

# HISTORY

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**Bronwyn Hanna** – Eva Buhrich: Refugee Architect and Writer (1913–1976)

**Richard Waterhouse** – Why (Australian) Family History Matters

**Roslyn Russell** – When the Royals Came to Bathurst

**Jacqui Kennedy** – Captain Thomas Fenwick and the ‘Battle of the Bar’

Book Notes and More





# History House: From the New Roof to the New Lift

On 16 June 2026, members, donors and supporters gathered to celebrate our beautiful new copper roof. RAHS President Adjunct Associate Professor Carol Liston AO spoke about how the roof will protect the library, collections and heritage fabric of History House. Guests also enjoyed a spectacular bird's-eye view through new drone footage.

You can watch the drone footage here:  
<https://youtu.be/82U3h9UY5YI>



goal of promoting a greater understanding of Australian history.

While our doors are closed, our events will move online, and we hope to organise some excursions. RAHS Librarian Donna Newton will continue to answer research enquiries by phone and email.

The new lift is expected to arrive on 15 January 2027, with installation completed by 26 February 2027.

Thank you to our members, donors and supporters for making this next stage possible. We look forward to welcoming everyone back to History House and celebrating the launch of our new lift in March 2027.

With the roof complete, we are now turning our attention to the next exciting stage: a new internal lift that will make History House much easier for everyone to access.

History House will close to the public from 16 October 2026 while we move library materials and reconfigure the rear of the library, where the current toilets are located, to create the new lift entrance. The toilets will also receive a welcome upgrade. Dismantling of the old lift will begin on 9 November.

We will also improve the tenancy spaces on Levels 2 and 3 and in the basement. Rental income from these spaces will help maintain History House and support the RAHS's core



**Front Cover:** Olympia Motor Speedway Official Program 1926 (Randwick and District Historical Society Collection).

**Back Cover:** Embroidered cloth made by Bathurst resident Ethel Grace Tutton to commemorate the royal visit to Bathurst in 1954 (Photo by Sarah Swift, Bathurst District Historical Society).





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## RAHS Editorial Christine Yeats FRAHS

This edition of the *History* explores the many ways that the past is remembered, interpreted and rediscovered. From forgotten landscapes and remarkable individuals to family stories and royal occasions, these five articles demonstrate how history is found not only in major events but also in the places, people and communities that have shaped Australia.

One hundred years after the brief but spectacular life of Sydney's Olympia Motor Speedway, Ashley Kingston uncovers the story of a bold interwar venture that has almost disappeared beneath suburban development. By tracing the transformation of Maroubra's sandhills into today's Coral Sea Park, he reminds us how physical landscapes preserve traces of the past, even when the evidence appears to have vanished.

Readers are introduced to the life and work of refugee architect and writer Eva Buhrich through Bronwyn Hanna's biographical essay. Arriving in Australia after fleeing Europe, Buhrich made a lasting contribution to modern architecture while documenting and advocating for contemporary design. Her story highlights the important influence of migrants in shaping Australia's cultural and architectural heritage.

Richard Waterhouse considers why Australian family history matters. Moving beyond genealogy, he examines how family history provides valuable insights into broader social change, revealing patterns of migration, work, community and identity. His article demonstrates why researching ordinary families has become an essential part of understanding Australia's past.

Royal visits to Bathurst during the twentieth century are brought vividly to life through photographs and objects preserved by the Bathurst District Historical Society. Roslyn Russell's article captures the excitement surrounding the Prince of Wales in 1920 and Queen Elizabeth II in 1954, illustrating how these occasions became enduring memories for local communities.

Jacqui Kennedy profiles Captain Thomas Fenwick, whose entrepreneurial vision and maritime enterprise helped shape the Richmond River district during the late nineteenth century. Through Fenwick's achievements, readers gain an appreciation of the individuals whose determination contributed to the growth of regional New South Wales.

The Book Notes highlight recent additions to the library. On the Shelf explores the Hassall, Marsden, and Betts families and their interconnected lives in early colonial Australia.

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# Tracks of the Past: The Olympia Speedway

**Ashley Kingston**

Residents of Maroubra (Muru-ora-dial Gadigal) Sydney are unlikely to be aware that 100 years ago their suburb was the venue for a business venture called the Olympia Motor Speedway. On eighty acres of leased government land and surrounded by sandhills, a concrete racetrack that featured exorbitantly banked curves was hastily constructed around what was an unnamed ephemeral lake. The Olympia Speedway could also be described as ephemeral.

Australia emerged from the Great War and the influenza epidemic of the 1920s to a significant time of social and technological change. It was a time of rebuilding, optimism and upheaval. Middle-class young women embraced the rise of flapper culture as liberating and exciting. For many of the Indigenous peoples who had fought alongside white Australians during the war there was further loss of country and oppression. In what would result in the Stolen Generations, the Board for the Protection of Aborigines continued its policy of forced child removal.

Cinema, radio, automobiles, and planes were the new modern obsessions of rich and middle-class Australians. In Sydney from 1921, car ownership quadrupled in five years from 33,000 to 127,000. This new population of car owners were keen to test the reliability and speed of their vehicles. A quick race in the street or an across the state endurance trial became common to evaluate the vehicle and demonstrate their newfound driving ability. A police force depleted of manpower post war struggled with enforcement as other crime spiralled.<sup>1</sup>

And thus, in this heady time, on untouched country, an elaborate scheme was dreamt up by a syndicate of would-be entrepreneurs. This would be so much more than just a racetrack. In late 1924 in what must have been an interesting meeting, the directors envisaged an extravagantly banked concrete saucer circuit, with a nine-hole golf course in the middle. There would be tennis courts, a bowling green, open-air dancing, and horse racing. The directors anticipated the Australian Grand Prix could be held there and possibly the Olympic games in a few years. They would have to construct grandstands, restaurants, bars, fencing and erect lighting for night racing. Oh, and the lake needed draining.<sup>2</sup>

Tenders for construction of the speedway were advertised as the newly formed Olympia Speedway Ltd went about the administrative details. They had £40,000 seeding capital and had to float the company to attract more capital. The directors estimated they needed £250,000 to complete the project. One of those directors was Mr A.J. Hunting who was the chief spokesman for the company. He was the original lessee of the government land securing a term over 27 years, which he then transferred over to the company. In an interview in May 1923, he stated:

The track will be shaped like a saucer, and so steep as to accommodate speeds up to 120 miles an hour. At the line where the cars will lap at 85 miles an hour, the track will be exactly a mile in circumference.<sup>3</sup>

Hunting further stated it was anticipated the profits would be around £50,000 a year. There were many more grandiose claims in newspapers and advertising leading up to the opening day on 5 December 1925. This was all to encourage the public to buy shares in the venture. Not more than a couple of kilometres away at Coogee, the directors of the Coogee Ocean Pier Company were running a similar campaign. The numbers and grandiose claims bear a striking resemblance. The other similarity of these private ventures was they both were being conducted on Crown lands.

Somewhere along the way during the construction phase the track was shortened to an awkward length of five-sixth of a mile. The round saucer became egg shaped and all talk of a golf course, bowling green and tennis courts were dropped. The steep banks which were essential to allow the vehicle to corner at high speed remained and were claimed to be up to forty-eight degrees. An elaborate electronic timing and totaliser score board was a late addition at a cost of £8,000. A telegraph line was especially run to the newly erected radio 2BL broadcast tower in Coogee to record the sounds and transmit the race results and times. A studio-based commentator gave a live broadcast of events.

On opening day, trams filled with some of the 67,000 to 74,000 people that were variously estimated to have attended. The tram stopped at a specially convened station adjacent to the speedway turnstiles which then



*Don Harkness at wheel of Overland 6 in a celebratory photograph after setting an Australasian 24-hour record of 1,235 miles at Maroubra Speedway (Courtesy Powerhouse Museum. Gift of Mr Donald J. Harkness, 1994. Photographer Milton Kent).*

led to the seating area in front of the start finish line. Another entrance was dedicated to motorists. To avoid traffic jams, newspapers helpfully published special maps for motorists to show a variety of routes to get to the previously 'unknown' Maroubra. Motorists, competitor cars and motorcycles advanced through a tunnel that went under the track to convene in the centre of the speedway circuit. Wire netting had to be laid over the entire area to stop cars becoming bogged in what had very recently been a swampy lake.<sup>4</sup>

Commencing at 11 am a total of twenty-seven events were keenly contested either by cars or motorbikes. A tactic of going high and wide on the final steep curve before throttling at full speed to the finish line proved thrilling and decisive. Although there were close calls there were no accidents and the expensive totaliser board was hailed as a great innovation.

There were two female competitors, Marie Jenkins and Nina Eva Vida Jones (always referred to as Mrs. J.A.S. Jones). Jenkins won her heat and came second in the final. She would go on to be a frequent race winner and

proved extremely popular with the press and crowd. Jones initially competed in a heavy touring car; she was successful in later races. At various times depending on their success, both women were dubbed 'The Queen of Speed', and 'Miss Jenkins' cool and intrepid driving called forth much well-deserved applause from the crowds.'

The following week a twenty-four-hour Australian speed record attempt was held. Commencing at 2:30 pm Friday afternoon, it involved completing 1,483 laps of the Olympia Speedway in four-hour shifts, driving an Overlander through the night under its own lighting. The 1,235 miles covered at an average of fifty-one and half miles an hour was a new record. These kinds of reliability endurance speed events were quite common around this era. That very weekend there had been three other reliability races including a return Sydney to Bourke race.<sup>5</sup>

The second racing meet was held on Boxing Day of 1925. It included several motorbike fixtures competing for the 'Golden Helmet', a new trophy dreamt up by





*Phil Garlick Gravesite  
(Photograph by Ashley  
Kingston, April 2026).*

black armbands the next day at the speedways third meeting and Marie Jenkins won her first race. A spectacular crash on the home straight resulted in serious injuries to the mechanic, the vehicle a complete write off.

Questions began to rise from the media about the safety of the track. Popular and leading driver Hope Bartlett, 'the Marquis of Maroubra', dismissed the concerns snarling, 'Is there such a thing as a safe one at 100 mph?'

By March, the Olympia Speedway was forced into liquidation after failing to pay a string of debts. It was sold off for a mere £10,000 four months after it had opened. The new owner erected lighting and the races recommenced in May.

In July Sid Dutton, a motorcyclist competing for the 'Golden Helmet', blew a tyre and was thrown off his Zenith when he crashed into a safety fence. He died when his vehicle rebounded off the fence and landed on him.

Two of the most popular stars of the Maroubra track, Phil Garlick and Hope Bartlett, had a fierce but friendly rivalry. The

the directors of the speedway. This would be the last good news for the directors of the Olympia Speedway.

