



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WESTERN
AUSTRALIA

Western Australian Economic History Summit 2020

Writing About Co-operative Development in Western Australia:
Reflecting on *Let Our Co-operative Spirit Stand*

Bruce Baskerville

February 6th, 2020

University of Western Australia



CENTRE FOR
Western Australian History

Reflections

Our history is about more than rugged individuals.

Let Our Co-operative Spirit Stand is a window into the neglected history of co-operation and community-building in Western Australia.

Bruce Baskerville explores questions such as when the first co-operative formed in Western Australia, who were the leaders of the Westralian co-operatives movement, where did the co-operative stores once ubiquitous in country towns come from – and where did they go, what do Rochdale and Raiffeisen mean, what did co-operation have to do with developing local identities, and is Western Australia's story of co-operation in any way distinctive?

Let Our Co-operative Spirit Stand is a story of successes and failures, human ingenuity and frailties, of conflicts and curious alliances between co-operative purists and local adapters, and of the Federation they created to pursue their common aims. Engagingly written and extensively referenced, Bruce Baskerville introduces us to a movement that was once the daily lived experience of many Western Australians from all walks of life, but whose history has largely been left to gather dust.

This is a history worth knowing, for it offers insights into how our society has grappled with great changes in the recent past, and how the co-operative spirit has much to offer in a world once again in the throes of fundamental changes.



Image: Sarah Walsh

Dr Bruce Baskerville is a public historian who grew up on Western Australia's Batavia Coast with stories of Dutch shipwrecks and convict ruins, amidst the windswept awe of the Dongara sandplains and Abrolhos Islands. He has long researched the ways in which old institutions are adapted and naturalised in new places, from the Crown to building styles, shared histories to commonage systems. He has an abiding interest in communal and co-operative models of self-governance and their historical roots.

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Let Our Co-operative Spirit Stand



Let Our Co-operative Spirit Stand

A centenary history of resilience and adaptation in the Co-operative Federation of Western Australia 1919 – 2019

Bruce Baskerville
Foreword by the Hon Robert French AC

Bruce Baskerville

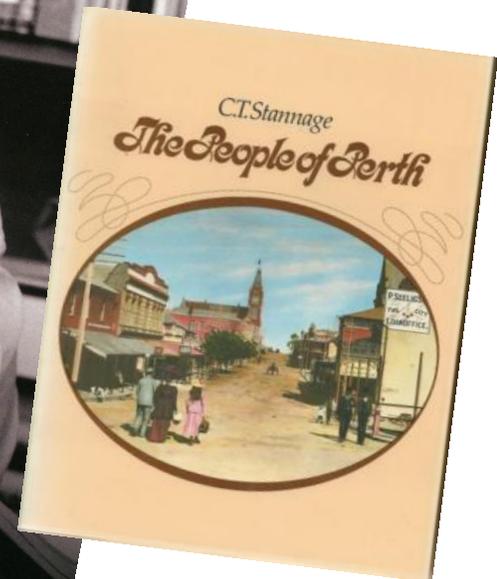
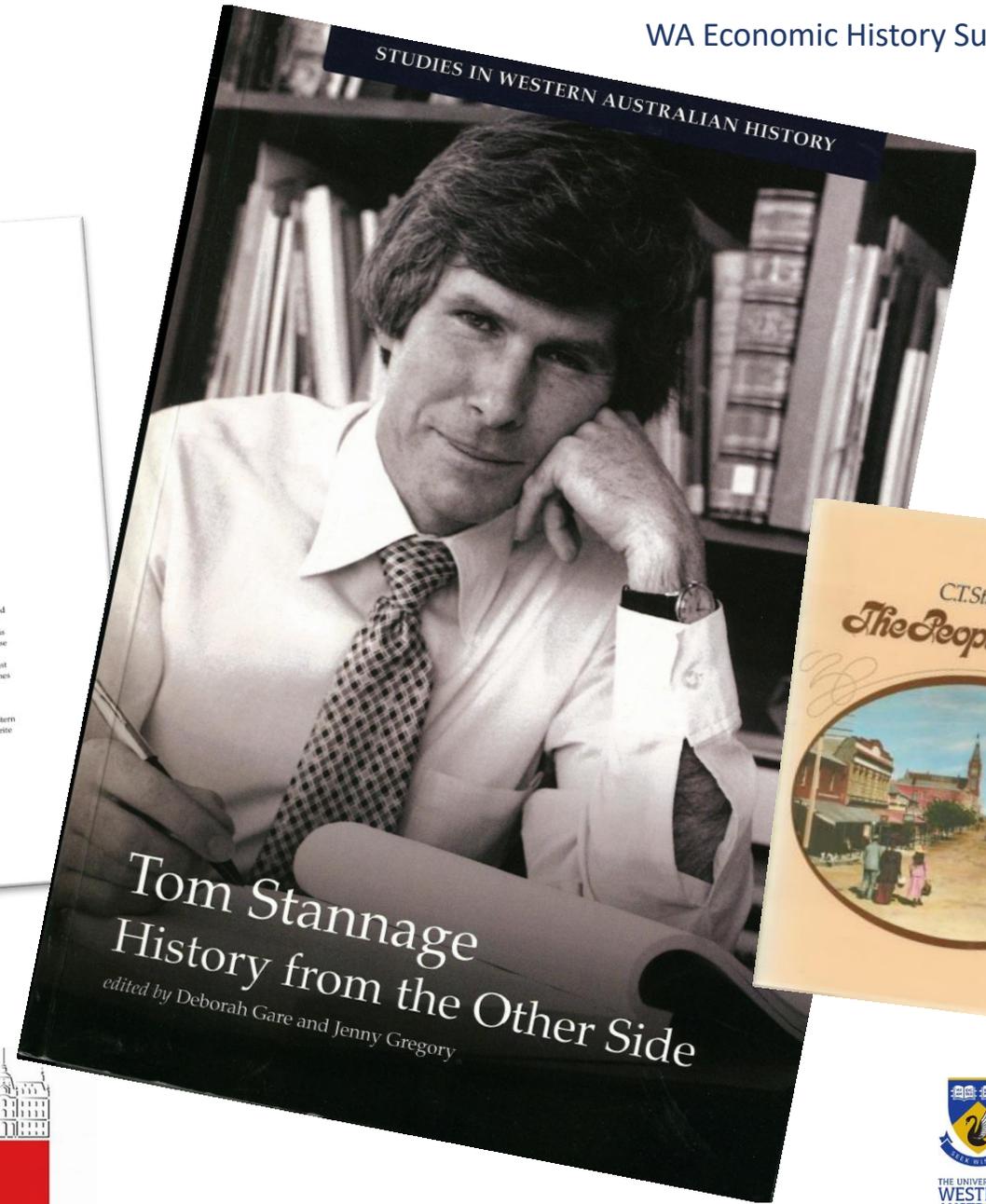
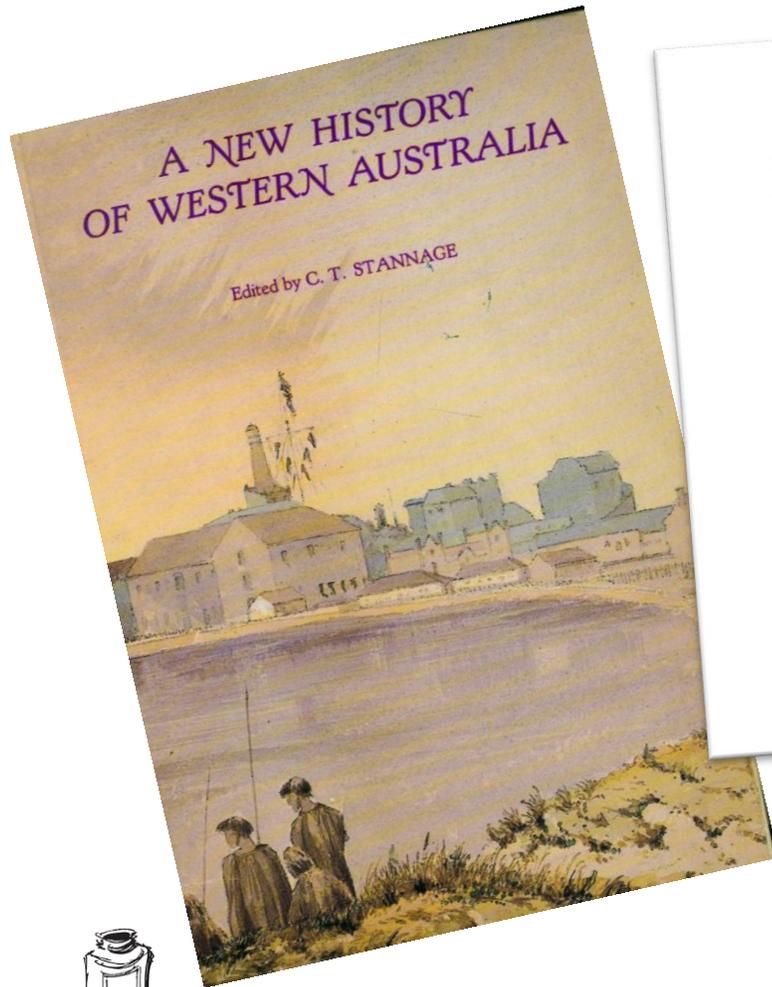


