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Newsletter

Federation of
Australian Historical Societies Inc. →



Photo: *Broken Dreams* by Michael Cook

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Diversity

This issue is inspired by the ways that historical societies and groups engage with diversity

Historical societies are well situated to make a unique contribution to the recognition and celebration of diversity - by working with - and being part of their communities. The writers in this issue express a commitment to inclusion - from documenting histories - to exhibiting the historical evidence and re-interpretation of collections. Stories of the long forgotten are reinvigorated from varied perspectives, whether these are feminist, multicultural, queer or indigenous.

Many of the ways of doing history move beyond the local

to a broader national agenda: the History of the Lebanese in Australia; Indian History in Australia; Australian Women's experience of work and Lesbian and Gay life stories across Australia. The research of the Female Convicts Research Centre goes even further with a whole-of-population approach.

Strategies for recognition are outlined by History Trust SA and the Royal Historical Society of Queensland. In particular the important work of Aboriginal Victoria in developing Registered Aboriginal Parties provides a valuable model for historical societies who hold Aboriginal object collections.

Dr Bernadette Flynn, Editor

The Federation of Australian Historical Societies is supported through funding from the Australian Government's Community Heritage and Icons Grants program via the ACT Government.

From the President

PAINTING OF CAPTAIN COOK: *Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay, 1770*, by Emanuel Phillips Fox, NGV



STATUE OF CAPTAIN COOK: Melbourne. Paint poured on Cook's statue leading up to Australia Day, 2018



When I first studied Australian history at school and then university in the 1960s it conformed to a very traditional pattern which would now be generally unpalatable and would be dismissed by many for its focus on 'dead white British males'

For those of us in the east, Western Australia hardly existed, so it was very much an east coast view. Early explorers were followed by convicts and Governor Macquarie, Macarthur and the wool industry, perhaps the foundation of the other colonies, the gold rushes, a big jump to nationalism and federation and then WWI and maybe the Depression. In the West, they had their own perspectives on these matters.

Local historical societies and historical museums essentially conformed to a version of this pattern, elucidating these themes in conjunction with studies of the local economy and financial and political leaders (men).

I was reminded of the resilience of this traditional perspective in part of the community by the furore earlier this year when a number of statues of explorers and early colonists were vandalised. In response, a report was undertaken into the protection of public monuments by the Australian Heritage Council. It is well worth reading for the balance it provides, pointing to the diverse range monuments and heritage sites that go well beyond explorers. (<http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/4474fb91-bd90-4424-b671-9e2ab9c39cca/files/protection-australia-commemorative-places-monuments.pdf>) In this light it is interesting that the Australian government has controversially proposed to spend \$50 million on a memorial in Botany Bay to Captain Cook and European settlement.

In contrast, a glance through this issue of the FAHS

Newsletter demonstrates how historical studies have diverged and have become so much richer and more inclusive since the 1960s. Indigenous history, women's history, migrant and ethnic history, and gay and lesbian history are among those areas now regularly encompassed in our evolving understanding of Australia's diverse history.

Historical societies are engaging with these themes, as demonstrated by Timothy Roberts from the RHSQ, who is also a new FAHS Councillor. The RHSQ has a commitment to cultural diversity and this has been fulfilled in many ways, including collecting material related to Indigenous people and recognition of different ethnic groups in Queensland.

Elsewhere in this issue: Diana Smith describes how to deal with Indigenous objects in our collections; Colette McAlpine and Dianne Snowden provide insights into the study of convict women; in separate articles Craig Middleton, Nikki Sullivan, Corrine Ball, Julia Miller and Guy Gomeze discuss studies and exhibitions that involve gay and lesbian history; Dianna Newnham shows how the National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame exhibits the range of women's work; and ethnic history is discussed by Len Kenna and Crystal Jordan (Indian) and Anne Monsour (Lebanese).

I am sure you will enjoy this good read that has been put together for FAHS by Bernadette Flynn.

Associate Professor Don Garden

Working Together: Community History Societies, Aboriginal Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victoria

The past is waiting to be rediscovered. A review of historic records and collections or a new donation to a community history museum is often all it takes to generate passion or reignite interest in the past and illuminate new perspectives on Aboriginal object collections

What is really exciting is the process of rediscovery and recording, through engaging with Aboriginal people to lead, learn and inform an understanding of these collections. Importantly, in Victoria this work is increasingly being led by Victorian Aboriginal Traditional Owners through Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) in collaboration with community history museums and societies.

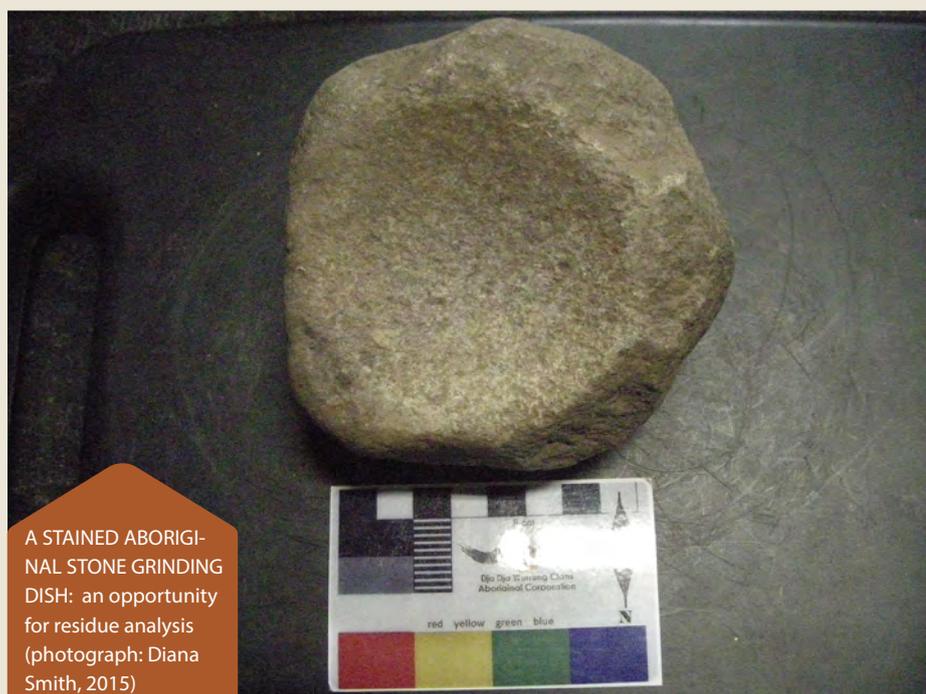
Aboriginal Victoria (AV) is a key

point of contact and often, a conduit to this meaningful and collaborative cultural heritage work, facilitating dialogue between Aboriginal Traditional Owners and guiding museum staff through legislative requirements. Occasionally trepidation may be heard in the voices staff and volunteers who work in community history museums when contact is made. Issues of possession, ownership, custodianship and reprisal are sometimes raised, but these can easily be allayed and resolved. Talking through these issues with RAPs or AV's Heritage Services and regional programs staff and reading through fact sheets available from some RAP offices or the information contained on AV's website can put to rest many of these fears. Once this initial contact has been made, arranging a visit to record

and understand collections can begin.

