



Royal Australian Historical Society

Knowing your history

5 June 2025

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Katoomba, viewed from railway line c. 1920 (RAHS Collection)



At the book launch of *The Past Fifty Years of Public Education in Canowindra*, a project supported by a 2024 Create

NSW Cultural Grant, Year 12 students celebrated the launch in period dress for a 1875-themed ball

RAHS receives \$100,000 annually to deliver grants and seminars across NSW

The Royal Australian Historical Society is proud to be one of 82 organisations awarded funding through Create NSW's *Arts and Cultural Funding Program – 4-Year Multi-Year Funding (2026–2028)*.

Through this program, the RAHS will receive **\$100,000 annually** to deliver the project titled **Grants and Seminar Program for NSW: Building Community Skills to Explore Local Histories**.

This Create NSW funding will support the RAHS devolved grants program and a series of community history seminars delivered across Western Sydney and regional NSW. The program aims to build capacity, foster collaboration, and amplify local voices through historical research and storytelling.

Planning is underway to relaunch the grants program under a new name in 2026. In the meantime, the **Create NSW-funded 2025 Cultural Grants Program**

organisations for publications, exhibitions, oral histories, and digital resources.

To learn more, visit: <https://www.rahs.org.au/cultural-grants-program>

Read more about all 82 recipients: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/grant-recipients?nid=77630>

We thank Create NSW for supporting community history and the volunteers who help preserve it. These initiatives enrich cultural life across NSW and ensure local stories are shared for future generations.



Excavation site showing the History House foundations (Photo: Donna Newton, May 2025)

Preserving History House: What the Soil Revealed

At the RAHS, we are committed to keeping our members and friends informed as we undertake essential works to protect History House—our state-heritage listed home and a vital hub for NSW's history community.

in the building. Engineers confirmed that History House sits on reactive clay soil, which expands and contracts with moisture changes. A blocked drain at the base of the basement stairwell has allowed rainwater to seep into the ground, disturbing the foundations.

Tree roots were also found beneath the building and in the drainage system. These have been traced to the London Plane trees planted along Macquarie Street in the 1980s. Research by RAHS Librarian Donna Newton confirmed the trees were planted between 1982 and 1986. A comparison of the 2001 and 2016 Conservation Management Plans suggests that the visible cracking to the sandstone front façade likely began during this period as the tree roots extended beneath the building. Many members and visitors have regularly commented on the cracking above the front door—one of the most visible signs of movement.

Internal roof repairs are scheduled to begin in June. Also in June, RAHS has organised a planning workshop with our architects to consider next steps. Key priorities include accessibility, structural soundness, maximising space for our activities (including archival areas in the basement), and rental revenue. There's a lot to consider as we plan the next stages of conservation and upgrades.

While works are underway, we're carefully managing the schedule to ensure History House remains open—welcoming researchers, hosting events, offering venue hire, and continuing library tours. If any members are curious to see parts of the building or would like to learn more about the project, please let us know—we'd be happy to arrange a tour from basement to attic, subject to safety considerations.

We're grateful for your continued interest and support as we work to safeguard this significant place for local and community history.



Donna Newton speaking about the RAHS collection (Photo: Ralph Davis, Ku-ring-gai Historical Society)

RAHS Library Talk and Tour

Recently, members of the Ku-ring-gai and Ryde District Historical Societies visited History House for a special **Library Talk and Tour**. The visit began with a presentation by RAHS President Carol Liston, who explained why the RAHS Library is such a valuable and unique research resource. After the talk, guests enjoyed morning tea in the reception rooms before taking a guided tour of the Library led by RAHS Librarian Donna Newton. During the tour, Carol also shared practical resources to support the societies' community and local history research.

RAHS Councillor Judith Godden, who accompanied the group, shared this feedback:

'On behalf of Ku-ring-gai and Ryde District Historical Societies, thank you for a very enjoyable and useful RAHS Library visit. The morning tea and opportunity to chat beforehand was much appreciated, as was Carol's talk setting the scene and outlining principles that apply also to the two affiliated societies involved. We appreciated Donna's expertise and pride in the Library, as well as the opportunity to see material first-hand and to follow up particular interests.'

