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Newsletter



Communicating history and heritage: the telegraph and other milestones and anniversaries From the President

Welcome to the June 2022 Newsletter (Number 53). We are looking forward to continuing the work of the FAHS in the post lockdown world. We trust that you enjoy the range of articles in this issue.

Our optimism about the ongoing future of history and heritage is tempered by the news that three historical societies in the Sydney metropolitan area have closed permanently. We are concerned to learn about this and we trust that this will not become part of an unwelcome trend.

Although the requirements vary across the various jurisdictions, this is a timely reminder to all historical and local societies of the need for an up-to-date constitution. Where possible the constitution should seek to ensure that any surplus property

of the association (such as collection items and books) be transferred to another not-for-profit organisation with similar objects.

We have also learned of the difficulties facing the Richmond River Historical Society (RRHS) following the devastating Lismore floods. The RRHS operates the Lismore Museum. Owing to the flood damage, the building housing the museum (*below*) has to be cleaned. This means the entire museum collection has to be moved out of the building.

The RRHS has been seeking funds to assist with the move. Unfortunately, the FAHS is not resourced to provide the financial support to the RRHS or other societies affected by the floods and other disasters.

We can of course support our members' representations to the various funding bodies. Sadly, the plight of the RRHS reinforces the vulnerability of our shared heritage in the face of natural and other disasters.

In closing, have you considered nominating a financial member of one of the Federation's member societies or their affiliated societies for a Fellowship or a Merit Award?

There is information about these awards on the FAHS website at: www.history.org.au/awards/ If you have someone in mind for an award there is still time to submit your nomination to the FAHS as we have extended the deadline until 31 July 2022.

Christine Yeats



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Communicating history and heritage: the telegraph and other milestones and anniversaries



Introduction

FAHS Councillor Margaret Anderson and I co-edited this issue of the FAHS Newsletter.

We selected the overarching theme of Communicating history and heritage: the telegraph and other milestones and anniversaries – in part to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the completion of the Overland Telegraph line between Adelaide and Darwin on 22 August 1872.

As Rosalie Triolo notes in her article, the Overland Telegraph has been deservedly described as ‘the greatest engineering feat carried out in 19th century Australia’.

Today real time communication with those on the other side of the world is taken for granted. In this anniversary year it’s timely to remember just how important the project was for the Australian colonies.

The telegraph line between southern and northern Australia was a crucial step in linking the country to England and the rest of the world via the Java-

to-Darwin submarine telegraph cable. Messages that once took months to arrive could be delivered within hours.

Graham Shirley, Derek Pugh, Rosalie Triolo and Margaret Anderson have considered the ‘Overland Telegraph’ and its impact differently.

Graham writes about the film documentary, Rosalie looks at school texts, Derek gives us an historical account and Margaret discusses the ‘inadvertent’ beginnings of the feminisation of the office.

Our choice of theme also provided an important opportunity for the relationship between history and heritage to be explored.

As our contributors demonstrate, such discussions rarely follow a single thread. Roslyn Russell writes about a maritime history discovery of a rare copy of James Horsburgh’s *Directions for Sailing to and from the East Indies, China, New Holland, Cape of Good Hope, and the Interadjacent Ports*.

Alice Springs Telegraph Station, now the centre of the Historical Precinct where visitors can immerse themselves in the history of the Alice Springs Telegraph Station and discover the origin of Alice Springs as a town and its interesting characters.

There are numerous remnants of the 12 repeater stations along the route between Adelaide and Darwin - some restored like this and others merely ruins or a scattering of rocks and other remnants of this pioneering achievement.

Image: <https://alicespringstelegraphstation.com.au/>

The link between place and time is a recurring message in Bruce Pennay’s discussion about the project to digitise the Bonegilla Migrant Reception Centre name index cards. Fiona Bush’s ‘little tale’ titled ‘Archaeology as Heritage’ reminds us of the importance of going back to the primary documents.

Christine Yeats
with Margaret Anderson

A Review of Constructing Australia: A Wire Through the Heart (2007)



'Camp of the Overland Telegraph Workers at Roper River, Northern Territory, Approximately 1870'

Creator: Samuel Sweet

Courtesy: National Library of Australia

Accession Number: 15307 2856

Portraits below courtesy: State Library of South Australia

Accession no: (Todd) B 26817

Accession no: (Stuart) B 501

Produced by Film Australia's Making History initiative, Piper Films, and the South Australian Film Corporation, the 55-minute documentary *A Wire Through the Heart* (2007) describes how the construction of Australia's overland telegraph was enabled by the first crossing of the Australian continent by Europeans in 1862.

While previously it had taken four months for news to travel from Britain to Australia by ship, from 1872 the overland telegraph allowed Australia to communicate with the outside world within hours. It was a breakthrough just as radical as the internet, and its construction was one Australia's great engineering feats of the 19th century.



John McDouall Stuart

A Wire Through the Heart was made for the television series, **Constructing Australia**. The other two documentaries in the series are *The Bridge*, made to celebrate 75 years of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, and *Pipe Dreams*, which related the construction between 1896 and 1903 of a water pipeline across the 530 kilometres from Perth to Kalgoorlie.

Each of the **Constructing Australia** documentaries intended to tell the story of an engineering triumph and to explore the human drama behind the people who led these achievements.

Charting the construction of the overland telegraph, *A Wire Through the Heart* focuses on the achievements of the skilled, highly knowledgeable explorer John McDouall Stuart (1815-1866) (left) and the mathematician, astronomer, meteorologist, and electrical engineer Charles Todd (1826-1910) (right).

Once Stuart had found an overland route from Adelaide to Darwin in July 1862, the way was clear for the running of a telegraph line through the centre of Australia to the north

coast, where it would connect to a series of submarine and land-based cables all the way to London.

