Royal Australian Historical Society
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Members of the Royal Australian Historical Society are warmly invited to attend the Society's Annual General Meeting.

Time: 6:00 pm, Tuesday, 14 April 2026

Location: Hybrid meeting

- In person at History House, 133 Macquarie Street, Sydney
- Online via Zoom

If you wish to attend, please email admin@rahs.org.au and confirm whether you will be joining us at History House or attending the meeting online. Further details will be provided once your attendance has been registered.

Following the meeting, refreshments will be served in the History House reception rooms. Members will have the opportunity to meet Councillors and enjoy an informal catch-up with fellow members.

Agenda

1. Welcome and Apologies
2. Confirmation of the previous AGM minutes held 15 April 2025
3. Consideration and, if deemed fit, adoption of the RAHS Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2025
4. Consideration and, if deemed fit, adoption of the RAHS Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2025
5. Declaration of the RAHS Returning Officer for the current year
6. Presidential Address
7. General Business
8. Closing

Voting and Proxies

All financial members of the Society are eligible to attend and vote at the AGM. Members who are unable to attend may appoint a proxy to vote on their behalf. A proxy must be a financial member of the Society at the time of voting. Proxy forms, addressed to the Returning Officer, must be received at **History House no later than 5:00 pm on Tuesday, 7 April 2026.** Members who are currently not financial but renew their subscriptions prior to the AGM will be eligible to attend the meeting and may also hold proxies for other financial members.

NOTICE OF ELECTION – RAHS COUNCIL POSITIONS 2026

At the close of nominations at 4:00 pm on Friday, 20 February 2026, three nominations had been received for four available positions on the Royal Australian Historical Society Council.

The nominations received were from:

- Carol Liston
- Katherine Reynolds
- Samuel White

Under Regulation 28 of the RAHS Constitution, a postal ballot is not required where the number of nominations does not exceed the number of available positions. Accordingly, a ballot will not be held to determine the four positions on the twelve-member Council.

RAHS Editorial Mark St Leon

The articles brought together in this issue of *History* embrace a diversity of subjects.

Musician and musicologist Mark Pinner opens our eyes to the important role that music played in supporting Newcastle's working-class movement. Music, performed by local musicians for local audiences, generated fraternity and a sense of community during the struggle for an eight-hour day.

Deviously expropriated from their Pacific communities, thousands of South Sea Islanders were landed in Australia to work as cane cutters, timbergetters and labourers in the latter half of the 19th century. As Adele Zubrzycka has outlined, the coastal north of New South Wales contains the largely overlooked legacy of generations of South Sea Islanders who made their lives there.

Our cherished History House stands in the company of several heritage buildings lining the adjoined Macquarie and College Streets. College Street was named for Sydney College, erected in the 1830s, a remnant of which is embodied in today's Sydney Grammar School. Former 'Grammar' headmaster, John Vallance, and heritage architect Howard Tanner, describe how they came to install the portico foreseen in the original design of Sydney College and disguise a humble fire escape as a work of art.

Gravestones may not only reveal stories but suggest pathways for further historical enquiry. Sioned Lavery provides two examples drawn from Sydney's Camperdown Cemetery. The 1856 monument of the eminent harpist Nicholas Bochsa reminds us that the young colonies of Australia were already being integrated into the theatrical and musical circuits straddling the earth. The graves of members of the Russell family acknowledge the presence of the women seldom mentioned in the history of one of Australia's outstanding 19th century industrial families.

Until the arrival of Colonel 'Ike' Austin, public displays of expert marksmanship did not figure in colonial entertainment. Impressions of America's 'Wild West' were informed by newspapers and novels. In this article, your Guest Editor describes how 'Ike' single-handedly expanded colonial notions of entertainment and conveyed his own Civil War and 'Wild West' experiences.

I hope there is a little bit here to inform and inspire every shade of historical taste.

Contents March 2026 Number 167

Brass Bands and Organised Labour in Colonial Newcastle, 1861—1901: The Eight-Hour-Day Movement

Mark Pinner

Eight hours to work,
Eight hours to play,
Eight hours to sleep,
Eight bob a day.
A fair day's work,
For a fair day's pay.[1]

At 4 pm on 22 June 1895, after 12 years of fundraising by Newcastle's Eight-Hour-Demonstration Committee and aided by a land grant from the colonial government, Newcastle's first Trades Hall was opened adjacent to the Technical College in what is now Hunter Street. Trades Hall provided a meeting place for Newcastle's labour organisations and was emblematic of the strength of the city's working class. As had become customary for any civic event, a brass band was present. Mr R. Scott's Adamstown Brass Band was 'stationed in the street, and prior to the opening they played a number of selections.'[2] By this time, brass bands had become an integral part of community life in the Newcastle area, one manifestation of working-class culture that accompanied migration from Northern England, Wales and Northern Europe.

Adamstown Brass Band, 1 October 1897, from the Ralph Snowball Collection. With kind permission of Newcastle City Library.

It is impossible to pinpoint precisely when brass bands first appeared in Newcastle. However, reports in the press mention a band attached to the volunteer military forces as early as 1861. The earliest mentions of civilian bands date from 1866 when the Waratah Miners' Band, and another unnamed 'small attempt at a brass band', performed at the Waratah Foot Races.[3] Bands were formed in other parts of Newcastle and, by 1870, there were at least seven bands in the area. The Borough of Lambton alone was the home of two: the Lambton and Lambton German Brass Bands.[4] Compared to bands elsewhere in the colonies, where clarinets and the occasional piccolo were part of the instrumentation, photographic evidence shows Newcastle's bands to be all brass, of modest size and strictly the domain of men. During the colonial period most bands were, with the occasional exception, locality based in contrast to Britain where bands were more formally attached to particular mines or works.

There were numerous examples of bands enlisted to serve the cause of organised labour. In 1872, the Lambton Brass Band accompanied a procession of miners to celebrate a pay increase to sixpence per ton that had been granted by Mr Croudace, manager of the Lambton Pit.[5] In 1874, a Grand Demonstration was held to celebrate an agreement between the Coal Miners' Association and the Associated Colliery Masters ending arbitrary wage cuts and reducing the working day to 10 hours. Held on the Newcastle Lunatic Asylum Grounds, special trains were provided to deliver a crowd of over 1,000 people.[6] A procession from the railway station to the Grounds of the various miners' lodges and their respective bands took place in the following order: the Borehole Miners & Hamilton Brass Band; the Burwood Brass Band & A. A. Company's Men; the Wallsend Brass Band and the Wallsend Company's Men; the Co-operative, Waratah and Lambton Men and the [Lambton] German Brass Band; and the Lambton Brass Band followed by the New Lambton, Anvil Creek and Greta Men.[7]

Miners' Gathering, Cooks Hill, September 1888, complete with brass band. Ralph Snowball/ Norm Barney Collection. With thanks to the University of Newcastle Cultural Collections.

A photograph taken in September 1888 during a three-month strike by miners shows a brass band taking part in a demonstration. Although wages and the employment of non-union labour were, like previous demonstrations, purported issues, the great disparity in wealth between mine owners and miners was the undercurrent. As labour historian Robin Gollan observed, this 'strike was the first overt expression of such a criticism [of the social order] backed by industrial action.'[8]

Undoubtedly, one of the biggest movements within organised labour during the nineteenth century was the struggle for an eight-hour working day. Although this movement had earlier origins, it gained traction in Britain and eventually surfaced in the Australian colonies. In August 1855, stonemasons working in Sydney's Rocks area sought an eight-hour day,[9] and in April 1856 so did stonemasons working on the construction of the University of Melbourne.[10]

In Newcastle, demands for an eight-hour day appeared as early as November 1869 when 'the building trades convened' at Mr F. Ash's large room in the Bricklayers' Arms 'for the purpose of furthering the eight-hour movement.'[11] There were also demands for shorter working hours in the rail industry during the 1870s. In April 1883, miners at the Wallsend's Co-operative Colliery passed a motion at their monthly lodge meeting to 'to abide by the eight hours' system.'[12] In July 1883, brass bands were sought for Newcastle's first Eight-Hours Demonstration to raise funds for the building of a Trades Hall.[13] The demonstration at the Crystal Palace Gardens Waratah began with a parade, followed by festivities including dancing to the bands. The order of procession in the parade was decided by a ballot with bands being required to submit competitive tenders to supply a minimum number of ten to twelve performers for a fee. Bands needed to charge for their performances to help cover the costs of instruments, the bandmaster's fee, and payments to players.[14] Bands also raised capital through subscriptions in their local communities and through activities like providing music for dancing, or picnic excursions.

Eight Hours Demonstration.

TENDERS are invited for TWO BANDS of MUSIC of not less than ten performers each, to attend the above demonstration (as required by the Committee), on TUESDAY, October 16th, 1883.

Bands to provide their own refreshments. Tenders to be addressed to the undersigned as early as possible, from whom further particulars can be obtained.

The Committee do not bind themselves to accept the lowest or any tenders.

By order,
JAMES CURLEY ⟩ HON.
D. MELVILLE ⟩ SECRETARIES.
Newcastle, Sept. 19th, 1883.   7331

Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate, 20 September 1883.

Participation in these Demonstrations provide not only a snapshot of the development of the brass-band movement but the nature of the industries active in the Newcastle area. At the inaugural Demonstration, only two bands were engaged, the Lambton and Wallsend bands, and the trades represented included shipwrights, building, rail and boiler making. By the 1884 demonstration, tenders from four bands were accepted: the Hamilton; Artisans'; Wallsend and the Great Northern. It was also reported that another band, the Stockton Band, had also taken part.[15] At the

Demonstration Ground the program consisted of speeches, a sports' program, and musical amusements. Hinting at the repertoire of the bands the *Newcastle Morning Herald* reported 'to the back of the grandstand, there was a dancing booth, and here a band was playing, inviting those who could accept the challenge to trip it merrily in a valse or a polka.'[16]
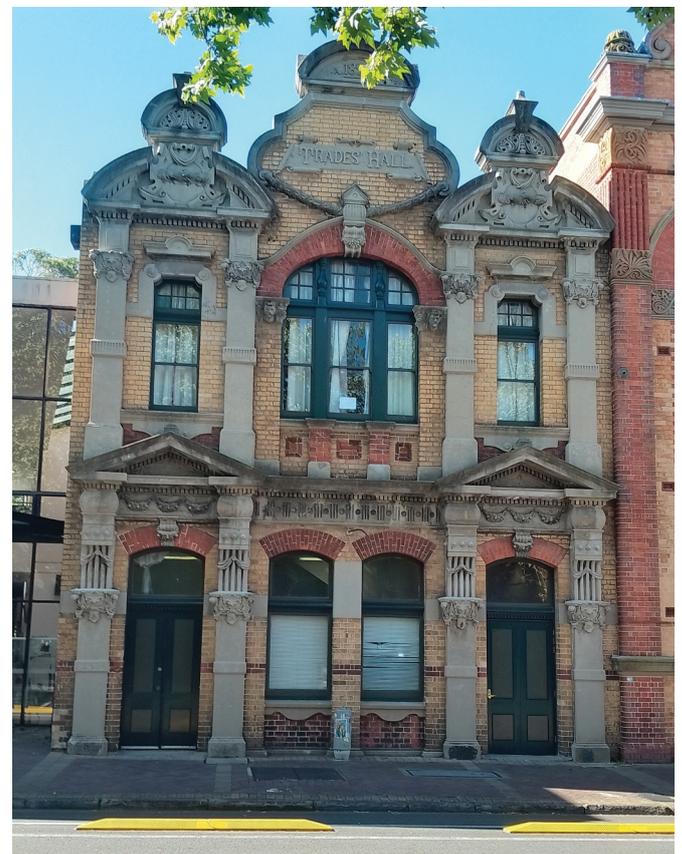
Before the end of the colonial period, many other bands participated in the Demonstration including the Great Northern, Stockton, Waratah, City, Merewether-Burwood,[17] Barkel's Model, District Fire Brigades, Adamstown, Varley's,[18] Excelsior, West Wallsend, Newcastle Temperance, Wharf Labourers' and Young Australia Bands. By 1884, trade representation had also expanded to include the first official participation of coal miners, coal trimmers and lumpers, wharf labourers, seamen, engineers, shop employees and iron workers. As the date of the Demonstration varied from year to year, the day was declared a regional public holiday beginning in 1885.