Opportunities for learning more about the past now underpins recording and registering Aboriginal object collections. The scope for capacity building is evident for people working in cultural heritage management. This is a mutual process with RAPs working alongside archaeologists, staff of museum societies and AV, gaining experience in the techniques of curation and cataloguing, recording, scientific analyses and research, together with Aboriginal people bringing their own cultural perspectives to collections through oral and traditional knowledge to access deeper meaning attributed to objects.

New finds within object collections can be surprising and bring new information to light. While Racquel Kerr (Traditional Owner and Aboriginal Heritage Officer, Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation) and I were recording the Aboriginal object collection at the Daylesford and District Historical Society Inc, we discovered a rock stacked in the chimney of the building. This rock was identified as tachylite, a volcanic basaltic glass material found in few places across Australia including Dja Dja Wurrung Country in central Victoria. What makes this tachylite find particularly interesting is that it forms an Aboriginal core tool, from which flakes were knapped to create



A STAINED ABORIGINAL STONE GRINDING DISH: an opportunity for residue analysis (photograph: Diana Smith, 2015)

and refine for use as blades, cutting tools and implements. Limited distributions of small flaked tools, fragments and tiny cores of tachylite have been found and uncovered across parts of Victoria, often revealing evidence of high levels of reduction, use-wear and reuse, presumably due to the finite source of this material. This object is perhaps the largest known example of an Aboriginal tachylite core that has been found to date.

Whether via historically linked events or perhaps through contemporary associations, there are infinite perspectives that can inform the past through studying these objects. At a micro-level, examination of objects can also present new realms to explore, for example, through studies of materials identification, design elements, use-wear and residue analyses and comparative research. Recognising these opportunities and planning for appropriate future projects is certainly worthwhile.

There are legislative requirements under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (the Act) that often intersect with how historical societies and community museums hold, research and acquire Aboriginal object collections. These requirements are not onerous but do guide the processes and policies that facilitate such functions as recording and registering Aboriginal object collections, repatriation and research. As there can be various questions raised in relation to these matters it is appropriate to consult first with the relevant RAP. If a collection contains objects with provenance outside of the appointed RAP's boundary or beyond Victoria, contact with AV to seek direction is recommended.



RECORDING THE TACHYLITE CORE: Dja Dja Wurrung Traditional Owner, Racquel Kerr, . Photograph: Diana Smith, 2016)

The Aboriginal tachylite core is perhaps the largest known example found to date. It was recently discovered stacked in the chimney at Daylesford and District Historical Society.

The purpose of recording Aboriginal object collections is to enable registration through entry of information into the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register (Register). Objects are examined closely, measured, weighed, described and photographed to create a detailed record in line with AV's published recording standards. Aboriginal oral testimony and information regarding the traditional significance of each object, or a collection as a whole, is recorded and added to the record for entry into the Register. Registration improves quality of information, facilitates management and protection measures available under the Act and ensures that object collection records are accessible to RAPs. Aboriginal Traditional Owners can access information about their cultural heritage and revitalise their

knowledge of provenance, distribution and use of resources available to their Ancestors, including a wide range of technologies, raw materials and cultural applications. This is the work today that dissolves barriers and challenges to understanding the past, builds new relationships and enables people to be involved in the journey of knowledge sharing and discovery together.

Visit Aboriginal Victoria at: <https://www.vic.gov.au/aboriginalvictoria/heritage/heritage-tools-and-publications/guides-forms-and-practice-notes-for-aboriginal-heritage-management.html>

Diana Smith,
Manager, Loddon Mallee
Heritage Programs,
Aboriginal Victoria

A Commitment to Inclusion



Aussie by SA artist Peter Drew

Opened in 1986, the Migration Museum in Adelaide was a world first, predating the Immigration Museum in Melbourne and the Ellis Island Museum in the United States of America. The Museum collects and preserves objects and documents and interprets the cultural diversity of the people of South Australia. While stories of migration invariably focus on ethnicity the Migration Museum is also committed to telling the stories of all South Australians, and focusing on other elements of diversity, including dis/ability and gender and sexuality. With this in mind the Museum has taken an active approach to inclusion that moves beyond the improvement of access (ramps, audio loops, and so on) thinking more about how groups connect with and participate in the life of the institution.

Our museum occupies the last remaining buildings of Adelaide's nineteenth century Destitute Asylum. While researching the newest permanent exhibition about the history of the site the curators uncovered many interesting stories that spoke volumes about the invisibility of dis/ability in historical narratives.

While not wanting to impose contemporary discourses, ideas, and knowledge onto historical figures, the curators decided to highlight stories of individuals who, by today's understanding, would be classed with a disability. The onus here is on the visitor to ponder the ways in which changing ideas about dis/ability have shaped people's lives in the past and the present.

As part of its commitment to access and diversity the Museum also ran an autism-friendly session in July 2016. A team including curators,

programmers, and front of house staff developed and managed the event which was scheduled prior to public opening on a Saturday morning. We wanted to provide a fun and safe learning environment for participants, free of the complexities that can arise in mixed spaces. Partnering with Autism SA 'social stories' were created by museum staff and distributed to attendees to prepare them for their visit. These now sit on our website available to all members of the public who have family members on the spectrum. We stationed a staff member in each main

ADELAIDE'S 19TH CENTURY DESTITUTE ASYLUM: Now the site of the Migration Museum. Image: the State Library of South Australia



gallery to direct children and support parents on their journey through the museum. 'Play' as a museological concept was employed to support diverse learning styles – for example participants could use white gloves to handle objects, create 3D models (in partnership with Makers Empire), and enjoy nineteenth century games in the courtyard.

The active approach to inclusion here proved successful, with a fully subscribed event. Children were able to enjoy the experience on their terms while parents expressed delight at not having to worry about the usual stress caused to their children by public experiences.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer+ (LGBTIQ+) stories are also largely absent in museums internationally. With this in mind, and with the social inclusion objectives of the Migration Museum, curators and programming staff have embedded LGBTIQ+ programming within the Museum's regular offerings.

One particular project *Queering the Museum* invited eight lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer+ (LGBTQ+) identified community members to look into our museums' collections and re/interpret them with a queer lens. This involved supporting research and facilitating access to object collections. The exhibition, which was a pop-up 2 day event during Adelaide's Feast Queer Arts and Culture Festival, included eight separate displays that connected museum objects with diverse sexualities and genders in multiple ways.

One participant placed a mauve 1950s wedding dress and a beard from a child's dress-up

LAVENDAR MARRIAGES: Exhibition display exploring the hidden histories of homosexuality.