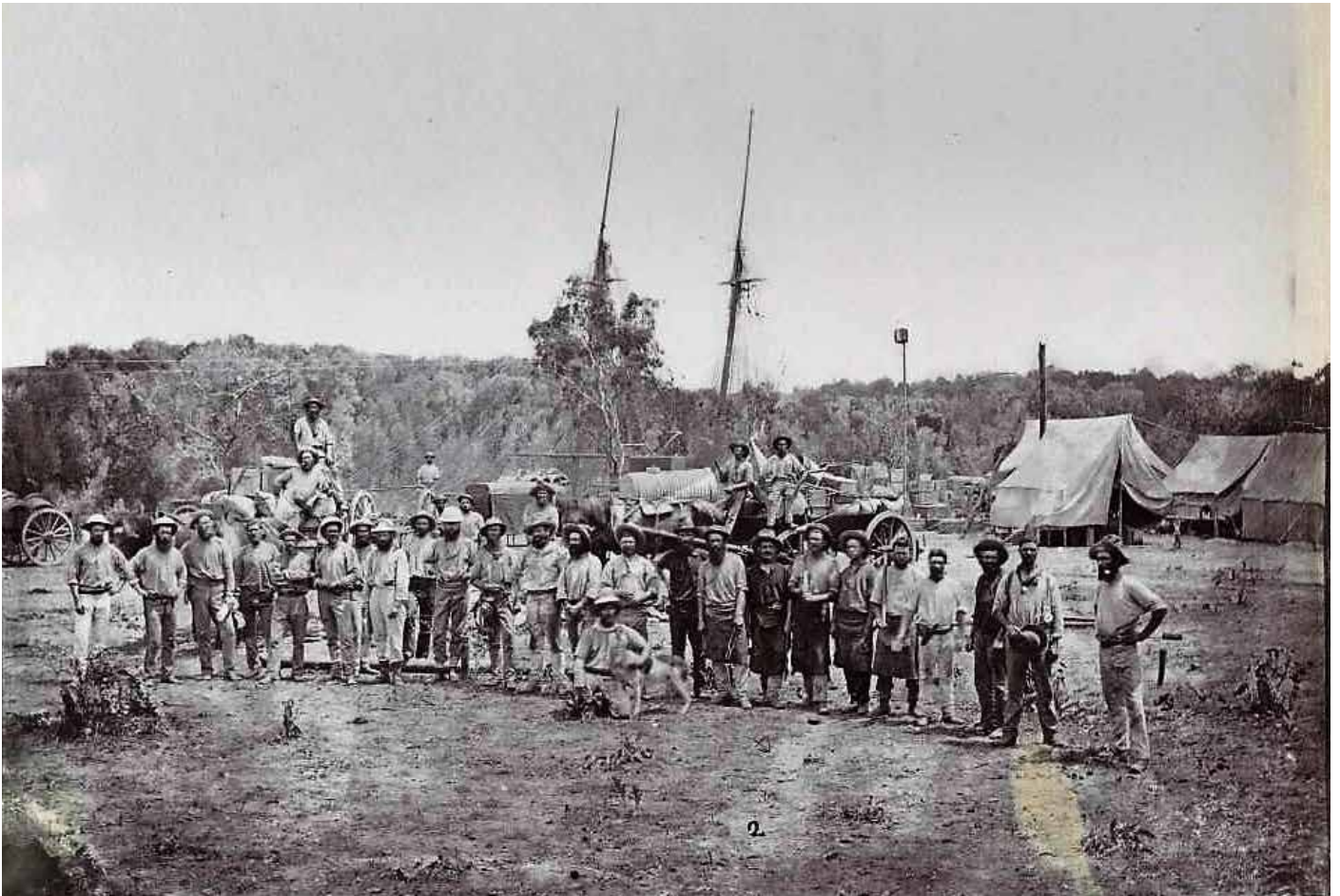
Construction finished on 22 August 1872, and within months the line was linked to the Java-to-Darwin submarine telegraph cable.

Charles Todd and John McDouall Stuart were diverse personalities. John Jenkin writes of Todd that he was a 'benevolent autocrat', and: 'Small but robust, he was shrewd, resourceful and hard-working, but also kindly and playful, delighting especially in puns'.¹



Charles Todd

A Wire Through the Heart



Like Todd, Stuart was of small stature, but his life had its share of ill health and poverty, and the Australian Dictionary of Biography calls him 'a lonely and independent figure, with a fierce pride'.²

A Wire Through the Heart establishes how the careers of Stuart and Todd were intertwined - in Stuart's case, by a determination to find a route for the line, and Todd's, to lead the project that would construct it across 3200 kilometres.

Both were answerable to the South Australian Government, which was determined to have its then colony be the first to run a telegraph line across the continent for the economic and status benefits it would bring.

Early in the narrative, Todd is established as the project's overarching visionary, his fascination with new telegraphic technology motivating him, in 1856 to run

a telegraph wire from Adelaide to Port Adelaide, reducing information travel time from a day to a minute.

Stuart's talents as an explorer included his ability to find water by studying Aboriginal tracks, the direction birds flew, and the lay of the land.

A Wire Through the Heart's re-enactments of Stuart's journeys to find a way across the continent emphasise the most arduous of his barriers, such as Indigenous opposition, razor wire-like scrub, intense drought and heat, and his physical suffering.

Todd's challenges are shown to include having to plead with the South Australian parliament for the opportunity to lead the construction of the overland telegraph and overcoming what initially seemed insuperable problems in the building of its northernmost section.

'Workers on the Overland Telegraph Line, Southport, Port Darwin, Northern Territory, approximately 1870'

Creator: Samuel Sweet

Courtesy: National Library of Australia

Accession Number: 153072257

During its making, *A Wire Through the Heart* had the added challenge of showing more of the Australian continent's landmass than either of the other *Constructing Australia* documentaries. Although it positions Charles Todd and John McDouall Stuart as equally significant figures, most of *A Wire Through the Heart's* running time depicts Stuart's attempts to cross the continent.

Todd shoulders the brunt of the South Australian and intercolonial political and business pressure, but it is the physical extremes which Stuart endures

A Wire Through the Heart

(dehydration, exhaustion, sandy blight) and puts himself through (alcoholic benders when not exploring) that the filmmakers give greatest emphasis, reinforced for the viewer by the reality that while Todd was hailed a hero, Stuart died in obscurity.

To reinforce Todd's significance, *A Wire Through the Heart* begins with Todd sending his first overland telegraph message to London, and at the documentary's end we see him receiving his first reply.

As motion picture film was not available until the 1890s, the events of *A Wire Through the Heart* had to be mostly told through dramatised reconstruction blended with surviving photographs, present-day footage of key locations, animated maps, newspaper articles, and interviews with historians. My only criticism is about the portrayal of events chosen for some of those reconstructions. While written accounts of Stuart's story usually give a balanced version of his considerable skills and achievements as an explorer,

the emphasis *A Wire Through the Heart* places on Stuart's abovementioned illnesses and drunkenness gives the impression that he was very often barely able to cope, which was not the case.

Otherwise, the documentary's script – co-written by veteran stage, TV and radio writer Rob George and *A Wire Through the Heart's* director, Darcy Yuille – is well and persuasively structured. Additionally, Yuille deploys his outback and urban heritage locations well, capturing at times vivid landscape images that linger in the memory.

Premiering on the ABC in 2007, *A Wire Through the Heart* and the other episodes of **Constructing Australia** have had an ongoing educational and sales life during the years since. All three programs have had the benefit of downloadable teachers notes in addition to separate pages (with links to playable clips) available on the [National Film and Sound Archive website](#). Viewing copies of the entire Constructing Australia series can be purchased from NFSA's online shop.

Given the real-life drama involved in John McDouall Stuart's expeditions and the line's construction, it would be easy to assume that Australia's overland telegraph story had been tackled by at least one feature filmmaker or TV drama producer long before *A Wire Through the Heart*. But not so.

In 1939 pioneer Australian

filmmaker Ken G. Hall announced he would produce and direct a feature called 'Overland Telegraph, an epic of early Australian colonisation'.³ Nevertheless, in late 1940 the feature output of Hall's production company Cinesound was suspended for the duration of World War 2, and the postwar years failed to bring either more Cinesound features or Hall's overland telegraph film.

But from the 1940s onward, Australian documentary films, miscellaneous sound recordings, radio and TV programs about the overland telegraph did include those telling of its construction. Among the several items NFSA holds about this subject are the AWA (Amalgamated Wireless Australia) radio program *This is Australia: Overland Telegraph* (c. 1949), and Peter Luck's overland telegraph mini documentary in his *Bicentennial Minutes: A Time to Remember* (1988) TV series.

