



ROYAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPRING 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
SEPTEMBER					
Wed 2	1pm – 2pm	RAHS Day Lecture – <i>Discovering Bessie Rischbieth</i>	Michelle Staff	Free	Free
5 – 13 September		NSW History Week – <i>Keeping Stories #HistoryWeek2026</i>			
Wed 9	1pm – 2pm	RAHS Special Lecture – <i>The Many Stories of Dr Mary Booth: Revealing the Life of Federation's Forgotten Feminist</i>	Bruce Scates & Rae Francis	Free	Free
Wed 23	10am – 3.30pm	Southern Highlands Seminar – <i>Researching Local and Family History in Your Community</i>	Various	\$25	\$30
OCTOBER					
Wed 7	1pm – 2pm	RAHS Day Lecture – <i>The Olympia Speedway at Maroubra</i>	Ashley Kingston	Free	Free
Fri 9	10am – 3.10pm	Western Sydney Seminar – <i>Exploring Land Records and Local Government</i>	Carol Liston & Christine Yeats	\$25	\$30
Tue 13	10.30am – 3.30pm	Affiliated Societies Seminar – <i>Successful Grants and Sharing Your Collection</i>	Various	Both Sessions: \$40 / \$20*	
Wed 14	1pm – 2pm	RAHS Special Lecture – <i>Hotels and the Growth of Regional Communities: A View from Kiama, NSW</i>	Tony Gilmour	Free	Free
NOVEMBER					
Wed 4	1pm – 2pm	RAHS Day Lecture – <i>The Rupturing and Rebuilding of the Aboriginal World in Victoria</i>	Richard Broome	Free*	Free*
Sat 7	10.00am – 3.30pm	Moruya Regional Seminar – <i>Researching Local and Family History in Your Community</i>	Various	\$25	\$30
Tues 10	11am – 1pm	RAHS-WEA Workshop – <i>Lives at Work: Discovering NSW History Through Archives</i>	Christine Yeats	\$35*	\$39*
Wed 18	1pm – 2pm	RAHS Special Lecture – <i>In Search of Mick Simmonds: An Aboriginal Family History</i>	Steve Farram	Free*	Free*
DECEMBER					
Wed 2	1pm – 2pm	RAHS Day Lecture – <i>Details forthcoming</i>	TBC	Free*	Free*

Events marked with an asterisk (*) are online only while History House is closed for renovations from 16 October 2026. History House will reopen for events and venue hire in March 2027.



RAHS Day Lecture – *Discovering Bessie Rischbieth***Wednesday, 2 September 2026, 1pm – 2pm at History House (hybrid). Cost: Free**

Bessie Mabel Rischbieth (1874–1967) was many things: a feminist leader, an ardent internationalist, a lifelong theosophist and a global traveller, as well as a wife, aunt and sister. Her name might not be so well known now, but at her peak from the 1910s to the 1940s, she was one of the most significant feminists in the country. This presentation will share some of the key features and events of her long life and will showcase various archival materials that offer insights into the fascinating and sometimes enigmatic character she was.

About the speaker: Dr Michelle Staff is a feminist historian based at the ANU in Canberra/Kamberri. She is the online and outreach manager for the National Centre of Biography and in 2025 received the Hazel Rowley Literary Fellowship in support of her current project, a biography of the Western Australian feminist Bessie Rischbieth. She is also an avid amateur soccer player and dog mum to Billie the cavoodle.

RAHS Special Lecture – *The Many Stories of Dr Mary Booth: Revealing Federation’s Forgotten Feminist***Wednesday, 9 September 2026, 1pm – 2pm at History House (hybrid). Cost: Free**

Mary Booth’s life reads like a compendium of feminist firsts. One of the first women to graduate and practice medicine and amongst the first to run for parliament, she championed infant welfare, shaped the founding rituals of Anzac, fought to protect Sydney’s historic and natural landscape, and established the first Women’s Club in Sydney. This paper will reveal the many stories of her life, retracing her time abroad and her travels across Australia. It will situate ‘Mary’ in time and place, gauge her contribution to the political and social life of the early Commonwealth and assess the legacy she left to both nation and empire.

