

Historical Society of the Northern Territory

NEWSLETTER JUNE 2026

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HSNT Committee – President: Derek Pugh; Vice President: Bev Phelts; Secretary: Libby Siebert; Treasurer: Clare Corfield. others - Brian Reid, Clayton Fredericksen, Vida Goodvach, Rosemary Cameron & Peter Siebert

FUTURE EVENTS

Saturday 6 June - Parap Markets HSNT Book Stall

Janie is running the book stall and will be offering discounted books.

Saturday 13 June - Exhibition in Focus | Unruly Days: Territory life 1911 – 1921 at the Museum & Art Gallery -11am-noon

Join MAGNT Curator of Territory History, Jared Archibald, for an in-depth tour of the exhibition. The Northern Territory has always been a land of contrast and extremes. From its monsoonal Top End to its arid interior, larger than life characters, bountiful resources and highly diverse society – life in the Territory has always been different to the norm. Utilising a wide range of objects, photographs and stories, *Unruly Days: Territory life 1911-1921* explores what it was like to live in the Territory in the first decade of Commonwealth rule whilst the world was in turmoil. Join MAGNT Curator of Territory History, Jared Archibald, for an in-depth tour of the exhibition.

Friday 19 June – National Trust talk at Burnett House - 5.30pm start

The speaker is Raine Caldwell and her talk is on "Bletchley Park".

Bletchley Park is an English country house and estate in Bletchley, Milton Keynes (Buckinghamshire), that became the principal centre of Allied code-breaking during the Second World War. During the War, the estate housed the Government Code and Cypher School which regularly penetrated the secret communications of the Axis powers – most importantly the German Enigma and Lorenz ciphers.

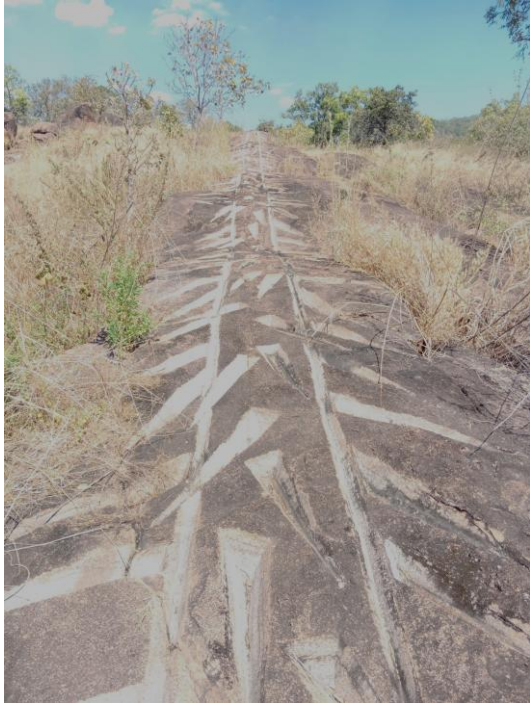
Meet at Burnett House for a drink and nibbles at 5:30 pm. Talk starts at 6 pm. Entry \$10.00.



Bletchley Park

HSNT 4WD trip – Darwin Show Weekend – 24 & 25 July

Darwin Show Day 24 July marks the 164th anniversary when John McDouall Stuart and his party reached the northern shore (Pt Stuart). It was their 3rd attempt. It is planned to meet at the Bark Hut in the morning and make our way to Pt Stuart. We will hold a small reenactment which includes speeches of the day, raising the Union Jack Flag and a toast. BYO own lunch to have at the site.



After lunch, there will be a visit to the artistic granite rock carvings which are located 10km from the Bark Hut

On Saturday, we will take Hardies Track and visit Hardies Billabong. The Track and Billabong are named after Frank Hardie.

Hardies Track will be subject to a reccie run in June to check on conditions of the track.



Participants meet Friday 24 July morning at the Bark Hut. Time to be announced. The Bark Hut will be used as a base. Participants will need to book accommodation for Friday night – we return home on Saturday afternoon. Bark Hut has cabins and camping sites. Book early as it is a long weekend.