A reviewer reminisces

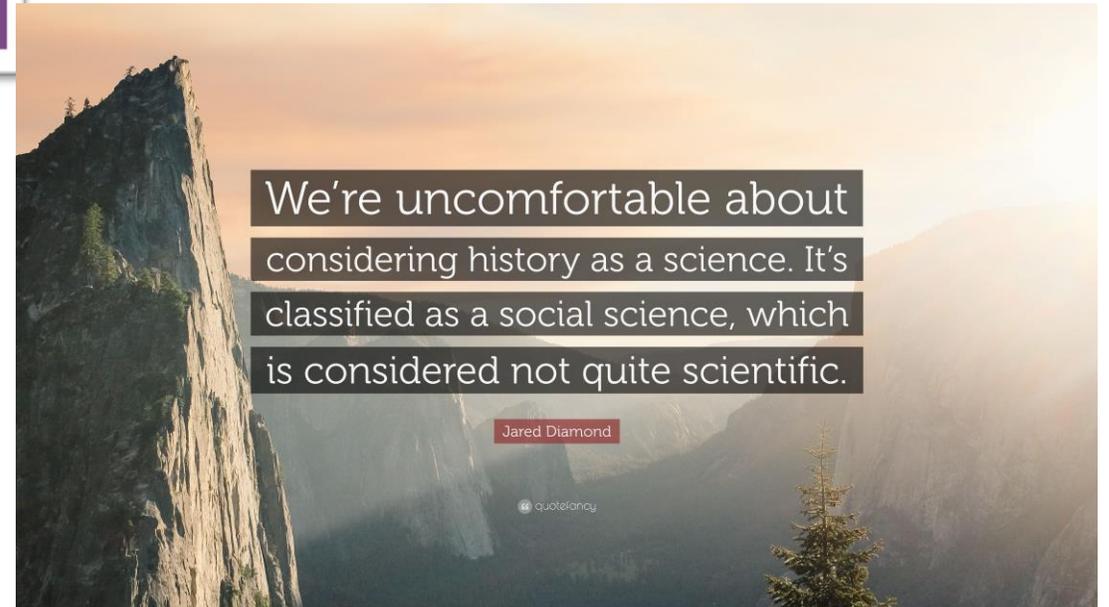
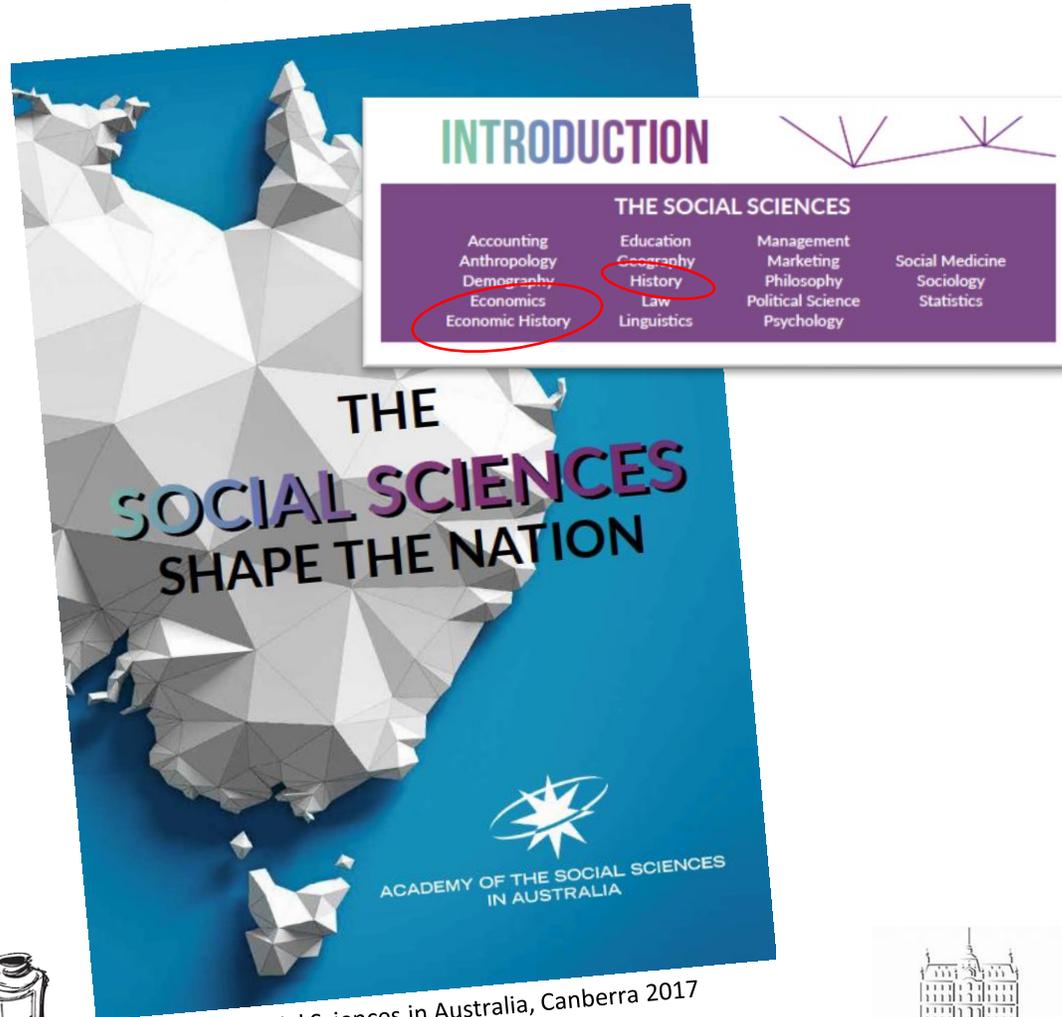


“I well remember the sights and smells of our local Co-op at Bolgart. Wooden boards on the floor, huge rounds of hard Romano cheese sitting on a counter, the shelves stacked with tins of golden syrup and other provisions not easily made or grown on the farm, glass jars of barley sugar and white rock candy with a red name visible in the centre, the hessian sacks of sugar and calico bags of flour mixed with the smells of spices and a whiff or two of polish or other non-comestible for sale. Those sugar and flour bags went on to another useful life in many a rural household. You will not find such memories within this volume.”

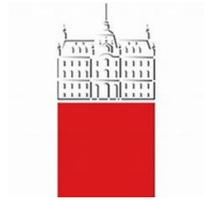
History that matters



History & Social Sciences



Jared Diamond, 'Why Did Human History Unfold Differently on Different Continents for the Last 13,000 Years?', 22 April 1997, [edge.org](https://www.edge.org/)



Causation (e.g. World War One)

