

# ALBANY

## A BRIEF HISTORY

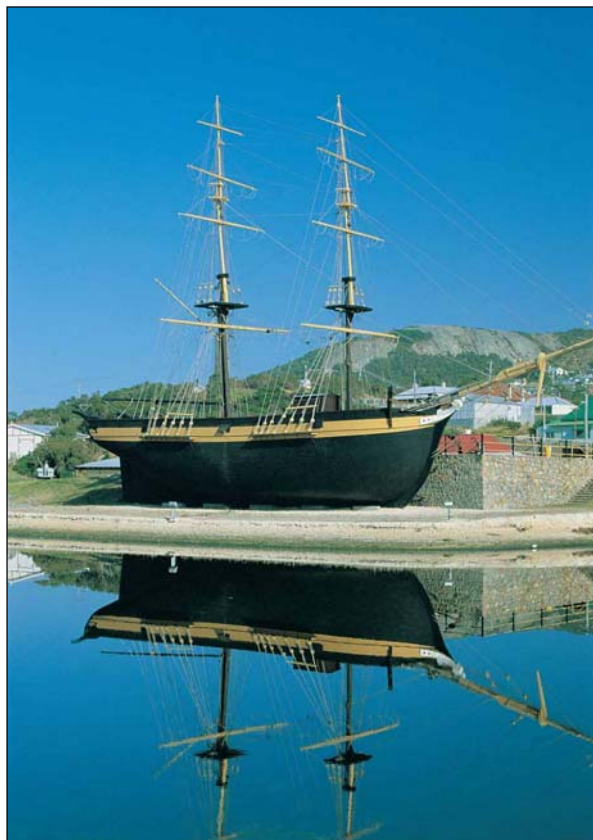
Before European settlement, the Great Southern region was inhabited by the Mineng Aborigines of the larger Noongar group. Evidence of the Aboriginal presence in the area dates back about 25,000 years. Noongar family groups moved from place to place within their own territories according to the availability of food.

The first known European sighting of what was to become the Albany region is attributed to Peter Nuyts from the *Gulden Zeepaard* in 1627. In 1791, George Vancouver and his party claimed New Holland (which later became known as Western Australia) as a British possession and named King George III Sound.

After Vancouver's visit, there were several French expeditions to the area led by D'Entrecasteaux, Baudin, Freycinet and Dumont D'Urville. These were paralleled by a range of British expeditions and voyages, most notable of which were probably those of Charles Darwin in the *Beagle* and Matthew Flinders in the *Investigator*.

The British Government ordered a settlement to be founded at King George III Sound in part to prevent the French establishing a hold on the Australian continent, but mainly because of growing dissatisfaction with the convict settlement at Port Macquarie in New South Wales.

On 9 November 1826, the Brig *Amity* sailed from Sydney carrying a party under the command of Major Edmund Lockyer, who was ordered to form a settlement at King George Sound. The brig reached Princess Royal Harbour



**Replica of the Brig Amity**

on Christmas Day 1826, but no one was put ashore until the next morning. The settlement party comprised 23 convicts (mostly tradesmen), 18 rank and file soldiers, a sergeant, a captain, a surgeon, a storekeeper and the commander Major Edmund Lockyer, with stores for six months (including sheep and pigs).

Lockyer named the site Frederickstown after His Royal Highness, Duke of York and Albany, Frederick Augustus – second son of King George III. This was the site of the first European settlement in Western Australia. In 1831, Governor Stirling visited the Sound and changed the settlement's name from Frederickstown to one of the Prince's ducal titles – Albany.

From 1834 new settlers began to develop agricultural and pastoral holdings. Over the decades, European settlement expanded into the hinterland. Albany evolved into a busy port, servicing the immigration and produce needs of the goldfields and exporting timber and agricultural products.

In 1914, Australian troops sailed from Albany on a voyage via Egypt to Gallipoli, where they landed on April 25, 1915. Many soldiers' last glimpse of Australia was at the start of



**Desert Mounted Corps Memorial**

that voyage as the hills of Albany faded into the distance. Their service to their country was recognised on April 25, 1923, in Albany at the nation's first Anzac Day dawn service, the start of a tradition that is becoming dear to the hearts of all Australians.

Albany struggled and grew during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, working doggedly through the Depression and serving gallantly in World War II. Bigger and better farm machinery and the science of trace elements boosted agriculture after the war and Albany shipped increasing tonnages of grain to overseas markets.

Whaling was a mainstay of the town for many years but in 1978 Albany's whaling station ceased operations. It was eventually converted into the Whale World museum, now a major tourist drawcard.



**Town Hall**

Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, tourism became an increasingly important part of the local economy. Visitors began to appreciate Albany's clean environment, superb beaches and dramatic landscape. Whale watching, diving adventures, bushwalking and wine tours, along with wildflower tours and the good old family holiday, keep Albany buzzing year round.

Woodchips and grain combine to keep the port busy and Albany looks to a future that includes the export of iron ore and manufactured timber materials.

Albany was proclaimed a City on July 1, 1998 and now has a population of about 32,000 people.

- *Acknowledgement to She Was the Brig Amity, by Les Johnson, and First Settlement Heritage Trail, by WA Heritage Committee.*