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Newsletter



Relevance and importance of Local History

Welcome to the June 2023 Newsletter (Number 55).

We trust that you enjoy the range of articles in this issue which consider the continuing relevance and importance of local history.

Don Garden reminds us the libraries across the country 'support and champion their local history' and many have their own their own local history collections. Some take an even more active role. In Victoria Bayside City Council librarians have been 'released to volunteer their time during working hours to assist the Sandringham & District Historical Society with its collection'.

Caroline Homer's contribution *History seen every day from the shores of Esperance Bay* considers two key elements of local history – people and place. We learn of the Dover convict probation station on Tasmania's Hope Island and something of the life of John Broadhurst Boothman and his family's links

to the island.

My introduction *Discovering the story behind the name through local history* sheds light on a little known author and her subscription library and confirms the importance of local history collections which are the raw material of a community's history, assisting researchers on their way to further discoveries.

Amy Morrison's contribution about the Centre of Democracy gallery space run by the History Trust of South Australia is a reminder that 'history informs political debate and legislative change'. We learn that the 'Centre helps audiences be better informed about this history in order to engage more directly with our democratic system and political debates'.

In *History and Urban Development: Informing Canberra's East Lake Place Plan* Nick Swain describes how history can beneficially inform a complex urban redevelopment project by showing that history

is an essential element for understanding place – vital for urban planners who seek to design livable places.

The ephemeral 'life' of some particular objects of public art is the overarching theme of Sue Steggall's article *Echoes of Times Past. Sculpture in a Public Space*. She goes on to describe the efforts of one modern day artist to remember the past and consolidate a future by reusing the re-purposing the marble fragments from the original art work.

Rosalie Triolo's article *Comprehending the World and Making it One's Own: The Significance and Relevance of Local History* reaches the heart of the matter when she refers to Weston Bate's statement 'where but in his immediate locality can the ordinary man best comprehend the world and make it his own'.

Christine Yeats
FAHS President

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Right: Remains of a stone wall, Esperance Bay

- Caroline Homer



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Discovering the story behind the name through local history



High Street West Maitland,
c.1930

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In 2017 the 40th Anniversary issue of the Maitland and District Historical Society's Bulletin included an article by Helen O'Brien titled *Impressions of High Street in the 1950s and Beyond*.

Accounts such as these are the 'treasure' that local historians capture and record through their documentary collections and publications. They are also the raw material of a community's history and they assist researchers on their way to further discoveries.

One of the businesses that O'Brien mentioned was the Pandora Library:

... a small lending library, which also had an exquisite small range of treasures that were so tempting, that my first Christmas present to my Mother after I started work was a large plate in the shape of a lettuce leaf.¹

Maitland's Pandora Library was one of the hundreds of 'circulating' or subscription libraries that operated in the suburbs and country areas from the early 20th century to the 1960s. 'If you walked down a suburban Sydney street in the 1930s or 40s it's likely you would have passed a small privately run

library.'² These libraries were an important service to the reading community before the spread of local government libraries in the decades after the Second World War.

Like each of these libraries, the Pandora Library has its own story to tell. In 1926 the local Maitland newspaper reported that Miss B Cecil Doyle, 'the well known writer is supplying a long felt want in Maitland by opening a really up-to-date modern library'.³

While B Cecil Doyle may have been well known in 1926, today few remember her contributions as a writer. Bertha Cecil Doyle was born in Maitland in 1886. Her father was a local grazier and her uncle was a prominent Maitland architect Arthur C Lee. In the early part of the 20th century, Bertha was well known within literary circles of the day. She wrote poetry, short stories and literary items for a number of Australian newspapers and magazines as 'B Cecil Doyle'.⁴

In 1914 writing as Cecil Raworth she co-wrote an adventure story, *The Mystery of Wall's Hill*, with fellow writer Kate Margaret Partridge, who wrote using the name Sydney Partridge. Their decision to write using men's names was probably a response

to the challenges faced by women writers at the time, who slipped 'their work past male publishers who did not think publishing was a place for a woman'.⁵

Bertha does not appear to have continued her writing career beyond the 1920s. This may explain why she decided to open the Pandora Library, which she kept going until 1950, when it was offered for sale.

The Pandora Library and Bertha Cecil Doyle is just one example of how local historians can help to uncover forgotten stories and bring our local identities back to life.