On New Years Eve four days later during a practice session, Leo Salmon and Albert Vaughan were killed overshooting the high bank. The competitors wore

flamboyant Reginald (Phil) Garlick, 'Australia's premier speed driver', held the record for the fastest speed on the Maroubra track at 98 mph. He had been the better of Bartlett for much of 1926 and was determined to crack the 100-mph mark.



Garlick, sporting a pencil thin moustache, driving in a suit and tie, his number thirteen emerald green 'Lucky Devil' supercharged Alvis, was easily identifiable. On a warm January evening in 1927 before 15,000 spectators, Bartlett and Garlick were battling the 'All-Powers Car Handicap'. On the last curve of the sixth and final lap, Bartlett was marginally in front. Garlick, in his signature move went high and wide ready to streak down the wall to the finish line. He skidded, his front wheel caught the sandy edge of the track, and hurtled off the high embankment, snapping off a lighting pole killing him instantly. His wife Nellie was at home in Rose Bay listening to the call on 2BL when the broadcast was suddenly cut. She heard the worst a few hours later.

There was a massive outpouring of public sorrow following Garlick's death. A special race meeting was held to raise funds for a memorial. Featuring imported Italian marble, a carved likeness of Garlick at the driving wheel is his tombstone. He was buried at South Head Cemetery.<sup>6</sup>

A month later Fred Barlow competing in the main event of the night, died after he went off the same spot as Garlick. Four men had met their death in the same way in fourteen months, landing in a swampy area some locals had callously called 'Losers Lake'.

At the more central and easier to get to Sydney Showgrounds, motorcycle and midget car racing had begun weekly races drawing away the Olympia Speedway crowds. Maroubra locals had developed the habit of sitting on the surrounding sandhills for race day eschewing the entrance fee, revenue dwindled and the track closed again. The Coogee Ocean Pier never fully completed became bankrupt and suffered a similar fate to the Olympia Speedway. The Roaring Twenties had given way to the Great Depression.

In the following decade, the abandoned track was used unofficially from time to time by automobile clubs for car or motorbike testing. Champion motorcyclist Robert Coombs better known as Bobby Blake was killed there when he skidded in wet conditions in June 1936.<sup>7</sup> The area sat unused until the lease finally expired in 1946, the lake had come and gone several times, the area was now known by locals as the 'snake pit' and avoided.

The Lands Department dedicated the area to public housing and commenced a building program from the 1950s. Randwick Council who were responsible for the new streets and parks elected to name the streets after the American ships that participated in the Battle of the Coral Sea in 1942. Randwick Council wrote to the

American Consul to seek advice, and their blessing for the idea, which was granted. A good part of the inner area of the former Olympia Speedway and former lake is now called Coral Sea Park.<sup>8</sup> Despite claims, the streets and embankments do not align with the former racetrack. Although one could argue that part of the much-levelled remnant embankment on the northern side of the park is the location of the former 'killer section' of the track.

A major refurbishment of the Coral Sea Park in 2023 by Randwick Council resulted in new drainage infrastructure which finally put paid to the ephemeral nature of the lake which had still flooded the park and, like the Olympia Speedway, consigned it to history.<sup>9</sup>

## About the author

Ashley Kingston is Vice President of the Randwick and District Historical Society.

## References

<sup>1</sup> Museums of History NSW, 'Joy-riders', 12 December 2017, <https://mhns.wa.au/stories/underworld/joyriders/>.

<sup>2</sup> 'Sydney's Speedway Well On The Way', *Truth* (Sydney), 7 December 1924, p. 16, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/168702731>.

<sup>3</sup> Bede Carroll, 'The Motorist', *The Referee* (Sydney), 16 May 1923, p. 15, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/128113558>.

<sup>4</sup> 'Motoring. Olympia Speedway', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 December 1925, p. 14, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/16258676>.

<sup>5</sup> 'New Maroubra Speedway', *The Daily Telegraph*, 14 December 1925, p. 9, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/245047564>.

<sup>6</sup> 'Greg Growden pays tribute to Australian motor-racing pioneer Phil Garlick and his gravestone', *ESPN*, 5 June 2016, [https://www.espn.com.au/racing/story/\\_/id/15971032/greg-growden-pays-tribute-australian-motor-racing-pioneer-phil-garlick-gravestone](https://www.espn.com.au/racing/story/_/id/15971032/greg-growden-pays-tribute-australian-motor-racing-pioneer-phil-garlick-gravestone).

<sup>7</sup> 'Crashed at Maroubra', *Warwick Daily News*, 15 June 1936, p. 4, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/177378587>.

<sup>8</sup> Randwick and District Historical Society Cabinet Files: Maroubra Speedway: Correspondence from Randwick Council to American Consulate, 3 August 1950.

<sup>9</sup> Randwick City Council, 'Coral Sea Park upgrade', <https://www.yoursay.randwick.nsw.gov.au/coralseaupgrade>.



# Eva Buhrich: Refugee Architect and Writer (1913–1976)

Bronwyn Hanna

This essay has been updated from Bronwyn Hanna's PhD on early women architects in New South Wales.<sup>1</sup> Information and quotes come from the author's 1998 oral history interview with Hugh Buhrich, unless otherwise stated. Because the emphasis is on Eva Buhrich, the essay reverses the usual marital naming convention: the wife is referred to throughout as 'Buhrich', while her husband is called 'Hugh'.

## Introduction

Eva Buhrich arrived in Sydney with her husband Hugh Buhrich as World War II was breaking out. Newly married, both were young architects recently qualified in Europe, fleeing Hitler's Germany. In Australia, Hugh worked exclusively as a designer of modernist architecture and furniture, eventually becoming a registered architect in 1971; by contrast, Buhrich never registered in New South Wales or joined the Australian Institute of Architects. Although her degree was more prestigious and better recognised than Hugh's in Australia, she was poorly paid as a woman for architectural design and better remunerated for writing on architectural issues in the popular press and trade journals. A native German speaker, Buhrich wrote fluent, sophisticated English and became a prominent

commentator on architecture and building. Publishing in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and elsewhere from the 1940s to the 1970s, she was probably the first woman to write on these subjects under her own by-line in a major Australian newspaper. Castlecrag expert Professor James Weirick recalled Buhrich's weekly column as a formative influence on his interest in the built environment.<sup>2</sup> More recently, architect-academic Catherine Lassen has argued that Buhrich 'greatly contributed to Australian and modern architecture' in the two family homes she built with Hugh in Castlecrag, as well as in her writing and other activities.<sup>3</sup> *Buhrich House II* is considered one of Australia's finest modern homes.<sup>4</sup>

Buhrich was born Eva Maria Bernard in April 1913<sup>5</sup> in Nuremberg, Germany, one of two children of liberal Jewish parents. Her father was a cloth merchant and her mother was active in pacifist politics. Supported by her parents, she began studying architecture in 1933 at the Technical University of Munich, where she met Hugh Buhrich. His studies were suspended because of anti-Nazi political activism, while she faced increasing persecution as a Jew. They transferred to the Technical University in Berlin to study under Hans Poelzig before moving to Switzerland, where Buhrich completed her

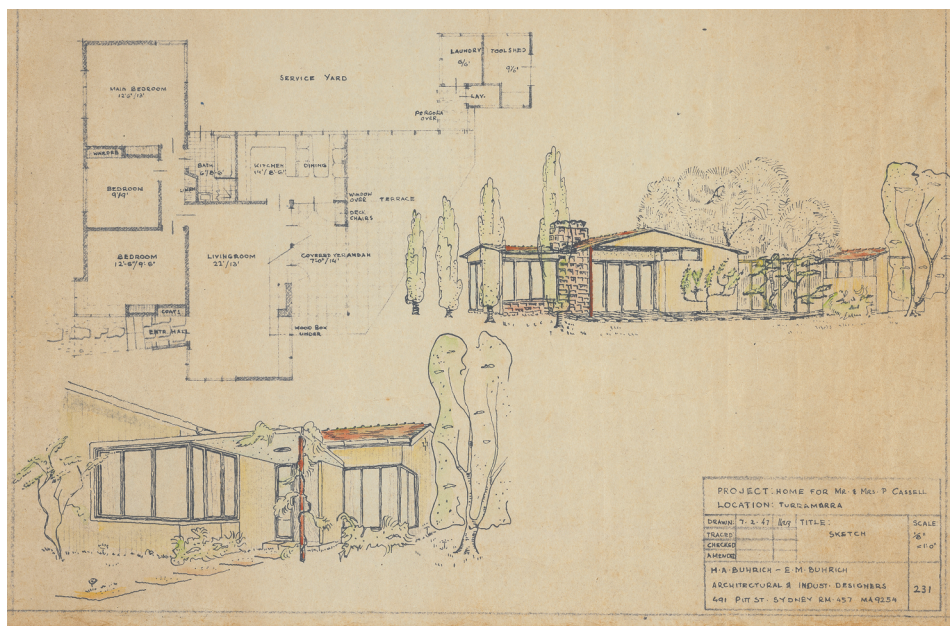
architecture diploma at ETH Zurich in 1937 under Otto Salvisberg.<sup>6</sup> Hugh, unable to afford Switzerland's higher living costs, finished his degree at a less prestigious school in Danzig. Both benefited from studying with leading figures of the European Modern Movement.<sup>7</sup>

After graduating, the Buhrichs reunited in The Hague, moved to England and married in

*Eva Buhrich on her verandah overlooking Sydney Harbour at 375 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag, 4 February 1975. Courtesy of the photographer John Gollings.*





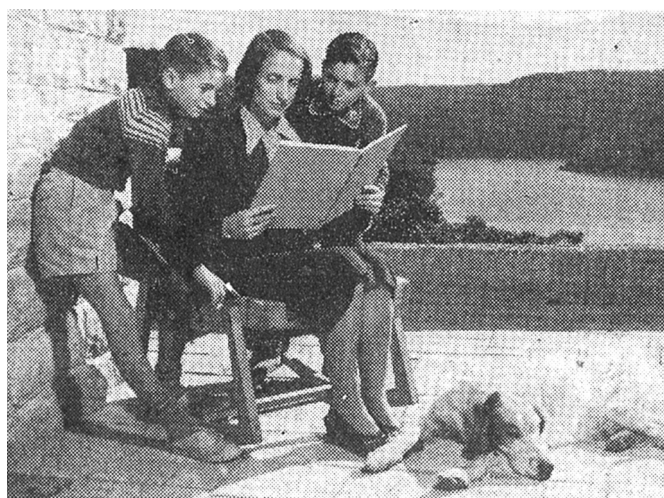


*Design for a three-bedroom house in Turramurra for Mr and Mrs P. Cassell by Hugh and Eva Buhrich, 1947 (State Library of NSW).*

London in 1938. Although Buhrich had won a postgraduate scholarship to research school design, Hugh insisted they leave Europe as war approached: 'We had to get out. There was no time!' They considered Canada, the USA, Argentina, Kenya, New Zealand and Australia, but each required landing fees of about £200 – around a year's wages. For their Australian application they claimed they had the money. Once accepted, architect friends at the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), led by secretary Edward Carter, raised the funds. Hugh soon repaid the loan and received a letter from Carter saying the money would be used to help other refugees.