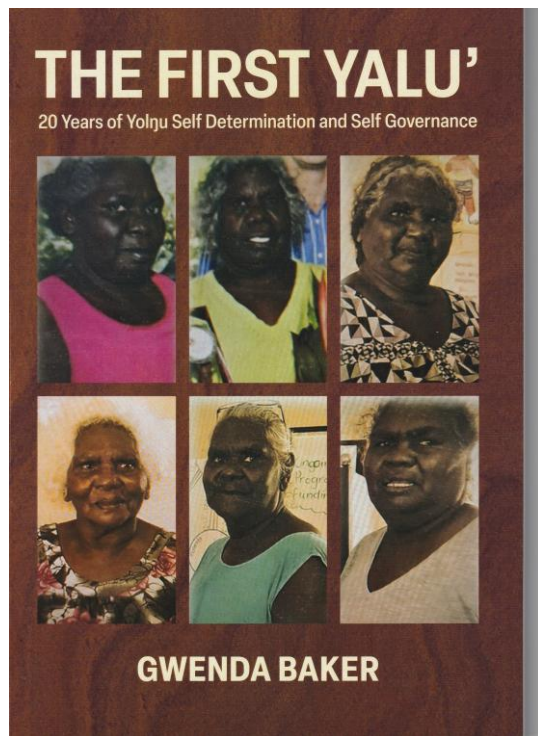
High clearance vehicles are needed.

If you wish to join the trip or participate as a passenger and willing to share petrol costs, please email the Society Email: hsnt@inet.net.au or phone Bev on 0417868827.

Unfortunately, Hardies Track will not be open until mid June and Pt Stuart will not be open until the end of June. So at this stage, we are unable to provide more details until we can do reccie runs. Hopefully we will have more detail etc. times in the July newsletter.

Sunday 5 July at 3pm – The launch of *The First Yalu* at History House

Gwenda Baker's latest book will be launched by Dr Jan Richardson



The Society has just published *The First Yalu: 20 Years of Yolngu Self Determination and Self Governance* by Dr Gwenda Baker.

The book is a tribute to the women who set up and managed a highly regarded organisation in Galiwinku, Elcho Island, NT. Yalu Marnugithinyaraw, the first Yalu operated for 20 years from 1999. The women created a space in a post mission town to run Yolngu education programs for Yolngu children. A positive story of self-determination and self-governance ended by a Balanda takeover in 2019.

The book will be available for \$35 – CASH ONLY

Friday 10 July from 11am to 1pm at the Bookshop in the Mall –

If you missed our book launch of Gwenda's book, you can catch her out the front of the Bookshop signing her new book.

20-26 September – Australasian Mining History Association Conference – Smythesdale (near Ballarat)

The Organising Committee invites offers of presentations on any topic relevant to mining history, or history of the area.

For general information on the conference please refer to the AMHA website at <https://www.mininghistory.asn.au/next-conference/>

The Call for Papers and the Registration form can be found here:

<https://amha.tidyhq.com/public/schedule/events/60121-30th-annual-conference-smythesdale-vic>

Vale Wendy May James OAM 1935-2026



Wendy James was born Wendy May Secrett on 25 Sept 1935 in the small Western Australian town of Armadale before coming to the Northern Territory of Australia with her family in 1937. For most of her life she has lived in Darwin.

She has survived two major cyclones and has been evacuated from Darwin twice, once in 1941 just prior to the bombing of Darwin by the Japanese during the Second World War and then again in 1975 after the town was destroyed by Cyclone Tracy.

She became a dental nurse after leaving school and was the first to work with the Territory's mobile dental units. She was living in Katherine when she met and married her husband Earl James who was a government surveyor stationed in the town.

