



ROYAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY SUMMER & AUTUMN 2026 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Book online at <https://www.rahs.org.au/rahs-events/> or call us on (02) 9247 8001

Date	Time	Event	Presenter	Member	Guest
FEBRUARY					
Wed 4	1pm – 2pm	RAHS Day Lecture – <i>What You Didn't Know About the Letters of Rachel Henning</i>	Angela Phippen	Free	Free
MARCH					
Wed 4	1pm – 2pm	RAHS Day Lecture – <i>The Last Tour: Paul and Eslanda Robeson's Visit to Australia and New Zealand</i>	Ann Curthoys	Free	Free
Fri 6	1pm – 2pm	RAHS Special Lecture – <i>Rock and Tempest: Surviving Cyclone Tracy and its Aftermath</i>	Patricia Collins	Free	Free
APRIL					
Wed 1	1pm – 2pm	RAHS Day Lecture – <i>Saffron Incorporated: The first King of the Cross and fifty years of sex, murder, music and mayhem</i>	Stuart Coupe	Free	Free
Tue 14	6pm – 8pm	RAHS Annual General Meeting			
Thu 16	1pm – 2pm	RAHS Special Lecture – <i>Eirene Mort and Nora Weston, artist and artisan: Sixty years of collaboration</i>	Sylvia Martin	Free	Free
Wed 29	11am – 1pm	RAHS-WEA Workshop – <i>What Lies Beneath: A Deeper Dig into the Archives</i>	Christine Yeats	\$35	\$39
18 April to 18 May		National Trust's Australian Heritage Festival (NSW)			
MAY					
Wed 6	1pm – 2pm	RAHS Day Lecture – <i>Local History, Family History, Personal History, National History: Case studies and the complexity of Australia's European Past</i>	Richard Waterhouse	Free	Free

Unless otherwise stated, all events are hybrid and at History House, 133 Macquarie St, Sydney.
Joint RAHS-WEA events must be booked through WEA Sydney at <https://www.weasydney.com.au>



**RAHS Day Lecture – *What You Didn't Know About the Letters of Rachel Henning*
Wednesday, 4 February 2026, 1 pm – 2 pm at History House (hybrid). Cost: Free**

In 1951–1952, *The Bulletin* published a series of letters written by Rachel Henning covering her experiences coming to and living in Australia, between 1853–1882. They became a publishing phenomenon with multiple subsequent standalone editions. However, only half of her original letters were ever published and those that were had been edited. In this illustrated lecture, Angela Phippen will explain what was edited and why. The lecture is based on Angela's research as a State Library of NSW Visiting Fellow in 2025.

About the speaker:

Angela Phippen has been a professional librarian for over 40 years having worked at the Society of Australian Genealogists and as Local Studies Librarian with City of Ryde Libraries. She has diverse research interests including NSW divorce records; war memorials and honour boards; and the nineteenth-century stained glass artist, pastoralist and surveyor, George Hedgeland – Rachel Henning's brother-in-law.

**RAHS Day Lecture – *The Last Tour: Paul and Eslanda Robeson's Visit to Australia and New Zealand*
Wednesday, 4 March 2026, 1 pm – 2 pm at History House (hybrid). Cost: Free**

Paul Robeson was a celebrated singer, actor, athlete, lawyer, and civil rights activist. In 1960, Paul and his wife, Eslanda, a notable civil rights activist, author, United Nations journalist and anthropologist, finally toured Australia and New Zealand after years of US passport denial. Through their eyes, we see life on the Far Left, the emergence of new forms of Aboriginal and Māori protest, and the reception and influence of African American entertainers in Australia and New Zealand. Ann Curthoys explores why the trip was a success and how it exerted a profound influence both at the time and over future generations.

About the speaker:

Ann Curthoys AM, FASSA, FAHA has written extensively about race, class and gender in Australian history, with an interest in both its British imperial contexts and its American, especially African American, connections. Influenced by her mother's involvement in pro-Aboriginal political activism and her own participation in the 1965 Australian Freedom Ride, Curthoys established the Women's Studies Program at the Australian National University, taught History at the University of Technology Sydney, and later returned to ANU where she became the Manning Clark Chair of History. She is now Professor Emerita at ANU, an honorary professor at the University of Sydney, and is a Member of the Order of Australia (AM).

**RAHS Special Lecture – *Rock and Tempest: Surviving Cyclone Tracy and its Aftermath*
Friday, 6 March 2026, 1 pm – 2 pm at History House (hybrid). Cost: Free**

When Cyclone Tracy flattened Darwin on Christmas Day 1974, it was the worst natural disaster Australians had ever experienced. Stationed in the city with the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service, Patricia Collins not only lived through Tracy but was part of the massive clean-up effort. The experience of living through a terrifying natural disaster is chillingly told as she recounts her own dark hours that Christmas, along with those of her contemporaries. In the days after Tracy, the majority of Darwin's population was evacuated interstate as the Navy's Task Force arrived to clean up and rebuild. In this talk, Patricia Collins will share first-person accounts of the terror and uncertainty as well as courage and survival. It is a fascinating and moving story.

