



Media Release

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City museum piano to be housed at historic Coogee Common

A sweet sound will accompany the highly-anticipated reopening of Coogee Hotel this March, following a donation from the City of Cockburn's Azelia Ley Museum and current descendants of the district's early European colonial families.

A handsome 1924 walnut Wertheim piano, in working order after decades of loving custodianship by local descendants of its original owners, will take pride of place at Coogee Common, on Cockburn Road.

The piano's most recent custodian, Cheryl Carvell (nee Cork) of Spearwood, and her fellow family members – including the Brenzi (originally Della Maddalena), de San Miguel, Cork and Wood clans – are descendants of Mary and William Wood, the Wertheim's original owners.

Mary and William were Cheryl's grandparents, and they had three daughters Edna (Cheryl's mother), Elvie and Phyllis, all of whom played the piano at a time when the instrument was commonplace in the family home.

The piano arrived in WA from Melbourne where it was one of 18,000 made by the famous Wertheim company between 1908 and 1935.

Mrs Carvell was given the piano in 1983 by her aunt Phyllis Miguel and it was used by her two daughters who learned to play as primary school students and then, along with other family members, enjoyed playing it for many years after.

"For the last five years the piano sat quiet and we realised it needed to be cared for in the future. We turned to Azelia Ley Museum for help," Mrs Carvell said.

"The City of Cockburn and the Historical Society of Cockburn agreed to accept it into the Azelia Ley Museum collection and as there was no room at the museum, after some negotiation with Coogee Common, we decided the piano could be housed there because of the building's historical significance."

Mrs Carvell said Miguel family members worked on the plot of land when it was a dairy, before it became a hotel in the late 1800s, as part of a tight knit community where everyone knew everyone else.



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City of Cockburn History/Museum Officer Christine Elaine said it was as a lovely story of an old piano that belonged to a family whose descendants were among local settlers from before and at the time the hotel was established more than 120 years ago, being kept in the community.

“The piano was accepted into the City’s museum collection and will now be housed at the refurbished historic hotel, a building which is finally returning to its original role as one of the area’s premier social gathering places, after also operating as a store, post office, dairy and later for many years, as an orphanage,” Ms Elaine said.

General Manager, chef Scott Brannigan, said he was delighted to receive a phone call from the City’s museum offering a very old but working piano with links to descendants of families living in the district from around the time the hotel first opened.

“It is another authentic link with the history of this building and the local community,” Mr Brannigan said.

The old Coogee Hotel opened in 1898 with Walter Powell as its licensee, after he wife Letitia (Charlotte) began operating the Four-mile Well tearooms for day trippers when taking ownership of the land in 1890.

A liquor license was granted in 1898 and by October that year, after immediate renovations ordered by the licensing board, the former “two sitting rooms and two bedrooms” were upgraded to become an operational hotel.

Walter and his wife, plus his sister Blanche and brother Baden, landed at Fremantle aboard the *Fitzroy* in 1882, among a flood of English settlers who arrived to be granted land allotments between the Clarence Townsite and Manning Estate.

All this activity took place just 8km from what some believe to be the original doomed 1829 Clarence settlement (Peel Town) established by Thomas Peel near Mt Brown, about 8km from where the Coogee Hotel opened 70 years later.

Coogee Common is the brainchild of owners restaurateur Nic Trimboli and developer Adrian Fini, responsible for Fremantle’s popular Bread in Common restaurant.

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Caption: Cheryl Carvell (seated, centre left) with family members and City of Cockburn Museum/History Officer Christine Elaine (far left) and Coogee Common General Manager, chef Scott Brannigan (far right).



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