In 1886, the 4th Regiment Band, under Bandmaster William Barkel, made its first appearance at the Eight-Hour Demonstration, an overtly political event. This band was formed at the end of 1884 by the consolidation, under the part-paid system, of the local volunteer infantry corps into one unit known as the 4th Regiment Newcastle. Provision was made for a band of 25 members, made up of contingents from Newcastle and the former East and West Maitland Volunteers. This was larger than civilian bands which averaged only 10 to 15 members at that time.[19] Although the military hierarchy initially forbade the band's participation in the Eight-Hour Demonstration, it led the procession with 'their excellent selection of march music … the theme of universal comment.'[20] It is interesting that the 4th Regiment Band also charged a fee for performing despite receiving government

Band of 4th Regiment (Newcastle) c.1887. With thanks to Greg and Sylvia Ray.

funding. This may have been to augment the wages received by the performers and bandmaster under the part-paid system.[21]

By the 1890 Eight-Hour Demonstration, six bands were engaged for the parade, a magnificent procession one mile long consisting of 7,000 persons and around 15,000 and 30,000 spectators.[22]

During the early 1890s, the Australian colonies experienced a major financial depression, the result of a banking crisis and of strikes by shearers and in the maritime industry. Newcastle's Eight-Hour Demonstration was affected, with many of the societies participating in the 1893 procession being 'virtually on the brink of insolvency.'[23] The payments made to bands suffered accordingly. In 1889, bands had tendered their services for amounts between £8 to £10. By 1897, tender amounts had fallen to between £5 and £5 5s.[24]

Newcastle Trades Hall, Hunter Street, 2024. Author's collection.

However, the 1890s depression appears to have had only a short-term impact on the Eight-Hour Movement. Fortunes eventually recovered and sufficient funds, aided by a land grant from the colonial government, were raised to build Newcastle's Trades Hall. The push for an eight-hour working day continued beyond Australia's Federation in 1901 so that, by 1916, it was universally recognised in

Australian industrial awards. Organised labour's push for an eight-hour working day is still celebrated as Labour Day in New South Wales, on the first Monday each October.[25] Although street parades have long since ceased to be a part of Labour Day celebrations, they were very much part of these activities during the late-colonial era. As well as the Eight-Hour Demonstration, brass bands were integral to any civic occasion and a part of the fabric of working-class life in colonial Newcastle.

About the author

Dr Mark Pinner is a performer, musical director, musicologist and music historian with research interests in brass and military bands, working-class music, and nineteenth-century opera. He is the author of *Brass Bands in Colonial New South Wales: A Social History* and has contributed book chapters on music criticism, the songsters of Charles Thatcher and journal articles on racism in musical theatre and the music of the Soudan War. Mark is also President of the Hunter Regional Band Association.

References

1 Motto of the Australian Stonemasons, adapted from Welshman Robert Owen's slogan. National Museum of Australia, 'Defining Moments: Eight-Hour Day', https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/eight-hour-day.

2 'The New Trades Hall', *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 24 June 1895, p. 6.

3 'The Waratah Foot Races', *Newcastle Chronicle*, 29 August 1866, p. 3.

4 Indicating the presence of Miners from Northern Europe.

5 'Monster Meeting of Miners', *Newcastle Chronicle*, 27 July 1872, p. 3.

6 'Order of Procession', *Miners' Advocate and Northumberland Recorder*, 18 March 1874, p. 2.

7 'Order of the Procession', *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 25 March 1874, p. 2.

8 Robin Gollan, *The Coalminers of New South Wales: A History of the Union, 1860–1960*, Melbourne University Press, 1963, p. 5.

9 Rowan Cahill, 'The Eight Hour Day and the Holy Spirit', *Recorder: Official organ of the Melbourne Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History*, no. 253, March 2007, https://labourhistorymelbourne.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/recorder253.pdf.

10 National Museum of Australia, 'Defining Moments: Eight Hour Day'.

11 'Eight Hour Movement', *Newcastle Chronicle*, 23 November 1869, p. 3.

12 'Co-operative Miners', *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 30 April 1883, p. 3.

13 See Rod Noble, 'The Hunter Valley's Eight-Hour Movement and its Connection with the First Newcastle Trades and Labour Council, 1869–1886', *Illawarra Unity: Journal of the Illawarra Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1999, pp. 45–55. There had been a local branch of Sydney's Eight-Hour Committee.

14 Player payments appear to have been common at this time.

15 'The Eight Hour Demonstration', *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 16 October 1884, p. 3.

16 'The Eight Hour Demonstration', *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 17 October 1884, p. 2. For more detailed examination of band repertoire during the colonial period, see Mark Pinner, *Brass Bands in Colonial New South Wales: A Social History*, Fernmill Books, 2021.

17 These bands performed alone or combined at different times.

18 One of the few bands directly attached to a particular employer. A brief history of Varley's can be found here: https://varleygroup.com/about-us/our-history/.

19 'Band for 4th Regiment Volunteer Infantry', *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, 25 September 1884, p. 5.

20 'The Eight Hour Demonstration', *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 15 October 1886, p. 8.

21 It appears that Barkel, and probably many of the members of the 4th Regiment Band were full-time musicians.

22 'The Demonstration', *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 10 September 1890, p. 8.

23 'Eight Hour Day', *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 20 October 1893, p. 6.

24 'Eight Hours' Demonstration', *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 18 September 1889, p. 7; 'The Eight-Hour Celebration', *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 30 September 1897, p. 4.

25 The Australian Capital Territory and South Australia share the same date. The Northern Territory and Queensland observe Labour Day on the first Monday in May; Western Australia observes Labour Day on the first Monday in March; and in Victoria and Tasmania on the second Monday in March.

A Short History of South Sea Islanders in Northern New South Wales

Adele Zubrzycka

Australian South Sea Islanders are the descendants of over 50,000 Melanesian men, women and adolescents who were legally and illegally recruited to work in the Queensland and New South Wales sugar industry between 1863 and 1904.[1] Since 1914, most research into the employment of Melanesian labour in the industry has focussed on Queensland.[2] Consequently, the important connection between past and present Islander communities and the history of New South Wales has been overlooked.[3] The 2017 Tweed Valley Hospital development, which involved the partial demolition of three Islander-built dry stone walls on a former sugar estate in Cudgen, northern New South Wales, highlighted this oversight. Their removal was strongly opposed by the local community and Islander historian Clive Moore.[4] This article aims to enhance our understanding of Islander contributions to the New South Wales sugar industry and their lives and pursuits outside of it.

South Sea Islanders were first engaged to work in New South Wales in 1847 when Benjamin Boyd recruited an estimated 200 males and females from Vanuatu (then the New Hebrides) and other small South Pacific islands to work as shepherds on his pastoral stations in the districts of Bega and the Monaro.[5] This scheme was marred from the beginning and it ended tragically for many of Boyd's recruits, several dying and others forced to find work retrieving the bodies of people who had suicided or drowned in Sydney Harbour. In October 1848, all of Boyd's remaining Islander recruits left the colony aboard the Marist mission vessel *Arche d'Alliance*. Boyd was declared bankrupt in 1849 and disappeared on a bird-hunting expedition on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands in 1851.[6]

After Boyd's disastrous attempt to introduce South Pacific labour, when and where South Sea Islanders were landed again in the colonies is difficult to ascertain. However, in 1863, 67 men from Vanuatu were landed at the port of Brisbane aboard the schooner *Don Juan* to work on Robert Towns' Logan River cotton plantation.

The only well-documented employer of South Sea Islanders in New South Wales was William W. Julius, the owner of Cudgen Mill, 10 km southwest of Tweed Heads. Julius employed an estimated 500 Islanders (many from the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) on his Cudgen estate between 1878 and 1892.[7] Many had originally been landed in Queensland and were engaged by Julius either directly or when they travelled south in search of better working conditions. In addition to employing Islanders on his estate, Julius leased land to them for their own cane farming activities. Many of the dry stone walls

South Sea Islanders at Cudgen Mill in 1902. The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser, 22 February 1902, p. 486.

constructed by Islanders on his Cudgen estate still stand today apart from those impacted by the Tweed Valley Hospital development. By 1895, the Islander community at Cudgen was well-established and had formed a cricket team and a choir and raised funds to build a church (St John's) that could accommodate 100 people.[8]

Cudgen Mill was purchased by John Robb of Robb and Co. in 1882. Robb continued to employ South Sea Islanders and lease surrounding farms to Islander families and individuals. Robb and Julius are reputed to have developed respectful relationships with their Islander employees and provided them with fair wages and living conditions.[9] Nevertheless, these representations are difficult to confirm and contradictory narratives appear in local newspapers. For example, 60 Islanders employed by Robb went on strike in September 1891, demanding an increase of five shillings to their £1 per week wage.[10] Rather than agree to their terms, Robb allegedly replaced these workers with European labourers.[11] Robb died in September 1911. On the day of his funeral, 200 mourners (including, allegedly, some Islanders) walked behind the horsedrawn hearse bearing his coffin to Murwillumbah Cemetery.[12]

When the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR) acquired Robb's estate in 1912, it immediately cancelled all South Sea Islander leaseholds in what CSR described as 'whitewashing' the estate.[13] This had a devastating impact on Islander families, some of whom had spent decades establishing homes and cane farms on their properties. Many were forced to find alternative work such as timbergetting and cane cutting on nearby properties. In addition to the Cudgen Mill, CSR engaged Islanders for domestic work, but not mill work, in 1884 at its Condong Mill between the towns of Tumbulgum and Murwillumbah.[14]

Further south, in towns on the Lower Clarence Valley and in districts around the Richmond Valley, fewer South Sea Islanders appear in documentary records. The records of CSR's Southgate, Chatsworth, Harwood, Darkwater and Broadwater mills do not contain any references to the direct employment of Islanders.[15] In these areas, most large sugar mills and plantations employed European, Indian and Aboriginal workers, partly due to the excise and bounty system introduced by the Commonwealth Government to encourage the employment of 'white' labour.[16] Consequently, many Islanders worked in smaller mills or cane farms and became self-employed.