## Buhrich's career as an architect

In Australia Professor Alfred Hook from the University of Sydney appears to have played a key role in helping



*Eva Buhrich photographed with her twin sons at Buhrich House I at 315 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag (ABC Weekly, 7 February 1953).*

the Buhrichs settle. He was probably encouraged to do so through his RIBA connections, according to Weirick: 'If so, it was one of the few campaigns to actively help refugees from Hitler's Germany, that may warrant more research'.<sup>8</sup> Hook introduced the Buhrichs to another husband-and-wife architect team in Canberra, Heather Sutherland and Malcolm Moir, who gave them six months' work. Eva obtained

a role at General Motors as a draughtsperson and then a role at the Commonwealth Building Station at Ryde. Other architects with whom they became friendly in Sydney at that time included Sydney Ancher, Arthur Baldwinson and Walter Bunning.

In 1941, Eva Buhrich gave birth to twin sons Neil and Clive.<sup>9</sup> Continuing working during these early years must have been difficult with few childcare services and no extended family support – although her mother and brother did manage to migrate to Australia after the war.<sup>10</sup>

Late in life, Hugh could not recall any of Buhrich's architectural designs being built. One architectural drawing held in the State Library of New South Wales shows a 1947 design for a three-bedroom house in Turramurra credited to both Eva and Hugh Buhrich. The client had met Eva Buhrich in the maternity ward in 1941 and the families had become friends. Sadly, the house remained on the drawing board.<sup>11</sup>

The Buhrichs built two outstanding modern houses for themselves in Castlecrag, largely owner-built by Hugh on land purchased from the Griffin estate. Overlooking Sydney Harbour, *Buhrich House I* at 315 Edinburgh Road was completed in 1947, and *Buhrich House II* at 375 Edinburgh Road in 1972.<sup>12</sup> Architect Peter Myers considered *Buhrich House II* 'the finest modern house in Australia'.<sup>13</sup> It was named the NSW Australian Institute of Architects' 1970s 'House of the decade' and won their 'Enduring Architecture' award in 2015,<sup>14</sup> as well as being heritage listed.

During his 1998 oral history interview, Hugh told the author that Buhrich had not contributed to the design of either Edinburgh Road house. Elizabeth Farrelly's article on *Buhrich House II*, based on her 2004



interview with Hugh, also does not mention her involvement.<sup>15</sup> Hugh suggested Buhrich preferred a more 'humanised' Scandinavian approach and 'never would go that far'. However, it is difficult to imagine an architect not influencing the design of their own home. Docomomo Australia states that Eva Buhrich 'no doubt had a strong influence on the project'.<sup>16</sup> Recently, Catherine Lassen has provided a detailed argument for Buhrich's contribution, identifying a contemporary news clipping crediting her input to the kitchen design<sup>17</sup> and, more importantly, matching the house's design qualities with modern values analysed in her writings.<sup>18</sup>

## Buhrich's career as a writer

Hugh suggests that Buhrich gave up architectural design work because of the poor wages she received on the female rate of pay for architects, and because she was paid much better as a writer. Indeed, it seems likely that her writing sustained the family financially while Hugh persevered working in the boom-and-bust building industry. Hugh also suggested: ‘She wasn’t really interested in practising architecture, but she was very interested in writing’.

By the 1950s Buhrich was working as a writer with J. Walter Thompson and doing freelance editorial work with industry journals *Building Ideas* and *Furniture Trends*. She designed elegant layouts and contributed much of their content. She also wrote on architecture for publications including the *Australian Women's Weekly*, *Woman, House and Garden* and *Walkabout*. Her widest audience likely came through her *Sydney Morning Herald* column (1957 to late 1960s). Around

1972 she designed a book entitled, *Castlecrag*, praised by Weirick as a 'particularly handsome work of graphic design and layout'.<sup>19</sup> Shortly before her death from cancer in 1976, she published her own book, *Patios and outdoor living areas*, sharing her long-standing interest in this area of domestic design.<sup>20</sup>

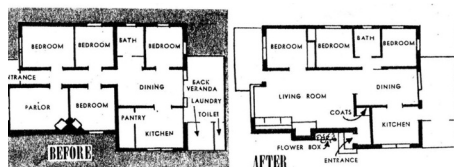
Buhrich's writings contributed to developing Australian attitudes towards modern architecture and conservation. She frequently used her own modern architectural drawings for discussion and to illustrate flat or slightly gabled roofs, open-plan living areas integrated with courtyards, and features such as glass bricks, granite contrasts and curved walls. She encouraged the modernising of older houses by removing walls, reducing decorative elements and enclosing verandahs to create contemporary living spaces. She championed international and Australian modern architects including Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, Walter Burley Griffin, Jørn Utzon, Ken Woolley and Harry Seidler. At the same time, she advocated for protecting historic environments, for example opposing the demolition of Paddington's terraces and Griffin's incinerators. In 1966 she praised migrant-led renovations as 'urban renewal without large-scale development'.<sup>21</sup>

When asked for his opinion of her writing, Hugh replied that she could have been more aggressive and initiated more debate, but her preferred approach was to 'even things out'. Even so, an examination of her articles shows that she consistently debated contentious issues such as modern design, the cultural contributions of migrants, and conservative design

sentiments by influential people such as Prime Minister Robert Menzies and Prince Phillip.<sup>22</sup>

Amongst the hundreds of news clippings in the Buhrichs' scrapbooks, there was one article commenting on Eva Buhrich herself as a writer and working mother. Published in Queensland's *Sunday Mail* in 1957, the article contrasted her appearance, 'a dainty little five-footer' against her achievements, 'a busy woman (wife, mother of twins) in a man-size job' and her 'interesting comments on working mothers':

*Eva Buhrich, 'Adapting an old house to new life' (Woman, 22 December 1952).*



† taking out two internal walls, a large living-room is made of hall, parlor and fourth bedroom. Entrance moved to the no-longer needed pantry, the dining-room has become a room instead of circulation area and bedrooms have gained a little private hall.

## Adapting an old house to a new life

Many old houses don't suit modern requirements, and if you buy one, it is almost certain that it will need some alteration, remodelling or repairing. Architect Eva Buhrich gives some helpful advice.

[illegible]

**nuisance**

Others that do may not be as obvious. For example, a sewer siphon in a sink or a sump pump in a sump can be a nuisance. If the siphon is not properly installed, it can cause a sewer backup. If the sump pump is not properly installed, it can cause a flood.

Write an and borer infestation. If you find an infestation, you must get it under control. If you do not, the infestation will spread and cause damage to your property.

Then again, mummies up by present. Many of the mummies up by present. Many of the mummies up by present.

place colored or lead glass with clear glass, but it is more difficult to increase the size of the wall opening, particularly when windows need widening.

To substitute french doors for small windows is much simpler when it only involves taking out brickwork to sill height.

**Verandas**  
A common step in re-modelling is the closing in of an open veranda. This gives a useful sunroom, but sometimes means that daylight and fresh air are taken from the room behind the

In that case it would be the best (though costlier) idea to cut a very large opening in the wall between the new sunroom and the old room so that

Kitchens are usually ample in size but they nearly always need new cupboards, sink and other equipment.

**Doors**  
A panel door covered with a sheet of plywood gives a modern appearance, and a slatted door can be made to look like a

Most people prefer a hot water system and, as a rule, sufficient space for its installation can be found in the roof.

A difficulty which often arises is that water pressure in the old house is too low to cope with all the new equipment. In

BEFORE

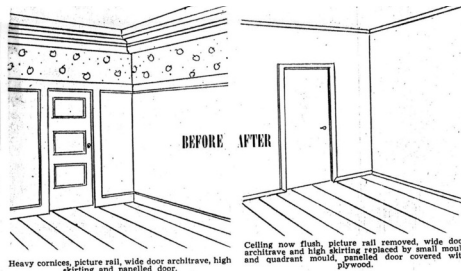
Existing windows.

**BEFORE AFTER**

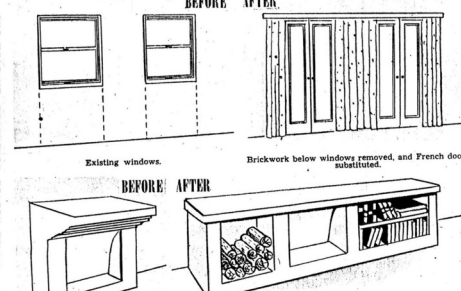
By removing shelves, a

places with old-fashioned mantels can sometimes be simplified or modernized without much trouble. Dark stained floors can be sanded and given a modern wax finish.

And then there is



DEGREE



By removal

**AFTER**

Ceiling now flush, picture rail removed, wide door and high skirting replaced by small mould and quadrant mould, paneled door covered with plywood.

**AFTER**



Brickwork below windows removed, and French door substituted.



ing the high mantle and adding a woodbox and book-narrow old fireplace has gained a broad, contemporary appearance.

Remodelling is like everything else: the more money you can spend on it the better the result will be. When it's a matter of restricted means the structural repairs must come first.

For the rest make long-range plans to finish one room at a time except where a tradesman such as the fibreglass plasterer has to be called in and does the whole job more economically all at once.

'Keep a job and keep a house too? Well, of course it can be done! ... My week-ends are busy and I neglect the garden, but it still can be done' ... Footnote: When Mrs Buhrich ... writes her do-it-yourself hints, she always omits the 'Mrs'. 'Men don't like to be told how to do these jobs by a woman', she said.<sup>23</sup>

This is one of few insights into the efforts required of Buhrich in being a working mother in a male dominated industry. Hugh thought that Buhrich had never encountered gendered discrimination apart from the unequal pay issue – although that issue was significant enough to force her to change careers. This newspaper article suggests that negotiating gender issues was an everyday concern for Buhrich, however addressed with patience and humour. With the two recent essays by Catherine Lassen, Eva Buhrich's contributions to modern architecture in Australia are becoming better recognised.

## About the author

Dr Bronwyn Hanna completed a PhD and co-authored two books on women architects in New South Wales. Since 2003, she has worked as a heritage professional and advocate on projects including the Sydney Opera House, South Eveleigh and the Lithgow Small Arms Factory. She also undertakes oral histories and leads historical walking tours in Sydney.

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<sup>6</sup> Catherine Lassen, 'House Buhrich II in 1972', *Fabrications*, vol. 35, no.1, 2025, pp. 107–132.

