

YOUR VIRTUAL DISCOVERY VISIT – 71 TO THE HERITAGE STORIES OF ROTTNEST ISLAND

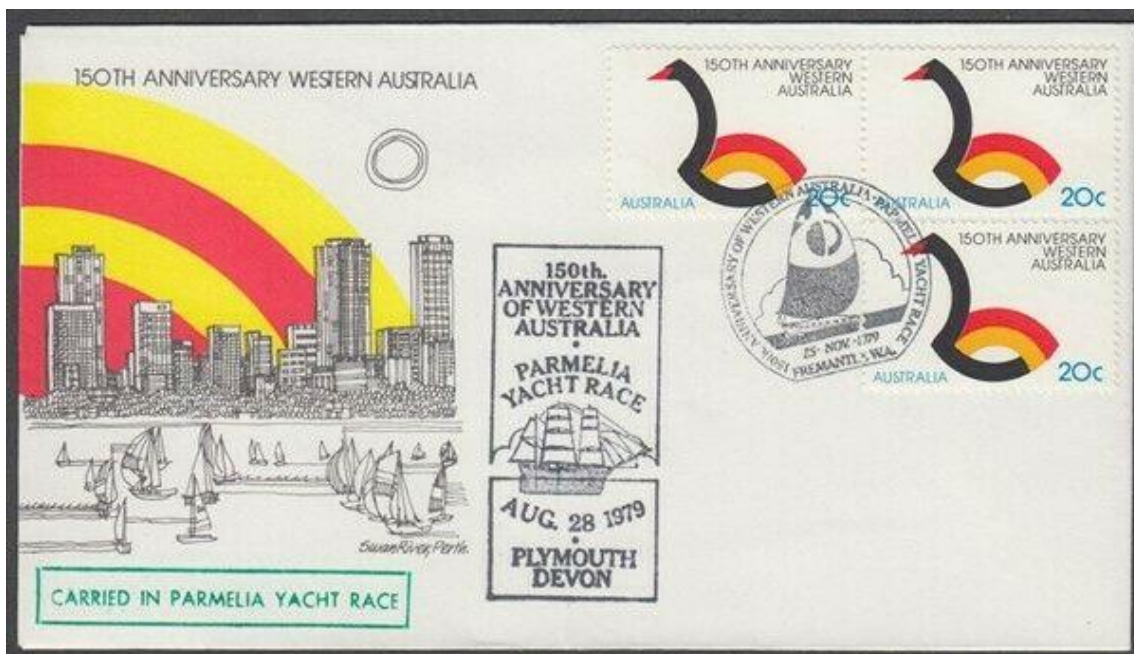


The Virtual Visit series was initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic when Rottnest Island was closed to the public due to social distancing restrictions and periods of use for quarantine from March to June 2020.

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.

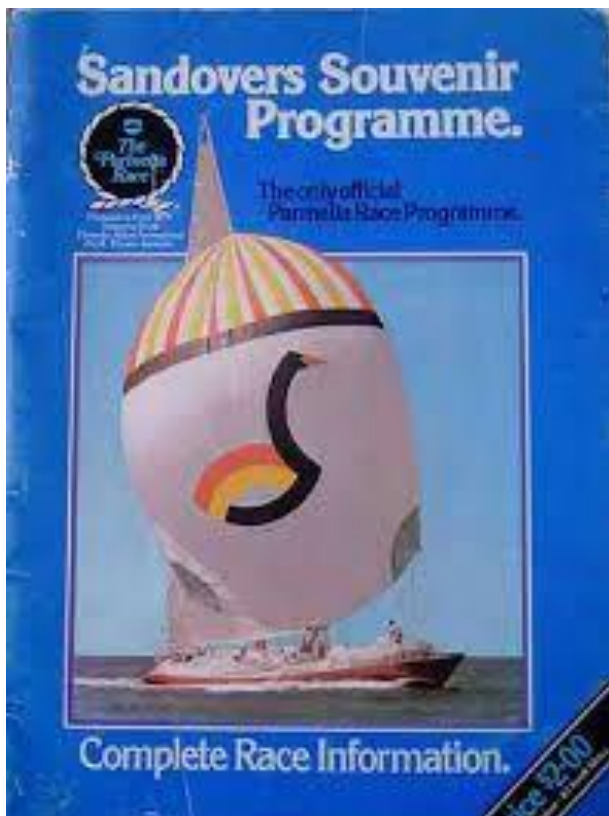
Enjoy, reflect and share.

