



ROYAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WINTER 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 | Friend |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------|--------|--------|
| MAY | | | | | |
| 18 April to 18 May | | National Trust's Australian Heritage Festival (NSW) | | | |
| Fri 15 | 11am – 12pm 1pm – 2pm | RAHS Walking Tour – <i>South Eveleigh</i> <i>Locomotive Workshops</i> | Bronwyn Hanna | \$20 | \$20 |
| JUNE | | | | | |
| Wed 3 | 1pm – 2pm | RAHS Day Lecture – <i>Historical Implications of the Life of Sir Gerard Brennan</i> | Jeff FitzGerald | Free | Free |
| Sat 13 | 10am – 3.40pm | Cowra Regional Seminar – <i>Five Windows into NSW History</i> | Various | \$25 | \$30 |
| Wed 17 | 1pm – 2pm | RAHS Special Lecture – <i>Playtime: A History of Australian Childhood</i> | Emily Gallagher | Free | Free |
| JULY | | | | | |
| Wed 1 | 1pm – 2pm | RAHS Day Lecture – <i>In Arnhem Land with the 'Clever Men': On researching the story of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land of 1948</i> | Martin Thomas | Free | Free |
| Sat 4 | 10am – 3.30pm | Central Coast Seminar – <i>From Classrooms to Courtrooms: Exploring NSW State Archives</i> | Various | \$25 | \$25 |
| Thu 9 | 1pm – 2pm | RAHS Special Lecture – <i>Andrew Fisher: So Much More Than a Prime Minister</i> | David Headon | Free | Free |
| Wed 15 | 11am – 1pm | RAHS-WEA Workshop – <i>Investigating the 'Old Register' and NSW Parliamentary Papers</i> | Carol Liston | \$35 | \$39 |
| Sat 18 | 10am – 3.30pm | Kiama Seminar and History Talk – <i>Building Research Skills and Exploring Local History</i> | Various | \$28 | \$35 |
| AUGUST | | | | | |
| Wed 5 | 1pm – 2pm | RAHS Day Lecture – <i>A.D. Hope: A Poet in History</i> | Susan Lever | Free | Free |
| Wed 19 | 1pm – 2pm | RAHS Special Lecture – <i>Unravelling the story of Elizabeth Fulloon and the Parramatta Female Factory 1824–1827</i> | Heather Garnsey | Free | Free |



AUSTRALIAN
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FAMILY HISTORY
SOCIETY



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SYDNEY



RAHS Day Lecture – *Historical Implications of the Life of Sir Gerard Brennan: The Law’s Good Servant*
Wednesday, 3 June 2026, 1 pm – 2 pm at History House (hybrid). Cost: Free

Sir Gerard Brennan’s life provides a powerful lens through which to view the transformation of Australia during the twentieth century. He joined the High Court in 1981 and in conjunction with the other judges, played a pivotal role in ‘Australianising’ the law – in parallel with the Australia Acts, the republican debate, and a broader search for national identity. This talk focuses on three landmark cases: the Mabo judgment, which rewrote the nation’s relationship with its own past; Marion’s case, in which Brennan enunciated a compelling and profound legal approach to the protection of the dignity of people with disabilities; and the Constitution’s implied protection of political communication – a doctrine that continues to shape Australian public life. His life illustrates how history is often made by conservators, not crusaders.

About the speaker: Jeff FitzGerald obtained an Honours degree in Law from Melbourne University and a PhD in the Sociology of Law from Northwestern University in the USA. He then taught Sociology and Legal Studies at La Trobe University, provided policy advice in the justice and governance areas in the Victorian Premier’s Department, and was Deputy Secretary in the Victorian Attorney-General’s Department. He then spent 10 years as Registrar at the University of Technology Sydney. Following his retirement at the end of 2006, he has acted as a consultant in the area of Higher Education governance and has served as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the AustLII Foundation which provides free online access to legal authorities and writings.

Cowra Regional Seminar – *Five Windows into NSW History*

Saturday, 13 June 2026, 10 am – 3.40 pm at Club Cowra, 101 Brisbane St, Cowra NSW 2794

Cost: RAHS Members \$25 | Non-Members \$30 (includes morning tea, lunch and a coffee/tea station)

Booking online at <https://www.rahs.org.au/shop/tickets-cowra-regional-seminar>

The RAHS and the Cowra Family History Group present a full-day seminar that will delve into five types of collections you can use to explore local and family history. Participants will learn about the Old Register, Apprenticeships and WWI Soldier Settlement records, land records, and NSW Railways.