Christine Yeats

¹ Helen O'Brien, 'Impressions of High Street in the 1950s and Beyond', Bulletin of the Maitland and District Historical Society, Vol. 24, no.4, November 2017, p. 6.

² Jane Gibian, 'A nice little business: Part of daily life in the mid twentieth century, circulating libraries have left charming traces', State Library of New South Wales, <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/stories/nice-little-business>

³ Maitland Daily Mercury, 27 October 1926, page 4

⁴ B Cecil Doyle, AusLit, <https://www.austlit.edu.au/austlit/page/A31417>

⁵ 'Reclaim her name: Why we must free Australia's female novelists from their male pseudonyms', The New Daily, 16 August 2020, <https://thenewdaily.com.au/entertainment/arts/2020/08/16/female-novelists-male-pseudonyms/>

Local Government, librarians and local history

Librarians are interesting people. They are obviously educated, clearly literate and possess a range of expertise, including a significant proportion having an interest in history.

Across Australia, in countless libraries they support and champion their local history, many possessing their own local history collections. This is just one of the ways in which the more culturally aware local government bodies and libraries demonstrate their understanding of the importance of local history and heritage to community wellbeing.

Some go even further. A fine and unusual example of this is currently operating in suburban Melbourne where Bayside City Council librarians have been released to volunteer their time during working hours to assist the Sandringham & District Historical Society with its collection.

This is part of a long story which all began when it was decided four or so years ago to renovate the Sandringham library where the Society had been based. The Council moved the Society temporarily to a nearby building while new premises were prepared at the former Sandringham Masonic Lodge. The interwar lodge, now owned by the Council, contained some beautiful internal decoration including the lodge's ceremonial room with fine timberwork and a spectacular decorated ceiling. It looked to be a very attractive proposition.

Unfortunately what was supposed to be a relatively short process of renovation has been complex and elongated and the work on the lodge has not yet started. Among several obstacles, engineers discovered that the floor of the ceremonial room had limited loadbearing capacity and could not support the Society's collection and activities.



Cutting a long story short, the Society was subsequently moved to a shop front in Sandringham and most of its collection was sent to a storage unit, but when the storage arrangement fell through the collection ended up in a distant suburb where it could not be accessed. In recent months, however, a more appropriate shop front (**above**) has been rented, large enough to house the collection, so the Society and its collection have been reunited. Tenure is essentially guaranteed until the lodge is ready or the Council finds other premises, but the collection was in a state of some disorder after being moved four times.

These unusual circumstances have generated extensive interaction between the Sandringham & District Historical Society and the Bayside City Council, and now its librarians. Society volunteers face the enormous challenge of refamiliarising themselves with the thousands of items in the collection, reorganising them and, in some cases, discovering and identifying items.

This is all while continuing the normal activities of developing the collection, answering inquiries and continuing to

digitise material to make it harvestable by Trove.

Where this process now strikes me as most admirable is that the Bayside library service has volunteered the contribution of some of its enthusiastic librarians to assist with the work on the collection. Over several weeks this year, two librarians have spent their Wednesday afternoons at the Society, under the guidance of the Society's Collections Committee, tackling the mammoth task of getting the collection in order and ensuring that it is accessible. The librarians are reportedly thoroughly enjoying themselves as they get their hands dusty and delve into the very basics of management of a community history collection.

The process of removal and relocation, while elongated and difficult, nevertheless demonstrates admirable support and recognition by the local government authority and its library service, for which SDHS is very grateful. More broadly it encapsulates a recognition of the value to local communities in the work done by volunteers to collect and promote their history.

Don Garden
Past President FAHS

History seen every day from the shores of Esperance Bay

On a glorious autumn day in April, in southern Tasmania, members of the Dover History group kayaked to Hope and Faith Islands in Esperance Bay to explore the remnants of historic occupation.

Remains of convict era buildings were explored, sturdy stone walls were admired and morning tea was enjoyed amongst historic walnut, pepper and holly trees. With morning tea including a cake made from apples from a 100 year old tree, history indeed permeated the day. As the group prepared to depart Hope Island, a whaling tripot was spotted buried deep in the rocks, revealing another aspect of history from the local area. The next stop was Faith Island, Dover's earliest burial ground, which had been known as dead island. Among the lichen covered trees, a smattering of headstones can be found, bearing family names that are still present in the Dover community today.