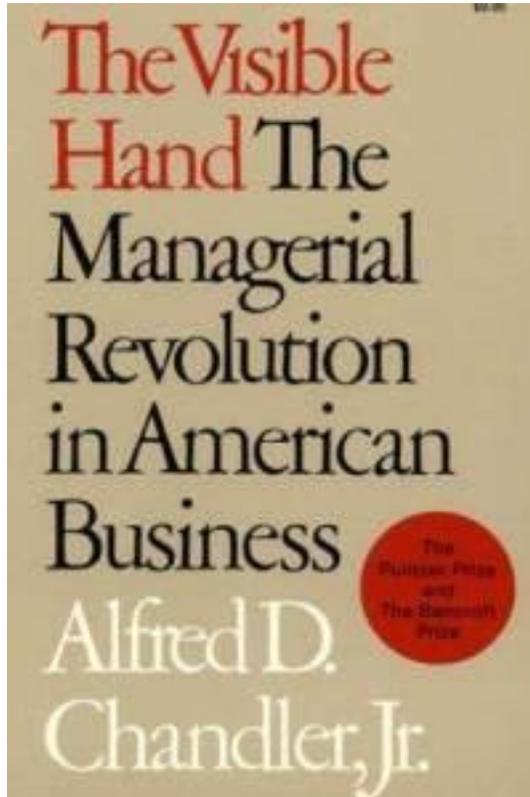


Brooklyn Daily Eagle (USA)
4 December 1912

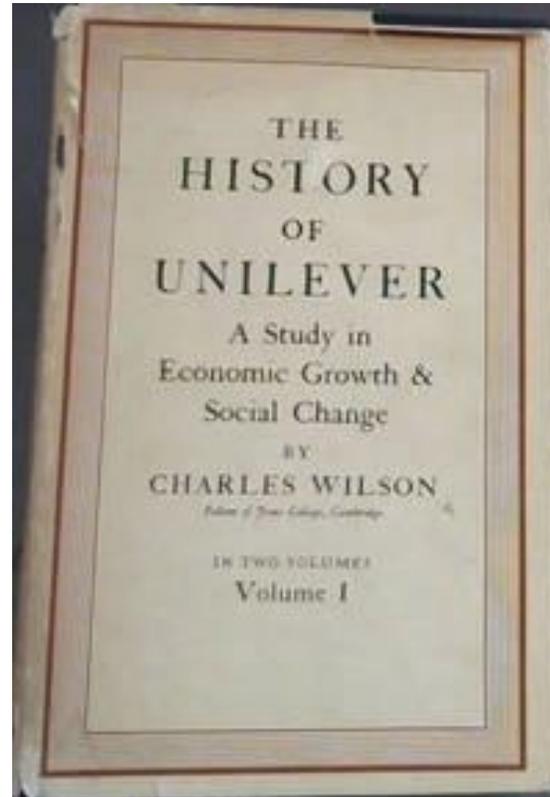


Westralian Worker
7 August 1914: 6

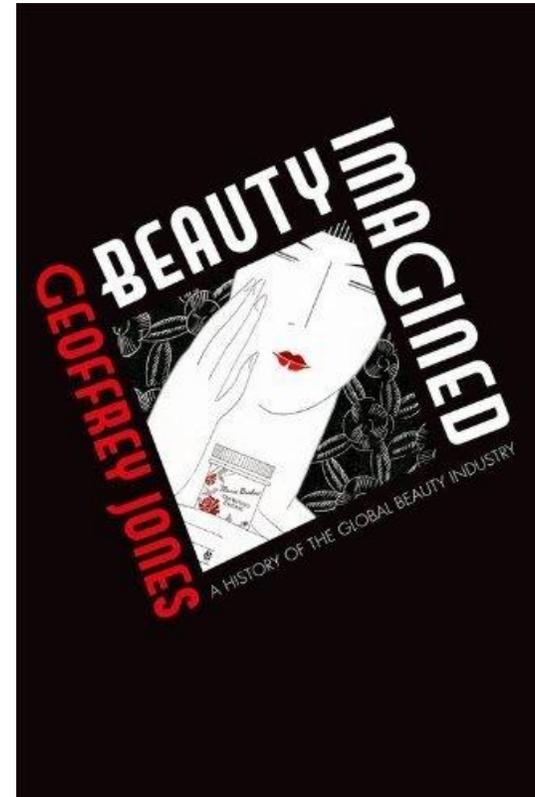
Business History 1.0



1977

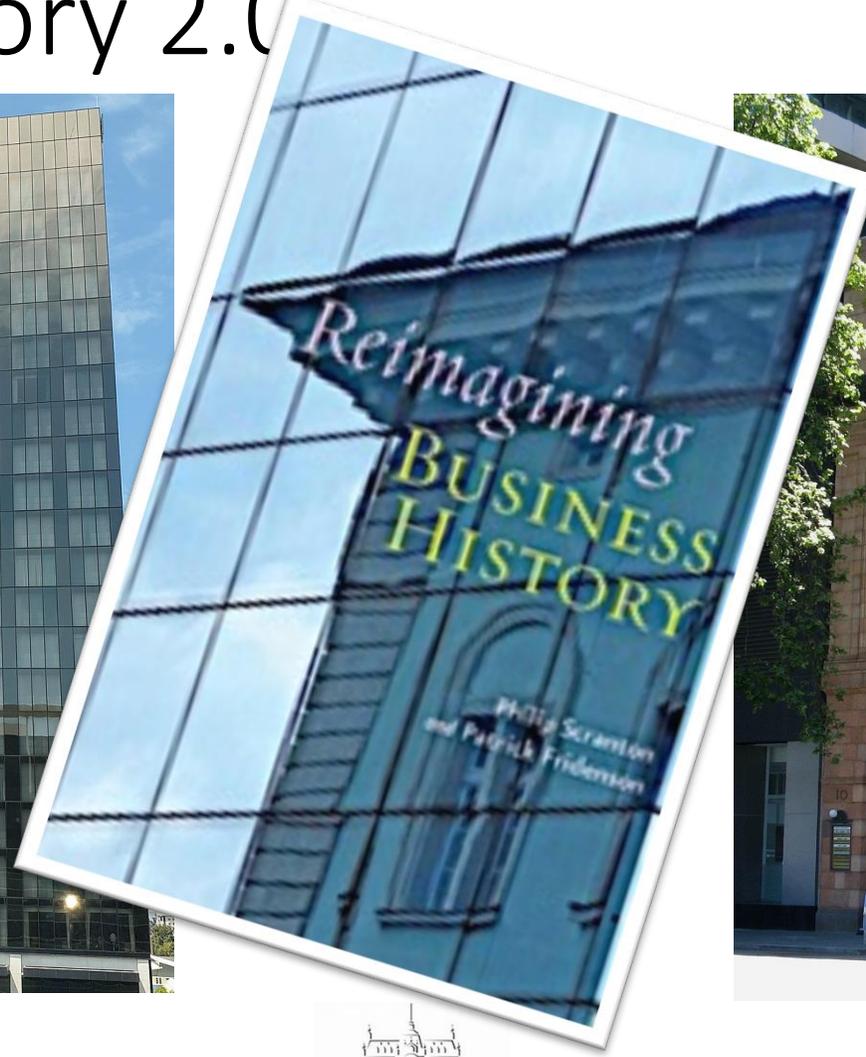


1954



2010