Carol Liston AO is an Australian historian who specialises in the history of early New South Wales (1788–1860). Her particular interest is the colonial development of the County of Cumberland (Greater Western Sydney), using land records, family history and surviving buildings to document the past.

Christine Yeats FRAHS is an archivist and historical researcher with a strong interest in local and community history. Throughout her long career with State Records NSW, she was committed to improving access to the State’s archives. She continues to advocate for archives, historical literacy, and the preservation of Australia’s documentary heritage through her roles with peak history and heritage organisations.

RAHS Special Lecture – *Playtime: A History of Australian Childhood*

Wednesday, 17 June 2026, 1 pm – 2 pm at History House (hybrid). Cost: Free

Wattle fairies, talking magpies, excursions to the South Pole, unbreakable dolls, flesh-eating monsters, and toddler kings. Is there anywhere the childhood imagination cannot take us? In her recent book *Playtime*, Emily Gallagher explores children’s play and imaginative lives in the half-century before the Second World War. Often overlooked in Australian history, children were a significant demographic group throughout this period, and they deserve to be taken seriously as historical subjects. This lecture will explore some of the creative and surprising ways that young people navigated their changing world. It is a story about young dreamers and aspiring journalists, old schoolrooms and backyard cubbies, war and modernity, and the enduring power of the imagination to defy the routine and powerlessness of everyday life.

About the speaker: Dr Emily Gallagher is a historian at the ANU. She began her career as a teacher in Sydney before deciding to pursue her passion for history and writing in Canberra. *Playtime: A History of Australian Childhood* is her first book. Emily is also a research editor for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and a research fellow on an ARC-funded project writing the first history of grandparenting in Australia.

RAHS Day Lecture – *In Arnhem Land with the ‘Clever Men’: On researching the story of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land of 1948*

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

In this richly illustrated presentation, Martin Thomas tells the story of how he came to write about one of Australia’s most controversial research ventures, the 1948 American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land. Thomas will talk about his own response to some of the deeply unethical practices of the original expedition and the ways in which he worked collaboratively with Indigenous communities to understand how they regarded an expedition that collected thousands of ethnographic objects, natural history specimens, and human remains.

About the speaker: Martin Thomas is Emeritus Professor of History at Australian National University and a scholar of cross-cultural interaction and exchange. He is a broadcaster, occasional filmmaker, essayist, and oral historian. His books include *The Artificial Horizon: Imagining the Blue Mountains*, *The Many Worlds of R.H. Mathews: In search of an Australian anthropologist*, and *Clever Men: How worlds collided on the Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land of 1948*, winner of the 2025 Mark and Evette Moran Nib Literary Award.

Central Coast Regional Seminar – *From Classrooms to Courtrooms: Exploring NSW State Archives*

Saturday, 4 July 2026, 10 am – 3.30 pm at Gosford Lions Community Hall, 3/8 Russel Drysdale St, Gosford

Cost: \$25 (includes morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea)

Booking online at <https://www.rahs.org.au/shop/tickets-central-coast-seminar-2026>

The RAHS and the Central Coast Family History Society will co-host a regional seminar for genealogists, historians, and researchers, covering a range of resources essential to exploring local and family history. Participants will learn how to access and use records from the NSW State Archives Collections, including collections that have recently been digitised. Participants will learn about Education records, the Old Registers 1 to 9, Small Debt Courts, and how to locate and research State Archives on Ancestry.

Carol Liston AO is an Australian historian who specialises in the history of early New South Wales (1788–1860). Her particular interest is the colonial development of the County of Cumberland (Greater Western Sydney), using land records, family history and surviving buildings to document the past.

Christine Yeats FRAHS is an archivist and historical researcher with a strong interest in local and community history. Throughout her long career with State Records NSW, she was committed to improving access to the State’s archives. She continues to advocate for archives, historical literacy, and the preservation of Australia’s documentary heritage through her roles with peak history and heritage organisations.

RAHS Special Lecture – *Andrew Fisher: So Much More Than a Prime Minister*

Thursday, 9 July 2026, 1 pm – 2 pm at History House (hybrid). Cost: Free

The remarkable contribution to Australian political life made by Andrew Fisher, Australia’s fifth Prime Minister, has only just begun to receive a measure of the recognition it deserves. Employed as a pit boy in the Scottish coal mines as a nine-year old, Fisher eventually migrated to Queensland aged 22, in 1885, and shortly after joined the fledgling Queensland Labor Party. While never a charismatic politician, he was liked on both sides of the political divide for his honesty, integrity and unswerving dedication to the attainment of a more just Australia. Prime Minister no less than three times (between 1908 and 1915), and the first Prime Minister to enjoy a majority in both houses of Parliament, his governments legislated on the basis of fairness and acted on a genuine vision for the new Commonwealth.

