



# Royal Australian Historical Society

Knowing your history

2 May 2024

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The Majestic, Katoomba (RAHS Photograph Collection)



Former R.C. Henderson Ltd factory on Randle Street, Surrey Hills (City of Sydney Archives)

## RAHS 2024 Annual General Meeting

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The RAHS held its annual general meeting via Zoom on 16 April, with members joining RAHS Councillors to review the annual and financial reports.

The following motions were passed unanimously:

- Confirmation of the minutes from the previous annual general meeting, held 18 April 2023.
- Adoption of the RAHS Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2023.
- Adoption of the RAHS Financial Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2023.

The 2024 Council nominations were:

- Mark Dunn
- Judith Godden
- Iain Stuart

The RAHS thanks Lynne Allen and Graham Shirley for their contributions during their terms as RAHS Councillors.

The 2024 Council nominations were followed by the President's address, delivered by Dr Iain Stuart. The President gave a short talk on fires on Randle Street, including a blaze in 1927 that impacted the same factory [destroyed by arson in May 2023](#). The talk was an opportunity to delve into the history of Sydney and the impact of changing technologies on the built environment. An article on the three Randle Street fires will appear in an upcoming edition of *History* magazine.

The President also gave an overview of the progress made in reopening History House to the public and the hopes of hosting hybrid meetings and events so that members can attend in person or online. The President highlighted that having to move RAHS activities online during COVID enabled many regional members and others who could not travel to History House to participate in events and meetings for the first time.

After the AGM, the RAHS Special Council meeting was held to elect the RAHS Executive. The 2024–2025 RAHS Executive and Councillors are listed below.

The RAHS Council will promote Australian history on behalf of its members through research, events, publications, and community engagement. We aim to celebrate and preserve the rich mosaic of our shared histories. We look forward to seeing you at History House or an online event in 2024.

## RAHS Council

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**President:** Dr Iain Stuart

**Senior Vice President:** Ms Christine Yeats

**Vice President:** Adjunct Associate Professor Carol Liston AO

**Treasurer:** Dr Kathrine Reynolds

**Executive member:** Dr Mark St Leon

Mrs Judith Dunn OAM  
Dr Mark Dunn  
Dr Judith Godden  
Mr Craig McPherson  
Associate Professor Richard White  
Dr Samuel White  
Ms Alison Wishart

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## Meet our new RAHS Councillors



**Mark Dunn**

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I am very happy to have been appointed as a Councillor for the RAHS at the most recent election in April. I have had a long association with the RAHS as a member and look forward to helping the society during my term on the Council.

I am a professional historian, working as a consultant in the heritage, archaeology and history sector, with projects spanning from local and state government through to histories for individual owners of hotels, houses and everything in between. I have a particular interest in the history of the Hunter

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and published *The Convict Valley* in 2020 on the area.

Over the years I have served as Chair of the Professional Historians Association, President of the History Council of NSW and Deputy Chair of the Heritage Council. I am currently also on the editorial board of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and part of the NSW working party of the ADB. Working with local historical societies and in the collections of the RAHS has always been important in my work and I look forward to meeting members and promoting the collections to other historians.

Mark Dunn

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**Judith Godden**

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This is to introduce myself as one of the newly elected Councillors. I've been a member of the RAHS since 1989 and am delighted to now join its excellent team. I have a PhD in history and have worked in various settings as a professional historian and, for over twenty years, as an academic at the University of Sydney. The chief focus of my work during my time at Sydney



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Australian College of Nursing. I have published widely on a variety of topics.

Ever since my first book, about nurse Lucy Osburn, I have had a special love for researching historical biography. My present research focus involves a multi-pronged family history project with, among other outcomes, a major website and an article in the June *History* magazine.

