

COMMUNITY PROFILE

people, faces, places and a touch of tattle

Australia's biggest oak tree

Donnybrook is just waking up to the pleasant fact that it is apparently the possessor of Australia's largest English oak. **NINA SMITH** reports.

ASK at the Donnybrook Tourist Centre, and the staff there might tell you a funny story.

It's about an English tourist who wandered in one day and told them the big, historic oak tree outside must be at least 300 years old.

In fact he insisted on it, until they reminded him that Donnybrook had only been around since the mid-19th century, at which point he realised his error.

It goes to show though just how big Donnybrook's oak tree is.

And now it has been declared the biggest oak tree in Australia.

Nobody is able to say exactly who planted it or when, though according to Donnybrook history enthusiast Rachel Mitchell (nee Fry) two local families claim their grandfathers planted it.

According to the National Register of Big Trees, a website coordinated by tree enthusiast Derek McIntosh in his quest for Australia's biggest trees, the *Quercus Robur* (or old English oak) next to the Donnybrook railway station and visitors' centre is 110 years old and measures 5.61 metres in circumference, 23 metres high and 29 metres around its crown.

According to the plaque at its base, it was planted in 1890, making it 120 years old.

Either way, it's an educated guess as to when it was planted, Mrs Mitchell said.

"My father and his brother and mother had an invitation to an Arbor Day in 1910," she said.

"That was possibly the day they put in the historic pine trees."

The pine trees were as much a Donnybrook landmark as the oak until they were cut down in the 1950s.

Pines and oak both provided shade for horses and later cars.

The oak tree was a popular parking spot, particularly on the days when everyone went to meet the train. "Meeting the train was a social event," Mrs Mitchell said.

According to local anecdotes, the oak was not only popular for parking – it was a popular place for 'courting' and also saw a few fights in its time.

The road back then, which was lower than the paved footpath now in its place, passed the train station, the oak tree, the station-master's house (now the telecentre) and went out again.



LANDMARK: Rachel Mitchell under Donnybrook's historic Oak Tree, now declared the biggest oak tree in Australia
MEMORIES: A newspaper clipping from the early 1990s, when the commemorative plaque was placed underneath the oak tree.

"In the early days you saw late shopping on a Saturday," Mrs Mitchell said.

"If you didn't have your hat and stockings, you weren't quite proper for a Saturday. The CWA and the roads board both used to meet on a Saturday evening."

In 1991 the CWA compiled a book called *Tales from the Old Oak Tree*, relating stories from Donnybrook's early days.

The first page tells stories about the oak tree, such as how it marked the taxi rank for Billy Hill's Essex car and how young clerk Alf Trigwell was told to take a box of birds outside and let them go because the smell was unbearable.

"The birds – kookaburras – flew into the young oak tree and laughed," the book says.

The book also recorded Donnybrook's 150th anniversary. It was on this occasion that the commemorative plaque was installed under the oak tree – and a time capsule buried there.

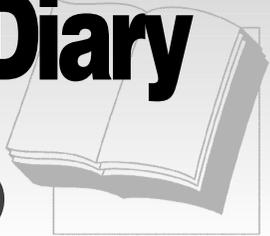
If Donnybrook's oak tree could talk, no doubt it could tell some very interesting stories about events and people it has seen over the years.

Having now been declared Australia's biggest oak tree, there is little doubt it will attract even more people as they arrive in Donnybrook.

Community Diary

Brought to you by ...

Donnybrook Fresh



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THE *Donnybrook-Bridgetown Mail* publishes details of coming community events, on-going community group meetings and contact numbers in its community diary. To include items in the community diary, local groups should contact our office on 9731 2310 (telephone) or 9731 2317 (fax).

Club Doctors is a free counselling service provided by the Rotary Club of Bunbury Leschenault to help clubs and community associations in the South West to resolve problems and to improve performance. If your community organisation, however large or small, needs advice on matters such as future planning, teamwork, successful meetings, recruiting volunteers, and finance - call our hotline 0488 914 611.