Hope Island formed part of the Dover convict probation station, which operated from 1844-1848. It is the largest island in the bay, sitting at the entrance to Port Esperance, providing protection from the easterly sea breezes.

Dover had been selected as a suitable site for a probation station for its potential to be self-sustaining, through growing



Assistant Superintendent's quarters, Hope Island, Port Esperance

wheat, vegetables, cutting timber and being accessible by water transport. The main part of the station was sited along the Dover rivulet with the sub-station on Hope island providing a source of vegetables for the convicts as well as supplying other stations. The assistant superintendent's quarters are still standing and have been preserved through the addition of a roof that sits above the structure, added in the 1990s. Thick stone walls, deep window sills and numerous fireplaces are evidence of building practices of the past.

When the probation station closed in 1848 the Government leased the land to generate income. In 1849 the lease was transferred to a John Broadhurst Boothman, whose family proceeded to occupy the island for the next 85 years. First John and his wife Margaret, followed by Margaret's nephews James and Robert Sawers.

John Broadhurst Boothman worked hard to develop the land on Hope Island, acquiring machinery over time to improve productivity. With the help of local labour he was able to supply the district with hay, cattle feed, barley, vegetables, milk, butter, eggs and pork. In the early years he held a liquor licence and ran a hotel from the island, frequented by ships' crews, including passing whalers.

He was the son of convict John Broadhurst Boothman elder, who had been sentenced to seven years transportation and sent to Port Phillip on the *H.M.S. Calcutta* in 1803 then on to Van Diemen's Land (VDL) in the brig *Ocean* in 1804. John's wife Margaret Alexander had been sentenced to seven years transportation for stealing and sent to VDL in 1838 on the barque *Atwick*. Margaret's nephews arrived from Scotland in 1858 as teenagers, having recently been orphaned. They



View of Faith Island from Assistant Superintendent's quarters, Hope Island, Port Esperance

who made a major contribution to the Dover community over many years, taking up various important positions such as Customs Officer and Coroner.

After the Sawers brothers, the island was leased by the Wrapp family who were also successful at cultivating the land, earning a reputation for growing large, quality vegetables. After the Wrapps, a series of lease holders have farmed the island, with cattle grazing being the most recent activity.

Faith, Hope and the neighbouring islet Charity, are highly visible from the shores of Dover. They are a reminder that history and heritage isn't just in the past, it is part of our daily lived experience, providing meaning, context and connections with those that came before us.

Historical information from *A History of Dover and Port Esperance Tasmania Volume 1* by Norm Beechey and Dorothy Baker

**Caroline Homer
Dover History Group**

Approaching reconciliation through our shared democratic history

The Centre of Democracy is a gallery space run by the History Trust of South Australia which tells the stories of moments and people that have shaped democracy in South Australia.

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Outside of the gallery, the Centre also engages audiences in the digital space, both through its website and through social media. One of the roles of the Centre of Democracy, for digital audiences in particular, is to provide historical context about the political status quo today. Democracy continues to evolve, and operating in the digital space allows staff to engage with audiences in real time as events unfold.

For National Reconciliation Week 2023 the Centre of Democracy ran a social media campaign of nine posts. The aim of the series of posts was to share stories of our combined histories and reconciliation action to help audiences to better understand continued calls for reconciliation today. We featured objects from our collections and stories of significant individuals to engage audiences with different aspects of the history. Through this approach we were able to feature our shared history as well as past examples of reconciliation action.

The campaign began with a post about National Sorry Day on 26 May. It is a day to remember and acknowledge those whom we have come to know as the Stolen Generations. National Sorry Day was first held in 1998, one year after the Bringing Them Home report that was the result of a Government Inquiry into past policies which caused children to be removed from



Painting of the Oodnadatta (Duntjiba) Children's Home by Kunyi June Anne McInerney, 2016, History Trust of South Australia collection, HT 2018.0071.

their families and communities. In 2000, National Sorry Day was observed with the Sydney Harbor Bridge walk for reconciliation. The aim of marking this day is to acknowledge the legacy of past injustices and how this can affect future generations. For the Stolen Generations, the history is still very relevant and affects people's everyday lives. For others, learning about this aspect of history gives new meaning to the relevance of reconciliation.

