



16th Australasian **Botanic Guides Conference**

Beauty rich and rare
Kings Park and Botanic Garden Western Australia

16 - 20 September 2019

WALK SUMMARY: A SCOUNDREL, A STATESMAN AND EDITH - Walking Guides through History.

This walk gives us a glimpse into Western Australia and Kings Park's past. We initially acknowledged the extensive period that indigenous Australians have lived in this area before focusing on a brief moment in time during the post European period, from the mid 1800 to 1900s.

We were introduced to 3 significant and very different characters through which we experienced history and their pivotal role in the development of Western Australia and Kings Park.

A Scoundrel We met one of the almost 10,000 male convicts shipped to Western Australia from Britain between 1850 and 1875. Initially settled as a free state for men and women, the early settlers had an unremitting struggle with a poor economy and lack of infrastructure in the early years. The transition into a penal colony was necessary to provide convicts for much needed labour and skills. The convict system in WA proved to be quite forward thinking and many of the convicts went on to become valued members of the Western Australian community laying the foundation stones for modern Western Australia, as we saw in our 'Scoundrel'. Most were granted a 'ticket of leave' and eventually were pardoned, leaving them free to work for an income. They were never, however allowed to return to England. The work of the convicts in Kings Park was a major contributor to the colony's economy. The effects on the appearance of the park are still evident today.

A Statesman Any reference to the early history of Western Australia would be incomplete without outlining the profound impact John Forrest had on Western Australia's enormous growth during the 50 years of his adult life as we heard during this walk.

A renowned explorer who received a knighthood for his services to exploration, John Forrest soon rose to be appointed WA's Surveyor General before entering politics and being elected unopposed in 1890 as the first Premier of Western Australia when the state was virtually bankrupt with a stagnant population growth.

His leadership skills, vision but dogged resolve was central to managing the population explosion of the late 1890s gold rush era. A time when WA's population increased by 340% over 10 years, putting enormous demands on infrastructure across this large state and at the same time creating lasting economic growth.

His foresight also ensured that Kings Park was established and it has grown to become a world renowned Botanic Garden showcasing WA's unique flora.

After 10 years serving as WA Premier, John Forrest resigned and was elected to Australia's first Federal Parliament. He served as minister in a number of portfolios including Treasurer.

Many of the legacies of the Forrest era remain to this day for all to see.

John Forrest was truly the leader for his time.

Edith Cowan Edith Cowan was extraordinary. In a time when grown women were still wearing sweet, white, floor length frocks with blue sashes, and relying on their husbands to speak for them in public - Edith was changing the world for us all.

Her ability, with the support of a wonderful husband, to overcome a tragic childhood and go where women had never been before, speaks of intelligence, integrity and perseverance.

Edith's list of achievements is immense, as a natural leader she became the first female magistrate in Australia, the first woman member of an Australian Parliament, and was awarded an OBE for her war work. As a result of just part of her massive campaigning workload, Edith and the teams she led achieved many improvements and opportunities for women and their children. The Children's Court was set up, King Edward Memorial Hospital for women was built and education for girls was considered seriously.

Edith is memorialized by the clock on the roundabout at the entrance to Kings Park, a university and her image on our \$50 note.