HISTORY

MAGAZINE OF THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

'History is central to reconciliation': RAHS launches its inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan

1 June 2023

Acknowledging Australia's difficult past is a key step toward reconciliation between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal peoples. By revisiting our own long history, and by promoting truth-telling in the histories that we write today, the Royal Australian Historical Society (RAHS) is proud to actively promote this journey via its inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Today the Society formally launches its Reflect RAP, developed with guidance and endorsement from Reconciliation Australia. Launched on Gadigal land, this plan was shaped by a working party that includes Uncle Shayne Williams, a senior Dharawal man with strong links to the Sydney area, and Dr Michael Bennett, who has helped Aboriginal families and communities connect with their histories for over two decades. RAHS Councillors in the RAP working party also include our President, Dr Iain Stuart, as well as Associate Professor Carol Liston, Graham Shirley, Craig McPherson, Dr Peter Hobbins and General Manager, Suzanne Holohan.

The Society's RAP has been endorsed by the RAHS Council as a guiding document for the coming years. As an action plan, it is focused on real outcomes that include:

- actively participating in National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week events
- consulting with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples regarding the Society's cultural awareness protocols
- initiating a grant-funded internship project to review the digitised journals of the RAHS to identify reminiscences and accounts that mention Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and places
- launching a timeline of representations of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australian screen and audio materials
- developing a business case for procurement

from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.

The Reflect RAP is the first step in the four-stage RAP process outlined by Reconciliation Australia. Operating from January 2023 to July 2024, it outlines the Society's initial steps in building understanding, connections, initiatives and opportunities to fully acknowledge the deep and rich pasts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. A fundamental aspect is making contact and listening to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the vicinity of the Society's headquarters at History House in the Sydney CBD, the lands and waters of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation.

'History is central to reconciliation', noted the Chair of the RAHS RAP Working Group, Dr Peter Hobbins. 'By starting this journey ourselves, in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, we hope to encourage other historical societies to also commit to the reconciliation process'.

For more information about the RAHS Reflect RAP, please visit:
https://www.rahs.org.au/reconciliation-action-plan

For guidelines for commencing the reconciliation journey and creating a Reconciliation Action Plan, visit Reconciliation Australia and liaise with their helpful advisors:
https://www.reconciliation.org.au/reconciliation-action-plans/

For more information and events during National Reconciliation Week, see:
https://www.reconciliation.org.au/our-work/national-reconciliation-week/

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN
REFLECT

RAHS Editorial Christine Yeats FRAHS

Welcome to the June 2023 issue of the RAHS *History* magazine.

We cover a range of topics in this issue and we hope you enjoy the variety.

We begin with Dr Lauren Samuelsson's article 'Tastes of the Nation: Food Trends in *The Australian Women's Weekly*'. Dr Samuelsson reminds us that the *Weekly*'s food and recipes inform us about our changing tastes and wider Australian culture.

On 20 October this year, we will be celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Sydney Opera House. In 'The Sydney Opera House, A Fractured History in Scattered Records', Paul Bentley highlights the challenges faced by researchers because the records are not housed in a single location. He concludes by noting that 'collaboration will be needed to make the scattered records discoverable and accessible'.

Paul Convy's article, 'The Remarkable Joe Thomal', explores the life of Bantamweight boxer, actor, and celebrity Joseph Francis 'Joe' Thomal, who 'recounted how he was born in 1878 in British Somaliland, near the Horn of Africa. As a young orphan someone took him to Aden.' Travelling to Australia as a stowaway, and despite the White Australia Policy, Joe Thomal went on to live a long and full life in this country.

Returning to the topic of food, the life of former convict and colonial restaurateur Stephen Bax is discussed by Ian Dodd in his article 'Stephen Bax: Master Chef to the Sydney Social World'. Bax was lauded by the press and for nearly ten years, Bax 'was by far the most celebrated cook in Australia'.

Don Garden's article notes that Australian towns and cities are unusual in that their sites were mostly selected consciously according to a set of criteria or expectations. In 'Clear Fresh Water to Common Sewer: Hobart Rivulet and Urban Streams', we learn that towns were generally founded on well-watered, often-fertile and treed pleasant landscapes. As Garden goes on to add, 'the irony is that urban centres soon destroyed the very factors which were responsible for their siting.'

In addition to the *Book Notes*, our regular *On the Shelf: RAHS Library Notes* looks at some of the material in our collection relating to Queen Elizabeth II, her coronation and Sydney visit in 1954.

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Front Cover: Sydney Opera House (Photographer: Hamilton Lund).

Back Cover: King Street in the rain, c. 1900 / Frederick Danvers Power (Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales).

Tastes of the Nation: Food Trends in The Australian Women's Weekly

Lauren Samuelsson

The *Australian Women's Weekly* (the *Weekly*) is an Australian institution. Since it hit newsstands ninety years ago, in June 1933, it has held the position of Australia's most popular women's magazine. While its popularity has now declined, in the 1950s and 1960s, the magazine was read in over twenty-five per cent of Australian homes and was the highest selling women's magazine per capita in the world. Its success and its presence in almost every Australian home ensured that the *Weekly* was highly influential.

One of the *Weekly's* major contributions to Australian society was in the area of food. From its very first issue, the *Weekly* offered its readers, whether they be 'stay-at-home, gad-about, intellectual, or just nice-average', ideas about what to cook for dinner (or any other meal of the day!).[1] It provided editorial recipes, written and compiled by the magazine's Test Kitchen staff, as well as recipes sent in by their *very* enthusiastic readers. Every recipe, no matter where it appeared in the magazine was 'triple-tested', and the Australian public loved it.[2]

By the 1970s, the *Weekly* also commenced regularly publishing standalone cookbooks, some of which have gone on to become household names. The *Children's Birthday Cake Book*, for example, has been reprinted over 20 times since it was first published in 1980 and has become a cultural icon in its own right.

The popularity of the *Weekly's* food and recipes tells us that they are important to Australian society. However, they can also tell us many other things about our changing tastes and wider Australian culture. The history of food offers us a unique window into histories of trade, of migration, of labour, of gender, and of national identity. Histories of food and food culture –how we eat and cook, our beliefs and values concerning food, cooking and eating practices – are important. In this article, we are going to look briefly at several food trends from the *Weekly's* pages, which can tell us a lot more about Australian society than simply what we put on the dinner table.

Making Do: The 1930s and 1940s

The food culture of the 1930s and 1940s could be defined through its austerity. The *Weekly* appeared at the tail end of the Great Depression when many Australian families were still grappling with unemployment and poverty. While those who could afford the magazine (at a price of 2d) were not hardest hit economically, very few Australian families escaped the Depression without some change to their dietary habits. Just as Australia was recovering from economic uncertainty, the Second World War broke out. While Australia did not face the intense rationing that Britain did, Australia's role as 'food arsenal for the allied world' led to food shortages.[3] Rationing of tea commenced in July 1942 and was eventually joined by rationing of sugar, butter, and meat. Even unrationed foods, such as potatoes, were often in short supply.[4] Rationing continued until 1950.

Mock foods (foods that were designed to look or taste like another) were one way that Australians dealt with food shortages – rather than going without, they improvised and made substitutions. When potatoes were scarce, for instance, the magazine shared recipes for 'Sham Potatoes' – a flour-based dumpling.[5] Looking closely at recipes for mock foods, can tell us much about the cultural importance of the foods being replaced as well as the replacements.

Consider the chicken. Today, Australians are among the highest consumers of chicken meat in the world.[6] However, before modern chicken farming practices were adopted in the mid-twentieth century, eating chicken was a novelty, saved for special occasions. Recipes for mock chicken appeared often in the *Weekly* during the 1930s and 1940s, and two thirds of those recipes called for the use of rabbit as a substitute.

The consumption of rabbit reveals the influence of austerity on the Australian diet. Rabbit is seen as a meat of necessity, of poverty, and was given nicknames such as 'underground mutton' and 'poor man's chicken'. During the Depression and the Second World War, Australians ate a lot of rabbit.[7] One way to make the tedium of a rabbit-centric diet more bearable, was

Domestic glamour on the cover of The Australian Women's Weekly, 6 January 1954. Courtesy of the National Library of Australia, http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4814477, and Are Media Pty Limited, aremediasyndication.com.au.

to transform the rabbit … into chicken. The *Weekly* shared recipes for 'Mock Chicken Chow Mein', 'Mock Chicken Casserole', and 'Mock Chicken Cutlets', all of which dressed rabbit up in chicken's clothing.[8]

The growing affordability of chicken from the 1950s sounded the death knell for the various chicken substitutes in the *Weekly* (though mock chicken still exists – in Bourke)[9] and rabbit very rarely appears on our tables. What this tells us is the relative importance of these two meats to the Australian diet – both in the past, and today – and highlights economic reasons for our changing tastes.