Queering the Museum - re/interpreting the Collection with a queer lens.

costume on a mannequin, in order to talk about what is known as 'lavender marriages' and 'beards'. The former term relates marriages between gay men and women in order to hide their homosexuality. Historically this occurred in times when homosexual sex was either illegal, or socially unacceptable. A 'beard' is the term given to a woman/wife whose presence functions to conceal her husband's homosexuality. This coupling or juxtaposing of two otherwise unrelated objects enable queer histories to be told.

The museum has also recently established an LGBTQ+

community history project which encourages community members to share stories about places, events, and lifestyles through the History Hub. We hope that this will grow to become an important repository for LGBTQ+ histories and a resource for those who wish to learn more about them. We have also begun to include, where appropriate, LGBTQ+ lives in our permanent exhibitions.

Craig Middleton, Curator at the Centre of Democracy, Nikki Sullivan and Corinne Ball, Curators at the Migration Museum, History Trust of South Australia

Telling the stories of long forgotten women



EMMA-EUGENIA:
Sailed to Van Diemen's
Land in 1842 with
191 women convicts

The Female Convicts Research Centre (the FCRC) has rescued the quiet, the survivors, the childless, the well-behaved and the ordinary from historical oblivion.

From 1803 to 1853, 12,500 female convicts were transported to Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania), as punishment for crimes, mainly theft. After serving their sentences, they were released into the community. Their transportation left a lasting legacy.

The Research Centre promotes interest in these female convicts, by encouraging and facilitating research mainly through its database, website and twice-yearly seminars.

Since 2004, a small group of volunteers in Tasmania has coordinated a much larger cohort of local, interstate and overseas volunteers to systematically trace and study Tasmania's female convict pioneers. This not-for-profit organisation was the first community research group in Australia to see that a whole-of-population approach would yield new knowledge.

The volunteer genealogists have recorded the details

of over 12,500 women into an online database, hosted events to celebrate and explore the lives of convict women, researched convict institutions and researched, written and published stories and books through *Convict Women's Press*.

The Female Convicts in Van Diemen's Land database contains the records of every female convict transported to Tasmania, covering their lives before, during and after transportation. Volunteers have transcribed information from original records from Australia, Britain and Ireland, including official archives, family records and newspapers. A worldwide membership of over 5,000 volunteer transcribers, academics, researchers, authors and family historians indicates the growing interest in these forgotten women, many of whom were the founding mothers of the Tasmanian community.

By building links with family and local historians in Britain and Ireland, the FCRC has enriched local convict archives with historical data outside the penal and judicial record systems.

The FCRC's goal is to turn state records into personal

biographies, giving each woman a record that brings together as much information as possible about her life before transportation, during her sentence and after she was free.

The online database is a living archive that is readily accessible and a significant resource for family historians and academic researchers.

Volunteers work from home but connect with people all around the world through a common project where they learn to read, understand and transcribe colonial documents and genealogical material, and develop skills in historical research, computing, database coding and entry.

Membership of the Female Convicts Research Centre has grown to over 6,500 people from across the world, but a core group of volunteers manages and completes most of the work we do. Volunteers transcribe convict documents and research convict lives. These volunteers are scattered across the globe, working in teams and individually to ensure that the life courses of the convict women are recorded.

Female Convicts Research Centre, Tasmania

THE CASCADES FEMALE
FACTORY: South Ho-
bart. Source: Archives
Office Tasmania



One volunteer, Arthur, in Scotland, travels to Edinburgh, digitises trial records, and works with a team to transcribe those records and to research the family history of those women. Keith in Portsmouth, Devon, has scoured newspapers for information on crimes and punishment and has transcribed the petitions against transportation. The Cornwall FHS has researched the lives of all the women from Cornwall. Many Family History Societies from across the UK and individuals with particular knowledge of women transported from their towns and villages have contributed material to our transportation pages. The Liverpool and South West Leigh FHS team, led by Pat, continues to send in research material each day!

Many other volunteers in the UK send in information as they find it. Volunteers in almost every Australian state contribute to both pre and post sentence research, transcribing medical journals, inquests, newspaper reports, and later trials, as they help to construct the pre and post transportation life of each convict.

Our members include volunteer transcribers, academics,

researchers, authors, and family historians, many of whom publish their research to tell the convict story. Our associate, Convict Women's Press Inc., www.convictwomenspress.com.au was established to publish our research.

The website <https://www.femaleconvicts.org.au> is a rich source of information gathered by our volunteers over more than a decade. We update this website and our database regularly and sometimes daily, as our transcribers continue to provide new information. Some of the popular features are:

Convict Lives: which tell the human stories and looks at the genealogy of convict families.

Convict System: The administration of the convict system is clearly explained in these pages. The Petitions against transportation give an insight into family life at the time of conviction.

Convict Institutions: Female convicts and/or their children spent time in various convict institutions including hiring depots, convict nurseries and the factories.

Convict Ships: Our researchers

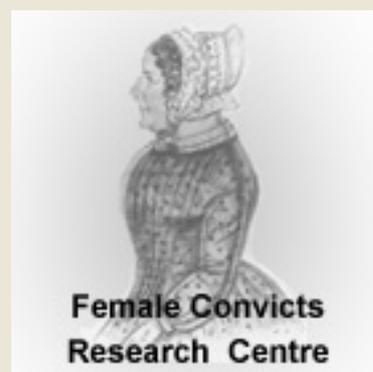
have transcribed many of the medical records kept by surgeons on board the ships. Our researchers also look into the system of disposal of female convicts on arrival.

The Database

The Female Convicts in Van Diemen's Land Database began in 2004 as a grass roots volunteer community project connecting descendants with their female convict ancestors. The database continues to serve an important role for the community, and has become a significant resource for family historians and academic researchers who have used the data transcribed by FCRC volunteers. Records added through the Founders and Survivors project have enriched the database. The database has evolved into a living archive, a project growing and changing over time as new sources of information become available.

We have shared our transcriptions and our research widely, and particularly with the Founders and Survivors Project when we worked closely with Professor Janet McCalman and Dr Rebecca Kippen and we appreciate their generous support and their acknowledgment of our work.

Colette McAlpine, Volunteer
Dianne Snowden, President,
Female Convicts Research
Centre, Tasmania



What's Work Worth?



WHAT'S WORK WORTH: Wool Cluster -shears, washboard and acetylene lamp.

How do museums represent women and work? What do their collections tell us about the work that women (and by implication, men) do? How do museums represent all the recent changes in women's work which have taken place? Do some objects symbolise women's work more than others? Are there 'women's' objects? If yes, do objects have a gender, or do they help construct gender? Or is gender simply a figment of our socially constructed imaginations? What is women's work? How should museums represent it?

These are some of the questions we invented and sought to answer as we created the 'What's Work Worth?' exhibition. Our aim has been to use feminist theory to rethink traditional museum practices and to use radical curatorial practices to rethink feminism. We think the way the rope weavings in the exhibition reframe women's traditional handwork is a great start.

