

Biographical Research Notes by Coordinator Local History

Sister Martin Kelly RSM MBE

- Sister Martin Kelly was born Margaret Frances Kelly to John James and Cora Ella (nee Broune) Kelly in 1930.
- Sister Martin Kelly's childhood home was at 33 Sunbury Road, Victoria Park, which abuts the current Duncan Street Reserve.
- She went to school at St Joachim's School (now part of Ursula Frayne Catholic College) from 1939 to 1947.
- She joined the Roman Catholic order of the Sisters of Mercy in 1947 and took the name of Sister Mary Martin (which would later change to Sister Martin Kelly).
- She taught at many schools across WA including St Joachim's School and Our Lady Help of Christians School (now part of Ursula Frayne Catholic College).
- Sister Martin Kelly's mother Cora lived at 33 Sunbury Road, Victoria Park until 1999, a few years before her death in 2003. Sister Martin Kelly was a frequent visitor to her mother's home up unto her death in 1989. Sister Martin Kelly's sisters lived and brought up their families in Victoria Park, with two of her nieces being head girls at St Joachim's. There is a strong family connection to the Town by her close family for over eighty years.
- In 1969 Sister Martin Kelly was appointed to the St Joseph's Girls Orphanage in Wembley, becoming the Sister in Charge in 1970, soon after she became the administrator of the Catherine McAuley Centre.
- *This new entity was formed to replace the orphanage system of care which was a direct response to changing community expectations, for which Sister Martin Kelly was a passionate and strong advocate.*
- *Sister Martin Kelly showed enormous compassion for the treatment and care of orphaned children and families who were struggling. She also worked tirelessly with government agencies to improve the care of children who were wards of the*

State. She was noted for her sense of humour and her strength of character and determination.

- Sister Mary Martin Kelly was awarded in an MBE for services to the Catherine McAuley Child Care Centre, Wembley in June 1979.
- Sister Martin Kelly was posthumously inducted into the WA Women's Hall of Fame Roll of Honour in 2016. With this citation: "Sister Mary Martin Kelly (1930-1987) received an MBE in 1979 for her services to Wembley's Catherine McAuley Centre. *Under her guidance, the Centre adopted a family care model, which recognised that family breakdown could be detrimental to the psychological well being of children and teenagers—a concept not previously taken into consideration. Sister Kelly reformed the living conditions of children who were wards of the State, and others who were privately placed in care due to family breakdown or crisis. She ensured that siblings were able to remain together.*

"Sister Kelly also introduced help for children with special needs including occupational and speech therapy and psychological care. Sister Kelly also recognised the need to provide a specific type of care for homeless and at-risk teenagers, which included transition towards independent living." (1)

- Sister Martin Kelly, whilst having a building named in her honour in Wembley in 1989, has no known pieces of geographic nomenclature in Western Australia named for her.

Analysis

- Duncan Street Reserve is not a Crown reserve and does not have a Landgate assigned Reserve Number. It is freehold land owned by the Town. As it is not Crown land the term "Reserve" should not be used and the correct feature class (or generic) under Part 5.1.2 of the *Policies and Standards for Geographical Naming in Western Australia* is the feature class of "Park.". There are several parks within the Town which are not Crown land but have the feature class of "Reserve" used incorrectly. This is most likely a result of there not being a government policy in place when the parks were named. Examples: Rayment Reserve, J A Lee Reserve, Hawthorne Reserve etc.
- Duncan Street for which the park is currently named as it runs along one side of the park, was named for the fourth Mayor of the Municipality of Victoria Park, Hugh George DUNCAN (1870-1935).

- Mr Duncan had a career in law and banking in the private sector but was also involved in civic duties over the years, having at one time been Chairman of the Belmont Park Roads Board, a Councillor for the Municipality of Victoria Park in 1906 and 1907. He was elected Mayor of the Municipality in 1908. Among his many achievements he has noted to have been a strong advocate to improving the train service between Perth and Cannington and also to widening the Causeway bridge.
- Changing the name of the park currently known as Duncan Street Reserve would not lessen the honour of Hugh George Duncan and his understandable recognition in the naming of Duncan Street in his honour.
- Section 1.4 Commemorative names (p. 12) of *Policies and Standards for Geographical Naming in Western Australia* states that "A commemorative name applied to local parks and recreational reserves may use the first name and surname of a person; although, it is preferred that only the surname is used."
- In the August 2014 Ordinary Council Meeting a Commemorative Recognition application was endorsed and the name of Hampshire Reserve was changed to Alec Bell Park.
- Precedence for the acceptance of first names and surnames has thus been firmly established.

Reference quoted in above:

WA Women's Hall of Fame 2016, '2016 Inductees Biographies', in WA Women's Hall of Fame, online resource:
<https://www.wawomenshalloffame.com.au/index.php/wa-womens-hall-of-fame-inductees-2016/>, accessed 29 June 2023.