In 1951 the Public Relations Film Unit of the Postmaster-General's Department produced the colour documentary *In the Footsteps of Sir Charles Todd*, which featured footage of the route of the overland telegraph line from Alice Springs to Darwin. This film and the ABC's *No Longer Alone* (1972) are also held by the NFSA. *No Longer Alone* commemorated the overland telegraph's centenary and was the 100th episode of the ABC's popular **A Big Country** television series. As well as showing the crucial role modern communications play in the lives of the people of Central Australia, the program charted the overland telegraph's history.

Graham Shirley



'The Overland Telegraph Line' - Bob Carew up a pole of the overland telegraph, 1921

Creator: Jack Laver

Courtesy: State Library of South Australia

Accession number: PRG 1365/1/133

1. John Jenkin, 'Sir Charles Todd' - <https://sahistoryhub.history.sa.gov.au/people/sir-charles-todd>

2. Peter Bowyer, 'John McDouall Stuart' - <https://sahistoryhub.history.sa.gov.au/people/john-mcdouall-stuart>; Deidre Morris, 'Stuart, John McDouall (1815-1866)' - <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/stuart-john-mcdouall-4662>

3. 'Courier Mail' [Brisbane], 25 May 1939, p. 12.

The Overland Telegraph Line



On 22 August 1872 Engineer Robert Patterson joined the 3,000 km long Overland Telegraph wire at Frew's Ponds in the bush in Australia's Northern Territory.

Morse code messages were then tapped out between Darwin and Adelaide for the first time, taking minutes to cross the country instead of weeks.

As promised, at 1 pm precisely the first official electric telegram arrived in Adelaide from Port Darwin.

Patterson and the 10 men gathered around him celebrated by smashing a brandy bottle against the final pole and firing their pistols 21 times into the air.

A string of congratulatory messages was soon transmitted from across the country: consuls and vice-consuls, politicians, and

senior public servants all took their turn.

The most quoted text came from Post and Telegraph Master General Charles Todd, then camped beside Central Mount Stuart:

... We have this day or within two years from the date it was commenced, completed a line of 2,000 miles long through the very centre of Australia a few years ago a terra incognita and supposed to be a desert, and I have the satisfaction of seeing the successful completion of a scheme I officially advanced 14 years ago.

The newspapers were enthusiastic, and the telegraph departments partied. A public holiday was announced, and banquets were announced.

Darwin 22 Aug 1870

Planting the first pole in Darwin 1870.

State Library of South Australia B 4638

The Overland Telegraph Line is held by many, even these days, to be no less significant for 19th century Australia than the 'giant leap' event was to the world in the 20th century. Indeed, many claim it was Australia's greatest engineering achievement of the 19th century.

A few weeks later, at 9 AM on 20 October, after the undersea cable between Darwin and Java was repaired by men on the Investigator, the line opened for communication between Australia and London.

Continued

The Overland Telegraph Line



Just imagine what a difference that made for business investors, war watchers, news hounds, and English patriots keeping in touch with 'Old Blighty'.

Australia's geographic isolation from her 'mother country' and the 'tyranny of distance' were immediately and forever ameliorated.

News now arrived from London within seven hours, rather than two or three months. It was then broadcast by the newspapers as up-to-date news for the first time in Australia's history.

Businessmen placed orders, did their banking, and gathered market information. Farmers sold their wheat or wool stocks. Colonial governments received directives directly from the British parliament. Prosperity and wealth blossomed.

This year, 2022, marks the 150th anniversary of the joining of the line and telegraphic communication between Australia and Europe.

A commemoration, planned by NT Heritage, is to be held on 22 August near the very place Patterson joined the wire on the final pole (at the Charles Todd Memorial 650 km south of Darwin), followed by an event at the actual joining pole, 1.6 km through the bush to the west.

There, we will re-enact the celebrations held by Patterson and his team. We will smash a Hennessey's Brandy bottle against the pole, and fire (cap-gun) pistols into the air 21 times.

The event will be filmed for a documentary now in the planning stage called *Twenty to the Mile*, after

'Powell Creek Telegraph Station 1895

State Library of South Australia B 9854

my book. TV News cameras and print media representatives will also be there, and we will be showcased on several social media platforms and on www.OT150.net

We are expecting a crowd of between 200 and 300 people: various VIPs, the Variety Club, Mates of the Marranji, Morsecodians and many others will be there.

They were exciting times. *Twenty to the Mile* celebrates the sesquicentenary of the joining of the wires on 22 August 1872.

It tells stories of the hundreds of men, and occasional women, who worked on the line, used it, relied on it for survival, or died on it during the 19th century.

Derek Pugh OAM,

Facebook: www.facebook.com/twentytothemile

Web: www.twentytothemile.com.au/

Film web: www.OT150.net

Go Fund Me: www.gofundme.com/f/film-twenty-to-the-mile-the-ot



Twenty to the Mile by Derek Pugh.

How the telegraph revolutionised communication in Australia and inadvertently began the feminisation of the office

It was a momentous day in 1872 when the overland telegraph line finally linked Darwin to Adelaide.

Within weeks Darwin was linked to Java and from there to the rest of the world, shrinking communication times between Europe and Australia from months to hours.

The Australian telegraph network had also spread rapidly since the very first line was built between Melbourne and Williamstown in 1854. By the late 1850s each of the major capital cities was connected, although Perth had to wait until the late 1870s before the difficulty and expense of installing a line across the Nullarbor was overcome. Soon post and telegraph offices dotted the countryside.

In this sesquicentennial year marking the completion of the overland telegraph, much of the focus will be on the technical aspects of telegraphic history and on the heroic efforts of those who built the line. And rightly so: it was a huge engineering achievement.

We also know much more now about the multi-racial history of the line's construction, and about the on-going legacy of Chinese and other communities in inland regions of Australia in the wake of the telegraph.

But there are other aspects of the broader social history of telegraphy that are far less known, and yet their impact may well have been equally revolutionary. They include the early employment opportunities telegraphy provided to women, who until this point were largely excluded from office work.

The 19th century office was a quiet workplace, free of mechanical noise. All communication, from business



S T Gill, 'Post & Telegraph Offices & Mechanics Institute Castlemaine', c.1862. Arthur Wilmore engraver
Reproduced courtesy State Library Victoria

letters to brief messages, was handwritten, and the records of business were also maintained by hand. Armies of clerks kept the wheels of government and business turning and all were men. The pace of communication was slow. Letters of instruction to colonial officials from the British Colonial Office might easily take several months to arrive, while even intercolonial correspondence was dependent on coastal shipping at first.

This changed overnight with the advent of the telegraph, and it was soon an essential tool of business, newspapers and government, although its cost curtailed wider private use. In 1854 the rate for a telegram in Melbourne was 2 shillings and sixpence for less than 10 words, with three pence for each additional word (exclusive of name and address). International

telegrams were vastly more.

As usage expanded, the rates charged fell. In 1885 the telegram rate within Victoria was sixpence for six words, with one penny for each additional word. Even so, telegrams were sent sparingly, and in a private context often presaged bad news.

Like the clerks, the first trained telegraphers were men, but this soon changed. In an unprecedented move, the Victorian Post Office began to train women as telegraphers from the 1870s.

By then some women had already found employment in the Victorian postal service, although their numbers were few. Most were widows, often the widows of postmasters, and their appointment was often based on personal patronage.