Glitz and Glamour: The 1950s and 1960s

During the 1950s, Australian families were becoming increasingly affluent. Disposable income meant that 'luxury' items such as domestic refrigerators and small appliances like stand mixers were becoming more common in Australian kitchens, and rising car ownership led to the viability of self-service shopping centres. Food culture was changing, and so was the definition of femininity, which grew increasingly glamourous, yet remained rooted in the domestic. Images of immaculately dressed women, overseeing their kitchens adorned with glistening Formica and bursting with consumer goods, became the norm.[10]

In response, the *Weekly* stepped up the glamour and embraced postwar modernity. Their food pages became heavily influenced by American tastes. The *Weekly's* 'turn to America' is clearly seen in its promotion of 'America's internationally famous Blue Ribbon cook', Dione Lucas. The magazine sponsored Lucas – who was the first woman to host a television cooking show in America – to visit Australia three times, in 1956, 1958, and 1960.[11] During these trips, Lucas presented cookery demonstrations to audiences, both live and televised, teaching them how to cook the 'sophisticated' cuisine of the day.

That cuisine was French. The adoption of French cookery was the earliest move away from Australia's British food traditions and provided a springboard for the development of Australia's cosmopolitan food culture.[12] Lucas' 'glamor' cookery was especially designed to be served to guests and was designed as much for display as for nourishment. She claimed that 'Food … should … be treated as an art', and shared recipes for 'Stuffed Eggs Printaniere', 'Mayonnaise D'oeufs Poches Macedoine' and 'Souffle en Surprise'.[13]

The *Weekly's* food editors took her advice to heart, and from the late 1950s and through the 1960s provided their readers with recipes which co-opted markers of modernity and which were inspired by American

foodways. In a striking example of this, food editor Leila C. Howard became a proponent of 'glamorizing', a phenomenon of the modern American kitchen. The act of 'glamorizing' a recipe was simple and 'utterly democratic'. All it took to 'glamorize' a dish was to 'splash sherry over the peas' or 'set fire to the dessert'.[14] In one article, Howard advised her readers to use ready-made ingredients, including packets of jelly, tinned fruit and chocolate bars to create desserts that 'require no tedious preparation' but were 'tempting in appearance and delightful in flavour'. Recipes included 'Raspberry Ice-Cream Pie', 'Jewel Mousse' and 'Strawberry Fluff'.[15] Under the direction of Howard, food in the *Weekly* had shifted away from Britain and towards a more cosmopolitan future.

The Busy Woman: The 1970s and 1980s

In 1972, the *Weekly* released a cookbook titled *The Busy Woman's Cookbook*. It was advertised as being 'for the liberated woman', in an early, yet shallow, nod to the burgeoning women's liberation movement. The magazine, which had actively overlooked women's workforce participation in the 1950s and 1960s, could ignore it no longer. Between 1961 and 1971, married women's workforce participation rose swiftly, from 9.6 per cent of the total workforce in 1961 to 18.1 per cent in 1971. This meant that approximately a third of married women were in paid employment in 1971.[16] As cookery was one of the more time-consuming domestic duties which fell to women, the *Weekly* offered its readers a slew of food editorials which considered how women could balance domestic and non-domestic work.

Some of these articles were explicitly targeted towards working women. A 1981 editorial titled 'Quick and Easy Meals for Working Mothers', provided readers with recipes including one which suggested three ways of 'doing up' the supermarket mainstay, the barbecue chook.[17] Other food editorials were less overt. An increase of 'quick' and 'easy' meals and the incorporation of convenience foods into the *Weekly's* recipes throughout the 1970s implicitly reflected the time-limitations of working women. So too did the focus on various new foodmaking technologies, such as slow cookers, which were deemed to help the working wife achieve her dream of 'returning home after a long day at the office to the aroma of a succulent braised leg of lamb'.[18]

Despite its focus on the working woman, at no point did the magazine suggest that women were *not* wholly responsible for the feeding of their families – they simply offered tips and tricks to help women deal with their increased workload. These food editorials

cemented traditional ideas about the gendered division of domestic labour, which continues to be a problem for women today.

Conclusion

The *Weekly* holds a deservedly central place in the food history of Australia, and studying the trends and tastes which appear in the pages of the magazine can shed light on wider Australian society and culture. The way that Australians dealt with scarcity, embraced 'modern' cuisine, and attempted to deal with changing gender roles are all reflected in the recipes shared in the magazine, whether they be for mock chicken, ice-cream pies, or microwaved casseroles.

About the Author

Dr Lauren Samuelsson holds a PhD in History from the University of Wollongong. Her interests include the history of food and drink, women's history, the history of popular culture and Australian cultural history. Her PhD thesis focused on the *Australian Women's Weekly* and its influence on the development of Australian food culture during its first fifty years of publication. Her award-winning work has been published in *Australian Historical Studies* and *History Australia*. She has also published in *The Conversation*.

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The Sydney Opera House, A Fractured History in Scattered Records

Paul Bentley

On 20 October 2023, we will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Sydney Opera House, a building with a 250-year history. The architectural experience depends on its relation to the city, as emphasised in a 1996 world heritage nomination bid, *Sydney Opera House in its Harbour Setting.* What happens inside is driven by the cultural forces that led to its creation.

The New South Wales premier J.J. Cahill triggered its construction at the Public Lecture Room of the Public Library (now the State Library of New South Wales) on 30 November 1954. The Sydney Opera House Trust was established in March 1961, after initial work by the Sydney Opera House Executive Committee. The administrative records of both bodies are preserved by Museums of History New South Wales. Other records are scattered, missing, or lost.

Cahill left his ghost in the Public Lecture Room. The space was later turned into the State Library's Manuscripts Department where I worked in the early 1970s. It was my accidental path in 1973 to the Opera House and a fifty-year preoccupation with its incomplete history.

The Dennis Wolanski Library and Archival Resources

In 1970, Roger Covell, in a report to the Australia Council, recommended that performing arts libraries and museums be established at the Opera House and other Australian cultural centres 'to awaken public interest in the arts embodied in the centres'.[1] The inspirational Opera House general manager Frank Barnes was keen on the idea. Trustee Hedley Yelland urged the rapid development of a library to fulfil the Trust's research and educational roles. Dennis Wolanski kicked in an inaugural sponsorship. At the launch in May 1973, Chairman Sir Philip Baxter and the Minister for Cultural Activities George Freudenstein, articulated the vision: 'we want anything and everything from the time of *The Recruiting Officer* in 1789 onwards'.

We responded to the vision by finessing policies under the guidance of a Trust committee which included State Library and Powerhouse Museum representatives.

To improve public access, in December 1975 the library moved to an area within the Exhibition Hall. Snapshots of the collection during the 1980s can be found in *Memories of the Stage* and *The Place to Go When There's Something to Know.*[2] By the 1990s, we held 12,000 monographs, 324,000 photographs and 150 metres of archival collections, among other types of material. The main drawcards were the research files with three million items, 95,000 programs, and three legacy card indexes to complement the library's online catalogue and digital asset management system. Acquiring and processing material on Australian performing arts history enhanced our appreciation of why the building was there.

Between 1988 and 1997, the library generated income of more than $600,000. Sponsorship of $575,000 in the Opera House Appeal Fund had been accumulated to support library projects. We responded to 4,000 enquiries and research visits a year and produced sixty-seven HSC kits.

Our roles extended beyond the library. We managed the House art collection. We embarked on an oral history project. After surveys in the early 1990s, we urged a more coordinated approach for managing administrative, architecture and performance documentation. Our role in reporting statistics on events and attendances led to leadership of a project to address problems arising from the arrival of standalone PCs. A networked infrastructure was installed, an automated events management system purchased, and other information management initiatives set in train. We were a partner in the Australia on CD project, *Stage Struck*, which won a BAFTA multimedia award in 1999. We oversaw the development of the Trust's first website. Other multimedia and tourist proposals were in the pipeline.

Our involvement in the unfolding relationship with Jørn Utzon helped create a path to his eventual return as an adviser in 1999. Although he declined oral history invitations, the interaction led to lifting restrictions from his Sydney papers in the State Library of New South Wales, a plaque honouring his role at the top of the monumental steps, the donation of his 1965

Dennis Wolanski Library and Archives of the Performing Arts, Sydney Opera House, 1983 (Wolanski Foundation collection).

architectural model for the major hall, and the provision of funds for conservation work on his collection at the State Library.

The year 1989 prompted changes to the library when government portfolio savings threatened its closure to the public. Dennis Wolanski increased his sponsorship. We reviewed policies and recommended replacing the broad performing arts archival function with a documentation role, microfilming material, and transferring originals to the State Library.