Business History 2.0

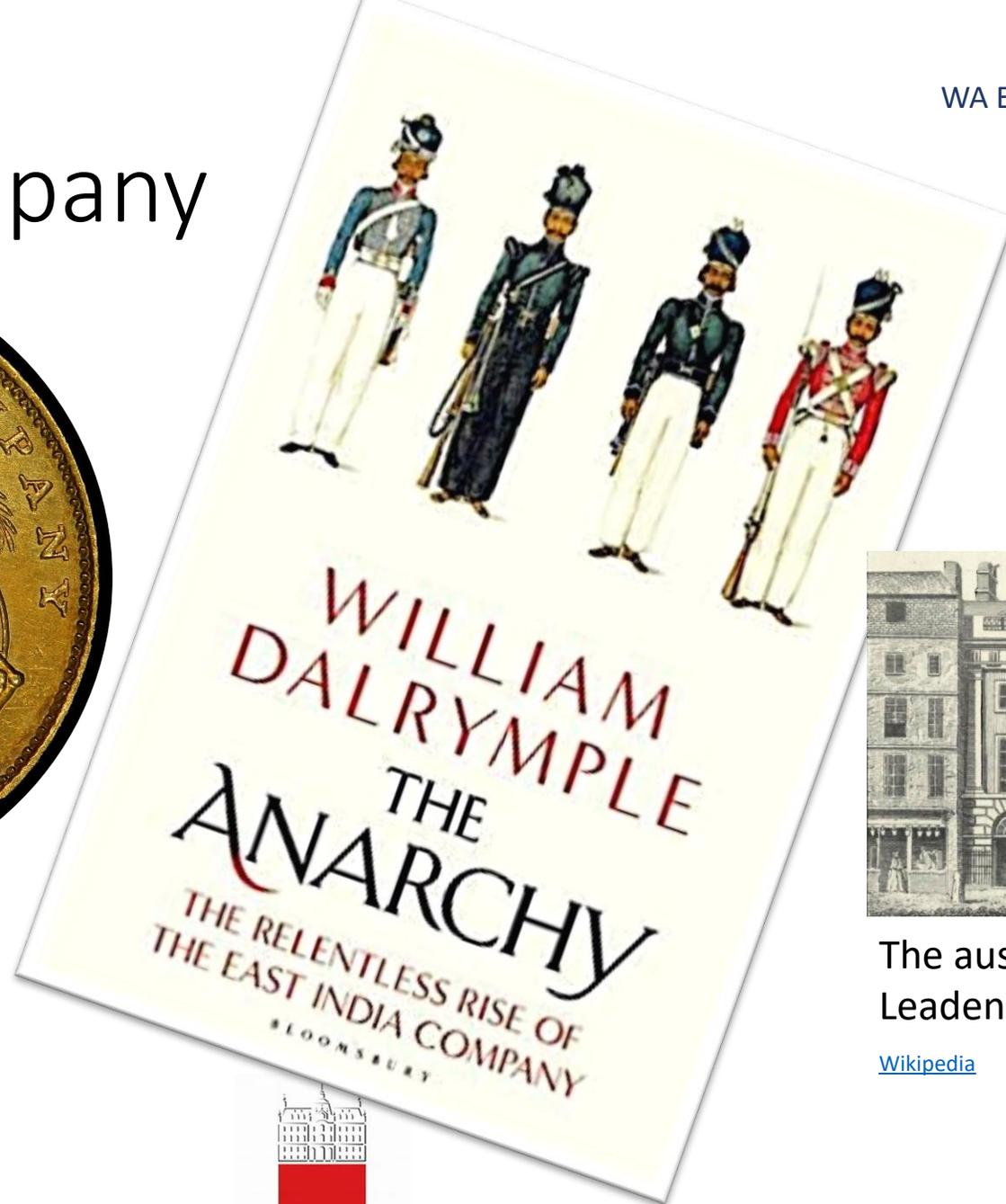


East India Company



Minting coins was one of the EIC's many profitable state-like monopolies in India

[Wikipedia](#)



The austere East India House, Leadenhall Street, London in 1766

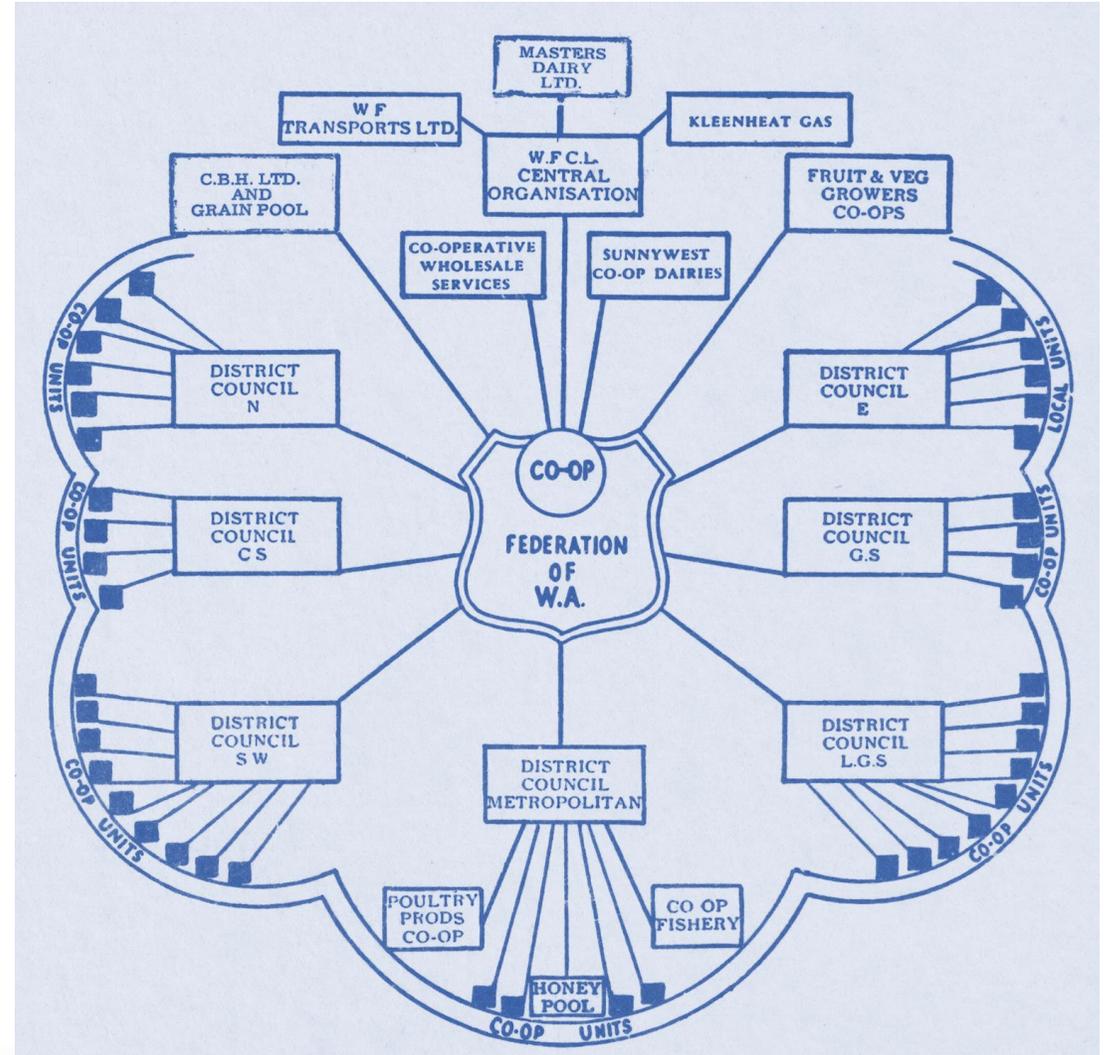
[Wikipedia](#)