Reports in local newspapers suggest that a small number of South Sea Islanders were residing and working in these areas by the mid-1880s.[17] On the Lower Clarence, for example, John Hackaka, lived

The funeral of John Robb, manager of the Cudgen Sugar Mill, followed by a procession of 200 mourners, 1911. Object number M24-14. Tweed Regional Museum.

amongst other Islanders and raised funds for the British & Foreign Bible Society in 1888 and 1890.[18] Local newspaper reports provide insights into the lives of Islanders in the towns of Maclean, on the Lower Clarence, and Chatsworth, near Grafton. In Maclean, a township of Islanders was established by 1900 along a 'large narrow strip of uneven country' with private residences and 'two or three public buildings'. In 1904, an Islander, Jack Tanna, could afford to hire a housekeeper (who, unfortunately, attempted to poison a friend of Tanna).[19] At the Chatsworth Sugar Mill, Islanders were employed in mill work in 1884. Islanders were buried in the Maclean Cemetery from at least the 1890s. Further archival research is needed to establish other insights into Islanders working and living in these regions.

Cane gang of eleven sons of original South Sea Islanders in the Tweed district, c. 1950. Object number TH1 09. Tweed Regional Museum.

Following the passage of the *Pacific Island Labourers Act 1901,* (one aspect of the so-called white Australia policy) it was proposed to deport an estimated 7,068 South Sea Islanders between 1906 and 1908.[20] Exemptions were allowed for upwards of 2,500 Islanders to remain in the country, many of whom settled on the Northern Rivers.[21] Islander communities were established in places such as Fingal, Tweed Heads, Chinderah, Cudgen, Murwillumbah, Eungella and Tumbulgum where they established their own cane farms, banana plantations and gardens; sold fruit and vegetables at local markets or to neighbours; and earned additional income from fishing, prawning or cane cutting activities. Some Islanders found work as timbergetters, while others moved to the cities, working odd jobs or finding employment at Islander-run boarding houses such as one in the Sydney suburb of Ashfield.[22] Many Islanders also fell victim to violence, poverty and discrimination. Second-generation Islander Johnny Itong recalled that

Murwillumbah Hospital excluded 'coloured people' from entering and, at the Empire Theatre in Tweed Heads, 'blacks' were segregated from 'whites'.[23]

In Australia today, the South Sea Islander community remains prominent across northern New South Wales, especially in the Tweed region. One of its best known members is political activist and writer Faith Bandler who grew up on a banana plantation in Tumbulgum and later in Murwillumbah. Her father, Wacvie Mussingkon, had been kidnapped from Ambrym, Vanuatu, in 1883 and 'sold as a slave' to a sugar plantation in Mackay, Queensland. In 1897, Wacvie absconded and eventually settled in the Tweed district.[24] He played a key role in challenging the deportations proposed under the *Pacific Islands Labourers Act.* Bandler herself campaigned heavily for the 1967 Referendum and authored several books, two of which described the experiences of her father (*Wacvie*) and brother (*Weloa, My Brother*) in Queensland and New South Wales before and after 1901.[25]

Conclusion

The history of South Sea Islanders in northern New South Wales is recognised in local heritage listings for the Cudgen Burial Ground, the Maclean Cemetery, along the Lower Clarence River, and the remaining dry-stone walls at Cudgen.[26] A large body of published work documents the lives of Islanders in the Tweed district and their earlier employment in southern New South Wales by Benjamin Boyd. Nevertheless, there is a need for further research on South Sea Islanders who have lived and worked along the Richmond and Lower Clarence Valleys, and in cities such as Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. The present dearth of available archival material, local studies and Islander community histories is a significant drawback. Further research would ideally grow this list and ensure the contribution of South Sea Islanders to the social, economic and cultural history of New South Wales is recognised and celebrated.

About the author

Dr Adele Zubrzycka is an early career researcher focussing on post-colonial history and archaeology in Australia. Her PhD research centred on South Sea Islander power and identity at the Pioneer Sugar Estate, North Queensland. It formed part of a wider, collaborative research project exploring the lived identities of Australian South Sea Islander communities. Adele's research interests centre on nineteenth and twentieth-century tropical agricultural industries, migrant labour experiences, and the dynamics between them.

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4 See Emelda Davis, 'Children of the Sugar Slaves: Black and Resilient', MA thesis, University of Technology Sydney, 2020 and citations.

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7 Joanna Boileau, *Caldera to the Sea: A History of the Tweed Valley*, Tweed Shire Council, 2006, pp. 110–111.

8 Boileau, *Caldera to the Sea*, p. 113; *Tweed and Brunswick Advocate and Southern Queensland Herald*, 3 April 1895; 'Cudgen Headland', *Tweed Daily*, 5 October 1918, p. 4.

9 Boileau, *Caldera to the Sea*, pp. 111–113.

10 *Northern Star*, 30 September 1891, p. 2.

11 *Northern Star*, 7 October 1891, p. 2.

12 'Local and General', *Byron Bay Record*, 30 September 1911, p. 7; Tweed Regional Museum, 'South Sea Islanders on the Tweed', https://museum.tweed.nsw.gov.au/explore/people-places/people/south-sea-islanders.

13 Letter to CSR Co. General Manager, 4 December 1911, C1-0-6-2, Document 6, *Cudgen mill and estate,* pp. 5–8, Noel Butlin Archives Centre (hereafter NBAC); Extracts from CSR Board Minutes, C1-0-6-2, Document 2, *Cudgen mill and estate,* NBAC; 'Kanakas Homeless on the Tweed River', *Leader*, 12 March 1912, p. 2.

14 CSR Limited Archives, Deposit 1, AU NBAC N305, C10, Folder 6, Document 4, Extract from Tweed letter book no. 36/5/1884, p. 139, NBAC.

15 CSR Limited Archives, Deposit 1, AU NBAC N305, C1-0-4, *Clarence River district Southgate Mill, Chatsworth Mill, Harwood Mill and non-CSR mills*; C1-0-5, *Richmond River district - Broadwater mill and non-CSR mills*; C1-0-4-1, *Macleay River district - Darkwater mill and non-CSR mills*; C1-0-6 *Tweed River district - Condong mill and non-CSR mills*; C1-0-6-2, *Cudgen mill*, NBAC.

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18 'British and Foreign Bible Society', *CRE*, 29 May 1888, p. 3.

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22 Davis, 'Children of the Sugar Slaves: Black and Resilient', 2020

23 Johnny Itong, *History of South Sea Islanders on the Tweed*, 1994, p. 23.

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25 Boileau, *Caldera to the Sea*, pp. 36–37.

26 NSW State Heritage listings for: Cudgen Burial Ground (LEP #2520096), Chinderah Cemetery (LEP #I13), Dry Stone Walls (LEP #I22), Maclean Cemetery (LEP #I196), House - 102 Frederick Street, Ashfield.

Classical Education: Making a Statement in Modern Sydney

John Vallance and Howard Tanner

Ever since and no doubt before Pericles appropriated cash from the Delian League's treasury to create a legacy on the Athenian Acropolis, institutional architecture has attracted controversy. The Parthenon is still a focus for argument today, even if it is not so much because of the original cost as the fact that the beauty of its whole and its parts can only be appreciated by visiting both Athens *and* the British Museum.
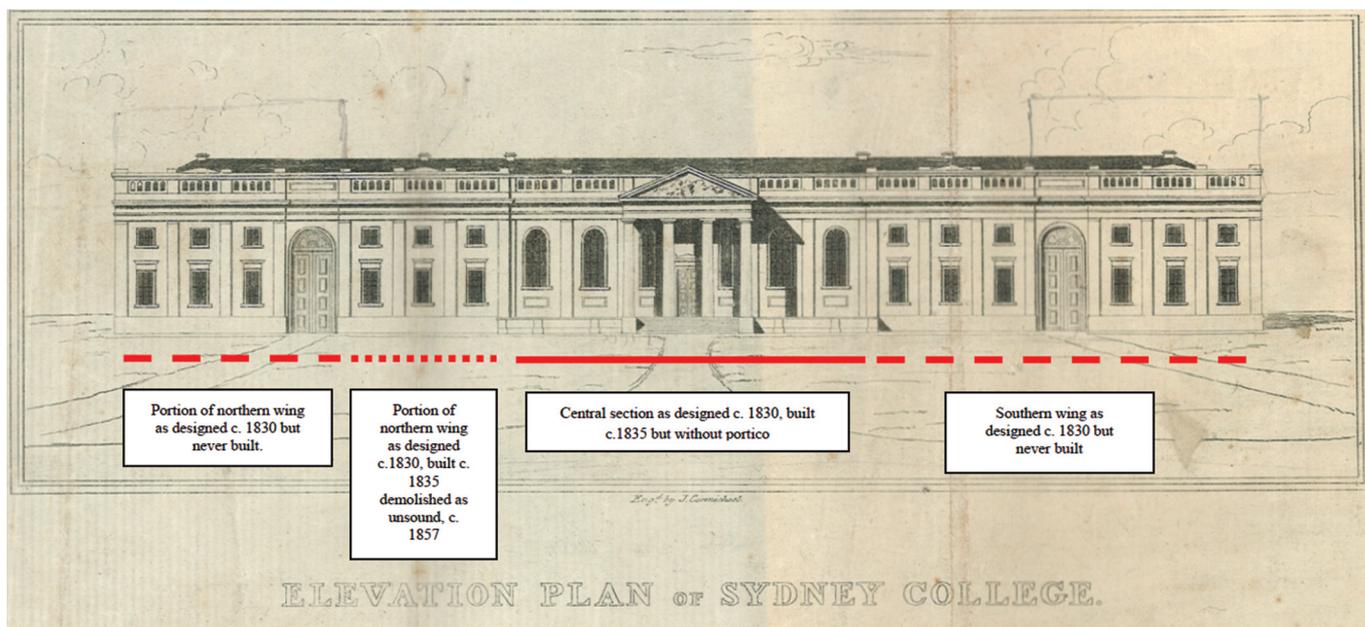
Buildings in that classical tradition were designed as much to be admired and enjoyed from outside as from within. This may be why they lasted as long as they did. It remains the case that outstanding modern architecture in the classical manner is a source of pride and confidence for the communities that produce it and not just for the people who work inside.