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Weirick, personal communications.

<sup>8</sup> Weirick, personal communications.

<sup>9</sup> The Buhrichs' son Clive also became an architect like his parents, while Neil trained as a psychiatrist.

<sup>10</sup> Through her mother, the Buhrichs became friendly with Faith Bandler and involved with Aboriginal rights and the Vietnam moratoriums. They also contributed to local activism to save the Griffin incinerators.

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<sup>16</sup> Docomomo Australia, 'Buhrich House II', <https://docomomoaustralia.com.au/buhrich-house-ii-1968-72-nsw/>.

<sup>17</sup> 'An architect builds his ideal house', *Australian House and Garden*, January 1976, p. 130. Remarkably, in a later reprint of the article, Buhrich 'has disappeared from all parts of the text', according to Lassen, 2026, quoting *Australian House and Garden's Greatest Houses*, 1977, p. 95.

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<sup>22</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 November 1965, p. 18; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 March 1963, p. 18; and *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 November 1965, p. 18.

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# Why (Australian) Family History Matters

Richard Waterhouse

In the Autumn of 1971, while researching my PhD thesis on the rise of a slaveholding planter class in colonial South Carolina, I spent time working in the Caroliniana Library in Columbia. I discovered that this repository of material relating to Carolina's history included hundreds of genealogical studies which was in contrast to Australia, where fearful of discovering convict ancestors, most potential genealogists were deterred from researching their family trees. It was not until the post-World War II era when Australians gradually abandoned their national obsession with respectability, an abandonment reflected in the repeal of laws enforcing Sabbatarianism and hotel opening hours, that they began to accept and even embrace their convict heritage. It was an era which culminated with *Ancestry* and *Who Do You Think You Are?*<sup>1</sup>

Genealogy is not family history, although it is one of its optional components. Europe has a long tradition of family historiography, which traditionally focussed on middle and upper-class families because there is an extant written record of men and women of those classes. In any case, historians assumed that wealthier citizens made a much stronger social impact than representatives of the plebian orders. But in the 1960s a new generation of historians, led by *The Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure*, began to explore family history from the 'bottom up'. Using births, marriages and deaths registers, these scholars created genealogies of residents of designated English villages covering several generations, using what they called 'family reconstitution' techniques, to explore family life in pre-industrial rural England. The statistical material they collected suggested that in this era English society was highly mobile in geographic terms, that marriages took place later than historians had previously assumed and that the nuclear rather than the extended

family was the society norm. They concluded that the pre-industrial family had more in common with the modern family than previously assumed.<sup>2</sup>

Although this combination of genealogical and statistical approaches enabled new understandings about the structure of pre-industrial English families, they were less successful in recovering the cultural values and world views which shaped the lives of these people. However, scholars researching nineteenth-century working-class life had access to a wider range of written sources, for example, Royal Commission reports relating to the social and economic circumstances of the working classes of the United Kingdom and its Australian colonies. Historians were also able to access the colonial era papers of such organisations as the Benevolent Society of New South Wales to explore the lives of those who lived on the economic margins. Because they used descriptive, not statistical sources, these histories belong to a historiographical category aligned with a more traditional form of social history.

Local history has a long Australian tradition. Until recent times, influenced by the ubiquitous pioneer legend narrative, many of these histories emphasised



*Portraits of William Henry and Mary Susannah Waterhouse.*

that early settlers were unselfishly united in a common purpose to conquer a harsh wilderness, overcome Indigenous resistance, ensure the prosperity of succeeding generations and lay the foundations of a nation. The period from the 1960s witnessed the publication of more complex local histories which were usually commissioned works researched by a new generation of professional historians. These local histories are critical to the family history project because they provide the widely varying and specific contexts that help explain the lives of earlier generations.<sup>3</sup>

I should add that digitisation of historical source material has both democratised family and local history and eased the research path of practitioners. For example, the onset of the internet and the subsequent creation of the British Newspaper Archive and the Australian National Library's Trove newspaper collection allows family researchers online access to material which helps them reconstruct the lives of ordinary people from past generations and then, using local history studies, fit those lives into contexts which make them explicable and multi-dimensional.

Relating local family history studies to broader colony, state and national histories reveals more complex and contradictory understandings of Australia's past. In researching my own family, I revealed that two generations of my Entwistle convict ancestors experienced a high level of freedom while still under sentence and found opportunity and respectability even before and certainly after they were freed. Martha Entwistle and her daughter-in-law Ann were convicted of forgery and arrived in Sydney in 1814. They were both offered the opportunity to travel on to Van Diemen's Land to join Martha's son and Ann's husband John. He was also a convicted forger, now a trusted and admired prisoner, who served as a courier between Hobart and outer settlements. When they both declined this proposal, they were assigned to the Castle Hill Lunatic Asylum where Martha became Australia's first mental health nurse. Later assigned to the secondary punishment settlement at Port Macquarie, she still enjoyed a high level of personal freedom, even travelling to Sydney to reunite with her son William, yet another forger, who arrived in 1819. Ann met an Irish convict, William Rafter and after her husband John's death in 1817, they married and lived out their lives in Parramatta. Serving out his assignment to Gregory Blaxland, William eventually became a shopkeeper and dealer also in Parramatta. Married twice and the father of ten children, when he died in 1864, he was referred to as 'an old and respected colonist'. Historians have debated the extent to which the convict system overall was harsh or operated more



*The newlyweds: Earle and Nancy Waterhouse, 1936.*

benignly like a system of assigned servitude. For the Entwistles it provided the path to redemption and modest prosperity. Certainly, their experiences as convicts were more like those which John Hirst described as the norm in New South Wales, rather than the Gulag-like lives which Robert Hughes' argued was the convict standard on Norfolk Island.<sup>4</sup>

The lives of my great-great-grandparents suggest that middle class adherence to strict moral and religious codes in colonial New South Wales was sometimes a mirage. William Waterhouse, a wood salesman and his 'wife' Mary Susannah who arrived in Grafton in 1872 with their children Henry Benjamin (7) and Frances Alice (2) seemed to epitomise the middle-class Victorian ethos of conformity and strict morality. William was elected a Council alderman, served as a magistrate and belonged to four lodges. He campaigned for evangelical Protestant causes such as temperance and organised the annual march and picnic to mark the anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne. As an exemplary Victorian wife and mother Mary Susannah led a domestically focussed life. When she died in 1904, her obituary described her as a very old and respected citizen.

William's obsession with moral causes probably resulted from deep anxieties that the secrets he and Mary





*Earle Waterhouse (far left) and his Beaufort crew. The pilot and two gunners died in a training exercise collision in 1943.*

here reinforces these revisionist arguments, indicating that in Grafton society was less puritanical and more pluralistic than it proclaimed. This story also suggests that closely researched individual family histories that move beyond genealogy

Susannah held might be exposed. Because he was not her legal husband and he was not the father of Henry or Frances. He was an impostor, an adulterer and a liar. In the 1990s a family historian, Jenny Nancarrow (Salter), revealed that in 1854 Mary Susannah had married Josiah Branchflower in London and he was the father of her four children. Who then was Josiah Branchflower? And how did Mary Susannah, Henry and Frances end up in Grafton the proclaimed wife and children of William Waterhouse? My own research revealed that Josiah Branchflower was probably descended from a family of French Huguenot refugee silk weavers. Leaving Lyon in the late seventeenth century to escape the renewed persecution of Protestants, succeeding generations of Branchflowers were silk weavers in the UK. In 1855 with the British silk industry in terminal decline Josiah and his family emigrated to Melbourne, where he earned a modest living as a gardener. In 1867 William met Mary Susannah and together they eloped to the New South Wales North Coast, travelling on the schooner *Alpha*, and taking her two youngest children with them.<sup>5</sup>

Earlier generations of historians of nineteenth-century England, and by implication, Australia, took the Victorians at their word and accepted that their proclaimed strict moral and etiquette codes determined the reality of middle-class Victorian life.<sup>6</sup> In recent years historians have challenged this notion, suggesting that Victorian society was marked by transgression as well as conformity. The cautionary tale that I have told

and simple narratives of progress can make important contributions to our understandings of the relationships between proclaimed historical ideals and realities.

My third family history narrative suggests that while Australian history is often separated into periods of war and peace, in reality these periods need to be studied in relationship to each other. Nancy Drake, the daughter of the local Schools Inspector, lived in Lismore in the early 1930s. At her mother's insistence, she had left school at fifteen to participate in the town's social life, all with the purpose of finding a suitable husband. She met and in 1936 married Earle Waterhouse, a young schoolteacher possessed of a university degree and prospects of quick promotion. In 1942 he joined the RAAF and by early 1945 he had reached the rank of Squadron Leader. The war proved to be a traumatic period in his life with long-term consequences for his mental health and his marriage. After training as a navigator, and flying a series of missions in a Beaufort Bomber attached to 100 Squadron, he became the training officer attached to the Jervis Bay Torpedo Unit. On 13 April 1943, flying in another aircraft, he witnessed the deaths of his former Beaufort crew, who were involved in a training exercise accident with another aircraft. He could never forget this tragic incident and even when asked to tell this story forty years later became too emotional to complete it.

In 1944 he was promoted to Flight Lieutenant and despatched to Darwin to become the minelaying officer for three squadrons of Catalinas. Subsequently

he planned every single allied mine laying mission in the Western Pacific, extending from New Guinea to the Taiwan Straits. He was not only a fine organiser but also a brave man. In June 1944, he was navigating a Black Cat participating in a torpedo strike in Bima Harbour in the Dutch Indies, when the pilot was wounded by enemy fire. Earle saved the wounded pilot's life when he pulled him from his seat, staunching the flow of blood, and administered morphia. For this action and for his planning of and participation in so many minelaying operations he received two bravery citations and was promoted to Squadron Leader. Yet at the end of the war the RAAF cancelled his owed leave, demoted him to Flight Lieutenant and put him on the next Catalina flight to Sydney. Lest We Forget is a promise that those who served, living and dead, will never be forgotten, but Earle's treatment, after his major strategic role, makes these words seem hollow. The fact that many other RAAF personnel experienced similar demotions as part of the demobbing process does not ameliorate but rather makes this policy seem even more dehumanising. The RAAF's action also led him to devalue what he had achieved, reflected in his post-war unwillingness to even acknowledge his major mine laying role. His refusal to talk about these experiences undoubtedly contributed further to his post-war psychological struggles. More than 70 years later I finally learnt about these extraordinary wartime achievements through my own research in the National Archives.