'What's Work Worth?' takes a broad look at Australian women's experiences of work. It explores this through the ordinary, everyday objects in the NPWHF collection and with reference to our existing exhibitions. It

poses two sets of questions. First: though women's work has changed dramatically in the last few decades, has it increased women's worth? Was the fight for equality a radical or, as Germaine Greer has argued, a profoundly conservative act¹? Second: How do our ideas about gender mediate how we view objects? How do the objects we like, hate, use, own or don't own, 'gender' us? If it is true that children are conditioned by the objects they play with, is it possible that adults are also conditioned by the objects they use?

The objects we have chosen and the way we have clustered them are designed to unsettle the notion, implicit in our previous exhibitions, that changes in women's work necessarily and solely signify progress. They are designed to provoke curiosity rather than defensiveness, to help us question what society values and what negative attitudes the demand for inclusion may have reinforced.

In 'unsettling' the notion of progress, we also hope to

1. 2015, *All About Women Festival*, International Women's Day, Sydney,

challenge the idea of a universal 'woman'. Whilst entering the paid workforce certainly changed the lives of many women who previously stayed at home, it barely touched the lives of working class women who, almost by definition, have always done paid work. One woman's achievement, depending on her class, race, age, marital status, sexuality, physical abilities etc may be another's demise.

We also hope to unsettle the idea that an object means the same thing to all people. We want you to think about the relationship between the object and its user, the object and its maker and the different contexts in which objects are valued. A lace handkerchief made by a woman of leisure has a very different set of meanings to a lace handkerchief made by a girl in a children's home.

Our second theme is to make visible the invisible and find value in the mundanity of lived experience. We want to reveal and revere what we have been taught to dismiss and ignore. This means identifying and articulating the contradictions embedded in each object, enabling us to see them in new



When we look at bread tins, do we see the bakers or the bread tin makers?

ways, allowing us to imagine what could also 'be'. Thus for example, when we look at bread tins, do we see the bakers or the bread tin makers? If the former, do we see commercial bakers, often men, or domestic bakers, usually women? Do we see the raw materials that went into their construction? The people who gathered the tin, forged it into steel, transported across the globe. Or do we see the people whose lives such common kitchen items sustained through the food it helped produce?

The ordinary people whose existences make the world go around. Should museums encourage us to see everyone who participated in this small testament to human ingenuity and connectedness? Or should they frame our vision and demand that we focus on only one aspect at a time?

Our third theme is to tell a national story with a local perspective. As Nicholas Gill has argued: 'Not recognising how local contexts inform

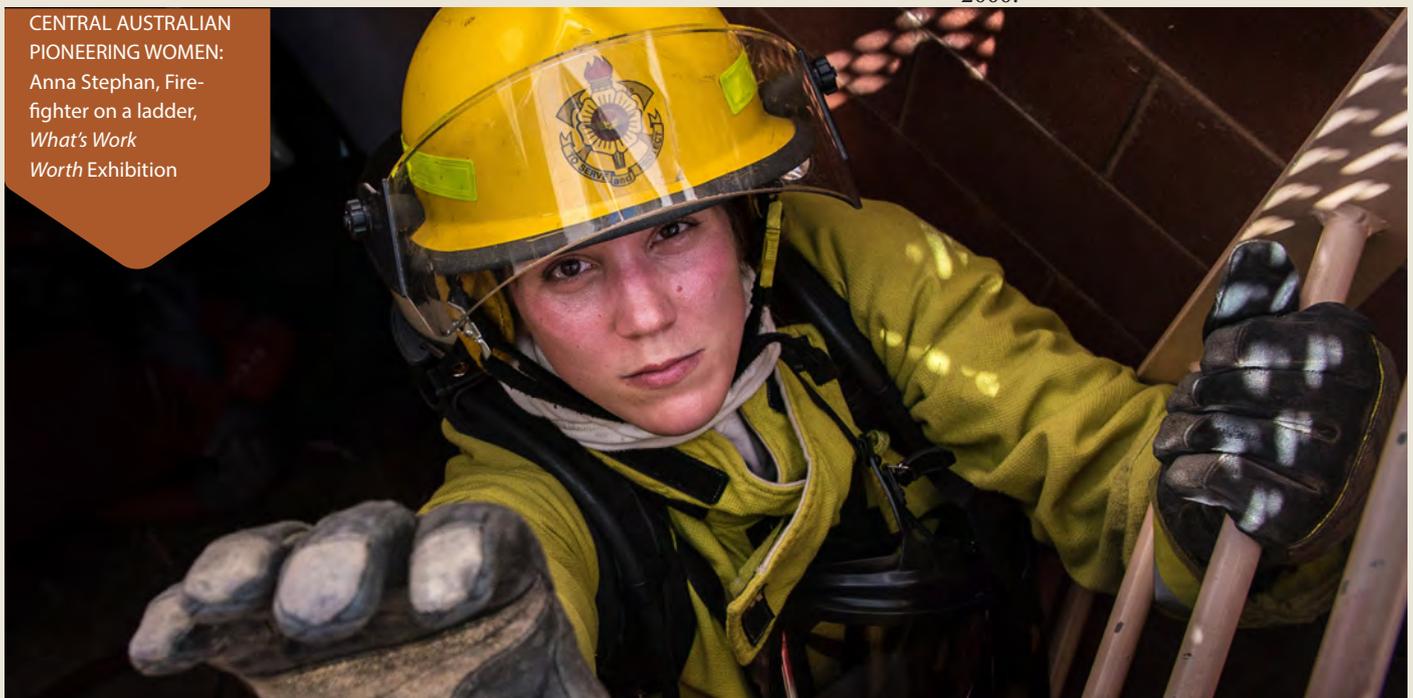
debate beyond the local and how extra-local, often historical contexts constitute the local precludes meaningful dialogue. At the same time, localities and their complexities can show globalising or stereotyping perspectives to be fatally flawed. One possible outcome of the failure to appreciate these entanglements of scale can be entrenched positioning that foreclose the potential for envisioning new outcomes.'²

As our other exhibitions show, Central Australia's pioneering women, black and white, often transcended narrow, nationally endorsed stereotypes about women's work. This new exhibition aims to honour their contribution by recognising the extraordinary in the mundane and the ordinary in the extraordinary.

Dianna Newham, Curator, National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame and Megg Kelham, Historian

2. Gill, Nicholas. *Outback or at Home?: Environment, Social Change and Pastoralism in Central Australia*: Australian Defence Force Academy, School of Geography and Oceanography, 2000.

CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN PIONEERING WOMEN: Anna Stephan, Fire-fighter on a ladder, *What's Work Worth* Exhibition



Celebrating diversity



OLDER LESBIANS: Barb and Barb hold hands (the *Hold Hands on a Tram* Project to reclaim lesbian history. Photo: Dr Catherine Barrett

'I had my eyes opened to past injustices, present inequities and the amazing ability of individuals to overcome adversity'

It was a sunny autumn morning in Launceston as I drove alongside the Tamar River. I was looking for the home of an older woman who had volunteered to be part of the Australian Lesbian and Gay Life Stories Oral History Project. It was an important interview. Older lesbian women who were willing to talk about the past were difficult to find, particularly outside of the main Australian cities. 'Ruth' (not her real name) promised to be an interesting and informative source of that elusive aspect of history--the forgotten and the marginalized. Over the next four hours Ruth told her story as I prompted with questions and monitored the fancy National Library Australia digital recorder anxious to successfully preserve her memories. As the morning slipped into afternoon I sipped water and she red wine from a cask tapped frequently from its

place of semi concealment in a kitchen cupboard.

