



The history of suburb names

The City of Gosnells contains 11 separate suburb localities, listed alphabetically below. All of these locality names have a history of their own and some predate the inception of the Gosnells municipality by many decades. There are other familiar names such as Crestwood, Forrest Lakes and Seaforth that are not listed below. This is because they are the names of subdivision development projects within larger suburban areas and are not officially recognised as localities in themselves.

Beckenham

Like neighbouring Kenwick, Beckenham was once part of the locality of East Cannington. The name was changed in 1948 to avoid confusion with the Cannington locality in the neighbouring municipality of Canning.

While urbanization is still continuing in the locality, residential subdivisions have long been a part of the area's history. with developments being planned as far back as the 1890s. Not long afterwards, in the early 20th century, another subdivision took place where the new streets were named after London localities such as Wimbledon, Clapham and Tooting. Included among these was a Beckenham Street, which was to give the area its name when East Cannington was divided to form Kenwick and Beckenham.

Canning Vale

At one time Canning Vale was known as the East Jandakot Agricultural Area. When the locality was incorporated into the Gosnells and Canning municipalities in 1923 the name Canning Vale was adopted. This name applies to both the area administered by The City of Gosnells and the area administered by the City of Canning. The name is believed to be derived from a property called Canning Vale Farm, the holding of William Nicholson. Like the current Canning Vale area Nicholson's farm straddled both municipal areas.

While early Canning Vale was primarily a region devoted to agriculture, the land there was not particularly fertile. This meant that many of the landholdings were relatively large compared with those in most other Gosnells localities.

The sizable holdings and sparse population meant that, when the agricultural properties gave way to other forms of land use, major commercial ventures could establish themselves on the large sites. This activity began to take place on both sides of the Canning-Gosnells border around the end of the 1970s and was initially of a mainly industrial nature.

The late 1990s saw many remaining acreages being developed for highly sought after residential real estate projects. For a time this suburban growth was rapid enough to outstrip a supporting infrastructure, an imbalance that is now being addressed with the establishment of new schools, kindergartens and retail stores.

Gosnells

In the early Colonial period that began in 1829 settlers from Britain were allocated lands that had been the domain of Aboriginal people for thousands of years. The most sought after grants in the Perth area bordered the Swan and Canning rivers, where there was permanent water and better soils. One of the larger properties was Canning Location 16, held by John and Frances Davis. John and Frances were not young when they decided to become colonists and both died in the hard pioneering years of the 1830s but were survived by their children. In 1862 the Davis family sold



the property to one Charles Gosnell of London. Gosnell was an absentee land-owner who did not develop the property in any way.

By the early 1900s the population of Western Australia had risen dramatically, largely as a result of the 1890s gold rush, and there was a strong demand for land on the outskirts of Perth. A consortium of developers then purchased Canning Location 16 as part of the deceased estate of Charles Gosnell. The land was then marketed as the Gosnell's Estate.

In 1907 the name "Gosnell's" was adopted when the new municipality was declared. This municipality also incorporated land that once formed parts of other large farms with names including "Maddington" and "Kenwick".

For some decades the municipality supported a number of orchards, nurseries, market gardens and poultry farms, with most of the urbanised areas being centred close to the Gosnells and Maddington train stations. However, urban growth increased rapidly after the Second World War with the wave of post war migration to Australia.

Huntingdale

Huntingdale is a suburb that was established in a few short years during the building boom of the early 1970s.

Many of the earlier roads in this locality were initially named by the developers. The name "Huntingdale" itself was one chosen by the developers and, like many of the street names, was probably chosen for its appealing imagery. Huntingdale, predominantly a residential area, has schooling and retail facilities.

Kenwick

Kenwick derives its name from "Kenwick Park", the farm of early settler Wallace Bickley. The exact date of naming is unknown, but Bickley's property had been known by that name since at least the 1850s.

On the Albany Road (now Albany Highway) a combined school, church and police station was built in the 1860s on land donated by Bickley. The only trace of this community centre still remaining is the church graveyard, now known as the Kenwick Pioneer Cemetery.

Later the locality was part of an area called East Cannington. However the name was formally changed to Kenwick to avoid confusing with Cannington in the adjoining municipality of Canning.

In 1992, a new library and community centre were opened in Kenwick Road and, like the original community building of the 1860s, they were constructed of rammed earth. In recent years major road and rail links have been upgraded and new ones instituted within the area. Suburbanisation has also encroached into many of the old horse paddocks and areas of scrubland, however the Brixton Street Wetlands still survive as a remnant area of habitat for many native species of flora and fauna.

Langford

Langford is one of the City of Gosnells' more recent localities and was well known for an abundance of 1970s public housing. What many folk are unaware of is the fact that part of what is now Langford once formed the estate of William Gordon Brookman, an extremely wealthy mining entrepreneur who became Mayor of Perth in the 1890s. Brookman's house was later converted into a function centre known as



the White House. In more recent times the building has been used for religious purposes.

In 1970 more intensive residential housing development was planned for the area with 600 residences set aside for public housing. Additional public and private constructions were to follow. This new locality in the Gosnells municipality was named in honour of W.H. (Bill) Langford, a long-standing member of the Gosnells Roads Board (an early name for what is now the City of Gosnells Council). Bill Langford had been involved in many local community activities since at least 1927.