About the speakers: Rae Frances and Bruce Scates are Emeritus Professors at the Australian National University. Prize-winning authors, they have published widely across a range of genres. Their collaborative biography, *Mary Booth: The Woman who Shaped the Anzac Legend*, has just been published by Melbourne University Press and pioneers new forms of life writing.

Southern Highlands Regional Seminar – *Researching Local and Family History in Your Community***Wednesday, 23 September 2026, 10am – 3.30pm at Exeter Village Hall, 10 Exeter Rd, Exeter NSW 2579****Cost: RAHS Members \$25 | Non-Members \$30 (includes morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea)****Bookings online at <https://www.rahs.org.au/shop/tickets-southern-highlands-seminar/>**

The Royal Australian Historical Society, in partnership with the Bundanoon History Group, present a seminar on using online archives and sources for local and family history. Topics will include Historical Land Records Viewer; Trove for local and family history; NSW State Archives Collection; and NSW Railways Records.

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. Christine is an advocate for archives, historical literacy, and the preservation of Australia’s documentary heritage through her roles with peak history and heritage organisations.

RAHS Day Lecture – *The Olympia Speedway at Maroubra***Wednesday, 7 October 2026, 1pm – 2pm at History House (hybrid). Cost: Free**

The Olympia Speedway at Maroubra (Muru-ora-dial Gadigal) was a grand, ambitious motor racing venue built on untouched swampland in the 1920s. Featuring steep banks and a mile-long track it hosted speed records, endurance races, and notable fatalities, leading to its closure amid safety concerns and debts. The site was later repurposed as a major Housing Commission development called Coral Sea Estate.

About the speaker: Ashley Kingston is Vice President of the Randwick and District Historical Society and Editor of its newsletter. A version of this paper appears in the September 2026 *History* magazine.

Western Sydney Seminar – *Exploring Land Records and Local Government*

Friday, 9 October 2026, 10am – 3.30pm at Western Sydney Records Centre, Kingswood NSW 2747

Cost: RAHS Members \$30 | Non-Members \$35 (includes morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea)

Bookings online at <https://www.rahs.org.au/shop/tickets-western-sydney-seminar-2026/>

The Royal Australian Historical Society, in partnership with the Museums of History NSW, present a seminar on exploring place and local history using land and local government records in the State Archives Collection.

Topics will include Maps and Crown Plans; Valuation Records; Tenure Cards and related Tenure Records; and Accessing Council and Shire Records.

The event includes a guided tour of the Western Sydney Records Centre, offering a rare behind-the-scenes look at the State Archives Collection. As this is a walking tour, a reasonable level of fitness is required.

Affiliated Societies Seminar – *Successful Grants and Sharing Your Collection*

Tuesday, 13 October 2026, 10.30am – 3.30pm at History House and Online

Cost (in-person): Both Sessions \$40 | Session A \$35 | Session B \$15

Cost (online): Both Sessions \$20 | Session A \$15 | Session B \$15

Bookings online at <https://www.rahs.org.au/shop/tickets-affiliated-societies-seminar-2026/>

Join us for a day of practical insights into grant applications and sharing historical collections. Hear directly from experienced grant assessors and learn what makes a strong application, common mistakes to avoid, and how to develop a realistic project plan and budget. Explore practical ways to make your collections more accessible, from copyright and permissions to eHive and AI-assisted transcription. The seminar is designed for members of RAHS Affiliated Societies, as well as anyone interested in applying for grants, developing community history projects, or caring for and sharing a local history collection.

RAHS Special Lecture – *Hotels and Growth in Regional Communities: A View from Kiama, NSW*

Wednesday, 14 October 2026, 1pm – 2pm at History House (hybrid). Cost: Free

From the first regional venues licenced at the start of the nineteenth century to the present day, hotels have shaped local social life and character. Despite the puritanical attitudes of respectable locals, and strict licencing laws, Kiama was once a place of ‘besotted and shameless drunkards’. Moving beyond the usual stories of male settler drinkers, the presentation will also tell of the opportunities for women and Aboriginal people.