That said, what we are prepared to pay for, let alone accept, as public beauty, changes with time. Corporate displays of public confidence and prosperity have become less and less acceptable over the past century. In our own lifetimes, as community pride began to foster jealousy and resentment, commissioning organisations grew correspondingly cautious. One generation's confidence in the future can easily look like insensitive hubris to the next.

Private schools in Sydney have attracted criticism in recent decades for spending money on grand developments instead of more worthy educational ends. The Trustees of Sydney Grammar School ('Grammar') were well aware of this a quarter of a century ago when they faced an unusual challenge. Their response is the subject of this article.

Grammar – with a history dating from the 1820s – is the oldest institution of its type in Australia. Founded in its modern form by an Act of Parliament in 1854, it occupies a significant position on the eastern edge of Hyde Park in the City of Sydney next to the Australian Museum. At the heart of the School's western frontage on College Street is a building designed by Edward Hallen in 1830, its central 'volume' completed in 1834. The building has many names, all interchangeable: the 'Big Schoolroom', 'Big School' or the 'Hallen Building'. It was built to house Grammar's

Portion of northern wing as designed c. 1830 but never built.

Portion of northern wing as designed c.1830, built c. 1835 demolished as unsound, c. 1857

Central section as designed c. 1830, built c.1835 but without portico

Southern wing as designed c. 1830 but never built

ELEVATION PLAN OF SYDNEY COLLEGE.

Carmichael's engraving of Hallen's Elevation Plan of Sydney College, c. 1830, showing planned portico. Only the central portion (the 'Big Schoolroom'), without the portico, and a portion of the north wing were constructed. SGS Archives.

predecessor, Sydney College, and was for a time the largest hall in Sydney. The community at large, not just the School, used it for a variety of purposes such as public meetings and concerts.

The financial slump of the 1840s caused Sydney College to close for a time, and by 1852 the Hallen Building served as the temporary accommodation for the newly established University of Sydney prior to the completion of new University buildings at Grose Farm by colonial architect Edmund Blacket. Once the University had moved to its new quarters, Sydney College was reopened in 1857 as Sydney Grammar School, three years after its founding Act had been passed.
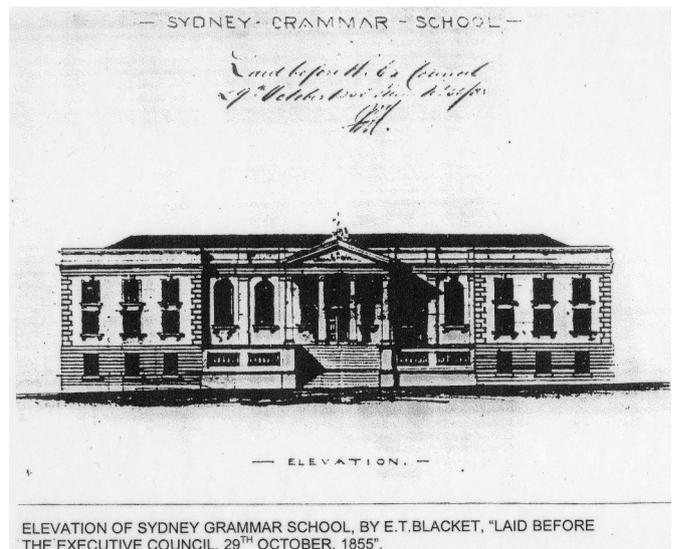
That was a long time ago. As today's Trustees appreciate, caring for old buildings is an expensive business demanding high levels of skill and experience. If a modern school is to operate within its heritage context, modern standards of safety must prevail without destroying the character of what is already there. The buildings of Sydney Grammar School are perpetually on show. The stretch of College and Macquarie Streets running from the Stanley Street corner down to the State Library and the Opera House forms one of the most striking streetscapes in Australia.

Merely maintaining and protecting that streetscape without the charge of extravagance is not a straightforward matter. Howard Tanner recalls a story he heard as a young architect that when the Queen visited Sydney in 1954, the façade of the School on College Street was in such a poor state that the Trustees decided to tidy up incomplete stonework and projecting iron tie-straps (presumably intended for a future portico) before the royal procession passed.

When Ralph Townsend became Headmaster in 1989 there had been a longstanding view at Grammar that
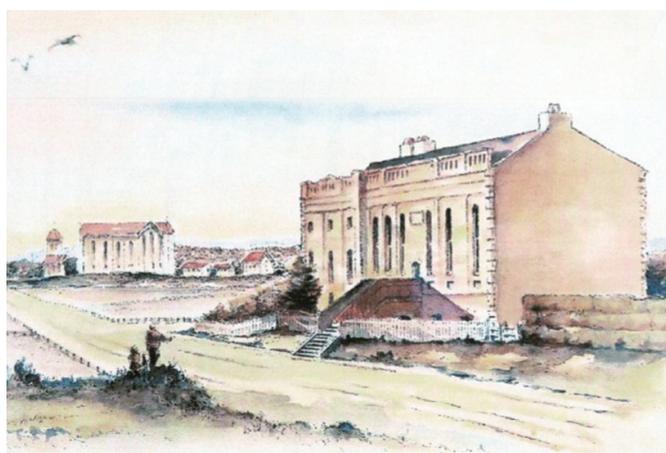
An early sketch of Sydney College, c. 1840 showing a short timber bridge between the front doors of the Big Schoolroom and College Street and the portion of the northern wing demolished by Blacket c. 1857 as unsound. SGS Archives.

ELEVATION OF SYDNEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL, BY E.T.BLACKET, "LAID BEFORE THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, 29TH OCTOBER, 1855".

Edmund Blacket added new wings to the north and the south of the original Hallen Building. Although his 1855 elevation plan of Sydney Grammar School envisaged the addition of a central portico facing College Street, this was not built. SGS Archives.

anything which might be considered ostentatious spending on the heritage fabric beyond simple maintenance should not be a priority. During Townsend's headmastership, attitudes began to change but, even then, replacement of the slate roof on the old sandstone buildings caused some argument. A good school could be operated out of a Nissan hut, one of the Trustees observed to John Vallance, appointed Headmaster in 1999.

No one wished to see physical improvements pursued at the expense of teaching or higher school fees but, by the turn of the millennium, parts of the site – including the main fence and façade along College Street facing Hyde Park – were in very poor repair and the fence simply had to be rebuilt. For some years, pedestrians on College Street passing the School could peer through railings atop a subsiding stone wall into a gravelled area populated by a pair of broken white plastic chairs.

A concert in the Big Schoolroom in early 2000 raised the opportunity for things to change. The room was full to capacity with pupils and their parents. One parent leant over and said to John Vallance: 'What if there was a fire in here?' Vallance explained to her that the room was fully compliant – as it was – with relevant fire regulations, but that night her question did not go away. The next day, Vallance raised the matter with Hugh Mackay, the Chairman of Trustees, and the advice of architects was sought. It was proposed that a glassed-in external staircase on the eastern side of the Hallen building would provide an additional means of escape in case of emergency.
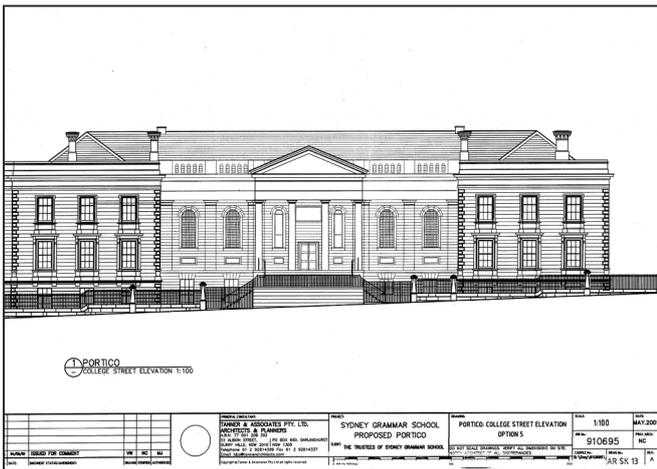
Tanner & Associates' design for the Sydney Grammar School portico, May 2001. SGS Archives.

Somehow, a glass box tacked on to the side of an old sandstone building seemed a rather dull solution. A similar proposal for the National Gallery in London had drawn consternation from the public a decade or so before. We began to look for alternatives.

It was not only a matter of fire safety. The School was increasingly interested in hosting the events of external parties in its historic buildings and, for this to be done, the Sydney City Council required 'Place of Public Entertainment' certification. A key part of this certification rested on the provision of disabled access to the old parts of the School.

It turned out that we were not the first to seek solutions to these problems. Edward Hallen himself, in 1830, had envisaged a grand, columned portico leading out onto College Street. The fenestration on the western elevation of his building had clearly been designed with this in mind, and an opening for a door – occupied in the meantime by a large trophy cabinet – was already in
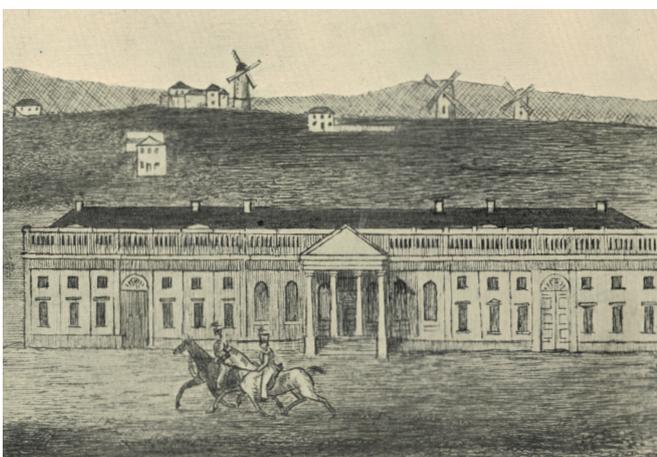
A contemporary engraving of Hallen's elevation plan c. 1830 with traffic in the foreground and Darlinghurst in the background. SGS Archives.

place inside. Unfortunately for Hallen's original design, the money had run out by the time the Big Schoolroom was opened in 1834/5, and money was not subsequently available. For a time, doors had opened out of the Big Schoolroom on to a short timber bridge and then to steps descending onto College Street. These steps were demolished in 1872 and the door space was filled in.

Edmund Blacket added new wings to the north and the south of the original Hallen Building and his 1855 drawings indicate that he, too, had envisaged the addition of a central portico facing College Street. Once again, however, funds were lacking and Blacket's portico was never built.