I deeply appreciate the support that historical organisations give their members and their role promoting history to the wider community. I have contributed to numerous such organisations at a committee and executive level. Among the experience I bring to the RAHS is as an Honorary Life Member and former President of the Australian and New Zealand Society of the History of Medicine. One of my aims as a RAHS Councillor is to support the ties between the RAHS and local societies. This focus stems from membership of the Ryde District Historical Society (of which I'm a Patron) and the Ku-ring-gai Historical Society (of which I'm Secretary). As well, I hope that my earlier years living in rural NSW will help my awareness of the needs of all our members outside Sydney. For more information, please see [judithgodden.com.au/](http://judithgodden.com.au/)

Judith Godden

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# Coming to terms with the past?

Identifying barriers and enablers to truth-telling and strategies to promote historical acceptance



## Coming to terms with the past? Identifying barriers and enablers to truth-telling

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The Uluru Statement from the Heart calls for Voice, Treaty, and Truth. It is the last of these calls to action that is the focus of a new research report by historians Dr Anne Maree Payne and Prof Heidi Norman, and commissioned by Reconciliation Australia: [Coming to terms with the past? Identifying barriers and enablers to truth-telling and strategies to promote historical acceptance.](#)

The report's key findings show that truth-telling must be led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities; it should engage with First Nations' perspectives; recognise the continuing impact of the past on their lives, while also recognising their resilience and survival; be ongoing and not a 'one-off' activity; and aim to achieve change at a structural, institutional or personal level.

The report identified barriers to and enablers of truth-telling in Australia. Concerns over trauma, cultural sensitivity, and confrontation were key barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, while non-Indigenous people identified a lack of opportunities and uncertainties about how to participate in

education about what truth-telling involves, as well as practical information about where, when and how it will take place. It also shows that truth-telling processes must establish trauma-informed, culturally safe protocols.

You can read [the report or a summary](#) on the Reconciliation Australia website.

The authors have also published an article on [The Conversation](#).

## Vale



### **Emerita Professor Lyndall Ryan AM, FAHA**

We are very saddened to hear of the passing of Professor Lyndall Ryan on 30 April 2024. Prof. Ryan will be remembered for her extensive work on frontier violence and massacres of Aboriginal people.

[Read Ann Curthoys' obituary in \*The Guardian\*.](#)



