

# HISTORY

MAGAZINE OF THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

March 2020 Number 143 \$5.50

(incl GST)



**Robin McLachlan** – Not a Motley Throng: Australians on the Klondike, 1898

**Rosemary Kerr** – Thinking Big: Australia's Unique Roadside Attractions

**Noeline Kyle** – Penal Servitude, Social Reform and Lady Travellers

**Christine Yeats** – Anna Elizabeth Walker's Silk Shawl: A question answered?

**2019 Annual Report**

**Bruce Pennay** – Reaching out from a National Heritage Place



# ROYAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

Tuesday 14 April 2020, 6pm

All members of the Royal Australian Historical Society are invited to attend the AGM to be held at History House on Tuesday 14 April 2020 from 6 pm. Members will have the opportunity to learn about the Society's progress, ask questions and speak to items on the agenda.

## Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 16 April 2019
3. Consideration and, if deemed fit, adoption of the Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2019 (as printed in this issue of *History* magazine)
4. Consideration and, if deemed fit, adoption of the Financial Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2019 (summary of Financial Statements printed in *History* magazine. A full statement of accounts is available to members on request)
5. Declaration by the Returning Officer of the Council for the current year.
6. Presidential Address
7. General Business

Refreshments will be served after the meeting. Please note that the RAHS Council members will have a short meeting to elect the RAHS Executive. The results of this election will be initially announced to members attending refreshments, and then published on our website, e-Newsletter and the next edition of *History*.

Any member who is eligible to attend and vote is entitled also to appoint a proxy in his or her stead. Such a proxy must be a financial member of the Society at the time of voting. Proxy forms, addressed to the Returning Officer, must be received at History House by no later than 5pm on Tuesday 7 April 2020. Proxy forms will also be distributed to proxy holders as they enter the Annual General Meeting.

Member who are not currently financial, but who renew their subscriptions before the AGM, are eligible to attend the AGM and to hold proxies for other financial members.

If you have not renewed your membership for 2020, please do so. We value your support in helping us achieve our overall constitutional objective – the advancement of education in the field of Australian history.

## NOTICE OF ELECTION

At the close of nominations at 4pm, Monday 10 February 2020, five (5) nominations had been received for four (4) positions.

The nominations were from:

- Phillip Black • Pauline Elizabeth Curby • Linda Emery • Peter Graeme Hobbins • Richard White

Under Regulation 28 of the RAHS Constitution, a postal ballot must be held to determine the four (4) positions on the twelve (12) member Council. Financial members will receive ballot papers. The ballot will be conducted at the direction of the Returning Officer and in accordance with the requirements of the Corporation Law. The postal ballot is the sole method of election when more than sufficient nominations are received (Regulation 28). Each elector must vote for four candidates in order for the vote to be valid. A 'first past the post' system will be used to determine the four successful candidates.

The four (4) candidates receiving the most votes will be deemed elected to the RAHS Council for a term of three (3) years (RAHS Constitution Clause 31).

**The ballot will close at 5 pm on Tuesday 7 April 2020.**

Ballots may be mailed to the Returning Officer at History House, 133 Macquarie Street, Sydney. Alternatively, ballots may be placed in the ballot box at History House during office hours. Regulation 34 currently requires the personal information on the outer envelope to be filled in by all the electors. Those who are concerned about privacy implications may enclose the outer envelope (containing the 'Ballot Papers' envelope) in a further envelope of their choosing.

---

**Front Cover:** Postcard of some of 'Australia's Big Things'. Photo by 'BrisbanePom' 2009 [Source: Wikimedia Commons].

**Back Cover:** Pre-federation Australian flag from the Klondike goldfields, 1898 [National Museum of Australia, Charlie Lloyd Collection 2011.0007.0001. Available online at <http://collectionsearch.nma.gov.au/object/217955>].

---





#### History House

133 Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000  
Phone 02 9247 8001 Fax 02 9247 7854  
email: [history@rahs.org.au](mailto:history@rahs.org.au)  
<http://www.rahs.org.au>  
ACN 000 027 654 ABN 91 000 027 654  
The Library is open Monday to Friday  
10am to 4pm

*History* is published quarterly by the Society to convey information and to encourage discussion about Australian history. All contributions must be signed and documented. Views published editorially, by contributors or in any material distributed with *History* are not necessarily those of the Society. Although the Society welcomes the support of advertisers and sponsors it cannot vouch for the accuracy of offers of services or goods that appear in the magazine, or be responsible for the outcome of any contract that may be entered into with an advertiser.

#### Joint Patrons

Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AO QC, Governor of New South Wales & Mr Dennis Wilson

#### Office Bearers

##### President

Christine Yeats, BA, DipLib, Dip ArchAdmin

##### Senior Vice President

Carol Liston, AO, BA (Hons), PhD, FRAHS

##### Vice President

Lynne Allen, BA, DipEd, GDLEAH, MA

##### Treasurer

Kathrine Reynolds, FRHistS

##### Executive Member

Linda Emery, BA

##### Company Secretary

Suzanne Holohan, BA (Hons), B Comm (Hons)

#### Councillors

Pauline Curby, MA, Dip Ed

Judith Dunn, OAM, FPDHS

Peter Hobbins, BA, BSc (Hons), M Medical Hum, PhD

Mark St Leon, BEC, GCertTQM, MBus, MA (Hons), PhD, CA

Graham Shirley

Iain Stuart, BA (Hons), M.Env Sci, PhD

Richard White, BA (Hons), Dip Ed

#### History Magazine

Guest Editor – Christine Yeats

#### Production

Suzanne Holohan BA (Hons), B Comm (Hons)

Christina King BA, GradDipEd, MA

Phillip Jaworski, BA (Hons)

#### Staff

General Manager – Suzanne Holohan, BComm (Hons), BA (Hons)

Librarian – Donna Newton, DipLibInf

Grants, Administration, Accounts and Insurance – Maryanne Byrne, BBus MMgt AOS.

Digital Media – Phillip Jaworski, BA (Hons)

ISSN 1031-9476

## RAHS Editorial Christine Yeats, RAHS President

Welcome to the March 2020 issue of the RAHS *History* magazine. If there is a common thread linking these diverse articles, it is one of movement and new horizons.

Robin McLachlan discusses the Australian presence on the Klondike Gold Fields in the remote north-west of Canada in his article *Not a Motley Throng: Australians on the Klondike, 1898*. As Robin recounts, over 400 Australians travelled to the Klondike Gold Fields, bringing with them a 'collective professionalism and confidence gained by decades of mining experience'.

In *Thinking Big: Australia's Unique Roadside Attractions*, Rosemary Kerr turns her attention to the 1960s when 'big things' started making their appearance on the Australian landscape, 'beckoning motorists travelling along major highways and tourist routes'. Today the Big Banana at Coffs Harbour and the Big Pineapple at Woombye, to name just two, have become part of Australian road trip folklore.

Noeline Kyle writes about Florence and Rosamond Davenport Hill in *Penal servitude, social reform and lady travellers: Rosamond and Florence Hill in Australia, 1873-1874*. The sisters visited Australia in 1873 and 1874 and published an account of their travels titled *What we saw in Australia* in 1875. On their return to England they continued to write and work for changes to child reform.

My article *Anna Elizabeth Walker's silk shawl: a question answered?*, explores the Blaxland family legend concerning the production and manufacture of an early nineteenth century silk shawl. It draws on my recent research using a mix of family papers and secondary sources.

*Reaching out from a National Heritage Place: Investigating Bonegilla, a Virtual Site Study* by Bruce Pennay looks at the virtual tour of the former Bonegilla Migrant Reception Centre (near Albury-Wodonga), which has been developed by Charles Sturt University. Bruce introduces us to the 'walkthrough Bonegilla online' and the accompanying set of specially designed learning materials.

In addition to the *Book Notes*, our regular *On the shelf: RAHS Library Notes* looks at the 1920 *Loan exhibition of pictures and objects of historical interest*, which was arranged by the RAHS.

The 2019 RAHS Annual Report is also included. The report sets out the financial and the other information about what has been a successful year for the Society.

## Contents March 2020 Number 143

Not a Motley Throng: Australians on the Klondike, 1898	2
Thinking Big: Australia's Unique Roadside Attractions	5
Penal Servitude, Social Reform and Lady Travellers	8
Anna Elizabeth Walker's Silk Shawl: A question answered?	11
Book Notes	13
2019 Annual Report	15
Reaching out from a National Heritage Place	27
On the Shelf	29

---

# Not a Motley Throng: Australians on the Klondike, 1898

Dr Robin McLachlan

'Australians with upturned sleeves and a swagger' stood out in the 'motley throng ... gathered from every corner of the earth' crowding the muddy streets of Dawson City in the summer of 1898.<sup>1</sup> With these few words, Canadian journalist Tappan Adney deftly characterised the Australian presence on the Klondike Gold Fields in the remote northwest of Canada. In contrast to 'young Englishmen in golf stockings and tweeds' and American 'would-be miners' in store-bought costumes, the Australians<sup>2</sup> brought to the Klondike the collective professionalism and confidence gained by decades of mining experience.

Over 400 Australians<sup>3</sup> had reached the Klondike Gold Fields by July 1898, out of an estimated influx of about 30,000, the vast majority from the United States.<sup>4</sup> Most followed the route from Skagway on the Alaska coast over the mountains to the headwaters of the Yukon River in Canada. When the ice went out in May, they travelled 750 km by boat, which they very likely had helped build, down to Dawson City on the mouth of the Klondike River—and its gold fields.<sup>5</sup>

The key sources used in identifying Australians on the Klondike in 1898 are the *Boat Registration Ledgers* kept by the Northwest Mounted Police (forerunner of today's RCMP). Each of the 7,000 boats was numbered and its occupants registered by name and home residence, so as to provide a record in the event of deaths from river mishaps. The prospectors had been previously checked by the Mounted Police at the border to ensure they were bringing in a year's supply of provisions. Imagine the surprise of Alfred (Dick) Samuels from Dubbo, when the Mountie turned out to be someone he had known as a policeman back home, John Allan.<sup>6</sup> There are many such accounts of acquaintances meeting on the *Trail of '98*.<sup>7</sup>

All six Australian colonies were represented but, as shown in the boat ledgers, the old colonial identities were shed. They called themselves, and were known to all, as Australians. Charles Lloyd, from Myrtleford in Victoria, went as far as making his personal Australian flag to fly on his boat, named *Kangaroo*.<sup>8</sup> And, why not? Other nations, especially Americans, were flying

their national flags. For the design of his pre-Federation flag, Lloyd drew inspiration from well-known Australian symbols, including the popular slogan *Advance Australia*. Lloyd's flag, now in the National Museum of Australia, is possibly the only surviving 1898 *Yukon Flotilla* flag in a public collection anywhere in the world.

Lloyd was just one of many well-known Australian prospectors beaching their boats on Dawson's river foreshore. Gilles McPherson from Bunbury was there, rumoured to have perished not long after in a Yukon blizzard.<sup>9</sup> James Tregurtha, a well-travelled prospector originally from Deniliquin, came in via the Stikine Trail.<sup>10</sup> Among those credited with significant discoveries back home were David McGregor (*Queen of the Earth*) from Coonabarabran and William Wright (*Lady Maria Reef*) from Charters Towers. Aloysius Joyce from Tasmania had been packed off to the Klondike by his father, keen to get him away from the irate husband of Mrs Eliza Burnell.<sup>11</sup> Andrew Baird was there, perhaps in part to escape the drudgery of the Ballarat family farm. It proved to be a good decision. Andy would find both his fortune and his future on the Klondike, staying on for the next sixty years, a pioneer in mechanised dredge mining.<sup>12</sup>

Australians brought key elements of a gold rush community to the Klondike, including one of its earliest newspapers. Three Murchison men, travelling up river by steamer, brought in a complete newspaper plant, with supplies sufficient for fifteen months, to set up the *Klondyke Miner and Yukon Advertiser*, a weekly newspaper.<sup>13</sup> Its first edition went to press on 10<sup>th</sup> September. The newspaper, observed the *Dubbo Liberal*, had 'an unmistakeable Australian appearance'.<sup>14</sup> The printer, John L. Rees, was formerly on the staff of the *Warren Herald*. The NSW State Library holds the only known intact set of the first twenty issues.

Newspaper advertisements show that Australians figured strongly as auctioneers and brokers. One of them, George Vernon from Brisbane, set up in partnership with New Zealander John Storry. Cabins, mining claims and sled dogs went under the hammer



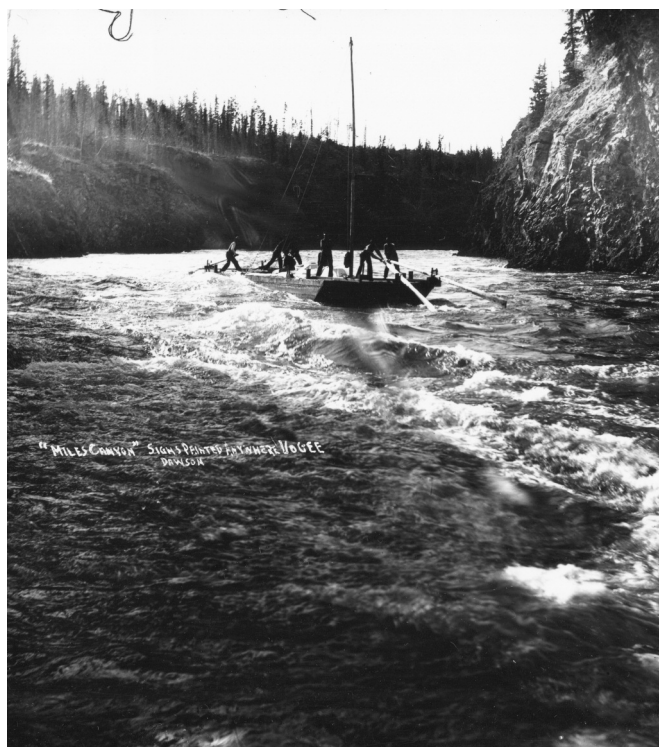
in the auction ring of *Vernon and Storry*. George Vernon became a leading citizen in Dawson City, dying there in 1954, age ninety-four.

In a ring of another kind, the boxing ring, Australians were again well-represented. The most famous was Frank Slavin, known to all nationalities as Paddy Slavin, heavy weight champion. The boxing match, however, that attracted particular attention that summer was on 4 July, American Independence Day, between lightweights American 'Kid' Williams and Australian 'Pluto' (William Brown), with 'Coolgardie Smith' (A. Erskine Smith) as referee.<sup>15</sup> With the 'claret flowing freely', the Mounties intervened to save the American from further damage. The Australian was of mixed-race, originally from South Africa.

Among the 400 Australians, there were at least twenty women.<sup>16</sup> Most were accompanying their prospector husbands; for the newly-wed McLeans their Klondike adventure was intended as an extended honeymoon.<sup>17</sup> Mrs Kate Hill, from Coolgardie, arrived in the company of her lover, George Bethel. Mrs Hill claimed to be a widow, which she was not, and neither was Hill her real surname. All was a subterfuge to escape a violent marriage back home. Kate managed George Vernon's Flannery Hotel before returning to Australia in 1903, as Mrs Catherine Guazzini, to seek a divorce. Also from Coolgardie were Mesdemoiselles Annie and Emma Portal, taking up residence in *Paradise Alley*. Two of their former Coolgardie clients reported home that they still retained 'their old amiability'.<sup>18</sup>

Mrs Nellie Humphrey stands apart as an exceptional Australian Klondike entrepreneur. She made two journeys over the Trail that summer, each time bringing in a highly profitable cargo of feminine apparel for the ladies of *Paradise Alley*. To quote Nellie, her '... goods melted away as did the snow in the Arctic sunshine'.<sup>19</sup> She stayed on for the winter of 1898-99 to manage the newly opened nineteen-room *Melbourne Hotel*. The *Klondyke Miner* wrote of her hotel in glowing terms as being 'run in elegant style', as well as 'scrupulously neat and clean', with the hostess herself described as 'warm-hearted'.<sup>20</sup> Nellie Humphrey, adventurous by nature, pushed on in 1899 to the new gold field at Nome, Alaska, where she carried a Colt 44 in her belt, 'to prevent any monkey business'.<sup>21</sup> It was there she met and married an Italian Count, who turned out not to be such. However, neither was 'Lady Nellie' an English aristocrat, but simply the former Miss Nellie Mackay, hat maker from Australia.

