Stories of the Pallinup River and Beaufort Inlet
acknowledgments

This project was funded by the Natural Heritage Trust and the Water and Rivers Commission with support from the Wellstead Land Conservation District Committee.

A heartfelt thank you to all the interviewees who shared their stories of the Beaufort Inlet and Pallinup River.

Aden Eades
Amelia & Bill Moir
Amos Moore
Betty Sewell
Brian Moir
Charlie Hick
Jeff & Rhoda Ellett
Handley Page
Peg Tyndale Powell
Ruth Moir

This publication is dedicated to Betty Sewell who passed away December, 2001.

A special thank you to Amelia Moir who helped with the initial interviews and provided valuable support throughout the project. Rosemary Jasper kindly made her digital recorder available for the project. Thanks also to Alan and Eddy Norrish who provided background information on the Beaufort Inlet and possible interviewees. Thank you to Kaylene Parker (Water and Rivers Commission) and Serena Stevens (Wellstead Land Conservation District Committee) for the opportunity to conduct this project and for their valuable support and advice.

The tapes and transcripts of all the interviews collected during this project are available at the Battye Library Oral History Unit, 5th Floor, Alexander Library Building, Perth.

contents

3 Rediscovering the Beaufort Inlet
4 from Broomehill to the Estuary
5 the Beaufort Inlet mob
6 Sheep come to the Pallinup
8 life at Marra Homestead
9 perceptions of the Pallinup River and Estuary
11 Springs and other secrets
12 Visitors come from across the State
14 Camping, fishing and more fishing
18 recollections of the Wildlife
19 rain and floods
22 Changes
24 taking care of the river and estuary

ISBN 0-7309-7581-9
Stories of the Pallinup River and Beaufort Inlet

Produced by
Water and Rivers Commission,
Coastwest, Coastcare and
Natural Heritage Trust

Collated by Angela Sanders on behalf of the Wellstead Land Conservation District Committee through Coastcare funding
rediscovering the Beaufort Inlet

Beaufort Inlet, or Pallinup Estuary as it is popularly known, is an important estuary in the South Coast Region. Located 130km east of Albany, the Pallinup Estuary is on the Register of the National Estate Database as it is found in one of the world’s most outstanding botanical areas.

The Estuary is important for both European and Aboriginal heritage, and still is a place where many people fish, camp and canoe. It has extensive areas of habitat for thousands of birds which visit the estuary each year and supports a productive commercial fishing operation.

The Pallinup River which drains to the Beaufort Inlet flows 250km before reaching its final destination. It is one of the largest rivers in the South Coast Region, with a catchment of almost 5000km². The catchment is predominantly cleared for agriculture.

The Inlet has important social, cultural and historical values that have not yet been documented. Communities are beginning to recognise the importance of these values and a successful application for Coastcare funding was submitted by the Wellstead Land Conservation District Committee and the Water and Rivers Commission with the aim of capturing some of the stories and impressions of the Beaufort Inlet through a series of oral interviews. The grant also funded monitoring of the water quality of the Beaufort Inlet to help assess its condition. This will develop a greater understanding of the issues facing Beaufort Inlet.

This report presents the recollections of twelve people who have had a close relationship with the river and estuary. Aden Eades tells us that the Pallinup River system was very important to the Aboriginal people as it was the largest river in the region and provided food during different seasons. After European settlement, sheep and cattle grazing began, first with grazing leases and later farms were established. Peg Tyndale Powell, Betty Sewell and Brian Moir relate stories about growing up at Marra farm on the east side of the Pallinup River near the Marra Bridge. The Pallinup River and estuary soon became widely known for its excellent fishing and visitors came from around the south-west to try their luck. Gradually changes to the river environment were noticed, and more recently efforts are being made to address the issues.
from Broomehill to the Estuary

“My old people used to tell me that the Pallinup was a special river. People used to travel from Broomehill to the old Pallinup Homestead that still exists today and get down on the waterways and hunt and just live along the rivers. The Pallinup, being the longest river we have in our region, was a very popular one, it supported everybody. They’d travel and camp all along the river as I said from the old Pallinup Homestead down through Kybelup, just south of Gnowangerup, even go into Gnowangerup I guess and along to some of those old farms. The one I’m thinking of is owned by a farmer by the name of Alan Stone, his farm was on the [Warperup] river, that’s Glenisla, that’s just west of Borden. Maileeup of course was a neighbouring property that was a very old established farm where Noongars lived; it was a traditional area for Noongars going way back.

They went from there to the old Magitup Homestead and from Magitup they went on to Salt River, which is just a little bit off that particular line of the river, but they cut across to there. Either side of the river they’d hunt and camp wherever. From the Salt River there was the White Dam Reserve which was nearby another old farm, Moana. Some of them went from there across to Mourcourup, which was owned then by Frank O’Meehan. Then they came back to this other place, Woolaganup, near Amelup, then on to Sandalwood. And of course Mongup too from Mourcourup. Mongup was just a branch off that again [Peenabup Creek] that flowed into the Pallinup. So people used to come in through there.

From Sandalwood they’d go on to another place called Callyanup, that’s the Noongars name for it, that farm was owned then by Andrew Wellstead. Then of course they went on to another place called Round Pool. There would have been a place but I can’t think of it between Round Pool and Chillinup. And of course once at Chillinup they stayed around the farm longer than they would anywhere else along the river. Moirs owned that farm too.

Some would branch off from there to go to Cape Riche or Boat Harbour and others would continue on to Boxwood Hills. There was an old track that left east of the existing bridge that went straight across into plains country and either to the mouth of the Pallinup or around to Boat Harbour and other spots along the coast.”

Aden Eades
the Beaufort Inlet mob

“A lot of these people were coast people too see and they’d go both ways. They’d travel a certain time one way and then they’d travel back at a different time of the year. Hunting, living off the land, gathering kangaroo skins, just hunting and collecting skins. They’d do their trip and they’d come back with a bundle of skins. They were telling me that when they were selling skins back in those very early days they got a pound a pound. So that was good money if you had enough skins.

But they would travel right down along the coast there. Like I mentioned before all of these properties had permanent fresh water. That’s why they built along there, because it was pretty arid country in those days and I guess the rivers would have been fresh in those very early settlement days too. But they went along the coast and would go so far—the different groups. The Pallinup River mob, the Beaufort Inlet mob there was a traditional campsite there and there were many families, who in the past, lived there all year round. And of course people had their own locations right along the coast and they would always visit each other from time to time. There was always that sort of interaction right through and I guess that’s how everybody got married in the end I suppose.

They tell me that the Bremer Bay tribe was one of the biggest tribes around, the Gairdner River mob was the other very large tribe as well. All of these people at different times would have gone into Jerramungup Homestead once that became established. So you’d get one or two people working there and you’d have fifty or sixty just hanging on there having a free ride. They’d have to find them things to do just for a bit of flour, tea, sugar, a bit of dripping or something. The rations were very meagre in those days. So a lot of cheap labour went on in those days with clearing the land and things like that.

