

YOUR VIRTUAL DISCOVERY VISIT – 55 TO THE HERITAGE STORIES OF ROTTNEST ISLAND



The Virtual Visit series was initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic when Rottnest Island was closed to the public due to social distancing restrictions and periods of use for quarantine from March to June 2020.

Now that the Island is again open to visitors, these Virtual Visits are continuing in 2021 to enable a further enjoyment of stories introduced at the Wadjemup Museum, the Chapman Archives or sites around the Island.

Enjoy, reflect and share.

ROTTNEST MILITARY WEDDING

Something a little different this edition to relive the exuberant and fulsome social reporting of the 1930s with annotations and side stories.

Brilliant Military Wedding- Rottnest Island is Romantic Background Sunday Times – 8 March 1936

“All the world loves a lover”, we are told, and to bear out the old adage, the residents of Rottnest island were able to lavish all their interest on the happy couple whose wedding took place last Tuesday night. The event was the island's first military wedding, and consequently it was the main topic of conversation for many days before, it actually was celebrated.

Miss Hilda McCue only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Clive McCue, of Bockdale, N.S.W., was the bride, and Captain Bertram Frank Hussey, of the Staff Corps, only son of the late Mr. and Mrs. B. Hussey was the bridegroom. Captain Hussey is in charge of the work at Rottnest in connection with the preparation of the fortifications and has been - a popular figure on the island for some months. The bride and her father arrived from Sydney by the **Katoomba** on Tuesday, were met by Captain Hussey, and then proceeded on the **Dauntless** for the Island. A number of guests, including military men, journeyed over with them.



SS Katoomba was a passenger steamship that was built in Ireland 1913 and spent most of her career in the Australian ownership of. McIlwraith, McEacharn & Co, including two periods when she was a troopship. In Australian civilian service, Katoomba mostly worked scheduled coastal routes, initially between Sydney and Fremantle. <https://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-kanimbla-i>



The firm of A. E. Tilley and Co was established in 1911 as a boat service in the harbor and for up-river trade. Alfred (Alf) Tilley's boat building business and boat shed operated for more than 30 years. The Dauntless was one of the many motor-launches he operated and was a popular excursion vessel.

<https://www.rowinghistory-aus.info/club-histories/fremantle/12-1.html>

The wedding ceremony took place in the music room of the hostel, which was appropriately decorated by Mr. Harry Rex's staff, who erected an altar and transformed the room into a fitting place for the occasion. The Rev Clift, of Fremantle performed the ceremony, and he invited many of the onlookers to witness it. Many ladies were anxious to see the wedding, and although many of the Island folk were coolly dressed in slacks or shorts, it did not detract from the solemnity of the occasion. The bride's gown was very much admired, and she made a very charming figure in her

gown of magnolia satin, cut in close-fitting lines, with a high **medici collar** and pearl-embroidered bodice. The veil was held in place with a coronet of golden leaves.



A Medici collar stands upright on the back of the neck and opens in the front. This type of ruff was introduced to France by Marie de' Medici in the 16th century, taking her name two centuries later. A considerable number of details of costume that originated in the 16th century have become part of the repertory of fashion design in subsequent centuries, the open standing collar later named the Medici collar is one example

<https://chertseymuseum.org/brides-revisited>

The bridesmaid in attendance was Miss Edna Hussey, whose dainty frock was of lilac **georgette**, allied with a fashionable feather-trimmed hat; The groom was attended by Lieutenant. AR Lawson. Royal Australian Artillery, as best man. The bridegroom's mother, Mrs. Bertram Hussey, played the wedding march.



Silk fresca is a medium weight faux silk fabric that has a sheen with slight colour variations to give the appearance of slubs in the fabric.

Part of the crêpe fashion fabric family, georgette fabric is a woven silk textile that is translucent with a slightly puckered surface and a beautiful drape.

The description of the wedding dress including the fabric and embroidery and that of the accompanying ensembles mark this as a distinctly upper end wedding.

<https://www.elle.com/fashion/personal-style/g31437529/bridal-style-evolution/>

After the ceremony the bride and groom were liberally showered with confetti and were heartily acclaimed by the friendly island population. The reception at the hostel was a particularly gay affair, Captain K Hall making an excellent chairman. There was prolonged applause and cheering when Mrs. Hussey drew **her husband's sword** and plunged it into the wedding cake in traditional military custom. Dancing was enjoyed until the early hours of the morning, the bride dancing in a charming frock of powder blue **silk fresca**.



Near the end of the 19th century, the Royal Engineers and their colonial equivalents had adopted the 1897 Infantry Pattern sword. Collectors will advise that many sword blades have been ruined by corrosion and rust after this cake cutting practice due to inadequate cleaning.