Ruth's home was neat and unpretentious. It contained photos of her adult children and grandchildren. There were lots of papers that Ruth consulted as she told me of her childhood growing up in rural Tasmania, her close relationship with her father, her marriage to Henry, the births of a daughter and then a son, the breakdown of her marriage, the many jobs she undertook including house building, the beginnings of her relationships with women, past partners, loss, loneliness and old age. It was the scope of a human lifetime. But it was no ordinary life, not that anyone's ever is. Ruth was a woman of her generation but she felt she did not fit very well. Conventional marriage did not suit. Her attraction to women had to be hidden until

recent years. Even her current neighbour was standoffish as Ruth had a small rainbow flag on her front deck. At least she felt that was the cause of their distance.

I conducted 12 interviews of the 60 for the Australian Lesbian and Gay Life Stories Project that ran from 2012 to 2015. It was a joint collaboration between Macquarie University for whom I worked as the project research assistant, the University of Queensland, the University of Melbourne and the National Library of Australia and funded by an ARC Grant.

There were six interviewers, Robert Reynolds, Shirleene Robinson, Clive Moore, Graham Willett, a doctoral student Daniel Vaughan and myself. We travelled all over Australia from Denmark in Western Australia to

BOOK PUBLICATION:
Gay and Lesbian, Then and Now: Australian Stories from a Social Revolution, Robert Reynolds and Shirleene Robinson



The book ‘highlights one important strand of the research findings, the increasing ability of lesbians and gay men to live ordinary lives in contemporary Australia.’

Alice Springs and Darwin in the Northern Territory, Toowoomba in Queensland, country Victoria and South Australia. I was stranded by a fallen tree on the way to a cattle property, entertained by a drag King and had my eyes opened to past injustices, present inequities and the amazing ability of individuals to overcome adversity.

The 60 interviews are housed at the National Library of Australia. Most are open access and some available online. Some are closed access due to the wishes of those interviewed or the possibility of defamation. They chronicle the extraordinary social change over the past six decades in Australia as attitudes towards homosexuality have shifted significantly. The two lead researchers, Robert Reynolds and Shirleene Robinson, published a book based on the project findings. (Reynolds, Robert, and Shirleene Robinson. 2016.

Gay and Lesbian, Then and Now: Australian Stories from a Social Revolution. Carlton: Black.) The book focuses on 13 of the interviews ranging from men and women in their 80s to their 20s. It highlights one important strand of the research findings, the increasing ability of lesbians and gay men to live ordinary lives in contemporary Australia.

It’s a cheering thought that homosexuality has, in a sense, gone mainstream and one reinforced by the passing of legislation in 2017 to allow same sex marriage. But it’s not the whole story- that is contained in the hours of interviews in the National Library Australia. The hardship, the agony of perceived difference, the resistance to diversity, religious persecution, physical and emotional abuse—the sheer bravery shown and persistence of lesbians and gay men of all ages and occupations, those living in rural areas and in

the city, to be themselves.

The Australian Lesbian and Gay Life Stories collection is a valuable source for the community and academics both now and in the future. It also enabled those interviewed to tell their stories and in so doing celebrate diversity. About a year after the interviews concluded I was informed that a woman I had interviewed had died. Her partner was going through their possessions and had come across a copy of our interview. She’d sat and listened to it, reliving the day of the interview, the life of her partner and aspects of their relationship. It had helped with the healing, the process of grief. It was a tangible reminder of a sometimes difficult life but one well lived.

Dr Julia Miller,
Director of Academic Affairs,
Sydney, CAPA The Global
Education Network

'The collection is unique in being the only repository of historically significant material relating to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and intersexed people in Western Australia.'



THE FIRST GAY PRIDE MARCH, IN WA: Perth 1990.

The collection of The Gay and Lesbian Archives of Western Australia Inc. (GALAWA) contains significant discrete collections, which have been donated to the Archives for preservation as complete collections, with their integrity maintained and provenance recorded.

The Lespar Library, the largest of these collections, contains over 4,000 feminist and lesbian books and other material. The library operated from a private residence (Library) in Perth from 1978-1994.

The complete series of the *Westside Observer*, a gay community print publication and other Western Australian published material in the collection is also highly significant for informational or research value.

These primary sources are important for research on the history of law reform for gay and lesbian people in this state, as well as many other issues to do with freedom and equality.

They are a valuable resource for educators, students, political commentators, historians and the communities of Western Australia.

Some of the material in the collection is significant for aesthetic or artefactual value.

One example is a Church Rainbow Altar Flag made in the 1980s for the MCC - Metropolitan Community Church; a lesbian and gay church; donated to the Archives by Max Karnaghan - MCC Priest.

The Archive also holds and preserves significant personal material documents, that record the lives and experiences of individual gay and lesbian people.

Much of this collection, such as oral histories and personal interviews, is precious, not only for the rarity of such personal recollections, due to the danger of disclosure in the past; but also because this material is not to be found elsewhere.

There is great social significance in that much of it has come to the Archives because there is an understanding that it will be respected and dealt with more sensitively in this context.

The gay and lesbian people who donated this material see these Archives as the most appropriate and safe place for their personal material.

The interpretive potential of the collection is very significant. Very little interpretative work has been done with this material in the past, due to discrimination and the ambiguous legal situation gay and lesbian educators found themselves in after the Foss Amendment of 1989.

This statement by the Parliament (Foss Amendment of 1989), while decriminalising sexual acts between consenting adults in private, added a statement saying the Parliament disapproved of the promotion or encouragement of homosexual behaviour; (Preamble to the Law Reform (Decriminalisation of Sodomy) Act 1989 WA). This



25 years of Pride festival history on display at the Museum of Perth in 2015

amendment particularly affected educational institutions. The initial proposal to establish GALAWA came into existence in the mid-1990s and GALAWA was Incorporated in October 1998. The archive is housed securely in the Special Collections area of Murdoch Library. The archive functioned and was accessible until the mid-2000s.

A new GALAWA committee formed at the end of 2015. Since then GALAWA has assisted several researchers with scholarly research and access to the collection for papers and curatorial exhibitions. One such exhibition celebrating 25 years of Pride W.A. curated by Guy

Gomezze was held at the Museum of Perth. The Museum is an initiative of the Perth History Association Inc, a not-for-profit organisation founded in 2015. The Museum chronicles the social, cultural, political and architectural history of Perth.