Noongars lived pretty well; they were healthy people back in those days. I’ve seen photographs of these people from that era, big, huge men, healthy looking people, well dressed too. But they used to survive out there; they used to walk from Bremer Bay across to Doubtful Island because there was a big camp as I mentioned before at Peppermint Beach, between Bremer and Doubtful. Some of my family was born there, my great grandmother was born in Bremer Bay. And her mother, my great, great grandmother comes from Esperance, which again supports the fact that people did travel long distances.

The rivers were a real source of survival for the Noongar people no matter where you go right throughout the country, nationally you know. All the waterways supported Noongars’ survival in those days because of the game, there was plenty of game, there was fish, everything was there. They would take their pick of what sort of food they wanted, some would go digging the tubers.”

Aden Eades

“The amazing part of it was, and some of the old Noongars aren’t quite sure, but the majority of them that I’ve spoken to have told me that the old grandmas were the ones that carried the fire sticks as they were travelling from one area to another. They never lit any of the bush until they were told by the grandpas, the old men, the elders, and as I said some evenings they wouldn’t light them before 6 o’clock.”

Jeff Ellett
sheep come to the Pallinup

“Noongars lived as I said all along the coast. Some of them were employed by Hassells, Wellsteads, Moirs to shepherd their sheep from Two People Bay right along the coast to Bremer Bay. They were out there ten or twelve months of the year then they'd get them back to the farms close to shearing time. But there were people living there all year around they tell me, these families. And there were others in other locations also that used to go down to shepherding grounds and they never mixed the sheep.”

Aden Eades

“Well it was play time mainly with horses with my older brother, who was only a year older, and whatever he did was OK for me to do also. We liked to be sent out mustering sheep during that period. As we had read all of our fathers’ thrilling novels by Zane Grey, we acted out the part as we went looking for the sheep. Suddenly my brother would raise his hand in the halting position and I would whisper, “Why are we stopping” and he would say, “Can’t you see that spiral of smoke over the hill there, Indians are there, we better be on the lookout”. So then we would get going again and finally find the sheep and take them home.

There were no amenities, as farmers know of them nowadays. There were absolutely no amenities, no water laid on, no self feeders and also sprays for flystrike and things like that I had to manage as well as I could. It was incredible what a person can do when they had to and how to treat sheep when there was fly strike detected in a mob. It was challenging to run them into the shearing shed and pack them into the catching pens the shearers used. That was a solution and then to sharpen up the hand shears and cut off the affected areas on the sheep, big strong wethers. I had to ride them back to front most of the time and cut off the affected areas with hand shears and sponge on a mixture of Cooper's Dip and that acted very well, that was quite effective.

Peg (wearing boots) with her brothers Ross, Brian and Neville and sister Betty on a favourite rock by the river in the 1920s.

We had dams and they held the water very well 'til the late summer and that presented the biggest problem of all. When the dams, the local dams ran dry luckily there was a wonderful fresh water soak near the head of the river where the cottage was. I put all the sheep, no matter if they mixed up the hoggets with the older wethers, too bad, they all had to go together in that paddock which was a big and accommodating one feed-wise luckily! Then every second day I had to take the cattle and the horses to water. Well horses can be very naughty indeed if anyone attempts to mix them with cattle. They put up their tails in the air and they prance around the cattle until they have them in a mood to stampede. So that didn’t work, I couldn’t take them together, I had to take them separately, down 2½ miles to water, 2½ miles back and then the cattle the same.”

Peg Tyndale Powell
(description of life at Marra as a child in the 1920s and later when Peg managed the farm during the war)
“Every autumn the mated ewes were walked down to the estuary of the Pallinup River. They were kept there for about six weeks, taken home before lambing of course, but this was an important time of their pregnancy and they went on to excellent natural feed. One of the best feeds available in that particular locality was a bush that we called ‘blue bush’. Now you couldn’t get a horse to walk past a ‘blue bush’ and I don’t suppose you could get a cow, but we didn’t have any in those days. It was something that attracted all animals, they thrived on it. It doesn’t look blue, each leaf is partly bronze coloured and the other half is possibly a pale blue, it’s got that combination. It’s a low shrub usually, only about this high and spreads out.

Once the sheep got there they were looked after by two Aboriginal brothers, and of course they were referred to as shepherds. Occasionally my father used to go down and see if everything was ok and that meant that he rode down. In those days you always carried a rifle and he would have lent this particular brother named Roy the rifle and one cartridge to go and get a kangaroo. A change of diet because the rest of their diet would have been rabbits and ducks that they used to trap in the shallow water with rabbit traps, and fish. Now this particular gentleman was a super shot and he had an unusual mannerism about his skill and that was he shot with both eyes open. Have you ever seen anyone shoot with both eyes open? Incredible.

On one occasion, and I really can’t remember how it worked out, I was left to ride the horseback to the homestead from this paddock at night time. My instruction from dad was let the reins stay loose, keep your knees well behind the kneepads on the saddle and let the horse take you home. And it did. It took three to four hours for that to happen. I was scared stiff, I was still in short pants, I wasn’t a teenager even. And of course pitch dark night and you’d hear a thump, thump, thump and that’d be a kangaroo but you never knew what was going to leap out of the dark. The occasional dingo would howl. The owls used to swoop by and the horse would throw its head around and the bridle would rattle and I’d think what’s it going to do, I could hardly see its head. That horse surely had sharp ears.”

Brian Moir

(looking after sheep at Marra)

Gordon & Gladys Moir with their children at Marra on the Pallinup River in the 1920s.

“Down here at Hassells, the first year that they had sheep there, in the autumn the aborigines weren’t allowed to carry on their burning program because that was against Englishman’s ideas. The first winter they lost sheep, they died and that happened again the next year. One of the old Noongars, how they did it I don’t know, he and Bill’s (Hassell) ancestor, grandfather, talked about it and somehow he told Bill’s grandfather that it was the poison in the bush that was killing the sheep. After their burns there was no poison so he said righto you carry on with your burning program, and the next year they hardly lost any sheep.”

Jeff Ellett
**life at Marra Homestead**

“We had governesses, that’s plural because some of them did not like the isolation. One governess on her first night when she heard the curlews cry and dingoes howl she thought the devil at least had arrived on her doorstep and she demanded a passage home immediately. So we didn’t learn much from her. Then we had some wonderful governesses.”

*Bettina Tyndale Powell*

“Mother was an outdoor person and at one stage she had us in the boat that had been up on the bank and out in the middle of the river with the water gushing in everywhere and she said ‘I think you’d better do some bailing’. Then when we didn’t have any effect with the bailing with little jam tins she said ‘I think we’d better go back to shore’.

We kids used to row from where we had our boat parked, down to the mouth. Mum would let us go. We’d ride down there and tie the horses up and get the boat going and row and work on it until we got down... we didn’t go down to the bar very often we usually stopped at the ‘Yates’. I think we must have got tired by then. We used to use something to hold up to sail home on. We didn’t have a proper sail.