Since returning to Darwin in 1963 she has been involved in a vast array of school, church, sporting and community organisations. Among other things she was:

- Vice President of YWCA (NT) from 1982/83.
- Board member of YY Enterprises 1981/86.
- Foundation member of Penguin Club of Aust (NT Division) 1963.
- Honorary Organiser of the Penguin Club (NT) 1979/1984 during which she established five new clubs in the Territory.
- Inaugural Convenor of the Northern Territory Women's Advisory Council (appointed by the Chief Minister) 1983/86.
- President of NT Cancer Council 1989/96.
- She was a Director of the Museums & Art Galleries Foundation (NT) for eight years and was the President of that organisation for a year.
- She was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 1998 for services to the community through promotion of women's issues in the Northern Territory.
- She completed three years as the Chair of the NT Branch of the Order of Australia Association.
- She was the Chair of the organising committee for the National Conference of that association held in Darwin in 2012.
- And not forgetting that her and Earl are life members of the Historical Society of the NT

Wendy passed away on 16 May. Her funeral service will be held at Christ Church Cathedral on Thursday 21 May at 2pm. A Wake will follow.

Wendy was 90 years of age and had been married for 70 years. She has 4 sons, 8 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Text supplied by her son, Matt James

HIGHLIGHTS OF PAST EVENTS

Plaque unveiling honouring Vaiben Louis Solomon (1853 –1908) on 6 May 2026 at Brown's Mart

V L Solomon was the 21st Premier of South Australia and a member of the first Australian Commonwealth parliament. In 1873 he moved to the Territory and became editor of the *Northern Territory Times* as well as holding successful mining and mercantile holdings. He built "Solomon's Emporium" now Brown's Mart. He became a prominent political figure in Territory and helped found Palmerston's (Darwin) first municipal council in 1874. He established a building company which was prosperous and his home on The Esplanade was considered the grandest in town. The Hundred of Solomon in South Australia and the electoral Division of Solomon in the Northern Territory are named after him.

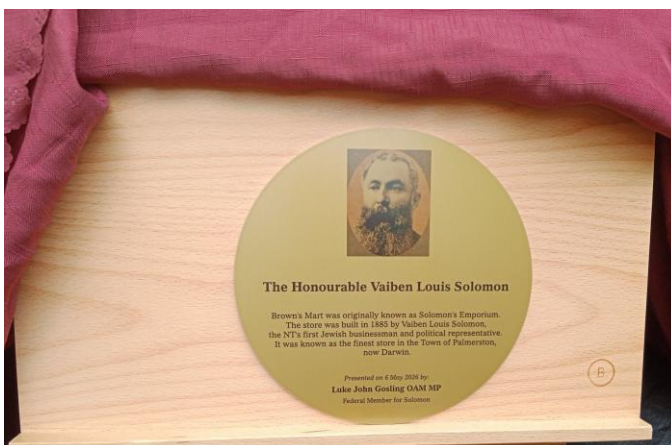
A plaque recognizing his contribution to the Territory was unveiled by Luke Gosling, Federal Member for Solomon; Mark Dreyfus, MP for Isaacs & Simon Lipert (Solomon family)



Luke Gosling, Mark Dreyfus & Simon Lipert



Luke Gosling, Vida Goodvach, Mark Dreyfus, Simon Lipert (Solomon family), Justine Davis MLA, Daniel Aghion KC (President ECAJ)



The Plaque



Janet Leather & Col Beard



Col Beard, Eddie Webber, Janet Leather & Judy Beard



Peter Siebert & Clayton Fredericksen



Rosemary Cameron, Merry Cooper, Mark Ames & Derek Pugh



Peter & Libby Siebert



The audience

Film Showing – Twenty to the Mile at History House on 10 May



Ian Anderson, Peter Siebert, Derek Pugh & Merry Cooper



Virginia Ross, Merry Cooper & Bev Phelts



Elaine Hellyer & Marnie Cameron



Jan Hills & Carole Miller



Jenny Krumbeck, Peter Siebert, John Krumbeck & Sue Ridgewell



Libby Siebert & Jan Richardson



Merry Cooper & Jan Moore



Rosemary Cameron & Garth



Sachiko Hirayama & Derek Pugh



Mark Ames & Virginia Ross



Launch of *Bravery and Ambition* by the Hon Sally Thomas AC on International Nurses Day on 12 May. The book was written by Janie Mason and published by the Society.



Sally Thomas & Janie Mason



Former NT Administrator, Vicki O'Halloran AO & Jan Richardson



Libby Siebert, Paige Taylor & Rosemary Cameron



Deborah McNeill, Sally Thomas & Merry Cooper