The 'motley throng' wandering Dawson's streets grew ever more restive that summer, perhaps encouraged in their mutterings and threats by the daylight of the Yukon's Midnight Sun. All had soon discovered on

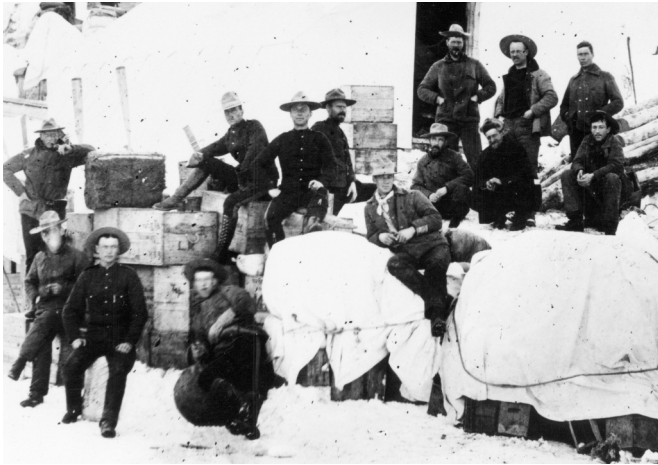


*Navigating Miles Canyon rapids on the Yukon River en route to the Klondike [Yukon Archives, Anton Vogee Fonds, YA#143].*

arrival that the Klondike was a small over-staked field offering few prospects for new arrivals. It was also proving to be only an alluvial field, with no evidence of reef gold. This was especially disappointing for the Australians, as they had not travelled halfway around the world to pan for gold. The discovery—through Australian expertise—of ancient gold bearing creek beds in the hills above the staked valley floors was some compensation, but it still fell short of expectations.

In a word, the Klondike had been *boomed* by commercial interests benefiting from the Rush, aided by newspapers disseminating *fake news* through their telegraph networks.<sup>22</sup> The situation was worsened by a gold field administration under Commissioner Thomas Fawcett that was inadequate, incompetent and blatantly corrupt.<sup>23</sup> Given that the overwhelming majority of prospectors were Americans, a potentially dangerous situation was being created, one that could result in a cascade of events leading to the sovereign loss of Canadian territory.

By summer's end, the situation had been peacefully resolved in a positive way, in no small part because of the proactive actions of an Australian prospector, Frank Jay Dunleavy.<sup>24</sup> Superintendent Sam Steele of the NWMP described Dunleavy as a 'professional agitator', which was not totally inaccurate. Dunleavy had been a shearing union activist in Queensland, and he applied his skills in public oratory and union organisation to



*Northwest Mounted Police and Stampeders at the border on Chilkoot Summit amid piles of gear waiting to be checked [Yukon Archives, Anton Vogee Fonds, YA#72].*

the situation. Within days of arrival, he had published a miners' manifesto, before going on to help set up a miners' committee and organise mass meetings.<sup>25</sup> Dunleavy led the way in establishing the Klondike Miners' Association and helping broker constructive negotiations with Fawcett's replacement, Commissioner William Ogilvie.

Frank Dunleavy left before the end of the year, and would go on to follow an adventurous life (this included being robbed in Bolivia at gunpoint for his clean shirt by the 'Sundance Kid'). Most of the other Australians also soon departed, Charles Lloyd among them, disappointed with the mining opportunities offered. Some, like David McGregor, would stay on for a time, either working their own claims or providing professional expertise to others. A number joined Nellie Humphrey in trying their luck at Nome, the next big thing. A handful, Andrew Baird and George Vernon among them, stayed to make the Klondike their home. They were far from being just a 'motley throng'. All have a story to tell.

To tell their stories, Andrew Pike OAM of *Ronin Films* has undertaken to produce a documentary film, *Diggers on the Klondike*. Please visit the film's web page for further information:

<https://www.roninfilms.com.au/feature/16478/diggers-on-klondike.html>

## About the Author

Dr Robin McLachlan is originally from Canada, having come to Australia in 1972 to undertake a doctorate in history at ANU. His interest in *Australians on the Klondike* began about ten years ago following a late evening visit to a Dawson City cemetery. He welcomes

enquiries from readers who may know of someone from Australia who was on the Klondike. Email: [Chintola@bigpond.com](mailto:Chintola@bigpond.com).

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Tappan Adney, *The Klondike Stampede*, Harper & Brothers, Toronto, 1900, p 377.
- <sup>2</sup> Named individuals have a public access referenced biographical record available on [www.ancestry.com.au](http://www.ancestry.com.au).
- <sup>3</sup> My estimate of 400 is based mainly on the identification of individuals found through a comprehensive survey of Australian and Yukon newspapers and entries in the *Yukon River Boat Registration Ledgers* (Yukon Archives, Northwest Mounted Police Records (R.G.18, D1-D4). MF#29, Microfilm Reel 011, vols 5-11).
- <sup>4</sup> For background history, refer to Pierre Berton, *Klondike The Last Great Gold Rush 1896-98*, Anchor Canada, Toronto, 1972.
- <sup>5</sup> Only a handful took other routes, principally the Ashcroft, Stikine and Edmonton trails. A few went by steamer up the Yukon River from St Michael in Alaska, the easiest if costliest option.
- <sup>6</sup> 'A Dubbo Gold Miner', *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 14 December 1901, p 2.
- <sup>7</sup> The NLA's Trove collection of digitised newspapers is an invaluable source for the identities and experiences of Australians on the Klondike through access to letters, reports and interviews published in local newspapers.
- <sup>8</sup> 'Facts about Klondyke', *The Alexandra and Yea Standard*, 6 January 1899, p 3.
- <sup>9</sup> Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush that Never Ended*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1969, p 174. (McPherson's British Columbia death certificate shows he died in 1928, age 84, in the Provincial Home for Incurables.)
- <sup>10</sup> J.E. Tregurtha, (P.J. Bridge, ed.), *Leaves from a Prospector's Diary*, Hesperian Press, Carlisle, 1996, pp 132-140.
- <sup>11</sup> Anne Henderson, *Enid Lyons – Leading Lady to a Nation*, Pluto Press, North Melbourne, 2008, pp 21-35. (There is evidence to identify Aloysius Joyce as the biological father of Enid Burnell, later Dame Enid Lyons.)
- <sup>12</sup> Andrew Baird, *Sixty Years on the Klondike*, Gordon Black Publications, Vancouver, 1965.
- <sup>13</sup> 'General News', *Murchison Times*, 16 August 1898, p 2.
- <sup>14</sup> 'Life in Klondyke', *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 29 March 1899, p 2.
- <sup>15</sup> 'It was stopped by the police', *The Klondike Nugget*, 5 July 1898, p 1.
- <sup>16</sup> Rob McLachlan, 'Ho for Klondike, Australian Women and the Klondike Gold Rush 1897-99', *Australian Family Tree Connections*, July 2011, pp 16-17.
- <sup>17</sup> 'Ruffy Klondyke', *Euroa Advertiser*, 25 February 1898, p 3.
- <sup>18</sup> 'Returned Klondikers', *Evening Star* (Boulder), 27 December 1898, p 4.
- <sup>19</sup> 'Gowns Dawson's Belles', *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 2 September 1898, p 6.
- <sup>20</sup> 'The Melbourne', *The Klondyke Miner and Yukon Advertiser*, 25 November 1898, p 6; and, 'Local and General', 2 December 1898, p 2.
- <sup>21</sup> 'News of the Day', *The Age*, 10 November 1899, p 4.
- <sup>22</sup> Robin McLachlan, 'Booming the Klondike Down Under: The British Columbian Connection', *Journal of Australasian Mining History*, vol 15, October 2017, pp 150-165.
- <sup>23</sup> P Berton, *Klondike* (1972), pp 311-318.
- <sup>24</sup> Robin McLachlan, 'Frank Jay Dunleavy Professional Australian Agitator on the Klondike 1898', paper presented at *Australian Historical Association Conference*, Australian National University, 5 July 2018.
- <sup>25</sup> 'An Open Letter', *The Klondike Nugget*, 2 July 1898, p 2; and, 'Finally Organized', *The Klondyke Miner and Yukon Advertiser*, 10 September 1898, p 4.

---

# Thinking Big: Australia's Unique Roadside Attractions

Dr Rosemary Kerr

Growing up in the 1970s, some of my favourite memories are of family road trips from Sydney to Surfers Paradise in the long summer holidays. No journey north would be complete without an obligatory stop at the Big Banana at Coffs Harbour, or a day trip further north to the Big Pineapple at Woombye on Queensland's Sunshine Coast. Since the 1960s, 'big things' have punctuated the Australian landscape, beckoning motorists travelling along major highways and tourist routes. They have become part of Australian road trip folklore, attracting a cult following and featuring in film, music, literature, on dedicated websites, and even postage stamps. While they are often dismissed as tacky or kitsch, these quirky tourist attractions make bold statements about local, regional and national identity, but they also tell us something about broader Australian culture.

'Big things' are not unique to Australia, being first used in California from the 1920s to lure motorists off the highways to stop at food stalls.<sup>1</sup> They are also seen in Canada and New Zealand. Yet ours tell distinctly Australian stories. One of the first 'big things' to be built here was Dino (later Ploddy) the dinosaur, whose gigantic grey-green concrete figure stood near the Pacific Highway at Gosford on the NSW Central Coast from 1963, welcoming visitors to the nearby Australian Reptile Park. He was commissioned by the park's owner, Eric Worrell.<sup>2</sup> The Big Banana at Coffs Harbour opened in December 1964. John Landi, an American entomologist, built the 'biggest banana in the world' to attract passing motorists to stop at his roadside banana stall and to focus interest on this important local industry. It expanded over the years to incorporate a café, souvenir shop and educational exhibit. Today it is part of a huge fun park including an ice-skating rink, mini-golf course, rides, water park, nursery and 'The World of Bananas' multimedia theatre experience. Visitors can also tour the banana plantation and packing shed.<sup>3</sup>

Construction boomed in the 1970s and 1980s, and there are now over 150 'big things' in Australia. They celebrate many features of Australian life, including

local produce and industry: two Big Pineapples, a Big Mango, Big Orange, Big Strawberry, Big Barramundi, and Big Oyster. Animals, birds and insects include: the Giant Koala in Dadswell's Bridge, Victoria, which featured in the 2009 movie, *Charlie & Boots*; the Big Merino, near Goulburn; Rockhampton's six Big Bulls; the Big Penguin, which guards the town of Penguin in Tasmania; and the Big Mosquito, or 'Ossie the Mossie', at the Hexham Bowling Club.<sup>4</sup>

Inanimate objects also feature in the shape of a Big Stockwhip, Big Rocking Horse, and Big Lawn Mower. The Big Joint at Nimbin in northern NSW is unique in being the only 'big thing' representing an illegal substance. The ten-metre long bamboo and canvas marijuana joint hangs from the ceiling of the HEMP (Help End Marijuana Prohibition) embassy, in the town, which, since the 1970s has been known as the 'hippie capital' of Australia. The Big Joint sometimes features in events, being transported atop a bus during the annual Mardi Grass hemp harvest festival. Folk heroes are represented by the Big Ned Kelly, Big Soldier, Big Miner, Big Captain Cook and, more recently, the Big Bogan, built in September 2015, who stands proudly near the town of Nyngan, NSW, in his singlet, shorts and thongs, with his esky and fishing rod close at hand.<sup>5</sup>

The arrival of 'big things' reflected the growth and popularity of drive tourism in the second half of the twentieth century. In the years following World War II, Australian car ownership flourished at a rate second only to North America. Australia's first mass-produced car, the Holden, was launched in 1948 and, between 1949 and 1955, car ownership almost doubled. By the 1960s, the majority of Australian families had access to a vehicle.<sup>6</sup> By the 1970s nearly eighty-seven percent of holiday trips within Australia were by car, according to the Domestic Tourism Monitor survey conducted by the Bureau of Tourism Research.<sup>7</sup> Other factors contributing to the rise of the road trip holiday included the gradual reduction in working hours and the introduction of paid annual leave which, by 1974, extended to four weeks.<sup>8</sup> Major highways, including the Pacific also improved to some extent after the war to cope



with greater volumes, weight and speed of traffic. Routes were regraded and realigned, and reinforced concrete bridges replaced many single-lane timber structures. While bitumen sealing extended in the late-1960s and 1970s, our national highways were not completely sealed until 1988 in readiness for the commemoration of the bicentenary of European settlement.<sup>9</sup> Once complete, the blacktop brought Australia-wide and transcontinental motor touring within reach of ordinary Australians and became a national ritual.

The rise of drive tourism also changed the roadside landscape. Infrastructure was slow to keep pace with the increasingly sophisticated demands of motor tourists. In the 1950s and 1960s camping and caravanning holidays were most popular. By 1965 there were over 2,000 caravan parks and camping grounds in Australia.<sup>10</sup> They provided an affordable, communal environment catering to tourists' desire for relatively simple pleasures close to nature. Motels first appeared in the mid-1950s and spread along major highways in the 1960s, revolutionising road trip accommodation. Hotels and guesthouses could not compete with the comfort, convenience and amenities that the new American-style motels offered, from ensuite bathrooms to electric kettles and toasters.<sup>11</sup>

Alongside accommodation infrastructure, elaborate man-made diversions competed with natural attractions for tourists' attention. In Port Macquarie, for example—which, by the late 1960s, was one of the largest holiday destinations on the NSW mid-north coast—themed attractions included Fantasy Glades, which opened in 1968. It featured Snow White's cottage and the 'dwarves' church' as well as displays of birds in aviaries, and animals roaming the grounds. New developments planned at the time included a porpoise pool and oceanarium, Paradise Park and a snake farm.<sup>12</sup>

Designed to grab the attention of passing motorists, 'big things' often combined both the natural and artificial in imaginative, if outlandish, ways and usually celebrated produce or products for which the town or district was famous. Some were aimed simply at advertising local businesses such as shops, petrol stations, motels, caravan parks or restaurants. Others were built specifically as tourist attractions, and usually incorporated a café or restaurant and souvenir shop selling merchandise featuring—often imaginative—versions of their namesake. Some had hotel or motel accommodation attached.

The Big Pineapple and former Sunshine Plantation complex at Woombye, for example, was listed on the Queensland Heritage Register in 2009 for its significance as an early example of agri-tourism. It was built in 1971 by the Taylor family, who bought the 23-



*The Big Bogan at Nyngan. Photo by 'Bahnfreund' 2017 [Source: Wikimedia Commons].*

hectare pineapple farm and embarked on an innovative venture to use the Maroochy Shire's agricultural heritage and tropical production as a tourist attraction. The Sunshine Plantation showcased over forty varieties of fruits, nuts, spices and sugar cane. Visitors could enter the Big Pineapple itself to see an audio-visual story about the pineapple industry and the production and processing of other tropical fruits. A shop and restaurant were located nearby, and the sugarcane train took people on a guided tour of the working plantation. In 1979 the site expanded to incorporate the nearby macadamia nut factory, complete with a Big Macadamia and the Nutmobile tour, and now covers over forty hectares.<sup>13</sup> In 1983, Prince Charles and Princess Dianna visited, taking a ride on the Nutmobile; the carriage they rode in was marked subsequently with a plaque.