We kids used to have a money-making thing on brush skins [brush-tailed wallaby] we’d snare. We’d see where the brush would come in under the fence lines to the grass on the fields. Ross and Peg used to get on their horses and ride further up. I used to sit on the ones close to the house where I didn’t have to walk far. In the morning we’d go around our traps and as we went past the wood heap we’d pick up a section of wood ready to dong them on the head. Ross used to skin the brush. As soon as I’d done my two or three holes I’d go home, I didn’t have a very big heap of skins. He and Peg did much better because on the weekends they’d ride out and set where the brush didn’t expect to find snares. He used to hammer the skins up on the shearing shed, which was made of wood, rough wood, and they would always have skins drying out there. When there were enough to realise on them we’d sell them to dad and then he would sell them on to one of the traders. But I had a very good system where I sold my heap several times. But when I came to the third time to sell them he said he’d already bought them twice, he wouldn’t fall for it and I was disappointed in his dealing then.

We had no sentiment about killing things. If there was a sick chook we stuck it in a bag and took it down to the river and threw it in and then watched to see how many bubbles it would blow, things like this. It didn’t worry us one little bit and if there were kittens they went the same way, with a stone in the bag to make sure they sank. I can remember jumping with joy at the number of things and all. But we had definite ideas about what you got rid of and what you didn’t. It was a wonderful life really and there was adventures.”

*Bettina Sewell*

“I can recall the first time I ever saw and was given a fox whistle and my brother and I went off, we were going to get all the foxes in one foul swoop. What we didn’t cater for, we chose a rock and we sat on this rock that looked down on the riverbed and we overlooked the fact that this rock was really a ledge, it jutted out from where it was anchored in the side of the riverbank. We got blowing this fox whistle and the next thing we had a fox sitting between us and we didn’t know what to do and nor did the fox. But we got a lot of foxes with that whistle, it was a wonderful thing.”

*Brian Moir*
perceptions of the Pallinup River and Estuary

The last 8 miles of the Pallinup River to the estuary was an unbroken stretch of water. At the beginning it touched our farm ‘Marra’ for this half of the distance, a part that especially presented so many exciting reasons for regular weekend entertainment – to swim, row our boat, fish and hunt ducks. A two-room cottage of weatherboards and corrugated iron was built mainly to allow the extra time needed to row our 12-foot wooden boat to the estuary as a special weekend event. That remaining 4 miles spelt much excitement to the mind of an 8-year-old, also endurance, when doing a turn on the oars.

There were very important landmarks enroute. The ‘Paper Barks’ was one spot for extra good fishing and opposite to which was a small peninsula, bordered with ‘pigface’ and then sand at the water’s edge. Such an inviting spot for some refreshment on the way. Out of sight, behind, was a well-chosen haven for ducks. ‘The Yates’ at a bend in the river, (one of several) was a worthy sight with its large yate trees growing close to the water. Red meat-ants there were a real pest when ashore. From around the bend, excitement tended to mount along with the first sight of the estuary.

The river by then had begun to widen and continued to do so until the impressive score of one mile was reached near the end. But before that was a sheltered bay, alive with ducks with a floating mass of teal, black duck, mountain duck and swans. On sight of us they were quickly airborne enmass making a breath-taking sight. A wonderful fresh water spring trickled into the river nearby. It was of course, the main drawcard to the waterfowl, visitors and campers were glad to have such a water supply on hand also. There was an inviting clump of paperbarks on a floor of white sand.

Peg’s Grandparents, Henry & Annie Field, ‘take an oar’ on the river opposite Kowald’s Shack.

Amongst the campers were two separate families of stud sheep breeders who declared the peace of the Pallinup plus fish and ducks were unequalled. Another regular was a doctor looking for an all-over tan. He let it be known that visitors were quite welcome providing their approach was noisy enough. Some business people from Perth came regularly for various reasons, mainly quiet and pristine surroundings.

‘Marra’ has a scrub paddock, including the fresh water spring, to give the Bungaree wethers a change of diet. Although fenced, it needed a shepherd on guard against dingoes. Extra heavy winter rains inland would fill the river’s water level enough to open the bar into the sea. The great King George whiting would then come in in large numbers inviting an extra visit from ‘Marra and more excitement for that little 8-year-old to whom the estuary was nothing short of magic.

Written by Peg Tyndale-Powell March 2001
"It was a wonderful stretch of water and there was so much you could do. If you were not taking an oar you could dangle your feet over in the water. Also there was always fishing tackle in the boat, you could drop an anchor over, we had an anchor, and then do a little fishing. Duck shooting was not allowed on the river on those occasions. It was only in the evenings when the ducks were in flight, looking for fresh water, usually dams on the farm."

**Peg Tyndale Powell**

"I always loved the river it's got some magic somehow about it, the birds of course, the scenery. The scenery from our kitchen window, we had the river there with the big pool and then the Stirlings on top of that. It's got some very nice pools. Through Boxwood it's very rugged through there and I remember someone reporting that there was a pair of peregrine falcons nesting on one of those cliffs at Boxwood. Viv and I went to the Boxwood golf club and walked down to the cliff and we found a lot of traces of them but we didn't see any there."

**Ruth Moir**

"When I go back down to that country, coast country, I've been down there with my grandfathers and my great grandfathers, I've been down with them when I was young. My uncles and my aunts and my mum and dad and people like this. Most of these people are not with us any more today and its all those memories come back to you and it's a wonderful feeling because you are reaching those people somehow, in memory, and I get this good feeling when I go down there. All along the coast, even when I go to Cape Riche the same thing, yes... seem to be making contact there somewhere and the memories flow back very freely. That's a good thing I think, it's wonderful to be able to do that I think. Most Noongar people from the coast who have connections down that way feel the same. It's like if you went away for a holiday, away from your husband and your kids, come back and it feels good the closer you're getting to home. It's a nice feeling and it's the same feeling I get going down on the river camping. Even when I go back there now I get a wonderful feeling because my wife is no longer with me, she's passed on, and we roamed all of that country and we know it right through."

**Aden Eades**
springs and other secrets

"I built a house at the Pallinup where the road goes down into it. Miller's Point yes that's it. It was very good for fish. The best fish I had for years there, bream and mullet, I preferred mullet. Netted the mullet, netted the bream too.

I used to take the nets off the blokes when they didn’t have a licence. I was issuing the license, and if they didn’t come and get a licence well I would take the nets off them. They had to have a licence and had to have certain size nets, 3-inch net, if the net was smaller than that I could take it, and I did take it. When I got nets I would ring the Shire up and they would send a policeman down to get it.

I had a dog there and she used to be with me in the water of course. But she was very handy. She used to find the nets in the water, she would smell them and she'd let me know and I’d search for them. She was on the boat all the time. I had a shag there that was tamed; he was caught in a net and couldn't get out. I took him out and put him in the boat and he stopped in the boat and before I got to Miller’s Point I threw him out, see, and every time I would go out he would be coming across to get in the boat. The dog and him was mates.