In the same year, the library moved to the Broadwalk Studio where it shared space with the Public Works Department. The Studio could no longer be used for performances because panic escape routes were inadequate. The PWD needed accommodation to manage the $100 million major upgrade program. Additional factors reinforced the temporary arrangement.

Amplifying the story

During its first fifteen years, the Opera House produced several books and a documentary about its history and operations.[3] The Theatre Manager's Department presented more than 300 exhibitions, mostly about the performing arts.

Covell's idea of a museum gathered momentum. In 1978, Jørn Utzon said he would like to see a small museum established to show his designs.[4] Public agitation for a performing arts museum led in 1986 to a ministerial task force to consider options. One was to locate the library in the Maritime Services Board Building (later the Museum of Contemporary Art) and continue exhibitions at the House.

Three exhibitions produced by the library crystallised

possibilities. *The Building of the Century* was presented during the Bicentenary celebrations 1988–1989. We installed a travelling version at the Kennedy Center Washington and venues in Europe and Asia 1994–1995. *The Unseen Utzon* (1994–1995) was a joint initiative with the State Library of New South Wales.[5]

Architect Leif Kristensen had proposed an exhibition space below the forecourt in 1989. Options were explored by a new ministerial task force and McKinsey feasibility study. I firmed up proposals with Kristensen after visits to Expo 92 in Seville and overseas cultural facilities. These trips highlighted the fact that, during daylight hours, the Opera House was a sculpture that people walked around. There was no assembly point in the manner of Pei's pyramid at the Louvre. There was no public route inside. There were few daytime attractions. Revenue opportunities were missed.

Our plans for the hi-tech museum TheatreWorks, incorporating the library, included a small theatre to demonstrate tricks of the trade, multimedia experiences and galleries. Projected revenue of $2 million was to cover operations and produce a profit. A compelling idea was Kristensen's solution to join the Drama Theatre and Playhouse foyers. In 1994, the New South Wales Government provided triennial funding of $7.1 million to implement the project.[6]

New brooms and aftermaths

Work stopped in 1995 after the arrival of new brooms with pre-conceptions. The new premier Bob Carr had pledged to halt TheatreWorks if he were elected in March 1995. The new chair Joe Skrzynski arrived in December 1995 with a vision for a more active Trust role in presenting events. The collection of most theatre and concert programs, the essential record of what happens on stage, ceased. The long-standing general manger Lloyd Martin retired. A new CEO Tim Jacobs arrived in March 1997 to implement 'a changing of the guard'. Two deputy general managers and dedicated senior staff were shown the door. The Trust closed the library and dispersed most of its collection.[7] Tim Jacobs resigned in February 1998 to become CEO of the Arts Centre, Melbourne. In October that year, in the Centre's newsletter *Limelight,* he wrote about his exciting plans for its performing arts collection, which continues to this day with items transferred from the Opera House.

Upheavals are common in countries and companies. The dynamics were considered by Cecil Woodham-Smith in her book *The Reason Why,* about the charge of the Light Brigade, later brought to life in the Tony Richardson film. Different perspectives and complicated communication led to mistakes. Shifting the blame was one way of dealing with the result. At the House, a fractured

Sydney Opera House (Photographer: Hamilton Lund).

history had played out before in the experiences of Sir Eugene Goossens, Jørn Utzon and Peter Hall. The purge of the mid-1990s appears as a contradictory narrative in annual reports of the time. Was the gung-ho approach to change an over-reaction with rhetorical flourishes? Was it a mistake to get rid of the library?

Access to information became more difficult. In 2003, Geraldine O'Brien, in *The Sydney Magazine*, wrote 'the disappearance of the Dennis Wolanski Library … has been a loss for not only those interested in the arts, but also ironically, for those interested in the Opera House itself.' New CEO Norman Gillespie condemned the decision, which he said had been made at the premier's insistence. James Semple Kerr, in the 2003 edition of his House Conservation Management Plan elaborated:

> In 1993 it was the Dennis Wolanski Library that made it possible for a stranger to the Opera House to research and write the first edition of this conservation plan in a relatively brief time and at reasonable cost … The major impediment to the full understanding of a place of the complexity of the Sydney Opera House is the loss of collective memory.[8]

In 1998, Phillip Wolanski and I established the Wolanski Foundation Project to help people find material and provide other services. In 2000, lessons learned from managing events data at the House assisted the development of AusStage. Work on the dispersed collections led to a partnership with the University of New South Wales to develop the Performance Memories Project around the Wolanski Collection of research files and programs in 1,600

boxes and card indexes. In 2017–2020, we created 180,000 data records for companies, individuals and events relating to the Opera House and the performing arts. The exhibition *Performing Sydney 1920–2020* featured items from the collection and Jonathan Bollen's data visualisations of venues and repertoire in the city's changing theatre landscape.[9]

Looking back, looking ahead

The story of the House since the 1930s carries episodes of grand visions launched in the hope that resources would follow to sustain efforts. Initiatives have run aground because of the political cycle and corporate churn. Questionable decisions and uncoordinated efforts have led to wheel reinvention.

There is a need to keep turning the kaleidoscope. The myth that Eugene Goossens was the first to propose the Opera House is often repeated. Helen Pitt, in *The Opera House*, describes Cahill's 1954 meeting in the wrong building. Peter FitzSimons in his creditable book *The Sydney Opera House* describes how designer William Henry Archibald Constable set up cameras for the documentary *Autopsy on a Dream*, when in fact the cinematographer was his son, William Reginald Constable.

History arrives through a rear-view mirror. Writing it depends on what is discoverable. Tangible evidence wrestles with what has not been recorded. Details are fashioned or omitted.

The historian Philip Drew contends: 'The historic record of the Sydney Opera House, from the beginning to the present day, has been a zigzag course between

problems, inadequate research, shallow analyses, politically uninformed action, and muddle.'[10]

A new book on one of the Opera House architects, Andrew Andersons, reminds us of the need to extract marrow from a wider sweep of records in government departments and the Sydney City Council and it draws attention to Utzon's vision for a building that is more than 'a magnificent solitary edifice'.[11]

The collections of many who contributed to the Opera House have landed in the State Library of New South Wales, National Library, interstate cultural centres, and other repositories in Australia and overseas. Some records have been lost, are missing or await acquisition. Force fields will affect the way the performing arts are presented, promoted, and documented in future.[12]

Finding information from records at the House continues to be a major challenge. Details on past performances are not as accessible, for example, as they are at Carnegie Hall. Tantalising files on people, performances and topics are located at the University of New South Wales.

The fiftieth anniversary is a time to celebrate a remarkable building as we consider what lies ahead.

The latest Conservation Management Plan by Alan Croker guides further architectural changes and archaeological practice. It re-asserts the Kerr recommendations of 2003 for improved records and information management. A Renewal Interpretation Strategy considers how to convey the building's history, significance, function, value and aspirations. A Heritage Action Plan 2022–2025 touches on plans and systems to be developed. A re-activated oral history project will be tested by the Rashomon effect. Collaboration will be needed to make the scattered records discoverable and accessible.

About the Author

Paul Bentley managed the Wolanski Library and related projects at the House between 1973–1997. He is a member of the Australian Museums and Galleries Association's (AMaGA) Performing Arts Heritage Network committee (https://pahn.au). With Andrew Simpson, he wrote a brief history of AMaGA in 2019. He is writing a book about Australian cultural history and its preservation.

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The Remarkable Joe Thomal

Paul Convy

Please be aware that this article contains words and descriptions that reflect the period and would be considered inappropriate today.

Joseph Francis 'Joe' Thomal was a boxer and Australian Bantamweight champion for five years in the first decade of the twentieth century. He became a well-known actor and celebrity until he died in 1952. African-born and black, he achieved success when the White Australian Policy was a cornerstone of Australian society, in spite of official sanctions and unofficial prejudice.

A 1923 profile in Melbourne's *Sporting Globe* described Thomal as tall, slim, poised and a model of sartorial artistry in a well-cut suit. He gave the impression of dignity and cultured assurance.[1] He recounted how he was born in 1878 in British Somaliland, near the Horn of Africa. As a young orphan someone took him to Aden; he did not remember who. Educated in an Aden convent, he learnt to read and write Latin, French and English becoming the smartest boy in the school. He took a job as clerk in a French shipping company which necessitated him going aboard boats travelling to and from Australia. He thought Australians looked a happy people so he stowed away. At sea he was soon discovered. The captain wanted him thrown overboard but was spared when other passengers intervened.

Three other stowaways were sent down to shovel coal as stokers, but Thomal avoided that because he had been an altar boy who knew how to serve mass and a French priest took him under his wing. Onboard, Joe met a Syrian/Lebanese businessman who owned a clothing warehouse in Redfern and employed him doing odd jobs. He met Sydney identity and late-nineteenth-century champion boxer Sydney 'Chiddy' Ryan. Ryan ran a boxing gym in Elizabeth Street Redfern which some claimed was also a front for his two-up gambling school. Thomal took to boxing enthusiastically and learnt as much as possible about the pugilistic arts.