In the 1860s, colonial architect James Barnet designed the grand façade of the Australian Museum, next door, and provided a plan for central portico for the School. Subsequently, in 1873, architect George Mansfield proposed a reworking of the façade, dispensing with a portico but featuring seven grand pedimented windows. Neither Barnet's nor Mansfield's schemes materialised.

The Trustees approached Howard Tanner, an Old Boy and a leading heritage architect with a longstanding interest in Grammar's buildings, to establish if any one of these nineteenth century solutions could be adapted to modern requirements. The result is the portico we see today. The portico completes the frontal display of heritage buildings on College Street, provides modern standards of access and egress, and makes a powerful statement to all who pass by.

Howard Tanner recalls the difficulties he and his colleagues – including lead architect, the late Neil Corrigan – faced in re-creating a structure not seen in Sydney for over a century. Studies were made of the nineteenth-century portico of The King's School, Parramatta, the work of Hallen's brother Ambrose, when it was discovered that the two shared a library of architectural books. Reference to early photographs of Grammar's College Street elevation showed fine sandstone detailing around a central doorway and metal straps projecting from the stonework to secure a future portico.

These historic photos helped Tanner and Associates (as the firm was then called) resolve the intricacies of fashioning and installing dressed stonework around the entry door. The King's School portico provided a model for detailing the columns and pediment of the Grammar portico. The columns were turned (on a converted carpenter's lathe) and weathered at Piles Creek north of Sydney by Gosford Quarries. The columns were cored and sleeved over a stainless steel frame that was then braced back onto the Hallen building. The concealed frame ensured that the new structure would meet

The project team, from left: Peter Breeze (Bursar), Howard Tanner (Architect), Hugh Mackay (Chairman of Trustees) and John Vallance (Headmaster). SGS Archives.

contemporary earthquake codes. Large sections of the structure were transported from Gosford Quarries to College Street on articulated lorries in the early hours of the morning when roads were clear. The installation of the portico was then executed to a very high standard by St Hilliers and the Traditional Stonemasonry Company (now the Traditional Restoration Company) led by James Ginter.

Classical Doric elements of the portico's structure demonstrate the continued relevance of what the ancients were seeking more than two thousand years ago – the idea of a useful and beautifully proportioned structure that can give people pleasure, confidence and a powerful sense of place even when seen from a distance.

Although the School had far more modest aspirations than Pericles, the Trustees and Headmaster were teased about it all the same. After the opening of the portico in 2002, some of the boys at the School nicknamed the new structure 'Dr Vallance's Parthenon'. Nevertheless, the School at last had its fire escape and the nineteenth-century visions of three great colonial architects had been realised by sympathetic modern colleagues at a cost much the same as would have been spent on the alternative, the proposed glass structure on the rear side of the Hallen building. The project was very generously funded by members of the school community (including the Trustees) through a capital appeal.

Even if the Royal Visit of 1954 had spurred the School's Trustees to patch up the untidy, unfinished College Street façade, it took until 2002 before the Queen's subsequent representative, (the now late) Governor Dame Marie Bashir could open the final result in a Vice-Regal ceremony. College Street was closed to traffic for the occasion, and the School community gathered outside before proceeding up the new stairs into a renewed and restored Hallen Building.

The completed façade of Sydney Grammar School makes a significant visual contribution to the sequence of heritage buildings lining College and Macquarie Streets, Sydney's one truly architectural thoroughfare.

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About the authors

John Vallance AM is a classical scholar and artist. He was Headmaster of Sydney Grammar School between 1999 and 2017 and NSW State Librarian between 2017 and 2023.

Howard Tanner AM is an architect, author and exhibition curator. His architectural career focused on heritage, schools and private residences.

The authors worked together on the project to build Grammar's College Street portico.

Acknowledgements

Revealing Histories: Camperdown Cemetery

Sioned Lavery

Sydney's Camperdown Cemetery contains some 15,000 stories that connect us to larger local and global networks of people, places and events. At Camperdown, one can find the remnants of the once striking monument to the harpist Nicholas Charles Bochsa and the unusual grave of the Russell family. These graves tell two interesting stories of touring musicians and of the women of one of Australia's major nineteenth-century industrial families.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the eminent harpist **Nicholas Charles Bochsa** and the eminent soprano Anna Bishop embarked on a tour across Europe, America and Mexico before arriving in Sydney in December 1855. Within a month of arriving, Bochsa died of dropsy (today known as edema). He was buried in Camperdown Cemetery and over his grave, Bishop had an elaborate sculptural monument erected in his memory.[1] At the creation of Camperdown Memorial Rest Park the cemetery was reduced in size, and the sculpture was moved from Bochsa's grave to its current location. It has since suffered damage with many details, including the female figure, missing.

Bochsa and Bishop, like many of their musical and theatrical contemporaries, had followed the gold rushes from California to New South Wales.[2] Bochsa's monument is not only a reminder of the global connectivity of the Australian colonies but provides a launching point from which we can form an

Bochsa grave between 1920–1950. National Library of Australia, 4655317.

understanding of and connect with other historic events and people.

Born in circa 1791, in either France or modern-day Czechia, Bochsa displayed exceptional musical talent from a young age. By the age of 16, he was able to play several instruments and had composed a symphony, ballet and opera. He performed his opera *Trajan* for the Emperor Napoleon. Bochsa was admitted to the Paris Conservatoire, the harp his primary instrument.[3]

Upon leaving the Conservatoire, Bochsa entered Napoleon's court where he performed and taught the harp. Amongst his students were the Empress Josephine (1763–1814) and the Empress Marie Louise (1791–1847). He broadened the popularity of the harp among the nobility of France and, later, Great Britain.[4]

When the Bourbons were reinstated to the French monarchy in 1814, Bochsa continued to serve as harpist to Louis XVIII. However, scandal broke in 1817 when revelations of Bochsa's forgeries came to light. Bochsa fled Paris for London. Tried *in absentia*, he was found guilty, fined 4,000 francs and sentenced to 12 years imprisonment. Understandably, Bochsa never returned to France.

In London, Bochsa performed and taught in the court of the Prince Regent, later George IV. In 1822, he was appointed a founding professor in the Royal Academy of Music and became influential in the pedagogy and playing of the harp.[5] However, when knowledge of his 1817 trial for forgery and guilt came to light, his personal reputation suffered. His reputation further suffered when he bigamously married Amy Wilson, already having married Georgette Ducrest in France in 1812. In 1824, he filed for bankruptcy and, in 1827, was dismissed from the Royal Academy of Music.[6]

Bochsa remained in Britain another two years, touring with Anna Bishop and her husband Henry but by 1839, Bochsa and Bishop had eloped and embarked on their world tour. The 'celebrated Madame Anna Bishop [and] her musical director and manager Bochsa' arrived in Sydney in 1855.[7] She was publicised as the 'world-renowned prima donna Madame Anna Bishop' and he as 'Chevalier Bochsa, the great composer, Harpist and Pianist'.[8] Nevertheless, Bishop was clearly the main attraction.

Due to Bochsa's illness, the Sydney performances were postponed until 22 December 1855. Although unable

to play the harp, Bochsa managed to conduct the orchestra and accompany Bishop on the piano. They performed a further three concerts, but Bochsa's health continued to decline. He died on 6 January 1856.

Bochsa's hearse was drawn by four horses, and the accompanying funeral procession comprised 16 coaches and carriages.[9] Although only a short time in Sydney, mourners included friends, acquaintances, former students, members of the Sydney theatrical community and 'citizens of influence and respectability.'[10]

Recollections of Bochsa were not unequivocal. On the one hand, he was remembered as 'the most talented harpist … [a] great composer and … one of the most comprehensive and rapid scorers.'[11] On the other hand, he was considered to be 'a vain, petulant, domineering, bad-tempered man.'[12] Nevertheless, it has been written that Bochsa was 'one of the most prolific of all composers for the harp: his music is not profound, but it is often adventurous and sometimes brilliant. His harp method was long regarded as a classic.'[13]

Anna Bishop remained in Australia for two years, touring the regions and cities in what was 'in effect Australia's first touring opera company.'[14] She undertook another tour of Australia in 1868–1869 and a final tour in 1874–1875.[15] Her prolific touring, which embraced tours of Africa and Asia, earned her a reputation as one of the earliest international celebrities and divas. Anna Bishop died in New York on 18 March 1884.

The **Russell** brothers – Peter, John and George – established one of Australia's leading iron foundries. Peter Nicol Russell established the Sydney Foundry and Engineering Works in 1842 and made significant philanthropic donations to the University of Sydney's School of Engineering. In 1855, the brothers formed P. N. Russell & Co. which became one of the largest engineering works in the Australian colonies. Its output included railway infrastructure, steam dredges, mining and milling equipment, ornamental iron work and gun boats.[16]

The Russell family grave is conspicuous among Camperdown Cemetery headstones and is the resting place of George's wives and children but not of George himself who was buried at Rookwood Cemetery. The Gothick iron monument which now marks the grave was, presumably, the work of the Sydney Foundry and Engineering Works and symbolised the family's prominence in the iron foundry and engineering industries. It also stands as a marker to the lives of the women and children of which there is, otherwise, little documentation.

Dorothy Lean Russell (née Cawrse) was the first wife of George Russell. She was born in January 1829 in Warleggan, Cornwall.[17] How and when she arrived in Australia are unknown. In June 1851, Dorothy gave birth to their son Robert Russell.[18] George and Dorothy were living in Kent Street, Sydney, where she died, aged 23, on 25 April 1852 following a short illness recorded as 'inflammation'. Robert died three days later of 'convulsions.'[19] They were buried together on 3 May 1852.[20]

Born in East Lothian, Scotland, on 27 February 1833, Isabella Cecilia Russell (née Carfare) was the daughter of Agnes and John Carfare.[21] She married George Russell in June 1853. Their daughter, possibly their third child, Florence, was born on 27 December 1862.[22] Florence died on 16 April 1863 and was buried in Camperdown Cemetery the same day.[23] Isabella died, aged 33, on 2 March 1869, and was buried, alongside her daughter and George's first wife and son, the following day, on 3 March.[24] There were at least two other children born to Isabella and George: Peter Nicol Russell (1856–1947) and Isabella J. Russell (1859–1891).[25] George had two more sons, G. Russell and S. A. Russell but it is not clear if Isabella was their mother or if George remarried after her death.[26]

Alice Dixon Russell died at the age of 12 months of natural causes and was buried in the Russell family grave on 18 March 1869.[27] Her internment record places her in the Russell family grave, but she is not recorded on the grave's inscription. Her date of death and relation to the Russell family is unclear as records of George Russell's children, his siblings and their children are incomplete. As Florence and George had a stillborn daughter in February 1868, it is unlikely that Alice, presumably born about March 1868, was their child.[28] Nor is it likely that their stillborn daughter had been buried a year after the still birth. The only record found of a daughter born to a Russell about this time, was to Charles Russell of 240 Kent Street but his relation to George Russell is unknown.[29] This is not to say that Alice is not a close relation of George Russell, in fact her resting place in this grave suggests as much.

