



Historical Society Matters

The newsletter of the Federation of Australian Historical Societies



History and heritage news from around Australia

From the President

Welcome to 2025 and the 'new look' FAHS newsletter with new title, *Historical Society Matters*, as voted by your FAHS representatives from each State and Territory.

The FAHS Council thanks all of you for your work in researching, preserving and promoting Australia's history and heritage. The Council is always interested to know and share the best of what is happening nationally: to celebrate society achievements and learn of strategies to address challenges. There are no borders in the wider Australian history and heritage movement; what we do and value can only be strengthened and more likely secured for the future when we work together.

Note the new title. This edition contains many 'matters' relevant to societies nationally. At grass-roots, your historical society 'matters' and, as the FAHS badges in the banner declare, 'history matters' overall.

Within this edition are histories of Canberra's preliminary development as Federal Capital, Tasmania's Cascade Brewery and environs, Victoria's Yarra River as depicted by artists and writers; and Queensland's bi-centenary settlement commemorations at Redcliffe on the Brisbane River. The histories of each State and

Territory are fascinating for their different environments and climates, yet similarities of 'experience' can be found across the accounts.

Other articles provide models for success and outline remarkable achievements. The Northern Territory has achieved an enviable publishing milestone through clever partnerships and flexible approaches; South Australians are supported by, and enthusiastically and creatively, take up grants to help facilitate research, publications, collection care, exhibitions and digital projects; and, New South Wales and Western Australia have worked methodically through major decisions with regard to their premises while impressively sustaining full complements of events, publications and member supports. The reports embrace Indigenous peoples, places and perspectives as well as environmental perspectives and attentions to inclusive language.

There is much within from which we can all learn. And the bulk of the successes have been achieved by volunteers and hard-working staff; people such as you.

Thinking also of great achievers, but with much sadness, the Federation of Australian Historical Societies notes the passing of two excellent contributors to

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[FAHS Facebook page](#)

The Federation of Australian Historical Societies acknowledges that the nation of Australia boasts the longest living culture and heritage of any part of the world. We pay tribute to our First Peoples, their heritage and their contribution to our contemporary society. We will endeavour to have First Peoples engage in our historical work and participating as members. We acknowledge the First Peoples as the original custodians of the land on which our societies work and operate.

local and wider Australian history and heritage: Meredith Satchell of South Australia, and Esther Davies OAM, the latter being a long-time member of the FAHS Council and friend to many of its delegates and their societies.

Alongside contributions from each State and Territory, the newsletter contains many new features including links directly to the website and Facebook page of each constituent. For these, FAHS sincerely thanks Craig Proctor for his excellent and creative work. FAHS also sincerely thanks Pauline Hitchins for her work on many bulletins and newsletters in recent years.

This first issue of a new newsletter iteration and reaching, intentionally, a wider readership than previously provides the opportunity to answer questions I, for one, am often asked.

What is FAHS? Who are its members? What does FAHS do? 'About' on the FAHS home page currently offers the following summary:

The Federation of Australian Historical Societies was established in 1977, has eight constituent

members, one in each state and territory, and is the national peak body representing the interests of about 1,000 historical societies and about 100,000 members throughout Australia ...

[Historical society] members provide hundreds of thousands of hours of work to collect documents and images, research and publish history, present public lectures and exhibitions, protect and preserve built and place heritage, collect material objects and exhibit them in museums, and make an invaluable contribution to heritage tourism ...

[The Federation] communicates with government and public officials to inform them about issues affecting historical societies and museums, and to advocate the interests of historical societies and museums. The Federation also provides access to a variety of guides and training materials to assist historical societies.

The websites of FAHS constituents are listed below. Visit them, starting perhaps with constituents you have

never visited (and perhaps in locations you would like to visit), and strengthen your national picture.

Visit also the FAHS website to gain a flavour of its work: <https://www.history.org.au/> (especially the e-newsletters of recent years). *Please note: the website is scheduled for maintenance and updating, and this will happen across 2025. You will be advised as this happens.* You can follow all developments through updates such as this or when the release of each quarterly newsletter is promoted by a link through your constituency. Better still, receive all information directly in your inbox 'free of charge' (being information you are free to share widely) by signing up for e-news: <https://www.history.org.au/enews/>.

FAHS looks forward to strengthening all facets of Australia's local history and heritage movements by learning from and sharing nationally the best of what is being achieved. The people responsible are your constituency's 'peak' or 'umbrella' bodies embraced by FAHS, as well as the local societies to which you belong – and you.

Rosalie Triolo
FAHS President

FAHS Constituents

- Canberra & District Historical Society: <https://www.canberrahistory.org.au/>
- Historical Society of the Northern Territory: <https://www.historicalsocietynt.org.au/>
- History Trust of South Australia: <https://www.history.sa.gov.au/>
- Royal Australian Historical Society: <https://www.rahs.org.au/>
- Royal Historical Society of Queensland: <https://www.queenslandhistory.org/>
- Royal Historical Society of Victoria: <https://www.historyvictoria.org.au/>
- Royal Western Australian Historical Society: <https://histwest.org.au/>
- Tasmanian Historical Research Association: <https://thra.org.au/>

FAHS Office-Bearers

The following people were nominated by FAHS State and Territory constituents and elected at the FAHS Annual General Meeting in October 2024. Across 2025, they will be representing and working for your constituency as well as a stronger Australian history and heritage presence in national contexts.

President and RHSV delegate:

Dr Rosalie Triolo OAM FRHSV

Immediate Past President and RAHS delegate:

Ms Christine Yeats FRAHS

Senior Vice-President and HSNT delegate:

Dr Don Garden OAM FFAHS FRHSV

Junior Vice-President and RHSV delegate:

Ms Margaret Anderson FFAHS

Treasurer and RWAHS delegate:

Mr Nick Drew

Secretary and RHSQ delegate:

Dr Ruth Kerr OAM FFAHS

C&DHS delegate: **Mr Nick Swain**

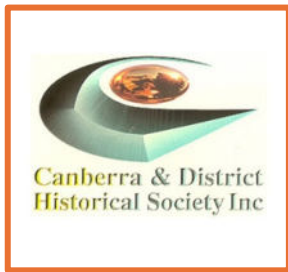
HTSA delegate: **Ms Alice Beale**

RAHS delegate: **Ms Judith Dunn OAM**

RHSQ delegate: **Mr Stephen Sheaffe AM**

RWAHS delegate: **Mr Michael Nind**

THRA delegate: **Ms Caroline Homer**



Throwing Open the City: The First Sale of Leases in the Federal Capital Territory

CDHS Website

CDHS Facebook page

(This article is an abbreviated version of an article published in the *Canberra Historical Journal*, September 2024.)