Located on the crest of a hill overlooking the motorway, the Big Pineapple became a well-known landmark, locally, nationally and internationally and is one of the most recognised 'big things' in Queensland. In 2006 it was named as one of twelve Queensland icons—including the Great Barrier Reef and cane toads—by the National Trust of Queensland. In June 2007 Australia Post

issued five stamps celebrating Australia's 'big things'. The Big Pineapple was one of the five selected, along with the Big Golden Guitar at Tamworth, the Big Banana at Coffs Harbour, the Big Merino at Goulburn, and the Big Lobster at Kingston in South Australia.<sup>14</sup>

While the Bruce Highway now bypasses the Pineapple, and despite several changes in ownership and fluctuating fortunes, it continues to attract visitors.<sup>15</sup> Recent plans involved reviving it as an 'extreme tourism' destination and a venue for music festivals, with a water park, camp grounds, a brewery and winery.<sup>16</sup>

Not all 'big things' have been so fortunate. As highways are re-routed and the attractions are bypassed or owners suffer financial woes, many have fallen into disrepair. Their fading fibreglass or concrete exteriors stand as white elephants, sad reminders of former glory days. Yet, attempts to demolish them are often met with fierce resistance by locals and the wider community. Ballina's Big Prawn, for example, which pays tribute to the important local prawn industry, was built in 1989 beside the Pacific Highway, marking the southern gateway to the town on the north coast of NSW.<sup>17</sup> After that section of highway was bypassed in 2009, the prawn languished and the local council approved its demolition. However, a community campaign overturned the decision and, in 2011, hardware chain Bunnings bought the site, including the prawn, and relocated it to their premises in West Ballina.<sup>18</sup> Other 'big things' have felt the impact of a changing political and cultural landscape. Cairns' Big Captain Cook was draped with a 'Sorry' sign on Australia Day in recent years.<sup>19</sup>

'Big things' are a tongue-in-cheek expression of Australian larrikinism and humour. As a form of folk art, they invert reality by making common objects surreal and larger-than-life, with the aim of surprising, shocking and amusing passing motorists. In this, they reflect the idea of the road as a space set apart, where normal rules and behaviours—including what we eat and where we sleep—do not apply.

Yet, they may also harbour deeper meanings. Stephen Stockwell suggests that Australia's love of 'big things' may also reflect a fear of the 'empty space at the heart of the continent'. Given that huge creatures, such as the Rainbow Serpent, figure significantly in Aboriginal creation myths, Stockwell wonders if perhaps 'big things' are another means by which white Australia seeks to write itself and its stories large upon the landscape.<sup>20</sup>

While Australia's 'big things' may, on some level, be another means of stamping our identity and culture upon this vast and sometimes frightening land, for most tourists they represent the playfulness, humour and escapism so commonly associated with a road trip.

While some have fallen by the wayside, others tell stories of survival, adaptation and reinvention. It seems that 'big things' will continue to be part of Australia's cultural landscape, holding an endearing place in our collective consciousness and in the memories of local and international road trippers.

## About the author

Dr Rosemary Kerr is a historian and heritage consultant based in Sydney. She is the author of *Roads, Tourism and Cultural History: On the Road in Australia* (Channel View Publications, 2019). She is a member of the Professional Historians Association (NSW / ACT) and is currently on the Australia ICOMOS National Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes and Cultural Routes.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> 'The Big Pineapple (former Sunshine Plantation)', Queensland Heritage Register website – <<https://apps.des.qld.gov.au/heritage-register/detail/?id=602694>>, accessed 31 December 2019.
- <sup>2</sup> Nancy Cushing, 'The Road Behind Us: The Pacific Highway Sydney to Brisbane as a Heritage Corridor', *Historic Environment*, Vol. 20 No. 1, September 2007, pp. 21–25, p. 24.
- <sup>3</sup> Stephen Stockwell, 'Introductory Essay. Big Things: Low Art and the Land' in David Clark, *Big Things: Australia's Amazing Roadside Attractions*, Penguin, Camberwell, Vic., 2004, pp. viii–xi, p. x; 'The Big Banana Fun Park, Coffs Harbour' website – <<http://www.bigbanana.com/park-info/history/>>, accessed 16 September 2016.
- <sup>4</sup> Clark, *Big Things*, pp. vi–x, 110.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> Georgine Clarsen, 'Automobiles and Australian Modernisation: The Redex Around-Australia Trials of the 1950s', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 41 No. 3, 2010, pp. 352–68, p. 353; L. M. Perrott, Jnr., 'Australia Needs Motels', *Walkabout*, May 1952, p. 10; John William Knott, 'The "Conquering Car": Technology, Symbolism and the Motorisation of Australia Before WWII', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 31 No. 114, April 2000, pp. 1–26, pp. 3–4.
- <sup>7</sup> Richard White, *On Holidays: a History of Getting Away in Australia*, Pluto Press Australia, North Melbourne, 2005, pp. 133–4, 141, 147.
- <sup>8</sup> White, *On Holidays*, pp. 120–24, 128.
- <sup>9</sup> *Open Road*, April 1986, p. 25.
- <sup>10</sup> Jim Davidson & Peter Spearritt, *Holiday Business: Tourism in Australia since 1870*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South, Vic., 2000, pp. 177–178.
- <sup>11</sup> Davidson and Spearritt, *Holiday Business*, p. 180.
- <sup>12</sup> *Open Road*, July 1969, p. 17.
- <sup>13</sup> 'The Big Pineapple (former Sunshine Plantation)', Queensland Heritage Register website – <<https://apps.des.qld.gov.au/heritage-register/detail/?id=602694>>, accessed 31 December 2019.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> Amy Clark, 'Australia's "Big" Problem: What to do with our ageing supersized statues?', News.com.au website – <<https://www.news.com.au/travel/australian-holidays/family/australias-big-problem-what-to-do-with-our-ageing-supersized-statues/news-story/26152b9625bfa2cf5da204ef8e2bbbeb>>, accessed 3 January 2020.
- <sup>17</sup> Clark, *Big Things*, pp. 131–132.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ballina Shire Advocate*, 12 September 2012, online – <<https://www.ballinaadvocate.com.au/news/big-prawn-has-been-moved/1531067/>>, accessed 4 April 2017.
- <sup>19</sup> Clark, 'Australia's "Big" Problem'.
- <sup>20</sup> Stockwell, 'Big Things: Low Art and the Land', pp. viii–xi.

---

# Penal servitude, social reform and lady travellers: Rosamond and Florence Hill in Australia, 1873-1874

Dr Noeline Kyle

Victorian female travellers were also reformers, sometimes expressing this in a published account of their travels. Many of these women led conflicted lives alternating between desires to interrogate reformist ideas for women and children and to remain within middle-class social boundaries. English reformers Florence and Rosamond Davenport<sup>1</sup> Hill can be placed in such a group. They visited Australia in 1873 and 1874 and published an account of their travels titled *What we saw in Australia* in 1875.<sup>2</sup> Their book commented on asylums, industrial schools and reformatories, orphan schools, prisons, transportation, and ragged schools. They also described Venice, the Suez Canal, gum trees, locusts, houses and buildings, private theatricals, goats, botanic gardens, flowers and fruits, gardens and parks, art galleries, Govetts Leap in the Blue Mountains and much more.<sup>3</sup>

Isabella Bird, Lucie Duff Gordon, Edith Durham, Harriet Martineau, Beatrice Grimshaw and Florence Nightingale are similarly nineteenth century 'lady' travellers and reformers. All of these women wrote books about their travels. They are celebrated for their daring and their courage.<sup>4</sup> For some there was significant support as they travelled. In her travels Isabella Bird had an introduction to a local citizen of importance or, in some cases, a male traveller with a support team willing to accompany her. For example, while travelling through Kurdistan in the 1880s (with four mules, stores for forty days, three skin tents, one of which was a bathroom tent, food and clothing and servants) she was in the care of 'the ring of Major Sawyer's sentries.'<sup>5</sup>

It might be surmised however that middle-class women who travelled in the nineteenth century had complicated motives for their often extensive travels. Beatrice Grimshaw wrote thirty popular novels based on her treks through the Pacific, America, Europe and Papua New Guinea.<sup>6</sup> Some, like Harriet Martineau and Florence Nightingale, travelled when young, and wrote about their travels before embarking on a life of

activism in social and political reform.<sup>7</sup>

The Hill sisters also fit within a group of nineteenth century female travellers who escaped the frustrations and 'shackles' of Victorian middle-class life in middle age. Or, so it is described when such women began their travels, often when parents had died leaving them a substantial legacy. Matthew Davenport Hill, a noted lawyer and penal reformer, had died in 1872, the year before Rosamond and Florence left on their journey, thus ensuring them the financial means to do so.

Florence and Rosamond Hill's primary interest was in child reform and both had travelled to France with their father to meet Frederick Demetz and visit his Mettray Reformatory for juvenile offenders. However, it was their involvement with Mary Carpenter and Frances Cobbe which led to their more specific interest in the welfare of children. Cobbe introduced them to the notion of boarding-out, a system whereby poor, neglected and destitute children, instead of being held in the workhouses of London or in reformatories, would be placed with families of 'their own class.'<sup>8</sup> At the same time the sisters continued some interest in penal reform and it is likely Matthew Davenport Hill's lifetime of work in adult and juvenile prisons had considerable influence on his daughters' inclusion in their travel itinerary of a number of gaol visits as well as those made to orphanages, industrial schools and reformatories for children.

When Rosamond and Florence visited Darlinghurst Gaol in November 1873 Harold Maclean was the Comptroller-General of Prisons and Sheriff. Highly regarded, Maclean had introduced reforms for prisoners and additional training for warders.<sup>9</sup> The Hill sisters wrote that, 'the cleanliness and order of the goal are excellent,' and they found that improvements under Maclean were in train although they were critical of overcrowding and the lack of a Prisoner's Aid Society in the female section.<sup>10</sup>

Despite their visit to Darlinghurst Gaol, however, the





*Rosamond Davenport-Hill, M.L.S.B. From a Photograph by Elliot & Fry, taken in 1894 [Memoir of Rosamond Davenport-Hill by Ethel E. Metcalfe, 1904].*

sisters had little to say on the lack of a separate female prison and nor did they comment on the broader issue of how women might be incarcerated in the future. This is surprising as England had introduced a Penal Servitude Act in 1853 which 'extended all rules and regulations relating to male prisoners' to women.<sup>11</sup> Brixton, opened in 1852, was the first female prison and, a year later Fulham Refuge was established to house women for the last twelve months of their sentence.<sup>12</sup>

There was a well-established prison system in England on which to graft female institutions. Joshua Jebb, the reformist English Surveyor-General of Prisons was an influential and sympathetic reformer of female prisons. English prison reform was also a complicated amalgam of the work of the state assisted by prominent reformers, such as Elizabeth Fry who pioneered prison change for women and ensured its continuance.<sup>13</sup> No such reformist background is found in NSW until the work of Rose

Scott and other penal reformers became more widely known and supported in the later decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> Long Bay Reformatory for Women, the first female prison in the state, was not opened until 1909.

The Hill sisters' visit to Parramatta Gaol provides some indication of the difficulties they might have encountered as visitors to NSW gaols. The notorious murderer Joseph Armstrong was chosen to act as a delegate for the prisoners and they wrote:

A tall, broad-shouldered man was pointed out to us as the present delegate; and asking if we might question him about the duties of his office, he was called forward. On this nearer view, his countenance struck as one of the hardest and most unsympathetic we had ever seen. Observing that he wore leg-irons (indicating that he was under sentence for life), we asked, when we had moved away, what his offence had been....we were told that he was Armstrong, the captain of the 'Karl' (sic)! Had we been aware in time we certainly should not have spoken with him.<sup>15</sup>

Joseph Armstrong was the captain of the *Carl* carrying kidnapped Pacific Islanders. After a fight between two warring groups led to deaths, Armstrong ordered that some eighty of these men, some dead, others only wounded, be thrown overboard. The wounded also had their hands and feet tied together, a horrific act that led to Armstrong and a number of his crew being charged and imprisoned for murder.<sup>16</sup>

The sisters were able to garner considerable support and publicity during their visit to Australia. They knew men and women in powerful positions, they were readily accepted into the respectable environs of colonial society and they had relatives and close friends who supported them as they travelled. Their South Australian cousin Caroline Emily Clark, also a prominent child reformer and advocate of boarding-out, supported their Australian visit.<sup>17</sup> However, they wrote about what they 'saw' not about what might be changed, or what new policy might be introduced.

There are long passages in their book describing buildings, gardens, boat rides and trees, and the interesting, important men who accompanied them. One example is a tour they had with William Windeyer, the Chairman of the Public Charities Commission (1873-1874), throughout the 'lions of Sydney' which included the University of Sydney, Botanic Gardens, Benevolent Asylum, Government House and its grounds, Watsons Bay, Middle Head, and Sydney Harbour. They gave evidence to the Commission in 1873 but do not make extensive mention of it in their book although their evidence

given at the Commission, and especially that on boarding-out, was reported in the press.<sup>18</sup> That they had little to say on female prisons is perhaps a product of their greater interest in child reform.

On their return to England both sisters continued to write and work for change to child reform. They were credited with having a significant effect, although Swain argues that, despite much written to the contrary, their influence on child reform and boarding-out was minimal and often exaggerated over the decades of their lifetime.<sup>19</sup> Neither showed significant interest in penal reform except for publication of a record of their father's work in this field in 1878.<sup>20</sup>

Of course, not all female travellers were reformers and nor were all reformers travellers. But it is an interesting aspect of nineteenth century middle-class women's lives that they used travel and writing to explore their own lives and social or political issues affecting women and children across the world. The Hill sisters, despite their significant talents, were unable to engender some change to female prisons in NSW. And, in the end, it would be a long wait for real change to a colonial penal system that placed women in small spaces attached to male prisons and which continued to view their legal and social rights as second-rate.

## About the Author

Since her retirement from university teaching in 2001 Dr Noeline Kyle has been actively involved with Australian family and local history organisations to facilitate more professional writing of family and local histories. She is a volunteer at the RAHS, a member of local and family history organisations and has been an Honorary Professor at the University of Sydney since 2007. Noeline has published many books on women's history, memoir, writing family history and numerous articles in journals, magazines and newspapers. Her latest book *Women's Business: Midwives on the Mid North Coast of NSW* continues her interest in the history of nineteenth century women's professions, see her website: <[www.writingfamilyhistory.com.au](http://www.writingfamilyhistory.com.au)>. Her current research focuses on female staff at nineteenth century NSW gaols.

## References

<sup>1</sup> Rosamond and Florence changed their name from Hill to Davenport Hill after the death of their father in 1872 as a means of 'perpetuating his memory'. The change may also have been done to avoid confusion with Octavia Hill (no relation) who was sometimes thought to be Rosamond's sister, see Michael Horsburgh, 'Her father's daughter: Florence Davenport Hill, 1829-1919,' *International Social Work*, Vol. 26, No 4, 1983, p.7.

<sup>2</sup> Rosamond and Florence Hill, *What We Saw in Australia*, MacMillan and Co., London, 1875.

<sup>3</sup> William Henry Davenport Adams, *Celebrated Women Travellers of the Nineteenth Century*, fifth edition, Swan Sonnenschein & Co., London, 1891, first published 1882, pp. 454-455.

Rosamond and Florence Hill, *ibid*, pp.320-321.

<sup>4</sup> Pat Barr, *A Curious Life for a Lady: The Story of Isabella Bird, Traveller Extraordinary*, Penguin Books, London, 1979.