We encourage other historical societies and heritage groups—including Western Sydney and regional societies planning excursions to Sydney—to consider arranging a **RAHS Library Talk and Tour** at History House. It's a great way to connect, explore the RAHS collection, and share ideas.

To organise a visit for your group, please contact us at history@rahs.org.au

RAHS News



Supporting Future Library Professionals at the RAHS Library

The RAHS Library recently hosted TAFE Digital student Electra Aitchison as part of her Diploma of Library and Information Services placement. Electra contributed to cataloguing and research tasks, gaining practical experience with the types of work involved in managing a historical collection. Her placement also coincided with our upcoming transition to Liberty, the same online Library Management System used in the TAFE course.

As well as developing her library skills, Electra explored our press clippings collection and uncovered fascinating stories from Australian history. With

constructed in Sydney's Botanic Gardens for the 1879 International Exhibition and tragically destroyed by fire in 1882. Now considered one of Sydney's great lost buildings, the Garden Palace continues to capture the imagination of researchers and historians.

The RAHS is proud to support the next generation of library professionals and to provide meaningful, hands-on experience that connects students with both the practice of librarianship and the richness of our historical collections.



History House Front Doors

Land Title Research Workshops – Update

We received a higher-than-expected level of interest in our planned land title research workshops, with historical societies from across NSW and many individual members expressing enthusiasm for learning more. These records offer insights well beyond land ownership. Understanding this evidence will add greater depth to local histories, personal stories, and broader patterns of community change.

We're now working through a plan that will allow us to share this valuable knowledge as widely as possible – both in Sydney and in regional NSW and Western Sydney.

reinforces the RAHS's commitment to ensuring that historical knowledge is actively shared and used by communities across the state.



The Queen of Nations Shipwreck

Dr Peter Hobbins delivered a riveting Day Lecture on the mysterious 1881 wreck of the *Queen of Nations* on 4 June. Was it navigational error or drunken folly? His storytelling brought 19th-century maritime drama to life. If you missed the presentation, don't worry! You can explore the full story in Dr Hobbins' article in *Signals* issue 144, published by the Australian National Maritime Museum.

Read it here: [*Signals* 144 by ANMM – Issuu](#).

RAHS Digital Pick



Pastor Daniel Allen's Particular Baptist Church, Sydney c. 1912 (City of Sydney Archives)

Podcast Episode:

Liberty not License: The Hyde Park Riots of 1878

Jeff Kildea joined Samuel White on the latest episode of the *JRAHS Podcast* to discuss the Hyde Park Riots of 1878.

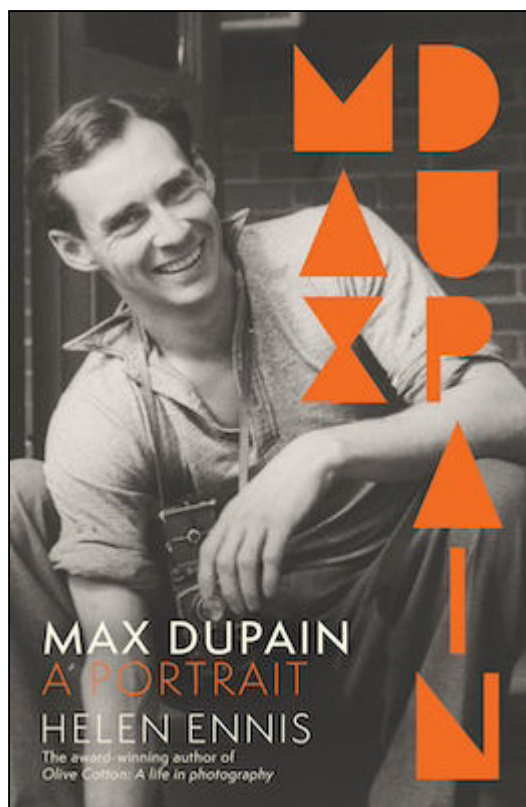
The Hyde Park Riots of 1878 provide a case study of how the emerging Australian democracy sought to balance the right of free speech, which the colonists regarded as their birthright, and the right of sections of the community to be free from what we now call 'hate speech'.