December 2024 was the centenary of the opening of Australia's emerging Federal Capital to private development – an historic step in the Capital's evolution. The centenary was commemorated by a partnership of the Canberra & District Historical Society, the National Trust of the ACT and the Kingston and Barton Residents' Group. Several local traders and the local community garden supported the event, and a display of photographs and plans was hosted in the historic building of Winning Appliances.

Some of the attendees included Dawn Waterhouse (née Calthorpe) aged 101 and daughter of one of the first lease sale auctioneers, local Members of the ACT Legislative Assembly and relatives of some of the early business owners. They learned and viewed some of the event's history.

Federal Capital Territory (FCT) land policy

Edmund Barton, the first Prime Minister of Australia, had explained in the House of Representatives in 1901 that the Commonwealth government would retain ownership of all land in the federal area and establish a system of leasehold tenure; there would be no room for

the land speculator. The *Seat of Government (Administration) Act 1910* declared in Section 9 that, 'No Crown Lands in the Territory shall be disposed of for any estate of freehold except in pursuance of some contract entered into before the commencement of this Act'.

By leasing the land and charging rent based on unimproved capital value, governments would, theoretically, be in receipt of a perpetual, ever increasing and reasonably reliable source of revenue. At a time when the Australian population was reluctant to pay for the new capital, Barton claimed that this revenue would be used to pay for the capital's development.



Land Sale on Camp Hill, 12 December 1924. Canberra & District Historical Society

Making Canberra ready

The Federal Capital Advisory Committee (FCAC) prepared a three-stage scheme for the development of Canberra. Stage one involved 'priority being given to fundamental engineering services such as roads, water supply reticulation, sewerage and electric distribution, without which the proper settlement of residential and shopping areas could not be effected'.¹

The sale of leases in the City area needed to be in 1924 after Parliament fixed an approximate date for its transfer to Canberra - 9 May 1927 - with a Royal visit locked in.² The first sod for the Provisional Parliament House was turned on 23 August 1923. Housing and retail services needed to be provided for the expected influx of population accompanying the move, including for the businesspeople who would support that population.

The auction

The first sale of leases in the FCT eventually took place on 12 December 1924. The FCAC selected blocks suitable for leasing by considering the general zoning of the city for various purposes: the sale posters clearly showed blocks allocated for businesses, residential, community use and recreation reserves.

Historian, Frank Brennan, notes that, 'The sale received a surprisingly wide press coverage, most newspapers stressing its historical significance.'³ The government was anxious that people from across Australia should at least be aware of the auction.

The auction site was on Camp Hill, variously described as 'a scorched hillside overlooking the partly erected provisional Parliament House'⁴ and 'in the middle of a bare, windswept plain'.⁵

The key people involved with the auction were: Major CWC Marr, MC, DSO. (Acting Minister for Home and Territories, Nationalist Party Whip and Member for the NSW seat of Parkes); Sir Austin Chapman (Member for Eden-Monaro); Charles Henry Crammond (Auctioneer, Director of Richardson and Wrench, Sydney); William (Bill) George Woodger (a prominent figure in the business and public life of Queanbeyan and Canberra); and, John Henry (Harry) Calthorpe (Founder of Woodger and Calthorpe, stock and station and real estate agents).

Crammond began the sale process with the kind of promotion of the property on offer that you might hear at a modern auction. The 300 buyers had his assurance that in 10 years Canberra would be as large as Goulburn. This prediction was achieved, easily.⁶

As the result of a bidding war between B Young Ltd of Queanbeyan and Henry Ferdinand Halloran, flamboyant property developer of Sydney, the very first block was sold for over three times the reserve price of £650. JB Young Ltd made the winning bid. Halloran's ego-satisfying consolation prize was to secure the lease of the first residential block sold in Canberra.

Such was the import of the occasion that several influential people including the Speaker of the House of Representatives, William Watt, and the Commonwealth Librarian, Kenneth Binns, suggested that the silver inkwell and pen with a gold nib and the ivory mallet be deposited with the National Library. Crammond presented both items in February 1925 to Senator Pearce.

Success of the sale

Contemporary assessments of the first sale considered it to have been a success. The *Sydney Morning*

Herald report began, 'Notwithstanding the fact that the Federal Ministry offered the leaseholds at Canberra earlier than was wise, according to expert advice, the sale to-day was successful'.⁷

The *Queanbeyan Age and Queanbeyan Observer* of 14 December 1924 agreed: 'Highly successful, indeed, was the sale on Friday last ... There was an attendance of about 250 to 300 people, the majority of whom were town and district residents'.

The practicality of the government's land policy was put to the test by implementing an operational leasehold system. Idealism was tempered by reality.

There was mixed success in achieving the government's objectives:

- Business and residential blocks were primarily developed for the intended purposes
- While the leasehold system was designed to discourage speculation, this was not prevented
- People with limited means did not obtain leases. Some capital was needed because of the initial requirement to build on the block
- Only limited housing was provided for public servants by the private sector. The sector could not compete with the comparatively low rental for housing that the government charged its public servants
- There was a reluctance, including among banks, to invest in homes that disbarred potential occupants from ultimate security and the Australian dream: outright ownership⁸
- The very early promotion of the leasehold system claimed it provided a way to develop the national capital with little or no call on the public purse. This did not eventuate.

Concluding thoughts

The phrase 'throwing open the city' did not open floodgates of unfettered private sector development of Australia's new capital. Nevertheless, the private sector was now able to participate directly in the national capital's development.

There was a hard deadline to be met in moving the Seat of Government from Melbourne to Canberra in time for the opening by Royalty of the Provisional Parliament on 9 May 1927. The accompanying influx of new residents needed also to be serviced, and this required some

degree of flexibility. In sum, the 'throwing open' was generally successful: Canberra was now open for business.