Now with the assistance of the Murdoch Special Collections team, the GALAWA committee is working towards reactivating the archive, expanding the collection and making the archive accessible digitally with the assistance of future funding, ensuring the sustainability of the archive at a time of limited volunteerism and resources.

Guy Gomezze,
Co-convenor of GALAWA,
Perth



Indian History in Australia australianindianhistory.com



Visitor at the Australian Indian History Photographic Exhibition



Nehchal Singh reunited with the history and photograph of his Great Grandfather Desanda Singh, who was in the AIF, WW1



The 100th year Last Post Ceremony at the AWM in 2017 for Sarn Singh, AIF, WW1.

The Australian Indian Historical Society Inc., (AIHS) was formed in 2002, following an approach by the Chairperson of Multicultural Commission of Victoria, Mr. George Lekakis. Mr. Lekakis requested that the AIHS write a history of Indians in Victoria, in such a way that it would reduce racism towards Indians, and to make members of the Indian community feel at home in Australia. And finally to write it in such a way that other ethnic groups could use it as a template for their histories.

At this time most of the publications on Australian History ignored the contribution that ethnic and other minority groups contributed to the development of Australia. Because of this, it was necessary to refer to official documents, biographies and diaries etc. This new approach revealed a wealth of information that was previously unknown. This new information challenged the accepted thinking in the Indian Community and their place in Australian History.

AIHS published this new information in Volume 1, of, *Are Indians an Ethnic Minority?* This was an introductory volume and in it we discussed the recall from India of Governor Phillip with his Officer Corps, to mount the First Fleet, and explained that all convicts transported to Australia were transported in ships owned or under the control of the English East Indian Trading Company. The only exception to this was the ill-fated Second Fleet. These ships were in the main manned by Indian sailors called Lascars. This was the first interaction between Indians and Europeans in Australia. We added to that information, by saying that four of the first five Governors in New South Wales had served in India and the administration of early Australia was based on technological transfer from India.

In 1790 Governor Phillip ordered Lieutenant Bowen to Calcutta for urgently needed supplies ¹ and this proved so successful

¹ Kenna, Len, *Are Indians An Ethnic Minority?* Vol. 1. Discovering Victoria, p. 165

DIAMOND VALLEY LIBRARY: Liz Pidgeon, local history librarian with Len Kenna, Co-Director AIHS.



that the British Government ordered that all supplies required for New South Wales were to be purchased in India if they could not be purchased at a cheaper rate in England or the Cape of Good Hope. As a result of this order, ships were dispatched from India with a wide range of goods for the new Colony including horses, cattle and domestic animals. These animals formed a major part of the foundation herds in Australia.

After the New South Wales Corps was disbanded in 1818, they were replaced on a rotational basis with Regiments from the British Armies in India. Many of the Officers in these armies travelled with their Indian batmen and these batmen along with a few Indian indentured labourers were the first Indians to migrate to Australia. As a result of serving in Australia a number of British Officers resigned their commissions and migrated to Australia. They invested their wealth in Australia and this strengthened the small and struggling Australian economy. They also purchased large tracts of land and named their properties after places in India. A number of towns such as Lucknow in Victoria, Walwa in New South Wales are cases in point. In 1900, one hundred horsemen from India came to Australia to celebrate the Federation of Australia January 1901. Only two other countries sent military contingents to Australia. They were the United Kingdom and New Zealand.

Are Indians an Ethnic Minority? Volume 1 includes the historical account of the Sydney Cove (a Snow Class Vessel), which departed from Calcutta bound for Port Jackson in 1796. The vessel was manned by 8 Anglo Indians, (Officers and Crewmen), and 44 Indian Lascars. It was run aground on Preservation Island

AIHS PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION: Kapil Dev with Crystal Jordan, Warrnambool, Victoria, 2010.



'most of the publications on Australian History ignored the contribution that ethnic and other minority groups contributed to the development of Australia'

in Bass Strait in early February 1797. Three Anglo-Indians and fourteen Lascars set sail in the longboat for Sydney but it was swamped off the Ninety Mile Beach, Victoria. They attempted to walk to Sydney, fourteen of the men died along the way and the remaining three were rescued near Wattamolla. The survivors reported to Governor Hunter that they had crossed a Strait. Governor Hunter sent George Bass to investigate their claim that a strait existed. It was these sailors that discovered the Strait, not George Bass. These sailors were the first non-indigenous people to land in Victoria, the first to undertake an overland journey. The discovery of Bass Strait made sailing from Cape Town to Australia much safer for both man and beast. As a result English horses and cattle were imported from Great Britain and these were used to breed up horse and cattle herds, which at that time were mainly small Indian breeds.

AIHS travelled to various temples with *Are Indians an Ethnic*

Minority? Volume 1, discussing the rich history of Indians in Australia but we were at a loss to get our story read and believed. With the passing of time we assembled a Pictorial Exhibition and Pictorial Book of Indians at work, at play and at worship.

We took the Pictorial Exhibition to the Temples, Sporting Events, Indian Festivals, Parliament House in New South Wales and Victoria and to India. We published stories on our website and Facebook that explained the images in the Pictorial Exhibition: it was virtually interactive. This approach was embraced by the Indian Community and the Exhibition became a window into their past. Because of this approach most Indians living in Australia today understand that Indians of all ethnic backgrounds have a strong and long term connection with this country and this has given them status and a sense of belonging in Australia.

Len Kenna & Crystal Jordan
Directors of Australian Indian
Historical Society Inc.

Tales from the East: India and New South Wales



Historic houses bring rich context to their narratives. In contrast showcase museums struggle to match this contextual abundance. The dilemma is that the stories and ideas behind the lives of the occupants of houses are often invisible to visitors who see the principal message as being about taste and style.

With Lindie Ward and Robin Walsh I recently curated an exhibition for the National Trust at Old Government House, Parramatta exploring early colonial connections between Parramatta and India - *Tales from the East: India and New South Wales*. The first step was to find a logical link with the house.

The oldest extant part of the building was built in 1799 but the property was tripled in size during Governor Macquarie's administration, largely achieving the form it has today. The ground floor interiors are a scholarly recreation of the house at the end of the Macquarie period based on an 1821 inventory.

While a few of the residents of Government House, Parramatta had Indian service, Lachlan

Macquarie (1761-1824) has the strongest connections having arrived in Bombay in August 1788 and left India, for the last time, on 19 March 1807. It was his work in India that led to the apogee of his career as Governor of New South Wales from 1810 to 1821. Just as importantly his life in India is well documented.

The synergy between Macquarie's earlier career, his role in shaping the Parramatta house as well as its Macquarie period room settings, provided the opportunity to use it to conjure up his Indian life as a springboard to explore early colonial associations between Australia and India and show how modern day Australians of Indian heritage are enriching the culture of western Sydney.

The methodology was to use a neutral space, the cross hall, to illustrate episodes from Macquarie's India using excerpts from his journals to explore themes such as *Macquarie's Bombay, Entertainments, Excursions, War, Love and Death*.