He suffered from PTSD for the rest of his life, even spending time in Concord Repatriation Hospital after suffering a nervous breakdown in 1959. These mental struggles also affected his relationship with his wife, although she had other reasons for suffering depression. The onset of the Cold War led governments in the West to place a strong emphasis on conformity and domesticity as a means of achieving national unity and strength.<sup>7</sup> For many women, including Nancy, the defining of their roles as wives and mothers, led to feelings of resentment and lack of fulfillment. Without education and work experience, opportunities for employment, even with spousal approval, were minimal. My father, who shared the widespread male view that women were emotionally and intellectually inferior, neither understood nor supported my mother's feelings and potential ambitions. As they grew older my parents argued less but they never really managed an emotional reconciliation. I suspect their story was commonplace and the 'consensus' which marked 1950s family life hid conflicts between war traumatised husbands and wives trapped in domestic lives.<sup>8</sup>

I largely based my account of my parent's post-war relationship on my own recollections and here the

injection of the personal allowed me to recreate intimate details and I hope give a more human account of their lives than if I had relied exclusively on family letters. Family history can be studied as a social science but the examination of the dynamics of personal family relations requires a more intuitive approach. Finally, World War II and the 1950s are often studied as separate periods in Australian history but the legacy of the war hung heavily over the post-war era, as this case study shows, and family micro-histories covering both eras can contribute to our understanding of the complexities of that legacy.

My experience in writing my extended family history over seven generations led me to recognise the importance of local, family and national histories in providing a set of important contexts in which to locate my characters. I was able to tell their narratives not just as local or family but as Australian stories, marked both by contradictions and consistencies, achievements and tragedies. Who said Australian history was boring?

## About the author

Richard Waterhouse is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Sydney. He is the author of six books and more than 70 articles on United States and Australian history.

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# When the Royals came to Bathurst

Roslyn Russell

Tours of Australia by members of the British royal family were red-letter events over much of the twentieth century. A large percentage of Australia's population was able to see their monarch, or the monarch's representative, and the response was overwhelmingly positive. The city of Bathurst in New South Wales was a destination for several of these highly popular visits, which were captured in photographs and objects in the Bathurst District Historical Society's collection.

Not every royal tour included Bathurst, but two of the most significant royal tours did – that of the Prince of Wales in 1920, and Queen Elizabeth II's first Australian tour in 1954 (as well as a later tour by the Queen in 1982).

The first visit to Bathurst by a member of the royal family was by the heir to the British throne, Edward, Prince of Wales in 1920. Arriving in HMS *Renown* in May, over the next three months the Prince and his entourage visited 110 regional and urban destinations on a 14,000-kilometre round trip. After arriving in Victoria, the Prince and his companions travelled through New South Wales and Western Australia, and returned east through South Australia and Tasmania, before concluding the visit in Queensland.<sup>1</sup>



*'The Digger Prince' badge (Bathurst District Historical Society).*

Just over 100 years later, journalist Kate O'Neill wrote:

At the height of his popularity in the 1920s, Prince Edward, the Prince of Wales boasted a profile that would have rivalled that of William and Kate ...

The good looking royal and future King was the most photographed celebrity of his time and a men's fashion icon.<sup>2</sup>

The comparison of the Prince of Wales to the current junior royals, or popular celebrities today, is valid, but it is far from the whole story. It does not take into account the radically different geopolitical environment of over a century ago, which played an equal, if not more significant part in the success of this royal tour, and subsequent tours well into the twentieth century.

Members of the House of Windsor personified and embodied the British Empire. 'In the hundred years between 1815 and 1914, Britain conquered much of the world: the empire expanded by 10 million square miles, ensnaring around 400 million people within imperial boundaries.'<sup>3</sup> In 1920, only Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Union of South Africa were described as self-governing Dominions under the British Crown. The remainder were under colonial administrations centred in London.

Britain had also emerged as one of the victors of the vast clash of empires that was World War I. Australia, with a population of approximately 4.9 million, had seen 416,809 Australians, representing 38.7% of the male population aged 18 to 44, enlist for service in the Australian Imperial Force. Of those who enlisted, 61,514 died. The purpose of the Prince of Wales' tour, to thank Australia for its sacrifices in the war, was one that resonated deeply with a nation only just emerging from this traumatic period. The characterisation of Edward as the 'Digger Prince', associating him with a defining moment of Australian nationhood, the Gallipoli campaign of 1915, touched deep chords of both imperial and national pride in the highly receptive nation that awaited his arrival with eager anticipation.

Edward's 'service' in World War I was much touted as justification for his 'Digger Prince' title and, to be fair to him, he did offer to go with his regiment, the Grenadier Guards, to the front line. However, Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War, was having none of it. His



*Welcome Arch for Prince of Wales, Bathurst, 1920 (Bathurst District Historical Society).*

Prior to the Prince's visit to Bathurst on Friday, 13 August 1920, some disappointment was expressed by another regional centre, Orange, that Edward, before he visited Bathurst, would only spend twenty minutes there, at the railway station. Despite strenuous efforts by the Mayor and Aldermen of Orange, no changes could be made to the Prince of Wales' schedule.

Nevertheless, a crowd of around

5,000 people greeted Edward as he stepped onto the platform at Orange at about 3 pm, shivering in the cold. Once twenty minutes was up, 'The prince was back on board and the royal train departed'. The disappointment, for some citizens of Orange, was compounded by the fact that no decorations had been installed, with one Chamber of Commerce slamming it as 'the most dead fish welcome' he had ever seen.<sup>6</sup>

For the Prince, it was on to Blayney, where he was again 'greeted by thousands with thunderous applause', before he arrived in Bathurst just after 5 o'clock, in 'cold and threatening weather'. The crowd awaiting the Prince, estimated at around 15,000 people, was 'entertained with bright selections' by the Salvation Army Band conducted by bandmaster A.F. Veale in a barricaded-off enclosure in the middle of the roadway. When the royal train drew into the platform, the Prince was greeted by the Mayor, Alderman Havenhand, the Town Clerk, and state and federal representatives, along with members of the press, and was escorted to a waiting motorcar 'amid a salvo of enthusiastic cheers'.<sup>7</sup>

The motorcade proceeded from the station and under two ceremonial arches, one in Keppel Street and one in William Street, opposite King's Parade at the intersection with Russell Street. This arch, emblazoned with the word 'Welcome', was captured by Bathurst photographer J.J. Kelly. Both arches had been erected by willing workers who arranged golden wattle and gum tree branches to create these 'beautiful and impressive' decorations. Atop the William Street arch stood a group of Volunteer Aid Detachment girls in white dresses, with 'Britannia' holding a shield in the middle. Everyone in the crowd was dressed in their best to greet the Prince – ladies in hats and gloves and men in suits – and all were cheering frantically.<sup>8</sup>

concern was not that the Prince might be killed; what was preventing him from allowing Edward to engage in active combat was the possibility that he could be captured by the Germans and held hostage to deliver a favourable result for them in any armistice negotiations.

Edward had to be content with his role as a staff officer to Field Marshal Sir John French at the British Expeditionary Forces' General Headquarters in France from November 1914, where 'he was most effective performing his regular royal duties of visits and meeting guests'. When the King visited France in August 1916, Edward helped to show him captured ground around Fricourt and Mametz.<sup>4</sup> His military service earned the Prince a Military Cross and the Croix de Guerre.

For the Australian public, this was enough: the Prince had worn the King's uniform and had been on active service, and this had earned him the 'Digger Prince' title. Edward's war service was also said to have forged an affinity with people across the social spectrum, which added to his popularity.

Edward, Prince of Wales arrived in Australia on board the HMS *Renown* in April 1920. He spent nine days in Victoria, eleven days in New South Wales, four days in Tasmania, eleven days in Western Australia, six days in South Australia and eight days in Queensland. He visited 110 cities and towns across Australia, to immense public acclaim. He endured repetitious theatrical welcoming rituals, was kitted out in ceremonial clothing and paraded in old-fashioned forms of transport. Well-attended 'people's receptions', the royal progress, race meets, balls and garden parties were all repeated with dizzying frequency. This pageantry did have another purpose. Edward's presence at ex-servicemen's functions, visits to repatriation hospitals, soldier settlements and local monuments to the dead acknowledged Australia's profound collective grief.<sup>5</sup>





*Queen Elizabeth II addressing the crowd in Bathurst, 12 February 1954 (Bathurst District Historical Society).*

On arrival at the Court House in Russell Street, the Prince mounted the dais, surrounded by leading citizens and war services representatives, while the Bathurst District Band played, 'almost drowned out by the wildest cheering as the crowd, now estimated at between 10,000 and 12,000, arrived in Russell Street'. A welcoming address was delivered by Alderman Havenhand, to which Edward responded with a speech, in which he gave the schoolchildren a day's holiday, followed by the District Band playing the national anthem. An inspection of Boer War and World War I servicemen was followed by afternoon tea in the Court House. The Methodist Choir sang 'Britannia' from lorries in Keppel Street and were acknowledged 'with a gracious bow' by the Prince.<sup>9</sup> Then, after eighty minutes in Bathurst, the Prince's train left the station bound for Sydney.

As well as a holiday, the royal visit was commemorated in a medallion given to all Australian schoolchildren, along with a facsimile of a letter handwritten by the Prince of Wales, in which he pledged that he would return to Australia 'whenever I can'. He never did.

Bathurst had to wait 34 years for the next royal visit, when the young Queen Elizabeth II came there in 1954. The young Queen's visit to Australia, less than a decade after the end of World War II, reinforced the attachment to Britain and its monarchy that was still strong in a generation that had undergone the rigours of war in both Britain and Australia. The newly-crowned Queen Elizabeth II and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh made their iconic royal tour of

Australia from February to April 1954. The couple visited 57 towns and cities across the country. Almost 75 per cent of the Australian population saw the Queen at least once during the visit, the first by a reigning British monarch to Australia. Her father, King George VI, had intended to visit Australia in 1949 but his ailing health ended that plan, and it was announced that his eldest daughter, Princess Elizabeth, would tour in his stead in 1952. The King's death in February that year derailed this plan as well, and Australians had to wait until after the coronation on 2 June 1953 for their first glimpse of the young Queen Elizabeth II and her husband, Prince Philip. By the time the couple arrived in Australia in early February 1954, 'Anticipation was high and sentiment at fever pitch.'<sup>10</sup>

Less than two weeks after arriving in Australia, on Friday, 12 February 1954, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh left Sydney and arrived at Raglan Aerodrome in a RAAF Dakota aircraft, their first flight in a military plane on the tour. Bathurst was waiting for them: people had begun to gather the previous evening, and by midnight there were 4,000 people in the city, some wrapped in blankets and sleeping in front of the dais on King's Parade where the civic reception was to be held the next day. An estimated 10,000 people poured into Bathurst in cars and on trains on Friday morning.

