

Town's soldiering on

isa Calautti discovers a place fit for heroes

years ago, Warren "Wassa" Pearson didn't even know the wheatbelt town of Bruce Rock existed.

A chat with friends who were returning to the town for a Back to the Bush Reunion for returned servicemen, women and their families changed that, and Mr Pearson's fate was set.

Now, the annual reunion, which attracts thousands to the town in the first week of November, is an event he wouldn't dream of missing. The Quinns Rocks Vietnam veteran, who as a 20-year-old served as a steward with the Australian Army, says the war changed his life for ever.

He lost two of his mates during service. One was blown up by a tank, just weeks before he was due

to return to Australia. "The way the blokes got over it was they drank. I drank a lot while I was over there to get things out of my head," he said, "and I drank a lot when I got home."

The Back to the Bush Reunion is his highlight of the year.

"It's in my head all the time — Bruce Rock is coming soon," he said. "I regard it as the veterans town of WA. It's the only town where you can go and know there's not going to be a hassle or problems, everyone gets along."

"I can say things to a veteran I have never mentioned to my wife. We have our own little language, we all understand and we know what we can and can't talk about."

The Back to the Bush Reunion, started by Bruce Rock locals Merv



Veteran Warren Pearson with his memorabilia. Picture: Michael O'Brien

Gould, Bill Stewart, Colin Turner and Paul Hutton, celebrates its 10th anniversary this year and veterans of all conflicts are invited to camp out at the town's main oval.

On Saturday, November 6, street markets and historic military vehicles and brass bands will bring colour to the streets.

In the afternoon, all veterans are invited to take part in a march

through the town to St Peter's Church for a relighting of a memorial candle at the Vietnam Veterans Peace Window.

On the Sunday, a memorial dedicated to the Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels, Papuans who helped Australian troops fight the Japanese during World War II, will be unveiled. Two "angels" and their carers will attend the ceremony.

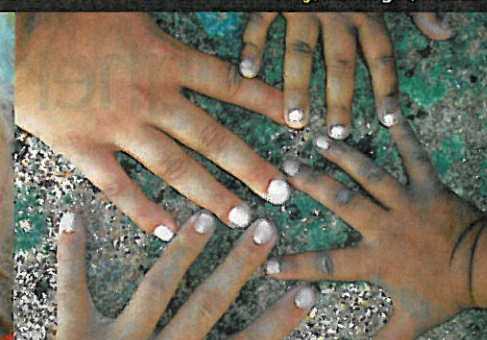
Juwan Storey, Narrogin, Feet.



Anne Goldsmith, Pingelly, Mother and daughter.



Juwan Storey, Narrogin, Hands



Towns are snap-happy

Locals are captured on camera, writes Pam Brown

Locals armed with cameras have been busy in the communities of Narrogin, Pingelly, Brookton and Wagin this year, capturing what life in the Wheatbelt means to them.

More than 100 of these pictures have been published in a book, *Voices of the Wheatbelt: Our Place, Our Stories*. It is the second publication in the *Voices* series, the first featured people in Tammin, Kellerberrin, Quairading and Merredin.

The latest book is part of the *Strong Cultures, Strong Communities* initiative, a three-year community arts and cultural development program within the four southern towns.

Run by the Community Arts Network WA (CANWA), it is funded by the Federal and State governments.

Both hip-hop and filmmaking workshops have been run as part of the initiative. A hip-hop collective called *New Balance* have been formed in Narrogin and their debut

single, *Come Along*, was performed at the book's launch last month.

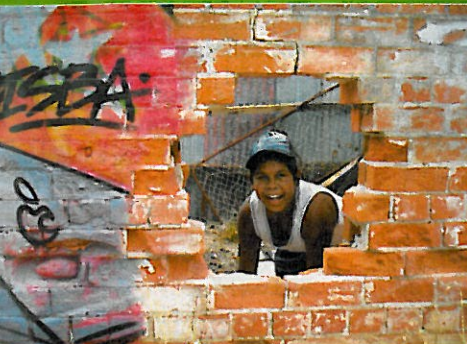
Nyoongar communities in Narrogin, Brookton and Wagin have worked with professional filmmakers from the Film and Television Institute to make three, eight-minute films, which are on a DVD inserted in the book.

CANWA managing director Pilar Kawat said that now the initiative had been kicked off, the next move was to go back to the communities and to talk about what they had enjoyed doing and what could be done in the next two years.