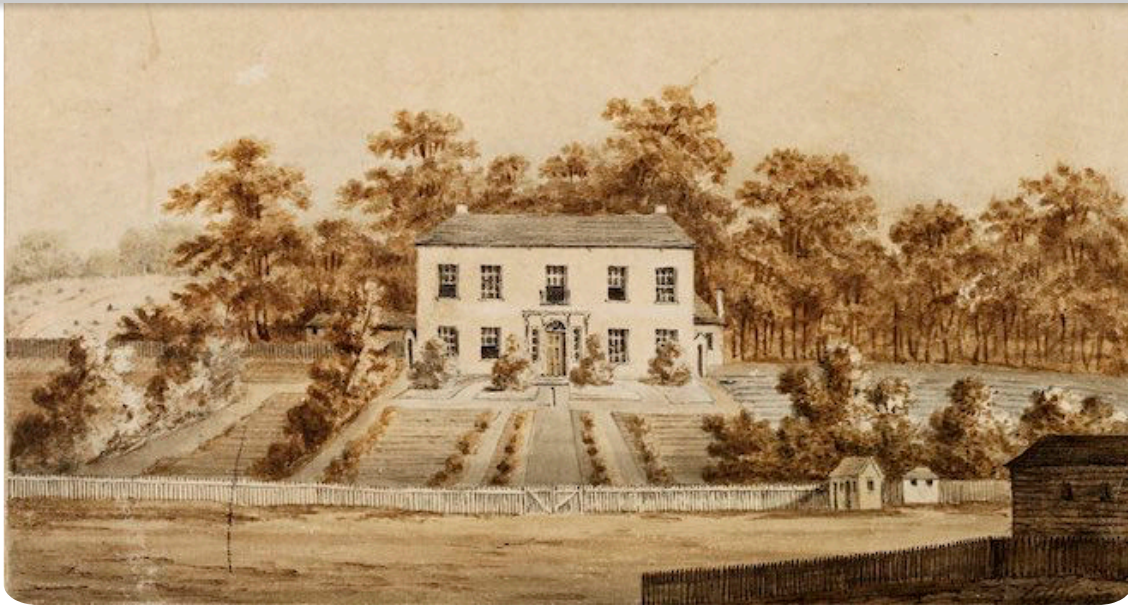
### **Dr Peter Orlovich**

We are very saddened to hear of the passing of Dr Peter Orlovich on 17 April 2024. Dr Orlovich was an integral member of the NSW Geographical Names Board since its inception in 1966, including playing a vital role in the Anzac Memorial Place Names Project.

[Read Karin Brennan's obituary on the Australian Society of Archivist's website.](#)

## RAHS Digital News





Government House, Parramatta, 1805 (Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW)

## Garden Design Using Australian Plants: A History

### Presented by Stuart Read

Landscape historian Stuart Read was our guest speaker for our monthly lecture series in September 2023. In his talk, Stuart discussed the history of Australian garden design using native plants, including waves of fashions (it didn't just start in the 1960s), players who were influential, and examples of gardens that remain so. You will be surprised to learn how early and how widely native plants were used! [You can now catch up on the recording on YouTube!](#)

## RAHS Events



Central Railway Station (RAHS Postcard Collection)

**RAHS-ARHS/WEA Workshop**  
**The Role of Railways in the Progress of NSW**

**Speaker:** James Dalton.

**When:** Thursday, 16 May 2024 at 11.00 am.

**Where:** Online via Zoom.

**Cost:** RAHS Members \$35 | Non-members \$39.

Railways are often overlooked for the significant role they played in the development of NSW and Australia. Most of us have some association or connection to railways, even if it is just to get to and from work. But did you know that since 1855, railways have shaped our society's economic, social, technological, industrial, and political development? This presentation will explore this story's significance to citizens and their families.

[BUY TICKETS](#)



**NATIONAL**  
**ARCHAEOLOGY WEEK**





Excavations at the Parramatta Metro Site (Image Supplied)

**RAHS/National Archaeology Week**  
**Bricks, Bottles and Bones:**  
**Historical Archaeology at the Parramatta Metro Site**

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**Speaker:** Abi Cryerhall.

**When:** Wednesday, 22 May 2024 at 6.00 pm.

**Where:** History House, 133 Macquarie St, Sydney NSW 2000.

**Cost:** RAHS Members \$12 | Non-members \$15.

Archaeological excavations at the new Parramatta metro station site commenced in 2022 and is being undertaken in stages through to the end of 2025. Comprising almost an entire city block in the heart of the CBD, the excavations so far have revealed evidence of environmental change, significant Aboriginal archaeology including contact-period artefacts, two convict huts, multiple phases of 19th-century domestic occupation, and local manufacturers and businesses. Post-excavation analysis is in its early stages, this talk explores some of the preliminary findings and artefacts from the site.

**BUY TICKETS**



Source: Hunter Living Histories

**RAHS Day Lecture**  
**Awabakal and Nikkin:**  
**Reconnecting histories of First Peoples, coal and colonists**

**Speaker:** Julie McIntyre.

**When:** Wednesday, 5 June 2024 at 1.00 pm.

**Where:** Online via Zoom.

**Cost:** Free.

In the late 1790s colonists encountered exposed coal measures along the 35-kilometre stretch of coastal cliffs from Newcastle's Nobby's Head to Catherine Hill Bay near Lake Macquarie. Geologist Edgeworth David later declared this extensive carbon-rich strata to be 'probably the finest of its kind in the whole world.' As this paper discusses, the prevalence of visible coal seams means it is no surprise that Awabakal people of the region named, used and traded bituminous, heat-softened, tar-like nikkin (coal).