Used to get a lot of people there from all around the district. Some would come from Gnowangerup, some from Borden, but when the weather was fine you got a lot of people there.

Two and a half days I used to trap dingoes. I used to have people come down and tell me dogs were killing sheep and I’d go out. Well I used to be trapping there before I went to live there. I used to just be working for the Vermin Board. I used to get about 70 dingoes a year.

You had to know how to set them or you wouldn’t get them. Well, you find a place to put it for a start, you have to see dog tracks. And when you see the dog tracks you know you are on the beat. So you pick a place where they’ve gone against a bush and scratched and if you can’t find that well you pick a place yourself. You scratch and you set the trap in the middle of the scratch up against the bush, not too close, and you put a stick about as thick as your finger only longer across the front of it. Also it's a good idea to put one on the other side too in case he comes in from that distance and of course as he steps over the stick he steps onto the trap. That's the idea but when I finished trapping, when I gave it up I used to shoot them, I found that a lot easier. The thing was to find the dog then, but I had no trouble to find them.

Well of course I put a road up to the springs and a lot of people don’t know about that. There is a road from the Pallinup at the building place there, the point, right up to springs. There were good springs there. They were all yates, hill yates. And its got breakaway that’s washed away a bit. And its got this fern around it, bracken fern around it. There was a lot of springs rose up there. They were never used; they were found I suppose but never used. They were nice fresh water.

Of course there were plenty of places around the beach that were very interesting too, there are caves and that. Very interesting. Bee hives, plenty of beehives. We used to get all our own honey. Very interesting country around there on the banks, granite. Of course there was a road up the river too on both sides. There was a mine up there I used to work a bit because there was a seam there I used to make all sorts of gems out of. It was very good that little mine I had there. I would mine ....I don’t know what the names might be now but all sorts, a big variety of stone you’d get there - but it cut out. I sold all I could. I used to go up to the Gnowangerup Show and put it in there and I would sell it in no time. Put it on brooches and things.”

Amos Moore
visitors came from across the State

"We had an interesting visitor who used to come quite frequently. He was a doctor from here, a well known doctor from Albany, who, when he felt the pressure of work was getting too much for him he would get in his car and travel to Marra through the Chester Pass Road. On two wheels we always thought because he did it in record time. He would stay a night with us. He would arrive mid-afternoon on the Saturday and unload. He always brought us a parcel of meat regardless of the fact that there was no refrigeration. But it was a very kind thought and much appreciated from our usual diet and some of it we would pickle to keep it to have later on."

**Peg Tyndale Powell**

"We had lots of important people, business people, that came to enjoy the solitude and the quietness and the nature, it was a number one place. We had a judge that came with his son, who was a doctor and they came every year and built more or less a permanent camp up river. They had an arrangement with Dad that if he should come down with the family that he should fire a gun before he got there so they could put their clothes on. They were real back to nature people, those ones.

But then as I say one of the people was a great friend of the family's and he was very popular with us because every time he came each year, sometimes he came with the family and sometimes he came with men friends, he bought a square Frean biscuit tin full of an assortment of bags of lollies. When you lived at Marra that was a thing, a real impressive gift, this tin of sweets.

At one stage he came down, there were four of them, businessmen. He was an accountant, one was a chemist, one was in real estate and anyhow they were all huge, they were very big men, I think the lightest was over 16 stone or something. They had a little canvas boat that would only take two at a time. They camped down at the estuary and two of them would row across the estuary to waterholes that were on the other side of the estuary. To get the water each day only two men could go in this boat at a time because otherwise it would sink under their weight.

Then there was this honeymoon couple who ran their battery flat and had to walk to Marra. She wouldn't stay on her own because she was a city girl and had never been in the bush before. She elected to walk in high heel shoes fifteen miles, by road, they went by road. When dad got home from work he found a collapsed bride on his doorstep. People like that they were interesting.

Then there was the undertaker from Kalgoorlie and a married couple from Perth that were very great friends. They came down a couple of years. He taught me how to roll cigarettes, I reckon he needed another client.

With the fishing, the first year I was teaching in Pingelly, I went into the hotel to buy some cigarettes and Jim and the fishing crew had just come back from Margaret River where they used to go fishing. They had their fish box there, and coming off the Pallinup River I of course as I went past, I looked like this. There were a few fish in the bottom of the thing. I didn't know these blokes because I was a new schoolteacher, anyhow Jim said to me "What do you think of them"? And I said I thought there weren't very many there and proceeded to walk on my way because I just wasn't interested in the fact that they'd gone all that distance for those few fish! He said, "Did you catch more fish than that"? I said "We'd always catch more fish than that in our river", OUR river, because that was my thinking at that time. Anyhow a bit later on he came looking for me and he said "Where's this 'our river'"? And it led to he and a couple of his friends coming down and Nev and I going with them and staying at Bremer Bay.
One of the men rigged up a wool bale, that was to be a smokehouse sort of thing, and he had a very restless night keeping the fire going and the smoke going just so and putting the bream on sticks through the wool bale. He got them fixed and that was the only lot he ever got because after that he put them at Marra at the homestead in the old smokehouse and the cattle invariably went looking for something to eat and horned around this wool bale and let the flies in, so his effort wasn’t successful there.

Betty Sewell

“At one stage there was a fishing industry down there. Now that was before our time and we don’t know anything about it. But they had a smokehouse off the end of the beach. The camping area was there and then there was the bar and this beach ran along there. Just up from the end of the beach where it joined the rocks, which were very ordinary rocks, they weren’t spectacular or anything they were just little pebbles as far as we were concerned. Back from there in the sandhills but still in our paddock there was this smokehouse. I can only remember it as a wreck, I sort of know about where it was.

Brian: Anyone staying any length of time had no way of keeping fish other than smoking them and this is how it all happened. Smokehouses of some description popped up everywhere if you were staying a week or a fortnight; some people stayed a month.

Betty: Some used to go down with their wagons, the Murrays used to go down with their wagons and some of the Gnowangerup families used to go down with their wagons. Marg House talks about going down there for a holiday. They’d set up permanent camps for that time, it was a lovely place really.”

Betty Sewell & Brian Moir

I’ve seen a lot of people fish the Pallinup River by handline and a lot by netting, the old square hook as they call it. It draws fishermen from a huge area. From up in the Lakes district and so on and so forth and even years ago apparently there were even people out west of Beverley, out where I originally came from who used to take an annual trip down to the Pallinup River to go fishing. I think in those days they would salt the excess catch and take it back home to Beverley. So it’s always been a great river for fishing for bream and mullet. I’ve caught a few nice bream down there myself.”