Continued

Communications Revolution

The advantage to the post office was cost saving, since women were paid significantly less than men, even when they performed the same work. This reflected common gendered divisions within the 19th century workforce overall. Probationary (female) telegraph officers were trained in a special women's room at the Central Electric Telegraph Office, where the young aspirants studied under the eagle eye of a woman supervisor. Probationers were unpaid for six months, but at the conclusion of their training could apply for appointment as assistants in the post office, with the possibility of promotion to post mistress. There was never a shortage of recruits.



Other young women flocked to the classes in telegraphy offered from 1872 by the new Industrial and Technological Museum in Swanston Street. It offered classes for a fee and was swamped with female applicants.

Although female telegraphers were required to hold a certificate in telegraphy, there was no such requirement for men, most of whom learned the trade on the job, after starting as telegram boys.



TOP: Telegraphy School, Technological Museum, Melbourne, 1872

Samuel Calvert engraver

RIGHT: Telegraph Office employees, Melbourne, 1949

Telegraphers are seated at teleprinters. Both male and female telegraphers can be seen in the photograph.

Reproduced courtesy State Library Victoria

Continued

Communications Revolution

As the number of women employed in the post office increased, their visibility attracted some adverse comment. In 1879, during a general administrative crisis in the Victorian public service, exaggerated newspaper commentary accused the postal service of saving money by ousting men with families in favour of employing women.

Forced onto the defensive, the Deputy Postmaster General reassured critics that most of these women regarded their employment as temporary, maintained only until they achieved 'the more befitting station to which they naturally aspire' [meaning marriage], but since many of the women employed were either widows or women with other dependents, his observation should probably be taken with a grain of salt. In fact, many were long-term employees of the postal service.

As the differing colonial postal services moved towards

amalgamation into a new federal service after 1901, it seemed at first that the position of women might improve. In response to an equal pay decision in the NSW service, female postal employees formed the Victorian Women's Post and Telegraph Officers' Association, led by the able spokeswoman Louisa Dunkley.

It was largely through their efforts that the principle of equal pay for postmistresses and telegraphists was included in the *Commonwealth Public Service Act* in 1902. But it was a pyrrhic victory: after 1900 no new postmistresses were appointed and fewer female telegraph officers were given permanent appointments.

However the female telegraph officers (or telegraphists as they were called) had forged an important path for women, and soon others would invade the masculine preserve of the office. They came in the wake of two other inventions of the late 19th

century, the telephone and the typewriter, both of which were soon appropriated by women.

Although very far from an equal workplace, the 20th century office employed increasing numbers of women as telephonists, typists and secretaries, transforming the face of white-collar work in the process.

Margaret Anderson

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David Carment, *Australia's Northern Capital: a short history of Darwin*. Historical Society of the Northern Territory, Darwin, 2005.

Gideon Haigh, *The Office: A Hardworking History*. Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2012

Claire McCuskey, 'Women in the Victorian Post Office', in Margaret Bevege, Margaret James & Carmel Shute (eds) *Worth Her Salt: Women at work in Australia*. Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1982

Old Treasury Building, 'In the office', *Lost Jobs: the changing world of work* <https://www.oldtreasurybuilding.org.au/lost-jobs/in-the-office/>

Shepherd, 'The significance of the Overland Telegraph Line, 1872-1901', *Journal of Northern Territory History*, No. 7, 1996, pp. 41-44



Typist Pool, H V McKay Massey Harris, Sunshine, March 1952. Reproduced courtesy Museums Victoria

Thousands of young women trained as typists and secretaries until the advent of the desktop computer in the 1980s made them redundant.

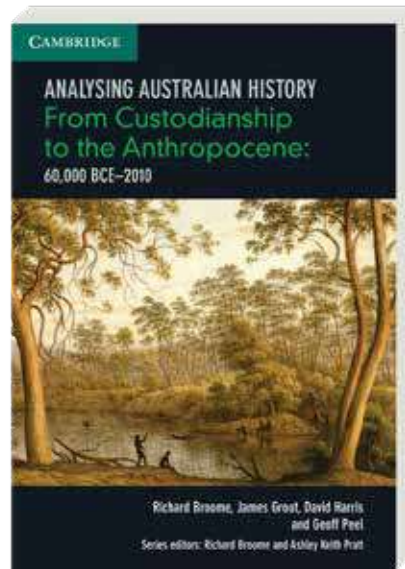
Textbooks that Traverse the Nation: New Research and Resources for Australia's Historical Societies

The National Museum of Australia describes the construction in August 1872 of the Overland Telegraph line between Adelaide and Darwin as 'the greatest engineering feat carried out in 19th century Australia'.

Within months, 'the Telegraph was linked to the Java-to-Darwin submarine telegraph cable, and Australia's communication time with Europe was reduced from months to hours. Australia's isolation from the rest of the world was lessening': <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/overland-telegraph> (accessed 21 May 2022)

But Australia has for centuries – indeed, millennia – been connected to the world, and Australia's history is all the more fascinating a study when one seeks the diverse peoples, places and perspectives within and beyond Australia that have shaped Australia's history and the recording of it.

As for the teaching of Australia's history with its connections to diverse peoples and places past through to present, not enough Australians know that Victoria is the only state or territory to offer a dedicated Australian History course at Year 12. The usual response of audiences on learning this is disbelief. History educators in other states and territories (and there are many excellent ones) will often declare that features of their Year 12 offerings are relevant to, or contain sufficient elements of, the Australian experience. They also sometimes argue that Australia's history has been covered to excess in junior levels, thus, school teachers and students wish to undertake different historical studies in the senior years.



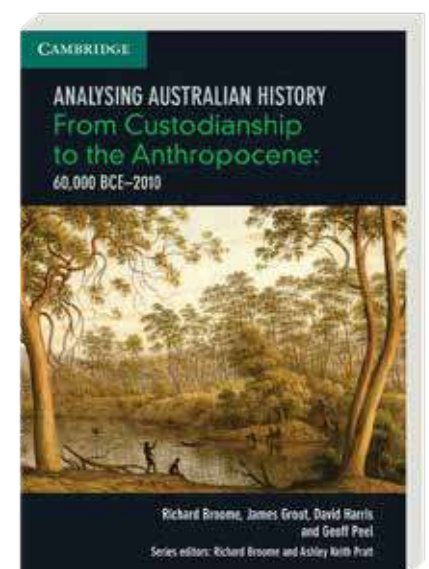
More could be said here, including about the alarmingly common administrative perception in too many schools nationally that 'anyone can teach Australian history'. This often means that non-History teachers who are unaware of the very nuances and complexities capable of bringing the history to life – in tandem with students' developing intellectual capacity across their schooling to explore more complex topics in greater breadth and depth – treat the subject superficially, repetitively and dispassionately. These are only some of the grim realities.

Nevertheless, a band of teachers, historians and curriculum authorities in Victoria has rallied anew to retain, if not increase, the number of Year 12 students undertaking the new Australian History Study Design. They have won the argument that every nation should offer at the highest level of schooling a rich and diverse history of itself; indeed, the multiple histories of Australia's places, its peoples and their differing perspectives. They have argued that all residents of Australia today are products of, or live in one way or another

with, the outcomes of those pasts. The times of delight as well as of distress can inform our thoughts and actions in our present and in our futures. Australian history is fascinating to know, and important to know.