RESERVE TICKETS

**Affiliated Societies News**

**Federation of Australian Historical Societies**



The latest [FAHS eBulletin](#) is now available online.

The bulletin covers events around the country including nominations to the Australian Memory of the World Register, digitisation, strategic plans, networking, visits to historic homes, and news from historical societies.

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## Friends of Callan Park



### Callan Park's Veterans: A Century of Connections

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Presented for the National Trust Heritage Festival, an outdoor (24/7) historic exhibition called *[Callan Park's Veterans: A Century of Connections](#)* is installed at three locations within Callan Park: the 1925 Callan Park War Memorial, designed by the siblings Raymond and Eileen McGrath, who have connections to the ANZAC Memorial; the 1931 Sydney Harbour Bridge War Memorial, designed by Douglas Grant; and Broughton Hall.

Callan Park and Broughton Hall became military hospitals during WWI – #28 and #13 Australian Auxiliary Hospitals, respectively, beginning a century of veteran care, and an enormous investment in infrastructure and services by the Repatriation Department.

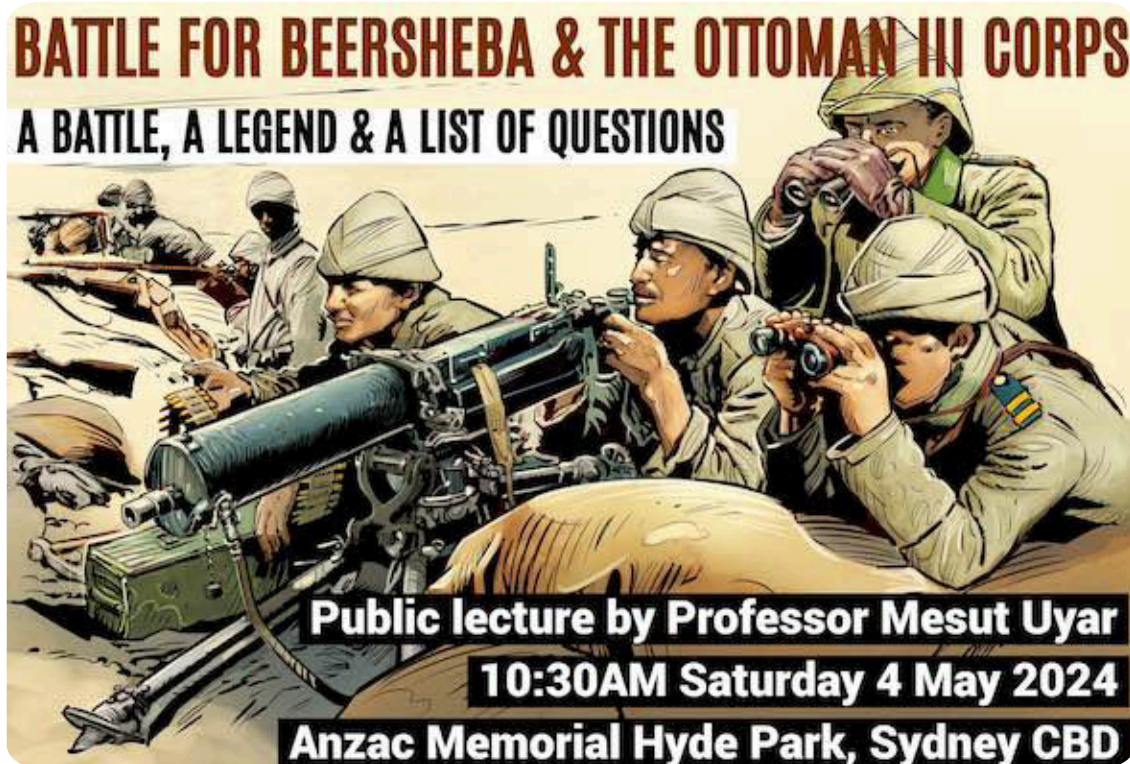
Today all memories of Anzac Day or Remembrance Day services at Callan Park have vanished, yet a new and deeply significant form of remembrance has



reflect upon the impact of war.

