A City on the move:
Transport in Belmont

BELMONT · CITY OF OPPORTUNITY

Belmont Park Road Board District 1920

A light impression on the land

An early colonist travelling by road from Perth to Guildford would have passed the Pine Apple Inn at Maylands. The road on the other bank, through Belmont, did not come into general use until the Causeway opened in 1843.

But well before Europeans arrived in 1829, there was a route from the southern bank near *Matagarup* (Heirisson Island), following the Swan River upstream. The track was one of a complex network of paths used by aborigines for ceremony and trade.

For centuries such routes were an integral part of everyday life. As there were no wheeled vehicles, and people moved only with what they could carry, these tracks needed to withstand nothing more than human feet. So they left a very light impression on the land.

The Aboriginal track to Guildford probably followed the route labelled 'Old Road' on an 1847 map. At Belmont, the Old Road lies slightly to the south of the current Great Eastern Highway.

After colonisation, the shallow muddy flats around *Matagarup* obstructed progress upriver and it was not long before a bridge was desperately wanted. Only flat-bottomed boats could get to the deeper water upstream and cargo had to be man-handled across the flats.

By 1842, the line of a new route through Belmont had been marked out on plans but little was done towards constructing a road. A track in the firm clay was considered good enough for the time being.

Opening for general traffic in May 1843, the Causeway meant the Belmont district lay on the main thoroughfare to Guildford.

1847 map showing the Old Road to Guildford

Second Causeway bridge, around 1904

Ted Davies' Garage, Great Eastern Highway, 1931

Life is a highway

In the 1860s, convicts cut down large jarrah trees to slice them into discs 30cm wide. These were used to form the surface of the main road through Belmont. The discs became known as 'Hampton's Cheeses' after the Governor who had proposed their use.

By the early 20th century, enough traffic was flowing through Belmont for a request to be made for a bridge to connect the district with Bayswater. This claim was turned down, since the State Government saw no need for such a bridge.

Belmont's potteries, horse traders, Chinese market gardens, piggeries, poultry farms and dairies disagreed. For them, the alternative was a 16km trip through Guildford or the Causeway.

Improvements were made to the main road through Belmont in 1915 when some of 'Hampton's Cheeses' were torn up, replaced with tarmac enhanced by electric lights.

In 1922, Belmont and Bayswater again asked for a bridge to link them. Again they were refused. Not until 1934 would Garratt Road Bridge finally be approved by the Government.

The road to Guildford was renamed the Great Eastern Highway in 1935. As more and more vehicles used the road, service stations, mechanics, machinery companies, used car yards, scrap metal yards, boat dealerships, and cabinetmakers, flourished along its length.

A second crossing was added to Garrett Road Bridge in 1972. Worryingly, in the next decade, a section of the older bridge collapsed due to termite damage.

Another river crossing in Belmont was to be the Redcliffe Bridge, carrying the Tonkin Highway across the Swan. Designed by Maunsell & Partners, it was officially opened in 1988.

Between Rivervale and Redcliffe, the Great Eastern Highway was upgraded between 2010 and 2013 when it was increased from four to six lanes. During these works, near the junction of Belmont Avenue and Great Eastern Highway, engineers uncovered the 'Hampton's Cheeses' now on display at Belmont Museum.

A motor drive through Belmont

In 1914, one motoring enthusiast praised the delights of driving through 'Belmont the Beautiful':

We were wondering where we should go for a motor run.

The Fremantle Road was damned as villainous, and therefore Cottesloe had to be ruled out.

Someone suggested the south road to Guildford by way of Belmont. 'The road is all right!' he urged. 'The local bodies keep it in tip-top order.'
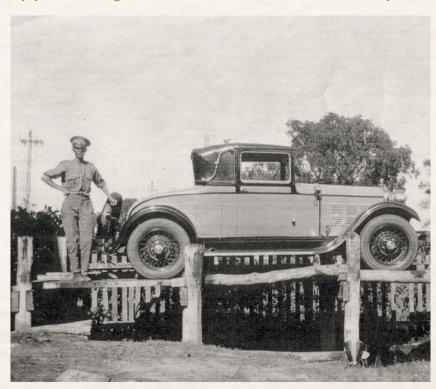
That settled it. After passing out of the scabby city streets and crossing the moth-eaten Causeway, which looks as if W.A. were thrown back to 1880, we got into Victoria Park. There the going was much better, and the Parkites seem to be alive to the wisdom of keeping their macadam in good condition.