Thomal arrived in Sydney around 1891, fortunate because prior to Federation, colonial immigration laws were not as hard and fast as later federal immigration laws. The colonies tended to target Chinese immigrants so other non-Europeans could sometimes slip-in. It also meant that being a permanent resident in 1901 and coming from another British colony, he seems to have achieved Australian resident British subjectship (from 1948 called Australian citizenship).

There is a possibility Thomal disguised his real origins to escape immigration restriction laws. His daughter Esme testified in a 1948 court case that her father and grandfather were both 'American Negroes'. Even being an American (and therefore not a British subject) would have meant a problematic immigration status.[2]

By 1899, Thomal was an up-and-coming professional boxer with fights regularly reported in the press; winning some bouts and losing a few. At first, matches lasted four rounds, but by the early twentieth century, often went on for a punishing twenty rounds and more. The press described him as a 'scientific boxer' with a weighty punch who planned his moves in the ring, sometimes called 'Snaky Thomal' for his agile ability to avoid punches.

According to the *BoxRec* and *BoxerList* online databases, he had fifteen bouts, with three wins, and seven losses. His final Melbourne bout and win against Joe Newton on 24 October 1904 made him bantamweight champion of Australia. He retired professionally, but continued boxing through 1905 and 1906 as part of amateur and charity events.[3]

By August 1906, Thomal was running a boxing studio in Elizabeth Street, Sydney, teaching boxing and managing boxers. He was also a second to the black American champion Jack Johnson during the tumultuous bout against the Canadian Tommy Burns at Sydney Stadium. Johnson won to become World Heavyweight Champion much to the chagrin of supporters of the White Australia Policy who yearned for the emergence of another 'great white hope' to restore the championship status of the 'white man'. Thomal was also training and touting the skills of New Zealander George Fernandez as his own 'white hope' from 1911 to 1913.[4]

In 1904, Joe married Margaret Rivers, described as a 'half-caste from New Zealand'. She died relatively young in September 1919 of influenza during the Spanish Flu pandemic. The family was living in suburban Bexley.[5] They had three children, including two daughters who survived into adulthood. Esme Thomal, born in 1911, learnt music at school and became a musician. Josephine 'Joyce' Thomal was born in 1913.[6]

In 1938, Australian artist Violet Teague was commissioned to create paintings hung over the altar of

Peter French, Joe Thomal and Gwenda Wilson in the J C Williamson production of The Hasty Heart, 1946 (National Library of Australia).

All Saints 'Artic' Cathedral in the remote Canadian settlement of Aklavik, North West Territories for a series called *Epiphany of the Snows*. One work, called *Toilet,* had a black female servant as a subject. Teague found 'an African negress living in Surry Hills', an incongruous description of Australian-born Josephine 'Joyce' Thomal.[7] The painting was destroyed when the cathedral burnt down in 1974. A surviving image from *PIX* magazine clearly shows Josephine as the maid.

Tragically, soon after posing for the painting, Josephine was killed as a passenger aboard the Sydney Harbour ferry, *Rodney,* which capsized near Bradleys Head on 13 February 1938, as those onboard waved goodbye to sailors on the visiting United States cruiser *USS Louisville.* It was one of seven foreign warships visiting Sydney for the 1788 sesquicentenary celebrations. Seventeen of the nineteenth passengers were young women who came for a final glimpse of their boyfriends. One of them was Josephine Thomal.

The Sun reported on Josephine's funeral:

> Colored People Present. Paying tearful tribute to the memory of Josephine Phoebe Thomal, 24, white and colored people filed past the grey casket in Kirby's chapel. Her girl friend, Olive Gorman, was a pitiful figure. They were together on the Rodney, but were separated when thrown into the water. A spray of red roses was laid inside the casket by the girl's sister, Mrs. Esme Albany. Her father's beautiful wreath rested on top of the casket. Scores of Sydney's colored people were among the mourners.[8]

Later a benefit function was held at Newtown in honour of the victims and sister Esme played piano solos as part of the entertainment.[9] Esme married Philip Albany in 1933 and later married Sendy Togo in 1951. Sendy Togo was an Aboriginal man from Murwillumbah who made news in 1942 during the darkest days of World War Two when the Army,

Portrait of Joe Thomal as Blossom in the J C Williamson production of The Hasty Heart, 1946. Ritter-Jeppesen Studios, Melbourne (National Library of Australia).

man, he had limited income from boxing enterprises.

Later in November 1938, friends and supporters staged a testimonial event at *The Hub* theatre in Newtown, and according to the *The Labor Daily* prominent boxers and theatrical artists staged special displays including by 'star colored middleweights … Atilio Sabatino, Alabama Kid, Ossie Stewart, Syd Brown, and Allen Matthews'.[12]

In 1944, Thomal reached the pensionable age of sixty-seven and applied for an old age pension and was surprised to find his claim, which should have been routine, denied. He discovered legislation prevented anyone who was an 'aboriginal native of Asia, the Pacific Islands or Africa' receiving social security benefits. Even though a British subject, Joe was born in Africa.[13]

Officials, it was said, felt Thomal deserved a pension, and after all, who in Australia would deny a sporting star. The Minister for Social Services, Senator Fraser, investigated his case and within a month granted him a special compassionate allowance of twenty-seven shillings per week, equal to the old age pension. So, while Joe gained a measure of justice for himself, this stratagem meant that the general injustice remained.[14]

desperate for recruits, rejected him for service even though he was assessed as 'A1' only because he was black.[10]

In May 1938, Joe made representations about the distribution of funds raised in a public appeal in memory of those lost on the *Rodney* as well as five further victims of the Bondi surf tragedy of the same weekend; twenty-four victims. Of £3,840 collected, Thomal received just over £17 for his daughter's funeral. If funds had been divided equally, each victim's family would have received £160, then a substantial amount of money. Thomal noted that he was in a poor financial position with another dependant daughter and therefore could not see how he would be less worthy than others. It is not clear how the funds were eventually distributed but does show Joe felt he needed that equal share.[11] Now sixty and no longer a young

In one respect Thomal found it fortunate to be black. He was in demand in films, live theatre and vaudeville playing black characters. And as he became more experienced, he was found to be a good actor gaining roles in his own right. In 1924, Joe gave boxing lessons, newspapers noted, in South Taranaki, New Zealand. This was perhaps in conjunction with work as part of a touring group of actors in the play *White Heat* where he appeared in Dunedin in 1926.[15]

Thomal was employed by the Australia/British theatre impresario and actor Oscar Asche to perform in the production of *Chin Chin Chou* touring Australia and New Zealand. Asche produced around 2,500 performances of his 'Oriental Spectacle' from around 1917 to 1923.[16] In 1926, Thomal played *Wanna*

Singhe in Leon Gordon's play about the tropics called *White Cargo*. He toured with the play to New Zealand. It was still being performed in Sydney in 1938 and included future Hollywood star, Peter Finch. Thomal said he liked to give a good portrayal of 'the native' and used his training skills to keep Gordon fit. Joe played many roles in live productions and films until the 1950s. He used his acting skills to earn a living in some unusual ways.

In 1931, promoters of an African-themed adventure film called *Trader Horn* were delighted when an African potentate called Prince Tomate appeared in Melbourne and toured the southern states. In flowing robes, Tomate was said to live in luxury with many wives and command the loyalty of 10,000 warriors.[17] Coverage of his progress sparked an upsurge in interest in African themes and patrons paid to see more of Africa in *Trader Horn.* It was not until 1945 that Joe Thomal admitted he was paid to play Prince Tomate as a publicity stunt for the film.[18]

In April 1938, Thomal rode in the sesquicentenary celebratory parade of 'nations' on a float representing 'Africa'. Dressed in flowing robes, he waved heartily to the assembled crowds on the passing vehicle.

Thomal was convicted for helping to promote a film screened in Sydney: 'dressed in white, with horizontal stripes, representing a convict, and with his hands connected together with an imitation chain, he did parade King Street, Newtown, on September 4 [1936], carrying a notice about a local talkie on his chest and back'. He was arrested and fined him ten shillings with eight shillings costs for displaying an advertising placard.

