Services in Belmont:
Helping the Community

St Columban's, which overlooks Cracknell Park, has served as both a convalescent home and as a home for retired priests, 1975.

Belmont Going Ahead

In the 1920s, Belmont was becoming renowned as an up-and-coming suburb:

For many years the Belmont district was best known for Ascot Racecourse, but more and more attention has been paid to it as a residential suburb. Many beautiful spots are to be found that make ideal building sites, giving glorious glimpses of the Swan River and Darling Ranges.

Local government is carried out by a Road Board. This Board has a big area to administer and the district is divided into three distinct suburbs: Rivervale, Belmont and Redcliffe. Each is fairly closely settled along the main road and for a few streets back on either side.

The district has five State Schools as well as a Convent. Owing to the great area of the suburb it has been found expedient to build schools at Carlisle, South Belmont, Rivervale, Belmont and Redcliffe. This means that although the main road is four and a quarter miles in length, no child has to walk any great distance to school.

The Town Hall, situated on the main Guildford Road [Great Eastern Highway] and practically in the centre of the district, is a roomy building, and contains the administrative offices of the Board, and the Board's meeting room.

In a district the size of Belmont, the building of roads is a big and difficult problem. The Board are facing it with confidence, constructing roads of a good width, capable of carrying heavy traffic. In the matter of footpaths the district is not so fortunate, having only two miles in all.

Belmont is fortunate in the number of reserves scattered about the district. Each portion has its parks and playing grounds, while the recreation ground, known as Hardy Park, is well equipped for all manner of outdoor sport. In the East Ward, there are two big reserves in McLachlan and Garvey Parks, both fine big playgrounds which make for healthy children.

Before many years have passed Belmont will probably take her place among the leading suburbs of Perth.

Daily News, 24 May 1928

Pavement construction in Belmont, c1970s.

All Saints

Krantz & Sheldon, plans for All Saints Church, Cloverdale

The earliest Anglican services in the Belmont area are said to have been held in the open under a large tree, but little is known of these.

The area around the junction of Moreing Street and Great Eastern Highway was mainly bush when the foundation stone of the little Mission Church of All Saints was laid by Bishop Charles Riley on 8 September 1906. There was not even a footpath along the main road at the time. After the ceremony the Bishop presented prizes to the Sunday school children.

A brick church was erected by a local builder, William Blacklock, with a matchwood ceiling from which four large kerosene lamps were suspended.

There were wooden swing-doors between the porch and the church, and the back wall was weatherboard to allow for later extensions.

The modest altar was a packing case brought out by the Fisher family from England. This was mounted on a platform and surrounded by a wooden rail. Eventually most of this woodwork was eaten by termites. The seating was wooden chairs with cane seats and the baptismal font was a large clam shell from the North West, mounted on a wooden stand.

During renovations around 1920, electric lights were installed, and pews replaced the old chairs. By 1921, the wooden ceiling was so badly damaged by white ants it was removed.

It was not until the mid-1940s, that a new wooden altar replaced the original packing case.

Although All Saints, Moreing Street, was demolished in 1977, some of the bricks from the original All Saints were used to build a seat in the garden of the new All Saints in Belgravia Street, Cloverdale. The old foundation stone was set in the wall of the new building and a memorial stone placed in the garden. The old church bell was given to St. Bartholomew's, East Perth.

Congregational Church

Planning for a Congregational Church began around 1900, when Dorothea Bechtel donated a block on Guildford Road (now Great Eastern Highway), Rivervale. Services were held at the Bechtels' family home until enough money was raised for a church.

A fundraising committee was established. Of forty homes in the district, thirty-one promised to support the new building.

The foundation stone of Burswood Congregational Church was laid in October 1905. It was a landmark building, having been erected on the highest part of the block.

The little Congregational Church remained in use until the 1990s when it needed to be removed for road improvements. The Belmont Historical Society campaigned for its relocation, so each piece of the church was carefully marked and put in storage.

The Belmont Historical Society fundraised for many years with the aim of raising sufficient funds to rebuild the church. A stained glass window from the church has been restored and is displayed in the Belmont Museum, whilst pallets of bricks from the original building have been stored for future use in replicating the Church facade.