Although the riots occurred almost 150 years ago, this episode has relevance today when Australian society is still struggling to get the balance right. The forcible expulsion of Pastor Daniel Allen from Hyde Park in March 1878 demonstrates that the current practice of 'cancelling' or 'deplatforming' discordant voices is not a new phenomenon.

[LISTEN HERE](#)

This episode is based on research published in the December 2024 Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society. [Learn more](#)

RAHS Events



RAHS Special Lecture *On Max Dupain*

Speaker: Helen Ennis.

When: Wednesday, 18 June 2025 at 1 pm.

Where: History House, 133 Macquarie St, Sydney.

Cost: Free.

Max Dupain's photographs — especially of Sydney — helped shape the image of modern Australia. Helen Ennis will discuss Dupain's views and legacy and the challenges his voluminous archive poses to a biographical approach.

RESERVE TICKETS



RAHS Day Lecture
Worlds of Vulnerability: Vagrancy in nineteenth-century Australia and New Zealand

Speaker: Catharine Coleborne.

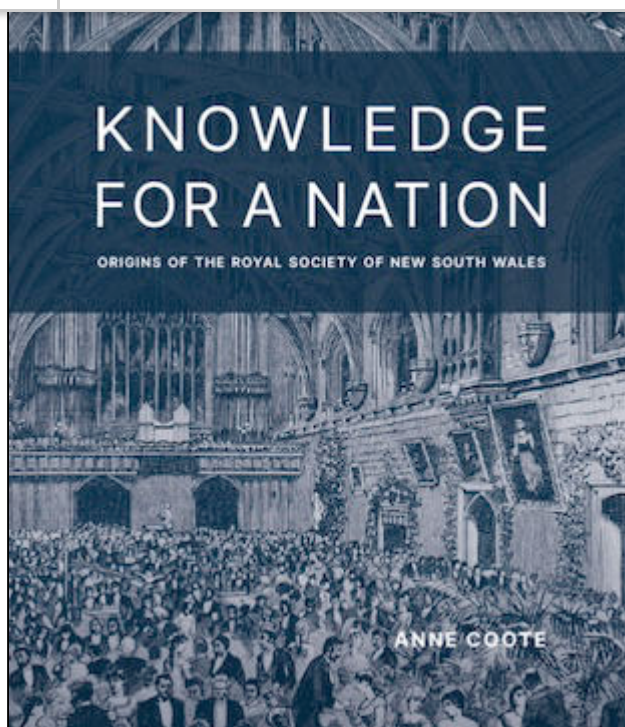
When: Wednesday, 2 July 2025 at 1 pm.

Where: History House, 133 Macquarie St, Sydney.

Cost: Free.

Historians have used vagrancy to examine economic processes, labour and human migration, urbanisation, and responses to poverty, such as welfare and legislation. Patterns of vulnerability were based on social difference and the politics of mobility and identity. These have become deeply entrenched in the social and cultural order over time. Using the theme of vulnerability in histories of vagrancy and the regulation of mobility helps to create a stronger relationship between law and the social institutions of the period, such as asylums, benevolent homes, and immigrants' homes. This presentation highlights those most vulnerable to police surveillance and regulation. It offers a reminder of the socio-economic factors at play in creating definitions of unauthorised mobility that are still relevant in our present moment.

RESERVE TICKETS



RAHS-RSNSW Lecture

Not another gentlemen's club: The nineteenth-century origins and significance of the Royal Society of NSW

Speaker: Anne Coote.

When: Wednesday, 16 July 2025 at 1 pm.

Where: History House, 133 Macquarie St, Sydney.