Once the Queen's plane had landed and she and the Duke were welcomed by the Premier of New South Wales, they began their trip by Land Rover into

Bathurst. Passing through welcome gates constructed near Bathurst Showground, they encountered an enthusiastic crowd, including cheering schoolchildren, and in King's Parade a solid mass of people had gathered in front of the Civic Centre. Here the royal couple were welcomed by the Chief Secretary, the Minister for Immigration and the Mayor of Bathurst and their wives, and the Town Clerk, then walked along a 180-metre pathway through the park to the welcoming dais.

The royal visit to Bathurst on 12 February 1954 included a loyal address by the Mayor and the Queen's response, a meeting with ex-servicemen and women at Bathurst Civic Centre, and the playing of the Carillon. The royal couple then visited Bathurst Showground to greet the crowds of schoolchildren gathered there.<sup>11</sup> The total size of the crowd in Bathurst to greet the Queen was later estimated at between 80,000 to 90,000 people.<sup>12</sup>

In two short hours the long-awaited visit was over, and the Queen and Prince Philip were farewelled at Bathurst Station by the stationmaster, Louis Le Breton, before they boarded the Royal Train bound for Lithgow, then on to Sydney in the Governor-General's carriage, which had been ornately decorated in timber, leather and gold, and air-conditioned.

The Queen would make a further 15 trips to Australia, but none was as extensive as her triumphal 1954 tour. On many of these visits the Queen did take the opportunity to visit places outside the state capitals and Canberra – and one of these was Bathurst, in 1982. On 11 October that year the Queen and Prince Philip landed again at Raglan Airport and were met by the Mayor of Bathurst, Max Hanrahan, Member for Bathurst Dave Berry, police and some schoolchildren. The major streets had been barricaded off for crowd control and decorated with flags and floral arrangements. A large crowd up to eight deep lined the procession route, with schoolchildren assigned a section of the route along William Street, holding flags and seated cross-legged awaiting the royal visitors. The Queen began her public walk to City Hall, accompanied by the Mayor, and was given bouquets of spring flowers (pre-approved beforehand). She then unveiled a commemorative plaque near the Bathurst District Historical Society premises to mark the visit.<sup>13</sup>

Queen Elizabeth II's stoicism and sense of duty endeared her to people around the world. When she died on 8 September 2022, she was mourned around the world. The Queen's state funeral took place on 19 September at Westminster Abbey, and 28 million people in the United Kingdom, 1.4 million people in the United States and 3.9 million people in Australia

tuned in to watch.<sup>14</sup> It was the last grand ceremonial occasion of the former British Empire.

## About the author

Dr Roslyn Russell is a historian, museum consultant, and co-author of *Significance 2.0* (2009). She chairs the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Committee. She is a Board Member of the International Centre for Documentary Heritage, Cheongju, Republic of Korea. Roslyn presents at international conferences and workshops for UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme, contributing her expertise in safeguarding documentary heritage.

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# Captain Thomas Fenwick and the 'Battle of the Bar'

Jacqui Kennedy

Of Scottish heritage, the Fenwick family arrived in Australia in 1849, with the youngest six-year-old Thomas, and several older children, including John, aged 13. They settled in the Balmain area in the thick of the shipping district.<sup>1</sup>

Captain Thomas 'Tom' Fenwick spent his youth on the tough Sydney wharfs and by 1870, together with his brother John, had established a steam ship towage service, said to be the first in Port Jackson, called J. & T. Fenwick. Alongside steam tugs, they also owned, or had a financial interest in, some sailing ships which traded up and down the coastal rivers.



*Portrait of Captain Thomas Fenwick (Ballina Library Collection).*

Fenwick had been trading timber on the Richmond River with his schooner *Atlantic* and recognised that a towing service on the bar of the river for the timber laden sailing ships would be a good business. There was a shortage of sailing ships to transport the timber cut out of the Big Scrub, and a steam tug could tow two or three schooners at a time up the river.

For the first 20 years of the timber trade since the 1840s, the vessels coming to the Northern Rivers for the riches of the red cedar were sailing ships and many were wrecked trying to negotiate the entrance at the Heads. The topography of the bar at Ballina made it more dangerous than most river bars. The south head was a low sandy beach, and the north head was studded with jagged rocks. The entrance channel was constantly changing position, and the mouth of the river was full of shifting sand banks.<sup>2</sup>

Waiting for suitable tides and winds to cross the bar, ships were often held up for days or weeks. At one point, 42 vessels were bar-bound for 17 weeks as it was too dangerous to cross.

The cedar trade was booming and there was plenty of work for tugboats. From the early 1870s there had been a few steam tugs competing for the lucrative tugboat service at the bar. They were all hoping to secure a valuable government subsidy when it became available.<sup>3</sup>

They used paddlewheel vessels, which were less likely to foul any snags in the river and could navigate into very shallow water. Out at sea they were usually less inclined to roll. A flag would be raised at the Pilot Station, which could be seen from afar, to let the tugboats know a ship was out to sea needing to be towed across. The vessels out to sea would use their own flag system to indicate which tug they wanted, or they would just take whichever tug reached them first.

Captain Johnson's 15-ton iron steamer *Culloden* lasted a year before it was wrecked on bar.

William Yeager was using the *Keystone* for river towing as it was too small to cross the bar. He then bought the small 43-ton tug *Athletic*, but he lacked the experience for the dangerous work at the Heads and soon withdrew from Ballina and concentrated on the



*Fenwick shipyard on the banks of the Richmond River (Ballina Library Collection).*

profitable cargo run from Coraki to Casino.

William Yabsley, a shipbuilder from Coraki, had built a 50-ton paddle-steamer *Index* to tow his own schooners *Schoolboy* and *Examiner* safely down river and across the bar, putting Captain Lachlan McKinnon in charge. McKinnon, a Scotsman with a calm nature and strong will, was free to pick up any other shipping trade crossing the bar or towing up or down river.<sup>4</sup>

In 1873 Fenwick purchased the *Alchymist*, a 54-ton paddle-steamer, and together with his wife Mary Cummings and young son Andrew, moved to Ballina to establish a permanent towing and shipyard presence.

Towage charges varied, but the standard price was £26 to take a vessel across the bar, up to Lismore and down the river again. The tow from the bar to Blackwall (Wardell) and out to sea cost £8.

Tom Fenwick was indignant at the thought of losing lucrative towing charges and he used unscrupulous methods to undermine and sabotage his rival.

Thus began the 'Battle of the Bar'.<sup>5</sup>

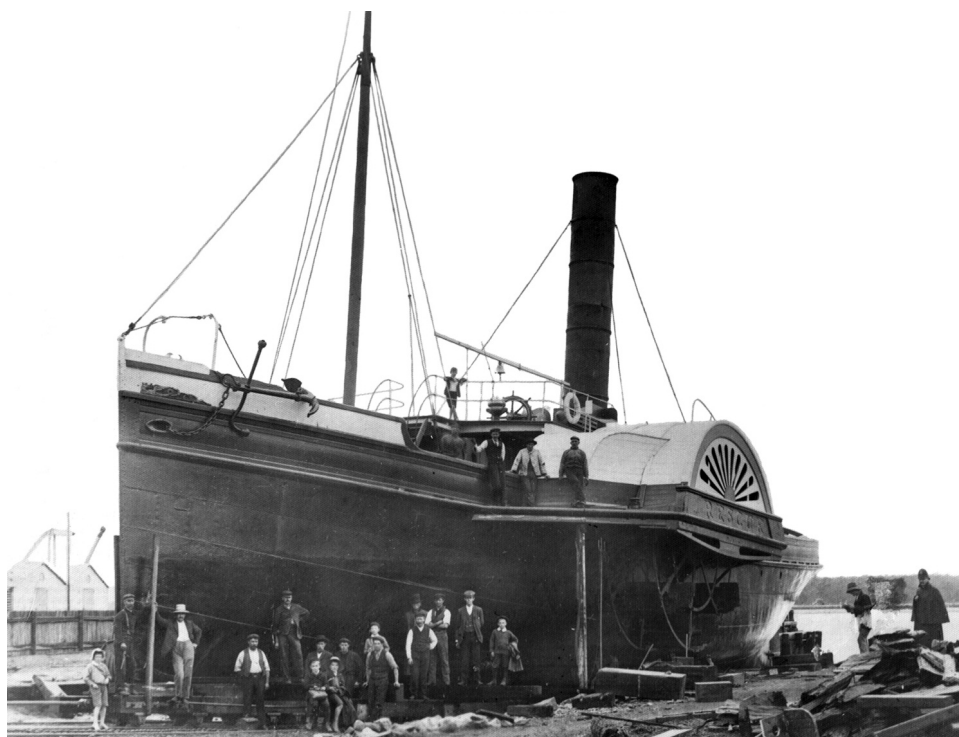
Fenwick became obsessed with besting his competition. *Alchymist* was slightly larger and faster than *Index*, and Fenwick was often seen chasing the *Index* across the bar to secure the tow. On calmer days, Fenwick would wait outside the Heads all day, bobbing about in the ocean waiting to spot a sail on the horizon. For the ships waiting inside to go out, or to be towed up the river, Fenwick would negotiate with their captains and undercut the fees, lessening his own profit just so he could secure the work. He would moor his boats in such a way as to block the *Index* and, in one incident, rammed the *Index* in an attempt to put her out of action.<sup>6</sup>

James Ainsworth records:

Early one morning just as day was breaking the flag appeared on the staff at North Head for a schooner in the dim offing. Both tugs had their fires banked overnight, so that a sufficiency of steam was only a matter of minutes. Venturing out in his shirt at first light to have a peep at the bar, Fenwick saw the signal on the headland at the same time that he also saw by her smoke that the *Index* at Lewis' wharf was stoking her furnaces. If it was to be a race for the tow no time was to be lost. The *Alchymist's* [sic] engineer had not yet tuned out, and without further ado Fenwick ran down and tickled up the fires. Next he saw the *Index* casting off her lines and following her lead, still minus his trousers, engineer and deckhand, he also let go with no one else on board to lend a hand. He was captain, fireman, engineer and crew in one. In the race for the bar Fenwick was first. He was also first over it, and although hard pressed he continued to beat his rival to the ship until he finally secured her by passing his line to her waiting crew. It was surely an unprecedented achievement for any man to fire and drive, and steer a fair-sized tugboat unaided over a river bar in such circumstances, and it may be taken as an accepted fact that it has never been attempted since. Before crossing in Fenwick requisitioned a man from the ship to attend to the furnaces, while he piloted the tug with her prize in tow back to port and safety. The neglected trousers were a welcome garment awaiting his return.<sup>7</sup>

The rivalry made little sense to Captain McKinnon – as one tug was away towing up the river, the other tug got the bar work and vice-versa. They were both





*Tug Rescue in the dock  
at Fenwick shipyard  
(Ballina Library Collection).*

leaving Fenwick free to monopolise the market and increase his fleet and prices.