Charlie Hick

“There were people I can remember that used to come every year from York, they used to camp just a little bit further up in the camping area than we did. I remember one year them catching a huge, or what seemed to me as a child, a huge shark and they dragged it in behind the vehicle up through the camping area and hoisted it up in a tree. The memory of that stuck with me forever; it just seemed so big I guess compared to the bream we’d been catching in the river, it was a big, big fish. And those people always had church services every Sunday and they always invited whoever was there to join them for their church service on Sunday. I believe one of them, his name was Tom Marwick from York.”

Amelia Moir
camping, fishing and more fishing

"...However some 12 months later our next trip, we’d saved enough petrol on the farm for our next trip to the Pallinup Estuary. This was a great trip. A 30-hundred-weight Chev truck was used which was good and had plenty of room to move about on. As we had approximately two weeks of camping and fishing on this trip we used to fish and sleep, swimming too, as we camped at the estuary close to the beach. One day ‘you know who’ got rubbed for not catching many fish. So I got up next morning at 4 am to fish for bream and I got five big ones. I never was rubbed anymore.

In this camp a family from Narrogin way goes fishing at Pallinup every year. This bloke we made fun of him because he used to fish with a line tied to his foot and then he’d lay back on the bank and wait for the fish to bite. The thing about this is, and we couldn’t get over it, this chap had the biggest toe I had ever seen! It was 3 inches long and 2 inches wide if I can remember what it was like. We could only laugh and say he would have been good at harvest time with that big toe in the gas pedal. Us boys always remarked about Claude and his big toe. He gave us scope to keep the pot boiling.

About two days before we came home some time was spent fishing and catching enough fish to bring home. So an apple case was used with a layer of seaweed on the bottom and a layer of fish and this was repeated until the box was full. A layer of fish and a layer of seaweed, that was the only way, because there was no fridges and no way of keeping fish we only had this salt thing and when you got them home you had to get rid of them quick. Dad gave most of the fish away.

Like I said before petrol was hard to get and people say it was a good easy life but hard but happy. Seeing petrol was in short supply people used to set to and make charcoal to put into gas producers. I for one burnt mallee roots and buried them in the paddock and two days later dug them up and they were black and all cold. The charcoal was then fed into a burner with a fan to keep it hot. The water tank, about a gallon in size, with a top fitted to drip water onto the hot coals. Now this burner was made on a frame so that it would fit on a motor car. This made gas although it lacked some power it helped all people and some of them were able to stock up a bit on fuel. I guess looking back over the years this was how we obtained enough petrol to go camping and fishing at Bremer and Pallinup."

Handley (Bomber) Page

“My first experience with the Pallinup River was back in 1979 when we first came down here, Margaret and I. We’d only been here about a day when one of the old gents from down at Miller’s Point had heard that these new people had moved in up to the Beaufort Plains and they’d come from somewhere up in the wheatbelt. So he went out and set a net and duly arrived up home with a smile from ear to ear but with three enormous mullet in this bucket. I’ll never forget it if I live to be a hundred because they were still flicking their tails, that’s how fresh they were. He handed us over these three mullet and it definitely proved to me that I’d arrived pretty close to paradise anyhow I reckon.”

Charlie Hick
“Well I’ve been going down the Pallinup from when I was a child, young child with my family and I know all the spots along there. From what we call the ‘Swallow’s Cave’, that’s in part of the old Marra farm property. Right down past the Ranger’s hut there’s another place further down, we used to fish all along there. A long time ago you could travel right down to Miller’s Point, because there was a track going right alongside the river. With all the fires, trees have fallen over and blocked the roads there. So you go out along the paperbarks and out to the highway and back into Miller’s Point. That’s the only way you can access that now, unless you’ve got a boat, that’s the easiest way down.”

Aden Eades

“Just prior to getting married, a friend and I were contract fencing and we decided we would have a bit of a holiday, so we went down and took an old caravan annexe down and pitched it right on the edge of the water at the Pallinup, right at the mouth and that was actually a terrific time. We of course used to mainly fish and explore and bream fishing were absolutely terrific. But Amelia’s father spoil it a bit for us because while we were there she came down with her family and it rained. We had a good setup because we had this open fronted caravan annexe and we could lay in bed in the morning and throw our line out in the water and catch breakfast. So it rained and we couldn’t do much and the old fellow sat on the end of my bed and he fished and he fished and every time he threw a line in he pulled out a bream and when they left we went fishing and couldn’t catch any more fish.

He did tell us about, he called them the ‘Red Cliffs’, and I now know that they are the cliffs of the type section for the Pallinup Siltstone. He advised us that a good fishing spot was to go over and walk around and follow the bar to the other side of the inlet and underneath those so called ‘Red Cliffs’ it was really good fishing. We walked down there late one afternoon and it was getting dark when we got there and it was absolutely fantastic fishing. We found all you had to do was throw out about a metre, or maybe two metres of line at the most, and you could catch really great big bream. So that’s just what the fishing was like then, it was terrific.

Bill & Amelia Moir’s camp at the Beaufort Inlet in January 1962.

After we got married and 12 months later, we had our first holiday, we went and camped again at the mouth of the Pallinup. But this time it was a little more sophisticated, we had a proper tent. Amelia’s mum and dad came down with us too and we had a great holiday fishing again and exploring, walking around the coast. One of the significant things I remember about that is that we took the cat again, it was the same cat, and every afternoon it brought in a rat and we thought of course it was the normal sort of black rat and realize now that it was actually bringing in bush rats.”

Bill Moir

“The river bellied out at the bar, at the estuary. I’ve heard it quoted as about a mile wide then. But upstream where there were rocks, we fished the whole length and breadth of the river from about two miles from our house the fishing started. We knew all the rocks, and where there were rocks against the side the river was narrower and deeper but it bellied out when it got down to the estuary. Miller’s Point on was much shallower but wider.”

Betty Sewell
“We used to go there for our annual holiday, the family would pack up and off we’d go in the old Dodge car. I can clearly remember getting to the river crossing, the Pallinup river crossing at Marra, and there was a gentle sloping bank on one side and a very steep bank on the other side and I’d flatly refuse to ride in the car up the steep side. Dad had to stop, which I’m sure made it very difficult for him to get up the steep bank, while I walked up and then I would get back on board and off we’d head for Pallinup. I often wondered how on earth we ever got there because the tracks were just absolute sand tracks. I think perhaps the narrow tyres on the car helped us get through. But we had wonderful times there, we used to pitch our tents and camp by the river, catch fish, enjoy life.

I clearly remember the very shady paperbark trees. They were always lovely to pitch a tent in so that when the afternoon sun come over, especially as it was the middle of January and usually fairly hot, it was lovely to have the shade on your tent in the afternoon. We caught lots of fish and I’m sure that was probably our staple diet while we were there, being able to go and catch the fish.

We also used to go fishing in the Pallinup River from Marra down, not necessarily in the estuary but in the actual river. We used to go down to the Marra Homestead then follow the farm tracks down through the paddocks. We used to stop at various places down the river and fish. In those days there weren’t freezers and what have you to keep the fish so we used to go fishing and on the way home you’d drop fish off to all the people on the road home and then when they went fishing they’d do likewise. The fish was always shared, but in a good day you could catch a sugar bag full of fish no problem.”