Rising on the slightly higher ground near the railway station we soon struck the Belmont road, which, comparatively speaking, proved a joy for ever – or perhaps I might say a joy dash along a level stretch of several miles. Not only

was the road in excellent order, but someone – the Roads Board probably – had watered portions of it, and the pleasure of streaking through at 20 knots [37 km/h] was a new sensation.

We recalled what the effect would be if we tried the experiment at, say, North Fremantle. The Belmont road, moreover, has other attractions. There are nice hedgerows and trees and gardens. Just over on the left is the Swan River, looking cool and placid; away to the right is the gradual slope up to the Darling Ranges.

Belmont is an object-lesson to certain districts that collect more rates and have much worse roads. The Roads Board is to be commended and metaphorically patted on the back. May they always keep good roads, and the motor people will bless them.

(Sunday Times, 15 March 1914)

Cars being serviced at the rear of Ted Davies' Garage, Great Eastern Highway, 1931

An early Belmont motorist, 1914

Another one rides the bus

Ethel Caisley, 1954

Caisley's Bus Service, 1934

In the early 1920s, Ethel and Harry Caisley began their bus service with a depot adjacent to their Redcliffe home. Eric Nock later recalled the driving force behind the business:

Mrs Caisley was a person of very adequate proportions and a variety of characters.

She could scold, reprimand, smile, laugh and, whenever she thought fit, she could swear. It was always wise to remember that you were the employee.

Being the first bus out in the morning was when you would catch Mrs Caisley at her best. Her attire being very sparse and her mind alert to the day's requirements.

When you were the last bus at night and the first bus in the morning, you were aware that you had displeased the good lady. When you were on the normal shifts, you knew that all was well.

At that time bus drivers were obliged to be in the union. Once when I was the first bus out on a Monday Mrs Caisley informed me that all bus drivers were on strike and I could not drive.

Later, she told me with a smile: 'We employers had our conference. I told them I would be happy to give my drivers an extra two shillings and six pence per week, but the Secretary of the Employers Federation told me to "sit down, shut up and remember where you are".'

However our drivers did get a few shillings per week more.

One of the Caisleys' drivers was a man called Wigmore. He and his wife realised how lucrative the business was and started an opposition service. The situation became a shambles known as the 'Handbag Battle of the Terrace' between Mrs Caisley and Mrs Wigmore.

I feel that when the Caisleys sold out, Belmont lost very a worthy citizen.

Beam Transport, which took over Caisley's in 1937

Beam Transport Collectors late 1940s (L-R) Betty Thompson, Betty Meredith, Margaret Tussler, Lucy Beer, Norma Motham, Ellen Orr, Kneeling June Cockman

Fred Clarke arrived in Belmont in 1928. He remembered his time with Caisleys:

On being assured I could drive, Mrs Caisley sent me out to the Redcliffe depot to meet Harry Caisley who was to give me a test.

The test involved driving to the Sandringham Hotel for a couple of drinks. After that the job was mine.

Mr Caisley was a mechanical genius. With a piece of string, a lump of rubber and a stick of chewy he could fix anything! He kept the buses running – even those that should never have been on the road.

At least the engines were simple – magnetos and a simple carburettor. We learnt to respect the crank handle as it was to break many an arm.

To be a bus driver, you had to be a tyre changer, a roadside mechanic, and a bus washer. In fact a jack-of-all-trades.

With no two buses alike, no two gear changes alike and five different buses in one shift, you had to be good!

Betty Thompson started work with Beam Transport in the mid-1940s:

I married one of the bus drivers. I was working in the office and he'd come in to make his payments, so I'd got to know him. I was a bit tired of the office and asked if I could be his collector.

We collectors would stand in the aisle. It was always absolutely packed. The fare from Perth to Redcliffe was a shilling and tuppence. You had the ticket machine on your right and a money bag on your left. The machine was very hard on your shoulders and back.

Collectors had shift work: three to four hours in the morning during peak period, more in the afternoon. Then we had to stand at St. George's Terrace collecting fares as people got on after work.

1843 With the Causeway opened and a bridge across the Helena River, the road through Belmont becomes the main route to Guildford.