DONNYBROOK

Donnybrook Ladies Bowls every Thursday commencing at 10am, names to be in by 9am. New bowlers will be made most welcome. For information please contact Kathy Bedford on 9731 2820.

Apple Festival Committee meets at the Visitor Information Centre (old railway station) on the first Monday of every month at 7:30pm. Contact the Secretary, Richard Chapman on 9731 1521 for details.

Adult survivors of child abuse and trauma - are you stuck in the past? Learn to re-parent yourself and become more aware as a parent. This is not counselling, but a successful innovative program run by a not for profit organisation. This affordable 5 day retreat is run by survivors (trained in this program) for survivors. This program has been running successfully in NSW for 9 years, so join the many people who have benefited. Book now. Held in the South West cost from \$95. Contact 0429 979 074 or www.mayumarri.com.au and click on Western Australia.

Seniors social club: Are you aged over 50? Looking for a fun way to get involved with your community and meet new friends? The Donnybrook Social Club (seniors) meets every Tuesday and Friday at 1.30pm in the resource room at the Donnybrook Library. Call Gwendoline Nidd on 9731 0396 for details.

The Donnybrook Gardening Club meets on the second Thursday of each month. Ring Helen Tuia on 9731 8271 for the location of the next meeting. New members are welcome.

Bootscooting is held Mondays from 10am to 12noon, Wednesdays from 7.30pm to 9.30pm and Thursdays from 1pm to 3pm in the Donnybrook Masonic Hall on South West Highway. Cost is \$6. For enquiries phone Audrey on 9731 1018.

Meditation: Weekly introductory meditation classes available, with ongoing support. No fees. Call Loraine 9731 2571 for more details.

Donnybrook Arts & Craft: At the Guide Hall cnr Marmion St & Ramsay Tce. TUES 10am-3pm - all types of craft are welcome including spinning, weaving & pottery. If you wish to learn a craft please come along and join us. WED - patchwork/quilting please call Clare 9731 2113 for times. FRI 10am-3pm china painting, painting & drawing. BYO lunch. Tea & coffee supplied. Contact Judy Byatt 9731 1499.

Toy Library: Donnybrook Community Centre, Allnut Street, Donnybrook. Open Tuesday and Thursday 9.30am to 10.30am and the first and third Saturday on the month. Cost is \$10 per school term and this enables you to loan two toys and a video for a two week period. Contact 9731 0448 or 9731 0802 for details.

Donnybrook RSL Sub Branch: President and community liaison: Damian Dixon 9731 1841. Fax: 9731 0302. RSL meetings are held on the first Monday of every month upstairs in Memorial Hall. 7pm start.

Donnybrook library: Storytime at the Resource Centre, every Thursday at 10.30am with a repeat session on Friday at the same time. All Welcome.

Donnybrook Drug Action Group: For more information contact Sian on 9731 8201.

Donnybrook-Balingup Community Bus: A full schedule of fees is available at the Shire Administration Centre, Bentley Street, Donnybrook, during office hours.

Donnybrook basketball: The juniors competition is held on Tuesdays catering for children of all ages. Mini ball starts at 3.30pm and the older groups play later in the afternoon. For more information contact Don Potthoff 9731 6176.

The **Friendship Group** meets every Wednesday from 9.30am at the All Saints' Anglican Church Hall on South Western Highway, Donnybrook. Bring along your sewing, knitting and craft and have a cuppa and a chat. All welcome.

Lion's Club of Donnybrook holds its meetings at the Allnut St. Lion's Den on the second and fourth Monday of each month. Starting at 7.30pm. For all enquiries phone 9731 1009 or 9731 1176. New members welcome.

Donnybrook tennis: Tuesday tennis starts at 9am while junior tennis is on Saturdays with beginners eight years and older at 9am and intermediate and advanced at 10am. All matches are at the Tennis Club behind the recreation centre. For more information contact Ann Clifford on 9731 8273.