G. A. Wasley first attended this church in 1912, and he recalled those early days:

Lighting was from six very large hanging kerosene lamps which were made of some shining metal with large silver metal reflectors above the level of the flame within a glass chimney.
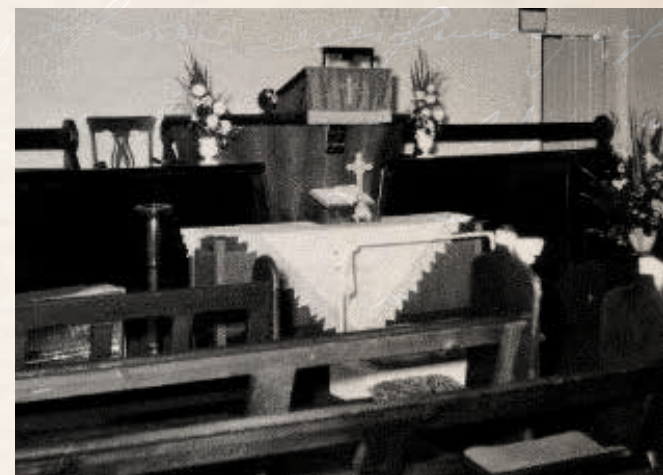
The light was very easy on the eyes and one can appreciate the need for a very large pulpit Bible. A really outsize Bible was provided by the young people from the Sunday School.

Flooring was of pine boards without any type of matting or carpet. The chairs had woven straw seating.

Several items from the Congregational Church, including the Bible, are now held by the Belmont Museum to be viewed by local residents and visitors to the district.

Congregational Church interior

Rivervale Uniting Church.

Rivervale Congregational Church

St Anne's Church & School

Before construction of St Anne's in Hehir Street, Catholics has celebrated Mass in the home of Charles and Kathleen Courtland. Designed by local architect Augustine Benedict Rieusset, St Anne's was officially opened on 6 December 1914.

Joan Doyle later recalled some of the early priests:

Many will remember Fr Crowley, who travelled to Belmont from his parish in Highgate to perform church duties. My own baptismal certificate bears his name. He also held the position of Racecourse Chaplain.

Father Brennen later became our more regular priest, travelling from the Parish of St. Joachim's in Victoria Park. A familiar sight coming up Hehir Street, behind the wheel of his T-model Ford, his black clerical suit protected by a dust coat for obvious reasons, and on his head a Panama hat with a black band. His companion, a faithful black dog. After the demise of Fr Brennen, many priests travelled to Belmont from Victoria Park.

St Anne's Convent School, Belmont, class photograph: 1948

Run by the Sisters of Mercy, St Anne's School, Belmont, operated from 1915 to 1967. The first teachers were Sisters Benedict and Agnes, who came from Derry, Ireland. By the time Joan Doyle started at the school, the teachers were Sisters Brigid and Bernard.

Joan fondly remembered the school concerts.

Apart from piano duets, song and dancing routines taught by Sisters, Sister Bernard was light as a feather on her feet; the audience was treated to renditions from Irish colleens, Hawaiian girls, Gypsies, Dutch boys and girls, sailors and the list runs endlessly on.

Many will remember a little boy by the name of Ross Dyson, angelic face and voice to match, who had to be placed on a box so all in the Hall could see and hear his rendition of 'What would you take for me Papa?'

Belmont Museum

While the City of Belmont has always looked to the future, it also keeps an eye on preserving its rich history. In 1980 the City's librarian, Aino Marshall, suggested that guests at the Pioneer Afternoon Tea should be asked for their reminiscences. Council quickly allocated $1,000 towards such a project.

As a consequence, a meeting of those interested in Belmont's past was held in a room in the aquatic centre, and the Belmont Historical Society was officially formed on 7 April 1981.

There continued to be strong links between the Council and the Historical Society. Aino became the Society's first Secretary, while Andy Norlin, past councillor and long-term resident of the district, was elected its inaugural chair. In 1998, the chair was handed to Peg Parkin, who had served as the City's mayor from 1987 to 1994.