On learning that there would not be the foundation of even one high-quality textbook to support Victoria's Year 12 teachers and students with the new Study Design, the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, through its president, Emeritus Professor Richard Broome, swiftly assembled a team of Victoria's best historians and teachers. In a remarkable collaboration with Cambridge University Press, and despite some concerns that one textbook could never be ready in time, a series of four textbooks was created and is now supporting teachers and students in the inaugural year of the Study Design, 2022.

An additional benefit is that the textbooks are being used by teachers as teacher background or for the activities 'as are' or 'adapted' where Australian history can be found in years 7, 9, 10 and 11.



Continued

Textbooks that Traverse the Nation

The series is entitled *Analysing Australian History*. The four books are:

- » *From Custodianship to the Anthropocene: 60 000 BCE-2010*
 - » *Creating a Nation, 1834-2008*
 - » *Power and Resistance, 1788-1998*
 - » *War and Upheaval, 1909-1992*
- https://www.cambridge.edu.au/education/series/Analysing-Australian-History?utm_source=edumar&utm_medium=newsblog&utm_campaign=vceaustrhistory#YpBX16hBxnI (accessed 21 May 2022)

But this article is less about school history than it might seem; the series has rich applications in settings other than schools, including historical societies.

The Council of the Federation of Australian Historical Societies is aware that many societies wish to engage more with schools. A review of the books reveals that they are immediately useful 'manuals' to inform societies' work.

They provide the latest 'big picture' historical research if not specifics related to emphases or

items in many society collections nationally.

Although each state and territory has different curriculum documents, there are sufficient indications in the books of historical content and curriculum terminologies as relevant to most states and territories.

The books provide opportunity to reinforce societies' current work, make societies aware of new directions – perhaps even encourage societies to display items that have not been displayed for some time.

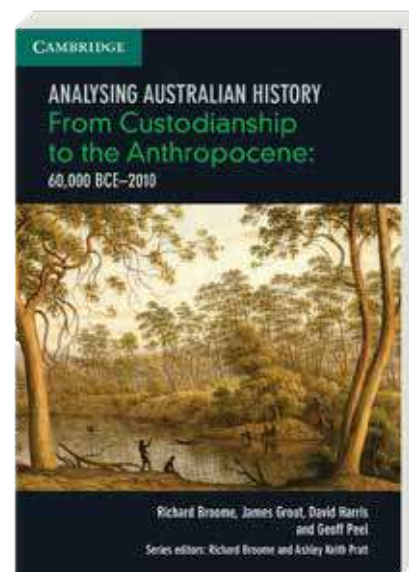
They offer the most-current scholarship in language currently considered appropriate for, and sensitive to, the likely diverse audiences experiencing school incursion or excursion programs.

There is a wealth of instant 'questions' and 'activity prompts' to engage middle-senior secondary students or be adapted to societies' purposes at other school levels.

And, all of the above can be relevant to historical society programs and permanent exhibitions enjoyed by adult non-school visitors.

The latest research and terminology offers societies the means by which to write or revise exhibition panels and object captions. The same opportunities apply to GLAM educators in galleries, libraries, archives and museums in their work with school and public programs overall.

The quality and format of each book challenges the usual expectation of a textbook. Each is a professional non-A4 adult size with gloriously colourful covers. Within each are clear time-lines, maps and glossary side panels, with black and white and colour images bedded comfortably alongside text. There is an



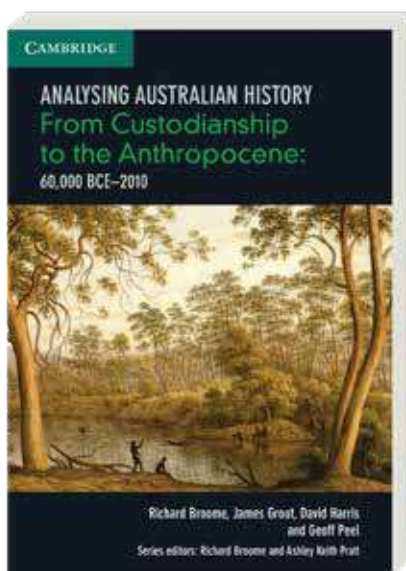
effective heading hierarchy, and the detailed endnotes for each section respectfully acknowledge intellectual property and offer further research leads.

Historical societies embrace passionate peoples of all professions and interests who volunteer time to care for and communicate about Australia's histories.

The authors and supporters of this textbook series have given the survival of VCE Australian History its best-possible chance, simultaneously creating opportunities for applications in Australian history communities beyond schools.

The Overland Telegraph offered opportunities for many Australians to extend their connections with, and knowledge of, the world, and vice versa, and it facilitated opportunities for more Australians to connect with each other. The Cambridge University Press *Analysing Australian History* series affords the opportunities to expand the work and worth of local historical societies Australia-wide.

Rosalie Triolo



A Maritime History Discovery in a Historic Homestead at Braidwood

'Bedervale' is an historic homestead at Braidwood, New South Wales. The homestead is the property of the Royds family, while the collection relating to the previous owners of 'Bedervale' for 130 years, the Coghill-Maddrell family, is owned by the National Trust of Australia (NSW).

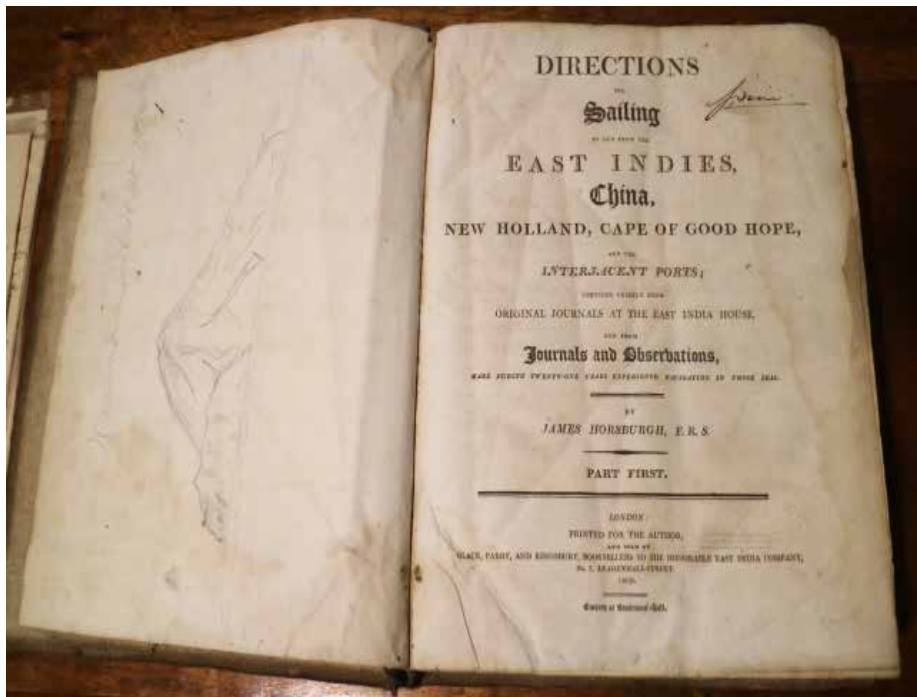
The collection ranges from fine furniture and artworks, rare books and manuscripts, musical instruments and sheet music, clothing and accessories, to maritime and scientific measuring instruments, tools and items of domestic life, providing a time capsule of material culture of great depth and complexity.