Donnybrook Playgroup: Come along and be a part of the group for Terrific Tuesdays and Thrilling Thursdays from 9.30am to 11.30am, at the Donnybrook Community Centre (Child Health Clinic) bring a piece of fruit to share for morning tea. Contact Iolanda Ratcliffe 9731 2410.

Donnybrook-Balingup Chamber of Commerce committee meetings are held at the Visitors Centre at the Railway Station on the third Monday of each month starting at 7.30pm. All members are welcome. For enquiries call 9731 1720 A/H 9764 1132.

Donnybrook Masonic Lodge meets 3rd Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm. Masonic Hall South West Highway Donnybrook. Except September (Installation/Change over) 3rd Saturday. June in recess.

Donnybrook Mixed Bowls: Scroungers every Sunday 1pm. New members welcome. Inquiries ph 9731 1898

Donnybrook Ladies Golf: Held each Wednesday. Opening day 1st April. Names to be in by 10am. All ladies to bring a plate to share. Past members welcome for lunch. For enquiries ph Lesley on 9731 2006.

BRIDGETOWN

The **Bridgetown Telecentre's** hours are 10am to 4pm, Monday to Friday and the Centrelink agency hours are from 10am to 1pm.

Impact is a free youth group for children aged six to 12. It is held at the Church of Christ Hall (behind the boat park) on the corner of Hester Street and Lockley Avenue, Bridgetown every Friday from 3.30pm to 5pm. For more information call Lachlan Anderson on 9761 4311.

LAMP's new Carer's Respite Service will hold regular meetings for those suffering mental illness. Every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday opening at 10am, participants are welcome to come and join activities, or just sit and chat. A light lunch and tea/coffee is available for a small gold coin. We can help with transport if needed, for local and surrounding areas. Come and join us at the "The Meeting Place" in the hall behind the Uniting Church, Bridgetown. If you'd like more information call (08) 9761 2088.

Blackwood Horse and Pony Club Inc: Mounted rally held on the fourth Sunday of each month. President: Linda Vowles 9764 4004.

BALINGUP

Balingup Patches and Craft: Contact: Jane Humby 9761 2157. C/O Post Office Balingup.

CWA Balingup: Mrs Marjorie Jones 9764 1331. PO Box 25, Balingup, 6253.

Balingup Bowls: Contact Dick Vander/Wall on 9764 1112.

Balingup Golf: Contact Trevor Payne on 9764 1885.

Origins Centre, Balingup: The second week of each month is set aside at the Origins Centre, Balingup for this important practice, the development of mindfulness. Bookings and information with the Centre manager Sue 9764 1109. Classical Mindfulness Practice classes are held each week in the rotunda at Origins Centre, off Jayes Road, Balingup. Wednesdays 5.30-6.30pm and Saturdays 9.30-10.30am.

Balingup Lions meet every second and fourth Thursday of the month. New members welcome. Phone Chris on 9756 2004 for further information.

Balingup Progress Association: Meets on the first Wednesday of each month 7pm at the Community Centre.

GREENBUSHES

First Click computer courses are now available in Greenbushes. Ring John Nicholas on 9761 3575 for further information.

Greenbushes Playgroup held every Wednesday from 9am to 11am in the old courthouse, Blackwood Rd, Greenbushes. Contact Shannon 9764 3007.

KIRUP

Ladies' badminton is held every Tuesday, except school holidays, at the Kirup Town Hall from 9.30am to 12noon. For enquiries call Leanne 9731 6168.

Mixed badminton is held every Thursday night at the Kirup Hall at 7.30pm. For enquiries call Elsbeth or Peter 9731 6558 or 0427 776 592.

Kirup playgroup is held every Thursday from 9am to 11am at Kirup Primary School in room three. Cost is \$2 and people are asked to bring a piece of fruit to share. For enquiries, call Leanne 9731 6168.

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