Don't take at face value

Complex organisational chart of the Co-operative Federation that appeared in successive annual reports in the 1960s and 70s – but does it show how things actually operated?

CFWA AR 1966



Federation formed



Westralian Farmers' Ltd Building
SLWA b1927159

CO-OPERATION

THE FARMERS' FEDERATION

ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF DELEGATES.

AN IMPORTANT DECISION.

THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

On Tuesday afternoon last the annual conference of delegates of farmers' co-operative societies was opened at the offices of the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., in Wellington-street. About 200 delegates attended, but the proceedings were not open to the Press.

Daily News,
4 July 1919: 6

Co-ops before 1919

Victoria District Co-operative
Flour Milling Co Ltd,
Geraldton,
Registered 1908

Board of Directors,
1923



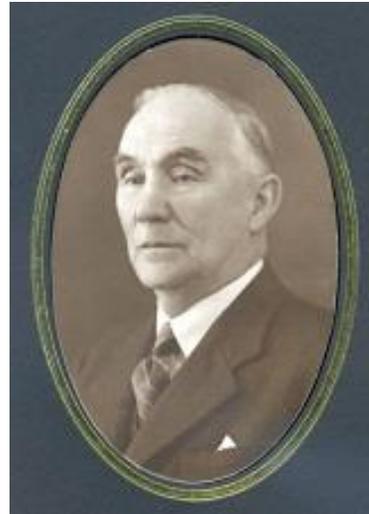
Biography & Business History

raswa.org.au



Tom Bath
1875-1956

WA Parliament
Biographical Register



WD Johnson
1870-1948

Walter Harper
1880-1895



CFWA 53rd AR, 1953



The search for new markets



Co-operatives Federation
of Western Australia
chairman
E Thorley Loton
and Mrs Loton at the
South East Asian
Co-operatives Conference,
Kuala Lumpur,
January 1958