Lucie Duff Gordon, *Letters from Egypt*, Virago, London, 1986 (first published 1879).

<sup>5</sup> Pat Barr, *Ibid*, p.245.

<sup>6</sup> Shirley Fenton Huie, *Tiger Lilies: Women Adventurers in the South Pacific*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1990. p.111.

<sup>7</sup> William Henry Davenport Adams, *op cit*.

Florence Nightingale, *Letters from Egypt*, privately printed, 1854.

Joan Rees, *Women on the Nile: Writings of Harriet Martineau, Florence Nightingale and Amelia Edwards*, The Rubicon Press, London, 2008.

Cecil Woodham-Smith, *Florence Nightingale, 1820-1910*, The Reprint Society, London, 1952.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Horsburgh, *op cit*, p.4.

The child reform movement in England and Australia was a product of a changing concept of childhood in the nineteenth century. Children, once viewed as small or mini-adults, were now seen as separate, dependent and in need of specific care. The rise of industrialisation and concern for children working in harsh conditions in English factories led to the enacting of Factory Acts to oversee their working conditions and the establishment of Industrial and Reformatory Schools and ragged schools thought suitable for reforming the 'street arabs' of London. In New South Wales the Parkes-Martin government passed the Industrial and Reformatory Schools Act in 1866. This Act formalised the moral reform of (so-called) wayward, destitute, neglected and criminal children in New South Wales and together with the rise of state schooling from the 1840s and 1860s brought all working-class and poorer children within the domain of the State. Unlike England the Australian states did not favour poor laws and there was a much greater involvement of the states in both child reform issues and the establishment of Industrial and Reformatory Schools and the policy of boarding-out that followed, see Noeline Kyle, 'Reconstructing childhood' in D. Meadmore, P. O'Brien & B. Burnett, *Understanding education: Contexts and agendas for the new millennium*. Prentice Hall, Sydney, 1999; Noeline Kyle, *Her Natural Destiny: The Education of Women in New South Wales*, University of NSW Press, Kensington, 1986; and Shurlee Swain, 'Florence and Rosamond Davenport Hill and the development of boarding out in England and Australia: a study in cultural transmission,' *Women's History Review*, Vol. 25, No. 5, 2015, p.751.

<sup>9</sup> Suzanne Edgar 'Maclean, Harold (1828-1889)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/maclean-harold-4122/text6593>>, published first in hardcopy 1974, accessed online 3 January 2020.

<sup>10</sup> Rosamond and Florence Hill, *op cit*.

<sup>11</sup> Zedner, Lucia, *Women, Crime, and Custody in Victorian England*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991, p.179.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p.182.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 179-182.

<sup>14</sup> John Ramsland, *With Just But Relentless Discipline: A Social History of Corrective Services in New South Wales*, Kangaroo Press, Sydney, 1996, pp.162-164; Judith Allen, *Sex and Secrets: Crimes Involving Australian Women Since 1880*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1990, p.43,p.80.

<sup>15</sup> Rosamond and Florence Hill, *op cit*, p.310; Terri McCormack, 'Long Bay Prison,' *The Dictionary of Sydney*, <[https://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/long\\_bay\\_prison](https://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/long_bay_prison)>, accessed 6 January 2020.

<sup>16</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 July 1872; *Argus*, 22 August 1872; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 August 1872.

<sup>17</sup> 'Caroline Emily Clark (1825-1911)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/clark-caroline-emily-3212/text4837>>, published first in hardcopy 1969, accessed online 3 January 2020.

<sup>18</sup> 'Second Report of the Commissioners of Public Charities,' in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 June 1874.

<sup>19</sup> Shurlee Swain, *op cit*, pp. 745-746.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Horsburgh, *op cit*, pp.1-13; Rosamund and Florence Hill, *The Recorder of Birmingham: Memoir of Matthew Davenport-Hill*, MacMillan, London, 1878.

---

# Anna Elizabeth Walker's silk shawl: a question answered

Christine Yeats

On 4 January 1823 Anna Elizabeth Blaxland, the second daughter of John Blaxland, married Thomas Walker, Deputy Assistant Commissary General to His Majesty's Forces, at St John's Parramatta.<sup>1</sup> Anna Elizabeth's satin and matt striped cream silk wedding dress<sup>2</sup> had short sleeves, a low neck and was trimmed with white gauze.<sup>3</sup> According to a family legend Anna Elizabeth's wedding ensemble included a beautifully worked scarf or shawl woven in China from silk cocoons that she and her sisters had cultivated. In the version recounted by her daughter, Anna Elizabeth's brother Captain George Blaxland had taken the cocoons to China to be spun and woven into the scarf or shawl: '...it was woven into a beautiful scarf of lovely design, the white silk forming the groundwork & the yellow the design of lovers knots & the baskets of fringed Pinks and Roses.'<sup>4</sup>

At first glance this appears to be highly improbable and easily dismissed as a romantic legend. Broadbent, Richard and Steven certainly suggest that it 'is highly unlikely' but recent research shows that the reality is much closer to the legend.<sup>5</sup>

It is likely that Anna Elizabeth did have a scarf or shawl—descriptions vary—manufactured in China from silk that originated in NSW. This seems to have been accepted in 1826. Whether she wore it on her wedding day is less certain. A report in the *Hobart Town Gazette* of 25 March 1826 about the Annual Meeting of the Agricultural Society at Parramatta noted that Mrs Walker 'has received a shawl from China, manufactured there from Australian silk, produced under her care.'<sup>6</sup> In October 1826 the *Australian* reported on the Agricultural Society's quarterly meeting and fair at Parramatta. It noted that Anna Elizabeth had received a gold medal for her 'praiseworthy attention to the silk-worm, and for the exhibition of a shawl manufactured in China, from the produce, which far surpasses anything of the kind imported, as well in texture as in beauty'.<sup>7</sup> The *Australian* mentioned the exhibition of colonial silk, and the shawl which Anna Elizabeth 'had caused' to be produced and manufactured into a shawl in China.<sup>8</sup> While none of these accounts provide irrefutable evidence as to where the silk was

grown, they are consistent in reporting that it was in NSW. Exactly when Anna Elizabeth received the shawl is not mentioned in the reports.

We know from newspaper reports and family stories that Anna Elizabeth Walker née Blaxland was cultivating silkworms long before her marriage in 1823. According to one article, 'Friends interested themselves in her hobby. Mrs. Macquarie and Lady Brisbane both used to send her bunches of fresh mulberry leaves for her pets.'<sup>9</sup> In 1949 *The School Magazine* included an article on the success of Anna Elizabeth's silk growing efforts. It also mentioned that her mother's friends Mrs Macquarie and Lady Brisbane provided her with mulberry leaves.<sup>10</sup> Her daughter's manuscript *Family Traditions and Personal Recollections* refers to Governor Brisbane's generosity in permitting Anna Elizabeth to use the leaves from the mulberry trees in the Government Garden at Parramatta.<sup>11</sup> This ready access to mulberry leaves meant that Anna Elizabeth certainly had the resources at her disposal to produce the number of cocoons needed for the shawl for many years.<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, despite the promise of her earlier success, disaster struck her silkworms in February 1826. The *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* reported that although Mrs Walker 'has for several years past been paying the most sedulous [sic] attention to the production of the silk worm', she had lost 20,000 silkworms because the leaves were plucked from the mulberry trees too early.<sup>13</sup> Whether Anna Elizabeth continued to take an active interest in silk production after this calamity is not noted but the history of the shawl produced from her silkworms was long remembered.

In 1921 members of the Blaxland family lent a shawl and a handpainted scarf to the Vaucluse Park Trust. The correspondence file relating to the loan is now held by Sydney Living Museums. The earliest item is a handwritten note dated 27 April 1885. It is attached to an undated handwritten sheet of paper, which was probably prepared at the time of the loan. It reads: 'Mama grew the silk worms wound the silk sent it to China where it was woven & made up the dark gold is the male





*Embroidered silk shawl, China, c.1826, originally belonging to Anna Elizabeth Walker nee Blaxland [Sydney Living Museums].*

silk & the light the female she was married with it on Jan'y 1822 [sic].<sup>14</sup>

The undated handwritten sheet has a further description of a shawl and a hand painted scarf<sup>15</sup>:

Silk scarf [shawl] from silk worms raised by Anna E Blaxland daughter of John Blaxland Esquire of Newington Kent England & Newington NSW. The first silk produced in the colonies 1819 & made up in China. Anna Blaxland married Thomas Walker Esquire DACG Rhodes Tasmania & Rhodes Concord. Value 20 guineas

Chinese hand painted scarf of Anna E Walker, nee Blaxland. 1819 Value 3 guineas

The family have given both items a date of 1819, which was probably based on the family legend surrounding the history of the silk shawl or scarf produced by Anna Elizabeth. Nevertheless, it gives credence to the story that she could have worn it on her wedding day.

On 11 July 1936 the solicitors acting for the executors of the estate of Alice Octavia Walker, the daughter of Anna Elizabeth, wrote to the Secretary of the Vacluse Park Trust concerning the disposal of various family relics and articles. These included Anna Elizabeth's wedding dress and the scarf (shawl). The description of the shawl is as follows: 'worked with silk which was grown by Miss Walker's mother from the first silk worms known in Sydney. The cocoons were sent to China and the scarf was worked there and returned to Sydney.'<sup>16</sup>

The solicitors had approached the Trust on the advice of Ida Neeson, Secretary to the Mitchell Library, who had suggested that the Trust 'might appreciate these

articles' and place them on display.<sup>17</sup>

Anna Elizabeth's shawl and wedding dress were included in the Australian Historical Exhibition which was developed to celebrate Australia's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations. Karl Reginald Cramp (then RAHS President) was the Chairman of the Australian Historical Exhibition Committee. The exhibition was held in the lower ground floor of the Commonwealth Bank at Martin Place from 1 to 26 February 1938. The Catalogue entry for Item 374 reads 'Mrs A E Walker's Shawl; silk by New South Wales silkworms, and made up in China'.<sup>18</sup>

Whether this is the last word on the origins of the silk used in Mrs A E Walker's shawl—and whether she wore it on her wedding day—remains to be seen. Others may differ in their assessment of the available evidence. In the absence of documentation to the contrary, it seems that Anna Elizabeth Blaxland did grow the silk and send it to China to be woven in about 1819, making her Australia's first female sericulturist.

Today the shawl is part of the Sydney Living Museums collection. It is described as being of 'fine Chinese workmanship, elaborately embroidered in monochrome and double-sided'.<sup>19</sup> Illustrations of the shawl are included on pages 154 and 161 of *India, China, Australia: trade and society 1788-1850* which was published in association with the exhibition *India, China, Australia: trade and society 1788-1850* held at the Museum of Sydney from 10 May 2003 to 17 August 2003.

## Acknowledgement

The assistance of Megan Martin (Head, Collections & Access, Sydney Living Museums) and Donna Newton (RAHS Librarian) in preparing this article is acknowledged with thanks.

## About the author

Christine Yeats is the President of the Royal Australian Historical Society, President of the National Council of the Independent Scholars Association of Australia (ISAA) and the Chair of the NSW Chapter of ISAA. In addition, Christine convenes the Assessment Subcommittee of The UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Register.

An archivist by profession, Christine is a researcher and professional historian with a particular interest in Australia's colonial history. Her current research projects include Australia's Romani, colonial women silk growers and the botanist Sarah Hynes.

Christine has contributed to a wide range of publications, has spoken at national and international conferences, and presents talks and workshops for local and family history groups across NSW.



*Mrs Anna Elizabeth Walker nee Blaxland, 1840 by Maurice Felton (1803-1842), (ML 341) [Image courtesy of the Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW].*

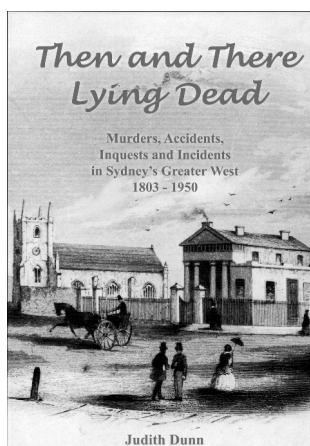
## References

- <sup>1</sup> *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 9 January 1823, p.3.
- <sup>2</sup> James Broadbent, Suzanne Rickard and Margaret Steven, *India, China, Australia: trade and society 1788-1850*, Glebe, Historic Houses Trust of NSW, [2003], p.163.
- <sup>3</sup> *Advocate* (Burnie, Tas. : 1890 - 1954), Friday 18 October 1940, page 4
- <sup>4</sup> Anna F. Walker, 'Family Traditions and Personal Recollections', c.1900 (1900, undated, copied after her death in 1913, MLMSS 462), Silkworms p.2.
- <sup>5</sup> Broadbent, Rickard and Steven, p. 163.
- <sup>6</sup> *Hobart Town Gazette*, 25 March 1826, p. 4.
- <sup>7</sup> *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 7 October 1826, p. 3.
- <sup>8</sup> *Australian*, 7 October 1826, page 3
- <sup>9</sup> *Camden News*, 2 December 1920, p. 3.
- <sup>10</sup> Helen Heney, *The Girlhood of Anna Blaxland*, 'The School Magazine', v.34, no.4 Part 3 Class 5, 3 June 1949, p.119-120.
- <sup>11</sup> Anna F. Walker, p.2.
- <sup>12</sup> Approximately 6,600 cocoons are needed to produce a kilo of silk. (<https://www.peta.org.uk/issues/animals-not-wear/silk/>, Accessed 9 January 2020).
- <sup>13</sup> *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 25 February 1826, p. 3.
- <sup>14</sup> Vaucluse Park Correspondence files (File 2C: Furniture & Ornaments 1934-1948, handwritten note dated 27 April 1885.
- <sup>15</sup> Vaucluse Park Correspondence files (File 2C: Furniture & Ornaments 1934-1948, handwritten undated note, possibly 1921.
- <sup>16</sup> Vaucluse Park Correspondence files (File 2C: Furniture & Ornaments 1934-1948), Letter dated 11 July 136 from Priddle, Gosling, Dalrymple and Sellar to the Vaucluse House Trust.
- <sup>17</sup> Priddle, Gosling, Dalrymple and Sellar
- <sup>18</sup> *Catalogue of the Australian Historical Exhibition*, Australian Historical Exhibition, Sydney, 1938, p.40.
- <sup>19</sup> Broadbent, Rickard and Steven, p.163.

# Book Notes

## *Then and There Lying Dead: Murders, Accidents, Inquests and Incidents in Sydney's Greater West, 1803–1950*

*Written by Judith Dunn.  
Published by Judith Dunn,  
2019.*



The perennially popular *Horrible Histories* series has capitalised on the gruesome, comical and outright odd aspects of our past. In this new compilation of untimely ends, ghosts and grog stories from Sydney's west, Judith Dunn has captured that appeal. Written to

entice more general readers into history, the book largely comprises transcribed and annotated newspaper accounts over 150 years. We learn of floating corpses, swindlers, sly stills, bushrangers, mental illness and – yes – the proverbial axe murderers. Judith follows up each story with a brief explanation, as well as biographical and local history notes to place the reportage into wider context. Some stories are poignant; others remain shocking in their graphic detail. Overall, the collection reminds us of the tenuousness of life in colonial and early Commonwealth Australia, as Sydney swelled and swallowed up outlying centres. It's an engaging read, capped off with a suite of transcribed headstones and euphemisms for death.