In November 1952, Joe Thomal became ill on his way to the 'Actor's Retreat' at Sussex Inlet and was admitted to Wollongong Hospital. He died later that day on Sunday 23 November 1952. After a service at the Labor Funerals in Surry Hills, he was buried in Rookwood Cemetery.[19]

Incipient racism always followed him, and his family and sections of the press would snipe because of his colour. Grudging acknowledgement of his success could be followed by racist remarks like 'native, darkie, negro, or coloured'. Sometimes it was baldly stated that he had no right to compete against 'white men'. Despite the White Australia Policy, Joe Thomal lived a long and full life in Australia as a successful boxer, trainer, actor and celebrity.[20]

About the Author

Paul Convy is a local historian, writer, editor, founding member of the Australian Lebanese Historical Society, serving on the Executive for many years, and member of the RAHS. He has published widely on local history, in particular in the Eastern Suburbs, and on the history of the Lebanese in Australia.

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Stephen Bax: Master Chef to the Sydney Social World

Ian Dodd

On 22 July 1812, Stephen Bax was sentenced to death at the Essex Assizes at Chelmsford for burglary with intent to steal. The judge respited sentence, submitted his case to be considered for mercy, and his sentence was commuted to transportation for life.[1] He arrived at Sydney on the *Fortune* on 11 June 1813.

At about the time that *Fortune* left England, the government decided to encourage the families of transported convicts to follow them to the colony.[2] Stephen's wife Mary got herself top of the list of those wanting to go.[3] She was given passage in the *Kangaroo*, which carried wives of convicts and their children as its main cargo and disembarked in Sydney on 12 January 1814.

Stephen was probably assigned to government labour. The authorities knew from what he told them on arrival that he was a cook and confectioner, but we do not know whether they used those talents. On 21 February 1815, he was granted a Ticket of Leave. From then he had to fend for himself. He did not do too well because he could not pay the rent on one property and had to leave his furniture as security.[4] In musters he was described as a labourer until 1821 when he appeared as a baker. Things must have improved because in 1823 Mary unsuccessfully applied for a grant of land in the city on the basis that she had sufficient funds to build a dwelling.[5] By 1825 four of their children had been born in the colony – Thomas, George, Jane and John. On 28 November 1825, it was announced that Stephen was to have a Conditional Pardon.[6]

The first definite confirmation that business was looking up is Stephen's modest advertisement in the Sydney newspapers on 27 September 1826.[7] Styling himself as a pastry cook, cook, and confectioner he took

> this opportunity to return his sincere thanks to the ladies, gentlemen, and inhabitants in general, for the liberal support he has experienced, and flatters himself, by unremitted attention to business, to merit a continuance of their support; and has removed for the more convenience of business, to No. 8, George Street. Orders and dinners sent to

> any part of the town. Soups, jellies, custards, etc, on the shortest notice. N.B. Turtle soup on Friday.

The ship *Speke* arrived on 26 November 1826. One of its crew was a teenager also named Stephen Bax. He was Stephen and Mary's first son whom they had left behind in England as a baby. It must have been an emotional reunion. Stephen junior was soon at work helping in the business.[8] After about a decade, records show he was a seaman again, eventually settling in Hobart, crewing and commanding coastal vessels.

Bax's skill as a cook attracted the attention of the editor of the *Monitor* who wrote in the edition of 13 April 1827:

> A very snug genteel *Ordinary* at 4 o'clock is served up every day by Mr. Bax, the Confectioner and Pastry Cook, in Underwood's Buildings, George Street, which is attended by a few gentlemen of great respectability. We ... partook of a very superior well-cooked dinner, consisting of three courses, (pastry included) and fair share of a bottle of Cape Madeira, *and all for three shillings!* Mr. Bax's cold ham, mutton pies, and apple tarts, go off at a great rate every day, now the weather is something cooler, about 12 and 1 o'clock. Better are not made by the famous Mr. Birch, of London.[9]

An ordinary was a meal provided to the public at a fixed price.

Not to be outdone, the *Australian* also sang Stephen's praises the following week:

> A turtle was killed at Bax's on Wednesday, it weighed upwards of two hundred weight, and was otherwise in excellent condition. The callipee – the calipash – green fat fish, flesh and fowl, not forgetting its three hearts, all of the best possible order, and only needed Mr. Bax's superior and exquisite *post obiit* mode of cooking to render it fit for the gorge of an Alderman or a Sybarite.[10]

Perhaps in response the very next week the *Monitor* reported: 'The Colonial Secretary gave a grand dinner to the principal officers, civil and military, resident in Sydney, on Friday last. A fine turtle was dressed on the occasion by Mr. Bax.'[11]

Underwood's Buildings, View from the Sydney Hotel c.1826 by Augustus Earle. From the collections of the State Library of New South Wales (a1389002 / PX*D 321, Pt. 1, no. 2).

Stephen Bax also became an importer of fine foods. In 1828 he advertised the availability of an assortment of foods, as well as 'Excellent bread baked every morning'.[12] In July and August 1829 he inserted multiple newspaper advertisements for sale of shipments of jams, jellies, dried fruits, bottled fruits, sauces, cakes, nuts, herbs and spices, and a great variety of other foodstuffs which he claimed to be able to sell at prices lower than anyone else.[13] The same advertisements also proclaimed his readiness to make 'bride cakes' to order and to provide soups and made up dishes, all on the shortest notice. The imported preserved fruits were described by one newspaper as 'a very exquisite variety'.[14] At about that time he learnt that his Conditional Pardon had formally been approved.[15]

His establishment's fame was celebrated in a couple of stanzas of a ditty titled 'A Hot Day in Sydney':

You go to take luncheon at Bax's,
And call for cool jellies and buns –
But hotter and hotter it waxes, –
The jelly to liquid soon runs; –

His dainties are only a pester,
And so you withdraw from his shop; –
Loud rages the fiery North-wester,
As back to your office you pop.[16]

Emphasising his position as the first resort for anyone

wanting a meal was a reference in the text of a dramatic play published in the *Sydney Gazette*: 'I will divert him for a moment, and then retire to breakfast, ... if I can find one. Great Sir, I will away to Bax's ...'[17]

An article in the *Australian* on the best hotels and eating establishments in Sydney noted Bax's as a comfortable place.[18]

In December 1829, the business moved from George Street to York Street and was advertised extensively that month and the next, making a feature of its bread baking: 'Fancy breads, consisting of hot rolls, french rolls, and Laman's biscuits. ... Baker's bread of the best quality, and also ... well-baked Ship biscuit, warranted to keep in all latitudes.'[19] Soon afterwards Captain McKellar of the *Sovereign* entertained about twenty-five people on board his ship for which 'Messrs Bax and Durand were retained to get up the dinner.'[20]

In 1830 Stephen Bax became a publican, holding the licence for the Australian Hotel in George Street.[21] The change received notice in the press with the comment that 'from his tact and experience, we fully expect [he] will do the public every justice.'[22] Also noted was his house warming party at the hotel for a large number of his friends, who did not leave until the early hours of the following day.[23] He continued to make a feature of his meals, advertising 'Dinners sent out to order, and

executed at the Hotel on the shortest notice, and reasonable terms.' Every day at eleven o'clock there were soups, patties, and lamb and veal pies available. At two o'clock each day he served a set meal – 'An Ordinary on table (*d'hote*)'.[24]

In June 1831 the Captain of the first Australian steamship *Sophia Jane* gave a demonstration of its navigational capability on Sydney Harbour to members of the public. The *Sydney Gazette* expressed wonder at its comfort, power and speed, also noting that at two o'clock those on board were summoned to 'a sumptuous cold collation, served up under the direction of Mr. Bax of the Australian Hotel [in which] every luxury that could be devised was spread upon the hospitable table, garnished with the choicest champaign and other wines, ale, porter, etc.'[25] A similar report appeared in the *Monitor* which described the meal as 'a very superior cold collation, consisting of ducks, fowls, ham, and sweetmeat and fruits in profusion, provided ... at the rate of 2s. 6d. a head, which did Mr. Bax more than credit.'[26]

In January 1832 Stephen transferred his licence for the Australian Hotel and took over that of the St. Andrew's Coffee House in George Street.[27] He hosted there a 'whalers ball and supper ... got up in fine style.'[28] But he appears to have found himself in financial trouble because the Sheriff gave notice that his property in the business would be sold to satisfy a judgment.[29] And towards the end of the year all his private furniture was put up for auction.[30] He re-established his business in July 1833 at William Place George Street, taking over from Mr Moses.[31] The *Sydney Herald* gave him a boost, noting that he 'daily turns out of hand a splendid selection of pastry and confectionary.'[32] But he apparently defaulted on an agreement with Moses and before the year was out the Sheriff gave notice of sale of the property of the business at William Place.[33]

Stephen relocated to Adelaide Place George Street by early 1834.[34] In June 1835 he received another effusive notice in the *Australian*:

> The recent Government House supper was, we understand got up in a style beyond anything hitherto produced in the colony, by Mr. Bax, the confectioner, George Street; it composed 800 dishes, 650 of eatables, including all the delicacies of the season, and 150 ornamental. Mr. Bax received the well merited praise of most of the *elite* who were present on that occasion.[35]

Where would you see the like of this today? A coronation?

