

Bicton

Named after the small village of Bicton in South Devon by John Hole Duffield who arrived in the colony in March 1830 on the ship "Warrior". He applied to the Colonial Secretary for a Land Grant on July 22, 1830 but did not receive title until later in the year. Duffield planted the colony's first vineyard of 5,700 vines in Bicton and produced dry and sweet wines commercially in 1845. Duffield died in 1859 and the vineyard was leased to John Luff. Luff, Duffield's grandson James and an Aboriginal called Narley were sinking a well when the walls collapsed causing Duffield and Luff to die of suffocation.

The Bicton Racecourse arose from land leased from the Higham family in 1904, after the closure of the South Fremantle Course. The first race was on St Patrick's Day, 17 March of that year. It was an unregistered course, so unregistered jockeys and non pure-bred horses could compete on it. Ladies could enter the race course free of charge, but men had to pay three shillings. In 1917 it was closed after the WA Parliament passed the Racing Restrictions Bill. In the same year the former Bicton racing course was subdivided into suburban blocks and in 1921 Castle Hill was partially subdivided. 1924 saw the remainder of the Duffield grant pass to the Higham family by whom it was developed.

The whole of the Bicton area, especially Blackwall Reach, was of great cultural significance to the Aboriginals which provided a good fresh water supply and was an important camping and ceremonial ground.

Bicton is home to the Leopold Hotel. It was named after the Leopold Ranges and was constructed in 1907 by Mr L. Hirsohn. Meetings of the Melville Roads Board were often held at the Hotel before the Melville Roads Board Offices were constructed in 1913.

Bicton was also noted for the Fremantle Quarantine Station which opened in 1916. It was a Commonwealth Holding Station, and all animals (including queen bees!) were obliged to pass through it. In 1983, it moved to Byford and part of the land became public open space.

The Bicton Tearooms overlooking Blackwall Reach were established on Durdham Crescent, circa 1917 and run by the Stam Family until 1964.

From 1947-1969, the State Government ran the Point Walter Migrant Reception Centre. It was leased to Commonwealth Hostels from 1969 and was closed in 1971. The huts were demolished by 1987 and had seen use by soldiers, migrants and school children for almost fifty years.