About 1849, George Russell established George Russell & Co, a marine engineering firm located in Sussex Street. In 1855, this firm was absorbed by P. N. Russell & Co.[30] George remained a partner in P. N. Russell & Co. until its closure in 1875 following industrial unrest.[31] Little is known of George's later life, but he died on 2 August 1903 and was buried in another family grave in Rookwood Cemetery. It is not known why George was not buried at Camperdown.

Conclusion

In our cemeteries are to be found the stories of the people who have preceded us. Bochsa's grave and monument reveal a story that straddled the globe. The Russell family's grave serves as a memorial to, amongst other things, the infants and women whose lives are

often overlooked in chronicling our national story. The stories that may be called forth from our cemeteries enrich our understanding of our past.

About the author

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Colonel 'Ike' Austin: The Australian Fortunes of an American Civil War Veteran

Mark St Leon

In 1883, the Sydney magazine *The Bulletin* observed that 'a thundering lot of the Americans who come here seemed to have been in the army'.[1] At least 108 veterans of the American Civil War (1861–65) are buried on Australian soil.[2] Some came looking for gold, others to escape the law, others to seek adventure. One veteran who arrived in Sydney in 1883 was Sergeant Isaac Putnam Smith who was better known for his displays of marksmanship as 'Colonel 'Ike' Austin'.

Military records show that Smith was born in Brooklyn in 1836. The middle name of 'Putnam' may have been contrived to offset the prosaic 'Smith'. In April 1861, several days after the outbreak of the Civil War, Smith enlisted in the U.S. Army and was assigned to Company G of the 84th New York Infantry Regiment. Serving with gallantry, he was discharged, disabled, in September 1862 with the rank of Sergeant.[3] Although the nature of his disability is unclear, Smith was not incapacitated. Within a few years of his discharge, Smith had partnered with Julia Barclay but there is no record of a marriage.

As white settlers encroached on the prairie lands west of the Mississippi River after the Civil War, audiences in America's east hungered for stories of the 'wild west' without having to experience its brutal reality. In 1869, Ned Buntline, whose books had been sold in Australia since 1857, transformed the legendary William F. Cody – army scout, cavalryman, marksman, buffalo hunter and Indian fighter – into a folk hero in his 'dime' novel, *Buffalo Bill, The King of the Border Men*.[4] A dramatised version of this work was produced in Australia.[5] In 1872, Buntline engaged Cody to star in his touring production, *The Scouts of the Prairie*, where his displays of sharp shooting, horsemanship and stories of the prairies drew audiences regardless of wealth, social standing, age and gender.

In 1870, Ike and Julia were settled in Brooklyn with two boys, his occupation given as 'clerk in store'.[6] We lose track of Smith's activities for several years following. It is possible that he escaped his sedentary existence to spend several years, as he later claimed, on the western Plains 'acting as guide, scout, and

sharpshooter … and attaining accuracy of aim and steadiness of nerve which … made him a marksman of the first order'.[7]

When Ike next comes to light in 1877, he was in partnership with his brother-in-law, Charles Austin, the pair performing as exhibition marksmen under the soubriquets of 'Wild Ike' and 'Daredevil Charlie'. Their initial engagement was in the vaudeville troupe of the New York impresario, Tony Pastor, moving across America.

> They are marvellous marksmen and there is no fraud about their shooting, as know they use genuine cartridges, having purchased 1,000 32-calibre cartridges of Max Meyer & Co yesterday.[8]

From Pastor's troupe, the Austins undertook a four-month long engagement with Buffalo Bill's combination, still a variety-based company and not yet the famous open-air 'wild west' show. By this time, 'reckless' public displays of marksmanship were beginning to generate public concern.

> … [Bills] have been introduced in five legislatures forbidding dangerous exhibitions of marksmanship.[9]

With restrictions on their source of livelihood imminent, Ike and Julia left their son Henry in the care of Julia's parents and the Austins departed for Paris to give demonstrations at the Exposition Universelle.[10] In the tour of England that followed, Ike replaced the soubriquet of 'Wild Ike' with the more dignified 'Colonel Ike Austin' possibly because feats of reckless marksmanship were beginning to raise, in England, the same concerns as in the United States.

> … A momentary loss of nerve, the sudden shriek of an agitated female spectator, a quiver of the eyelid, an involuntary movement of a muscle and the line of fire will be crossed … I don't think such deadly amusement should be allowed by the Magistrates.[11]

After touring England, the Austins terminated their professional association. Ike and Julia moved on to India (1879–81) 'and other eastern countries' where, presumably, there were no objections to 'reckless' displays of marksmanship.

Australian Town & Country Journal, 5 January 1884, p. 17.

In India, Ike and Julia toured with Dave Carson's Company, Julia facing the bullets that Ike fired in her direction. Although, the 'Colonel' was 'always regular and sober in his habits', it was reported from Bombay in April 1880 that, inexplicably, he had attempted to commit suicide by cutting his throat with a razor.[12] Smith recovered and wrote to the *New York Clipper* to explain he had been 'suffering from a sunstroke'. Moving on from Carson's troupe, Ike and Julia undertook engagements in theatres and public halls and gave private command performances before several Indian princes.[13]

Julia's skill with a rifle was not much less than her husband's. At Lahore, as members of Willard's Combination Company, members of the audience rushed forward after their exhibition, curious to examine the rifles Ike and Julia had so skilfully used.[14] In June 1881, they departed for Rangoon.[15] Visits to Hong Kong (1882) and Shanghai (1883) followed. Although Ike and Julia intended to return to the United States, the American illusionist, A. Litherland Cunard, invited them to tour Australia at a salary of £100 per week.[16]

Ike and Julia arrived in Sydney from Foochow on 14 November 1883, saloon passengers on the 2,289-ton steamer *Naples*.[17] The following afternoon, a Saturday,

they appeared at the Theatre Royal under the 'distinguished patronage' of the Governor of New South Wales, His Excellency Lord Augustus Loftus and suite. At this stage, Ike's repertoire of 'fancy rifle shooting' consisted of 19 hazardous displays. Cunard courageously stood in front of a small white target as Ike shot objects from Cunard's hand, lips or head with his Frank Wesson rifle. In his 'great backward shot', Smith relied on a small looking glass to take aim.[18]

> Colonel Austin is, in a word, Fenimore Cooper's Deerslayer without the moccasins, his Pathfinder without the proverbs. He is a thin man with an eagle eye, and he never misses a shot unless on purpose.[19]

These exhibitions were a complete novelty for Australians as was Ike's Wild West 'habiliment'.

> Colonel Austin, dressed in the traditional sombrero, deerskin wampum-fringed suit, and embroidered moccasins of the Indian fighter … achieves feats which, until one saw them, one would believe to be impossible.[20]

Before departing Sydney, Ike and Julia gave exhibitions at the Opera House and the Coogee Palace Aquarium, a seaside resort. In Melbourne, Ike appeared on the bill with the Federal Minstrels at the Victoria Hall. Appearances in theatres, assembly rooms and public halls in Bendigo, Ballarat, Adelaide and Port Augusta followed, before they returned to Melbourne in April 1884 where they exhibited at the Intercolonial Exhibition and in Chiarini's Royal Italian Circus.[21]

In July 1884, Ike and Julia visited Warrnambool with their own troupe advertised as 'Colonel Ike Austin's Musical and Dramatic Combination Company'. Julia was billed as 'Miss Gracie Oscar, the popular soubrette and male impersonator' and the troupe included Miss Eva de Vere 'the eminent pianiste', Mr Harry Banham 'the great Australian comique', and Mr Harold Geoffrey 'the celebrated American delineator'. The program concluded with a comic operetta by Offenbach in which Julia sang. After several members quit without notice, the little combination arrived at Ararat 'under a cloud'. The troupe disbanded and Ike and Julia returned to Melbourne.[22]

After several brief engagements in Melbourne, Ike and Julia turned up in Hobart in November 1884 to appear with Buckley & Gardner's Minstrels at the Exhibition Building. In Hobart streets, Ike's 'flowing locks and backwoodsman garb' attracted considerable notice. Ike and Julia played numerous engagements in Hobart and Launceston before they returned to Sydney in March 1885. On St Patrick's Day, Austin was seen at Prince Alfred Park in the company of Japanese acrobats, a wire walker and a variety troupe. At the Opera House the

same evening 'Bro. Colonel Ike Austin and Mrs Colonel Ike Austin' delivered their 'shooting act' for Lodge No. 6 of the Fraternity of Mutual Imps. At the Alhambra Music Hall in July 1885, Ike's exploits were celebrated – possibly satirised – in a song entitled *Sharp Shooters; or, Ike Austin Outdone*.[23]

Nevertheless, as the novelty of their displays of marksmanship palled, Ike and Julia were reduced to giving displays of sharpshooting in a tent on Sydney's Haymarket Reserve, a precinct favoured by all manner of 'hurly burly' showmen. In August 1885, they arrived in Brisbane to join Buckley's Comedy Company for a tour of Queensland. Before taking to the road, Ike found time for a brief engagement with St Leon's Royal Palace Circus & Menagerie.[24] About this time, Ike and Julia parted company and Julia returned to America.