Nick Swain
C&DHS Delegate



Celebrating the first sale of Federal Capital Territory leases, 7 December 2024

¹ FCAC, *Construction of Canberra. Final Report*, July 1926 p. 5.

² James Gibbney, *Canberra 1913-1953*, AGPS, Canberra, 1988 pp 120-122.

³ Frank Brennan, *Canberra in Crisis: A History of Land Tenure and Leasehold Administration*, Dalton, Canberra, 1971, p. 79.

⁴ *Argus*, 13 December 1924, in Brennan, p. 79

⁵ James Gibbney, *Calthorpe's Canberra: The Town and Community in 1927*, AGPS, Canberra, 1986, p. 7.

⁶ In 1933 the ACT's population was 30,315 and Goulburn's 19,187. *Australian Historical Population Statistics*. Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2019. 3105.0.65.001.

⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 December 1924, p. 17.

⁸ Nicholas Brown, *A History of Canberra*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2014, p. 73.

Vale Esther Davies OAM,
14/03/1940 – 27/12/2024,
long-time member of the
FAHS Council

(Adapted from the eulogy read at Esther Davies' funeral by Dr Richard Reid, President of the Canberra & District Historical Society, with additional notes by Dr Rosalie Triolo.)

Esther was a shining star for many decades of a long and deeply productive career for the C&DHS. She possessed dignity, insight, and absolute commitment to the task of bringing the wonders and pleasure of the study and presentation of history to all, young and old, locally and nationally.

Esther was a member of the C&DHS from 1977 and there is much evidence of her practical supportive activity in the Society's published and unpublished records. There are references to her organisation of excursions, fund-raiser sales of second-hand books and countless everyday activities requiring significant personal time and effort that may seem mundane but which were essential to the Society's survival.

Esther was on C&DHS's Council for as long as most of us can remember, including four terms as President – 1992-93, 93-94, 94-95 and 2003-04. The role of presidency requires ease with suitable words on public occasions and Esther spoke or wrote with a down-to-earth grace. A review of the Society's annual reports and newsletters provides testimony to her care for, and dedication to, the Society and its objectives.

Esther's work for history extended well beyond C&DHS. As a high school history teacher, she worked tirelessly to stimulate and involve her students in her own passion. She published a short guide to family history as well as co-authored a short history of Canberra for students. Her classroom skill was particularly celebrated at Canberra High School through albums put together by her 1985 Year 10 history class outlining the story of all the individuals on the school's World War II honour board. The project was covered in the *Canberra Times* with a photo of Esther presenting the finished albums to the headmaster.



Esther held other history and education roles. In the early 2000s, she was an active contributor to the AMAGA (then Museums Australia) ACT Education Special Interest Group. She served as President of the ACT History Teachers' Association, and was an ACT contributor to Australia's first attempt at an Australian Curriculum. She was the school archivist at Telopea Park (the ACT's first high school) and helped answer inquiries large and small, take past and present students on tours of the building and collection and manage numerous commemorative events. For the school's centenary, she curated an exhibition in 2023 at the Canberra Museum and Gallery. For many years, she was also an active volunteer at the Australian National Museum of Education at the University of Canberra and, on the basis of her contribution, was made a Life Member in August 2024.

For the Federation of Australian Historical Societies, Esther was a Vice-President as well as ACT delegate for many years. To FAHS, Esther brought the same knowledge, skills and care associated with all facets of ACT local, family and school histories and a commitment to preserving and promoting Australia's history and heritage overall.

Publicly, Esther's enormous contribution was recognised in 2024 by the award of the Medal of the Order of Australia. The basis of the award is expressed in the official citation: *For service to community history, and to education.*

Esther's work 'lives on'.

HSNT Website

HSNT Facebook page

In 2024, the Historical Society of the Northern Territory (HSNT) reached a landmark that seems unlikely to have been bettered by any other Australian historical society - the launch of the 100th book in its publishing program.

Like other larger historical societies around Australia, HSNT publishes books on local history. However, there is 'a difference'; when the program began in earnest in the mid-1980s, little had been published on Northern Territory history. Perhaps Alan Powell's ground-breaking general outline of Territory history (*Far Country: A short history of the Northern Territory*, MUP, 1982) was the catalyst, as manuscripts on particular aspects of Territory history soon began to be submitted for publication.

The publishing program was formally set up by the HSNT Council. An Editor was officially appointed by Council, manuscripts of relevance to Northern Territory history that were unlikely to be published by the larger publishing houses were to be considered, and publishing costs were as far as possible to be met by book sales.

An arrangement was entered into with the then Northern Territory University (NTU) to print the edited manuscripts, and this continues today with NTU's successor, Charles Darwin University. The first HSNT book in the program was published in 1988, with several local historians filling the position of Editor over the years; Baiba Berzins and Peter Loveday, Suzanne Parry, David Carment, Alan Powell and Brian Reid. Only occasionally have manuscripts been rejected.

A significant step took place in 2023 with the re-development of the Society's website: www.historicalsocietynnt.org.au, enabling a more streamlined purchase of books online. The Society has also

A Remarkable Achievement: Historical Society of the Northern Territory Publishes its 100th Book



Author of the 100th HSNT publication, Richard Head, addresses the Alice Springs launch of the book, 2024. Image Brian Reid

entered into an arrangement with the Northern Territory Library for out-of-print or 'no longer selling' books to be uploaded to the Library's digital library, *Territory Stories*, where they are freely available to anyone, globally. So far, the first twenty of the Society's publications have been included.

The Society's one hundredth book on Northern Territory history was printed in early 2024. It is a social history of early Alice Springs by Charles Darwin University Alice Springs Campus sociologist Richard Head. The book was launched in Alice Springs and kindly hosted by the Alice Springs Council library. The event was well attended, mainly by the many senior Alice Springs residents who contributed to the work. The Society was very pleased to publish this book because manuscripts from Alice Springs are only occasionally submitted.

With the publication of the 100th book in 2024, the opportunity was taken to publish a short report on the publishing program in the Society's Journal (*Northern Territory*

Historical Studies, issue number 35, 2024, pp 71-80). The report included as an appendix a full list of the 100 publications. It also included a brief examination of the publication genres. In about one-third of books, 'biography' was the main theme. About one-quarter of books were review works of local history. The next most-numerous category was specific studies, usually by established historians. There were then books dealing primarily with place, World Wars I and II, and Aboriginal history. The report concluded with an outline of two issues the Society will need to consider: the need to look at publishing in digital format as well as hard copy; and, the need to make the Society's publishing program of more relevance to Aboriginal authors.