It is within this vast and diverse collection that a significant volume in the history of navigation is included, among others in 'Bedervale's' impressive book collection.



Captain John Coghill, who in 1836 commissioned colonial architect John Verge to design 'Bedervale', had a successful

nautical career as a ship's captain and part-owner. He made many journeys in the early 1800s between his base in the United Kingdom to India and China and other Asian destinations, before captaining the *Mangles* on four journeys in 1820, 1822, 1824 and 1826, bringing convicts to the colony of New South Wales. His wife, Jane Coghill, voyaged with him on the *Mangles'* second voyage to Australia in 1822.



After arriving in New South Wales in February 1826, Coghill sold his share in the *Mangles* to his partner, Captain Carr, and embarked on the next stage of his life as a prosperous settler, well connected to the colonial gentry of New South Wales, including Surveyor-General John Oxley, for whom he worked at 'Kirkham' near Camden; members of the Macarthur family, and other leading citizens such as Alexander Berry of Shoalhaven.

A copy of a rare book in the 'Bedervale' collection, James Horsburgh's *Directions for Sailing to and from the East*

TOP: Bedervale, front elevation.

ABOVE: James Horsburgh, *Directions for Sailing to and from the East Indies, China, New Holland, Cape of Good Hope, and the Interadjacent Ports of 1809*. Rough sketches of coastline, possibly by John Coghill himself, are featured on the flyleaf.

Continued

A Maritime History Discovery

Indies, China, New Holland, Cape of Good Hope, and the Interadjacent Ports of 1809, has physical characteristics that relate directly to its use on board ship by Captain Coghill before he retired from the sea to become a landed proprietor at Braidwood. The book has been bound in sailcloth, fastened to the cover by string roughly stitched to the fabric. The cover is stained in parts, most likely by sea water, testifying to its use in rough conditions.

The story of the book's author is in itself part of the saga of maritime navigation. James Horsburgh was motivated to write *Directions for Sailing to and from the East Indies, China, New Holland, Cape of Good Hope, and the Interadjacent Ports* by a catastrophic error that had caused a ship, the *Atlas*, which he was navigating as first mate, to be wrecked on the Indian Ocean islet of Diego Garcia in May 1786. Born into a Scottish family in 1762, Horsburgh was educated for a life at sea, and trained in mathematics, navigation and book-keeping. He embarked at 16 as a cabin boy on a coal trader, and continued his sea-going career in ships plying between India and the

East Indies.

His life took a fresh turn after the wreck on Diego Garcia, from which he was rescued with other survivors after six months of bleak existence at the small settlement there, then made his way to Bombay.

Horsburgh, determined to produce more accurate navigational charts so that future wrecks could be avoided, continued to sail as a ship's navigator between India and China, making meticulous notes, and constructing charts of the Straits of Malacca, the western side of the Philippine Islands and from Dampier Strait through Pitt's Passage towards Batavia, each accompanied by practical sailing directions. The charts so impressed Alexander Dalrymple, Hydrographer to the East India Company, that the Company published them.

Horsburgh also carried out observations between 1802 and 1804 of mercury rise and fall in two marine barometers, noting variations according to proximity to land, which interrupted the regular flow observed in the open sea. The Royal Society published this discovery, and made Horsburgh a Fellow.

The culmination of Horsburgh's observations and chart-making over 21 years of navigational experience was the *Directions ...* book that Captain Coghill used on his voyages, and is now in the Schoolroom at 'Bedervale'. Horsburgh published the first two-volume edition in 1809, and it was only then that his expertise in oriental navigation was widely recognised. He was rewarded with the position of Hydrographer to the East India Company in 1810 after Alexander Dalrymple's death in 1808. He continued to publish navigational charts that earned the trust of masters of vessels plying those routes, and of the merchants whose goods the ships carried,



Rough stitching secures the cover to the book.

All photos: Roslyn Russell

until his death in 1836 – the year that Captain Coghill commissioned the design of 'Bedervale' from John Verge.

As a tribute to 'one of the greatest hydrographers in history',¹ a group of British merchants in Canton collected donations for a lighthouse to be constructed in James Horsburgh's memory. This was duly erected in 1851 at the eastern end of the Straits of Singapore, and called the First Pharos of the Eastern Seas or, simply, the Horsburgh Lighthouse. The Latin inscription on the lighthouse honours 'Horsburgh the Hydrographer who is famous beyond all others in the Indo-Chinese sea'.² And the location of the wreck of the *Atlas* on Diego Garcia in 1786 that set Horsburgh on his path to becoming the 'Nautical Oracle of the World'³ is now known as the Horsburgh point.

Roslyn Russell

1. 'James Horsburgh', *Hydro International*, *op. cit.*

2. 'Horsburgh Lighthouse', Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horsburgh_Lighthouse

3. Significant Scots – James Horsburgh, *Electric Scotland*, https://www.electricscotland.com/history/other/horsburgh_james.htm



Water-stained sailcloth cover of Captain Coghill's copy of Horsburgh's *Directions ...* of 1809, a physical reminder of the rigours of life at sea.

Archaeology as Heritage

This little tale is about how an archaeologist was asked to investigate what was thought to be an archaeological site, with limited documentation.

Ironically, the primary documents, if they had been consulted, held all the clues!

Australian colonial history is full of home-grown histories based on stories told to the authors by maybe their grandparents, which often end up being wrong. But once printed, it is amazing how rapidly these stories become fact.

An example of this relates to a rather idyllic spot to the east of Perth known as St Ronan's Well.¹ In an article presented to the WA Historical Society in 1928, Mrs T. Pelloe reported that the remains of the ruins of a mud prison and police station could still be seen at this place.² In addition, an old pioneer had told her that Bishop Salvado had named the well.³ In 1975, the information from this talk was then incorporated into a little book about the Old York Road.⁴

Survey parties headed over the Darling Range, to the east of Perth in 1830 to find better land. The important find was the Avon River and York was established on its banks. Specific springs are not mentioned, but in November 1830, 1,280 acres was set aside for a town near St Ronan's Spring. Bishop Salvado didn't arrive in the colony until 1846; and any further origins of the name have unfortunately been lost. Prior to 1850, 640 acres

around the spring had been removed from the public lands and were reserved for travellers. By late 1835, a stone well had probably been constructed. Convicts arrived in the colony in 1850 and convict depots and road stations were constructed. By 1858, there are references to convicts cleaning out St Ronan's Well and by 1862 there was an additional brick well. A dilapidated brick kiln was noted at the well in 1864.⁵

A police station was established along the York Road in 1864 at a place called The Lakes which also boasted a wayside inn that had been constructed in 1854. The Lakes lies approximately 28 kilometres to the west of St Ronan's Well. There was no need for another police station at St Ronan's with York only 18kms to the east. The Police Gazette of Western Australia makes no mention of a police station at this location. Nor is there any mention of a convict depot being constructed at this site. So, what are these 'ruins'?