Another post focused on the history of the Stolen Generations, but this time featured an object from our collections. The painting by Kunyi June Anne McInerney of the Oodnadatta (Duntjiba) Children's Home was chosen for this reason. It is one of a series that Kunyi did for an exhibition at the History Trust of South Australia's Migration Museum titled 'My Paintings Speak for Me'. She then developed a book which features all her paintings and a written account of what life was like for the children in the Home. Kunyi was taken from her mother at the age of four along with her

three siblings and is a member of the Stolen Generations. She has put her story into paintings and a book in order to ensure the experiences of the children are not forgotten. Remembering, recounting and exploring these difficult histories is a part of the reconciliation journey.

Stories of individuals can resonate strongly with people and help to provide connections with history. Gladys Elphick (1904-1988), a woman of Kurna-Ngadjuri descent, was an active community leader in the second half of her life after she moved to Adelaide from the Point Pearce Aboriginal Reserve. Her initiatives and campaigns touched many people's lives, so sharing her story with audiences also prompted the sharing of personal memories. The Gladys Elphick Awards named in her honour illustrate how one person's example continues to inspire people today.

The week of posts included a brief summary of the history of National Reconciliation Week and its key dates. This provided

Approaching reconciliation through our shared democratic history



Pirru mularta message stick, made by James Tylor, 2022, History Trust of South Australia collection, HT 2022.1054.

context for why it was started and the goals of the organisers. National Reconciliation Week began as the Week of Prayer for Reconciliation in 1993, the International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

In 1996, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation coordinated the first National Reconciliation Week. Reconciliation Australia was then formed in 2001 to provide national leadership on reconciliation. National Reconciliation Week is a dedicated opportunity for all Australians to learn about our shared histories and explore how we can all contribute to achieving reconciliation in Australia. A focus on past examples of reconciliation actions or calls for reconciliation provide context for actions today.

A leaflet from the 2019 National Reconciliation Week campaign was featured along with some information about the aims of the 2019 theme. Then-CEO of Reconciliation Australia, Karen Mundine, explained in a media release at the time that the focus was on trust and truth. Calls were made for a formal truth-telling process that could be healing and provide a solid basis for a

unified future. Another Centre of Democracy post featured a crochet Aboriginal flag that was sewn by a group of friends who work primarily in Aboriginal health, or health aligned fields. It was created as part of an event at the Migration Museum held during National Reconciliation Week 2015. The final post of the Centre of Democracy's social media campaign featured a placard with the slogan 'Wharfies Demand Aboriginal Land Rights!' Made as part of an action of solidarity circa 1960, the picket sign is an example of how the Waterside Workers Federation supported Indigenous people in Australia.

As part of the campaign to share aspects of the history of colonisation and its impact on Indigenous peoples, a featured object was the Pirru mularta message stick that was commissioned for the Centre of Democracy gallery in 2022. It was made by artist and historian James Tylor on Kurna land. Message sticks are used across Australia by First Nations peoples to exchange information about messages, stories, songs and song lines. Message sticks were sent for diplomatic formal events such as government meetings. Including

the message stick allows visitors, digital or in-person, to gain some understanding of Kurna governance and what the development of a Western democracy meant to the First Nations people of South Australia.

The Centre of Democracy explains the history of particular moments and people to help visitors understand the significance of current aspects of South Australia's democracy. History informs political debate and legislative change. The Centre helps audiences be better informed about this history in order to engage more directly with our democratic system and political debates.

Amy Morrison
Curator Centre of Democracy

¹ Reconciliation Australia, 'National Sorry Day', 25 May 2020, <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/national-sorry-day-2020/>.

² Lewis O'Brien & Professor Paul Hughes, 'Gladys Elphick MBE', SA History Hub, History Trust of South Australia, <https://sahistoryhub.history.sa.gov.au/people/gladys-elphick-mbe>.

³ Reconciliation Australia, 'What is National Reconciliation Week?', <https://nrw.reconciliation.org.au/about-nrw/>.

⁴ Reconciliation Australia, 'National Reconciliation Week 2019 theme announced', 20 March 2019, <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/national-reconciliation-week-2019-theme/>.

History and Urban Development: Informing Canberra's East Lake Place Plan

As this article illustrates, history can beneficially inform a complex urban redevelopment project. It shows how history is an essential element for understanding place – vital for urban planners who seek to design livable places. This is the essence of place planning.