It would seem that books continue to be of interest despite the plethora of digital entertainments now available. The book publishing program of the HSNT will continue as long as manuscripts continue to be submitted.

Dr Brian Reid FFAHS
HSNT President



History Trust of South Australia – 2024 Grants Wrap Up

[HTSA Website](#)

[HTSA Facebook page](#)

Each year the History Trust of South Australia provides substantial funding across two grant programs: the South Australian History Fund (SAHF), open to almost anyone, and the Museums and Collections (MaC) grant, restricted to members of the MaC program. These grants fund everything from research, publications, collection care, the production of exhibitions, digitisation projects and as of 2024 - podcasts. The overarching aim of the grant programs is to keep building the evidence of South Australia's history and make it accessible to all.

In 2024 the History Trust of South Australia funded 85 grant projects to a total of \$385,647, including 24 in SAHF, 28 in MaC project grants and 33 in MaC small grants. The grant funds supported the building of new displays, generating new knowledge about South Australian history as well as new publications. Some of the highlights from the 2024 grant rounds included:

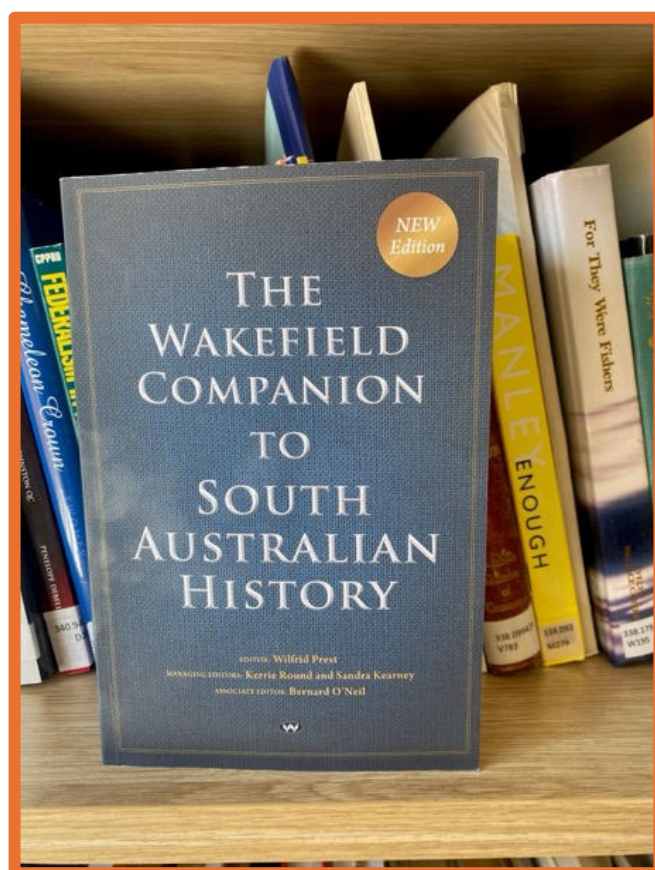
Adelaide Contemporary Experimental receiving \$5000 for a research project investigating the history of women performance artists at the Experimental Art Foundation. This project, titled '*She also performs: Exploring the history of women performance artists at the Experimental Art Foundation*', will culminate in a series of performances for public exhibition in 2025

Dark Before Dawn Productions was awarded \$5000 to support the production of a six-episode podcast series entitled *Man from a Mission* about Wayne Campbell's search to discover the history of his great-great-grandfather, Australia's first Aboriginal stonemason, William McHughes.

Adelaide Holocaust Museum and Andrew Steiner Education Centre won a \$16,200 grant to film oral histories with South Australian Jewish Holocaust survivors. These films will form the beginnings of a digital visual history archive. Content from this project will also become part of the new permanent exhibition for the Adelaide Holocaust Museum due to open in 2025.

New Publications

Several new history publications arrived in 2024 funded also by History Trust of South Australia grants in previous years. We were particularly pleased to see the new edition of *The Wakefield Companion to South Australian History* on shelves. Supported by a substantial 'Investing in History Grant' provided by the History Trust of South Australia, this new edition of *The Wakefield Companion* will quickly become an essential reference like its 2001 forebear.



Wilfrid Prest, Kerrie Round, Sandra Kearney, Bernard O'Neil, *The Wakefield Companion to South Australian History* (new edition), Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 2024

Other important publications supported by the History Trust of South Australia published in 2024 can be found here: [Summer Reading Guide – South Australian History Network](#)

To find out more about the History Trust of South Australia's grants program and to see a list of previous grant recipients, please visit: [Grants | History Trust of South Australia](#)

A selection of titles
funded by HTSA grants



Alice Beale
HTSA Delegate

Vale Meredith Satchell,
02/04/1947 – 08/12/2024

(Adapted from a Facebook tribute by the Regional Council of Goyder, December 2024)

The Regional Council of Goyder joins the Burra community in mourning the sudden loss of Meredith Satchell, a highly respected historian whose passion for preserving and sharing Burra's unique heritage has left an enduring legacy.

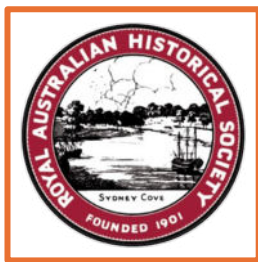
As Chairperson of the Burra History Group, Meredith led significant projects such as the green heritage plaques, authored numerous historical publications, and contributed to the Australian Cornish Mining Sites National Heritage listing as well as the most recent World Heritage Tentative Listing. Her collaborative work with the late Eric Fuss and her dedication to family genealogy research enriched local and national understanding of Burra's past.

Meredith's contributions extended to other significant projects, including the Burra Railway Station and the Burra Town Hall, ensuring these sites remain vital parts of Australia's history. Her meticulous research, publications and volunteer efforts have inspired many and brought history to life for the community.

She was a valued member of Council's Conservation Management Plan Advisory Committee, and her work was recognised at State level in 2024 when she was awarded the prestigious Life-long Historian Award from the History Council of South Australia.

Her absence will be deeply felt, but her contributions will continue to be cherished and celebrated for generations.