1856 Horse training facilities open at Ascot and a horse pulley system installed across the river between Bayswater and Belmont.

1860s Convict camp established at Depot Hill, Redcliffe, for building local roads. Slices of jarrah, known as Hampton's Cheeses are used to surface the Great Eastern Highway.

1881 Footbridge constructed across the Swan so Belmont residents can catch the train from Bayswater.

1885 Railway bridge constructed over the Swan, terminating at a station on the south side of the Racecourse.

1890s Private light railways at the foreshore for Marr's and Sugars' to transport their bricks.

1898 Formation of Belmont Road Board.

1904 First official request for a bridge to connect Bayswater and Belmont.

1905 Horse-drawn bus service between Belmont and Perth, which was replaced with a motor omnibus by 1914.

1908 Mills & Co given permission by Belmont Park Roads Board to build a jetty opposite Tranby House, provided the public have access.

1909 Residents request the railway be extended from Burswood into Belmont. This did not happen.

1911 First flight in WA by Joseph Hammond in a Bristol Boxkite from the Belmont Racecourse.

1914 Mills & Co construct private light rail to their jetty.

1915 Great Eastern Highway surfaced with tarmacadam.

1920 First aircraft to fly from the Eastern States lands at Belmont Racecourse.

1920s Belmont residents Ethel and Harry Caisley commence their bus service.

1922 Qantas commences operations in Queensland.

Another request for a bridge to link Belmont and Bayswater rejected by State Government.

1924 Perth's official aerodrome moved from Langley Park to Maylands.

1928 Mills & Co closes, along with the tramway and jetty.

1929 First Perth – Eastern States airline service commenced.

1930 Proposal that Belmont should buy the railway bridge and turn it into a road bridge to Bayswater.

1935 Opening of Garratt Road Bridge.

1935 Guildford Road changes name to Great Eastern Highway.

1937 Caisley's Bus Service bought out by Beam Transport Limited.

1939 Dunreath Golf Course, located within the Belmont Road Board District, chosen as the site for the Guildford Aerodrome.

1942 Due to the War, Aerodrome taken over by the military. Two runways constructed.

1944 First domestic air service from Aerodrome, when Australian National Airways left for Adelaide via Kalgoorlie.

1945 Aerodrome given over to civil operations.

1946 First Trans Australia Airlines service into Guildford Aerodrome.

1948 Woods Airways commence Perth to Rottnest Island services. These continue until 1961.

1948 Qantas aircraft leaves Perth as the first ever flight from Australia to Africa.

1850 – 1900

1900 – 1950

1952 First scheduled Qantas service to South Africa. Guildford Aerodrome renamed Perth International Airport.

1953 International terminal building built from salvaged World War II huts from Manus Island. Demolished 1964.

1955 Perth Airport becomes the first airport in Australia to obtain a liquor licence.

1955 Qantas operate the first flight to London through Perth. The route was Sydney–Perth–Jakarta–Bombay–Karachi–Cairo–Rome–London.

1955 First jet airliner visits Perth.

1956 Following a fire on the bridge, Belmont Station closes.

1957 Railway bridge dismantled.

1957 South African Airways commences service between Johannesburg and Perth.

1960 Garratt Road Bridge widened.

1962 Airport increases size by 1,370 acres to 3,620 acres.

1962 New airport terminal opens, just weeks before the opening of the British Empire and Commonwealth Games in Perth. The new terminal housed international and the main domestic operators.

1966 Extensions to the main runway allow 707s to use Perth.

1967 First Qantas jet service between Perth and South Africa.

1969 MMA signage on the hangars replaced with Ansett Airlines signs, in time for a visit by Sir Reginald Ansett.

1971 8,000 people gather at the airport to witness the arrival of the first Boeing 747.

1972 Second Garratt Road Bridge opens, enabling a four-lane dual carriage of traffic.

1972 Worldwide hijackings cause security officers to start checking baggage at the airport.

1978 Federal Minister for Transport announces a curfew for older noisier aircraft to apply at Perth, between midnight and 6am. The curfew was never introduced.

1981 Sir Norman Brearley, founder of Australia's first air service in 1921, opens Trans Australia Airlines new cargo terminal.

1985 Concorde makes its first visit to Perth Airport. It would return on a number of occassions, including a celebration of its 20th year of operation in 1989.