Knowing the rich history of urban development sites is essential for many reasons. Some history has a direct bearing on what can be done with the land. That history can range from the presence of heritage registered places to the locations of old uses which contaminated the land such as industrial processing and old rubbish tips.

That and other historical information, especially the area's stories about its characters

and events, also provide the opportunity to create interest and character for a development, making it more appealing for people to live, work and play in. People appreciate the stories about the area and this helps them identify with and develop attachment to it.

Place planning is a particular approach to planning the redevelopment of urban areas. The definition provided in the Request for Tender for the East Lake Place Plan 'refers to a stakeholder – and community-led place proposition which captures the identity, character and values of a precinct within its context and establishes key design principles to guide future planning, design and renewal.' (Procurement ACT. Request for Tender GS2988579. East Lake

Place Plan & Report. January 2022. Attachment A. Page 4)

East Lake is a precinct in Canberra of about 100 hectares that has been identified for redevelopment and urban intensification. The precinct includes parts of the suburbs of Kingston, Griffith and Fyshwick. Its name derives directly from that given by Walter Burley Griffin to the area that would have been a large lake formed by the creation of a causeway carrying a railway line from south of the Molonglo River to Canberra's city centre on the north side of the river.

An early stage in the development process has been the preparation of a Place Plan to guide more detailed development plans. At the time



Causeway Hall. The Federal Capital's first entertainment hall.

Continued

History and Urban Development

of writing, comment of the draft Place Plan had closed and the plan has not yet been finalised.

Thanks to early engagement with the local community the importance of the area's history was quickly identified and acknowledged.

The Request for Tender for the East Lake Place Plan included recognition of the cultural and heritage values of the precinct was specified as one of the government's objectives. Celebrating the precinct's history was included in the draft Place Plan design principles:

'East Lake celebrates its heritage assets and recognises the significant historical importance of the area including the Palaeo landscape, Ngunnawal and First Nations culture and stories of Country, celebrating the diversity of First Nations Culture, and European history.' (ACT Government. April 2023. Draft East Lake Place Plan, page 50)

Many people and community organisations contributed to the identification of the precinct's rich history. The history to be celebrated includes:

- The heritage listed Causeway Hall (1926).
- The Causeway Settlement.
- Remnants of the Griffin's railway into Civic.
- The Dairy Farmer's Co-operative.
- Cargill's Cottage (part of the Big Gun Dairy). PHOTO
- Railway history including the first train to Canberra and the captured WW1 Armiens Gun (the Big Gun).
- One of just two remaining limestone outcrops in the City District (Early European settlers once called the area the Limestone Plains).
- Prior uses e.g. First Nations,



Cargill's Cottage. The Big Gun Dairy farmhouse.

early European settlement, soldier settlers, dairy farms, disused rubbish tips, temporary camps, land fill.

- The former Causeway industrial area.
- Canberra's first fruit and vegetable markets.

As a consequence of identifying and valuing the area's history, the draft Place Plan includes several implementation recommendations which celebrate the precinct's history:

- The heritage listed Causeway Hall, built in 1926, to become a central community activity hub.
- A mini-precinct be developed that encompasses the limestone outcrop, Cargill's Cottage and a new visitors' centre for the neighbouring Jerrabomberra Wetlands.
- Cargill's Cottage to be nominated for inclusion on the ACT Heritage Register and made available for adaptive re-use.
- Reinstatement of Griffin's axis (the actual causeway).
- Celebration of the area's

railway history, including retention of the Rail Museum (possibly relocated) and the first train to come to Canberra (Locomotive 1210) and integration of the rail remnants into a new park.

- Retain the heritage listed Dairy Farmers' Co-operative.

CONCLUSIONS

Thanks to extensive community consultation the significance of the East Lake precinct's history has been recognised by government and built into the redevelopment process.

That history has provided important information about past uses, especially agricultural and industrial, which will inform decisions about what sort of future land use is appropriate or possible e.g. contaminated sites.

The draft Place Plan has demonstrated that the stories about the area's heritage can be used to promote the redevelopment and make it attractive to the people and organisations which will occupy it.