Cost: RAHS-RSNSW Members \$10 | Non-Members \$15.

The Royal Society of NSW is a twenty-first-century organisation with a long history in the intellectual culture of Sydney and beyond. In this talk, Anne Coote will discuss the origins of this learned society, its character and social position in nineteenth-century NSW, and the significant contribution it made to the development of an active colonial research community.

[BUY TICKETS](#)

Affiliated Societies News

Military History Society of NSW



2025 Annual Patron's Lecture

2nd/4th Australian Infantry Battalion in New Guinea 1945

Following the capture of Salamaua, Lae and Finschhafen, the 6th Australian Division was deployed to New Guinea in early 1945 to relieve the Americans, who General MacArthur preferred to utilise elsewhere. Between late April and early July 1945, the 6th Australian Division advanced from the Hawain River eastwards along the New Guinea Coast to Wewak – the last sea-based fortress of the Japanese in Papua New Guinea – on terrain which dictated that the attack had to be entrusted to a single battalion. This would be the 2/4th.

Drawing on the work of former society patron Major General Gordon Maitland, and the 2nd/4th Battalion's history *White over Green*, this lecture describes the feats of a New South Wales infantry battalion, which had already distinguished itself in 1941 in North Africa, Greece and Crete, in these concluding battles of the campaign, in which it earned the battle honours 'Wewak', 'Wirui Mission', and 'Mount Shiburango-Mount Tazaki', and the theatre honour 'Liberation of Australian New Guinea'.

When: Saturday, 7 June 2025 at 10.30 am.

Where: The Auditorium, Anzac Memorial Hyde Park.

Admission: Free, but a donation is appreciated.

More information: <https://militaryhistorynsw.com.au/activities/next-lecture/>



The First Fleet entering Port Jackson, drawn 1888 / E. Le Bihan (State Library of NSW)

The Arrival of the First Fleet

Speaker Denis Smith, Vice President of the First Fleeters, retired engineer and a First Fleet descendant of Marine John Barrisford and his wife Hannah. The First Fleet was a group of 11 British ships that sailed from England in 1787, arriving in Australia in 1788, to establish a convict settlement. Led by Captain Arthur Phillip, it transported approximately 1,500 people, including convicts, officers, crew, and their families. This talk will be about the preparations for the voyage and why Arthur Phillip was selected with the help of Lord Sydney. There are many interesting stories that we just don't know about the early settlement!

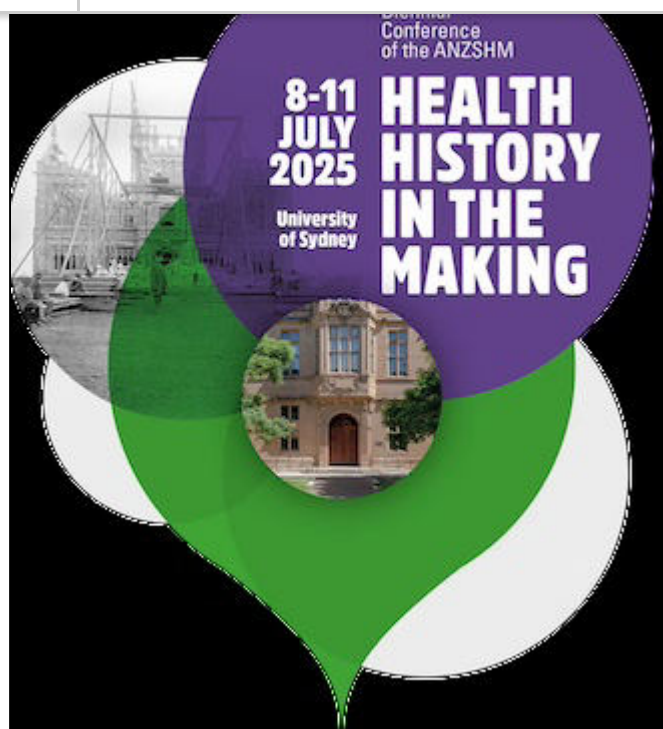
When: Saturday, 14 June 2025 at 2.00 pm.