1986 International Terminal opened by Prime Minister Bob Hawke.

1987 Section of Garratt Road Bridge collapses due to termite damage. Helicoptor lifting a beacon to the top of the new airport control tower crashes, tragically killng the pilot.

1988 Opening of Redcliffe Bridge over the Swan River to carry the Tonkin Highway.

1989 City of Belmont calls for a midnight to 6am curfew at the airport.

1990 Parking infringements at the airport increased to $50.

1990 New Golden Wing Lounge at Ansett terminal Building opened by Kim Beazley.

1991 Ansett's new domestic terminal opened by Premier Carmen Lawrence.

1995 Native Title claim on the Airport submitted by the Ballaruk people.

1997 Federal Government leases Airport to Airstralia Development Group for $643 million.

2001 Malaysia Airlines reduce their service out of Perth, due to a downturn in travel caused by terrorist attacks in New York.

2002 After 66 years of operation, Ansett operated its last flight from Perth.

2002 The old Ansett workshops and hangars are demolished.

2009 Agreement reached between Perth Airport and traditional owners. Westralia Airports commits to making Munday Swamp open for cultural activities.

2010-13 Gateway WA commences a billion dollar project to upgrade the roads around Perth Airport and the industrial areas of Kewdale and Forrestfield. Hampton's Cheeses uncovered on Great Eastern Highway.

2013 Terminal 2 (T2), the first new terminal for 26 years, opens at Perth Airport.

1 Archeologist uncovering the Old Guilford Road in 2012

2 First Causeway Bridge: 1860s, Alfred Howes Stone, Battye 009286D

3 Horse and cart, early 1900s: n.d. City of Belmont M0313-012 Sarah Drummond: c.1860s, Battye 003025D

4 Horse-drawn ice cart, early 1900s, n.d. City of Belmont M0319-01

5 Belmont Avenue, between Keane and Scott Streets, 1920s: City of Belmont M0243-01

6 Aerial photograph of Guildford Aerodrome, 1947: City of Belmont M0353-02

7 Australian National Airlines, c.1950s: City of Perth M0056-06

8 Garrett Road Traffic Bridge: 1936, City of Belmont M0089-01

9 Aircraft at Perth Airport: City of Belmont M0056-08

10 Redcliffe Bridge, 1988: City of Belmont M0043-02

1950 – 2000

2000s +

No more trains to ride

In the 1850s, working horses were used for racing, and they were ridden to and from the racecourse. Some riders swam their mounts across the river rather than ride them all the way down to the Causeway or eastwards to Guildford. Later, a pulley system was set up across the river, and horses were pulled across in a sling.

A footbridge constructed over the river in 1881 allowed Belmont residents to catch the Perth train from Bayswater. This footbridge had a drawbridge to allow boats to pass.

In response to growing demand for transport across the river, a railway bridge was constructed in 1885. A spur from the Perth–Guildford line was laid down east of the racecourse, terminating at a station on the south.

Special carriages could now deliver horses straight to the track and crowd numbers at the races increased as the journey became quicker and easier. Up to sixty horses would travel to Ascot by train, while stable hands and jockeys would hide in the horse boxes to avoid fares.

However, the train only ran on race days, providing limited benefits to ordinary Belmont residents.

From the 1890s both Marr's and Sugars' brickworks ran private light railways to transport their products to the river's edge. In 1914, the pottery company Mills & Co constructed a tramway from their works to their jetty, which had been built on the opposite bank to Tranby House in 1908. Mills & Co and its tramway closed around 1928.

Although Belmont residents increasingly owned cars, the train was the most popular form of transport until a fire damaged the railway bridge in 1956, and it was demolished the next year. This seriously affected the Brisbane and Wunderlich pottery factory, who had 30 tonnes of coal delivered daily, as well as Courtlands Pottery and George Rowlands' produce store.

Workers demolishing Belmont's railway bridge, 1957

Partly demolished railway bridge near Ascot, 1957

Train at Belmont Railway Station, with horses on the platform

Perth Cup Day in 1903 was nearly a disaster when too many people tried to gain access to Belmont Railway Station at once. Surging crowds, far beyond the capacity of a single train, jostled for a spot on the platform, leading to crushing and distress.

The following year, there was to be no repeat of this situation:

The railway authorities, with vivid recollections of last year's crowd, and the storming of the station, stood fully prepared for every emergency.