<https://armyshop.com.au/features/swords.html>

Among the many guests invited to the wedding breakfast were **Rev. Clift** (officiating), Mrs. Bertram Hussey (bridegroom's mother). Mr. C. McCue (bride's father), Lieut. Lawson (best man). Miss E. Hussey (bridesmaid), Capt K. Hall, Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Hussey, **the Hon WH Kitson**, (chairman of the Rottnest Board of Control), Mrs. Vernon Hamersley, Mr P Hamersley, Miss D. Hamersley, Miss F. Lefroy, **Mrs. Lyle Pym, Mr. and Mrs JB Stark**, Miss Stark, Mrs. E. Whitfield, Miss D. Whitfield, Mrs. Rockingham, Miss E. Whitfield, Father O'Callaghan, Mrs. E. Armstrong, **Mrs T**

Balmer, Mr. HJ Rex, Mr and Mrs LA Shapcott, Miss B. Saunders. Mr. and Mrs. A. Rex, Miss Rex Mr. Alf Deakin, Miss B. Jeanes, Mrs. Meredith, Mira B. Bardwell. Lieut. A. W Farmer, Miss G. Pearce, Mr, T. Holt, Mrs. Wood, Mr. G Clarkson and Mr John Clarkson.

Captain Hussey, a son of the late Dr. Hussey, of Toodyay, is a nephew of Mr SF Hussey, well known in Civil. Service arbitration circles. He met the bride when he was on staff duty, in New South Wales, and her first visit to this State was for the wedding. It was also the first time she had met the bridegroom's mother.

It is evident that the bride will be extremely popular with the residents of the island, and her friendliness has already made for her a wide circle of new acquaintances. She quickly adopted the island freedom of dress and appeared at the hostel attired **in cool green slacks** with a blouse of paler tint.



Rottnest will not quickly forget the **scarlet-and-gold splendour** of its first military wedding which was such a great success and happy celebration.

<https://archives.rvga.asn.au/1936/03/01/sunday-times-wedding-of-frank-hussey-and-hilda-mccue/>



Related/Miscellaneous Gleanings from the Chapman Archive and Others

The ashes of **William Henry Kitson**, were scattered over Thomson Bay on 11 December 1953 by the CEO of Rottnest Island, **JB Stark**, from the deck of Roland Smith;s launch *Polyanna*. escorted by the *Hiawatha*. Mr Kitson, died a year less a day before on 12 December 1952, He had served for 14 years as the chairman of the Rottnest Board of Control.

<https://archives.rvga.asn.au/1953/12/01/west-australian-report-of-spreading-of-kitson-s-ashes-in-thomson-bay/>

Mathew Lisle Pym died on 19 July 1938, aged 65. His wife **Constance Pym** (nee Angelo) died on 14 July 1955 aged 81 years.

<https://archives.rvga.asn.au/2020/10/21/karrakatta-cemetery-inscriptions-angelo-lisle-pym/>

Harry Rex ran the Rottnest Hostel from 1929 – 1939 after the departure of Ma Keogh. The Chapman Archives has descriptions of life on the Island by his daughter, **Mrs Renee Shapcott** and many contemporary photographs.

<https://archives.rvga.asn.au/2020/10/21/memories-of-rene-shapcott-nee-rex-father-hostel-manager-1929-1939/>

There have always been **weddings** on Rottnest from the first recorded in 1905, but they are becoming increasingly popular with (pre Covid) over 40 bookings per year.

<https://archives.rvga.asn.au/1967/11/01/women-s-day-a-wedding-turns-back-the-clock-waters-wheatley-wedding-article/>

<https://archives.rvga.asn.au/2016/07/01/stirling-times-marquee-for-rotto-weddings/>

The Reverend John Wilfred Clift was the founder of the Fremantle Mission to Seafarers. John Clift arrived in Fremantle in August 1930 on the *Larg's Bay* with only 30 shillings in capital. His aim was to set up the Port of Fremantle Mission to Seamen Institute. By 1944, when he left to become Chaplain of the Port of London, the Fremantle Mission to Seamen consisted of a chapel plus two well-established, debt-free, mission institutions.

<https://www.streetsofeastfreo.com/reverend-john-wilfred-clift>

At least one of those attending the McCue-Hussey wedding thought better of her own. In 1938 **John Craighill Balmer**, government photographer, filed for divorce on the grounds of desertion by his wife, **Thelma Evelyn Balmer (nee Rex)** from Rottnest in 1934.

<https://archives.rvga.asn.au/1949/01/01/multiple-7-newspaper-clippings-referencing-the-hostel-from-1911-to-1949/>



<https://www.mergephotography.com.au/rotnest-wedding-aly-dave/>