Not long after this, Stephen and Mary moved to Parramatta.[36] He set up business in George Street.[37] The days of fame were over. But for nearly ten years he

had been by far the most celebrated cook in Australia. Like some modern celebrity chefs, he had his financial difficulties, but he always managed to keep the business going. He is one of those many criminals who were given a drastic change of environment, and adapted, never returning to a life of crime in Australia. If success is measured in only financial terms, then he was not successful. He acquired no real estate, made no fortune. But his skills were appreciated and acknowledged. How many can say their name is celebrated not only in consistently favourable media reviews but also in verse, and in drama?

Mary had always been part of Stephen's success and played a significant part in the enterprise. Although her name did not often feature, she was also known as a confectioner.[38] She did not live to see Stephen get his Absolute Pardon which was publicly announced on 27 December 1841.[39] She had died on 1 April 1840. Stephen died on 7 October 1843 – unnoticed by the newspapers. Mary and Stephen's descendants live in Australia today.

About the Author

Ian Dodd is a RAHS member with an interest in the passengers and crew of the *Kangaroo*.

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RAHS 2023 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

On 18 April 2023, the RAHS held its AGM via Zoom. The following motions were passed unanimously:

- Confirmation of the minutes of the previous AGM, held 12 April 2022
- Adoption of the RAHS Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2022
- Adoption of the RAHS Financial Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2022

The 2023 Council nominations were then announced. Two nominations were received for four positions:

- Carol Liston
- Kathrine Reynolds

Under Regulation 28 of the RAHS Constitution, a postal ballot did not need to be held this year. The President welcomed Carol Liston and Kathrine Reynolds back as returning RAHS Councillors. He also thanked Pauline Curby, Linda Emery and Peter Hobbins for their contribution to the Society in their role as RAHS Councillors.

The 2023 Council nominations were followed by the 2023 President's Address, delivered by Dr Iain Stuart. The President gave a short talk on the history of the Burraga Copper mine (west of Oberon), which was once owned by the now-forgotten Copper King – Lewis Lloyd. He discussed the historical and heritage significance of the site.

The meeting closed and a special 2023/2024 Council meeting was held to elect members of the RAHS Executive. The results were:

- **President:** Dr Iain Stuart
- **Senior Vice President:** Ms Christine Yeats
- **Vice President:** Mr Graham Shirley
- **Treasurer:** Dr Kathrine Reynolds
- **Executive member:** Adjunct Associate Professor Carol Liston AO

Associate Professor Richard White was appointed to fill one of two casual vacancies. Nominations for the second vacancy will be discussed at the May 2023 Council meeting.

RAHS Council

President: Dr Iain Stuart
Senior Vice President: Ms Christine Yeats
Vice President: Mr Graham Shirley
Treasurer: Dr Kathrine Reynolds
Executive member: Adjunct Associate Professor Carol Liston AO

Councillors:

Mrs Lynne Allen
Mrs Judith Dunn OAM
Mr Craig McPherson
Dr Mark St Leon
Associate Professor Richard White
Ms Alison Wishart

Clear Fresh Water to Common Sewer: Hobart Rivulet and Urban Streams

Don Garden

Australian towns and cities are unusual in that their sites were mostly selected consciously according to a set of criteria or expectations. In this they were unlike older countries where the situation of a town was more likely an evolutionary process over long timeframes.

In the colonies, four environmental selection criteria were in play. First, it was essential to any settlement that there was a supply of water, usually a small stream or river, both for potable water and for industrial or similar purposes. Second, to build and live in a new settlement required available construction materials, notably timber and stone, while trees were also invaluable for all sorts of purposes, including firewood.

Third, most townsites were close to and facilitated a form of transport and communication. Creeks and rivers had to be crossed by punt or bridge, and this created a good location for a pub, store and other services. On the coast, ports were required for shipping and most Australian coastal ports (our capitals) were established in or close to harbours fed by river outlets.

Finally, another reason often cited was the natural beauty and aesthetic appeal of a site, such as a stream wandering through a green and lightly wooded valley or the pleasant vista across a coastal estuary. Green beauty might also indicate good tree cover or fertile soil for growing food.

In summary, towns were generally founded on well-watered, often-fertile and treed pleasant landscapes. The irony is that urban centres soon destroyed the very factors which were responsible for their siting; trees were cut down, land was built on, roads carved out and the formerly pure streams degenerated into bare and polluted channels for waste. There are innumerable examples of this including the Tank Stream in Sydney and Yarra River in Melbourne, the Avon River at Northam in Western Australia and the Grange Burn in Hamilton in Victoria.

The Hobart Rivulet in Tasmania/Van Diemen's Land followed this script. As the term 'rivulet' suggests, this is not a major stream. It is only about seven kilometres from its source in the southern foothills of Mount Wellington to its outflow on the western shore of the Derwent River estuary. For much of its journey it flows through a rocky valley but for the last two kilometres through the Hobart city, the landscape is flatter.

The Rivulet originally flowed into the Derwent at Sullivans Cove (site now of Constitution and Victoria Docks) close to a small offshore island (Hunter Island) that was joined to the land by a sand and rock 'causeway' that emerged at low tides.

Hobart was not the first British settlement on the Derwent River. In September 1803 a small party set up camp at Risdon Cove on the eastern shore. At the same time, Lieutenant David Collins was sent to establish a settlement at Port Phillip (Victoria) but, unimpressed with the poor resources around the settlement, early in 1804 he decided to move to the Derwent. He was equally unimpressed with Risdon Cove and on 19 February moved to a new site eight kilometres downstream on the western side.

The main reasons for the selection were referred to in a general order that he issued two days later, in a vain attempt to protect the stream and adjacent vegetation.

> Sullivan Cove, Derwent River, 21 Feb., 1804. The Lieutenant Governor having at length been enabled to fix the Settlement advantageously, and in a situation that appears to be blessed with that great comfort of life, a permanent
> supply of pure running water, cautions the people against polluting the stream by any means whatsoever; a proper place for them to water at shall be pointed out, and he positively forbids their going into, or destroying the underwood adjacent to the water, under pain of being severely punished.[1]

On 29 February Collins wrote to Governor King in Sydney and further expanded on his choice.

> In the center of this Cove is a small Island, connected with the Main Land at low Water, admirably adapted for the landing and reception of Stores and Provisions. Round this Island is a Channel for a Boat, at the Head of which is a Run of clear fresh Water, proceeding from a distance inland,

and having its source in a Rock in the Vicinity of the Table Mountain … The Ground on each side the Run is of a gradual ascent, and upon that next the Cove I have formed my Camp.

The Ocean and Lady Nelson are lying within half a Cable's length of the Shore, in about Nine fathoms Water. The Soil … appears … very advantageous … The Timber and Stone are in sufficient Quantity and Quality to answer all my Purposes; and I shall immediately set about the necessary work of getting my People under Cover, and preparing Ground for the reception of Seed.[2]

Collins therefore chose the Rivulet outlet for its permanent fresh water, good timber, stone for building and the sheltered cove with deep water anchorage and a landing place with secure storage. Collins did not mention aesthetic appeal, but the party's surveyor, G.P. Harris, described it as 'the most beautiful & romantic Country I ever beheld'.[3]

Collins' aspirations to protect the Rivulet were futile. Almost immediately timber was cut both legally and illegally and the pure water became polluted by traffic and waste. Although the settlement was tiny, over coming years the inhabitants were forced to go further upstream for water, but even that had its limits. Human waste and rubbish were increasingly dumped in and around the stream, contributing to high rates of disease and death in Hobart.[4]

Industries were established along the Rivulet's banks that drew on its water and utilised its channel for waste. Most numerous were water-driven flour and timber mills but there was also distilling and brewing (notably the Cascade Brewery) and other small processing plants. One calculation is that by the middle of the century there had been at least nine water-powered mills, three distilleries, at least six breweries, two woollen mills and one tannery, although not all operated at the same time.[5] Inevitably the deterioration in the quality and flow of the water became a source of disputes.

As the water became increasingly unsuitable for drinking, alternative sources were found, including diversions from other streams, private tanks and some reticulation. This facilitated the declaration of the Rivulet in 1843 as a 'sewer'.[6] Today this term is associated with odorous waste, particularly from toilets,

This sketch was made soon after the settlement was founded at Hobart. It shows one of the vessels close to Hunter Island where a cargo store has been established. Convicts are hauling a cart across the causeway, while behind them is the treed bushland stretching up to Mount Wellington. The pool of water on the right is most likely the original outlet of the pure waters of the Hobart Rivulet. View of Sullivan Cove 1804 / watercolour possibly by George William Evans (State Library of New South Wales).