I carried out an archaeological survey of the site in 2010. The 'ruins' that were thought to represent the remains of walls were ephemeral. Only one rough 'wall' could be found, and it did turn a corner. But the almost complete lack of evidence indicated that the

scattered remains of a few stones did not make a very small police cell, let alone a station. The most likely



scenario is that the remains represent a low wall onto which a canvas tent could be placed to form a rudimentary hut. It was probably used by the overseer of the convict road parties that stopped there to clean out the well or maintain the York Road. There was a substantial Convict Depot in York and a small convict road station at Greenmount (52 kilometres to the west of St Ronan's Well).

The construction of Greenmount Road Station is well documented. There is no documentary evidence for either a police or convict road station at St Ronan's Well. So, although the archaeological survey debunked Mrs Pelloe's story, it revealed that the place has an excellent source of primary documents, brought to light through archaeological research which enhanced its heritage value.

Fiona Bush OAM

1, St Ronan's Well is located on the Great Southern Highway. It lies 78 kms to the east of Perth and 18 kms from of York.

2, Pelloe, T. (Mrs) 'The York Road', in *Western Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings*, Vol. 1, part VI, 1929, p.10.

3, Pelloe, T., p. 7.

4, *The Old York Road* was the name formerly given to the road that ran between Guildford and York.

5, Millett, Mrs Edward, *An Australian Parsonage or, the Settler and the Savage*, UWA Facsimile Edition, Perth, 1980, p. 49.



TOP: St Ronan's Well. Photograph Fiona Bush

LEFT: This is a view of the 'so-called ruins'. The metre stick marks the line of the only remaining 'wall'. My dog, Smeagol, is sitting near what may have been the other side of the structure. Photograph Fiona Bush.

Digitising Bonegilla Index Cards

At least three groups of people applaud the decision to digitise the Bonegilla Migrant Reception Centre name index cards held at the National Archives of Australia.

First, family historians, who have been the driving force behind the commemoration of the place, welcome the new ready access online.

Similarly, scholars with a wide range of interests welcome the opportunities that come with digitisation to explore the promise such a large body of evidence holds for investigating aspects of post-war migrant reception processes.

And, importantly, onsite and online visitors welcome the way digitisation has helped them to make their own meanings of

place and time.

The Bonegilla cards

Bonegilla Reception and Training Centre was the largest and longest-lasting post-war reception centre. Between 1947 and 1971, it took in about 310,000 people, almost all drawn from non-British countries. It provided temporary, low-cost, accommodation until each newly arrived worker, with or without his/her family, could be dispatched to a job somewhere in Australia.

A specially prepared identification record card was prepared for each non-British newcomer arriving at Bonegilla. These records on 203 x 101 mm cards remain almost completely intact and are held as originally organised in 799 boxes, each

roughly the size of a shoebox, in the National Archives of Australia. The cards follow the usual conventions for establishing identity - name, nationality, date-of-birth, next-of-kin, appearance, marital status and, until 1956, a passport-like photograph. On each card details were kept of arrival and departure dates. Details of items of clothing issued to new arrivals appear on the reverse of the card, indicating the lack of resources with which some arrived.

Family history

Although the information on each card is spare, it helps family historians scaffold their attempts to place themselves and/or their families in some historical context. Family historians have been hungry for these personal records. The National Archives



The Bonegilla cards at Bonegilla in 1971.

Online, the cards have lost the ambience that came with the way they were originally archived. The voice over in this ABC documentary explained the cards as 'lives reduced to statistics'. However, online there is now an impressive rapid succession of multiple images presenting a flicker of faces and names. Source: A still from 'Closing Bonegilla', This Day Tonight, aired 1971, on ABC TV, accessible at <https://about.csu.edu.au/community/initiatives/bonegilla/bonegillas-end>

Continued

Digitising Bonegilla Cards

reports that it was fielding 300 inquiries for immigration records each month in the year before digitisation; about 40 were specifically for Bonegilla cards. Much of this demand has been channelled through the heritage site in Wodonga called the Bonegilla Migrant Experience. There, visitors have been encouraged and helped to apply to the National Archives for copies of the cards.

For family historians and for the imaginative, the magic is in the photographs stapled to each card up to 1956. Nearly all portraits conform to passport conventions and avoid smiles. These are stark, unsmiling images in black and white supplied by migrant applicants. A busy and seemingly unfeeling bureaucracy has fastened the photographs to the cards with staples which sometimes pierce a forehead, an eye, a neck. The images were not intended to be aesthetically pleasing or pleasantly presented. They were simple and cheap identifiers. This increases their value to heritage place visitors as raw, unmediated, authentic evidence at a rare personal level.

Perhaps more than any statistical or documentary source the photographs invite empathy and prompt imaginative response. Visitors are aware of the purposes of surveillance photography and sensitive to how the subjects present themselves to be viewed as objects. Some of those portrayed were visibly uncomfortable and appear uneasy or bewildered; some endured the ordeal with great dignity; some took care to present themselves well with fashionable hats or clothes. Some prettied children to establish their identity beyond the family for perhaps the first time.

Post-war Immigration

The digitisation provides access

B 456	Serial No.
Surname ADAMOWICZ	
Christian Names Anna	
Nationality Pol.	Age 10/12/46 Sex F
Date of Arrival 18 JUN 1950	Marital State S Religion P.C.
Ex Ship Nelly IV	Description
Date of Departure 21/9/50	Height
Destination "Catherine Booth" Salvation Army Home, Sackville St. Kew, Vic. Trade 2244	Weight
Standard of Education	Hair
Address of Next of Kin (if known) father Jozef	Eyes
	Complexion
	Scars
	General
9.1.51: Returned Bonegilla (details on mother's card)	
17/1/51: DEPT OF IMMIGRATION HOLDING CENTRE URANQUINTY NSW TL 2728	
National Archives of Australia	NAA: A2571, 2/5

Anna Adamowicz is pictured as a prettily dressed 3-year-old. Her family's cards tell how her father, Jozef, was allocated a workplace and went to it two days after arriving. A month later he found accommodation for her mother, Zofia, who joined him and sent Anna to a Salvation Army orphanage, where she stayed for three months. When Zofia was 7 months pregnant, she took Anna from the orphanage and they were sent to the Uranquinty Holding Centre. The record ends there as employment officers had no need to keep track of dependants beyond the circumstances of their arrival which related to the placement of a breadwinner. Source: NAA A2571,2/3-2/5.

for online visitors who may not be trying to locate themselves or their own. It is impossible to anticipate all the ways visitors will use them. But they will most likely be exploring ways in which the cards reveal something about reception arrangements at post-war migrant accommodation centres.

The careful record keeping of the Bonegilla cards was a control mechanism that the government used to reassure itself and the Australian public that it was closely managing the reception and work placement arrangements for the huge number of aliens it had helped come to Australia. There were no similar records kept of British migrants.

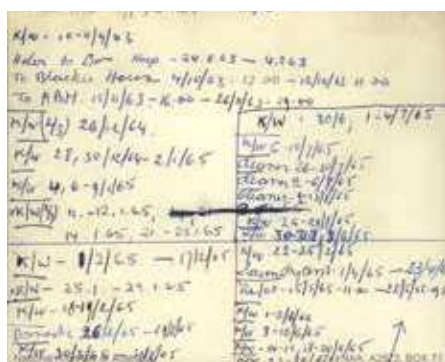
Read together, the arrival records show that the prime purpose of the mass migration scheme was to expand the workforce. Read successively, they also

illustrate how Australia called on an increasingly wide number of donor countries to meet the almost constant demand from employers for migrant labour through the long boom of the 1950s and 1960s.