The Historical Society was not just concerned with gathering stories about Belmont, it also wanted to collect objects which could be used to show people what the past had been like. The collection received a significant boost when a local resident, David Cruskall, generously donated his collection of historic items, which had been collected over many years.

As a consequence, there became a pressing need for somewhere to permanently display an ever-growing collection. A location was chosen in Faulkner Park, and the City of Belmont constructed a purpose-built museum for the Historical Society. This bicentennial project was officially opened on 29 October 1988.

With an extensive and continually growing collection of exhibits, school children could try their hand at pioneer activities, such as butter churning, washing with a tub, or writing with old ink pens.

Recently, the Council was handed a number of 'Hampton's Cheeses'. These were large slices of jarrah cut by convicts to make Belmont's roads in the 1860s, and now form a major attraction for visitors to the Museum.

Belmont Museum display

Belmont Museum – Construction: 1988

Belmont Council

A *Government Gazette* notice on 9 December 1898 signalled the formation of the Belmont Road Board. Six months later, a meeting at Belmont Primary School elected John Handran Smith the first Chairman.

However, the Board's first decade was frustrating. Repeated attempts to get better transport for Belmont failed, and the area faced major drainage problems, but lacked the resources to deal with this. For two decades, its main equipment was two horses with drays.

While other districts expanded, Belmont remained a rural area with a tiny population.

Since the Board owned no public amenities, in 1900 it purchased a small block on the corner Hehir Street and the Guildford Road (later called Great Eastern Highway). A hall was erected there in 1902, with the Board's offices added in 1905.

The system of wards was not introduced until 1909, when the district was divided into West, Central and East Wards. The East Ward extended from Epsom Avenue, the Central Ward stretched from Epsom Avenue to Abernethy Road and the West Ward from Abernethy Road.

Perth's sewerage system, with settling ponds on Burswood Island, brought unbearable odours to the residents of Burswood. An attractive suburb overlooking the river was now associated with sewerage. Complaints to Perth Council came to nothing, so the next best thing was to change the suburb's name. Residents decided on Riversdale, but the Board, after some delay, eventually decided that 'Rivervale' was a better label.

In the Depression of the late 1920s, thousands were out of work. The Board helped by putting men to work constructing a footpath along Guildford Road. Another group was given the task of painting and renovating the Board's hall on the corner of Hehir Street and the Great Eastern Highway.

John Handran Smith - First Chairman of the Belmont Roads Board

Belmont Hall with original facade, Roads Board first truck c. 1925

Towards the end of WWII the first real signs of development started to appear. An increase in building activity—mainly by the State Housing Commission—meant that the Board's solitary truck was overworked. In 1945, a second small truck was procured, and in 1947 a grader was purchased, another sign of development.

In 1960 the Road Board became the Shire of Belmont, and by 1964 it was apparent that the small chambers attached to the Great Eastern Highway hall were inadequate. New premises alongside the hall were planned, but ratepayers demanded a more central location.

A central Abernethy Road site was acquired, and a library and pool erected in 1971. The Ruth Faulkner Library and Bart Clayden Aquatic Centre were named in honour of long-serving councillors. The War Memorial was moved from Grove Farm to a spot between the library and pool.

The Ascot Water Playground, which was built under the Labor Government's 'Red Scheme' for the long-term unemployed, helped attract many visitors from outside the district. It also proved immensely popular with the locals.

A new Administration Centre was completed in 1978, although not officially opened until February the following year, when Belmont gained City status. The building, costing $1,372,000 to construct, was built on land originally owned by Stephen Craig. It was financed by the sale of a shopping centre

Belmont Park Road Board

block in Abernethy Road and, although there was some trouble in finding a buyer, the Board's original Great Eastern Highway buildings were eventually purchased by St John Ambulance.

BELMONT COUNCIL FIRSTS

Road Board Chairman
John Handran Smith (1899)

Shire President Paddy Faulkner (1961)

Female Councillor Ruth Faulkner (1968)

City Mayor Fred Rae (1979)

Female Mayor Peg Parkin (1987)

Fred Rae, Belmont's first mayor, and councillors. At the right is Peg Parkin, later to be Belmont's first female mayor: 1987-94 photo c.1979

Ruth Faulkner Library

As well as being the first woman councillor for Belmont, Ruth Faulkner campaigned hard for a free public library system. More than 40 years later, her success can still be seen by visiting the impressive Ruth Faulkner Public Library.

