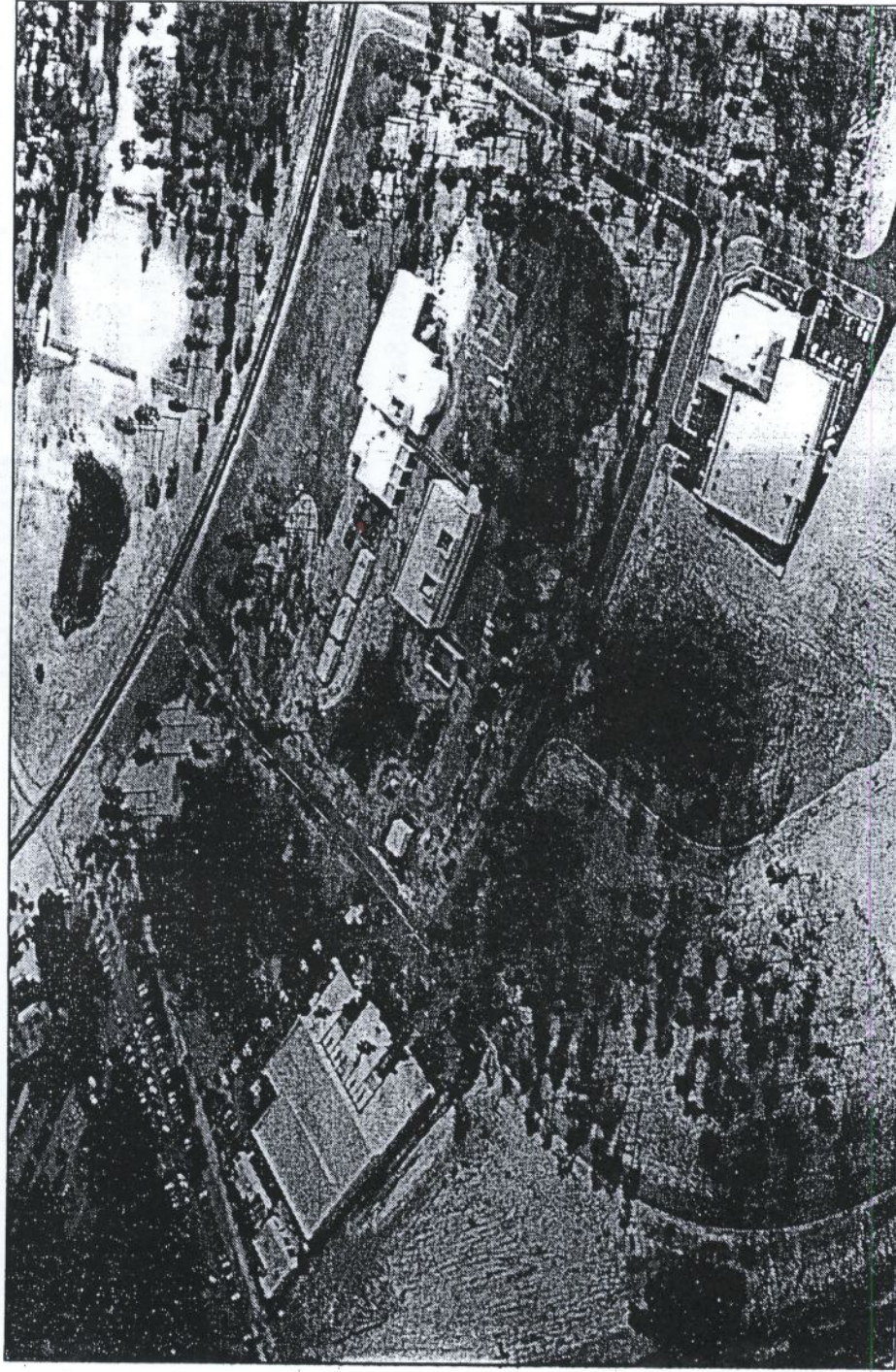
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W.A.I.T. — as it was in 1967.