

A history of BELMONT



Belmont was originally part of a land grant assigned to Captain Francis Henry Byrne in 1831. It is believed to have been named after Byrne's estate in England. The land was purchased by Shepherd Smith of Sydney in 1882, who subdivided it in 1897–98. The suburb was known as Belmont Park until being renamed in 1968.

Today, the suburb is mixed-use in character. The western part of the suburb is primarily industrial and commercial,

while the east and north are more residential, with various motels and other accommodation along Great Eastern Highway which forms the suburb's north-western boundary. It contains two public schools—Belmont Primary School, and Belmont City College (formerly Belmont Senior High School)—as well as Centenary Park, Signal Hill Bushland, the Belgravia Residential Estate and a 500-metre section on the south bank of the Swan River.



Aerial image taken in 1953.

Cover image: O'Rourke Delicatessen. Location Great Eastern Highway 1962

For tens of thousands of years, the area now known as Belmont was inhabited by the Noongar Whadjuk People. They knew the Swan River as the Derbal Yerrigan, and the strong connection with Noongar Boodja (Noongar land) remains significant to Aboriginal people today.

1829 Marks the beginning of the Swan River Colony with the arrival of the *Parmelia*, carrying Governor James Stirling and the first settlers

1830 John Wall Hardey arrives on the *Tranby*

1831 Captain Francis Henry Byrne obtains land and calls it Belmont after his estate back in England

1835 John Wall Hardey buys *Grove Farm* in Belmont, but leases it to tenants until 1843

1843 John Wall Hardey moves from York to *Grove Farm*

1892 Gold Rush increases need for housing. Poultry farms, dairies, piggeries and Chinese market gardens spring up in Belmont

1895 First Belmont Hall constructed on Guildford Road (later renamed Great Eastern Highway)

1897 Belmont School, the first state school in the district opens at the Belmont Hall which turns out to be an unsuitable venue

1898 Construction of Belmont Primary School

1899 First elections for the new Belmont Road Board (an early form of Council)

1902 New Belmont Hall constructed on Guildford Road

1905 Horse-drawn bus service between Belmont and Perth. Replaced with a motor omnibus by 1914

1935 Guildford Road changes name to Great Eastern Highway

1938 Belmont Park Tennis Club opens, with gravel courts located beside the Belmont Road Board Hall on Great Eastern Highway

1939 Signal Hill is used to communicate with military aircraft coming into Guildford Aerodrome, (renamed Perth International Airport in 1952)

1951 State Energy Commission (SEC) starts acquiring land between Belgravia and Daly Streets for a depot

1957 Opening of Belmont Senior High School

1960 Belmont Road Board becomes the Shire of Belmont

1968 The suburb of Belmont Park renamed Belmont

1979 Belmont becomes a City and the Council moved offices from Great Eastern Highway to Wright Street, Cloverdale

1992 Local campaign saves Signal Hill for a natural bush reserve

2000 Belmont Senior High School becomes Belmont City College

2001 SEC Depot cleared for development of Belgravia Estate

1829 – 1902

1905 – 2001



Belmont Primary School (n.d. [1930s] M0031-08)

Marbles and movies

Although it took five years, by 1928 the Parents and Citizens Association at Belmont Primary School had raised more than six hundred pounds to improve the school and its grounds.

This enabled the school to obtain a player piano and rolls, a gramophone and records, a sewing machine, library books, 35 pictures, a cement cricket pitch, a tennis court, two swings, sporting equipment and two cupboards. Of particular note was the concreting of a small area so the pupils could play their favourite game - marbles.

The pupils themselves cleared and levelled the playground, then planted grass so they could play cricket, football, and tennis.

There was enough money left over to buy a movie projector, which was to show educational films during school hours. The headmaster had the foresight to sometimes use the projector to show pictures to entertain the public. This let the school raise much-needed funds, and to fund raise for charities.