Mrs Faulkner brought up her children in Belmont, and found that the closest library was in Perth, where you had to pay to be a member.

In April 1970, Belmont ratepayers went to the polling booths to decide whether the Council should obtain a loan of $200,000 to build a new library. Fortunately, they voted yes, and the Library was officially opened on 3 July 1971 by the Member for Swan, Adrian Bennett.

Apart from a minor face lift to the front of the library and a few cosmetic changes inside, the building is structurally the same as it was when it opened its doors.

Designed by architects Forbes and Fitzhardinge, the library was an example of the very best in modern functional architectural design. It was also the biggest municipal library in Western Australia with a stock of 37,000 volumes of fiction and non-fiction materials.

Ruth Faulkner Library was also the first in the State to install an automated borrowing system. This meant that books borrowed were recorded, and the system could automatically determine when they became overdue.

Today the Ruth Faulkner Library welcomes more than 160,000 visitors annually and has a collection of more than 55,000 items.

Ruth Faulkner, now in her 80s, was the guest of honour at the Library's 40th birthday party in 2011.

"It's an amazing place for the community to come together," said Mrs Faulkner, "especially the children. Children must love books at an early age so it can help them learn and they have this lovely library to help them."

Ruth Faulkner at the site of the library which will bear her name: 1970

School Children at Belmont Public Library: 1979

St John of God Hospital

Hill 60

St John of God Hospital, Rivervale

The history of St John of God Hospital, Belmont, starts in 1934 when the Sisters of St John of God acquired a large property of five acres, which extended to the Swan River and contained a large house built around 1911-12. This house, known as 'Hill 60', was purchased from Donald Curtis, a well-known Perth businessman. When Curtis returned to Rivervale after living in Sydney, his next home was called Keer Weer and this was also sold to the Sisters to become part of the hospital complex.

At the beginning, only six Sisters worked at Hill 60. During the first two years, they had no accommodation within the house, since all the available space was used for the hospital. Instead they lived in the stables and the outbuildings next door.

It was quickly discovered that the home was too small and plans were drawn up for new buildings. When completed, the original plans were very extensive. However, funds were not readily available and only a section of the magnificently envisaged hospital could be realised at first.

After 1936, many improvements took place on the site, but the original Hill 60 was retained. Major extensions were completed in 1959, and an additional hospital wing was opened in 1969. The suite of operating theatres is said to have seen the first brain surgery ever conducted in Western Australia.

The buildings were eventually converted to facilities for looking after elderly people, but changes in hospital regulations forced the hostel to close in 1984. The building was subsequently used as a lecture and conference centre.

The building underwent superficial changes in 1989 when it was altered to accommodate the Fatima Medicentre.

In 1996, the Sisters sold the hospital as part of a facility rationalisation programme. A new hospital was constructed at Murdoch and the Subiaco hospital further developed, and most of the St John of God buildings were eventually demolished.

Educating Belmont

Although some schooling had taken place in private homes, the first State School in the district was Belmont Primary School in 1897.

At the start of the 20th century, the increase in the area's population caused the Education Department to add to the number of schools in the area. Burswood School, a two-room building, was built up the hill from the main road, just over the Burswood Railway crossing. A small one-room school, Redcliffe, was erected in Fauntelroy Avenue in 1908. Kewdale and Carlisle Primary Schools followed in 1915 and 1919.

Another small school was added in the Ascot Estate to cater for the State Housing Commission homes. Originally named Dunreath in 1952, it had to be dramatically extended soon afterwards and by 1958 had changed its name to Belmay Primary.

Development in the Kewdale area resulted in the relocation of Kewdale Primary in 1953. And increased housing in Rivervale saw the need for Tranby Primary about the same time.

All schools in the district were now catering for many pupils, and residents began pressing for a high school. For more than 50 years, pupils seeking education above primary level had been forced to journey to Perth Boys School, Perth Girls School or Perth Technical College.