Where: Henry Carmichael Theatre, Sydney Mechanics School of Arts.

Admission: Members \$5 | Guests \$10.

More information: <https://www.sydneyhistorical.org.au/>

ANZSHM 19th Biennial Conference



Health History in the Making

We are thrilled to unveil the Program for the ANZSHM 19th Biennial Conference, themed ***Health History in the Making***. Keynote speakers will deliver talks and participate in symposia on the history of the provision of indigenous health services as well as medicine in South-East Asia. Special sessions will be held on the contributions of the GLAM sector to the history of medicine.

The conference will commence with a Welcome Reception (included in registration) on Tuesday, 8th July, at the Fisher Library in amongst the Rare Book Collection, with a special display curated by the conference.

The conference is from **9-11 July** at the **University of Sydney**, in the Law School Annex at the Camperdown Campus. With over 70 captivating presentations, this conference promises to be an enriching experience for all. We will conclude with dinner at the historic Refectory at the University.

The program can be downloaded from our conference website:

<https://www.anzshm2025.com/program>

Registration can be completed online [HERE](#).

Hosted by Illawarra Family History Group

NSW & ACT Association of Family History Societies Inc 2025 Annual Conference

Bookings Are Now **OPEN**

Early Bird Prices Now Available

Conference Tickets

- **Free Family History Fair.** Friday 12 September 8.30am to 4pm
- **Meet and Greet.** Friday 12 September. 6pm - 8pm. **\$25**
- **Conference Days 1 and 2.** September 13 to September 14. **Early Bird Price. \$160 Available until July 31 2025.**
- **Conference Day 1.** Saturday 13 September. **NB- Only buy this ticket if you will NOT be attending on Sunday. \$120.00**
- **Conference Day 2.** Sunday 14 September. **NB- Only buy this ticket if you will NOT be attending Saturday. \$60**
- **Conference Dinner.** Saturday 13 September. 6pm - 10pm **\$65.00**
- **Conference ticket sales close at the end of August.**

Live Streaming

- **Saturday 13 September & Sunday 14 September.** 10am - 4pm Sat & 10am to 12.30pm Sun
- **Individuals \$80 for 2 days**
- **Groups \$180 for 2 days**

Raffle Tickets \$5 each or 3 for \$10



**ALL Tickets sold through
TryBooking**



[Click this link to go to TryBooking.](#)

Trade Tables

- **Friday 12 September and Saturday 13 September.** **\$30/day**
- **Sunday 14 September. \$15**
- **Fill in the application form on the Conference website**



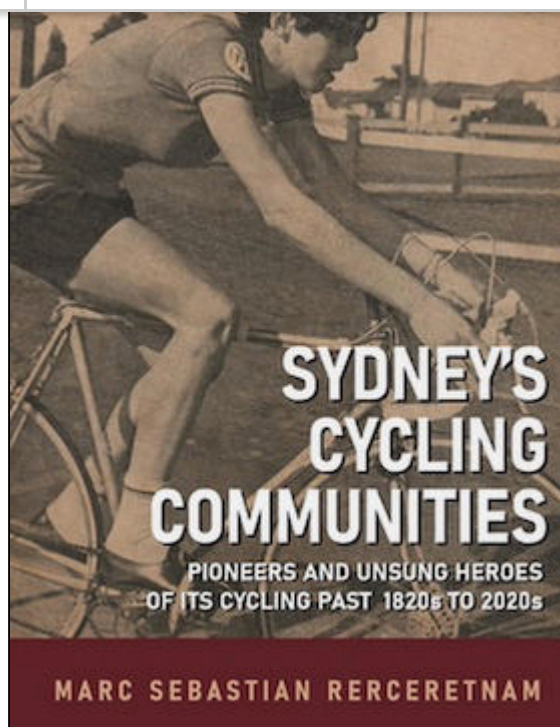
Click the links below to go to:

[The Conference Website](#)

[Facebook Page](#)

History News

Book Launch



Sydney's Cycling Communities: Pioneers and Unsung Heroes of its Cycling Past 1820s to 2020s

Since cycling was first introduced in Australia in the early 19th century, this activity of transport and recreation has grown steadily on the continent.