In the late 1990s a program of urban renewal and redevelopment was initiated for the area. Many individual homes in the public housing estate were sold to their tenants while others were remodelled and revamped, with some units being demolished.

Maddington

The locality of Maddington bears the oldest name of any of the Gosnells localities. Early settler John Randall Phillips named his holding "Maddington Farm" sometime around 1832.

Hard times forced Phillips to sell his property to Major William Nairn and set up another, smaller farm on an adjacent lot which he named Stoke Farm. The now defunct train station of Stokely was named after this property many decades later.

Maddington Park went through a variety of owners until 1904 when, like so many other farming properties on the outskirts of Perth, it was cut up for development. By this time, the area would have been well known to a great many Perth people as it had already harboured one of Western Australia's major racetracks, the Canning Park Turf Club, which was established in 1868.

From 1907 to 1973, Maddington was home to the administration buildings of the Gosnells Municipality, the Council Depot being located in the Maddington locality. For much of this period, Maddington itself was a small distinctive townsite with outlying orchards and market gardens.

The first serious wave of industrial activity to hit the Gosnells area did so in the Maddington locality in the early 1960s. By this time, the old Canning Park Racecourse had fallen into disuse and a wealthy English developer named William Davison expressed an interest in developing the racecourse area as an industrial estate. This development proceeded and the Maddington Industrial Area was born.

However, a vestige of the old racecourse remains in the form of an avenue of trees off Kelvin Road, just by the Maddington oval. These trees are believed to have been planted around 1870 and formed an avenue leading to the racetrack entrance.

Maddington now supports many urban dwellings and a large shopping centre. A few orchards and a vineyard linger on as reminders of the decades when most of the land use in the locality was for agricultural purposes.

Martin

The locality of Martin stretches from the banks of the Canning River and into the foothills. One of the more recently created localities within the City of Gosnells, Martin was gazetted in 1974 and is named in honour of long standing councillor, E.V. (Vic) Martin



A significant feature of the Martin hills behind the Tonkin Highway is the quarry. Much of Perth is held together by extracts from this quarry, which provides granite for the purpose of making cement. In operation since the 1920s, the quarry has provided employment for many residents in the City of Gosnells.

Orange Grove

Orange Grove is a City of Gosnells locality that still retains a predominantly rural flavour. Located in the foothills behind the Tonkin Highway, Orange Grove has supported a variety of land-based industries in the past. These include orchards, market gardens, poultry farms and brickworks. One vineyard continues to operate in the area and quarrying has been carried out since the 1920s.

The first significant machine-based industry in what is now the City of Gosnells was also placed in Orange Grove. This was a flour-mill built and operated in the 1860s by Jabez White, who utilized local materials to a great extent with even the millstones being hand cut from local granite.

Another nineteenth century engineering operation, the Mason & Bird timber tramway, also passed through Orange Grove. The Mason & Bird Heritage Trail follows a section of this tramway route, beginning at the Hardinge Park picnic area at the Bickley Reservoir.

The name "Orange Grove" itself was suggested in 1923 by local parliamentarian R.S. Sampson when the local primary school was opened, and reflected the importance of citrus growing at the time.

Southern River

The Southern River locality was only formally declared in the late 1960s but was an area with its own local identity long beforehand, with the Southern River Progress Association being formed in the 1930s.

Named after the main watercourse flowing through it, the Southern River area had been subject to European agricultural practices since the 1830s. However the land was so marginal and often waterlogged that few ventures flourished. Through most of the European occupation years of the 19th century, the land was leased for grazing, rather than being settled and lived on by the landowners.

By the 1920s and 30s a number of small farms, market gardens and orchards were operating in the area. More profitable ventures to develop included a dairy, duck farm, nursery, and stud farms for horses and goats.

Massive urban development in the early 21st century has seen the Southern River area become subdivided and urbanised with developments on former rural properties such as the Bletchley Park Stud farm, while sensitively preserving much of the wetland areas for public recreation. Sutherlands Park, a large sporting complex provides a focus for cricket and football for the Southern River, Thornlie and Gosnells districts.

Thornlie

The area now occupied by the suburb of Thornlie has been used by Aborigines and European people for a great many years. The first intensive use of the site began in 1884 when an experimental farm was established on the site by Frank and Amy James. The venture itself was financed by wealthy philanthropist Walter Padbury, Amy's uncle. The farm was named "Thornlie Park", with the bricks for the homestead



and outbuilding being made on site. The James family sold the farm in 1937 to Nathaniel Harper.

By the early 1950s the post war migration population boom was impacting on Perth, with the result that the land was now far more valuable for residential development than for grazing and agistment. Thornlie Park was sold at auction and a new suburb rapidly developed. Within five years, paddocks and banksia scrub had given way to a new suburb with shops, a school and a bus service. While this new suburb derived its name from the old homestead (later destroyed by fire in 1975), the present suburb of Thornlie also overlaps other agricultural properties.

Thornlie boasted the first air-conditioned shopping mall in the state, numerous schools, including one of Australia's first Muslim secondary schools, and a number of amenities including the principal swimming and recreation complex for the City of Gosnells. Thornlie has also been the site of the carefully planned and marketed residential developments of Crestwood and Forrest Lakes.