The demands of the local community were heard and Belmont High School was officially opened in 1957.

Further development at Cloverdale resulted in the need for a further two primary schools: Cloverdale Primary School in 1961 and Whiteside Primary in 1964.

Eight years after the opening of the first secondary school, yet more development was met by the construction of Kewdale High School. Both secondary schools later became Senior High Schools.

By 1980, Belmont High School was in desperate need of new buildings to replace the ones constructed in fibrocement. Meetings were held, and the drama teacher wrote a play about the situation. Local politician's Mal Bryce and Fred McKenzie finally forced the Government to commit to rebuilding the school by dropping a white-ant infested beam on the table in Parliament. Work commenced in 1982.
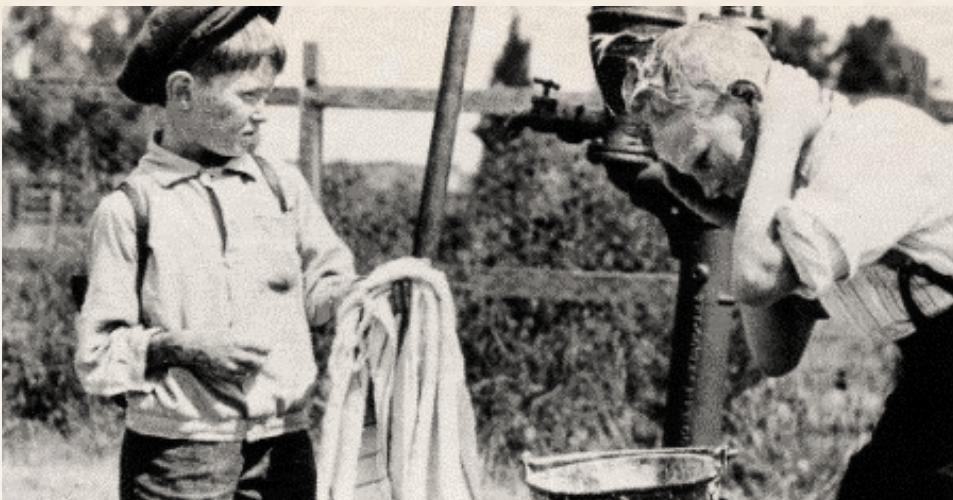
Declining numbers in the late 1990s meant Kewdale Senior High was proposed for closure. An unpopular move with local residents, they vigorously campaigned to save their small school.

Nonetheless, Kewdale and Belmont were to amalgamate on the Belmont site to form Belmont City College in 2000.

Tree planting at St Augustine's School 1970's.

SCHOOL	SUBURB	EST.	NOTES
Belmont Primary	Belmont	1897	
Rivervale Primary	Rivervale	1907	Called Burswood Primary until 1923, closed 1990
Redcliffe Primary	Redcliffe	1908	
Kewdale Primary	Kewdale	1915	Called South Belmont until 1951
St Anne's	Belmont	1915	Closed 1967
Carlisle Primary	Kewdale	1919	
Belmay Primary	Cloverdale	1952	Called Dunreath Primary until 1958
St Augustine's Primary	Rivervale	1952	Established by Sisters of Mercy
Tranby Primary	Rivervale	1954	
St Maria Gareth's Catholic School	Redcliffe	1956	Established by Marist Fathers
Belmont Senior High	Belmont	1957	Became Belmont City College in 2000
Notre Dame Catholic Primary	Cloverdale	1960	Merged with Holy Nomed School, Carlisle, 2010
Cloverdale Primary	Cloverdale	1961	Formerly Fisher Street Primary
Whiteside Primary	Cloverdale	1964	Amalgamated with Cloverdale Primary 1998
Kewdale Senior High	Kewdale	1965	Closed Dec 1999, merged with Belmont SHS to become Belmont City College in 2000
Australian Islamic College	Kewdale	1986	Acquired Kewdale SHS campus in 2000
Belmont City College	Belmont	2000	Result of a merger of Kewdale and Belmont Senior High Schools

Pump, Belmont School

Redcliffe School: 1918

Pupils at St Augustine's School, Rivervale

Extracts from Belmont School Journal, the first decade

May 1908 — Diphtheria very bad. Attendance very poor to the end of June.

