



Pam Hamence and Chris Sousa

Pam Hamence Awarded an OAM

On Australia Day Pam was awarded the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for her service with Volunteer Bush Fire Brigades, her service was credited as being well above and beyond normal service.

Pam first joined Kelmscott Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade in early 1970's. Before that time Women were not wanted or allowed to join; Volunteers were required to be 'able bodied men'; for those who remember that time, the State Governments and the Shire's changed the requirements to 'able body person'.

"Even though the requirements had been changed, on the first meeting day after the changes some men at the Kelmscott Brigade blockaded the doors to prevent the women from entering and joining, five of us Ladies barged our way past those blockheads and joined the meeting to become members." Pam proudly stated.

Pam was one of the first Ladies to join the volunteer Fire Brigade in Western Australia.

"All of the equipment, vehicles and clothing in those days had to be fundraised for, one of our main events was a Volunteer Fire Brigade Ball."

Pam along with her husband Brian purchased property in Bridgetown in 1988 and joined the Hester Brigade, and then joined the Bridgetown Bush Fire Brigade which was reformed in 2007 when the 'Bridgetown Fire and Rescue was separated into two bodies.

"Most of the work I undertook with the brigades was as the Treasurer or Secretary, along with manning the Radio, Well, I did have children to bring up as well."

"When there was an incident there was always a lot more work to do, the ladies had to buy food and prepare meals, mostly in their own kitchens, along with trying to organize fire procedures in a time of relative chaos." Pam went on to explain. In 2007 Pam and Brian Hamence along with Chris Sousa were the founding members of the WA Bush Brigades Historical Group.

"We are researching past fire activities, collecting local brigade's history as well as collecting old brigade vehicles" Chris Sousa said.

Chris Sousa nominated Pam who received OAM. Pam has seen some changes in her roughly 50 years of service with the brigade.

"Today Bridgetown is in a strong position, along with the Fire and Emergency Levy which means no more fundraising for the brigades, the Bridgetown Shire has been proactive in providing more than is required with vehicles and equipment and support for the local brigades, we have a Brigade Building which houses our equipment, a command centre and a food preparation area, and the Leisure Centre is a wonderful evacuation centre for the town."

"We have had 3 major fires in the district since 2004, but I feel our district is well prepared." Chris went on to say.