Available from [judith@pasttimestours.com](mailto:judith@pasttimestours.com)

ISBN 9781647139278

176 pages, illustrations, portraits, photographs;  
24.3 x 17.3 cm

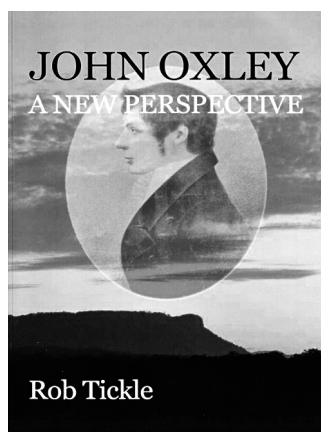
*Book note by Dr Peter Hobbins, RAHS Councillor*

## *John Oxley: A New Perspective*

*Written by Rob Tickle. Published by Veritas Archaeology and History Service, 2018.*

In this meticulously researched book, Rob Tickle sets out to reassess the character of John Oxley and his 1818 exploration to find the exits to the Lachlan and Macquarie Rivers. An older tradition of Australian historiography viewed Oxley as a social climber, who mismanaged his finances and died in debt. Moreover, his expedition to locate the fabled 'inland sea' was a





failure. Tickle shows this disparaging portrait had more to do with John Macarthur, who was critical of Oxley because he was courting his eldest daughter. Historian M.H. Ellis, Macarthur's modern biographer, cemented the poor reputation. The author also reassesses the 1818 expedition. While the expedition failed in

its stated goal, Oxley achieved a great feat in mapping the largely unknown interior.

Available from [rtickle@bigpond.net.au](mailto:rtickle@bigpond.net.au)

ISBN 9780648347002

228 pages; illustrations, facsimiles, maps, portraits (some colour); 30 cm

*Book note by Phillip Jaworski, RAHS Digital Media & Membership Services*

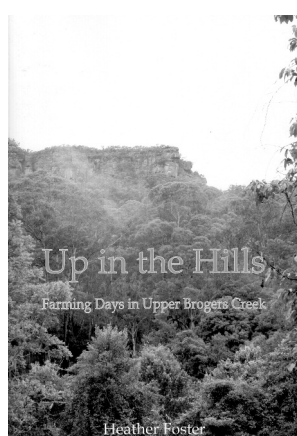
*These projects were supported by the Create NSW Cultural Grants Program, a devolved funding program administered by the RAHS on behalf of the NSW Government*

## **Up on the Hill: Farming Days in Upper Brogers Creek**

*Written by Heather Foster. Published by The Berry & District Historical Society, 2019.*

Timber first brought Europeans to the area known as Brogers Creek, the traditional land of the Dharawal speaking Aboriginal people, in the early nineteenth century. With the passage of the Crown Lands Acts of 1861 (known as the Robertson Land Acts) settlers replaced the timber getters. The Berry & District Historical Society holds tape recordings of the discussions and reminiscences of the descendants of some of these early settlers in the Woodhill and Upper Brogers Creek. The tapes were made over sixteen years, between 1978

and 1994. Heather Foster has drawn on the recordings to compile in her words 'a micro history of dairy farming on the margin of rainforest in New South Wales'. *Up on the Hill: Farming Days in Upper Brogers Creek* is a well researched and readable account of history of the people of the area, which supplements what is



available on the public record.

Available by contacting The Berry & District Historical Society, PO Box 153, Berry NSW or email: [berrymuseum@bigpond.com](mailto:berrymuseum@bigpond.com)

ISBN 978-0-6484954-1-3

72 pages: photographs (some colour), groups, portraits, facsimiles, references, endnotes and index.

*Book note by Christine Yeats, RAHS President*

## **Grave Misconceptions: A History of the Cemetery in the Country Town of Berry, New South Wales**

*Written by June Robson. Published by The Berry & District Historical Society, 2019.*

The book traces the history of Berry General Cemetery from its origins in the mid-nineteenth century to early twenty-first century. The Introduction states that there 'were many misconceived ideas in the history of the burial ground in Berry, known as Berry General Cemetery'. June Robson seeks to explain these misconceptions by drawing on two themes –

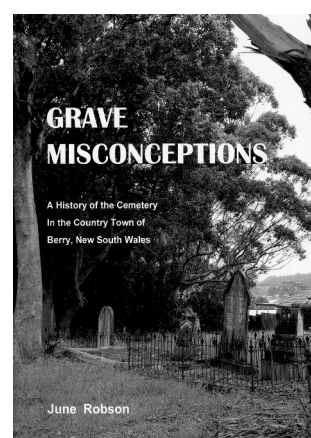
changes in the practices and beliefs surrounding mortal remains and developments in the understanding and awareness of public health considerations in the management of the dead. As she notes there is 'also the third circumstance', the fact that Berry was established as a private town. This is a readable and informative publication. It is well illustrated, with numerous coloured images. There is a very useful timeline at the beginning of the book, which gives the dates of the events relevant to the 'Grave Misconceptions' discussed by the author. These cover the period between 1822 and 2012.

Available by contacting The Berry & District Historical Society, PO Box 153, Berry NSW or email: [berrymuseum@bigpond.com](mailto:berrymuseum@bigpond.com)

ISBN 978-0-6484954-0-6

48 pages: photographs (some colour), facsimiles, maps (some colour), list of illustrations, notes and index.

*Book note by Christine Yeats, RAHS President*





---

# ROYAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## ANNUAL REPORT 2019

ABN 91 000 027 654

### THE YEAR IN REVIEW

#### RAHS President Christine Yeats

The strength of the RAHS is its members and supporters, and the Councillors who serve them. Our membership extends across New South Wales and beyond and includes both individuals and the many societies that are affiliated with the RAHS. Our Councillors have worked closely with the RAHS staff members at History House to deliver services and activities throughout 2019.

The RAHS Council continues to comprise a mix of new and longer serving Councillors. This provides an excellent balance, as the Society develops strategies and operational models to better serve its members, and achieve its overall constitutional goal – the advancement of education in the field of Australian history. The contribution of former Councillor Christine Wright, who served on the RAHS Council for seven years, including holding the position of Vice President, is acknowledged with thanks. Although no longer a councillor, we are grateful to Christine's ongoing support. In June 2019, we welcomed a new member to the RAHS Council – Mark St Leon, whose decision to become a member of council is much appreciated.

Reports summarising the Society's events, outreach programs, publications, digital projects, and membership services appear further within this report. They provide an insight to the range of activities undertaken by the RAHS and its commitment to promote history through different platforms – from traditional lectures at History House, regional outreach programs and an increasingly strong online presence.

None of this would be possible without the commitment of the team at History House - Suzanne Holohan (General Manager), Donna Newton (Librarian), Laura Signorelli (until May 2019) and Phillip Jaworski (Digital Media and Membership Services) and Maryanne Byrne (Grants and Accounts) throughout 2019.

The work of the RAHS continues to be ably assisted by its Volunteer Program. This program provides opportunities for RAHS members and friends to share their skills and research. They, like the members of the RAHS Council, offer their time and expertise to the

Society without financial recompense to assist it in achieving its goals and objectives. Today our volunteers assist in a range of different areas. Many are members of committees, listed later in this report, who contribute to our outreach initiatives, events, publications and heritage advocacy. We also have volunteers who work closely with staff on day-to-day operations and projects at History House and also online.

The work performed by volunteers is varied and stimulating, reflecting the activities of the Society. A selection of the work undertaken by volunteers include: Margaret Scott and Margaret Coleman, who were awarded RAHS Medals in 2018, prepared exhibition displays in the auditorium cabinets; Elaine Phillips managed the online bookshop; Bron Stepowski scanned Sydney NSW postcards from the Kerr collection; Megan Edwards added photographs from the RAHS image collection to our Flickr pages; Maximilian Reid commenced a historiographical project on Cook2020 using materials from the RAHS collections; Mary Sciberras reviewed items donated to the Society and their provenance; Elizabeth Heffernan and Christina King provided Australian History content to our social media platforms; Jan Koperberg produced the RAHS newsletter.

Betty Goodger, one of our longest serving volunteers, retired earlier this year. She will be greatly missed but we have many other wonderful volunteers to follow in her footsteps.

Although our plans to extend the 1970s extension at the rear of History House have proceeded very slowly in 2019, we remain committed to the building project. We are grateful to all those who have made donations towards it. Your generosity is greatly appreciated. I am pleased to report that after reviewing the plans in late 2019 we will be shortly calling for tenders for the work. Members will be updated over the coming months. RAHS Treasurer Kathrine Reynolds provides an update on the project status in her report.

In my capacity as Chair of the Events Committee I discuss the events and seminars in that section of the annual report. Many of these events are carried out in collaboration with local societies, the WEA, the City of Sydney, Sydney Living Museums and NSW State

Archives. I would like to highlight the Regional Seminars, which are part of the program organised by the Society in conjunction with historical societies and libraries in regional NSW and Western Sydney, with funding provided by Create NSW. In 2019 we presented three regional seminars – at Bathurst on 6 April, Shellharbour on 13 July and Kingswood on 22 November. We draw on Councillors' knowledge and expertise to present these seminars. I would like to record my thanks to Councillors Carol Liston, Kathrine Reynolds and Judith Dunn, who joined me in presenting them in 2019.

At the 2019 Annual Conference I reported that the project to publish *Playing their Part: Vice-Regal Consorts of New South Wales, 1788-2019* was close to completion. I am delighted to report that the book is with the printer and will be launched in the first quarter of 2020. This has been a collaborative project involving the Royal Australian Historical Society and Mrs Hurley, wife of the previous Governor of New South Wales. On behalf of the RAHS and its members I extend our gratitude to the three editors who have brought the publication to fruition – Carol Liston, Joy Hughes and Christine Wright. In addition, I also want to record my thanks to the State Library of NSW, which supported the oral history component of the project, oral historian Roslyn Burge, former Curator at Government House Ann Toy and all the authors who have contributed their time and scholarship.

Researchers are increasingly turning to technology to assist in their research. Over the past twelve months we have seen the launch of new websites and access to digital resources. RAHS Councillors and members have provided feedback on these new resources, including the new Historical Land Records Viewer (HLRV) and the recently launched State Archives Collection Search. We welcome the opportunity to receive feedback from our members about their experiences with the operability of these new online resources. During 2019 the RAHS was represented on the Mitchell Library Consultative Committee and the State Archives Advisory Committee. This provided the RAHS with a further opportunity to represent the interests of its members.

We were deeply saddened by the deaths of two RAHS Fellows and a former Councillor in September 2019. Ian Jack, who died on 6 September, was one of the longest serving RAHS Presidents. He was admired and respected within the academic world and later in his work as a heritage consultant. We will all remember Ian for his support for history at the local level in all its forms. Ian Jack's obituary was published in the December *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* and December *History* magazine. The well-known architectural and local historian, Dr Peter Reynolds died on 14 September 2019. Peter had been a RAHS member since 1969 and

served as an RAHS Councillor from 1993 to 2009. He was made a Fellow of the Society in 2009. He was also a long-standing member and chair of the RAHS Building Committee. Peter's obituary was published in the December *History* magazine. Former RAHS Councillor James Macken AM died on 19 September. An obituary was published in the December *History* magazine.

## FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

### Treasurer's Report

#### Dr Kathrine M. Reynolds FRHistS

It is again with great honour and pleasure that I present my Treasurer's report to the members of the RAHS for the last year of 2019. This year the RAHS reported a surplus of \$41,270, including membership donations. The RAHS reported a loss of \$59,145, due in part to the reduction in our income as we anticipated building works, while expenditure increased especially with maintenance of History House. The anticipation of building works restricted forward bookings for events and usage of our premises, seeing a reduction in our income for 2019. The maintenance and repairs to History House continue to increase due to the ageing lift and infrastructure, which highlights the importance of the building project for the long-term viability of the building.

As RAHS Treasurer, I continue to emphasise that the Society must manage its expenses as tightly as it can and I am pleased to report that this is the mantra of the staff who continually review expenditure and look for methods to reduce running costs. As usual, our projects are funded by grants or donations.

Again, I would thank our members and friends for their continuing support for the Society, and the fact that members continue to donate to our building project, which although it has seemed to take an inordinate amount of time, is growing closer to completion. We are actively trying at the moment to obtain quotes so we may finalise our plans, and move towards a Construction Certificate and start building. We are still short of the required amount that we anticipate as being needed, namely \$500,000 but we know this figure will firm when builders' quotes arrive and we can genuinely determine what the current building costs are likely to be. In 2019, our building donations were somewhat reduced as we received \$72,276 but we are very grateful for these as every dollar brings us closer. Hopefully, once we have final costings, members will again generously contribute to the building to see this project finalised. Currently the building fund has \$2.08 million, most donated by members whose help I gratefully acknowledge. Many types of donations have been accepted from champagne

at our Christmas party to Councillors donating their speaking fees to the building fund. I thank all Councillors who have contributed not just their time but also money to see the building fund slowly creep up. I should add that our current building quote has a 20% contingency built in to reduce the risk of cost-over run when building: we are hoping for the final quotes to be within a ball-park figure that we can accommodate.

Again, I would thank the many people who help the RAHS. We are particularly grateful to our political friends and thank the Hon. Don Harwin, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Public Service and Employee Relations, Aboriginal Affairs, and the Arts Vice-President of the Executive Council, Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council, and Trustee of the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Fund, for funding regional community and history projects through the 2019 Cultural Grants Program. Twenty-one projects received financial support, thirteen of which were regionally based.

For five years, the RAHS has successfully run the Transport Heritage Grants Programme managed by Transport NSW and Transport Heritage NSW, which have provided \$180,017 to nine not-for-profit organisations such as the RAHS to run transport heritage projects. Similarly, I would also like to thank the Hon. Gabrielle Upton, Member for Vacluse, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Heritage who supported our Heritage Grants Program.

Our raffles continue to generate funds to support various projects. At the 2019 RAHS Conference at Tamworth the Society earned approximately \$1,500 in raffle and book sales from the generosity of our members, which will be used to buy speaker microphones for the auditorium. I would thank Ancestry for their on-going support and generosity in providing two subscriptions as prizes for our Conference raffles. The Affiliated Societies Committee, ably chaired by Lynne Allen, with assistance from Judith Dunn, run the Annual Conference and is to be applauded for making a small profit from the Annual Conference of \$4,146 (not including raffles and book sales). Sincere thanks also go to be our keynote speaker, Professor Martin Gibbs, providing the Lesley Muir address at our annual conference on researching convict sites and the role of professionals as well as the community.

We also had book sales at History House and online book sales on our website, which contributed an additional \$3,431 in revenue, with a further \$4,759 coming from our events, the latter in no small measure generated by the work of the Events Committee and the hard work of the President, Christine Yeats who enthusiastically chairs the events Committee and tirelessly

seeks out speakers who may help us with these events. We are always grateful to receive donations of high-quality history books that we can rehouse to our members.

A special vote of thanks must be given to Suzanne Holohan, our General Manager, and her staff for their hard work. The 2019 Annual Report is an opportunity to express gratitude to fellow Councillors, volunteers and members who, with staff, help the RAHS achieve so much with very limited financial resources. Sadly we lost some of our volunteers, Trudy Holsworth who moved from Sydney and Betty Goodger who retired after decades of giving. To all who help us at the RAHS, to all affiliated society members who beaver away saving history in their communities, we say, "Thank you".

#### INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

INCOME	2019	2018
Donations received	7,051	1,527
Specific bequests and donations for History House Project	72,271	213,876
Grants received – Create NSW	65,000	65,000
Dividend and interest received	78,795	103,545
Rental income	154,317	150,295
Subscriptions received	102,778	112,083
Other income	108,153	119,412
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>588,366</b>	<b>767,885</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Accounting and Contract Services	34,237	13,638
Employee Benefit Expenses	237,759	242,417
Grants expended – Create MSW	65,000	65,000
History House expenses	66,065	60,208
Other expenses	70,272	67,508
<i>JRAHS</i> and <i>History</i> Magazine	35,525	28,835
Postage, printing and stationery	25,164	32,934
Depreciation	13,075	24,196
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>547,096</b>	<b>534,735</b>
<b>SURPLUS BEFORE TRANSFERS</b>	<b>41,270</b>	<b>233,150</b>

#### TRANSFER TO OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

<b>History House Build Project</b>		
Donations	72,271	213,876
Other	28,144	33,161
<b>SURPLUS</b>	<b>-59,145</b>	<b>-13,888</b>

#### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

<b>ASSETS</b>		
Cash	2,427,269	2,080,138
Receivable and other current assets	28,247	51,202
Financial assets	779,196	1,007,085
Property, plant and equipment	16,964,817	16,963,462
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>20,199,529</b>	<b>20,101,887</b>



## LIABILITIES

Accounts payable and other liabilities	227,386	244,541
Provisions	22,464	11,048
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>249,850</b>	<b>255,589</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>19,949,679</b>	<b>19,846,297</b>
<b>EQUITY</b>		
Reserves	19,074,985	18,912,459
Retained Surplus	874,694	933,838
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<b>19,949,679</b>	<b>19,846,297</b>

## SERVICES TO OUR MEMBERS

### RAHS Events and Outreach

#### RAHS President Christine Yeats, Chair of Events Committee

In 2019, the RAHS continued its established tradition of offering its members and friends a dynamic seasonal events calendar. This was made possible by the commitment of the RAHS Events Committee, RAHS volunteers and staff, and through collaborating with organisations such as NSW State Archives and Records; City of Sydney; University of Technology; Centre of Applied History (Macquarie University); Workers Education Association (WEA); Australian Society for History of Engineering and Technology (ASHET); Oral History NSW (OHNSW); Historic Houses Association Australia (HHA); History Council NSW; Independent Scholars Association of Australia (ISAA) – NSW Chapter; Shellharbour City Libraries; RAHS Affiliated Societies, both local and regional.

The 2019 calendar featured seminars and workshops that focused on our key goal - to develop historical expertise in the community that supports history and heritage projects. Our popular day lecture series at History House provided an opportunity for members to listen to research findings from new and established historians.

All events provided a much valued way for members and friends to connect with others who share a passion for Australian history.

Event Type	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Seminars and Workshops*	11	14	18	17	13
Lectures – Day, Evening, Joint	26	24	20	25	29
Excursions and Tours	5	14	8	16	7
Launches/Cocktail Evenings	1	1	4	2	2
Other	4	5	5	6	6
Webinars**	0	0	0	0	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>64</b>

\* In 2018, the figures include four regional workshops focusing on the centenary of the 1918–19 pandemic of ‘Spanish’ influenza.

\*\* The RAHS cancelled its webinar program in 2016, as it was not reaching the target number of participants to cover the costs.

## REGIONAL AND WESTERN SYDNEY SEMINARS FUNDED BY CREATE NSW SEMINARS

Regional and Western Sydney seminars are an important part of the RAHS outreach program. Seminar programs include skills based training and local history research components, which are designed based on the training needs of local historical societies and community groups.

I would like to thank Create NSW for its continuing support of this program. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of RAHS Councillors Judith Dunn OAM, Associate Professor Carol Liston AO and Dr Kathrine Reynolds for speaking at these seminars and providing online content.

This program also relies on local and state organisations, who provide speakers and logistical support. In 2019, we were delighted to work with Bathurst District Historical Society, Shellharbour City Libraries, and NSW State Archives & Records to deliver this program.

#### Bathurst Regional Seminar – *Digging deeper into our history*

Saturday 6 April 2019, CWA Hall

The RAHS, in conjunction with the Bathurst District Historical Society, presented this one-day seminar. It included the following sessions: *Land title records* – RAHS President Christine Yeats; *Parramatta Female Factory: grim prison or a place of idleness?* – RAHS Councillor Judith Dunn OAM; *Digging deeper into Trove* – RAHS President Christine Yeats.

#### Shellharbour Regional Seminar – *Convicts and crime*

Saturday 13 July 2019, Shellharbour Civic Centre

The RAHS, in conjunction with Shellharbour City Libraries, presented this one-day seminar. It included the following sessions: *Records relating to criminal courts (England, Scotland and NSW)* – Associate Professor Carol Liston AO, Dr Kathrine Reynolds, RAHS President Christine Yeats; *Digging deeper into Trove* – RAHS President Christine Yeats; *Digging deeper into Trove* – RAHS President Christine Yeats; *Organising your research, convicts and others* – Dr Kathrine Reynolds; *Getting to know your local resources (Introduction)* – Janelle Cundy, Information and Learning Officer Shellharbour library; *Getting to know your local resources (Tour)* – Janelle Cundy, Information and Learning Officer Shellharbour library.

#### Western Sydney Seminar – *Researching the history of your house*

Saturday 13 July 2019, Kingswood, NSW State Archives & Records

---

The RAHS, in conjunction with NSW State Archives & Records, presented this one-day seminar. It included the following sessions: *House history using the NSW State Archives* – Emily Hanna, NSW State Archives; *Land title research and the new HLRV website* – RAHS President Christine Yeats; *Understanding the history of your home and its interiors* – Michael Lech, Curator, Caroline Simpson Library & Research Collection.

## SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS AT HISTORY HOUSE

### **Saturday 9 February 2019 – Australian Lebanese family history workshop**

The RAHS, the NSW State Archives & Records and the History Council of NSW partnered with the Australian Lebanese Historical Society to bring together people interested in Australian Lebanese family history.

Presenters Alissar Chidiac, Cecile Yazbek, Nola Bramble, Glen Kalem, Emil Dan and Dr Paula Abood gave a brief overview of the different ways they have approached the documentation and telling of Lebanese Australian family histories. Dr Tanya Evans, Dr Jumana Bayeh and Dr Anne Monsour facilitated the workshop.

### **Saturday 16 February 2019 – Flu frenzy: Taming the 1919 influenza pandemic**

RAHS seminar in conjunction with City of Sydney

This seminar explored how local, family and medical records can help us piece together the intimate impact of this deadly global disease. Speakers included: Laila Ellmoos, historian at City of Sydney; Dr Peter Hobbins, RAHS Councillor; Chrys Meader, local historian in Marrickville; Dr Lisa Murray, City Historian.

### **Tuesday 12 February 2019 – Digitisation workshop: Small collections**

RAHS workshop in conjunction with the Workers' Education Association (WEA)

Presented by Paul Convy

This workshop looked at the issues to consider when planning a digitisation project. Topics covered were: material selection; indexing and describing materials; copyright; conservation; scanning and storing images.

### **Saturday 13 April 2019 – Capturing memories: Oral history in the digital age**

RAHS workshop in conjunction with Oral History NSW (OHNSW)

Presented by RAHS Councillor Pauline Curby and Andrew Host

This workshop equipped participants with the skills to undertake oral history interviews.

### **Wednesday 15 May 2019 – Using criminal records as a source of history**

RAHS workshop in conjunction with the WEA

Presented by RAHS President Christine Yeats

This workshop focused on how various nineteenth and early-twentieth century criminal records available in NSW, can be used by historians and researchers for research into past crimes.

### **Wednesday 28 August 2019 – Recording and preserving precious memories**

RAHS workshop in conjunction with the WEA

Presented by RAHS Councillor Pauline Curby

This workshop explored how the memories of family members and others can be recorded and preserved by drawing on oral history techniques and technology.

### **Saturday 19 October 2019 – Capturing memories: Oral history in the digital age**

RAHS workshop in conjunction with Oral History NSW (OHNSW)

Presented by Janis Wilton and Andrew Host

This workshop equipped participants with the skills to undertake oral history interviews.

### **Wednesday 20 November 2019 – Digging Deeper into Trove: Gazettes, Journals, Diaries, Maps and People**

RAHS workshop in conjunction with the WEA

Presented by RAHS President Christine Yeats

This workshop explored how to make the best use of the Gazettes, Journals, Diaries, Maps and People zones on Trove, the revolutionary free search engine created by the National Library of Australia.

## 2019 DAY LECTURES

Traditionally held on the first Wednesday of each month, this series is an opportunity for RAHS members and the wider community to hear speakers discuss their research interests on a wide range of Australian history topics.

### **Wednesday 6 February 2019 – Robert Bostock: Australia's slave trader convict and his freed captives**

Presented by Emma Christopher

### **Wednesday 6 March 2019 – The power of the pedal**

Presented by Rupert Guinness

### **Wednesday 3 April 2019 – Where history happened: Warragamba Dam**

Presented by Emeritus Professor Peter Spearritt

### **Wednesday 1 May 2019 – 'Make haste and go fetch the coroner!': Death Investigation in Colonial Sydney**

Presented by Catie Gilchrist

---

Wednesday 6 June 2019 – *Lookup! Shoptops: The world above the awnings*

Presented by Russell Workman

Wednesday 3 July 2019 – *Australia's maritime frontier*

Presented by Dr Craig Wilcox

Wednesday 7 August 2019 – *Recreating Sydney in 1959 – the making of 'Ladies in Black'*

Presented by Sue Milliken AO

Wednesday 4 September 2019 – *Terror, Insanity, and Suicide in Colonial Sydney*

Presented by James Dunk

Wednesday 2 October 2019 – *The story of Long Bay*

Presented by Patrick Kennedy

Wednesday 6 November 2019 – *Songlines, swaggies and surf safaris: On the road in Australia*

Presented by Dr Rosemary Kerr

Wednesday 4 December 2019 – *The little barbershop of history: A social history of Australian men's hair*

Presented by Dr Melissa Bellanta

## 2019 JOINT AND EVENING LECTURES

Wednesday 27 February 2019 – RAHS /Historic Houses Association Australia (HHA)

*Finding islands of my own: Phillip Parker King, the first internationally renowned Australian* – presented by Paul Brunton OAM, FAHA

Tuesday 12 March 2019 – RAHS/Independent Scholars Association of Australia (ISAA)

*A Walk Through Time and the Archives* – presented by Dr Diane Solomon Westerhuis

Thursday 21 March 2019 – RAHS/Australian Society for the History of Engineering and Technology (ASHET)

*Technology and engineering at the grassroots: 180 years of the development of wire strainers* – presented by Dr John Pickard

Tuesday 30 April 2019 – RAHS/ASHET

*A web of steel and concrete: design and construction of the Anzac Bridge* – presented by Rob Renew

Thursday 9 May 2019 – RAHS/ISAA

*Milton in stained glass* – presented by Beverley Sherry

Wednesday 22 May 2019 – RAHS/HHA

*Darlinghurst Gaol* – presented by Richard Whitaker

Thursday 20 June 2019 – RAHS/ASHET

*The Apollo moon landings: From challenge to achievement* – presented by Kerrie Dougherty

Wednesday 14 August 2019 – RAHS/HHA

*Paddington: A history – the terrace house* – presented by Robert Griffin and Robert Brown

Thursday 17 September 2019 – RAHS/ASHET

*The three wireless men* – presented by Jo Harris OAM

Wednesday 16 October 2019 – RAHS/HHA

*Mapping the massacres* – presented by Professor Lyndall Ryan AM FAHA

Thursday 31 October 2019 – RAHS/ASHET

*Early history of electricity generation in Australia* – presented by Debbie Rudder

## 2019 SPECIAL LECTURES

Thursday 16 May 2019 – RAHS/National Archaeology Week Lecture

*Judy Birmingham and the origins of Australian Historical Archaeology* – presented by Andrew Wilson

This evening lecture was a pre-launch event for National Archaeology Week 2019.

Sunday 8 September 2019 – RAHS/OHNSW History Week Lecture

*'Everywhere you look is a loss': Memories bushfire in a transformed suburban landscape* – presented by Dr Scott McKinnon

In 2003, the Australian Capital Territory experienced a devastating firestorm in which four people were killed and hundreds more injured. To coincide with History Week and its theme of 'Memory & Landscape, Dr Scott McKinnon examined the interweaving of memory, space and recovery in the years after the fire.

Wednesday 13 November 2019 – RAHS/UTS 'History is Hot' series

This series provides graduates the opportunity to present their research into Australian History. Topics includes: *Australian broadcasting's female 'pilgrims': A history of women and work in the post-war ABC* - Kylie Andrews, Australian Centre for Public History, UTS; *Sore feet, tears and seeds: Dingoes and people on K'gari (Fraser Island)* - Rowena Lennox, UTS; *The Sonnenorden/Sun Cult: Turning up the heat in historical fiction* - James Worner, Australian Centre for Public History, UTS.

## 2019 EXCURSIONS

Monday 11 March 2019

RAHS Excursion – *State Theatre* co-ordinated by RAHS Councillor Graham Shirley

Saturday 15 June 2019

RAHS/Friends of Callan Park (FOCP) Excursion – *Tour of Broughton Park* with FOCP tour guides



### Saturday 27 June 2019

RAHS Excursion – *RAHS walking tour: Gladesville Hospital* co-ordinated by RAHS Councillor Graham Shirley

### Thursday 8 August 2019

RAHS Excursion – *Guided Tour of Anzac Memorial, Hyde Park* co-ordinated by RAHS Librarian Donna Newton

### Thursday 17 October 2019

RAHS Excursion – *Royal Australian Navy's Garden Island Heritage Tour* coordinated by RAHS Librarian Donna Newton

## 2019 LAUNCHES, COCKTAIL EVENINGS AND OTHER EVENTS

### Saturday 26 January 2019

History House Open Day: *Pot Luck with History* and RAHS Book Sale

### Thursday 14 March 2019

RAHS new members' evening

### Tuesday 16 April 2019

RAHS Annual General Meeting.

### Tuesday 21 May 2019

RAHS/Thredbo Historical Society – Cocktail Evening and Talk

### Tuesday 10 December 2019

RAHS Christmas Party

## RAHS Library

### Donna Newton, RAHS Librarian

The RAHS Library is recognised by the National Library of Australia as being a culturally significant collection. It is a key research resource for RAHS members and the broader history community, with over 60,000 items on Australia history. The table below provides an overview of the collection.

Collection Item	2019	2018
Books	24,857	24,839
Journal/History/Conference	4099	4,045
Serials and selected contents index	3,689	3,689
Photograph Collection	11,432	11,432
Glass Slide Collection	7,614	7,614
Manuscripts	1,058	1,058
Press Clippings	7,255	7,255
Walker Slides	1,939	1,939
<b>Total</b>	<b>61,943</b>	<b>61,871</b>

The RAHS Library collection increased slightly compared to the previous year. We continue to deaccession duplicate items and those that do not meet our collection policy criteria.

The following table provides additional key library statistics.

Measure	2019	2018
Number of registered visitors – 80% RAHS members or affiliated societies' members	231	228
Number of visitors to RAHS library web pages	3716	4,682
Number of publications added to Books and More Database	*149	212
Number of other items added to Books and More Database	**50	
Entries added to <i>JRAHS</i> , <i>History</i> and Conference Database	54	53
E-Newsletters from affiliated societies submitted	300	301
<i>JRAHS</i> article requests	42	43
Articles submitted to <i>JRAHS</i>	17	16
Requests to use images from the RAHS collection	34	43

\* Publications contained in the database also include: items held in our Rare Books Room; the reference collection; directories and yearbooks

\*\* Other items in the database include: souvenir programs, pamphlets and brochures; bibles; maps; newspaper clippings; CDs/DVDs and microfilm/microfiche resources.