2024: A Significant Year for the Royal Australian Historical Society

[RAHS Website](#)

[RAHS Facebook page](#)

2024 marked a significant year for the Royal Australian Historical Society (RAHS). We re-opened our History House building in the middle of the year, following a long closure that began in 2020 due to the COVID lockdown and continued as we prepared for an anticipated building project. The plans for this project, aimed at updating, extending, and improving the heritage-listed History House, had been in the works for many years. However, in 2023, the RAHS Council made the difficult decision to let the development application lapse due to rising construction costs in the post-COVID environment and the challenges of securing funding in the current economic climate. Instead, the Council agreed to focus on a project to conserve and restore the existing building, one of the few remaining original townhouses in Sydney's Macquarie Street.

Despite the closure of the building since 2020, the RAHS continued to offer a full calendar of events and activities, thanks to Zoom and other online platforms. These included lectures, skills-based workshops, seminars, and book launches. While the return of in-person events has since allowed members to reconnect and engage face-to-face, we have maintained our commitment to offering some online lectures and seminars. This ensures accessibility for regional and interstate members, as well as a wider audience. The introduction of online events in 2020 played a

key role in maintaining our membership numbers during the extended closure of the building.

The RAHS Day Lectures, held on the first Wednesday of each month together with the monthly Special Lecture series, offer our members and supporters valuable opportunities for continuous learning and engagement with the Society. The lectures also provide a platform for both emerging and established historians to present on a diverse range of historical topics, enriching participants' understanding of Australian history and heritage. While most lectures are now being held in person, others are being presented online. In-person lectures are generally recorded and shared online via the RAHS YouTube channel.

In 2024, we marked two significant milestones in our events program. We hosted our first in-person event at History House since the COVID closure: a workshop titled *How to Conduct Guided Historical Tours*, presented by RAHS Councillor and delegate to FAHS Judith Dunn. This practical seminar for members and volunteers of historical societies exemplifies the RAHS's commitment to providing practical skills for historical society members.

On 25 September, we hosted our first Evening Lecture since reopening the building. The lecture, delivered by architectural historian Emeritus Professor Miles Lewis AM, FAHA FRSA, PhD, was titled *Portable Buildings: Port Jackson to Darwin* and was



The 2024 RAHS Conference held in the Dharawal Room at the Campbelltown Catholic Club

presented in association with the Australian Institute of Architects.

The RAHS Regional and Western Sydney Seminars, which are delivered in partnership with a range of history and heritage organisations, are an important part of our outreach program. They include skills-based training and local history research elements and are tailored to meet the training needs of local historical societies and community groups. On 2 March 2024, we presented a one-day seminar in collaboration with the Central Coast Family History Society (CCFHS). The theme was *Beyond the Digital Horizon: Trove, Libraries and Archives* and the speakers Christine Yeats FRAHS and Dr Carol Liston AO, FRAHS explored research options in both the digital and non-digital environment. Our ongoing collaborations with organisations such as the CCFHS enable the RAHS to offer engaging and high-quality events to members and to reach broader audiences.

The RAHS Affiliated Societies Committee (ASC) continues to play a vital role in fostering connections and supporting over 350 affiliated societies across NSW. In 2024, the ASC partnered with the RAHS Council, the Campbelltown and Airds Historical Society, and the History House team to deliver the 2024 RAHS Annual Conference, themed *Windows into Local History*. The RAHS Annual Conference remains a major event on the NSW local history calendar, providing invaluable networking and collaboration opportunities for historians, researchers, and members of affiliated societies. It inspires fresh ideas and

strengthens connections to preserve and share the history of NSW.

In 2024, the RAHS produced six publications, including two editions of the *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* and four editions of *History* magazine. The RAHS maintains an active social media presence across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. We now have over 7,000 followers on Facebook, 2,200 on Twitter, and 1,900 on Instagram, while our YouTube channel received over 8,000 views in 2024. The most-watched videos included *Secret and Special: The Untold Story of the Z Special Unit*, *The Shipwreck: The True Story of the Dunbar*, and *Truganini: Journey through the Apocalypse*. Our most popular post on Facebook was a photograph of the Cenotaph in Martin Place, taken circa 1930s, shared on Remembrance Day. Other popular posts included our #TransportTuesday series, featuring transport heritage images from the RAHS collections.

The RAHS is committed to reconciliation through truth-telling, education, and promoting understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories. By supporting respectful engagement with First Nations peoples and encouraging members to explore their own reconciliation journeys, we aim to foster meaningful connections and celebrate the heritage of NSW Aboriginal communities.

In 2024, we marked the centenary of the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association, highlighting its

significance in Aboriginal activism. We promoted events such as the Centenary Forum at the State Library of NSW and shared resources on Aboriginal history, including Professor Grace Karskens' collaborative work on Dyarubbin (Hawkesbury/Nepean River). We also encouraged participation in National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week. Through these efforts, the RAHS advocates for respectful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, recognising their histories as integral to the heritage of our State.

Looking ahead to 2025, the RAHS is set to deliver an exciting program of hybrid events. We will continue to work with affiliated societies and other organisations within the history sector to provide innovative and engaging opportunities for learning and connection.

Christine Yeats
FAHS Immediate Past President,
RAHS Delegate



The Bicentenary Commemorations of the First European Settlement at Redcliffe and on the Brisbane River

[RHSQ Website](#)

[RHSQ Facebook page](#)

In July 1799, Captain Matthew Flinders sailed the tiny sloop, *Norfolk*, up a waterway in Moreton Bay which he named Pumice Stone River; and explored the land for several days, passing through the low-lying swamps of the coastal lands near the sea. On Friday, 26 July 1799, together with two sailors and his Indigenous guide and (hoped for) translator, Bongaree, Flinders climbed Mount Beerburum. It was his map of the northern waters of Moreton Bay which Oxley, in the *Mermaid*, was to use 24 years later in 1823; and to use again when he made the decision to establish the European settlement near Red Cliff Point on 14 September 1824.

Lieutenant John Oxley sailed into Moreton Bay in December 1823 searching for an appropriate place to establish a penal settlement and encountered two ticket-of-leave men near Bribie Island who had landed in Moreton Bay earlier that year. It was his report that led to the establishment of the military outpost at Red Cliff Point. It was a small penal outpost far from Sydney, and eventually it became the foundation of the modern State of Queensland. It was imposed on the lands of the Indigenous people who had lived in the northern littoral of a tidal bay called *Moora*. The European settlement was always considered to be temporary with plans to eventually relocate the settlement up the river.