February 1909 — Progress fair, but the children's attitude is improving. The library is in full swing.

September 1909 — Garden desecrated by wandering cattle.

May 1910 — Day of mourning for the Kemp child burial.

August 1910 — Cows again completely destroyed gardens.

January 1911 — Average attendance 69. The children are generally well-behaved and teachable, but not keen on work.

September 1916 — Half holiday. Soldiers are marching through Perth.

July 1917 — School needs repairs. The drainage is very bad and there is a lot of water under the floor. The toilets are in a poor state.

October 1917 — Blackboards, consisting of paint on the walls, have been finished.

November 1918 — School closed owing to Germany having signed an Armistice with the Allies. Celebrations held at Hardey Park.

Original Redcliffe School

Emergency Services

Since 1897 Belmont had been part of the Victoria Park police district and, although numbers grew from one policeman to two by 1921, one was needed at the station. This left one officer to patrol all of Victoria Park and Belmont. Residents of both districts complained of crime levels and pleaded for protection. However, is was not until the early 1930s Belmont obtained its own police station in a house on Great Eastern Highway.

The small building had to serve the community until it was replaced in 1950 by a purpose-built station on the corner of Hardey Road and Great Eastern Highway. This had two cells and a charge room, along with living quarters. The present station on Abernethy Road was constructed in 1997.

In 1944, the Commonwealth Government constructed an underground communications centre between Epsom Avenue and Leake Street. Radar and signals equipment were installed there. Known as the 'Belmont Bunker', today it remains in use by the State Emergency Services, and is State heritage listed.

HOUSE RAZED BY FIRE: NO WATER FOR FIREMEN

Owing to no water supply being available, and the strong grip flames had, firemen called to Belmont yesterday afternoon could only stand helplessly by and watch a house, valued at several hundreds of pounds, burn to the ground.

The Central Fire Brigade received a call from Dairy Road, Belmont, about 2.50 p.m., and when an engine arrived there a four-roomed weatherboard house, the property of Mr. P. Doherty, was blazing.
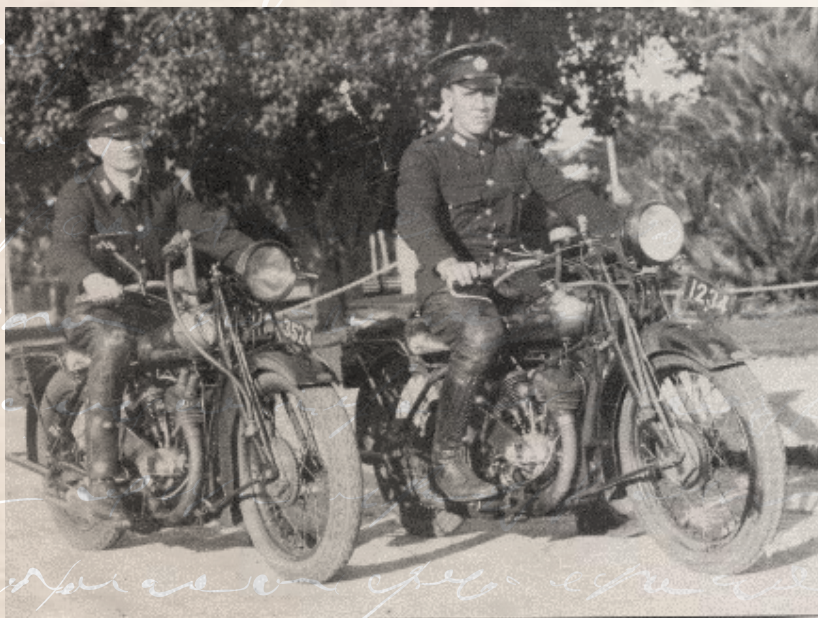
The Victoria Park brigade was also summoned.

Efforts were made to obtain water, but without success.

Firemen realised that it was hopeless to endeavour to extinguish the fire without water, as the fire had a strong hold.

After they had taken steps to see that the adjacent property was protected, firemen watched the blaze.