About the speaker: Professor David Headon AM is a cultural consultant and historian. Formerly Director of the Centre for Australian Cultural Studies, Cultural Adviser to the National Capital Authority and History and Heritage Adviser for the Centenary of Canberra, he is now a Foundation Fellow at the Australian Studies Institute (ANU), a Parliamentary Library Associate and the Canberra Raiders club historian.

RAHS-WEA Course – *Discovering Forgotten Lives: Investigating the ‘Old Register’ and Parliamentary Papers*
Wednesday, 15 July 2026, 11 am – 1 pm at History House (hybrid)

Cost: RAHS Members \$35 | Non-Members \$39. Bookings through WEA Sydney.

Focusing on the Registers of Assignments and Other Legal Instruments alongside NSW Parliamentary Papers, this session highlights the value of official records in reconstructing colonial history. The registers capture key details of land and legal transactions, including parties involved and the nature of agreements. Parliamentary papers extend this perspective, documenting government activity through reports, debates, and formal inquiries. Used together, these sources illuminate both individual lives and institutional processes, helping researchers trace connections between private actions and public policy in the development of NSW.

About the speaker: Carol Liston AO is an Australian historian who specialises in the history of early New South Wales (1788–1860). Her particular interest is the colonial development of the County of Cumberland (Greater Western Sydney), using land records, family history and surviving buildings to document the past.

Kiama Regional Seminar and History Talk – *Building Research Skills and Exploring Local History*
Saturday, 18 July 2026, 10 am – 3 pm at Kiama Library, 7 Railway Parade, Kiama NSW 2533

Cost: Members \$28 | Non-Members \$35 (includes morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea)

Booking online at <https://www.rahs.org.au/shop/tickets-kiama-regional-seminar/>

The RAHS and the Kiama Historical Society presents a seminar combining research skills with local history.

Session A (10.00 am – 1.45 pm) is a research skills seminar designed to support family and local history research. Participants will learn how to: search Trove more effectively; use the Historical Land Records Viewer to research individuals, families and properties; work with early New South Wales colonial records.

Session B (2.00 pm – 3.30 pm) is a local history talk exploring the lives of the Rutter sisters, tracing their journey from the Female Orphan School in Parramatta to their connections with the Kiama and Gerringong.

RAHS Day Lecture – *A.D. Hope: A Poet in History*

Wednesday, 5 August 2026, 1 pm – 2 pm. **Location TBC. Cost: Free**

The poet Alec Derwent Hope (1907–2000) lived for all but seven years of the twentieth century. He was acutely aware of the changes in technology over his lifetime, moving from the horse and cart days of his childhood to seeing the live television relay of a rocket ship reaching the moon on his sixty-second birthday. This paper will trace the way his poetry responded to change, and his growing concern about the way that humans destroy the world around them.

About the speaker: Dr Susan Lever OAM taught literature for many years at the University of New South Wales, Canberra, and she is the author and editor of several books, including *A Question of Commitment: Australian Literature in the Twenty Years after the War*. She became a friend of Alec Hope in the 1980s when she taught at the Australian National University.

RAHS Special Lecture – *Unravelling the story of Elizabeth Fulloon & the Parramatta Female Factory*
Wednesday, 19 August 2026, 1 pm – 2 pm. **Location TBC. Cost: Free**

Described by Governor Darling as ‘a woman of extraordinary bodily strength and energy of character’, Elizabeth Fulloon was a 43-year-old recently widowed mother of five when she arrived in NSW to take up her role as Superintendent of the Parramatta Female Factory. How did the wife of a London schoolmaster become the Factory’s first female Superintendent? How should we remember her time there, and was she really responsible for the infamous 1827 riot?

About the speaker: Heather Garnsey is a direct descendant of Elizabeth Fulloon and published her biography, *Unravelling*, in December 2025. She is an Honorary Member and Fellow of the Society of Australian Genealogists, where she worked for 35 years and was awarded an OAM in 2024 for her service to family history. After retiring in 2020 she is enjoying having more time for her own family history projects.