Contact Friends of Callan Park: [focp.admin@gmail.com](mailto:focp.admin@gmail.com).

### Military History Society of NSW



### Battle for Beersheba and the Ottoman III Corps

Although the centenary passed years ago, public interest in the Beersheba Battle (31 October 1917) is high in Australia. New titles appear frequently, and library shelves are moaning under the weight of them. But most of these works are just repeating well-established discourses and focus on the Australian Light Horse at the expense of others. More British Territorial soldiers fought in the battle than Australian Light horsemen and they did most of the killing and dying. It is no wonder that the Ottomans are mostly absent from this story telling if even the British are denied their rightful place. In most modern accounts, Ottoman troops have been described as passive defenders, only reacting to Australian actions and nothing more.

This lecture is an attempt to tell and describe what happened 'on the other side of the hill' and answer some of the resilient questions by putting the battle into the context of the Palestine Campaign and WW1 as a whole. The Beersheba Battle was part of a series of battles fought on a secondary front of a global



India, Egypt (labourers) and even Pacific and Caribbean islands. The Ottoman units were composed of not only Turks but also Arabs, Kurds, Circassians, Albanians and other nationalities. Because WW1 was a giant struggle between two alliances, the Germans and Austro-Hungarians, though in small numbers, played roles. The French wanted to take part, but for imperialistic reasons the British tried to minimise their contribution. This was not a battle between two nations, Australians against Turks, but between two large multinational empires which were, at the same time, members of great alliances.

**When:** Saturday, 4 May 2024 at 10.30 am.

**Where:** The Auditorium, Anzac Memorial Hyde Park.

**Admission:** Free, but a donation is appreciated.

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### Mosman Historical Society



Front Entrance, Hayden Orpheum Palace, Cremorne, 2024 (David Carment)

### The Orpheum Theatres

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Dr Ian Hoskins will speak about the Orpheum Cinema in Cremorne and its precursor, the North Sydney Orpheum. Both were built by the Virgona family whose patriarch, Angelo, arrived as a boy in Sydney from the Italian island of Salina during the 1880s. The first Orpheum was demolished to make way for

television personality Mike Walsh refurbished it during the 1980s in a manner that maintained the building's heritage and enhanced its commercial viability.

**When:** Wednesday, 8 May 2024 at 7.00 pm.

**Where:** Mosman Library.

**Admission:** Members Free. Visitors \$5 donation.

**RSVP:** Contact [davidcarment@me.com](mailto:davidcarment@me.com) before Monday, 6 May 2024.

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## City of Sydney Historical Association



Cottage in Francis Street, Darlinghurst, c.1909 (City of Sydney Archives)

## Sydney's Condemnation and Demolition Books

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In this talk, newly appointed City Historian Laila Ellmoos will tell us about the history of the City of Sydney's Condemnation and Demolition Books, a key photographic collection held in the City Archives comprising almost 5,000 photographs and associated glass plate negatives.

The City Building Surveyor's department used photographs to document the city's profound transformation in the first two decades of the 20th century. These photographs inadvertently captured the largely working-class neighbourhoods and people being displaced by commercial and government

The Demolition Books collection formed the basis of an exhibition at Customs House called *Developing Sydney: Capturing Change 1900–1920*. The exhibition, which was on display for 2 years during the Covid-19 pandemic, is available as a virtual exhibition and as a story map. The City Archives is working to digitise the collection and make it available for researchers and casual browsers alike.

**When:** Saturday, 11 May 2024 at 2 pm.

**Where:** Henry Carmichael Theatre, SMSA, 280 Pitt St.

**Admission:** Members \$5. Visitors \$10.

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## Huguenot Society of Australia



### Escape to the Wild and Desolate lands of the Cape: the Le Roux brothers and the Dutch East India Company (VOC)

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**A public lecture by Dorothy Brownrigg  
(La Roux descendent)**

Dorothy will dip into some history of the Netherlands, examining the reasons why many Huguenots escaped France via this corridor of safety and support. The tale of her relatives escaping to the Cape in the 1680s is about being in the right place at the right time – or was it the wrong place?