Sunday Times, 5 February 1939

Constables Fraser and Fletcher, Constable Fraser was stationed at Belmont c.1926

Belmont Police Station, opposite St John Hospital, Great Eastern Highway c.1931

References

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p. 4: All Saints Church: A. Spalding, 'The Anglican Church in Belmont', *Looking Back* (Belmont Historical Society, 1983); A. Spalding, 'Anglican Church in Rivervale', *Looking Back*; V. Hurd, 'All Saints Church of England, Belmont', *Looking Back; West Australian*, 4 September 1906. West Australian, 8 September 1906. *West Australian*, 6 November 1906; Maxine Laurie, *Ever Flowing Forward: The Story of Belmont* (City of Belmont, 1999); John Hartley Downey, 'A history of the Belmont District' (unpublished, 1973)

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p. 7: Museum: Laurie, *Ever Flowing Forward*; Eddie Marcus, Report for City of Belmont (2011)

pp. 8-9: Belmont Council: Downey, 'Belmont District'; Laurie, *Ever Flowing Forward; West Australian*, 14 August 1905; *West Australian*, 18 August 1902; A. L. McGrath, 'Perth Sewerage and the Burswood Filterbeds', *Memories of Belmont*; F. Wilson, 'Belmont Roads Board', *Memories of Belmont*, Vol. 2

p. 10 Ruth Faulkner Library: *West Australian*, 26 July 2011; Information provided by City of Belmont for 40th anniversary of Ruth Faulker Library; Laurie, *Ever Flowing Forward*

p. 11: St John of God: Downey, 'Belmont District'; Laurie, *Ever Flowing Forward*; A. Marshall, 'St John of God Hospital, Belmont', *Memories of Belmont*, Vol. 2

pp. 12-13: Schools: Western Australian Parliamentary Debates, Legislative Assembly, 21 May 1998; Laurie, *Ever Flowing Forward*; Belmont School Journal: 'Extracts from the Belmont School Journal, 1908-1928', *Memories of Belmont*; M. Newey, 'Some Recollections of Rivervale State School', *Memories of Belmont*, Vol. 2; Education Department of Western Australia, Schools Online

p. 14: Emergency Services: Laurie, *Ever Flowing Forward, West Australian*, 30 July 1935, *Daily News*, 7 December 1949, City of Belmont Municipal Heritage Inventory; House razed by fire: *Sunday Times*, 5 February 1939; *Daily News*, 7 December 1949.

Images (in order as shown in book)

p. 2: St Columban's, which overlooks Cracknell Park, has served as both a convalescent home and as a home for retired priests, 1975: City of Belmont S019-19

p. 3: Pavement construction in Belmont, c 1970's: City of Belmont M0337-04

p. 4: All Saints Church: *Krantz & Sheldon, plans for All Saints Church, Cloverdale* (State Library of Western Australia 7092A 1373 19)

p. 5: Congregational Church Interior: City of Belmont M0049-03; Exterior: City of Belmont M0210-01; Sign: City of Belmont M0049-15

p. 6: St Anne's: City of Belmont M0214-03

p. 7: Museum: City of Belmont M0364-01, M0381-08

pp. 8-9: Belmont Hall: City of Belmont M0424-01; Handran Smith: City of Belmont M0195-01; Road Board: City of Belmont M0018-01; Fred Rae & Peg Parkin: City of Belmont M0342-01

p. 10: Library: City of Belmont M0411-01; School Children at Ruth Faulkner Public Library, 1970's: City of Belmont M0190-03

p. 11: Hill 60: M0173-01; St John of God: City of Belmont M0061-01

pp. 12-13: Tree planting at St Augustine's School 1970's; Pump: City of Belmont M0055-01; Original Redcliffe School: City of Belmont M0187-02; St Augustine's: City of Belmont M0237-02; Redcliff School, 1918: City of Belmont M0097-01

p. 14: Fraser & Fletcher: City of Belmont M0429-01; Belmont Police Station: City of Belmont M0430-01

Front Cover Images (top and bottom)

St Anne's: City of Belmont M0214-03

Children at Ruth Faulkner Public Library, 1970's

Back Cover Image

Belmont Hall: City of Belmont M0424-01

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