The Royal Historical Society of Queensland proudly commemorated the bicentenary of the Red Cliff settlement on 7 September 2024 with a very successful conference held in partnership with two local historical societies, History Redcliffe and the Bribie Island Historical Society. Over 230 people attended, and Indigenous history was included in the commemorations. The Redcliffe conference was titled *Wunya ngulum* meaning welcome in the Gubbi Gubbi Language. Papers were delivered on Indigenous life, the impact on Indigenous people of the European settlement, the life of the commandant, Lieutenant Henry Miller, and the lives of convicts and soldiers. The original party belonging to the Europeans consisted of 29 volunteer convicts under the supervision of the 40th Regiment of Foot led by Miller. Descendants of the convicts and the soldiers attended the conference and, especially, of Miller. Fourteen papers were presented including



Pre-Contact 'Moreton Bay' by Gubbi Gubbi, Jiman and UK Australian heritage artist, Maurice Serico. (Used with permission)

papers about the Indigenous people who first occupied the land, and twelve papers were read by title only. They will all be published in 2025.

The European approach to settlement and Indigenous way of life were incomprehensible to each other. The Europeans were ignorant of the Indigenous concept of regional custodianship, and had no concept of Indigenous lore, ceremony or ritual. The Indigenous people had no concept of European lifestyle and the social mores of nineteenth-century British subjects. Unlike European law and custom, Indigenous lore and custom was enduring and not subject to rapid change. Communication was challenging, if not impossible—and the language of each was also incomprehensible to the other.



The Moreton Bay 1988 Bicentenary
John Oxley commemorative plaque

The open-air gaol and tiny military outpost were, thus, established against great odds. Under-resourced and under-supplied, the men, women and children of the settlement - free persons and convicts, alike - endured much. Nevertheless, this outpost community survived and the story of the seven months of the Moreton Bay Settlement at Red Cliff is an integral part of what, after 1859, became the Colony of Queensland and after 1901, the State of Queensland.

The Moreton Bay Settlement at Red Cliff saw many 'firsts'—the first confrontation between Indigenous men and the European expeditioners, and the first European death when Private Felix [Phelim] O'Neil died on 15 March 1824. It witnessed the first European birth. The settlement was the foundation of the military in Queensland and also where European medicine, as we know it today, began in Queensland. It was where agriculture was first attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, but was the foundation of what was to become a huge export industry in the centuries ahead. In November 1824 the settlement was visited by Governor Thomas Brisbane, Justice Francis Forbes, the first Chief Justice of New South Wales, and others.

Unlike the experience of the Indigenous people who had lived in apparent harmony with the land and sea (indeed who had prospered in this, their homeland), this European settlement at Red Cliff was, in many respects, a failure. Significantly, the supply of fresh water was inadequate for the settlement. Within weeks of the landing, there was no medicine for the treatment of the convicts, more than half of whom had become ill. Following its second visit to the settlement in December 1824, the *Amity* did not return for five months, and the supply of goods was also inadequate. The men, women and children of the settlement existed on 'salt meat and field pease'. The sandy soil was poor and there was no manure or fertiliser initially to grow vegetables, let alone the planned 100 acres of maize. The heat and humidity were distressing to the Europeans. There was no suitable timber in the neighbourhood for the building of huts and both timber and grass for thatch (as a substitute for shingles) had to be obtained miles away. Because of the extensive intertidal sandflats, the site was unsuitable as a port. The Indigenous people, not unreasonably, resented the intrusion of the European settlement, and relationships deteriorated to the point of conflict.

A bicentenary is a time to reflect on these facts of history, and to view and interpret them through the lens of twenty-first century analysis. In the twenty-first century, historians no longer speak of 'discovery' of these lands - as those colleagues of Indigenous identity and descent rightly say, "The land was never lost". Thus, this bicentenary had a very different flavour from that of the centenary events of 1924, and those of the sesquicentennial commemorations held in 1974.

Historians of perhaps a more enlightened society also no longer speak of a 'Bicentenary Celebration', rather of a 'Bicentenary Commemoration'. In this latter description, all Australians, those who descend from our First Peoples and those who do not, acknowledge the clash of cultures - each ignorant of the history and heritage of the other - but, as Australians today, share the common history of both.

The settlement at Red Cliff was abandoned in April-May 1825, and soon, the personnel and all material goods had been transposed to the northern banks of the Brisbane River. The Gubbi Gubbi People called the abandoned site, *Humpybong*. A conference is being held in Brisbane on 17 May 2025 to commemorate the bicentenary of the establishment of the settlement on the banks of the Brisbane River.

Stephen Sheaffe
RHSQ delegate



Yarra Birrarung: Artists, Writers and the River

[RHSV Website](#)

[RHSV Facebook page](#)

Yarra Birrarung: Artists, Writers and the River is the current exhibition in the Drill Hall headquarters of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. As the title implies, the exhibition reflects on the ways in which artists and writers have drawn inspiration from the river in the period from colonisation. The text for *Yarra Birrarung* was written by historian Dr Judith Buckrich whose book of the same name was published in 2024 by Melbourne Books:

https://melbournebooks.com.au/updates/product/1047/Media-Release_Yarra.pdf

Here is a large and complex topic, with many layers of meaning. Birrarung's waters and surrounding swamps sustained the Wurundjeri people for millennia, but the landscape also held significant cultural meaning, not least for the large gatherings held annually on waterway banks. Birrarung was a meeting place long before Europeans chose to place a settlement there. Once they did, re-naming the river in the process, they set in train a process that would alter it forever. *Yarra Birrarung* charts this process as seen through the eyes of artists and writers.