**Where:** Gordon Baptist Church Hall, Park Ave, Gordon near Gordon Railway Station. Parking Available.

**Admission:** All are welcome. Free entrance. Afternoon tea will be served.

**More information:** Contact Robert Nash, [ozhug85@gmail.com](mailto:ozhug85@gmail.com).

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## St George Historical Society



## Lydham Hall Historic House and Museum Reopens

One of the oldest homes in the St George area has reopened to the public. The NSW State Heritage-listed Lydham Hall is a sandstone villa built in the Victorian era. The home contains a unique collection of heritage items.

After a stroll through the museum, relax on the verandah with freshly baked scones and a pot of Twinings tea in vintage cups and saucers, whilst the kids play old fashioned games on the lawn.

The museum is open on the first Sunday of the month from 10 am to 4 pm. Lydham Hall is also open for group tours and venue hire.

**When:** Sunday, 2 June 2024 from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm.

**Where:** Lydham Hall, 18 Lydham Ave, Rockdale.

## Combined Cemeteries Meeting

### *Combined Cemeteries Meeting*

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May, 2024 ~ 1pm-3pm**

*Linnwood House, 25 Byron Road, Guildford*

Parking available in grounds of Linnwood House



Photo: courtesy Kulsingoor Cemetery Office

*Guest Speaker*

***Dr. Lisa Murray***

Presenting

***Cemeteries of the  
Sunshine Coast  
Queensland.***

Dr Lisa Murray is a professional historian specialising in archival research, and social, urban, public and oral history. She is the award-winning author of *Sydney Cemeteries: A Field Guide* (NewSouth Publishing, 2016) and is a member of the National Trust (NSW) Cemeteries Conservation Committee.

During 2023-24 she has been the Historian-in-Residence at the Sunshine Coast Council, researching the history of the district's cemeteries. Hear about Lisa's latest research and insight into common themes and unique qualities of Australian cemeteries, including landscape design, monument styles and regional stonemasons. Lisa's research illuminates the administrative challenges, fundraising and cultural practices encountered by the community trustees who cared for the cemeteries on the Sunshine Coast.

Afternoon tea will be served following the talk.

***All Welcome – Enquiries 0408 234 002***

Contributions to afternoon tea would be appreciated.





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WEDNESDAY 22 MAY 2024 • 6PM - 10PM

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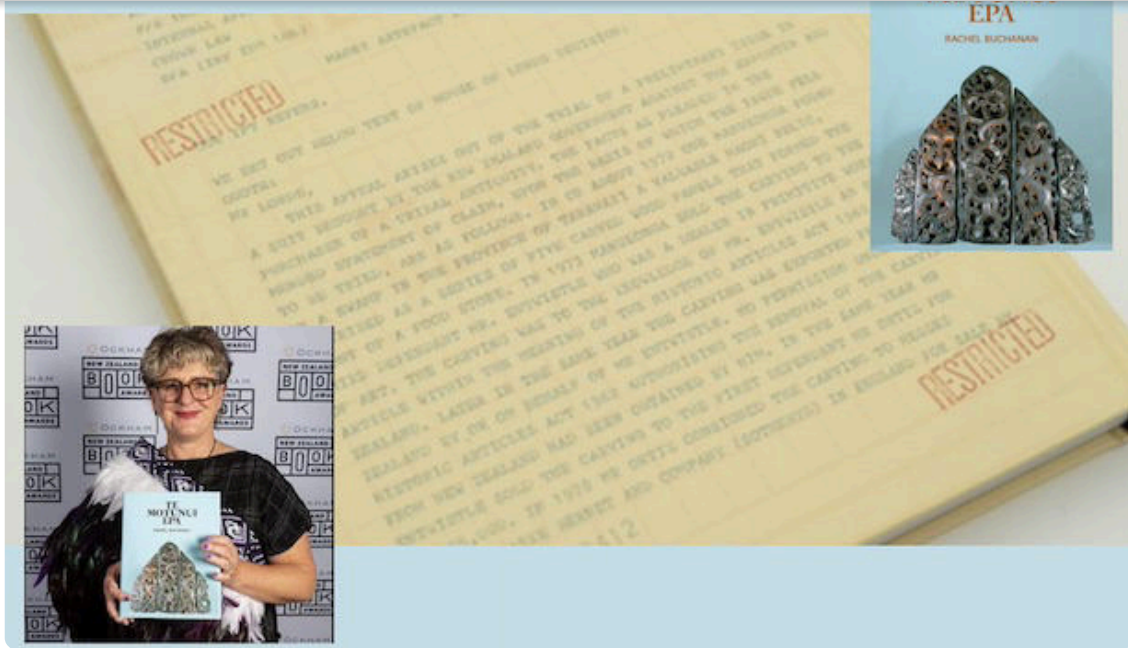
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## 2024 Wilson History Oration