Library users included interstate researchers as well as international visitors from Switzerland, Wales, Canada and United States of America. We also managed many online research queries on a wide-range of topics. While many researchers focused on local, family and biographical interests, other examples included: resources on the Great Strike of 1917 for a HSC student's History Extension major work; early colonial fishing industry in Sydney; Louis de Freycinet and the Uranie shipwreck in Falkland Islands 1820; Australian American Civil War veterans buried in Rookwood Cemetery; murders in the Coonabarabran / Warrumbungle shire area involving the Chinese Bushranger Sam Poo; research into families associated with the Rev. John D Lang in colonial Sydney; material on the Astor apartments and its concrete construction for an anniversary publication; Indigenous languages of Sydney and surrounds; early stock exchanges that operated on the goldfields during late 1800s; early pastoral runs of the Wide Bay and Burnett region NSW/QLD; information required on artist Joseph Wolinski's Archibald Prize portraits of RAHS Councillors Aubrey Halloran in 1927, Captain James Henry Watson in 1928 and Karl Reginald Cramp in

1938 for the ARCHIE 100 PROJECT; a request from Parliament NSW's Office of the Clerk seeking information on the location of graves and memorials for the Presidents of the Legislative Council for projects in the lead up to the bicentenary of the establishment of the Legislative Council in 2024.

Using photographs and showcasing other resources in the e-Newsletter and on social media continues to be a successful way for promoting the vast collection we hold at the Library. This results in an increase of requests from a variety of organisations / institutions to use particular items from the RAHS Library. In 2019, permission to use RAHS images was granted to: State Library of NSW; the new IGA store in Marulan; Network Communications QLD for the new store in Orange; Macquarie University; Sydney Harbour Federation Trust; The Rocks Walking Tours; National Trust Australia; NRMA; Tropman & Tropman Architects; Mittagong RSL Sub-Branch; Hector Abrahams Architects; Automotive Historians Australia; St Luke's Anglican Church Liverpool and from several RAHS affiliated societies.

The Anzac Memorial Hyde Park borrowed the RAHS 1919 influenza workers badge from our manuscript collection for display in their exhibition relating to the 1919 centenary of WW1.

Members' subscriptions and donations continue to greatly assist the RAHS Library. We would like to thank everyone for their ongoing support of our library, in particular all the RAHS volunteers.

## **RAHS Publications, Website and Digital Media**

### **Phillip Jaworski, RAHS Membership Services/Digital Media**

We hope our members found the publications we produced in 2019 enjoyable and insightful. This included two editions of the *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society (JRAHS)* and four editions of *History* magazine.

The *JRAHS* is the oldest journal of Australian history – first published in 1906. It contains original, previously unpublished non-fiction scholarly articles, reviews and images. The content is submitted by both academic and community scholars. Topics covered in 2019 included: the women in Governor Arthur Phillip's life; histories of the Chinese in regional NSW; the impact of the 1820 influenza outbreak on Indigenous and settler populations; the role of the *Endeavour* on James Cook's first Pacific voyage; and vice-regal consorts Lady Enid and Lady Elaine de Chair.

*History* magazine evolved from the Society's newsletter, and its current format was first introduced in 1988.

*History* provides articles of general historical interest, developments in historical research, book notes, forthcoming events and other relevant news. Each issue of *History* is produced with a guest editor who has the responsibility for sourcing articles from a range of potential contributors. The editors for 2019 were President of the Camden Historical Society Ian Willis (March) and RAHS Councillors Pauline Curby (June), Peter Hobbins (September), and Graham Shirley (December). Topics covered in 2019 included: style and fashion in 1950s Australia; developments in the silk industry in the 1890s; the spread of the 'Spanish flu' pandemic to regional NSW; and mapping convict sites in Tasmania.

The RAHS e-Newsletter continues to serve as an effective way to communicate relevant news, information and events to our members and friends. Over 2,600 people are subscribed to our e-Newsletter, with twenty issues circulated in 2019. Some of our top stories included: reporting on the changes to Historic Land Records Viewer (HLRV); An Intimate Pandemic: The Community Impact of the 1919 Influenza; new inscriptions added to the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Register; the 2019 RAHS Conference at Tamworth; and the digitisation of the Australian Joint Copying Project. The RAHS is very grateful for the news stories and other contributions made from our individual members and affiliates, as it ensures our content is current and covers a diverse range of historical interests.

The RAHS has an active social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and Instagram. We now have over 5,820 followers on Facebook and published 141 posts throughout 2019. Our most popular post for the year was a blog post about the supposed disappearance of two schoolgirls and their teacher at Hanging Rock on Valentine's Day 1900. The post was written by RAHS volunteer Elizabeth Heffernan and examined the historical veracity of Joan Lindsay's novel *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. We also saw a steady increase in our followers on Twitter and Instagram, as we made a greater effort to add more content on these ever-expanding platforms.

Our website was accessed by 39,547 users throughout 2019 (up from 33,531 in 2018) – an increase of 15.22% since 2018. Our users were predominantly from Australia (80.52%), with others from the United States, United Kingdom, New Zealand, India and Canada. 93 posts were added to the RAHS News page in 2019, which primarily included information about upcoming events, newly published books on Australian history, advocacy stories, and other relevant information/updates.

The Society looks forward to new opportunities in 2020 to increase our presence on our digital platforms, and connecting with various individuals and organisations, particularly with those in regional areas whose contact with the RAHS may be limited by geographical distance.

## RAHS Affiliated Societies

### RAHS Councillor Lynne Allen, Chair of Committee

The Affiliated Societies Committee is made up of representatives of local and specialist societies from the city and country who give freely of their time to support the valuable work of the RAHS. 2019 was another busy and productive year with the ASC organising the annual state conference and assessing the Cultural Grant applications. Jan Garaty, of Marrickville Heritage Society, has stepped down from the ASC and I want to thank her for her contribution.

The 2019 RAHS Annual Conference, with the theme Illuminating the Past, was hosted by Tamworth Historical Society and was launched in fine style with a welcome on the Friday night at Calala Cottage, a wonderful echo of Tamworth's past which is the society's home. Those who attended were treated to personally guided tours of the complex and a fascinating overview of the history of the site by Melinda Gill.

Delegates from twenty-eight historical societies, as well as individual RAHS members and friends attended the conference and were treated to two days of stimulating presentations in a collegial atmosphere. Local Kamilaroi man Len Waters gave the Welcome to Country, enthralling those present as he spoke through stories and the local indigenous dialect of the impact of drought and the importance of respecting the environment. Len's passion set the tone for the conference. This rousing welcome was followed by Professor Martin Gibbs the Lesley Muir addressee, who spoke passionately about his 'Landscapes of Production and Punishment' project which combines the work of both professional or community-based historians, archaeologists, sociologists and genealogists, to take a fresh look at convicts and their place in the Australian landscape. Over the next two days the attendees were entertained, challenged and informed by all the speakers, who covered a myriad of theoretical and practical topics and welcomed enthusiastic questioning from the audience.

Once again, the Business Session on Sunday morning provided a lively forum for the dissemination and exchange of ideas on matters affecting our affiliated societies. The handout is available on the RAHS website. If you missed the conference, please take advantage of this handout which will assist in the

governance and sustainability of your society. We will soon be announcing the venue for the 2020 Annual Conference and we encourage you to attend.

The 2019 Create NSW Cultural Grants were assessed by members of the ASC. As usual there was great competition for the \$50,000 funding available with \$95,621 requested in grant applications. Twenty-one projects were funded with thirteen of these being Regional NSW history projects. Nine projects were fully funded and twelve were partially funded. Applications will open in April 2020 so start thinking about potential projects and make sure that you have quotes to support your application. I strongly recommend that you access the grant expertise of the staff at History House to discuss your project before starting the application and be guided by their knowledge and experience. They are always keen to assist.

The RAHS wishes to thank Create NSW for continuing to fund the Cultural Grants into 2020 and for supporting the research and dissemination of the history and heritage of our great state.

Remember, the Affiliated Societies Committee is your committee, established to support your society in its valuable role as preserver and protector of the nation's heritage.

## RAHS Membership Data

This year there were small increases in our affiliated societies and library subscribers but the growth was not enough to offset the decline in the senior members category.

In November 2019 we introduced online new membership forms and launched a membership subscription drive in December, using our social media platforms. We will continue to introduce initiatives to grow our membership base.

AFFILIATED SOCIETIES	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Societies with fewer than 15 members	56	51	55	49	46
Fewer than 30	69	74	75	73	75
Fewer than 50	55	49	53	62	54
Between 51-100	95	94	101	93	101
More than 100	73	73	80	82	71
More than 200	15	20	20	22	24
More than 300	13	13	14	16	16
<b>Total Affiliated Societies</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>387</b>
INDIVIDUAL AND PAIRS MEMBERS					
Individual Members	310	309	303	308	364
Household Pairs (x2)	46	48	47	51	65
Students	6	13	10	15	18



Senior Members	442	493	503	481	435
Senior Pairs (x2)	96	89	93	92	83
<b>Total Individuals And Pairs</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>952</b>	<b>956</b>	<b>947</b>	<b>965</b>
<b>Corporate Members</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Library Subscribers</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>119</b>
Honorary Fellows	5	5	5	5	5
Life Members	17	17	19	19	19
Members 50 years	6	6	6	7	8
Free and Exchange	36	35	36	36	34
<b>Total Non-Subscribers</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Total Subscribers</b>	<b>1,397</b>	<b>1,427</b>	<b>1,493</b>	<b>1,479</b>	<b>1,478</b>
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>1,461</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>1,559</b>	<b>1,546</b>	<b>1,544</b>

## RAHS AND THE COMMUNITY

### Representation on History and Heritage Boards

As of the 31 December 2019, the RAHS is represented on the Federation of Australian Historical Societies by Judith Dunn and Christine Yeats; the Geographical Names Board of New South Wales by Terry Kass; the History Council of New South Wales by Christine Yeats; the State Records of NSW Community Advisory Committee by Christine Yeats; the National Archives Consultative Forum by Peter Hobbins, Pauline Curby and Iain Stuart; Create NSW Museums & History Artform Advisory Board by Christine Yeats.

### RAHS Administered Grant Programs

**The Cultural Grants Program** is a Create NSW developed funding program administered by the Royal Australian Historical Society on behalf of the NSW Government. This program assists historical research and publication of local community and regional history projects. \$50,000 was distributed to grant projects in 2019.

The following organisations were 2019 Cultural Grant recipients: Albury and District Historical Society; Armidale and District Historical Society; The City of Liverpool and District Historical Society; Eurimbla Precinct History Association; Hill End and Tambaroora Gathering Group; Lawrence Museum; Lions Club Kiama Inc; Macleay River Historical Society; Manilla Viaduct Rail Bridge Tourism; Mosman Croquet Club; Neutral Bay Uniting Church; New England Regional Art Museum; Old Bar and Manning Point Business and Community Association; Outback Theatre for Young People; Port Macquarie and District Family History Society; Randwick and District Historical Society; Ryde District Historical Society; Shoalhaven Historical Society; South Coast History Society; Sutherland Shire Historical Society; Wagga Wagga and District Historical Society

**The Heritage Grants Program** did not take place in 2019. Funding has been confirmed for 2020.

**The Transport Heritage Grants Program** is a NSW Government funded program, administered by the Royal Australian Historical Society with the support of Transport Heritage NSW (THNSW). It aims to help the NSW community rediscover the culture, events and people that shaped transport over the past 160 years, as well as assist with the restoration and conservation of NSW's valuable heritage assets. Recipients were announced at a special ceremony at the National Innovation Centre on Saturday 26 October 2019. The total amount awarded was \$180,108.

The following organisations were 2019 Transport Heritage Grant recipients: Goulburn Crookwell Heritage Railway; New England Antique Machinery Club; Sydney Tramway Museum; Zig Zag Railway; Sydney Bus Museum; Robertson Heritage Railway Station; The Rail Motor Society  
Illawarra Light Railway Museum; Lachlan Valley Railway Society Co-op.

## RAHS Certificates of Achievement

RAHS Certificates of Achievement provide recognition to those members of affiliated societies whose contribution is significant and noteworthy to both their society and the community.

The following people were awarded Certificates of Achievement in 2019: Elspeth Bradbury – Lake Macquarie Family History Group; Unita Fleischer – Lake Macquarie Family History Group; Scott MacArthur – Marrickville Heritage Society.

## RAHS Heritage Committee

The RAHS Heritage Committee consists of Senior Vice-President Carol Liston; Councillors Linda Emery, Graham Shirley, and Iain Stuart; RAHS member Craig McPherson, Senior Heritage Specialist, Sydney Trains; and RAHS member Elaine Phillips.

When the NSW Heritage Council advises RAHS of proposed changes to the State Heritage Register, the Heritage Committee reviews the proposals and responds to them. Consultations have included:

Cobb & Co Coach (Bathurst Visitors Centre);  
Toll Cottage (former Rose Cottage, Newcastle);  
Lindfield Learning Village (formerly William Balmain Teachers College);  
The Binishell Collection (three concrete futuristic bubble domes popular in the 1960s and 1970s);  
Segenhoe Flats, Newcastle;

Yanko Station Store, Jerilderie;

Regent Theatre, Mudgee; and

Thomas Dick Photographic Collection, Australian Museum and Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences.

The Heritage Committee this year sent a total of ten letters to the Heritage Council.

## **RAHS PEOPLE**

### **The Council**

In 2019, the Council comprised:

#### **President**

Ms Christine Yeats, BA, DipLib, DipArchAdmin

#### **Senior Vice President**

Associate Professor Carol Liston, AO, BA (Hons), PhD, FRAHS

#### **Vice President**

Dr Christine Wright, BA (Hons), PhD to 16/04/19  
Mrs Lynnette Aileen Allen, MA, DipEd, Grad Dip Local, Family & Applied History from 16/04/19

#### **Treasurer**

Dr Kathrine Reynolds, BA, MSc, PhD, FRHistS

#### **Executive Member**

Mrs Lynnette Aileen Allen, MA, DipEd, Grad Dip Local, Family & Applied History to 16/04/19  
Mrs Linda Emery, BA from 16/04/19

#### **Councillors**

Ms Pauline Curby, MA, Dip Ed  
Ms Judith Dunn, OAM, FPDHS  
Dr Peter Hobbins, BA, BSc (Hons), M Medical Hum, PhD  
Dr Mark St Leon BEc, GCertTQM, MBus, MA (Hons), PhD, CA  
Mr Graham Shirley  
Dr Iain Stuart, BA (Hons), M.Env Sci, PhD  
Associate Professor Richard White, BA (Hons), Dip.Ed.  
In 2019, eleven RAHS Council meetings were held at History House.

## **RAHS Committees and RAHS Working Parties**

The Society's committees bring together a wide range of people who have a shared interest in supporting the key activities of the Society. The RAHS committees develop draft policies for consideration of the Council as well as supporting staff with core activities. The RAHS also forms working parties that are dedicated to delivering a specific project.

Below is a list of the committees and their members as at 31 December 2019.

### **Affiliated Societies Committee**

Ms Lynne Allen (Chair), Ms Judith Dunn (Vice Chair), Associate Professor Carol Liston AO

(Councillor), Ms Samantha Friend (Bathurst), Ms Lorraine Neate (Wollongong), Ms Angela Phippen (specialist), Mr Graham Shirley (Councillor).

### **Events Committee**

The President Christine Yeats (Chair), Emeritus Prof David Carment, Dr Kathrine Reynolds, Mr Graham Shirley, Ms Margaret Dalkin, Mrs Judith Dunn, Ms Suzanne Holohan.

### **Executive Committee**

Ms Christine Yeats (President), Associate Professor Carol Liston (Senior-Vice President), Ms Lynne Allen (Vice President), Dr Kathrine Reynolds (Treasurer), Mrs Linda Emery (Council Representative).

### **Fellowship and Medals Committee**

The President Christine Yeats (Chair), Associate Professor Carol Liston (Councillor/Fellow), Mr Keith Johnson (Fellow), Professor Geoffrey Sherington (Fellow), Associate Professor Nancy Cushing (Professional Historian), Ms Pauline Curby (Professional Historian/Councillor), Associate Professor Richard White (Historian/Councillor).