From the middle of the nineteenth century, the lower reaches of the Hobart Rivulet were increasingly encased in brick and concrete. Old Houses on Hobart Rivulet at Wapping, n.d. but c. early twentieth century (RAHS Glass Slide Collection).

that is carried through constructed underground pipes and channels. At the time, the term was less specific and simply referred to a drainage channel. Such was now the designated role of the Hobart Rivulet!

Another reason for modifications of the Rivulet was its tendency following storms to overflow and flood the lower reaches of the settlement/town. This combined with the encroachment of properties, the development of the port and the need to align roads resulted in numerous diversions of its course. One of the most notable was the straightening in 1824–25 of the section that ran along the line of Collins Street (creating the 'New Cut') and joining it to the Park St Rivulet in its outflow.

The occasional floods also led to the construction of retaining walls by both private property owners and officials, so that the lower reaches through the town were increasingly encased in brick and concrete. This trend continued well into the twentieth century so that from near Molle Street through the city the Rivulet was

walled in. On top of this, literally, in the twentieth century the lower reaches disappeared from view as it was believed that such valuable city real estate should not be wasted. From near Molle Street buildings were constructed in the airspace above the Rivulet, so that it is almost all out of sight.

In Elizabeth Street there is still evidence of what lies beneath – beside the footpath a small section of the stonework of the 1842–43 Wellington Bridge is exposed to view. Not far away, near the Hobart hospital, the open 'cut' along Collins Street remains and provides a glimpse of the tunnel through which the Rivulet runs. Until a few years ago it was possible to take a walking tour along the underground path beside the Rivulet's culvert.

Perhaps the most dramatic change took place in World War I when the combined Hobart and Park Street Rivulet were encased in a tunnel under the Domain to a new outlet on the northern side of Macquarie Point.

On the positive side, since the 1980s a linear park has

been developed along the course of the Rivulet from near Molle Street upstream to the Cascade gardens. While very different from the landscape encountered by the settlers in 1804, it is green and attractive and gives walkers and cyclists some insight into the former rugged beauty of the Hobart Rivulet.

About the Author

Dr Don Garden, OAM FFAHS FRHSV, taught History and Environmental History at the University of Melbourne. He has written seventeen books, including local and regional histories, an environmental history of Australia and the Pacific and a history of El Nino events in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. He is the Immediate Past President of the Federation of Australian Historical Societies, former Co-Chair of GLAM Peak, Immediate Past President of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and a former member of the Australian Heritage Council. He is Honorary Secretary of the Royal Society of Tasmania, an Adjunct Professor at James Cook University, and a life member of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) and of the Albany Historical Society.

References

[1] General Order by Lieutenant Governor Collins, 21 February 1804, *HRA* Series 3, vol. 1, p. 219.

[2] Lieutenant Governor Collins to Governor King, 29 February 1804, *HRA* Series 3, vol. 1, p. 223.

[3] Barbara Hamilton-Arnold, Letters of G. P. Harris 1803–1812, Arden Press, 1994, p. 61.

[4] Stefan Petrow, *Sanatorium of the South? Public Health and Politics in Hobart and Launceston 1875–1915*, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1995.

[5] John Button, *The Rise and Fall of the Hobart Town Rivulet: An historic preservation study*, Tasmanian College of Advanced Education, 1978, p. 58; for further discussion on this and the following matters, see also Tony Rayner, *The Hobart Rivulet Historical Study*, Hobart City Council, 1998; Alison Alexander, *Beneath the Mountain: A history of South Hobart*, South Hobart Progress Association, 2015; The Wapping History Group, *'Down Wapping': Hobart's vanished Wapping and Old Wharf districts*, Blubber Press, 1988; Peter Freeman, *Hobart's Theatre Royal and the Hedberg: 200 years of change in Wapping*, University of Tasmania, 2021.
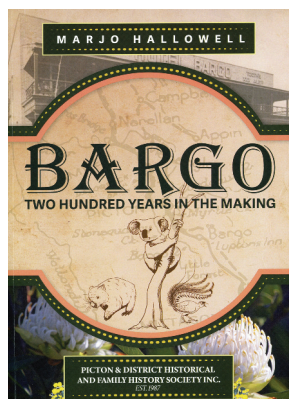
[6] Rayner, *The Hobart Rivulet*, p. 12.

SAVE THE DATE

2023

RAHS CONFERENCE

21-22 October 2023

at

The Wagga Wagga RSL Club

Book Notes

Bargo: Two Hundred Years in the Making

Written by Marjo Hallowell. Published by Picton and District Historical and Family History Society, 2022.

This publication commemorates the bicentenary of the first land grants of 1822 in Bargo, situated in the Wollondilly Shire. It is the culmination of years of collecting press cuttings, researching, and being involved in the local historical society: a rich history of the town from 1798, from first Aboriginal contact, explorers, bushrangers, and early settlement to 2022. The author uses primary source material, unpublished histories, recollections of the nineteenth century and the memories of those who reside there today to capture the history and the essence of this town. It depicts Bargo's people, places, events, social life, recreation, essential services, businesses, and the surrounding area. The author, Marjo Hallowell, is a long-time resident of Bargo, a local community asset and supporter. Many residents were involved in this 'project by the people of Bargo about Bargo, past and present'. Illustrated throughout with photographs, maps, plans and facsimiles.

Available from the author: marjofrombargo@gmail.com

ISBN 9780980750904 (paperback) 343 pages: illustrations, index; 30cm.

Book Note by RAHS Librarian Donna Newton.

Frederick Clissold, Esquire of Glentworth, Ashfield

Written by Chris Pratten and Ann O'Connell. Published by Ashfield District and Historical Society, 2023.

Chris Pratten and Ann O'Connell of the Ashfield and District Historical Society have written a thorough and interesting account of the life and livelihood of Frederick Clissold Esquire (1831-1892). Drawing on a variety of different documentary sources and research, the work maps out the various roles, enterprises, and family of Clissold. He was involved in a variety of primary industries, pastoralism and mining, local councils, and the horse-racing industry. The work emphasises Clissold's impact and influence in the development of various institutions in Ashfield and its surrounding regions and examines his continuing legacy in the area, including his residences, such as *Glentworth*, which is still standing and in use today. The book is well illustrated and an easy and engaging read and would be an invaluable source for anyone undertaking local history in Sydney's inner western suburbs.

Available from Ashfield and District Historical Society.

ISBN: 9780949842046 (paperback), 163 pages: illustrations; references, index; 29.8cm.
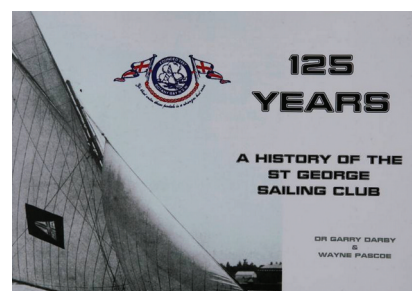
Book Note by Jessica Buckton, RAHS Volunteer.
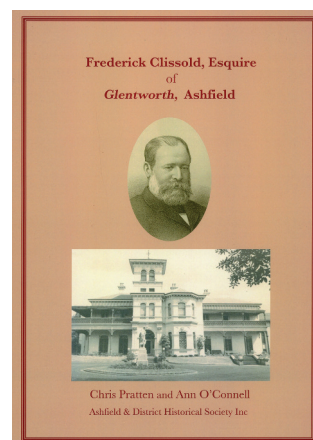
125 Years: A History of the St George Sailing Club

Written and published by Garry Darby and Wayne Pascoe.

Dr Gary Darby is a well-known historian who lives in the St George area and has twice won the prestigious Ron Rathbone Local History Prize. Wayne Pascoe has been the sailing club's historian for four years. Their efforts have resulted in a very thorough history of the St George Sailing Club, a club well-loved by the locals. The Club, situated in Sans Souci near the Captain Cook Bridge, was established in 1897. The location on Botany Bay provided a splendid base for the great delight of sailing. It has had its successful and difficult financial times, but members always rallied to the cause and the club, as the phoenix, has emerged renewed thanks to a merger in 2010 with the Manly 16 ft Skiff Sailing Club. The book outlines the many champion skippers, their crews and boats in a way a mere honour board could not. It is an important historical resource.

Available from St George Sailing Club: https://www.stgeorgesailingclub.com.au/.

324 pages: illustrations, portraits, index, 21 x 29.5cm.

Book Note by Elaine Phillips, RAHS Member.