The ground floor period rooms have been left intact but with

sensitive insertions to highlight Indian connections. For example the cross hall uses Macquarie's journals to introduce the third and fourth Mysore wars which were fought between Tipu Sultan and the East India Company. This theme is then further developed in the dining room using the dinner Macquarie held at Government House Sydney on 4 May 1819 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Tipu's defeat at the fall of Seringapatam.

To the portrait of George III which hangs over the fireplace have been added images of the Governor General the Marquis of Wellesley and General Harris as well as the Nizam of Hyderabad, Britain's ally. They face their rivals across the room where a replica of Johan Zoffany's full length portrait of Tipu Sultan and of Tipu's ally Napoleon Buonaparte, hang.

The dining table is set to represent some of the people who were at the 1819 dinner including three veterans of Seringapatam: Lachlan Macquarie, his aide-de-camp Henry Colden Antill and the Barracks Master Charles

JOHAN ZOFFANY'S
1780 PORTRAIT OF
TIPU SULTAN: from the
original in Tipu Sultan
Museum, Srirangapatna.
Image courtesy of Eric Sierins



McIntosh; two officers, James Erskine and James Taylor who left NSW to serve in Madras and Edward Close, later of Closebourne Morpeth, who was born in India.

Drawing rooms were typically feminine in their decoration, so fittingly this room compares the use of silks, muslins and chintzes in European and Indian fashions in the early 19th century. It includes Anna Josepha King's muslin evening dress, one of the oldest provenanced items of clothing in Australia.



In Macquarie's office, *The Governor Intervenes*, examines the case of William Browne who between 1816 and 1818 brought

approximately 40 Indian servants to NSW. They made serious allegations of mistreatment at the hands of the Browne family including beatings, verbal abuse, inadequate food and clothing, loss of caste, non-payment of wages and denial of liberty. Macquarie ordered an investigation which resulted in the servants being returned to India at Browne's expense. The Butler's pantry has an audio-visual installation called *Finding George Jarvis* which explores the life of a servant Macquarie purchased in the slave market in Cochin in 1795.

The north colonnade features botanical exchanges between India and Australia, while the furniture of the Parramatta breakfast room is compared to an Anglo-Indian interior in Patna. Upstairs *Indian Accent* examines stylistic differences between English, Anglo-Indian and Australian colonial furniture while *Town and Country* compares the architecture of vice-regal residences in Calcutta and Barrackpore, Bombay and Parell, with those of Sydney and Parramatta.

Works of Faith observes that St Thomas' Anglican Church Bombay, which Macquarie

attended, was a relative late-comer to that city's rich religious scene, having been consecrated in 1718. Bombay has much older Hindu and Muslim shrines. It then compares the churches erected by Macquarie in Sydney with mosques and temples erected in more recent times by Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian Australians of Indian descent. The holy books of the faiths including the Quran, the Avesta, the Bhagvad Gita and a Bible translated into Urdu which was donated in 1822 to the Bible Society of NSW by Bible Society of Calcutta are on display.

The exhibition concludes its exploration of cross-cultural exchange with profiles of modern-day Desi Australians. The word desi derives from Sanskrit and means one of our country. Desi Australians are people who like Macquarie have journeyed from India to NSW. Like Macquarie the four people profiled are making significant contributions to Australian life.

Tales from the East: India and New South Wales is on show until 26th August, 2018.

Ian Stephenson,
University Curator,
University of New England

Diversity through history



PRIVATE AUGUSTUS 'GUS' HODKINSON DAVIES: Auntie Paula Williamson-Babarovich with photograph of her grand-father, Photo: Damien Peck, ABC Brisbane

'Engaging with local communities has reaped rewards for The Society'

Since August 1913, the Royal Historical Society of Queensland has proudly preserved Queensland's rich history in many ways, most notably through regular public lectures and the publication of a Journal renamed the Queensland History Journal in 2008, which has been circulated since 1914. One of the values outlined in the Society's 2016-2020 strategic plan is Respect for the cultural diversity of Queensland and its different voices and stories. The Society has delivered some remarkable outcomes in this area.

First Australian culture has been an enduring focus of The Society. Thomas Welsby's discussion *Recollections of the natives of Moreton Bay: together with some of their names and customs of living* was published in The Historical Society of Queensland Journal in August 1917.¹ The Society's collection includes string bags, weapons and a

1. Thomas Welsby, 'Recollections of the natives of Moreton Bay: together with some of their names and customs of living', *The Historical Society of Queensland Journal*, vol.1 no.3 August 1917, 110-129.

remarkably fine jawun (bicornual basket), as well as Oscar Friström's pastel and oil portraits of indigenous Australians. In 2014 Charles Villiers Jordison's watercolour portrait of indigenous serviceman Gus Davies featured in the exhibition *Call to Duty: Stories from the Great War*. Davies enlisted with the Australian Army in 1917, serving in Egypt and France. He again served in the Second World War at the No.1 Garrison Battalion at Sandgate.

The Society engages with local communities by hosting exhibitions that celebrate Queensland's multicultural heritage. In 2012 The Society curated *The Italian Presence*, which shed light upon the role that the Italian community has played in Queensland's development. In 2017 The Society hosted the exhibition *Ties that bind: Lebanese in Queensland*, which brought together objects and documents that evidenced the journey of Lebanese immigrants to Queensland, making a new life in a socially and legislatively discriminatory environment in

the 1880s to maintaining strong cultural ties to their communities to this day. The Society lends its collections to enrich the story of Queensland's history, including early portraits to Brisbane's Newstead House and colonial jeweller Charles Allen Brown's silver model wheelbarrow to the Supreme Court Library. Recently, The Society developed brochures in a number of languages, allowing a wider audience to learn about Queensland's past.

Engaging with local communities has reaped rewards for The Society. Honouring Gus Davies's military service in the *Call to Duty* exhibition re-established contact with Davies's extended family, providing new information and context about their ancestor's life and achievements. Similarly, curating community-driven exhibitions has increased the visibility of The Society, widened awareness of the benefits of diverse communities, and brought previously untold stories to light. This was evidenced at the opening seminar of the *Ties that bind* exhibition, where notable Lebanese Australians provided perspectives on

TIES THAT BIND

Lebanese in Queensland

The Lebanese presence in Queensland stretches back to the 1880s.

Who were these people and why did they choose to make Queensland their home?

The exhibition will be launched in conjunction with a one day seminar celebrating and exploring this little known history.

Collaboration between
Australian Lebanese Historical Society
(Queensland) &
The Royal Historical Society of Queensland

22 April
EXHIBITION
OPENING



EXHIBITION POSTER:
The Ties that Bind,
collaboration between
ALHS and RHSQ

their experience and practical discussions on researching Lebanese history and records held in Queensland collections. Papers on these subjects were published in *The Queensland History Journal*.²

Anne Monsour, exhibition curator and President of the Australian Lebanese Historical Society notes:

2. Anne Monsour, 'Enduring Bonds: Lebanese immigrants in Queensland', and Yvonne Matta, 'A Lebanese-Australian family story', *The Queensland History Journal*, vol.23 no.6 August 2017, 359-384.