Bonegilla, then, was primarily a labour exchange depot. The cards attest to a procedure whereby an employment officer determined the 'occupational potential' of each new arrival during a short one-on-one interview, and then directed them to a workplace where they were expected to remain for at least two years. The cards, via individual instances, explain the way the contract system worked.

The cards also included movement details, which were used by the finance department to calculate the tariff that each resident was obliged to pay for food and lodgings.

Digitising Bonegilla Cards



Helvi Savolainen arrived with her husband Olavi and four children from Finland in 1963 when no photographs appeared on the cards. Olavi was first given work at Bonegilla. After about 18 months he moved back and forth from the Centre pursuing work opportunities and leaving his family at Bonegilla.

Helvi had another two children while at Bonegilla and was the sole child carer during his absence. She worked at the Centre to qualify for residence and to pay the tariff for accommodation. She was allocated different jobs, such as kitchen woman; additional cards were required to list them all.

A separate card was prepared for her son Tom once he turned 16. At 16, Tom was expected to take up work as directed and paid a higher tariff for accommodation.

The cards helped accountants determine meal costs and where to send invoices of any unpaid lodging expenses.

Source: NAA A2572, BOX 71, 1786-1790.

Online, the Bonegilla cards empower readers to track how the employable and the unemployable among the new arrivals were received at, cared for and dispersed from Bonegilla. Researchers can now more readily extend their accounts of how the Bonegilla Reception Centre operated and how migrants experienced the place.

Public memory place

Digitisation of the Bonegilla cards has been a large task undertaken in challenging economic times for the National Archives of Australia. The first phase of digitisation project, completed in 2021, involved allocating scarce resources to meet strong and persistent public demand.

The second phase, just completed, was made possible with a regional tourism grant that Wodonga City Council secured from the Victorian Government to enhance its tourism assets.

Wodonga City Council has developed Bonegilla into an

active public memory place. Since it assumed custodianship in 2010, Council has had to satisfy its ratepayers that the National Heritage listed place it supports appeals to a diversity of potential visitors. Council's interpretative activities have helped visitors approach site interpretation at different levels of sophistication. With this digitisation project Council has continued to broaden the ways onsite and online visitors are addressed.

Digitisation helps onsite and online visitors to expand their own meanings of place and time. It enlarges the capacity for the kind of cultural work that Laurajane Smith sees visitors doing at immigration heritage sites. It facilitates public memory work at a public memory place.

Fabric, location, resident memories, media records, contemporary photographs, artworks and now, digitised official documentary archives extend the ways visitors reach their own understandings of how the place worked and how it was experienced.

Since 1987 there has been series of 10-year anniversary events at Bonegilla. According to that commemorative reckoning, 2022 will mark the 75th anniversary of the Reception Centre. 75th anniversaries are significant as they usually mark the movement beyond living memory. I cannot think of a better way to mark this 75th anniversary than to rescue these records from archival dormancy with digitisation and, so, return them to distant families, communities and scholars.

Three rounds of applause, three cheers, for Wodonga City Council and for the National Archives of Australia for making this digitisation project happen.

Bruce Pennay OAM

1. <https://www.naa.gov.au/explore-collection/immigration-and-citizenship/migrant-accommodation/bonegilla-migrant-reception-and-training-centre>.
2. Email to author from Ann Maclean, Director Reference Services, National Archives of Australia, 4 November 2021.
3. "Bonegilla Migrant Experience": <https://www.bonegilla.org.au/>.
4. Laurajane Smith, *Emotional Heritage: Visitor Engagement at Museum and Heritage Sites* (London: Routledge, 2020), 152–54.

Contributors



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Christine Yeats is currently President of the Federation Australian Historical Societies and was the President of the Royal Australian Historical Society from 2018-2021. She is Immediate Past President of the Independent Scholars Association of Australia (ISAA), Immediate Past Chair of ISAA NSW, Convenor of the Assessment Sub-Committee of the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Committee and Jessie Street National Women's Library Board Member. Christine is an archivist, researcher and professional historian with a particular interest in women's history.



Graham Shirley

Graham Shirley has worked as a director, writer and researcher on Australian historical documentaries, and is co-author of *Australian Cinema: The First 80 Years* (1983 & 1989). From 2006 to 2014 he worked for the National Film and Sound Archive, after which he returned to freelance historical consultancy and work as an oral history interviewer. He is a RAHS councillor and a member of the Professional Historians Association (NSW & ACT).



Derek Pugh

Derek Pugh OAM, is an educator and award-winning author, writing books in several genres: NT history, science, adventure travel and YA fiction. He is most well-known for his history series on early European settlement of the Top End, Taborra, and the novels *Tammy Damulkurra*, and *Schoolies*. He lives in Darwin but as he grew up in the Australian Capital Territory and moved to the Northern Territory nearly 40 years ago, he claims to have been a 'Territorian' all his life.

He has had a long career in education in several contexts: from large urban senior schools, to tiny remote homeland centre schools in Central Arnhem Land, and several international schools. He now teaches part time, writes about Northern Territory settlement history and is busy promoting the settlement bicentenary coming up in 2024.



Margaret Anderson

Margaret Anderson, FFAHS is Director of the Old Treasury Building in Melbourne. She is a council member of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and the History Council of Victoria and is also a member of the Brunswick Historical Society.

For most of her career she has practiced as a public historian in museums in Australia, although she also taught history and material culture studies at Monash University in the 1980s. Her publications include articles on women's history, the history and demography of the family and the practice of public history.



Rosalie Triolo

Dr Rosalie Triolo is a senior lecturer in History education and in history of education at Monash University. She is a Fellow and the Vice-President of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, as well as a Past-President, long-time Board member and Life Member of the History Teachers' Association of Victoria. She is an elected or invited member of other Victorian and Australian historical and education bodies. Histories of Australia and of World War One are her specialist areas. She has published scholarly works, professional learning and classroom resources for primary, secondary and tertiary audiences, and presents regularly at state and national events.

Contributors



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Dr Roslyn Russell has written and co-written many works of Australian history, and has co-written and edited museological publications in Australia and the Caribbean. She also publishes fiction and non-fiction with Bobby Graham Publishers, <http://bgpublishers.com.au/>

Roslyn is currently Chair of the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Committee (www.amw.org.au), and from 2009 to 2013 was Chair of the International Advisory Committee of the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme.



Fiona Bush

Dr Fiona Bush, OAM has worked as a building archaeologist and heritage consultant in Western Australia for over 30 years. She has a broad spectrum of heritage interests but two of her passions are industrial heritage and colonial buildings. She is an active member of the Mundaring & Hills Historical Society, Vice-Chairperson of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society and their representative on the National Trust of WA's Council and a long-time member of the Trust's Classification Standing Committee. She served on the State Heritage Office's Register Committee for 14 years. She is currently writing a book on the stained glass studio of Gowers and Brown who operated in Western Australia from 1954 – 2004.



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A/Prof Bruce Pennay's interests focus on two broad topic areas: the cultural heritage of the NSW/ Victorian border region; and post-war immigration history and heritage, with particular reference to Bonegilla Reception and Training Centre in Wodonga.



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