

Fremantle Harbour

History of Fremantle Harbour

1997 marked the centenary year of the development of Fremantle Harbour. Fremantle is named after Sir Charles Howe Fremantle (1800–1869). On 2 May 1829, as commander of HMS *Challenger*, he hoisted the Union Jack on the south head of the Swan River to take formal possession for the British crown 'of all that part of New Holland which is not included in the territory of New South Wales'.

Often, the spelling 'Freemantle' is used – even in early documents and dispatches sent by Sir James Stirling (the first Governor of Western Australia) who named the port – but this spelling is erroneous.

Until the 1850s, Fremantle was an important whaling centre and, as early as 1839, plans were proposed to provide shipping with more adequate shelter so that vessels would not have to anchor at sea and have cargo lightered ashore.

In 1892, work began to develop the mouth of the Swan River into a port. Under the direction of C.Y. O'Connor, the harbour was opened in May 1897. Recognition of Fremantle over Albany as the premier port in Western Australia came in August 1900 when the first mail steamers called there. The Fremantle Harbour Trust (now known as the Fremantle Port Authority) was created in 1903 and has always been a State government organisation. (For more information, see *The Australian Encyclopaedia*, Grolier, 1963 and Australian Geographic Society, 1988.)

Commonwealth activity and interest

From Federation in 1901, the Commonwealth has had a strong presence in Fremantle and around the harbour. The port has been a natural focal point for Commonwealth agencies concerned with immigration, defence and customs activity.

Other Commonwealth agencies active in the area have included those dealing with military or civilian intelligence gathering such as the Commonwealth Investigation Service and the Commonwealth Police, industrial relations bodies – especially concerning the stevedoring industry – lighthouse and navigation agencies, quarantine services and health authorities.

Examples of records relating to Fremantle Harbour

| Title or description of record | Date range | Series number |
|--|--------------------------------|--|
| Investigation Branch | | |
| Intelligence reports of internments, repatriations, affiliations and general investigations | 1915–1920 | <u>PP14/1</u> |
| Collector of Customs, WA | | |
| Correspondence files | 1926–1950 | <u>PP6/1</u> |
| Wartime files Seizure of <i>Remo</i> as war prize | 1939–1945 1940–1941 | <u>PP227/2</u> to 7 <u>PP227/5</u> , 40/C/1497 |
| Canberra office | | |
| Fine Arts copyright files, Western Australia Pictorial postcard '52,000 tons shipping in Fremantle harbour' Pictorial postcard 'Entrance to Fremantle harbour' | 1896–1906 1906 1906 | <u>A1721</u> A1721, 207 A1721, 208 |
| Literary Copyright files, Western Australia Plan for opening Swan River for shipping | 1897–1907 1902 | <u>A1723</u> A1723, 106 |
| Applications for artistic copyright (with exhibit) View of Fremantle harbour from South Mole showing <i>Orsova</i> leaving port View from midstream showing both north and south wharves | 1907–1969 1914 1914 | <u>A1861</u> A1861, 3141 A1861, 3147 |
| Melbourne office | | |
| Department of Defence, correspondence files, Fremantle harbour extensions – fixed armament | 1906–1936 1927–1928 | <u>B197</u> B197, 1855/1/74 |
| Department of Defence, correspondence files, AIF prefix Survey of rock at entrance to Fremantle inner harbour | 1914–1917 1916 | <u>B539</u> B539, AIF378/7/1262 |
| Department of Defence, general correspondence files Hire of launch – police patrol around troop ships, Fremantle harbour | 1910–1921 1916 | <u>MP472/1</u> MP472/1, 16/16/5530 |
| Navy Office, general correspondence series Coal hulk, Fremantle harbour HMAS <i>Karang</i> i – attempted salvage submarine hull – Fremantle harbour | 1939–1950 1933 1946–1947 | <u>MP138/1</u> MP138/1, 603/202/289 MP138/1, 603/288/129 |
| Department of Defence, Defence Army series Defence of Fremantle harbour against air attack | 1914–1917 1942 | <u>MP729/6</u> MP729/6, 15/401/622 |
| Perth office | | |
| Property and Survey Branch correspondence files Fremantle – Customs proclamations – outer harbour area | 1911–1973 1911–1973 | <u>PP473/1</u> PP473/1, 1968/23 |
| Works and Services Branch, job files Fremantle harbour dredging | 1942–1962 1943–1949 | <u>PP280/1</u> PP280/1, N1942/43/282 |
| Works and Services Branch, Western Australia, aperture cards Fremantle harbour (Dept of Construction drawings) | 1945–1958 1941 | <u>K1201</u> K1201, WA4401 |

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| <p>Maps, charts and drawings, Australian Corps of Signals Detailed route plans harbour A/MTB battery, submarine cable North Fremantle</p> | <p>1944–1959 1944–1959</p> | <p><u>PP425/1</u> PP425/1, V1/R50</p> |
| <p>Department of Shipping and Transport, Regional Controller, Western Australia, Correspondence files Port and harbours – growth of Fremantle Port, newspaper cuttings – Kwinana extensions etc.</p> | <p>1953–1971 1958–1968</p> | <p><u>PP486/1</u> PP486/1, 1959/247</p> |