She said it had been important to establish the program over a long period of time.

"If you want to make a difference you need to have that consistency," she said.

Voices of the Wheatbelt is not for sale but copies will be available in libraries throughout the State and in the local communities at schools and shire councils. It will also be available on www.canwa.com.au.



Cherie Abednego, Narrogin, Gap in brick wall.



Carina Whittington, Brookton, Father and son on harvester.

MERREDIN PROPERTIES IN DEMAND

Goldmining projects and a major wind farm in the Wheatbelt have resulted in such a strong demand for rental properties in Merredin that it has been named as one of Australia's top 10 bargain property investment locations.

Elders Real Estate's Will Morris said construction of the 111-turbine Collgar Wind Farm, about 25km south-east of Merredin, had been a significant catalyst in fuelling interest and bringing new residents to the town.

The Edna May Gold Project near Westonia — which had its first gold pour in April — was also boosting demand.

Merredin was the only WA town

to make the Cheapiers with Prospects report which was compiled by national property researcher Terry Ryder.

He cited the regional town's vicinity to major projects, including the wind farm and its median house price of \$160,000, as reasons for its inclusion in the top 10.

Rental properties were yielding big returns, with an average \$254,000 home earning \$400 a week rent, he said.

John Evans, selling agent for Ray White Avon Valley, said the demand for rental properties was staggering.

"We can't get enough of them," he said.



This three-bedroom Merredin house recently sold for \$254,000.

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS MARKED BY COMMUNITY EVENTS IN FIVE TOWNS

Five Wheatbelt towns will celebrate centenaries this year, with a series of community events to mark the occasion.

Kulin and Nungarin will hold celebrations of the establishment of local government in the area and Narembeen, Dalwallinu and Kondinin will be celebrating 100 years of agricultural settlement.

Activities in the towns will include town history displays, community lunches, old-fashioned sports, competitions, photo exhibitions and market stalls.

Volunteer committees in Dalwallinu and Narembeen have gone one step further and put together books on their towns, doing months of research and interviews and featuring stories from major events through to family anecdotes.

Nungarin resident Maxine Cornish has written a book of stories, about the district, titled *A Piece of String*.

Shire of Narembeen project manager Caroline Robinson said its celebrations on September 17-19 had been two years in the planning, with the community working hard to make it happen.

"I can't tell you how huge (the book, *Narembeen: The First 100 Years*) is," Ms Robinson said. "A group of women volunteered and put together stories from the past 100 years; tracking down current and past residents, some from interstate or overseas."

Dalwallinu chief executive Peter Crispin said there were already 150 orders for the shire's book, *A Century of Memories*, which was a great

keepsake for the future. Premier Colin Barnett will officially open the Dalwallinu Centenary celebrations on September 11, after the opening of the new Dalwallinu Discovery Centre in the morning.

The Kondinin Centenary committee has organised events from October 8-10, including an art exhibition, horse and cart rides, tours to farms and old school sites and photo displays.

Kulin will host a lunch at the Kulin Memorial Hall on Friday, October 1, to coincide with the annual Kulin Bush Race weekend.

The Nungarin Centenary weekend will also commence on Friday, October 1 and include a tribute concert, 10th Light Horse demonstrations, a curry night and Sunday markets.

Moora Lifestyle Village

Your Opportunity

Looking for somewhere to retire? Perhaps you're already retired?

The Moora Lifestyle Village is located in the beautiful country town of Moora within easy distance of the town centre. The village has been designed with a real sense of community in mind and is the perfect place to relocate your park home to, or alternatively, build yourself a brand new one. For those travellers out there looking for somewhere to rest in the off season the village has secure RV parking and room for the boat so you can lock up and leave whenever the travel bug strikes. On completion the village will feature a meeting room for activities and social gatherings, a shed for pottering about in when the mood takes you and a BBQ and gazebo for wiling away those lazy summer days.

The town of Moora is situated on the banks of the Moore River surrounded by impressive Salmon Gums and beautiful parks, gardens and heritage buildings. Perth is less than 2 hours drive (weekly bus service is available) or alternatively an afternoon at the coast is just an hour away. There's plenty on offer in the Moora community from bingo to bowls and golf to darts. Moora provides a wealth of services including local hospital and medical centre and for those with a sweet tooth tasty treats and goodies can always be found at the local bakery or café.

Places in the village won't be available for long so if you are after an affordable lifestyle away from city living don't hesitate to call and book your spot now.

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