The exhibition is arranged chronologically around the walls of the Drill Hall's main gallery. A single introductory text panel provides context for each section, with reproductions of selected pictures, maps, and later photographs, to illustrate each text. It begins with an attempt to describe the river before the European invasion although,

inevitably, the paintings that illustrate this section are the work of European observers, such as John Cotton. These well-known works from the 1840s present an appealing view of Wurundjeri settlements along the riverbanks even though, by this time, such settlements were located some distance upstream from the village of Melbourne. Superintendent Charles La Trobe ordered the expulsion of the Kulin from their traditional hunting and ceremonial grounds in the vicinity of Melbourne in 1840, and this ruling was strenuously enforced. Many decades later, in the 1880s, Wurundjeri leader William Barak painted scenes of ceremonial dance once held near Melbourne, and these lively pictures are reproduced in Buckrich's book. Perhaps they were not available for the exhibition, but their inclusion would have strengthened the display's ability to resonate with contemporary First Nations' viewers.

Thereafter the exhibition charts a predictable course, with sections on 'European Settlement', the population explosion that followed the Victorian Gold Rush, the 1870s and 1880s, and the 'Turn of the Century'. There are common themes in each of these sections — the expansion of settlement, deforestation along the riverbanks and then in the hinterland, and the increasing pollution of the river from human and nascent industrial waste. The Yarra's propensity to flood, once a Blessing to the Wurundjeri

because it filled the many swamps and billabongs, was soon problematic to the settlers, who sought repeatedly to contain its erratic flow. Included in the exhibition are several plans of works designed to 'improve' the river, straightening its course and with dredging to remove silt. The 'Falls', shown in so many early paintings of the settlement, were destroyed with dynamite in 1883. This rocky barrier once separated salt water from fresh and was a notable landmark in the river.

From the earliest days of European settlement, the Yarra was both lifeblood and barrier. This had not presented the Wurundjeri with a problem: they used the Falls and various other crossing points well-known to them. But the settlers required crossings for both carts and people, and the construction of bridges was one of their earliest undertakings. Several paintings of early bridges are shown in the exhibition, including H. Nash's lithograph of the lively celebrations marking the completion of Princes Bridge in 1850. And just in time. Within a year the colony was flooded with eager gold diggers, whose rapacious search for wealth would despoil many an inland stream, heedlessly replicating the fate of the Yarra. The impact of industry is a strong theme in the sections of the exhibition examining the period from the 1870s to the 1920s, with graphic depictions of riverbank factories discharging their waste directly into the river.



Robert Russell, *Melbourne from the Falls from a sketch in 1844*, State Library Victoria

Waterside infrastructure also expanded at this time, with the construction of new port facilities and dry docks. And just in time for the new century, Melbourne's long-debated deep sewerage works were constructed near the river at Spotswood, represented in the exhibition by a collage of views printed in the *Age* newspaper by Ebenezer and David Syme & Co.

Three panels of the display document the next century, from the 1920s to the present. Industrial expansion is also a theme here, as wartime industries and then motor vehicle factories joined other household names such as Dunlop, Unilever and Kraft at Fishermans Bend. But art and artists are also addressed, with the creation of artists' communities at Heide and Montsalvat, and the expansion of state-sponsored music and art on the southern

bank of the Yarra. By the turn of the millennium, Southbank had been transformed from an industrial wasteland, into a high-rise 'destination' of apartments, restaurants and entertainment venues. Further to the north-west, the Docklands development transformed that former wharf precinct with a series of high-rise residential apartment complexes. Of greater note, this period also saw Melburnians at last embrace their river and acknowledge its lasting cultural significance to First Nations peoples. This had been a long time coming!

Yarra Birrarung: Artists, Writers and the River is a modest exhibition devised on a small budget but provides a good opportunity for visitors to see a range of pictorial works, in reproduction it is true, but

gathered together in one place, and interpreted within a broad-ranging historical context. The exhibition will be shown in the Drill Hall until 28 July 2025.

***Yarra Birrarung* was curated by Dr Judith Buckrich and designed by Daisy Searls.**

Margaret Anderson
RHSV Delegate



Water before Beer: An Excursion to the Cascade Brewery Site

[THRA Website](#)

[THRA Facebook page](#)

Even as a kid, growing up in Hobart's bushy suburbs, the Cascade Brewery was an 'institution'. I may not have been interested in the beer, but I knew the brewery for fizzy apple juices, delicious cordials, and malty smells that filled the South Hobart valleys on certain days of the week. I could see the grand building from my child-hood home and all the locals had Cascade Brewery stories to tell. South Hobart and the Brewery were inextricably connected.

On a beautiful February Saturday afternoon earlier this year, about thirty members of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association took a walk through the bush surrounding the still-working brewery, to learn why we were wrong to think of the site 'only' as the Cascade Brewery.

Tour leader, Martin Stone, also a member of THRA, has extensively researched the history of kunanyi/Mt Wellington and the early history of the Cascade Brewery which lies at the base of the mountain. 2024 marked the two hundredth anniversary of the Cascade business, although – as Martin was quick to point out – not the anniversary of the brewery. The site was originally part of a very large land grant given to Peter Degraives and Hugh Macintosh who initially built sawmills, flourmills, lime kilns, brickworks and other industrial structures on the land.

Before branching out into brewing beer, their initial businesses supplied building materials and



THRA tour group members learn the many histories at the Cascade Brewery site

other necessary goods to the early colony of Van Diemen's Land and the ships that passed through its port.

Key to these industrial endeavours was a reliable water supply. The location of the Cascade site placed it at the intersection of two flowing rivulets, and Degraives spent his career finding ways to manipulate both the landscape and the law to the advantage of the business. Martin Stone was clear that while Degraives was a canny operator, he was not always as ruthless as he has been portrayed – the records show that the neighbouring grant-holders were also 'working the system'.

Over a couple of hours, Martin and Chris, an employee from the Brewery, guided us around the perimeter of the site, explaining how it fit into the physical landscape and showing us the small traces of the pre-Brewery life

uncovered during explorations of the area. These included the low remnants of a dam wall in the rivulet, the paths of old water races, and some ceramic pipes long-forgotten but rediscovered by Chris.

Our group learned about the supply of water to Hobart Town in the early and mid-nineteenth century, and the various schemes which attempted to appease everyone or no one, depending on one's perspective.

Standing in bushland and beside buildings I know so well, yet learn about another side of their history, was remarkable. I will need to remember that, for Europeans, this site was the Cascade Mills before it was the Cascade Brewery, and that the site possesses many stories across time.