The service given was in every way adequate, trains running at 10-minute intervals, between 10.30 a.m. and 11.30 a.m., and at 5 minutes intervals for the next hour, after which the 10-minutes running was again resorted to, until after the last race.

At the Belmont station. Inspectors Pearson, Shillington, and Lillycrop were assisted by a large staff of subordinates.

A high picket fence, enclosing the station, left four large folding gates for ingress and egress. The homeward-bound crowd was allowed to rush the platform, until it was about two-thirds full, when, from a central conning tower, an inspector operated an electric bell, and the folding gates effectively separated, friend from friend, temporarily shutting in the one and out the other.

The scheme worked admirably, and 7,000 passengers were successfully rushed away without anything approaching mishap.

(Western Mail, 2 January 1904)

Leaving on a jet plane

The aircraft of today are somewhat different from the first plane seen in Western Australia: a Bristol Boxkite flown by Joseph Hammond at Belmont Park Racecourse in 1911.

Perth's first airfield was located on the Esplanade Reserve from 1920, but was moved to Maylands just four years later. The Peninsula's bushland was cleared and two airlines operated from the aerodrome: Australian National Airways and MacRobertson Miller Airways.

By 1938, the larger planes, such as the Douglas DC-2, had difficulty landing at Maylands. The runway could not be extended, having the river on three sides and clay-pits on the other. The area also regularly flooded and needed to be pumped. A new airport was needed.

The chosen place was the golf course at Dunreath, located within the Belmont Park Road District on the eastern flank of Redcliffe. However, just after the land was acquired, World War II began, and the site was developed by the RAAF. By 1944, there were two runways, with an airfield which could service the heavy Liberator bombers.

In May 1944, the first commercial flight from Dunreath's 'Guildford Aerodrome', was by an Australian National Airways airliner which took off from the RAAF runway for Adelaide via Kalgoorlie.

After the War, the airport reverted to its civilian purpose. The buildings erected by the RAAF were used for hangars, terminal buildings and offices. Australian National Airways erected a large new hangar, one runway was extended, and another added.

On 2 September 1952, a Qantas Lockheed Constellation made the first scheduled international service from Perth. The flight to South Africa, via Cocos Island and Mauritius, took 39 hours 17 minutes. As a result, Guildford Aerodrome was renamed Perth International Airport.

Using salvaged wartime huts from Manus Island, an international terminal building was completed in 1953 for £90,000 ($180,000). Many felt that this was too much to spend on an airport which only had one fortnightly service to South Africa. In any case, it was thought that Darwin should be the main entry point into the country.

Even so, aircraft from Britain increasingly flew to Perth International Airport rather than Darwin. By 1959, the number of passengers required the drawing of plans for a new terminal building.

Also, the new Boeing 707 being used from Perth to Singapore needed a longer runway, so more land was obtained to the north, south and west of the airport to allow for expansion.

The new terminal was opened in October 1962, just in time for the Commonwealth Games held in Perth the following month.

Much of the residential suburb of Newburn, which had been a small rural community east of Redcliffe from 1912, was resumed by the Commonwealth Government in 1970, doubling the size of the airport.

Another new International Terminal was officially opened by Prime Minister Bob Hawke in 1986, with a new control tower coming into operation in 1987. Ansett's new $18 million domestic terminal was officially opened by Premier Carmen Lawrence in March 1991.

MacRobertson Miller Airlines Douglas DC-3s, 1962

Hammond and his Bristol Boxkite, 1911

Perth Airport, 1962

The Ballaruk people submitted a Native Title claim on much of the Airport in February 1995. An agreement was eventually reached between the airport authorities and the traditional owners of the land. This included a commitment to make Munday Swamp available for cultural activities.

Following a decision by the Federal Government to lease the major Australian airports to the private sector, in 1997 a 50-year lease on Perth Airport was granted to Airstralia Development Group, for $643 million.

On 4 March 2002, after 66 years of operation, Ansett operated its last flight in Australia when an Airbus A320 departed Perth just prior to midnight. Ansett's predecessor, Australian National Airways, had operated the first commercial service from the Guildford Aerodrome in May 1944.

The first new terminal to be built at Perth Airport for 26 years, Terminal 2 (T2) opened in March 2013 and became home to Alliance Airlines, Tigerair and Virgin Australia, servicing both the domestic and international markets.