Fenwick expanded to river droghing and purchased *Victoria* and *Sarah L. Hixson* to capture some of the local passenger and cargo trade. The Francis Hixson was lost on the bar, replaced with the *Protector*. The partnership with his brother John dissolved in 1883 with a division of interests and each continuing in their own right – John on Sydney Harbour and Thomas on the Richmond River.

making good money, and he saw little benefit in expending all his energy trying to compete. At times though it was frustrating for both men when the other beat them to the tow by minutes and they had to return across the bar empty-handed. Coal was not cheap and they could not afford to lose too many fees from the ‘races’.

Fenwick’s frustration overflowed one day when Captain Lowrie of the *Sea Ripple* decided to take the tow from the *Index* instead of the *Alchymist* – Fenwick climbed onboard the *Sea Ripple* and thrashed the captain on his own quarterdeck.

These antics baffled the shipping community as they could see that there was plenty of work for both companies and the competition would keep the charges in check.

Fenwick had also developed other business interests: a ship repair yard and engineering firm with a slipway and wharf conveniently located in the centre of town. J. & T. Fenwick secured the New South Wales Government contract for a subsidised tug service in late 1875 and they purchased a new, larger 156-ton paddle steamer, *Francis Hixson*, to assist with the many rescues on the bar. Captain Fenwick was undoubtedly a fearless operator and executed many daring rescues at great peril to his own safety and that of his crew. He was well respected as a master mariner even though he lost several of his own ships on the treacherous bar.

By 1877 William Yabsley recognised that the rivalry was not serving the community and withdrew the *Index* from the fray and relinquished the bar trade,

Mary had two more sons, Thomas and John, however she died in March 1882 leaving three boys under ten-years-old. Thomas wasted no time and married Sarah Shaw just four months later. She had a young daughter Jessie, whom Thomas treated as his own child, and they went on to have eight more children. Sarah was the daughter of Ephraim and Elizabeth Shaw of Ballina. They lived near the Pilot Station at East Ballina with ‘Granny’ Shaw, who was well known as the local midwife.

In 1886, Tom built a beautiful two-storied home at the mouth of the Richmond River overlooking Shaws Bay to enable shipping movements to be easily viewed from the upstairs verandah. The house cost approximately £9,000, with £800 being spent on a magnificent cedar staircase and a beautiful black and white Italian tile entrance hall. At the front entrance is the family coat of arms with the motto *Perit ut Vivat*, which translated to ‘He perishes that others may live’. The house was designed by Thomas’ nephew James Fenwick.

The fleet of tugs and river droghers increased to include the *J. and T. Fenwick Comet William Langford Sarah Fenwick Marion Fenwick Emma Pyers Lady Franklin Sir George* and *Rescue*.

Thomas Fenwick’s older sons, Andrew and Thomas Junior, had joined their father in business, acquiring new boats for the passenger and tug trade, and replacing those lost to the vagaries of the sea. The river droghers like the *Sarah L. Hixson* and *Emma Pyers* began regular passenger and goods runs from Ballina to Lismore. In 1882 the *Florrie* was wrecked on the bar

and salvaged by the Fenwicks, repaired and then put back to work on the river.

Captain Fenwick was widely accepted as an expert in his work at the bar and many stories were told extolling his bravery, with newspaper accounts describing in vivid detail his daring rescues. The most widely publicised rescue was that of the *Chingtu* in 1893. Bound for Sydney from China, she had broken a tail-shaft during an easterly gale with imminent loss of ship, cargo and all on board. Fenwick braved the boiling seas and took *Protector* across the bar and into the fray with half the townsfolk as onlookers. After smashing through the mountainous breakers, Fenwick himself swam a line across to the stricken ship and successfully towed it to safety at Byron Bay.

A lengthy poem was written about the heroic feat, and the town made a presentation to Captain Fenwick and his crew for bravery.<sup>8</sup>

Discussions about building a breakwater had been raging for years and construction finally began in 1889. Over 90 ships had been sacrificed to the bar including many owned by the Fenwicks. He testified in many hearings and was lauded as the authority on the dangers of the bar.<sup>9</sup>

After a twenty-two-year career as a tug-boat master, Thomas Fenwick's final battle with the bar came in 1894 when he took the small tug *William Langford*, with Will Lomax as crew, out of the heads to tow his own ketch *Sir George* back in. On the return trip the *William Langford* was struck by a freak wave, foundered and capsized. Both men then had an hour-long battle with the waves threatening to dash them against the newly built breakwall. Rescuers were unable to reach them but eventually the men passed round North Head and were swept among the rocks below the lighthouse. Mr Parker, the light-keeper, and his son had carried ropes and lifebuoys down to the beach in readiness for action. The signalman, William Graham, with his brother Sydney, swam out – Sydney rescuing Lomax and William rescuing Captain Fenwick, both of whom were exhausted and cut by the rocks when dragged ashore. Thomas Fenwick, with sand in his lungs, suffered debilitating breathing problems for the next two years. He died in 1896 aboard his ship *Lady Franklin*.

He was buried on the hill at East Ballina, overlooking his magnificent house and Shaws Bay where he had spent his life as tug-master and had executed many daring rescues on the Richmond River bar.

After Thomas senior died, the two eldest boys continued to build and expand the shipping interests. The first river steamer to be built at their Ballina

shipyard was named the *Captain T. Fenwick* in honour of their father.

Sarah, Jessie and the younger children moved to Sydney and were embroiled in lengthy court cases over money with the older boys. After many years of waning prosperity, the Fenwicks struggled after the loss of several key boats and the downturn in business due to the improvements in road and rail. When the Captain T. Fenwick sank on the North Arm the loss was too great and they filed for bankruptcy in 1916.<sup>10</sup>

George Davis, the CEO of Davis Bros, acquired the ailing Fenwick Line which included the Ballina shipyard and four river boats: the *Ballina*, the *Sarah L. Hixson*, the *Gannet* and the pride of the fleet *Captain T. Fenwick* which was refloated, repaired and put to work as a tug at the Heads.

## About the author

Jacqui Kennedy is a member of the Ballina District Historical Society and the author of *The Hunt Collection: The George Hunt Maritime Photographic Collection* and web manager for [historymaps.au](http://historymaps.au), [richmondriver.com.au](http://richmondriver.com.au) and [smythe.id.au](http://smythe.id.au). This article is drawn from research published on the *European History of the Richmond River* website.

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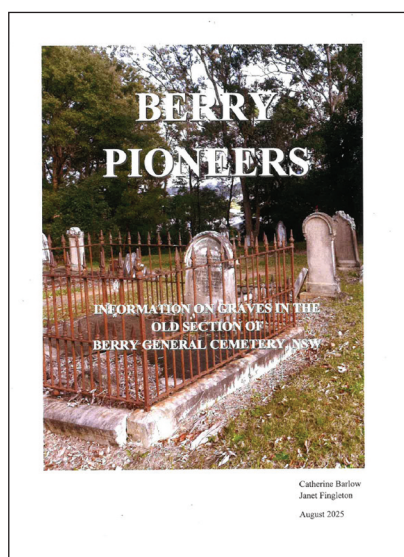


# Book Notes

## Berry Pioneers: Information on graves in the old section of Berry General Cemetery

*Written by Catherine Barlow and Janet Fingleton. Published by Berry & District Historical Society, 2025.*

The authors have incorporated the information and obituaries gathered by previous researchers of the Berry General Cemetery into this worthy addition to our



local history archives. They have also acknowledged all those who aided in the completion of this detailed book.

This publication lists the names of those interred, their religious denomination, detailed graves and obituaries sections, biographical information of early settlers, and

transcriptions and photographs of their headstones where available in the cemetery.

It includes an alphabetical index of those interred, information on the background of land grants and usage, monuments and gravesites, a timeline of key events, and a layout of the old section of the cemetery.

Available from: <https://www.berryhistory.org.au/>

199 pages: illustrations, plans, map, refs, index.

*Book Note by Donna Newton, RAHS Librarian.*

## Clarence Street, Port Macquarie: Community, Commerce, Controversy

*Written by Tony Dawson. Published by Port Macquarie Historical Society, 2026.*

The author explores the two-hundred-year lifetime of one of Port Macquarie's most historic streets, from penal settlement and early town plans, through economic transformation, war, and cultural change. Situated on this street are some of the town's oldest and newest buildings.

This full-colour publication, with Dawson's extensive research through the archives of local newspapers

reaching back to the early 1800s, tells the story of a small convict outpost transformed over time by social change, cultural disputes and commercial expansion, into a beloved hub of community and industry.

Through the lens of Clarence Street's buildings, places and people, we see the growth of a pivotal space of coastal New South Wales, from its small beginnings and continued growth into the future.

Available from: <https://portmuseum.org.au/shop.html>

117 pages: illustrations, maps; 25 cm; ISBN: 9780958039093.

*Book Note by Leigh Briar, RAHS volunteer.*

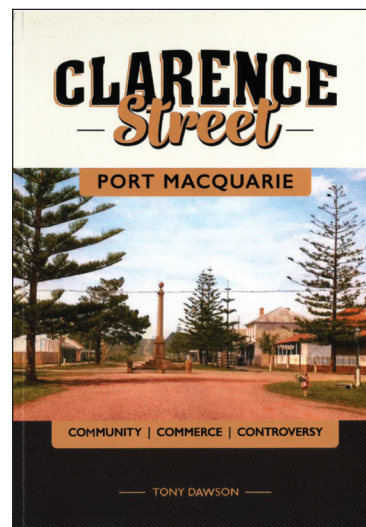
## Nutcote: Home of May Gibbs

*Written by Fiona Starr. Published by the Nutcote Trust, 2026.*

This book celebrates the centenary of Nutcote, the harbourside home of May Gibbs and her husband, J.O. Kelly. Part biography, part site tour, the book tells the story of May's life and the legacy of the home where she lived and worked for more than 40 years.

The author worked closely with the Nutcote Trust, which runs the museum, and with archival collections to develop this personal history of the home and its gardens, largely told through May's own words and those of her husband and friends. Chapters relate her extraordinary legacy, the restoration of Nutcote and the museum's amazing collections.

Full of Gibbs' drawings throughout, this beautiful 100-page book explores her stories, artwork, life and the home of



Australia's beloved children's author and illustrator.

100 pages: illustrations, sources, notes, plans; 21 cm;  
ISBN: 9780646721682.