According to the latest research of the National Cycling Participation Survey, there were 3.43 million Australians who rode bikes for transport or recreation. In 2023, 15% of Australians rode a bike at least weekly, 24% at least monthly and 37% at least yearly. The current figure indicates that the cycling population is well over 4 million nationwide.

The point is made that cycling is experiencing steady growth both as a means of transport and recreation, not to mention as a competitive sport.

The popularity of cycling has been recorded in a number of reports and books published about the activity, but there is no book that looks at the 200-year history of cycling in Australia, at least until now. Entitled *Sydney's Cycling Communities*, it sets out to trace the evolution of cycling's pioneers and unsung heroes, covering two centuries, starting from the 1820s.

The monumental task of recording cycling's growth in Sydney was undertaken by Dr Marc Sebastian Rerceretnam, an independent researcher, historian, and published author based in Sydney.

An avid cyclist himself, Rerceretnam was keen to produce a special report that

This book is a must-have for all aficionados of the history of cycling in Sydney and how it has evolved both as a means of transport and for recreation.

In summary, Rerceretnam's book captures the spirit of cycling in Sydney and throws a very encouraging light on cycling's future in Australia.

The book will be launched on Sunday, 15 June 2025, at a special event hosted by the Inner West Council.

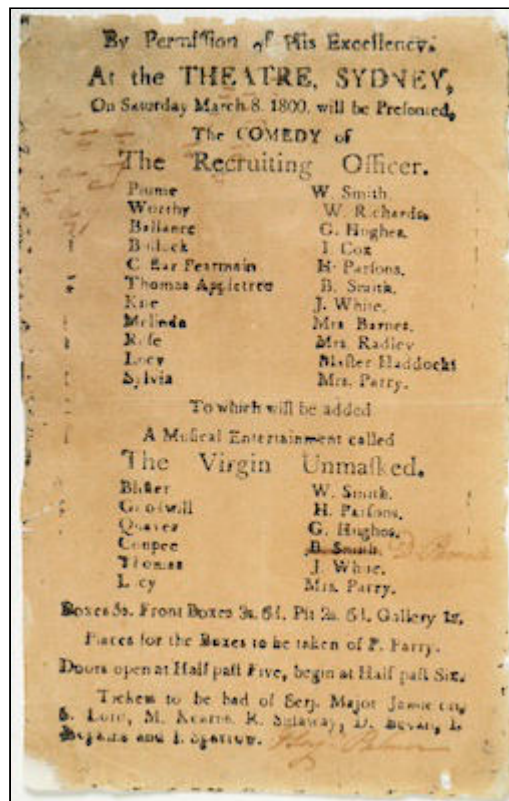
When: Sunday, 15 June 2025, from 1.30 to 3.00 pm.

Where: Marrickville Library and Pavilion, 313 Marrickville Rd, Marrickville.

Bookings: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/sydneys-cycling-communities-tickets-1309490905549>

Further information: <https://www.facebook.com/CyclingHistoryAustralia>

RAHS Blog Post



The Recruiting Officer: Australia's First Recorded Play

When you hear the word 'convict', what comes to mind? Chain gangs? Cat o' nine tails? How about theatre and play acting?

Australia's first recorded play at Sydney Cove. The play was *The Recruiting Officer* by Irish playwright George Farquhar.

236 years later, we are highlighting this significant event in Australia's performance and theatrical past.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Other News

Built Environment Awards

20
25

Medal for Conservation

Entries open 18 April – 13 July 2025



2024 winner:
Potter & Wilson

innerwest

INNER WEST

innerwest.nsw.gov.au/Built



Church Street, Parramatta c. 1920 (RAHS Collection)

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The Royal Australian Historical Society

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