**Amelia Moir**

“We had our favourite rocks that we reckoned you could always catch fish off all along the river from where it started up in the Marra end. That was about two miles inside our paddock? You could fish there and right down the river and we were about half way down, that Brian said, was Kowalds Point or something, because there was and old fisherman, he used to come down there called Ryan Kowald, tough old guy. You know honest and good, decent old fella. He used to come down quite often with a Mr. Thorman, who was the parish priest, Anglican priest. These two came and lived at Marra with us and at the end of the day Mr. Thorman would say “Oh, Ryan’s a tough old thing but nobody else would come with him but me”. And Ryan would say “You know, he’s a tough old thing but nobody else would come with him except me.”

**Betty Sewell**
"That side of the centre of the bar but not that close, it was back towards the centre of the bar length. Further along there was a salmon fisherman's camp and they had nothing to do with the Pallinup, they used to come in from the country and go to their locality. We were standing there, we'd come up from Bremer to have a look at this, and we spotted a little rowing boat out in the water. The sea was opposing the river and of course that was creating quite a choppy surface and all of a sudden this boat does a slow roll, in fact it was a quick roll. The occupants of the boat disappeared, but fortunately one came up quick enough to grab a bit of the boat and he hung on. It was just as well because he couldn't swim and the other person was Bill Hassell's eldest boy. All the gear from the boat came ashore and young Hassell had the good sense to just keep afloat and he came ashore. But the other fella was left out there where the two opposing forces were meeting and he was more or less stationery, being thrown up and down but still hanging on for dear life and then another boat came from the salmon camp and rescued him. But boy he a lucky man. Of course they came in and they picked up young Hassell and took him away, he was helping at the camp. I would think that other gentleman, who I knew quite well, would volunteer to be cook full-time, no more salmon fishing."

Brian Moir

"Patty's brother had a bus camp down there about 3 years ago and he said why don't you come down for a day we might get a few fish. This time instead of being camped on the south side where we used to camp, you can't get in there with a bus or anything unless it's a light vehicle or big tyres or something like that, four-wheel-drive or whatever. So we came in the gravel way, which is Miller's Point on the north side. We went in there and had a great day there. Went out with a chappy on a boat. There again the nets come into it, I'm not sure how much but he had a lot of net out and he picked up 900 kilos of mullet in an hour. A lot of fish, they weren't small fish they were big mullet. But in a way it was easy but in another way it wasn't. I knew that when you were chasing mullet you had to stir them up if you could, because mullet are supposed to be a surface fish, although they do go down near the sand sometimes if its shallow water looking for food. What we did, when we set the net and tied the ends off, it only took us about 20 minutes to set the net. I don't know offhand how much it was but we circled that net with this boat flat strap all the time up and down the other side of it and by doing it it excited the mullet and they didn't know where they were going and bang they were all netted in the net. So I was lucky enough, we brought three or four home that night. Paddy's brother was out on a boat earlier and he'd caught a few bream and we were cleaning bream and mullet and had a barbecue dinner, it was really nice."

Handley (Bomber) Page
recollections of the wildlife

"Not long after we were married [1950] we went down to the Pallinup and I can remember the large flock of birds taking off and re-settling again, they were everywhere, they were just wonderful to see. They were mostly swans I would think, a lot of ducks and probably coots and grebes and all those sorts of things, but I can remember the swans were just fantastic.

We were asked if we would check for the RAOU, as it was called in those days, and it must have been either the late 70s or early 80s. We had to fill in a form and send it back to Rodney Vervest and it was a count of ducks, swans and coots. So we did the Pallinup. When I say we, a friend of mine Viv McCormick who was in the RAOU, would come out sometimes and help me with the count. We would do the Pallinup through Chillup and then we would do the Corackerup and we’d do the bottom section where it joins the Pallinup. Then we would call in at the Monjebup creek, just opposite Chillup, virtually and there would always be some there. We also did chestnut teal counts, they were very interested in those, and there always seemed to be a pair just above the Chillup crossing.”

Ruth Moir

"We did a lot of walking around in the bush, not a vast area, but the bloom of spider orchids and so on was just unbelievable. It is a very, very important spider orchid area.

On that I was up at the Kings Park Wildflower Show two years ago and talking to Kingsley Dixon, the flower person. He happened to ask me where I came from and I said down Bremer Bay way he said is that anywhere near the Pallinup River and Boxwood Hill and I said that is exactly right where I come from. He said, well it’s the spider orchid capital of Western Australia, in his book. So that was something a lot of people wouldn’t really know, that it is a very unique spider orchid area. Even some of the swamps that we have retained on this farm have got some magnificent spider orchids in them. We’ve got one swamp, the closest one to the reserve; it has got a lot of different coloured spider orchids in it. I go to another swamp and it seems to be all white spider orchids. I’ve got another one that’s enamel orchids, so they all seem to have their own little habitat. Then I’ve got another one that’s got a real mixture of spider orchids, donkey orchids, the whole box and caboodle.”

Charlie Hick
rain and floods

“It rained for about 10 days, I think, on and off. We kept rain records and kept throwing out the gauge, it would be full and out would go that lot and then there would be another lot and that was incredible. It rained from the south-east, I think they were upper atmospheres or middle levels or something that didn’t move. I had a two-month old baby and I was a bit concerned that if anything went amiss, we had no telephone of course. The telephone was carried away with the river and everywhere you looked it was just river, just swirling along, trees going down, the occasional pair of horns going down, it was very dramatic. I forget the level but it was recorded out there at Chillinup but it was a record so far I think in our lifetime.

We couldn’t get anywhere and for about 18 months and afterwards there were detours all through the bush tracks that we used to go down to the Pallinup or to Cape Riche, or anywhere for that matter on those bush tracks. There were these huge detours, the swamps were full for ages, the yate swamps, it was incredible it really was. I think we had about 30 inches that year, because we got over that lot but then upstream from the Corackerup there was a deluge at April, it was about Easter. There was a big storm and down came the Corackerup and it wiped everything out, it was there to be seen for a long time where it hit the banks.

Well certainly after the 1955 floods there was nothing left. It was as bald as a badger. But then up came the Casuarina, they came up like mad, particularly around the crossings at Chillinup because most of the Yates had gone. But of course Yates seem to regenerate and they seem to grow up quite quickly, but I don’t suppose anything is quicker than the Casuarinas or the Acacias. The jams would have been there quickly too probably in certain parts.”

Ruth Moir (1955 flood)

“There was a little creek came in on the opposite side of the river (at Sandalwood) so the water backed up that, but it would have been at least a kilometre wide there, where it was backed up round that little creek. It was higher than any previous flood and my uncle told me there was a flood in 1914, I think he said, and they’d put a fence up higher than that flood and it took out that fence, so it was higher than any previous flood. At that part of the river it was higher than any flood since.