### Out of the Straight-Jacket: The art of anti-colonial history An oration by Dr Rachel Buchanan

From swamp to chateau to the House of Lords, as Dr Rachel Buchanan researched the wild, globetrotting journey of five magnificent 17th-century carvings made by ancestors in Taranaki, she also received an education in the art of anti-colonial history. Through wānanga and discussions with the Hon. Mahara Okeroa and other mentors, Rachel learned how to escape the straight-jacket of historical facts and write a story that is closer to the truth of ongoing tino rangatiratanga – or sovereignty – for Taranaki.

Dr Rachel Buchanan (Taranaki, Te Ātiawa) is a Māori historian who is a manuhiri (guest) on Bunurong land in Naarm-Melbourne. Rachel's most recent book, Te Motunui Epa was a co-winner of the 2023 Ernest Scott Prize for History for distinguished historical writing that contributes to the history of Australia or New Zealand and the 2023 W H Oliver Prize for the best book on any aspect of New Zealand history.

**When:** Thursday, 13 June 2024 at 6 pm AEST.

**Where:** Online. [More info.](#)



### **Mascot's Miracle:**

### **The 1971 airliner collision that nearly took 240 lives**

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**Bayside Libraries, in conjunction with the Botany Historical Trust, invites you to a local history talk by Dr Peter Hobbins**

In 1971 two jet airliners collided at Kingsford Smith Airport in Mascot. They came within 3 metres of a major impact that threatened the lives of all 240 people aboard the TAA Boeing 727 and CP Air McDonnell Douglas DC-8. Two further accidents were also only narrowly avoided in the next 5 minutes. How could this happen at Australia's main airport and who was to blame? And what did it have to do with the adoption of the 'black boxes' that now routinely assist with accident investigations? This story shows how local history can have international consequences.

Dr Peter Hobbins leads the exhibitions, curatorial, library and publications teams at the Australian National Maritime Museum. He is a historian of science, technology and medicine who studies calamities such as pandemics, shipwrecks and aircraft accidents. Peter is also a passionate advocate for community history, jointly winning Bayside Council's 2023 Ron Rathbone Local History Competition with his account of the 1971 airliner collision.

**When:** Saturday, 11 May 2024 at 10 am (followed by morning tea).

**Where:** Mascot Library, 2 Hatfield St, Mascot.

**RSVP:** [Cate.Kloos@bayside.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Cate.Kloos@bayside.nsw.gov.au) or [reserve a ticket](#) by 8 May.

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**Constant Guardian, Changing Times:  
The Supreme Court of New South Wales 1824–2024**

The Supreme Court of New South Wales officially launched its bicentenary history, *Constant Guardian, Changing Times*, on 3 April.