The headmaster asked the Belmont Road Board if they could use Belmont Hall for free, to show their evening movies. The Council was so delighted with what the school had achieved, they decided to have a projection room constructed in the hall. However, they turned down the request for free use of the hall, saying it would not be fair to professional companies who also wanted to show films.

Taking bantams on the bus

An early settler on Belgravia Street, Mrs N. Wilson, recalls her early life there:

"Dad purchased the land and built a little camp on it. This camp was constructed mainly of white-washed hessian bags. As it turned out later, the camp was right in the middle of the block. This was in 1912.

I recall there was a house further on from us. That was Mrs Klump's place at the corner of Fulham and Belgravia Streets. They had a poultry farm. Then about eighteen months later, people by the name of Elliott came to live on the corner of Belgravia Street and Alexander Road, just across from our place. They also ran a big poultry farm.

Prior to the bus service to Belmont, we used to walk down to the Belmont Railway Station to go to Perth. Which, needless to say, was very seldom. One of the first times I recall actually travelling across the Causeway was when my mother had taken my sister and myself to Perth and she bought us each a bantam hen. We carried the hens home on the bus, not even in a box.

My father also worked for Stephen Craig at one time. I recall helping him pick tomatoes at Craig's Swamp, now known as Tomato Lake. Craig's poultry farm was where the Belmont High School is now located.

Now the district has changed dramatically."



Sutton's farm on Belgravia Street. Identity of child unknown. (1927, M0109-03)

The Bunker



Interior of The Bunker, now SES training centre (2014, courtesy of Department of Fire and Emergency Services DFES)

The Fire and Emergency Services Complex is located at 91 Leake Street, Belmont. The site includes a large underground building affectionately known locally as 'The Bunker', which was built in 1944 during World War II.

The RAAF's 6 Fighter Sector HQ was originally based in a Masonic Hall in Mt. Lawley. Using radars erected around Perth this was a secure location where aircraft and ship movements could be tracked using symbols on a large map. In March 1944, the 6 Fighter Sector HQ was renamed 106 Fighter Control Unit and in January 1945 it moved into the new underground bunker in Belmont.

The Bunker was used by the Civil Defence as a headquarters until its name changed to State Emergency Service (SES) in 1959.

The Bunker was the operational centre for controlling the response to all natural disasters in Western Australia from the mid-1970s until 2010. In March 1999, the Bunker was manned continuously whilst Cyclone Vance devastated Exmouth and Cyclone Elaine flooded Moora. During major natural disasters, the Bunker was often visited by leading politicians including the Premier and Minister for Emergency Services.

After the new Perth Fire Station was opened in 2010, the Bunker's State Emergency Service was relocated from Belmont to the Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) HQ in Hay Street, Perth. Today the Bunker is used by the SES as a centre for carrying out training and exercises.



E. F. & W. V. O'Rourke Delicatessen (Great Eastern Highway, 1962)

Did you know...

If you live in Belmont, you'll probably know many of the road names and those of the parks. But do you know the history behind those names?

Hardey Road: Once called Hardey's Road, John Wall Hardey arrived aboard the *Tranby* in 1830, accompanied by his brother, Joseph. John became a leader in the community, and had a significant influence on the development of Belmont.

Hehir Street: Daniel Hehir was a jockey in 1910, and a trainer by 1913. He also served as a Belmont Councillor from 1900-1904 and 1907-1908.

Leake Street: George Leake arrived in the colony in 1829 and became a prominent man as the original Director of the W.A. Bank in 1837. His nephew (also George) was Chairman of the Western Australian Turf Club from 1899 – 1901.

Signal Hill Bushland: During World War II the reserve contained large aerals used by the military to detect aircraft flights.

Williamson Avenue: Formerly called Lukehurst Street, it was renamed in 1966 in honour of Charlie Williamson who enlisted from Belmont and died of pneumonia in France in 1916.

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Mrs N. Wilson



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 please contact the Belmont Museum
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