It certainly changed the river. The river there had flat-topped yates, really big, like you couldn’t put your arms around them, probably take almost two people to put their arms around them they were so big. It just took them out, it just took all the vegetation out of the riverbed and it was just a rocky bed. It grew up again and some time in the early 80s there was another flood, nearly as big but not quite, and it took it out again. So in my lifetime I’ve seen that riverbed cleaned out twice, and it’s grown up again. But the second time the trees weren’t as big, they weren’t as massive so they must have been much, much older. That was in year 55.”

Bill Moir (1955 flood)
“At one stage there were a lot of people this side of the river and there was a flood and they had to all pack up and they worked their way back to Marra by road. About sixty people camped in the shed and one family lived with us up at the house.

A father and son combination had a beautiful boat with the curved oars. We’d never seen those curved oar blades before and they did the ferrying and they left the oars with dad after they went. Yes, we had great fun really because there were youngsters in that group. We used to ride the horses and of course we didn’t have enough saddle horses so we took to the team horses and some of them were pretty big. Some of these little people sitting on the back of a wide Clydesdale, they had their legs out there not down there. It was said that if you fell off a horse seven times you became a good rider, so it was no trouble to fall off a horse seven times in one day.”

*Brian Moir*

“Mum used to tell the story, dad had been to Cape Riche, I don’t know how but in the buggy. When he came back the river had come down and mum went down to the river, she knew it was down and across the crossing and so on. Anyhow he swam across hanging onto one of the horses tails as he came across, to get back.

Tom Marwick out of York and he used to come down with Basil Craig, who owned one of the big hotels in York. They were two that came from York but then there was a party of York sportsmen. Eminent families in York, well they were all farmers or associated with farmers. Anyhow when they went down they used to go well supplied with liquor and they were very proud of their mountain of bottles that they had built there during their stay at the river. When they went the following year there’d been a flood through the camp and the bottles were scattered hither, thither and wither. I don’t know where they got the wire from but they got the wire and they fenced them in, collected them and fenced them in. They were very proud about that.”

*Bettie Sewell*

“Well the phone line was a scream because that was done before I got there with fencing wire. Mr Hassell and Keith’s father, Cleaver, and Cape Riche and Marra, they were on the overland telephone line. That would be the first thing to go when the river rose. It didn’t take much of a flood, it was only slung across on two poles across the river and away that would go. But in the beginning of settlement out around us with the conditional purpose blocks that were thrown open people would rely on us to ring the Eastern States or anywhere, it was the only phone for a long way around. It was terrible it really was, it was a very poor phone service you would have to scream and yell, it created a lot of tense moments but it was very humorous really.”

*Ruth Moir*

“I can remember that one very vividly because we actually went down to the Marra Bridge and the water would have been maybe 18 inches from lapping the decking of the bridge. We went out into the middle of the bridge to have a little bit of a sticky beak and just at that moment a great big yate log or something came along and rammed into one of the pylons and the whole bridge sort of shook. Well I reckon I got off that bridge that fast it would have made Cathy Freeman look like she was walking backwards.
But that was a huge big flood event and a huge volume of water, unbelievable, and it went out, of course broke the bar and went out into the ocean and made a great big brown mark right out into the ocean.”

Charlie Hick (January 1982 flood)

“I think the nature of the flooding changed because in the ’55 flood all the clearing was in Gnowangerup, Tambellup, Borden areas and they were only just starting to clear the Jerramungup-Corackerup Creek areas you see. So the water came from the higher reaches of the river and that’s why it was so high at Sandalwood. In the flood in the 80s it didn’t run anywhere near as high at Sandalwood but down towards the mouth it must have run nearly as high because it was lapping the decking of the Marra Bridge (which was built above the high water mark). But the nature of the [flooding] had changed because you’d have all the clearing from Jerramungup and Corackerup so the creeks there were feeding the river lower down. So there really was a change in the nature of the flooding.”

Bill Moir

Marra Bridge during the 1982 flood.

We just happened to be down there looking for wildflowers and it was a fairly damp year because the roads were very slippery into the Pallinup. We met someone coming out on the way in and he said, “Oh, it’s gone out, with a bit of help”. I think someone had been down there with a spade or something and we went down there straight away and there it was running parallel with the beach, between the beach and the humpies down there. It was quite unique to see this going out that way and so we were quite happy about that and Keith took some photos and we came home thinking we’d seen something.”

Ruth Moir (1997 flood)
changes

“As time has gone on it’s my belief that the water quality has gone down and it’s getting more nutrients into the river. It seems to me that each year on the opening rains, if we have a big rainfall event, the first flush of water seems to be a little bit dirtier than the one before. That doesn’t happen every single year but we seem to be getting more algae and so on into the river and things are certainly changing not for the better. I think that’s a worry.

I remember going down the river most probably a couple of days after that rainfall event when the water had come down and it was like a very thin, brown, liquidy chocolate. It really had a foul smell about it, almost like a dirty old sheep dip or something like this. It was not very pleasant at all.

The vegetation along the river, down this end at any rate, I think has been quite well preserved, well it’s in the Pallinup Reserve. I think it’s most probably further upstream where things most need to be done.”

Charlie Hick

“In the 70s we’d only catch what you needed, you didn’t take more. I’ve been down there after they’ve been with their nets and things and never caught a thing. Sit there all day and never catch a thing. Normally you’d throw your line in and sit ten minutes; fifteen minutes sometimes but you’d have a fish. And that would go on all day long, you’d catch half a dozen or a dozen and that was it. You could go on of course but you couldn’t eat it all, so you only took what you could eat.”

Aden Eades

“The last time I was there about 3 years ago and I was pretty disgusted. It really is degraded and I really don’t know why because it’s not as though there’s a lot of people pressure there, I think it’s probably fires more than anything. On the west side there were beautiful paperbarks and shady glens, it was really nice, but it looked quite horrid. I do know that the inlet itself too has silted up quite a lot from aerial photographs that I’ve seen and also from observation. Every time that we had a flood further up the river there seemed to be a noticeable burden of silt going into the river. We did take a boat down there on some occasions and you could boat around quite well. I’m quite sure now that lots of the parts of the inlet are so shallow that you wouldn’t be able to boat.”

Bill Moir

“We have many memories of it and they are really treasured memories because we will never see it again like that.

It’s everybody’s river and they abuse it in many ways. Of course the fishermen have their turn, they are allowed to net for a couple of months and then there’s a gap and another fisherman’s allowed to go, if it’s worth going. When they net they just empty rivers.”

Brian Moir
“Well I was fishing there all calm on a favourite rock of mine and I looked up all of a sudden and there across the river, on a little beach where a jut of land came in and there was water behind it, was a naked man drying himself in the sunshine, or at least standing in the sunshine and getting dry. And that’s when I decided it twern’t my river any more.

It was after the war and every rock was spoilt with rubbish and litter, broken glass, plastic, cans and things like this. Mother left me some land down there that she had, a separate block, in her will but I sold it because it was just rather revolting to go there because all the beauty had gone out of it.”