From Brisbane, Smith headed northwards as the featured act with the Buckley's Comedy Company, accompanied by his 'pupil', George Lawrence. In Bundaberg in October 1885, in an incident strangely reminiscent of the incident that had taken place in India several years before, Ike attempted suicide. After bidding adieu to Lawrence for the evening, Ike seated himself at a quiet spot on the bank of the Burnet River and cut his throat with a pocketknife.[25] Soon discovered, he was removed to the hospital where Dr Thomas stitched up the self-inflicted wound.[26]

> … The Colonel in the colonies has had a streak of bad luck. We hope he may recover and repent of his sinful hastiness.[27]

In fact, Julia's departure for America and Ike's subsequent attempt at suicide may have had more to do with a love triangle than Ike's 'bad luck'. During 1885, 21-year-old Alexandra Black, the orphaned daughter of a deceased Sydney police inspector, gave birth to Ike's child.[28] By October 1886, Julia had returned to Brooklyn where, unsupported by Ike, she was living on charity.[29] During 1887, Ike and Alexandra were blessed with another child, a daughter, Emily Edith Smith.[30] Ike and Alexandra did not marry but Alexandra raised Edith Emily.[31]

Ike gave one of his last public appearances at the Bondi Aquarium in April 1889 on an 'ingeniously constructed rifle range'. His eyesight failing, Ike was forced to give up his occupation and deprived of income from about 1890 and enter the Government Asylum for Aged and Infirm Persons in George Street, Parramatta. Visiting American showmen called on him and, in 1891, he was the guest of 'Doc' Carver, a former partner of Buffalo Bill, at Carver's 'Wild America' show on Sydney's Moore Park.[32]

By 1895, it was reported that Smith was a 'broken down old man'. Later that year, his daughter Edith Emily, aged eight years, died from accidental scalding. In a memorial notice, her 'loving mother', Alexandra, identified herself as 'Mrs Colonel Ike Austin'.[33]

Meanwhile, Ike's pupil, George Lawrence carried on with his own career as a colonial marksman. In 1897, a film was reputedly screened in Coolgardie that revealed some of Ike's shooting secrets. In one scene, Lawrence pointed his small-bore rifle towards spectators seated in the gallery of an open-air stadium and began firing at tiny glass balls tossed in mid-air. The balls were shattered and none of the spectators were injured by the 'bullets' fired in their direction. Why? In fact, strong blanks, not bullets, had been fired and the balls, thin and weakened, had been shattered by the concussion of the rifle discharge. Ike 'never forgave' the man who made these moving pictures that 'gave away' one of his shooting secrets.[34]

Memorial to Sergeant Isaac Putnam Smith, Co. G, 84th New York Infantry, in Rookwood General Cemetery, Anglican Section 13, USA Grave 367.

Remembered as an 'inoffensive old gentleman' Ike freely shared his reminiscences of 'Buffalo Bill' and the 'noble' Red Indians.[35]

When Ike died in May 1908, 'a sad, silent man', he was in receipt of a U.S. Government pension of 3s 6d per day.[36] He was buried in Rookwood Cemetery in an unmarked grave.

The late Roy Parker, a retired airline pilot who had served in the U.S. Army Air Force during World War II and subsequently settled in Australia, ensured that Smith and other Civil War veterans buried here were duly memorialised. As a result, in January 1994, a tombstone of Alabama marble, prepared and supplied by the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs, was placed over the Smith's grave in a special ceremony.[37]

About the author

Dr Mark St Leon is the author of *Circus: The Australian Story* (Melbourne Books, 2011) and *The Wizard of the Wire: The Story of Con Colleano* (Aboriginal Studies Press, 1993). Mark is presently Vice President of the Royal Australian Historical Society.

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26 'Local and General News', *Gympie Times*, 8 October 1885, p. 3.

27 Untitled extract, *Queensland Times*, 13 October 1885, p. 7.

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29 "Col' Smith's Record', *New York Times*, 15 October 1886, p. 8.

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32 'Circus News: Colonel Ike Austin Dead', *Variety* (New York), 11 July 1908, p. 13.

33 'In Memoriam', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 January 1896, p. 1.

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On the Shelf 125 Years of history through the lens!
Donna Newton

'The objects of the society shall be as follows: a) the collection and preservation for the use of members of the Society, of all books, newspapers, records, coins, stamps, prints, relics and [cognate] matters having reference to Australian history, especially as regards New South Wales.'[1]

This declaration makes clear that, from the outset, the Society was determined to build a collection to foster the study of Australian history. The first meeting of the Australian Historical Society (AHS)[2] was held on 15 March 1901 at the Queen's Hall, Pitt Street, Sydney.

From its earliest days, the importance of establishing photographic collections to document contemporary buildings – particularly those at risk of demolition – was recognised.

One panel from the Bayliss Panorama showing (now) History House in Macquarie Street (bottom right).

Among the first significant acquisitions were a series of negatives taken in 1879, offered by Mrs Sarah Bayliss, widow of photographer Charles Bayliss, who wrote asking 'if these would be of any service' to the Society.[3] These included the 1879 *Panorama of Sydney*, taken from the central tower of the Garden Palace in the Sydney Domain. Comprising 11 images and measuring 6 metres by 55 centimetres (20 feet by 22 inches), it provided complete coverage of the city and its surrounding suburbs.

By 1917, the glass slide collection totalled 180 items; two years later it had increased to 1,353. In 1923, there were more than 250 photographic prints and negatives. In 1999, the Society received a grant from the National Council of the Centenary of Federation to digitise the image collection. By then, it comprised over 7,000 glass slides and more than 5,000 photographs. Today, the Library holds approximately 7,500 glass slides and in excess of 13,000 photographs and prints.

The Library's image collections consist predominantly of glass slide negatives, prints and photographs covering a wide range of topics in state and national history, with a particular emphasis on New South Wales local history.

Built over 125 years through acquisitions and donations from staff and members, the RAHS Library continues to support researchers exploring the histories of people and places across New South Wales. Although sometimes overlooked, the collection is regularly rediscovered and remains distinguished by its strong focus on local history.

The social value of the collection is exceptional, providing a unique service to members, affiliated societies and the wider public—especially those in regional New South Wales who have limited access to major historical repositories in Sydney but a strong desire to connect with their local or regional past.[4]

For further information about the RAHS Library and its collections, visit https://www.rahs.org.au/library-overview/ or call in to the Library at History House. Our Librarian, Donna Newton, always welcomes visitors.

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1 AHS Minutes, 20 November 1900.
2 In 1918, the AHS was granted the right to use the prefix 'Royal' by the Crown, becoming the RAHS.
3 AHS Minutes, 2 February 1901.
4 Pauline Curby and Virginia Macleod, 'RAHS Library Significance Assessment', 2014.

Book Notes

## Bathurst's Nurses of the Great War 1914–1919

Written by Andrew Fletcher. Published by Bathurst District Historical Society, 2025.

Andrew Fletcher's *Bathurst's Nurses of the Great War 1914–1919* documents the history of the World War I nurses from Bathurst, NSW. This book immerses the audience into the experiences and histories of these women as dedicated civil servants, creating a vivid picture of their service through images, letters, poems, quotes and newspaper excerpts. These materials illustrate their lives during the war, from their uniforms, equipment, hospitals and achievements. It is a beneficial publication for understanding Australia's involvement in World War I from a regional perspective, in addition to providing context for regional heritage, women's history, and the development of Australian healthcare. *Bathurst's Nurses of the Great War 1914-1919* is an ideal resource for research into the impacts of war on regional Australian communities and a moving tribute to the inspiring resilience and contribution of these women.

Available from Bathurst Historical Museum.

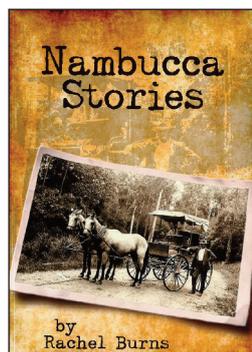301 pages: illustrations, facsimiles, maps, index; ISBN 9781763782877.

Book Note by Zoe McPherson, RAHS volunteer.
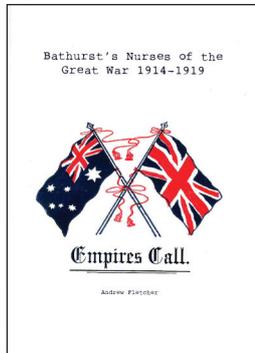
Nambucca Stories

Written by Rachel Burns.

Published by Nambucca District Historical Society, 2025.

Nambucca Stories preserves the colonial history of the Australian town of Nambucca, NSW. This publication uniquely details the town's past through the stories of Nambucca's residents. By tracing the events of European settlement from as early as 1817 to the town's ongoing progression into modern ways of living, Rachel Burns provides insights into the lives of the settlers and the developments within the town. This book serves as a great resource for historical research because of its ability to highlight cultural identity and collective memory, while equating history by emphasising the diverse experiences of everyday Australians. Through the utilisation of images, maps, newsletters, and stories from residents' descendants, *Nambucca Stories* authentically represents the community's lived experiences across time. This publication is invaluable for its power to preserve local narratives and connect the readers to the relevance of these histories and their themes.

Available from Nambucca Headland Museum.

207 pages: illustrations, plans, maps, index; ISBN 9780646718088.

Book Note by Zoe McPherson, RAHS volunteer.

Recollections of Old Liverpool Vol. 2

Edited by Glen op den Brouw. Published by City of Liverpool & District Historical Society, 2025.

The City of Liverpool sits at the head of navigation of the George's River, south-west of Sydney. *Recollections of Old Liverpool Vol. 1* covered the founding and growth of the area in the nineteenth century. Volume 2 continues the story from the convict period to the 1970s, and the intriguing index invites exploration, providing only the briefest headings. What happened at Mount Misery? Why does Yarunga Street warrant two entries? Why does Clarry the Horse get a mention? It's local history, wonderfully curated, and you don't need first-hand knowledge to enjoy the stories, though area maps would be useful.

Born and bred in Liverpool, Glen has served as President and Vice President of the Liverpool and District Historical Society. His interest and love of the area shows in the recollections that have found their way into this book.

Available from City of Liverpool & District Historical Society.

198 pages: photographs, facsimiles, index; ISBN 9780645153026.

Book Note by Kay Abrahams, RAHS member and volunteer.
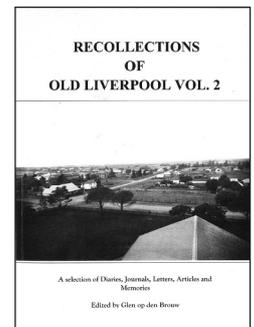
2025 RAHS Annual Report Summary

Redesign of the Annual Report

The RAHS Annual Report has been redesigned this year to better reflect the breadth of the Society's work and the many people who support it. The full report, which includes more images and highlights the contributions of our members, volunteers and partners, has been emailed to members and will be available in the members area of the RAHS website following the Annual General Meeting.

A short overview of the Society's activities and financial position is provided here.

Overview of the Year

During the year the RAHS continued its work sharing the history of New South Wales through publications, events and research support. *History* magazine and the *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* remained central to this work, presenting new research and stories about the people, places and communities that have shaped the state's past. The Society also launched its new online library catalogue, improving access to the RAHS collections and making it easier for researchers and members to discover the rich resources held at History House.

A major milestone during the year was the completion of the new copper roof at History House. Designed by Hector Abrahams Architects and supported by a Heritage NSW grant, the project forms part of the broader History House conservation program to safeguard the Society's historic home for the future. Alongside these works, the RAHS continued to support historical organisations across New South Wales through seminars, advice and its network of affiliated societies, helping strengthen the study and preservation of local history across the state.