About the speaker:

Patricia Collins was a member of the WRANS, the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service, based at HMAS *Coonawarra* in Darwin when Cyclone Tracy destroyed the city on Christmas Eve 1974. Patricia wasn't evacuated but stayed and worked on clean-up duties for months. Patricia wrote the book *Rock and Tempest: Surviving Cyclone Tracy and its Aftermath* in her 60s, to record the achievements of her fellow Navy women and men at that time. *Rock and Tempest*, published by Hachette Australia in 2024, won the Anzac Memorial Trustees Military History Prize in the State Library of NSW History Awards in 2025.

**RAHS Day Lecture – *Saffron Incorporated: The first King of the Cross and fifty years of murder and mayhem*
Wednesday, 1 April 2026, 1 pm – 2 pm at History House (hybrid). Cost: Free**

Wherever you find entertainers performing in neon-lit pubs and clubs, chances are you will find a wannabe gangster or two hanging around. Selling sex and drugs has always been a way to make a fast buck. Abe Saffron figured all this out very quickly. He was a chancer who kickstarted his criminal career SP bookmaking and receiving stolen goods. While he earned himself a quid or two, he wanted much more, and he was ruthless enough to seize any moment to get it ... no matter what he had to do. In *Saffron Incorporated*, music industry legend Stuart Coupe shows how showbusiness and the underworld are intrinsically linked, and how the original King of the Cross lay the foundations for more than fifty years of intrigue, murder and mayhem.

About the speaker:

Stuart Coupe is an author, music commentator, independent artist publicist and radio broadcaster who has been involved with music all his life. Amongst the books he has written, edited or collaborated on are *The New Music* (1980), *The New Rock 'n' Roll* (1983), *The Promoters* (2003), *Gudinski* (2015), *Tex* (2017), *Roadies* (2018) and *Paul Kelly, the Man, the Music and the Life In Between* (2021), which was shortlisted for Biography Book of the Year at the Australian Book Industry Awards.

**RAHS Day Lecture – *Eirene Mort and Nora Weston, artist and artisan: Sixty Years of Collaboration*
Thursday, 16 April 2026, 1 pm – 2 pm at History House (hybrid). Cost: Free**

In *Double Act*, art and design meet social history and queer history. Two Australian 'New Women' met in 1906 and shared an artist studio in Sydney. Eirene's skills as artist, designer, etcher, potter and needleworker were complemented by Nora's in metalwork, woodcarving and carpentry. Founding members of the Arts and Crafts Society NSW, they designed their own house and studio in Vaucluse.

About the speaker:

Dr Sylvia Martin is the author of five biographies of women who have been neglected in Australian cultural history. *Ida Leeson: A life* was awarded the 2008 Magarey Medal for Biography and was shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Literary Award and the Nita B Kibble Award. A book of memoir essays, *Sky Swimming*, was published in 2020, and her 2026 biography is *Double Act: Eirene Mort and Nora Kate Weston*.

RAHS-WEA Workshop – *What Lies Beneath: A Deeper Dig into the Archives*

Wednesday, 29 April 2026, 11 am – 1 pm at History House (hybrid)

Cost: RAHS Members \$35 | Non-Members \$39

Bookings through WEA Sydney: (02) 9264 2781 or <https://www.weasydney.com.au/course/RAHS26.01>

This course will offer practical guidance on how to unlock the rich resources of the NSW State Archives Collection using a selection of case studies. The session will highlight strategies for navigating and interpreting archival records, focusing on stories of individuals, communities, and institutions. Participants will learn how to combine traditional archival research with online tools and resources such as Ancestry and Find my Past, gaining insights into records ranging from immigration and convict history to land, education, and family life. The presentation will empower researchers to confidently trace and contextualise the past.

About the speaker:

Christine Yeats is an archivist and historical researcher with 35 years' experience, including senior roles at State Records NSW (now Museums of History NSW). She managed access to the State's archives, outreach, and public programs until her retirement in 2012. A past President of both the RAHS and the FAHS, she is also a member of the Australian Dictionary of Biography's Revision Sub-Committee. In 2023, she was awarded a RAHS Fellowship for her outstanding contributions to Australian history.

RAHS Day Lecture – *Local History, Family History, Personal History, National History: Case studies and the complexity of Australia's European Past*

Wednesday, 6 May 2026, 1 pm – 2 pm at History House (hybrid). Cost: Free

This presentation will explore how these four historical approaches can be combined to establish more complex understandings not only of the history of individual families but also of the histories of localities and the nation. To illustrate these arguments, I will present four examples.

The first focuses on the Entwistle family, including Martha and her son William, both convicted of forgery, who arrived in NSW as convicts and succeeded in creating new lives for themselves and their families. The second deals with William and Mary Susannah Waterhouse, respectable citizens of nineteenth-century Grafton, who lived with a deeply buried secret – they were not married, and their two children's real father was a man Susannah had abandoned in Melbourne. The third example focuses on Earle Waterhouse, a Mudgee schoolteacher who joined the RAAF in World War II and rose to the rank of Squadron Leader. Although he experienced a series of major traumas during the war, he also made a significant contribution to Allied success in the Pacific through his role in organising all Allied mine-laying missions in the period from June 1944 through to the end of the war. His life is a case study in the enduring cost of war.

About the speaker:

Richard Waterhouse is Emeritus Professor of History, School of Humanities, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Sydney. He was formerly Bicentennial Professor of Australian History and Head of the School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry. He is the author of six books and more than 70 articles and chapters on aspects of Australian and United States history. His most recent book is *Land of Promise: A history of European Australia through the lives of seven generations of my family* (Kerr Publishing, 2025).

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