Betty Sewell

“...But the Pallinup has taken a lot of hammering over the last twenty years that I know of. The signs are there, the size nets you can use too. That’s just cleaning it out and of course with the different sized nets they take everything, they’re not really taking what they want. So it’s important that they do fish with the correct size net so that the smaller ones can escape to keep stocks up. Most of them don’t worry about that; they go down and get what they can and what’s no good they throw out. It’s criminal really when you consider that this river... we all have a connection to it and it’s provided not only for Noongar people but non-aboriginal people as well. A lot of professional fishers used to fish there in the estuary part. But they just don’t police it enough. They really need to, and I’ve mentioned this to the Fisheries and Waterways mob, they need to get a Noongar in there to police these waters during the holiday seasons.”

Aden Eades

We didn’t go to the estuary much anymore in those days (1970s) because there was nothing much there. Well there were no birds to be seen in great quantity. It changed, Corackerup changed as well, you could see the green coming into it and the smell and it did change in those later years. There always used to be quite a few musk ducks down on the point at Chillinup but they seemed to disappear and the swans of course disappeared. There was always swans breeding on the Pallinup, at the Point Pool mainly. When we were doing the count I went down there one day and there was an abandoned swans nest just off the bank and the eggs were there just thrown out of the nest and left. There was always a pair breed up on the pool above the crossing at Chillinup and when the cygnets were old enough mother would bring them down as if to show us. She would cross across the crossing, the cement and be very proud of herself. But that all stopped, they just didn’t breed there anymore, I presume it was because it was unsuitable. It became just not suitable for breeding.”

Ruth Moir
taking care of the river and estuary

“I’m a member of the Wellstead Progress Association’s Coast Care Committee. We managed to get the track down to Boat Harbour done up but the track down to the mouth of the Pallinup has been done up about three parts of the way down. But the other end of it is something awful. Because Cape Riche now costs you $5.50 a night and the same at Miller’s Point, there are people who won’t cough up so they’re going to places like Boat Harbour and the mouth of the Pallinup on this side as alternatives. Well, you should see the track. I know the salmon fishermen there near the mouth of the Pallinup and I also know two farmers on the side of Boat Harbour Road and they said that this last spring and summer-autumn they have never seen so many vehicles backwards and forwards every day. Now we’re trying to get some more money to do up the other end of the Pallinup river track.”

Jeff Ellett

“The people at Chillinup, Michael and Penny, it’s been fenced and the growth that’s starting is absolutely incredible, even with the dry season that we’ve just had. The jam trees are all coming back and the everlastingst of course are up there, they’re beautiful and have stayed there all through. The floods didn’t even wipe them out. I think that’s the main thing I’ve noticed. It’s just wonderful to see all that happening.”

Ruth Moir

“If you have got some features that are quite outstanding as the Pallinup River is, that even in the hard times it gives you something to take your mind or focus off the hard times and sort yourself out a little bit. I’m sure that when you’ve spent a day being close to something that’s absolutely quite pristine and beautiful the problems diminish down to about a tenth of what they were before you started. There’s no two ways about it in my mind and areas like this really need to be preserved simply for the sake of our mental health in our communities, if for no other reason, but of course there are a million other reasons as well.

Just on that one I had some English visitors come out a couple of years ago as well and they wanted to camp on the farm. I took them out to the swamp that’s got a lot of different coloured spider orchids and it was in the spring so they were in full bloom. Well, you would have thought I’d given these people a million dollars, they were just blown out of this world that they could go to a place. I’d just got them a few mallee roots so they could have a nice little campfire, honestly I have never seen people so happy in all my life. They took all these photos of the spider orchids and sent some down to me. So those sorts of things they do give a lot of people a huge amount of pleasure and it’s good, pure pleasure. I think we’ve got to preserve it forever, there’s no two ways about it.

Learn about the river and so on and so forth and then take steps to start to reverse the detrimental effects. It won’t happen overnight but I’m sure if we set our minds to it with a heart and a will that it can be done. Then it would be great for my great grandchildren to be able to visit a river that’s pretty well pristine. It would be great if we could start to set something up for our grandchildren and great grandchildren that they could go back and visit that in as near as possible to its natural state. If I could do that I would feel I would have most probably contributed to mankind on this earth I think.”

Charlie Hick
participants

Aden Eades — Born in Gnowangerup in 1939. Spent time fishing at the Pallinup with his family as a child. He recalls stories told by his older relatives and others of Aboriginal life on the Pallinup River and estuary.

Amelia Moir — Born in Gnowangerup in 1939. Lived at Mongup farm on a tributary of the Pallinup, Peenabup Creek. After marrying Bill in 1961 shewent to live at Salisbury farm not far from Mongup. Amelia used to holiday at the Beaufort Inlet as a child and later with Bill.

Amos Moore — Born in Albany in 1907. Amos farmed at Kendenup until he joined the Vermin Board and trapped dingoes in the mid 1950s. He worked across the south coast as far as South Australia. He moved to Miller’s Point and built a house there in the 1950s and worked for the Shire of Gnowangerup policing the fisherman netting in the estuary.

Betty Sewell — Born in Albany in 1917. Betty grew up at Marra Homestead on the east side of the Pallinup River just south of the highway.

Bill Moir — Born in Gnowangerup in 1934. At 16 he went to live and work on his brother’s farm ‘Sandalwood’ on the Pallinup River near Borden. Bill married Amelia and went to live at Salisbury farm.

Brian Moir — Born in Albany in 1922. Brian grew up at Marra Homestead on the east side of the Pallinup River just south of the highway.

Charlie Hick — Born in Subiaco in 1951. Charlie lived in Beverley until he moved to ‘Beaufort Plains’ just north of the Beaufort Inlet with his wife Margaret in 1979. They have lived there ever since.

Jeff Ellett — Born in Koo-Wee-Rup near Melbourne in 1926. Jeff moved to a farm in Kojaneerup Springs Road with his wife Rhoda in 1963. They raised six children and spent time with them at the Beaufort Inlet fishing and holidaying.

Handley (Bomber) Page — Born in Gnowangerup in 1926. Handley worked on a farm in Gnowangerup in his teens and used to visit the Pallinup with his parents who farmed in Borden.

Peg Tyndale Powell — Born in Albany in 1914. Peg grew up at Marra Homestead on the east side of the Pallinup River just south of the highway. She married in 1939 and lived in Kedah in Malaysia until being evacuated back to Borden because of the war. Peg managed Marra while her brothers were away at the war.

Rhoda Ellett — Born in Cranbourne, near Melbourne in 1930. Rhoda married Jeff and moved to the farm in 1963. They developed the farm and raised six children.

Ruth Moir — Born in Moora in 1928. Ruth met husband, Keith in Albany while working as a nurse. She moved to Chillinup farm on the Pallinup in 1950 and and stayed there until mid 1990s. Later she visited the river and estuary taking photographs and carrying out bird surveys for the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union (now Birds Australia) in the late 70s and early 80s.