Year at a Glance: Impact Across New South Wales

1,318	RAHS members	**117**	Affiliated societies featured in the eNewsletter
1,450	Visitors to History House	**63,000+**	Items in the RAHS Library collection
48,000+	Visitors to the RAHS website	**43%**	Library collection currently searchable through the online catalogue
29	Events delivered across NSW		
850+	Participants in RAHS events and programs	**26**	NSW history and heritage projects funded through RAHS-administered programs
6	Membership publications		
15	RAHS eNewsletters published	**324**	Affiliated societies participated in the RAHS umbrella insurance scheme

RAHS Councillors at History House for RAHS Strategy Day. Left to Right: Mark St Leon, Carol Liston AO, Tony Gilmour, Christine Yeats, Kathrine Reynolds, Bronwyn Hanna, Mark Dunn, Judith Godden, Alison Wishart, Richard White, Iain Stuart. All Councillors are pictured here except Samuel White, who was an apology for the meeting. (Photograph: Courtesy of Peter Hobbins, past RAHS Councillor who was the facilitator for the RAHS Strategy Day).

2025 RAHS Financial Highlights

Income and Expenditure

Income and Expenditure	2025	2024
Total Income	1,131,661	1,500,891
Total Expenditure	1,098,368	1,474,600
Surplus before transfers	**33,293**	**26,292**
Transfer to other comprehensive income	68,597	45,458
Deficit after Transfers	-35,304	-19,167

2025 reflects careful stewardship of the Society's resources and continued investment in History House and the collections at the heart of our work. The 2024 result was materially affected by the write-off of History House Project costs and related donation adjustments. By contrast, 2025 represents a more typical operating year, with roof works funded from existing building donations and support from the NSW Government's Caring for State Heritage program.

2025 Revenue

The largest component of revenue in 2025 was the drawdown of prior-year building donations, which totalled $408,669 and funded approved History House works. In addition, building donations received during the year amounted to $61, 539 (2024: $74,947), while general donations totalled $152,433 (2024: $189,011).
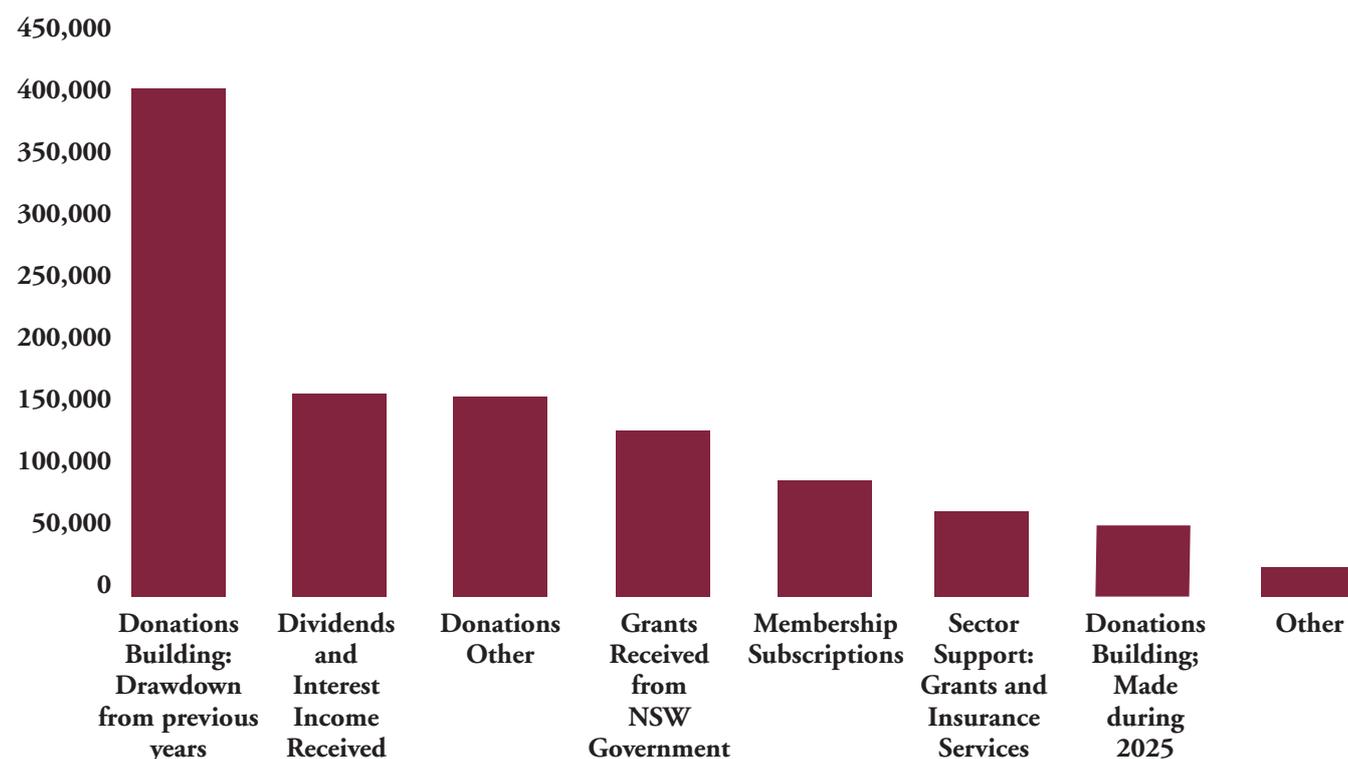
Grants and Donations

The Society gratefully acknowledges the continued support of Create NSW through its annual funding contribution of $80,000. We thank the NSW Minister for the Arts, The Hon. John Graham MLC, Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-Time Economy, and Create NSW for their ongoing support of the Society's work, for which we are most grateful. The Society was also awarded $112,790 under the NSW Government's Caring for State Heritage program. We acknowledge the support of The Hon. Penny Sharpe MLC, Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage.

We acknowledge with gratitude the longstanding commitment and generous support of Mr Geoffrey White OAM and Mrs Sally White OAM to the RAHS.

History House Project

History House Project: Breakdown of Expenditure

During 2025, the Society progressed essential conservation works at History House, with expenditure of $418,515 during the year.

The principal focus was the installation of a new copper roof, together with structural strengthening and associated roof works. These works address long-standing water ingress issues and are critical to safeguarding the building and its collections.

The project also included geotechnical investigations, structural engineering assessments, drainage analysis and compliance documentation to support both the roof replacement and future building works. The society continued to work with Hector Abrahams Architects in advancing a comprehensive master plan
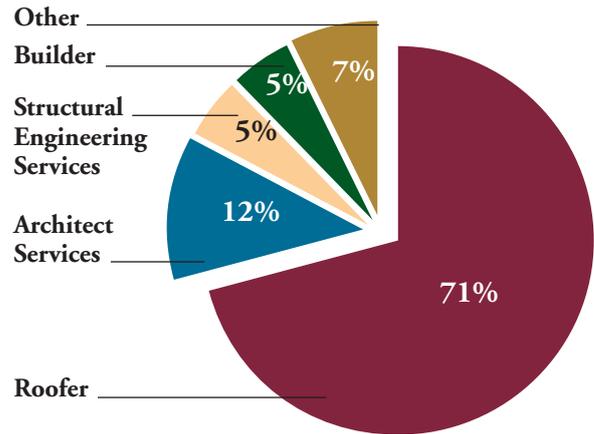
for History House, ensuring that future conservation, access improvements and building works are undertaken in a structured and responsible manner consistent with the building's heritage significance.

2025 Operating Expenses
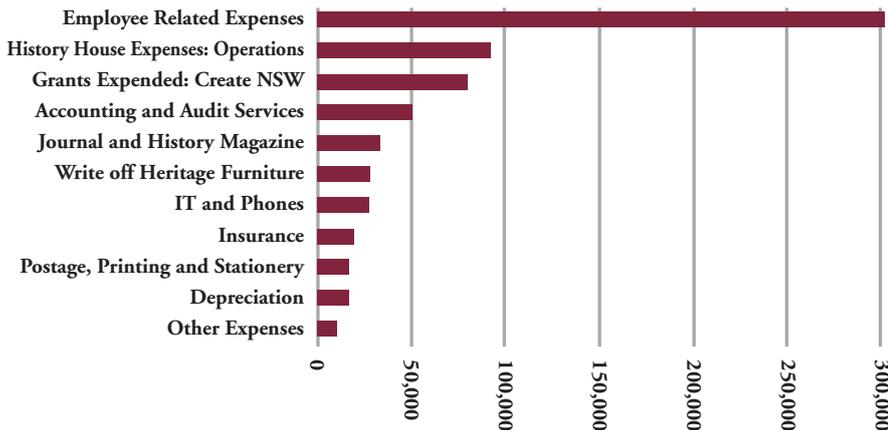
The main operating expenses in 2025 were employee-related costs of $302,345 (2024: $316,594); History House operating expenses of $92,280 ($2024: $107,763); grants expended under the Create NSW program of $80,000 (2024: $80,486); accounting and audit services of $50,772 (2024: $45,877); RAHS publication costs of $33,135 (2024: $32,685); and IT and phone expenses of $27,778 (2024: $23,461).

Statement of Financial Position

Total Assets	2025	2024
Total Income	21,356,601	20,744,667
Total Liabilities	2,555,892	2,968,498
Net Assets	**18,800,708**	**17,776,169**
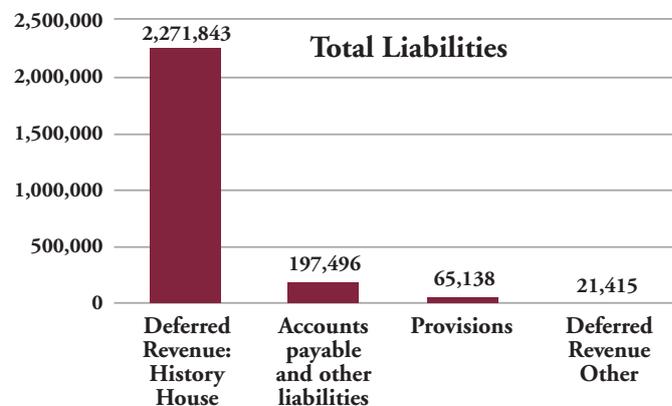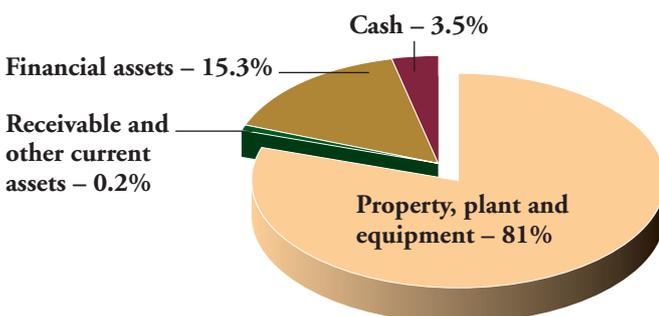
Note: Deferred revenue represents donations received in previous years for specific purposes. Accounting standards require these funds to be recorded as a liability until they are spent for that purpose.

ELEVATION PLAN OF SYDNEY COLLEGE.

"GRAMMAR", 1924