Imogen Wegner
THRA Committee Member



Good news for the RWAHS: A New Home

[RWAHS Website](#)

[RWAHS Facebook page](#)



The new History West/RWAHS premises, 109 Stirling Highway, Nedlands

After ten years of searching and fund raising, the RWAHS (operating also as History West), has purchased a building to be the Society's new headquarters.

The new location is a short distance from the existing premises and on a prominent road in an area being significantly developed. Photographs of the current Stirling House at 49 Broadway, Nedlands, and the new building at 109 Stirling Highway, Nedlands, can be easily viewed by online searching.

Relocating will allow for the Society's collections to be re-positioned and refreshed. The meeting room will increase seating capacity. The bookshop will be more prominent to the street front. The parking situation will be significantly improved. The building has a multi-floor lift to assist

members attending events and safe movement of collections. The amenities for volunteers and visitors are also significantly improved, as well as being legally compliant. An open day on 23 January allowed over 140 members and friends to enthusiastically view the building. The move to the building will occur in March or April.

Retrospect

When I joined the Society in April 1980, Stirling House had not long been expanded to provide for a meeting room/exhibition space at one end, and a foyer/office/facilities space at the other. Originally, the venue had been a delightful small house purchased by the Society in 1964. The building was, by then, fully utilised

by all of the Society's activities. The kitchen was the social heart of day-to-day life and often the location for committee discussions.

Although Stirling House was a welcoming and busy place, the inadequacies of the total footprint were apparent in 1980. Over the following decades minor changes were made in storage, including the acquisition of 'The Shipping Container' and a semi-mythical storage unit in the far north of Perth. The Society's Council and committees were fully aware of the shortcomings but the challenges of rebuilding and relocating competed with a myriad of issues also demanding attention.

The Society limited its collection activities by adopting policies to 'define' them and keep a focus on the realities of storage. The building proceeded to age and there was a limit to how many innovations the space could sustain.

The exhibition space was compromised by the needs of storage, the housing of chairs and equipment for meetings, as well as the presence of the grand table the Council assembled around.

Although technology was introduced for sound and screen, it too reached a limit in a world of Teams and Zoom. In recent years, some of us could see the building crumbling in front of us, the water and the possums.

Amongst other members there was a view that the Society could live within its premises and not expand further. There were others who saw that rebuilding or relocating were not just solutions to the physical constraints but a basis for membership renewal.

Planning

The History West Community Centre planning team worked with the Society's Honorary Architect, Maria Gilman, to have concept plans drawn up. The planning for a replacement building was an important element in raising awareness, facilitating discussion and confronting realities. The Society did not rebuild *in situ* because of the cost, not only in construction but also in financing other costs and temporary rehousing.

The development of the concept plan followed a 'needs assessment' of the functional area. Each committee contributed to this, and the needs of each was intended to shape expectations going forward.

Parallel to the rebuilding path, the Society also started exploring purchasing an existing building. Sixteen promising buildings were looked at, seven reaching Council consideration and one formal offer made before 109 Stirling Highway was secured. A key strategy was to look at commercial buildings that were less appealing for commercial buyers in the current environment (older, a bit tired but structurally sound) but which a not-for-profit (NFP) organisation could adapt.

Financing a purchase by a NFP is challenging when a NFP is competing with more flexible competitors. As the Society moved through proposals, member approval to sell Stirling House and undertake a purchase was obtained. These approvals helped expedite the final purchase.

The key part of financing was having the funds 'ready to go'; the margin for negotiation was limited. From the start of the building replacement project there was a strong fund-raising campaign. This involved many events and meetings with prospective donors, being helped all the way by huge donations of *time* and *pro bono* services.

The new building cost \$5.4 million dollars. The purchase was primarily by the sale of Stirling House, Lotterywest grants of \$1.7m, and raising over a million dollars from members and friends. The technique of taking pledges was important to the process. Money was only handed over when milestones were achieved. The Society's prudent financial management over the years allowed the Society sufficient reserves to fund the relocation and other costs arising from the purchase.

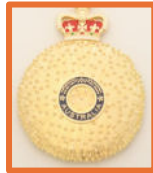
Although the sale was completed in December 2024, the Society has leased back Stirling House until March, with extension possible. This means that the relocation plan is quickly being put together and the re-fit of the new building is being contracted out. This is a tight time-frame, and a huge effort will be put in by the Society's management and volunteers to achieve it. Vice President and Chief Fund Raiser, Sally Anne Hasluck, wrote to members, 'Many good memories will be taken with us to our new home. We carry our history with us and, as a tangible reminder, we will take the plaque created to commemorate the Stirling House premises, acquired in 1964. This was a great moment as the Society had been without a permanent home since its establishment in 1926. Now this move marks both continuity and change'.

Michael Nind
RWAHS Delegate

Australia Day Honours, 2025

The Federation of Australian Historical Societies acknowledges the magnificent contributions of the following people in research, preservation or promotion of Australia's history and heritage. (The names and details of those listed have been supplied by FAHS constituent delegates.)

Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in the General Division



The late Professor Lyndall Ryan AM

For distinguished service to tertiary education, particularly Indigenous history and colonial settlement through research and publications

Professor Claire Edwina Smith, SA

For distinguished service to tertiary education, particularly social and anthropological archaeology, and as a national and international academic

Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the General Division



Ms Margaret Elizabeth Burn, ACT

For significant service to library and information science, and to the community

Mrs Joanna Susan Capon OAM, NSW

For significant service to the arts, and to community health

Professor David Headon, ACT

For significant service to history preservation, as a historian, cultural advisor, and author

Professor Paul Andrew Pickering, ACT

For significant service to tertiary education, social studies, and to history preservation

Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the General Division



Mrs Jennifer Gai Anderson, NSW

For service to the community of Ku-ring-gai

Mrs Dianna Faye Baker, NSW

For service to local government, and to the community of Inverell

Mr Gregory Thomas Blood, ACT

For service to sports history

Mr Keith Boulton, QLD

For service to community, particularly through history preservation

Mrs Beryl Edith Haley, NSW

For service to the community of the Gulgong region

Mrs Rosslyn Mackenzie Sweetapple, NSW

For service to community history

Professor Emerita Margaret Plant, VIC

For service to visual arts, and to art history

Mr Peter Squires, SA

For service to community history

Ms Pamela Anne Valentine, NSW

For service to the community of Liverpool

Mrs Edna May Watson, NSW

For service to the Indigenous community of New South Wales

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