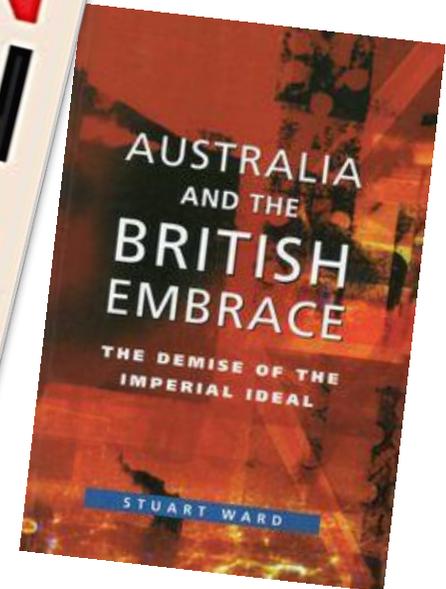
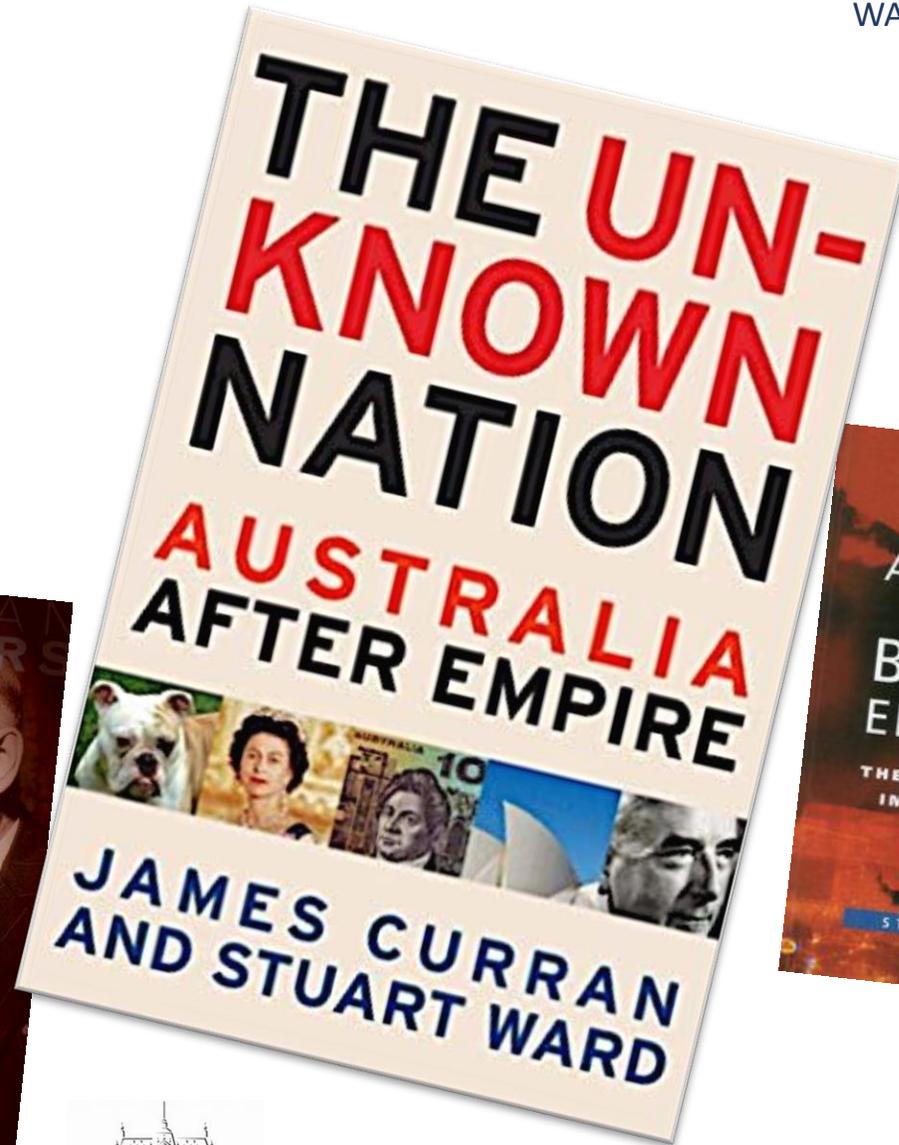
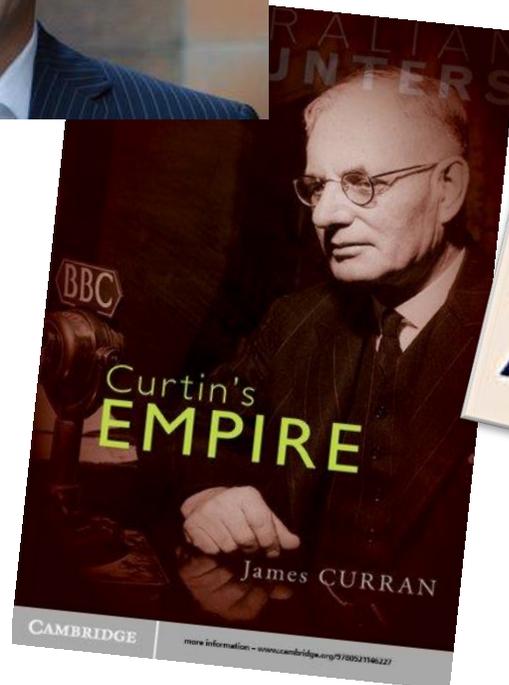
CFWA AR 1958

Left to right: Mrs. E. T. Loton, Mr. R. C. Gates (Registrar of Co-operative Societies in Union of Malaya), Miss G. F. Polley, General Secretary, International Co-operative Alliance, Shri Dat Narais Sinha (Minister for Irrigation in Government of India), Mr. E. T. Loton (Australian Delegate), Yang Anat Mulia Raja Musa, Speaker in the Parliament of Union of Malaya.

Abandonment



Professor James Curran and some of the Abandonment literature

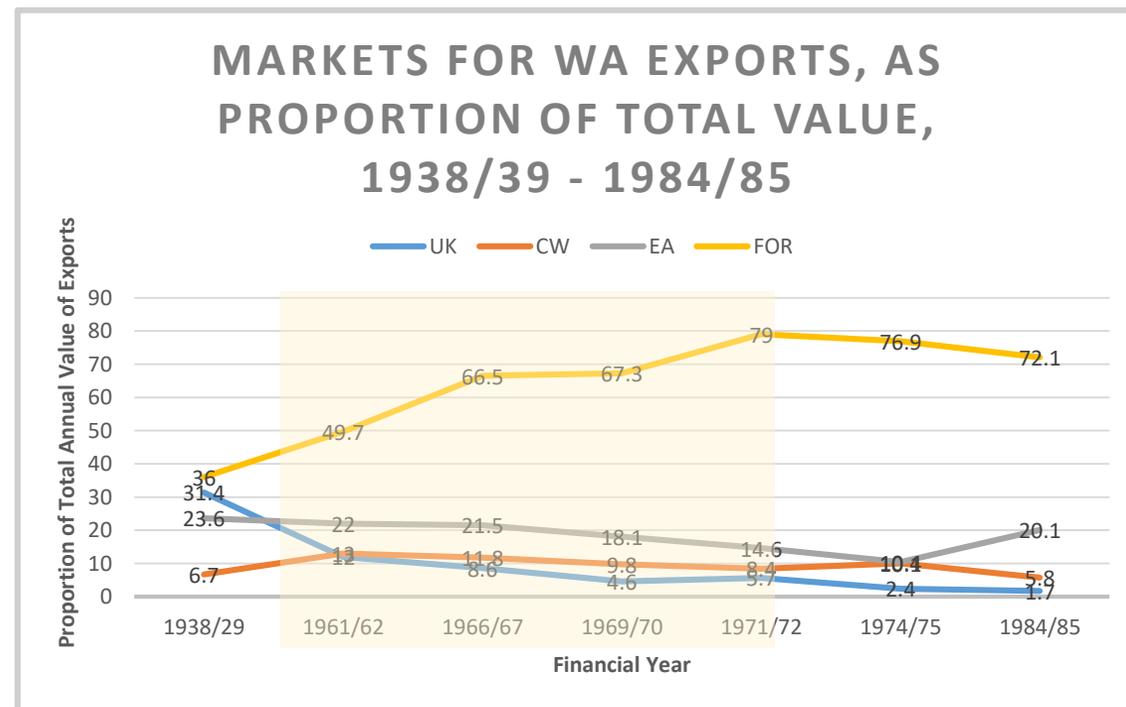


Changing pattern of WA-UK Trade, 1938-1985

Table 1 Changing markets for Western Australian exports, as a proportion of the value of total exports, 1938/39, 1961/62 – 1974/75, 1984/85¹³⁸