THE PARMELIA YACHT RACE AND THE ANITRA II



The Parmelia Race, Plymouth to Perth, was a feature event of the Western Australian 150th Anniversary Celebrations in 1979. Competitors were invited to recreate the 1829 voyage of the merchant barque *Parmelia* bringing the first British settlers to the Swan River Colony. The race was organised by the Royal Perth Yacht Club of Western Australia and sponsored by The Parmelia Hilton International, Perth. The course was Plymouth, England - Cape Town, South Africa - Fremantle, Western Australia, a distance of 10,548 nautical miles by the shortest route; the Great-circle distance.

To shorten the arrival period in Fremantle, new formats were introduced to the world of long-distance ocean racing. Twenty-seven yachts started in Plymouth and others joined the fleet in Cape Town for Leg 2. At the time it was claimed to be the biggest fleet to contest an "inter-ocean" yacht race; i.e. a race which traversed more than one ocean. Participants had independently scheduled their start from Plymouth in the hope of all arriving armada-like at Fremantle on the morning of 25 November 1979.



Sailors in the race experienced many of the same conditions faced by the *Parmelia* 150 years earlier. In the Atlantic the conditions were variable. Yachts experienced mainly adverse winds on leaving the English Channel before skirting the calms of the "North Atlantic High". The North-East Trade Winds provided fresh and favourable winds right down to the "Doldrums", where calms were interspersed with tropical storms. In the South Atlantic the fleet faced the adverse South-East Trades before having to negotiate the "South Atlantic High" and then finding fresh Westerlies which pushed the fleet towards Cape Town. Leg 2 was to present tricky conditions on departure from Cape Town prior to the favourable Westerlies. Yachts following the "Great Circle" had to venture down to 45° South latitude, into the very vigorous "Roaring Forties".

For some, the final approaches to Fremantle proved to be tricky. The French ketch *Anitra II* (a 17 metre Leopard ketch) was wrecked during the night of 24/25 November 1979 at Kitson Point on the southern side of Rottnest Island. The yacht had been a few hours from completing the Plymouth (UK) to Fremantle *Parmelia* Race and was delaying arrival for the programmed time of 10am. Inattention and unfamiliarity with Rottnest reefs proved an unfortunate combination. Fortunately, no one was seriously injured but, *Anitra II* was an insurance write off.



The wreck was cleared by Customs and Trevor and Ron Kitcher successfully tendered for the salvage. The deck was lifted off by crane after the hull was split along the waterline with explosives. After removing salvageable items including masts, winches, engine, air conditioning, generator, life raft, sails, and lead from the keel, the *Anitra* was handed over to the Island's businessmen's association. Ivan Rutherford and a team of volunteers coordinated the low loader transport to the settlement and conservation and display preparations were put in hand. The Winnit Club initially took on ongoing maintenance,

On 3 April 1980, the *Anitra*, minus its lower hull, was moved to a pad at the base of Signal Hill facing the Rottneest Museum and prepared as an ongoing exhibit. Just over a decade later, concerns expressed at the time of installation over long term maintenance proved accurate. The hull was deemed unsafe and the remains of the *Anitra* were removed and scrapped.

The Original *Parmelia*



*Representation of *Parmelia* by Ross Shardlow*
<https://www.swanriverpioneers.com/passenger-list-parmel>

The barque *Parmelia* brought the first European settlers to Western Australia in 1829, under the command of Captain J.H. Luscombe. Built in Quebec, Canada in 1825, she was 36 metres long and of 443 tons, *Parmelia* was hired to transport Lieutenant-Governor James Stirling and the first group of free settlers to Swan River to establish a colony here in 1829. Escorted by HMS *Sulphur* she left England in early February 1829, and hove to off Garden Island on 31 May. Two days later *Parmelia* was nearly lost when she ran aground on the sandbank which bears her name. She made two more voyages to Australia (with convicts to NSW) but no more to the Swan River Colony. She was destroyed by fire in an English dockyard in May 1839.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parmelia_Yacht_Race

<https://archives.rvga.asn.au/2021/08/25/west-australian-the-anitra-s-final-berth/>

<https://archives.rvga.asn.au/1979/12/01/the-west-australian-anitra-s-new-home-bill-lang/>

<https://fremantlestuff.info/ships/parmelia.html>

<http://www.wanowandthen.com/First-Fleet.html>

<https://www.albanyadvertiser.com.au/news/albany-advertiser/big-vision-for-albany-bicentenary-ng-b881246611z>

<https://www.patrickgormanmp.com/latest-news/2020/5/31/media-release-perth-wants-a-national-indigenous-museum-200-years-of-perth-survey-results-released>