### **Heritage Committee**

Associate Professor Carol Liston AO, Dr Iain Stuart, Mrs Linda Emery, Mr Graham Shirley, Mr Craig McPherson, Ms Elaine Phillips.

### **Editorial Board for the *JRAHS***

Associate Professor Carol Liston AO (Chair and editor of *JRAHS*), the President Ms Christine Yeats, Dr Kathrine Reynolds, Dr Peter Hobbins, Emeritus Prof David Carment AM.

### **History House Working Party**

The President Ms Christine Yeats (Chair), Dr Kathrine Reynolds, Ms Christine Yeats, Ms Suzanne Holohan.

### **Library and Archives Working Party**

The President Ms Christine Yeats (Chair), Associate Professor Carol Liston AO, Ms Suzanne Holohan and Ms Donna Newton.

### **Constitution Review Working Party**

The President Ms Christine Yeats (Chair), Associate Professor Carol Liston AO, Ms Suzanne Holohan.

## **Volunteers**

The RAHS would like to thank all of its volunteers for the incredible contribution that they make. Our 2019 volunteers included: Margaret Coleman, Margaret Dalkin, Megan Edwards, Betty Goodger, Elizabeth Heffernan, Trudy Holdsworth, Christina King, Noelene Kyle, Jan Koperberg, Elaine Phillips, Wendy Platt, Maximilian Reid, Mary Sciberras, Margaret Scott, Bron Stepowski and Jan Thomas.

We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of

our two retiring volunteers: Betty Goodger who volunteered for thirty-one years and Trudy Holdsworth who volunteered for seven years. The RAHS greatly appreciated their work and dedication, and wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

As well as volunteers, the RAHS would also like to thank two students who completed their work experience at the RAHS.

---

### **Daniel Non**

A year 10 student from Wollemi College, Werrington, Daniel undertook a World War I research project, prepared social media posts and performed library tasks as part of a fourteen-day work experience placement.

---

### **Oriana Mitchell**

Undertaking a Master of Archaeology and Heritage Management at Flinders University, Oriana completed her ten-day professional experience placement for her Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Practicum subject recording, researching and sorting the RAHS artworks, decorative arts, silver and museum objects in the basement.

---

## **2019 Certificate of Appreciation**

The RAHS introduced Certificates of Appreciation in 2014 to honour the contribution made by RAHS volunteers. The 2019 Certificate of Appreciations were awarded to Elizabeth Heffernan and Christina King.

## **STAFF**

### **Full-time**

General Manager: Suzanne Holohan, BA (Hons), BComm (Hons)

Librarian: Donna Newton, Dip Lib Inf, ALIA (Tec)

### **Part-time/Casual**

Finance/Grants/Insurance Administrator: Maryanne Byrne, BBus, M Events Management

Membership Services/Digital Media: Laura Signorelli BA (Hons) to 9 May 2019

Membership Services/Digital Media: Phillip Jaworski BA (Hons) from 29 May 2019

The Society also paid professional fees for financial services.

## **SOCIETY HONOURS**

The RAHS Council recognises contributions to the advancement of education in the field of Australian history in three categories, namely Fellow, Honorary Fellow and Medalist.

## **FELLOWS**

Members of the Society who, in the judgment of the Council, have rendered service in advancing the knowledge of Australian history and in furtherance of the objects of the Society, shall be eligible for appointment as Fellows. Under the Society's regulations, the number of Fellows shall not exceed twenty-five and not more than three Fellows may be appointed in a calendar year.

---

Dr Rosemary Annable, FFAHS

---

Emeritus Professor David Carment AM

---

Professor Stephen Garton, FAHA, FASSA

---

Robert Irving, OAM

---

Alfred Brian Maxwell James, OAM

---

Keith A. Johnson, AM, FSG, FSAG

---

Associate Professor Carol Liston, AO

---

Emeritus Professor Geoffrey Sherington

---

Dr Anne-Maree Whitaker, FRHistS

Dr Ian Jack passed away on 6 September 2019. He was the longest serving president of the RAHS, and was an active professional historian and consultant until his death. On 14 September 2019, the architectural and local historian Dr Peter Reynolds OAM died. They will both be remembered for their contribution to the RAHS and the broader history and heritage community.

## **HONORARY FELLOWS**

Persons who, in the judgment of the Council, have rendered valuable service in advancing the knowledge of Australian history, shall be eligible for appointment as Honorary Fellows. Under the Society's Regulations, the number of Honorary Fellows shall not exceed ten and not more than one Honorary Fellow may be appointed in a calendar year.

---

Emeritus Professor Alan Atkinson, FAHA

---

Dr Shirley Fitzgerald

---

Dr Dennis Norman Jeans

---

Dr Beverley Kingston, FASSA

## **MEDALLISTS**

The awards of Medalist for Distinguished Service are made by the RAHS Council to those members of the Society who, in its judgment, have made an outstanding contribution to the promotion of the work of the Society.

---

Margaret Coleman, OAM

---

Mr Richard d'Apice, AM, LL.B, FSAG

---

Margaret Scott

---



---

# Reaching out from a National Heritage Place: Investigating Bonegilla, a Virtual Site Study

**Bruce Pennay**

Charles Sturt University has transposed the former Bonegilla Migrant Reception Centre from the banks of the Murray River, near Albury-Wodonga, onto a website, just one click away. It has launched an innovative virtual tour, accompanied by a set of skilfully prepared learning materials. The website is aimed primarily at students, however, it can be and is used by others keen to see and learn about this National Heritage Place or to check on digital representations of heritage: <https://www.bonegilla.org.au/education/virtual-tour.asp>

## **Walking through Bonegilla online**

A 3D virtual tour is a reproduction of the real-life heritage place as it is today. It is, in effect, a spatial representation aimed at those who are not readily able to visit the actual site. It is on a Matterhorn platform, similar to that used for the virtual tour of Old Melbourne Gaol. In this case, however, the designers have studied the walkthrough with specially created YouTube videos, including an introductory claymation, and have supplied a picture trail of short commentaries.

Visitors can tour at their own pace and in their own time. The virtual tour opens for exploration three exhibition spaces, three more sparsely interpreted communal living spaces, and a staff recreation hut, which has been partly restored. It is supplemented with a short video that provides views of the physical setting of the Reception Centre and includes a drone flight to establish geographical context.

## **Investigating Bonegilla online**

The accompanying resource kit includes a set of four discrete investigations, which pose key questions and provide access to primary source material for visitors to explore. The investigations are well illustrated and easy to read as digital magazines created through the digital publishing platform, Issuu.

In each of the four investigations, visitors are shown how to find and use contemporary reports detailing

how the place functioned and how people experienced the arrival processes. The site presumes visitors are new to finding material in Trove and in the National Archives of Australia. Instructions point them to specific reports or documents, but leave open the prospect of further explorations in each cluster of newspaper reports or official files. This means the site not only helps visitors to locate carefully selected items in these vast archives, but also increases awareness of the patient detective work required of historians.

These introductions to simple Trove and National Archives searches are perhaps novel in materials prepared for use in or beyond schools. However, family historians and local historians are well aware of the need to cultivate skills in using Trove. This website helps advance such skills and, by doing so, endorses the observations made by the Australian History Association that Trove has had

The Block 19 remnant of the Bonegilla Reception Centre is on the National Heritage Register as illustrative of postwar migration policies and the arrival experiences of 310,000 non-British displaced persons, refugees and assisted migrants, who came between 1947 and 1971.

The Bonegilla Reception Centre was the largest and longest-lasting postwar migrant camp in Australia. At its peak, in 1950, it accommodated 7,700 people, including 1,250 staff. Consequently it had economic, social and cultural impact on Albury and Wodonga, its immediate host communities.

Memory of the Reception Centre and its impact is carefully preserved in the Bonegilla Collection at the Albury Library Museum. The site itself is conserved by Wodonga City Council as a public memory place called the 'Bonegilla Migrant Experience'. Both cross-border city councils worked in collaboration with Charles Sturt University to construct the website.

a 'transformative effect on the capacity of historians to undertake research'.<sup>1</sup>

An introductory 'Change and Continuity' investigation shows and explains changes to the fabric of the camp over time, as it served different cohorts of migrants. It helps visitors reckon with adjustments to Australian postwar immigration policies and practices between 1947 and 1971.

Two other investigations deal with two events in which Bonegilla made the national news. One invites visitors to find and assess the value of different newspaper and official accounts of a health scandal in 1949, when twenty-three newly arrived babies died. The other directs them to the National Archives of Australia for different accounts of a riot by unemployed migrants in 1961. It, for instance, points visitors to a file containing a secret report prepared by ASIO on the incident, its causes and its aftermath. That file has records that clearly indicate the long-term complaints from migrants who, because of an economic recession, could not be allocated the jobs they had been promised before they agreed to come to Australia. Throughout, however, it is centred on ascertaining the influence Communists had in inciting violence.

A final investigation of 'Migration Experiences' takes visitors to similar records, but also draws on migrant personal testimonies in the 'Belongings' archive, created by the now defunct Migration Heritage Centre of NSW. It enables visitors to explore the accounts migrants have recorded of their arrival and wider migration experiences. It touches on personal stories like, for example, those of Romulus Gaita and his family. It guides visitors towards making some sense of the kaleidoscope of personal testimonies.

## Contemporary films

The resource kit has a set of contemporary films which portray the Reception Centre from different perspectives, initially and then in its last days. Both sets ask visitors to think about changes in the way the centre was represented to the Australian public and to potential and actual migrants. So, for example, visitors are asked to compare a short film made to attract displaced persons to Australia with another which was made to reassure the Australian public about the benefits of the mass immigration program.

Two other short films report on the way Bonegilla was improved to attract skilled assisted migrants in the 1960s. One is a promotional film that purportedly shows how well Australia received the newly arrived. Another is a retrospective presented by a former migrant. It was made by the ABC *This Day Tonight* team to mark the closing of the centre in 1971.



*A protest march by unemployed migrants photographed by a fellow migrant in 1961 [Albury Library Museum, Drehlich, 14.901]*

## Welcome to Australia, Welcome to Bonegilla online

The website addresses the concepts, skills, outcomes and content specified in the Australian History Curriculum. It is an excellent place for students to undertake their mandated heritage site visit. It advances understandings of postwar immigration and its reception processes. It helps all visitors, be they students, teachers, or other adults, to make sense of the experience of migration.

Not everyone can easily get to this heritage place on the banks of the Murray River near Albury-Wodonga. Now, thanks to this website, they can visit and revisit the place. They can reflect on what the mass immigration program of the postwar years meant to the nation and to those who came. And they can ponder the digital representation of heritage places.

## About the author

Bruce Pennay is an Adjunct Associate Professor at Charles Sturt University and a long-time member of Albury District Historical Society and Wodonga Historical Society. He has written extensively about Bonegilla and Benalla Migrant Camps. He worked closely in collaboration with his colleague Paul Grover, a Lecturer in Education, and in consultation with Jessie Lymn, a Lecturer in Information Studies, on developing this site. The construction of the website was funded by a CSU Learning and Teaching Grant and Wodonga City Council. The work drew heavily on the Bonegilla Collection at Albury Library Museum.

## References

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Telling Australia's Story - and why it is important, Report on Canberra's National Institutions*, Commonwealth Parliament, Canberra 2019, p.35.

# On the Shelf: The Royal Australian Historical Society and keeping history alive

Donna Newton, RAHS Librarian

The Library collections of the Royal Australian Historical Society (RAHS) include a wealth of publications and other material relating to its own history. One such gem is the *Catalogue of exhibits: loan exhibition of pictures and objects of historical interest: Art Gallery ... Bridge Street, Sydney, May 25-29, 1920*.

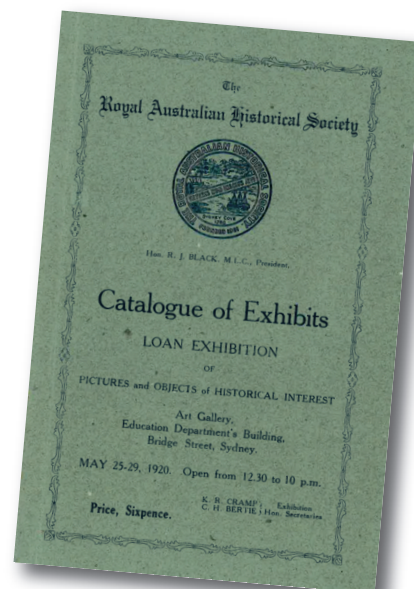
The Society had been lobbying the State Government and others, without success, to establish a history museum in Sydney since its inception. Although it was 'weighted down by repeated discouragement and public apathy on the subject'<sup>1</sup> the Society sought to 'keep the concept alive through public exhibitions of objects from its own collection and on loan.'<sup>2</sup> These exhibitions were held in 1920, 1922, 1938 and 1951.

The 1920 exhibition appears to have been largely organised by Charles Henry Bertie and Karl Reginald Cramp. The venue was the Department of Education's Art Gallery in Bridge Street, which had opened in 1915. At the time the Society's offices were conveniently located in the basement of the Building. The main objective of the exhibition was to draw attention to the need for a history museum.<sup>3</sup> Bertie and Cramp 'acted as joint Honorary Secretaries and invited loan exhibits from all and sundry'.<sup>4</sup> This was the first time the Society had coordinated an exhibition of this magnitude. The response to their public appeal for artworks, pictures, objects, clothing and relics of

historical interest was overwhelming.

The exhibition was opened on 25 May 1920 by the NSW Governor, Sir Walter Davidson, accompanied by his wife, Dame Margaret. Every RAHS member was sent a circular about the exhibition, enclosing a complimentary ticket for the opening night. Admission for the general public cost sixpence. The catalogue was also sixpence. An estimated 3,000 people attended the exhibition between 25 and 29 May.

The Catalogue provides a brief description of all the items on display. In addition to the many individual exhibitors, there were displays from the RAHS, Australasian Pioneers' Club, Parramatta and District Historical Society, and Angus & Robertson. RAHS Councillors and prominent members such as Walker, Cramp, Foster, Campbell, Betts, Bertie, Ferguson and Burfitt also had displays. The exhibition included artworks, photographs, firearms and other weaponry, plans and maps, letters, correspondence and diaries, surveying instruments, clothing and other apparel, medals and currency and all manner of miscellaneous memorabilia. A large number of framed etchings from Lionel Lindsay and Sydney Ure Smith were also offered for sale. An oil painting of the Commissariat Stores Sydney, one of the many RAHS exhibits, stills hangs on the wall in History House. The largest exhibit was the first gold cradle made in Australasia.<sup>5</sup>



*Cover of Catalogue of exhibits: loan exhibition of pictures and objects of historical interest: Art Gallery ... Bridge Street, Sydney, May 25-29, 1920.*

The catalogues for the 1920, 1922, 1938 and 1951 exhibitions are held in the Society's Library. Please contact our Librarian, Donna, if you would like to view them and learn more about the fascinating history of the Royal Australian Historical Society.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> *Annual Report and Statement of Accounts*, Royal Australian Historical Society, 1920, p.7.
- <sup>2</sup> Marjorie Jacobs, "Students of a like hobby": the Society 1900-1954', *Much Writing, Many Opinions - The making of the Royal Australian Historical Society 1900 to 2001*, Sydney, The Royal Australian Historical Society, 2001, p. 24.
- <sup>3</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Early Days', 1 May 1920, p. 12.
- <sup>4</sup> *Annual Report and Statement of Accounts*, Royal Australian Historical Society, 1920.
- <sup>5</sup> *Catalogue of exhibits: loan exhibition of pictures and objects of historical interest: Art Gallery ... Bridge Street, Sydney, May 25-29, 1920*, Sydney, Royal Australian Historical Society, 1920.