	1938/39	1961/62	1966/67	1969/70	1971/72	1974/75	1984/85
Britain	31.4	12.0	8.6	4.6	5.7	2.4	1.7
Commonwealth [§]	6.7	13.0	11.8	9.8	8.4	10.1	5.8
Eastern Australia	23.6	22.0	21.5	18.1	14.6	10.4	20.1
Foreign	36.0	49.7	66.5	67.3	79.0	76.9	72.1

§ not recorded as a distinct group after 1963/64 in the official Western Australian year books
 Commonwealth = mainly India, Pakistan, Malaya/sia and Singapore, Hong Kong, New Zealand
 Foreign = in 1938/39 mainly Netherlands East Indies, USA, Germany and Japan
 between 1961/62 – 1984/85, mainly Japan, USA, Middle East, China



The same data presented in a table (left) and a line chart (right): the yellow shading is the core 1961-1973 Abandonment period

Archival silences

TH Bath Memorial Library
established in 1961 by the
Co-operative Federation in the
Westralian Farmers' Ltd Building.

Lost in the 1980s



SLWA b3597904

Conclusions

Main Street, Coorow, Western Australia in 2018 –
registered in 1919, wound up in 1965, now the local museum



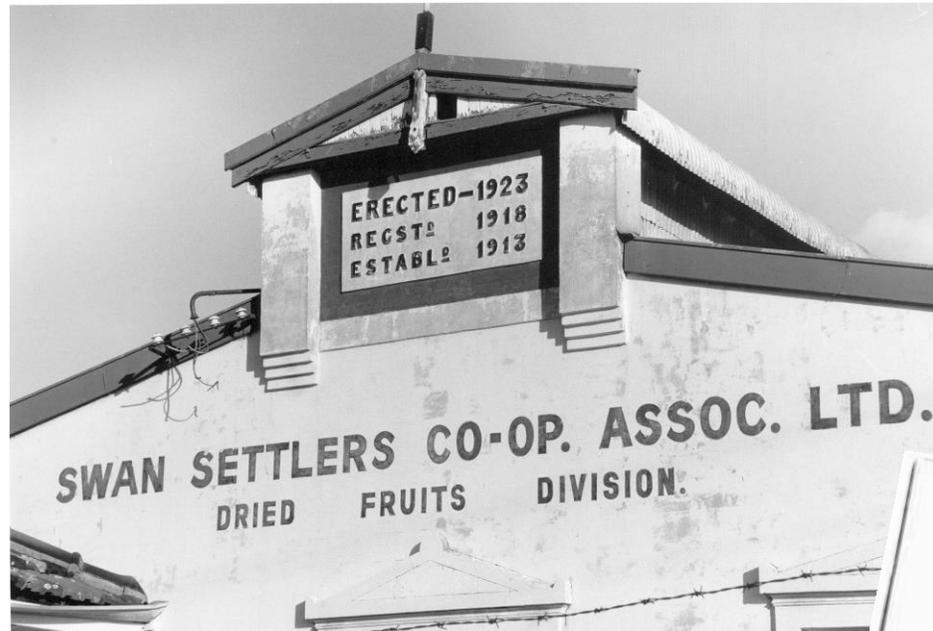
Local historical society presentations

HOUSEWIVES - - -
*Shop the Easy Way—Shop the Economical Way
 in bright and pleasant surroundings*

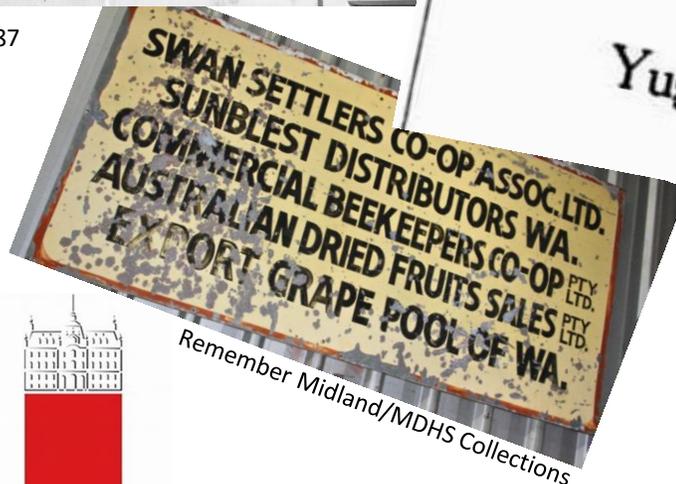


Midland-Guildford Co-op.
*gives you all these advantages and something
 more at its newly refitted*
YORK ROAD SELF SERVICE STORE

Swan Express,
17 January 1952: 3



City of Swan, Local History Collection 1987



Remember Midland/MDHS Collections

SOLDIER SETTLERS.
DIFFICULTIES DISCUSSED.

Western Mail, 3 December 1925: 2

DEHYDRATION OF FRUIT
EXPERIMENT AT UPPER SWAN.

Swan Express, 28 May 1926: 8

SUCCESSFUL IMMIGRATION.
Yugoslavs on the Swan.

West Australian, 8 March 1938: 17



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