Perth Airport interior, 1962

Qantas Boeing 747, City of Townsville, being refuelled, 1977

Camouflage and secrecy

A Kittyhawk pilot recalls the transformation of Dunreath Golf Course:

It was March 1942. The Japanese were sweeping southward and Western Australia was daily expecting invasion. With only a handful of aircraft, Perth was particularly vulnerable. So it came about that No. 77 Squadron was equipped with American Kittyhawks.

Camouflage and secrecy were the primary objects. If the enemy could not find our fighters on the ground, our losses would be confined to those sustained in aerial combat. In view of our pitifully small numbers, a sound policy.

Thus of necessity was Guildford Aerodrome born. In peacetime a small golf links, it offered admirable facilities for camouflage. Its disadvantages seemed obvious, and we pilots cast a jaundiced eye on the boggy ground.

Perhaps I was prejudiced. I had played the course before the War and had vivid recollections of succumbing to the magnetism of the trees and hooking into them. It was with trepidation I visualised myself bringing a strange aircraft down the same fairway.

The club house was converted to sleeping quarters for pilots, while tents were erected to house the ground staff. Gradually we settled down to the routine of keeping one flight standing by at 'readiness' while the other carried out a training programme.

The monotonous days went on. In the little 'readiness' hut among the paper-bark trees, rostered pilots sat and read, yarned, smoked and played cards as they waited for the ever-expected signal that the enemy was on his way.

Equipment was scarce. It was hard work, but in the end we had things pretty ship-shape, and became quite proud of the little strip. We had minor accidents, but no major disasters, operating continuously until we handed over to our successors when the squadron received orders to move to Darwin.

USAF Boeing B-29 Superfortress bomber, Waltzing Matilda, at Guildford Aerodrome, October 1945

USAF Boeing B-29 Superfortress bomber, Waltzing Matilda, outside ANA hanger, October 1945

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Images (in order as shown in book)

p. 2: Belmont Park Road Board District, G.H. Smith (1920s, plan courtesy of State Library of Western Australia 237C [36/7])

p. 3: 1847 map showing the road to Guildford: State Records Office, cons. 3689, Roads 085; Second Causeway Bridge, around 1904: Battye Library 006166PD

p. 4: Ted Davies' Garage, Great Eastern Highway, 1931: City of Belmont M408-01

p. 5: Car being serviced at rear of Ted Davies' Garage, Great Eastern Highway, 1931: City of Belmont M408-02; An early Belmont Motorist, 1914: City of Belmont M0383-01

p. 6: Ethel Caisley, 1954: City of Belmont M0086-01; Caisley's Bus Service, 1934: Battye 102292PD

p. 7: Beam Transport, which took over Caisley's in 1937: City of Belmont M0216-01; Beam Transport Collectors, c 1940: Mrs E Burke

p. 10: Workers demolishing Belmont's railway bridge, 1957: Battye 004950D; Partly demolished railway bridge near Ascot, 1957: Battye 004954D

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p. 13: Perth Airport, 1962: Battye 133405PD; Perth Airport interior, 1962: Battye 004038D; Qantas Boeing 747, *City of Townsville*, being refuelled, 1977: Battye 362365PD

p. 14: USAF Boeing B-29 Superfortress bomber, *Waltzing Matilda*, at Guildford Aerodrome, October 1945: Battye 291283PD; USAF Boeing B-29 Superfortress bomber, *Waltzing Matilda*, outside ANA hanger, October 1945: Battye 291284PD

Front Cover Images (top and bottom)

Workers demolishing Belmont's railway bridge, 1957: Battye 004950D

Train at Belmont Railway Station, with horses on the platform: City of Belmont M0143-01

Back Cover Image

Hammond and his Bristol Boxkite, 1911: Battye 229006PD

Each part of the coat of arms symbolises an aspect of the City of Belmont. The kiln and stack represent brick making and the cog is a symbol for industry. The wings symbolise flight and the airport, while the horse is the racing industry. The green stands for public space; silver, the sky; and blue is the Swan River. The black swan is the State emblem, and the ducal coronet around its neck symbolises Belmont's relationship to WA.

For further information on the City of Belmont Heritage Series, please contact the Belmont Museum on 9477 7450 or email museum@belmont.wa.gov.au or visit 61 Elizabeth Street, Belmont WA 6104