Nick Swain

Echoes of Times Past: Sculpture in a Public Space



In the lead-up to Sydney's Olympic games (2000) and the Centenary of Federation (2001) public art programs were developed to embellish the spaces of sporting competition, showcase the city as a centre of culture and acknowledge its history.¹

The Living City, Public Art and Policy document defined 'art' as the product of practitioners who intended their work and activities to be seen and read as art, embracing material and immaterial products and concepts.

A good example of this new public art was the Sydney Sculpture Walk.² Ten site-specific works were commissioned from Australian and international artists for locations including the Royal Botanic Gardens, Woolloomooloo Bay and the Domain, Martin Place and along Pitt Street to Circular Quay.

The successful artists were Debra Phillips, Robyn Backen, Bronwyn Oliver, Janet Laurence with Jisuk Han, Lynne Roberts-Goodwin,

Nigel Helyer, Anne Graham, Brenda L Croft, Fiona Hall and Kimio Tsuchiya.³

The policy document included protocols for cleaning, maintenance and conservation, guided by principles of best practice including the Burra Charter.

Where possible the original artists were to be consulted regarding the integrity of their work. There was also a de-accessioning policy that protected both the City of Sydney and the creator of a work in accordance with the Public Art, Copyright and Moral Right Guidelines. Reasons for removal of a sculpture from its site might include risk to the public; inconsistency with



Images this page:

Debra Phillips, 'Viva Voce'.

All photographs were taken by the author, Susan Steggall.

Viva Voce was photographed in 2016, in The Domain, Sydney. *Marble fragments retrieved from 'Viva Voce' 1999-2019*, was photographed at the Cross Arts Gallery, Sydney, 2023.



the objectives of the Public Art Policy; lack of physical integrity; artworks for which adequate maintenance was unavailable or for which the upkeep required over a five-year period exceeded its original value.

Urban spaces are subject to changes in taste. Sculpture intended to remain in situ for decades may become vulnerable. If civic authorities decide to re-locate a sculpture there is a danger that it will become an irrelevant embellishment to an alternative urban site instead of operating as a marker for a particular place.⁴ Or it can be completely removed, as has happened to at least one of

Echoes of Times Past

those ten artworks – *Viva Voce* by Debra Phillips, installed in 1999 on Gadigal land in the Domain across the road from the Art Gallery of NSW.

Public oratory began in the Domain in 1878, establishing Speakers' Corner as a location for the exchange of ideas and opinions. Regular Sunday afternoon debates involved notable identities and thousands of onlookers, yet there was nothing to acknowledge Speakers' Corner's historical and contemporary importance until *Viva Voce* was commissioned to mark it as a significant site for free speech.

The sculpture consisted of a small stepladder (modelled on Charlie King's red ladder⁵) and five 'soapboxes' set on the ground amongst the trees at Speakers' Corner. These boxes, sculpted in highly prized Carrara marble, embedded *Viva Voce* in mainstream traditions of the memorial by creating a lasting symbol for an ephemeral activity.⁶

For Debra Phillips, disappearance is a powerful force in human existence; how to deal with transience is fundamental to her working practice. It is a bitter irony that in 2019 the sculpture was de-accessioned and removed from its site. Protocols were apparently not respected as the artist was not consulted nor given any explanation for the work's removal following its de-accessioning, nor who made the decision although she was able to recover its components. The discrete location of this artwork meant that it was generally overlooked by the public, existing primarily in the mind of the artist and the memories of those who participated in its construction and documentation. Even more so now.

The exhibition *A Talker's Echo* at Cross Arts Gallery, Sydney

(June 2023), developed the ideas imbued in *Viva Voce* in a complex entanglement of history, memory, conflict, politics and sovereignty. The re-purposed marble fragments were augmented by a medallion the size of a 50-cent coin, with a soapbox on one side, a stepladder on the other and inserted into several marble chunks. The exhibition also included the five (acrylic) soapbox models for the project, two stepladders (one metal, one wood), and several photographs of historical significance to the Domain and nearby Royal Botanic Gardens.

The irregularly sized stone remnants (ghostly white, grey veined, some with discoloration), sitting on the floor and leaning against the gallery wall, suggested stillness, expectancy, as if waiting to learn their final resting place. There was a funerary air to them too – like discarded headstones stacked in a deserted section of a cemetery or a stonemason's workshop.