Available from: <https://www.maygibbs.com.au/>

*Book Note by Donna Newton, RAHS Librarian.*



*These projects are supported by Create NSW Cultural Grants Program, a devolved funding program administered by the Royal Australian Historical Society on behalf of the NSW Government.*

## Early Settlers, Speculators, and Houses of the Federal-Fyle Heritage Conservation Area, Ashfield NSW

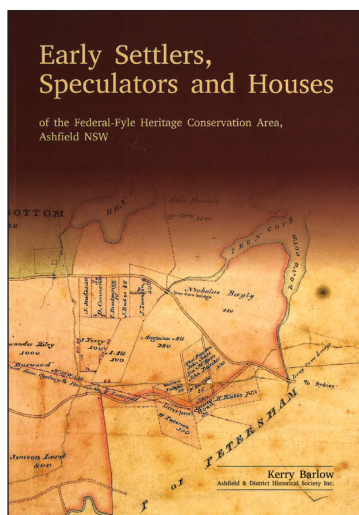
*Written by Kerry Barlow. Published by Ashfield and District Historical Society, 2025.*

This well-researched book explores the history of Ashfield's early settlement, examining the area's development, landowners, and changing built environment. Drawing on extensive historical research, including state records, maps, newspaper excerpts, and imagery, the book traces the town's expansion and the social conditions that shaped it. The publication demonstrates Ashfield's significance within Australian history through its preservation of local stories and insights into everyday colonial and community life while also highlighting the ongoing importance of heritage conservation and historical awareness. The book serves as a valuable resource for personal and educational research, offering specialised historical knowledge that enables a greater understanding of Ashfield.

Available from: <https://ashfieldhistory.org.au/>

127 pages: illustrations, maps; 30 cm; ISBN: 9780949842299.

*Book Note by Zoe McPherson, RAHS volunteer.*



## From Two Lines: The Life Story of Captain Josiah Holman

*Written by Michael P. Webb. Published by Silverbird Publishing, 2025.*

'I have been abroad six times viz. – to the Philippine Islands, the Brazils, twice to the Canadas and the Native Copper Mines of Lake Superior – to South Africa and lastly to Malacca'.

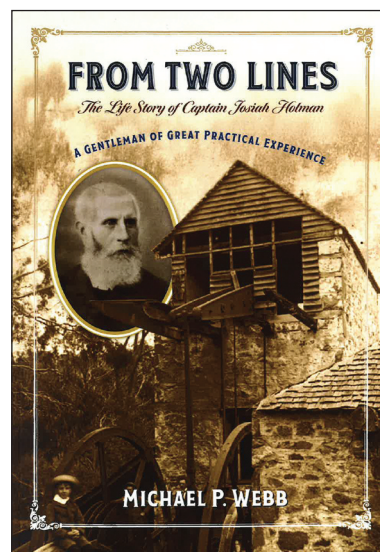
The lines above are from a letter written in 1859 by the author's Great-Great-Grandfather, Josiah Holman. Born in Wales, Josiah left

school at 14 and became a miner. He rose through the ranks to become a much sought-after Mining Captain, carrying responsibility for day-to-day mine management. His reputation grew and he was offered positions wherever in the world copper, gold or other minerals were discovered. His wife Elizabeth travelled with him, and their children. The mining boom in the 1860s drew him to Australia, and he eventually settled in the Orange district in Central New South Wales, where he died in 1893. Researching letters, diaries, family records, newspapers and journals, the author has combined family history with detailed descriptions of mining procedures in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Available from the author: [from2lines@gmail.com](mailto:from2lines@gmail.com)

258 pages: illustrations; 24 cm. ISBN: 9781764190541.

*Book Note by Kay Abrahams, RAHS member.*

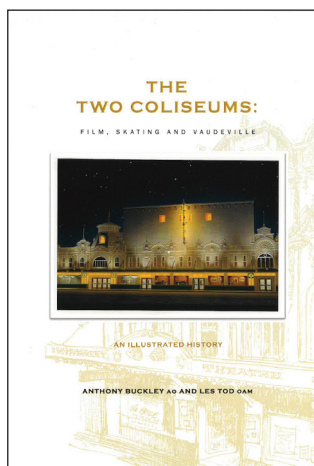


## The Two Coliseums: Film, Skating and Vaudeville — An Illustrated History

*Written and published by Anthony Buckley AO and Les Tod OAM, 2025.*

This publication explores the history of two neighbouring entertainment venues in North Sydney: the now-perished Coliseum de Luxe Picture Theatre and the Coliseum Picture Hall (later known as the Independent Theatre), which still stands today. Drawing on photographs, newspaper excerpts, and first-hand accounts, the book creates an immersive narrative tracing the site's transformation from a cable tram depot into a significant entertainment venue. The





publication highlights important aspects of Australia's social and cultural history in North Sydney, examining themes of popular culture, urban change, entrepreneurship, and performance from the nineteenth century onwards. By capturing the experiences of those who visited and shaped these spaces, the book contributes to a broader

understanding of Australia's cultural heritage.

Available from the authors: [thetods@bigpond.com](mailto:thetods@bigpond.com)

202 pages; illustrations, facsimiles; 30 cm; ISBN: 9780646708195.

*Book Note by Zoe McPherson, RAHS volunteer.*

## Werri Beach: Celebrating 100 Years

*Published by Gerringong & District Historical Society, 2026.*

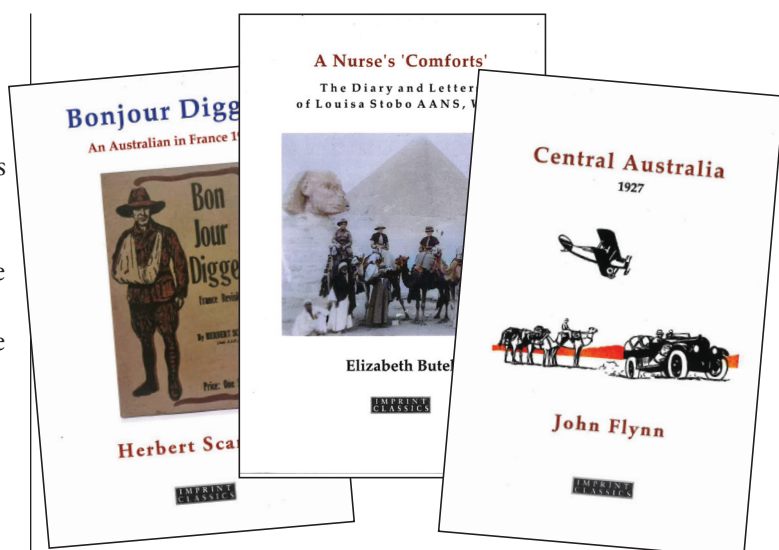
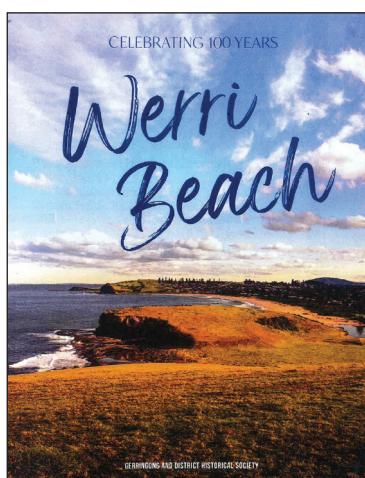
To celebrate the centenary of the first auction of the 280 blocks of land in the Werri Beach Estate, the Society has produced this brightly illustrated book detailing the cultural development of the local area over multiple generations.

The first chapters of the book trace the history of the original custodians of the land, the Wodi Wodi people, through early European settlement and the civic changes that gave rise to the town celebrating its first hundred years today.

The publication features contributions of photographs and personal memories from both current and past residents, elevating the book from a mere sequence of historical events to a passionate token of community. The pages are decorated with the work of local artists, family stories, and fond histories of local landmarks, offering a vivid and delightful reading experience.

Available from: <https://www.gerringonghistory.org.au/>  
192 pages; illustrations, maps; 21 cm; ISBN 9780648552055.

*Book Note by Leigh Briar, RAHS volunteer.*



## A Nurse's 'Comforts': The Diary and Letters of Louisa Stobo AANS, WWI; Bonjour Digger: An Australian in France 1916; Central Australia 1927

*Published by ETT Imprint, 2025–2026.*

ETT Imprint, an independent Sydney publisher, specialises in Australian literature and history. Since 1994, it has published an impressive list of works that would otherwise be largely lost to modern readers. The three sampled here give valuable insights into our past.

Elizabeth Butel has brought nurse Louisa Stobo to life. She does so with a transcription of Stobo's sparse WWI diary followed by a commentary based on her letters and other sources. Stobo's story highlights the importance of local identity – in this case, Maitland in the Hunter Valley.

Herbert Scanlon served in the AIF in France in 1916. *Bonjour Digger* is a collection of his stories which were later sold door-to-door by returned servicemen. That they needed to do this, and the stories themselves, provide a moving insight into the tragedy of war. Scanlon is especially evocative when describing everyday humanity contrasting with the ongoing horror.

*Central Australia* is a reprint of the famous Rev. John Flynn's 1927 account of his medical missionary work. It is an important source for healthcare in the outback and, especially regarding First Nations people, the era's attitudes.

Available from major Australian online book platforms.

118 pages; 122 pages; 85 pages; illustrations, maps, facsimiles. ISBN: 9781923205758; 9781923205680; 978192352705880.

*Book Note by Judith Godden, RAHS Councillor.*

# On the Shelf: Colonial Family History Collections

## Donna Newton, RAHS Librarian

The RAHS Library holds several significant collections, along with smaller holdings that reveal the interconnected lives and pioneering heritage of families in colonial Australia. One such collection is the Marsden, Hassall and Betts materials.

History House recently hosted a display of historic research materials for members of the Hassall Family History Association, who are descendants of Rowland and Elizabeth Hassall. The association is an RAHS Affiliated Society.

Some of these items were donated to the RAHS in the 1930s by Miss Elizabeth Betts, the granddaughter of Rev. Samuel Marsden. Miss Betts joined the Society in 1903 and served on its Council from 1917 until her passing in 1937 at age 88. Other descendants donated materials through the years.

The materials put on display included rare books, such as *The letters and journals of Samuel Marsden, 1765–1838*; James Wilson's *A Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean, Performed in the Years 1796–1798, in the Ship Duff*; James S. Hassall's *In Old Australia: Records and Reminiscences from 1794*; the Marsden-Hassall family bibles; Rev. Marsden's clerical collar; and an

optiscope lantern projector donated by Miss Betts.

There were also photographs and artworks of early family members, journal and magazine articles, letters, documents and newspaper clippings. The material gathered spanned the library's collections: monographs, manuscripts, images and decorative arts. The family members enjoyed their morning viewing, and the collection was truly appreciated.

If you are interested in this family's association or this collection, or if Affiliated Societies are interested in an introductory library visit to History House, please contact RAHS Librarian Donna Newton to discuss availability.

*Anne Hassall née Marsden (1794–1885), wife to Rev. Thomas Hassall (RAHS Glass Slide Collection).*



*Members of the Hassall Family History Association gathered at History House, 5 August 2026.*