The Inns and Outs of Liverpool's Old Pubs

Written by Glen Op den Brouw. Published by City of Liverpool and District Historical Society, 2022.
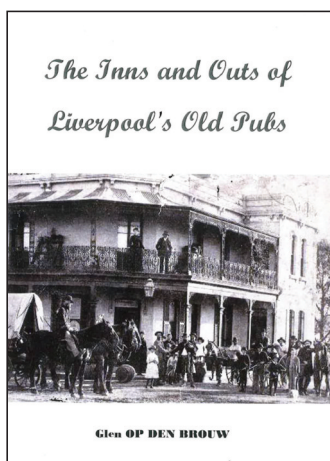
The *Inns and Outs of Liverpool's Old Pubs* is a fascinating read for any of those interested in learning more about how a community grows, interacts and unsurprisingly, enjoys their down time with a cold glass of beer. Glen op den Brouw's meticulously well researched book published by the City of Liverpool and District Historical Society, opens a welcome insight into the histories of a number of pubs across the Liverpool area. Throughout this record of various historical pubs and inns in Liverpool, historical photographs of their owners, before and current photo comparisons of the premises and historical newspaper articles accentuate and colour a living social history. What is highlighted in this work, is not just the historical significance of these venues but the lives that create and shape them and how these places become part of the fabric of the community. A great demonstration of this is the discussion about how, 'The Ship Inn' acquired its name. Though Liverpool's connections to the maritime industry and its early citizens may seem obvious, op den Brouw charts the scandalous case of William Ikin, the Chief Police Constable of Liverpool. Ikin's controversial conflict of interest as both pub owner and enforcer of licensing laws presents a colourful and engaging vision of early colonial history. The *Inns and Outs of Liverpool's Old Pubs* is recommended for any wishing to look inside this unique period of Australian history.

Available from City of Liverpool and District Historical Society.

ISBN: 9780645153019. vi, 106 pages: portraits (some colour), facsimiles (some colour); 30cm.
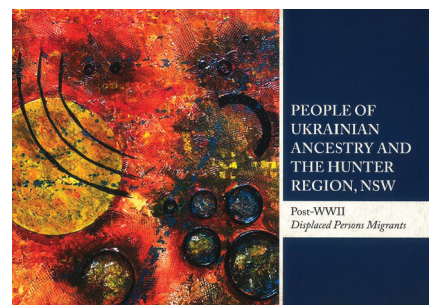
Book Note by Maximilian Reid, RAHS Volunteer.

People of Ukrainian Ancestry and the Hunter Region, NSW: Post-WWII Displaced Persons Migrants

Researched and compiled by Wolodymyr Motyka. Published by USCLtd (Sydney Hromada), 2021.

The *People of Ukrainian Ancestry and the Hunter Region of NSW: Post-WWII Displaced Persons Migrants*, researched and compiled by W. Motyka, is first and foremost a permanent record in the collective memory of those people of Ukrainian ancestry who began new lives in Australia. Made possible by the USCLtd Sydney Hromada, the Embassy of Ukraine and a Create NSW Cultural Grant, this work is at its core, a comprehensive Alphabetical Listing of Displaced Persons migrants who arrived in Australia from 1948 to 1954 to begin new lives in the Hunter region. An awe-inspiring listing, detailing first names and surnames in both Latin and Cyrillic script, dates and places of birth, spouses, arrivals and deaths is not just an accomplishment of research but also of linguistics. Importantly, this work also operates as a *living* record; charting the lives and histories of ordinary people displaced by war and embarking on a challenging journey to begin new lives. From experiences living in Displaced Persons camps, finding stable but grinding employment in the Newcastle steelworks, to the isolation of a homelife – all are detailed in a comprehensive fashion. This work marks a significant and beautifully human chapter to not just Australia's migration story but to all stories of migration and dispossession.

Available from the Ukrainian Association of Sydney.

ISBN: 9780646847962. 153 pages: illustrations, portraits, 21 x 30cm.

Book Note by Maximilian Reid, RAHS Volunteer.

Misfortune or Fraud? Illawarra and the 1840s Depression

Written by Lorraine Neate. Published by Illawarra Historical Society, 2023.

Australia was severely impacted by the Depression of the 1840s. Historian Lorraine Neate spotlights forty-two of these individual stories of financial hardship in the Illawarra Region. She shows how many became insolvent due to economic factors outside of their control, but others made 'unique financial missteps'. The book dedicates chapters to each of the insolvents and highlights how one insolvency impacted other businesses in the supply chain. For example, when builder Robert Osborne and carpenter Edward Creagan became insolvent in 1842, it impacted those who supplied timber, such as sawyers George Ancell and Francis Hemmings. In the foreword, Lorraine draws readers' attention to a particularly useful source – the insolvency documents held in the NSW State Archives Collection (Museums of History NSW). She explains how 'the files are a rich resource for researching early businesspeople, the value of assets and the types of goods and services being purchased by settlers'. Lorraine's research highlights how local and community history connects us to the past by showing the individual human experiences resulting from changes to global and national economic factors.

Available to purchase from the Illawarra Historical Society online bookshop: https://www.illawarramuseum.com/publications

ISBN: 978 909164 270

192 pages; photographs (black and white, colour), illustrations, maps. Includes bibliographical references and index. 30cm x 21cm.

Book note by Suzanne Holohan, RAHS General Manager.
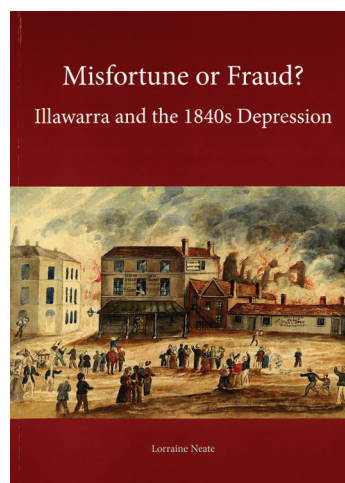
2023 Cultural Grants Program

We are pleased to share that the 2023 Cultural Grants Program is now open!

The Cultural Grants Program is a Create NSW devolved funding program administered by the Royal Australian Historical Society on behalf of the NSW Government. This Cultural Grants program assists historical research and publication of local, community and regional history projects.

Last year, eighteen projects were recommended for funding to the value of $59,105. Sixty per cent of projects focused on regional areas, twenty-three per cent on metropolitan Sydney, and seventeen per cent on Western Sydney.

Mosman Historical Society was one of last year's successful projects. They were awarded $4,600 to publish a collection of research articles on early Mosman. The book was recently published as *Mosman: Times Gone By* (2023).

We want to thank Create NSW for providing funding for the cultural grants program that supports local history and heritage projects, facilitating an understanding of the history of the people and places of New South Wales.

The 2023 Cultural Grants Program opens on 17 May at 9 am and closes on 23 June at midnight. If you would like to learn more about the 2023 Cultural Grants Program, you can visit our website.
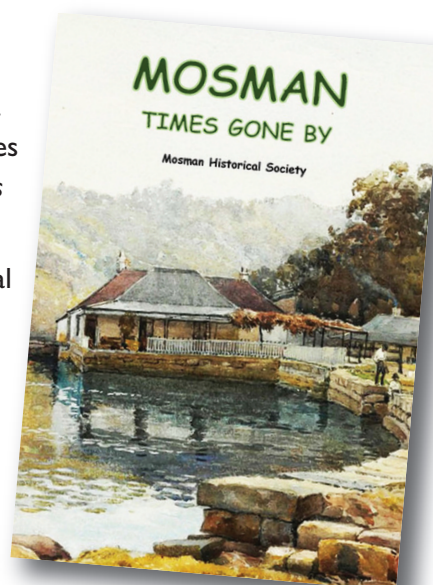
On the Shelf Donna Newton

Those of you who receive the RAHS e-News or follow us on Facebook will have seen the photograph and article about the ceremonial tree planting at Government House on 6 May 2023, which was attended by RAHS President Dr Iain Stuart. This event celebrated the coronation of Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla. The event prompted us to reflect on what we might discover in our photograph and ephemera collections relating to the Sydney visit of the late Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh in 1954 – 69 years ago. In addition to various photographs, we also located the menu from the 'State Dinner on the Occasion of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II', which was held at the Hotel Australia on 1 June 1953. The dinner concluded with 'Bombe Coronation' – no doubt a delightful variation on 'Bombe Alaska'!

Tree planting at Macquarie Place, 1954.

Queen Elizabeth II leaving Government House, 1954.

Coronation ceremonial tree planting, 6 May 2023.

HER MAJESTY
QUEEN ELIZABETH II
planted this tree
5th Feb 1954

THE GOVERNMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES

★

STATE DINNER

ON THE OCCASION OF

THE

CORONATION OF

HER MAJESTY
QUEEN ELIZABETH II

★

HOTEL AUSTRALIA, SYDNEY, 1st JUNE, 1953

Menu

OYSTERS ON SHELL

STEAMED FILLET OF WHITING
BON FEMME

ROAST TURKEY AND HAM

ICED ASPARAGUS
VINAIGRETTE SAUCE

BOMBE CORONATION

COFFEE