About the speaker: Dr Tony Gilmour is Vice President of the Kiama Historical Society and a RAHS Councillor. He escaped from a business career in 2021 and is now a full-time writer. Tony’s recent book, *Rascals and Respectables* (2025), looked at the social history of a south coast community through the lens of the licenced trade. It required many research visits to local drinking haunts.

RAHS Day Lecture – *The Rupturing and Rebuilding of the Aboriginal World in Victoria*

Wednesday, 4 November 2026, 1pm – 2pm, Online via Zoom. Cost: Free

This presentation begins with a brief discussion of the traditional world of First Nations peoples in Victoria through some of their land management techniques to glimpse what was before colonialism. It discusses the rupture of this world by legal, practical and moral claims made by colonisers; by the devastating impact of the frontier and by the colonial policies that followed over 150+ years. It then examines Aboriginal agency and responses to colonisation to this day, focussing on case studies of individuals.

About the speaker: Emeritus Professor Richard Broome AM, FAHA, FRHSV, FAHS taught Australian and Indigenous History at La Trobe University for over three decades, retiring in 2012. He then served on the RHSV Council for twelve years, including six as President. He is currently co-editor of the *Victorian Historical Journal*. Richard is the author/co-author of twenty books, including *Aboriginal Australians: A History since 1788* (5th edition, 2019) and the multi-prize-winning *Aboriginal Victorians: A History since 1800* (2nd edition, 2024). He is currently co-editor of a large multi-team project in Aboriginal History that tells stories of Aboriginal Australia as related by Indigenous communities across the continent, to be published by Routledge in four volumes.

Moruya Regional Seminar – *Researching Local and Family History in Your Community*

Saturday, 7 November 2026, 10am – 3.30pm at Mechanics Institute Hall, 13 Page Street, Moruya NSW 2536

Cost: RAHS Members \$25 | Non-Members \$30 (includes morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea)

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

The Royal Australian Historical Society, in partnership with the Moruya & District Historical Society, present a full-day seminar on using online archives and sources for local and family history.

Topics will include Land Records using the Historical Land Records Viewer; Trove for local and family history; NSW State Archives Collection; and a case study exploring local connections through historical documents.

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.

Kathrine Reynolds specialises in 19th-century migration and criminal history. She holds a BA, MSc, PhD and BCrim, as well as several diplomas in education and languages. Her current focus is on exploring female convicts, especially their criminality in Britain. She is an honorary member of the Department of History, University of Sydney and Department of Criminology, UNE.

RAHS/WEA Workshop – *Lives at Work: Discovering NSW History Through Archives*

Tuesday, 10 November 2026, 11am – 1pm, Online via Zoom

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

Bookings through WEA (02) 9264 2781 or online at <https://www.weasydney.com.au/course/RAHS26.03>

The NSW State Archives holds a rich and diverse range of records relating to occupations and professions, as well as records documenting the working lives of those employed by the colonial and later state governments of New South Wales. These records include registration, apprenticeship and employment records, business and licensing files, public service appointments, court, insolvency and bankruptcy records, hospital and police registers, and immigration documents. Together, these records provide valuable insights into professions, trades, livelihoods, career pathways and everyday working experiences, offering researchers a deeper understanding of individuals, families, communities and the changing nature of work across time.

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 Special Lecture – *In Search of Mick Simmonds: An Aboriginal Family History*

Wednesday, 18 November 2026, 1pm – 2pm, Online via Zoom. Cost: Free

In 1915, my grandfather Mick Simmonds and other children were excluded from Nambucca Heads Primary School because of their Aboriginality. Mick lived and worked with his Aboriginal relatives in inner-city Sydney from the 1920s, eventually owning his own house in Redfern where he and my grandmother lived for the rest of their lives. However, he never told his daughter or his grandchildren about what had happened in 1915. He never told us anything about our Aboriginal heritage. Researching this book has been a journey of discovery.

About the speaker: Steven Farram is senior lecturer in History at Charles Darwin University. He completed his PhD at Charles Darwin University in 2004 on the topic of the political history of West Timor, 1901 to 1967.