Since the Third Charter of Justice proclaimed its existence in 1824, the Supreme Court of New South Wales is a remarkably adaptive yet enduring monument to Australia's legal, democratic and economic wellbeing.

From colonial beginnings to export economy to global commercial and criminal litigation hub, *Constant Guardian, Changing Times* traces New South Wales' sometimes turbulent evolution through key trials, constitutional change, governance power struggles and shifting society mores. Throughout, the Supreme Court has remained a bastion of institutional integrity upon which the state justice system relies.

Immaculately researched, richly illustrated, and occasionally controversial – this bicentenary history is guaranteed to reward readers who want to understand the foundational importance of civic infrastructure in 21st-century democratic society.

[Available online](#). Orders can be click-and-collected from the Supreme Court, the Bar Association and the Law Society to save on postage.



## Celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Caroline Simpson Library

The Caroline Simpson Library began as the Lyndhurst Conservation Resource Centre in 1984. It was renamed in 2004 in recognition of the extraordinary cultural gift donated by the children of Caroline Simpson OAM (1930–2003) to the Historic Houses Trust of NSW (now Museums of History NSW). The gift included furniture, artworks, books and decorative arts from their mother's collection, along with an endowment for the library. A keen collector, Caroline had a passion for colonial history and heritage and an eye for rare and significant material.

This display draws from Caroline's collection of objects related to the incredible voyage of Rose de Freycinet (1794–1832) aboard the French scientific vessel *Uranie* in 1817–20. It offers just a glimpse of the breadth and importance of the objects acquired by one of Australia's great collectors.

### Details:

Caroline Simpson Library, The Mint.

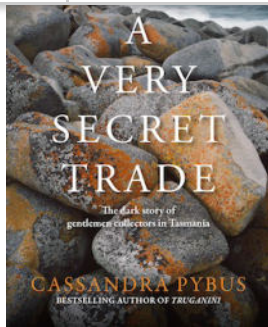
Tuesday–Friday, 10 am–4 pm, free entry.

The exhibition is open until 12 July 2024.

For more information, [visit the website](#).

## Other News





In *A Very Secret Trade*, Cassandra Pybus reveals how European collectors and curators, including eminent figures such as colonial governors, politicians, and British intellectuals like Sir Joseph Banks and Professor Thomas Huxley, sought exotic Tasmanian specimens like thylacine and platypus skeletons. This pursuit extended to human exhibits, driven by a belief in the uniqueness and possible extinction of the indigenous people. The book uncovers a disturbing conflict of interest among those responsible for protecting the indigenous population.

This compelling narrative not only offers a deep dive into a little-known aspect of history but also raises important questions about the intersection of science, ethics, and colonialism.

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### Book Giveaway

The RAHS has a copy of *A Very Secret Trade* to give away. To enter the draw to win a copy, email [history@rahs.org.au](mailto:history@rahs.org.au) with the correct answer to the below question before 12 pm on 9 May 2024.

What was the name of the historian who wrote about the Tasmanian Black War in 1870? Hint: He transcribed early Australian source material for the NSW government between 1887 and 1902.

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## 28th Annual Mander Jones Awards – Publications

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Nominations for the Australian Society of Archivists' 28th annual *Mander Jones Awards – Publications* are currently open. These awards recognise excellence in publications relating to archives and recordkeeping.

[Category 2B](#) may be of particular interest to Historians. 2B is an award for the best publication that uses, features or interprets Australian archives, written or edited by a person in their own right. Examples of works that might be nominated include history monographs, essays or articles that feature the use and interpretation of archives. There are **eight categories** overall available for nomination.

Nominations can be submitted via our online form. Works published in 2023 are eligible for nomination. **Nominations close Friday, 10 May 2024.**

You can find full details about the [Mander Jones Awards – Publications](#) on our website, including category information and nomination forms.

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Kiama (RAHS Photograph Collection)

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## The Royal Australian Historical Society

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