*I have observed an excitement on the part of Lebanese immigrants and their descendants about having their story taken seriously. It is I think what Barry York described as 'an emotional need on the part of some to learn about their parents' or grandparents' part in Australian history and not just about 'everyone else's' parents or grandparents.'*³

3. Barry York, 'Australian Ethnic History Survey: A Report', *Australian Historical Association Bulletin* ed.68, September 1991, 38-42.

After the seminar, a shared lunch of Lebanese food - an important cultural activity - opened conversations between seminar speakers and audiences. As one attendee noted:

It was a wonderfully successful way of bringing people together to hear a range of cultural heritage experience about which they were not previously aware, including piecing together experiences of people they did not know although the experiences were similar.

Though engaging with cultural diversity brings great rewards, it also presents challenges. The Society's commitment to promoting cultural diversity throughout Queensland, and its role as the preeminent history body in Queensland affords a forthright position on these issues. The Society initiates contact with indigenous representatives regarding cultural matters pertinent to its programming and collections; and looks forward to maintaining these productive conversations. The Society's Welsby Library regularly receives requests about community history, and holds many sources to assist researchers in understanding the evolution of Queensland's communities.

Queensland is built on a rich cultural tapestry, and The Royal Historical Society of Queensland is proud to work with local communities to share their cultural heritage. This challenging yet rewarding outreach has enriched both The Society and its audiences. We look forward to strengthening these bonds and creating new conversations in the future.

Timothy Roberts,
Councillor, Royal Historical
Society of Queensland

Documenting the History of the Lebanese in Australia



Mary Moses, Nee Nasser, in West Wyalong, 1920s



Herbert Debeck, hawker in the Hunter Region, 1930s.



Mary Saad, cafe and milk bar, Manning Street, Taree, 1940s.

Archival photographs from the Australian Lebanese Historical Society Collection.

People from the area now known as Lebanon have lived in Australia since at least the early 1880s; however, their story has often been overlooked in the recording of Australian history. In 2000, a group of volunteers, many of whom were the children and grandchildren of the original immigrants, founded the Australian Lebanese Historical Society (ALHS). Incorporated in New South Wales, the ALHS is a non-religious, non-political organisation that aims to catalogue and preserve relevant records and to extract their meaning through providing an historical context. Membership is open to people of Lebanese descent, their families and others interested in the history of Lebanese in Australia. The ALHS, which has members throughout Australia, has for almost two decades, facilitated the recording and telling of the Australian/Lebanese story by developing its collection, encouraging research, producing publications and exhibitions, and organising regular events that include the wider community as well as ALHS members.

An important feature of the ALHS is its connection with community. Indeed, its beginnings lie in the recognition by Australians of Lebanese descent that their parents and grandparents' stories were largely absent from the Australian story and a realization that they needed to act to fill this gap. The growth of the Society and the community response to its projects, seminars, publications and exhibitions reveal a genuine appreciation of the Society's efforts not only to preserve but also to tell their story. The Society's ongoing oral history project and development of a collection of records relating to the history of Lebanese in Australia demonstrates the preparedness of Lebanese immigrants and their descendants to share their stories, documents, memorabilia and photographs. Members and their families are encouraged to be actively engaged in the Society's activities through workshops to develop research, writing and oral history skills; by participating in the development of projects and attending



INAUGURAL ALHS COMMITTEE 2000:

L-R Back Row: Paul Convy, Lillian Melick, Anita Wastie, Gemilie Mellick, Freda Backes, Alissar Chidiac; L-R Front Row: Dr Helen Crane, Dr Glen Coorey, Marilyn Bashir

functions; and by contributing to publications such as the newsletter which is produced four times a year.

Through its activities and its affiliation with other historical societies, the ALHS aims to situate the history of Lebanese in Australia within the Australian story and thereby contribute to the understanding of the diverse nature of Australia's history. To achieve this, the Society promotes the work of academics, family historians (professional and amateur), writers, and artists whose focus is the Lebanese/Australian experience. Members of the Society speak at history seminars, conferences and other historical societies and the ALHS regularly participates in events such as History Week (NSW). The Society seeks to inform a wider audience through its website, Facebook page and publications. *Lebanese Settlement in New South Wales: A Thematic History* and *The Lebanese in Sydney* are both available online and many other articles are accessible through the ALHS website. In another example, a book and DVD produced as part of the Society's *Raw Kibbeh: Generations of Lebanese Enterprise* project (Qld) was distributed to over 70 libraries and historical societies. The Society also responds to many inquiries from academics, students, family history researchers and the media.

A significant milestone occurred in 2017 when the archives and historical collection of the Society became available to researchers at the National Library of Australia in Canberra, ACT. For many years, ALHS volunteers led by Paul Convy as honorary librarian, worked to create an archive that was accessible to researchers. Having accumulated a significant and unique collection and knowing

LAUNCH OF THE RAW KIBBEH PROJECT: Mary Saide, Antonia Simpson, Michael Saide and Gabrielle Saide



the Society with its limited resources could not guarantee its maintenance, the NLA was asked to consider taking the collection. In its favour, the collection was well-prepared, particularly thanks to Paul Convy's contribution, and included a range of materials about the history of Lebanese in Australia of use to academic researchers as well as family and local historians. The NLA's willingness to house the ALHS collection recognises its importance not just for the Society but for all Australians. A detailed guide to the collection by Paul Convy is available on the ALHS website.¹

The ALHS also works to highlight and preserve heritage sites specific to Australian Lebanese. One such project was the restoration of a group

of Lebanese Heritage Graves in Cootamundra cemetery. While significant to people of Lebanese heritage, the graves which date back to 1896 also illustrate the diversity of the modern Australian story. The Society has also conducted a number of Redfern Heritage Walks to highlight what remains of the Syrian (Lebanese) Quarter where many of the early Lebanese immigrants lived and worked. The Queensland Branch of the Society created a 2015 calendar to document objects connected to Lebanese ancestry and family immigration history. This project helped inform the Society's collaboration with the Royal Historical Society of Queensland to create the *Ties that Bind: Lebanese in Queensland* exhibition in 2017.

While of obvious interest to Australian Lebanese, the work of the ALHS reveals that history has many voices, the inclusion of which provide different perspectives of Australian history.

Anne Monsour,
President, the Australian
Lebanese Historical Society

1. Paul Convy and Anne Monsour, *Lebanese Settlement in New South Wales: A Thematic History*, (Sydney: Migration Heritage Centre, New South Wales, 2008), <http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/mhc-reports/ThematicHistoryOfLebaneseNSW.pdf>; 'The Lebanese in Sydney', *Sydney Journal*, 1 (2) June 2008, pp. 70 -78, <https://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/lebanese>; *Documenting the History of the Lebanese in Australia*, <http://alhs.org.au/>