Phillips takes heart that in re-using elements of *Viva Voce* a new work of art has emerged that not only re-affirms the agenda of the original but also highlights the potential impermanence of sculptures and the precarious autonomy of their creators. The installation raises issues around the role of free speech and public exchange versus private agency, as well as that of monuments in colonial history and collective memory including, now, the Indigenous people who lived in this area before settlement and its use as a corroboree ground.



This page: Debra Phillips, *Marble fragments retrieved from 'Viva Voce' 1999-2019*

Medallions occupy a fluid space between remembering the past and consolidating a future.⁷ As such, the medallion becomes a mobile archive, one that resists permanency but also resists disappearance. Long after the artwork's creator – or the purpose for which the medallion was made – are gone and forgotten, this finite, physical object will stand as testament to a significant moment in Sydney's social and political history.

Susan Steggall

¹ Susan Steggall, 'Spaces for Public Art: The Sydney Sculpture Walk', *ISAA Review*, Vol.16, No.1, 2017, pp 67-84.

² The project was curated by Sally Couacaud, former director of Artspace (Sydney) and Curator of the Sydney Open Museum. Agencies involved included the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG), NSW Centenary of Federation Committee, Sydney City Council and art-related bodies such as the City Art Program. <http://www.cityartsydney.com.au/curators/sally-couacaud/>

³ Sydney Sculpture Walk/City of Sydney brochure, State Library of NSW: N730.99441/2.

⁴ Jenny Harper & Aaron Lister eds, *Wellington – a City for Sculpture*, Te Herenga Waka University Press, 2007, p.129.

⁵ Charlie King was a Rationalist speaker at the Domain for nearly 34 years; <https://speakerscorner.org.au>

⁶ Debra Phillips, *Sydney Sculpture Walk*. Fact Sheet, p.2, www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au.

⁷ James Gatt, *Floor Talk, A Talker's Echo*, Cross Arts Gallery, 17 June 2023.



Comprehending the World and Making it One's Own: The Significance and Relevance of Local History

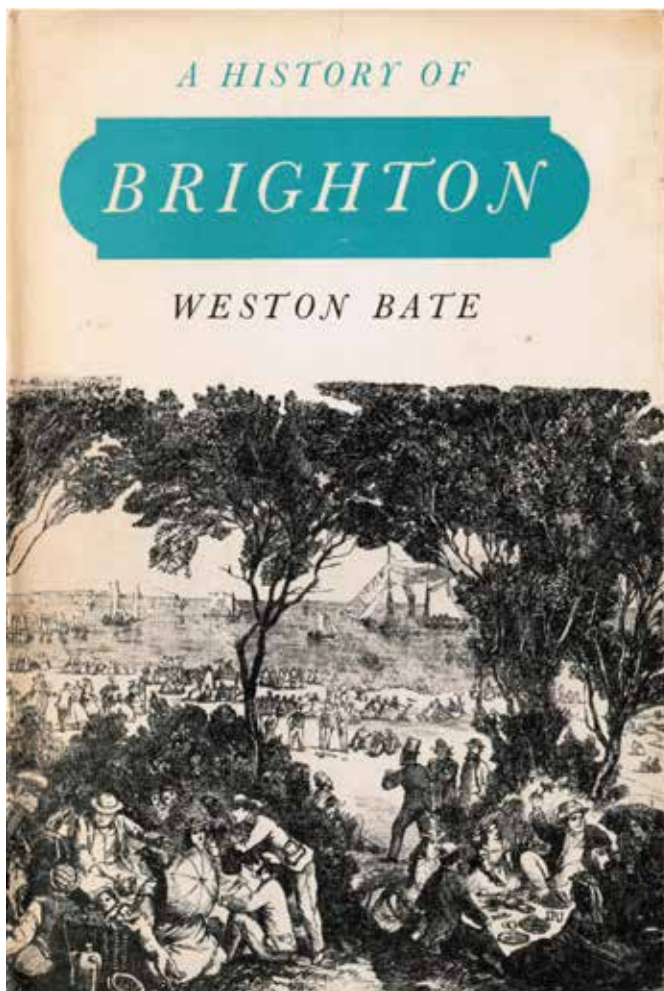
'Where but in his immediate locality can the ordinary man best comprehend the world and make it his own?'

This stellar quote by Weston Bate – being an early indication of his eloquent passion for all things 'local history and heritage' - appeared in his preface to his 1962 ground-breaking *A History of Brighton*.

He continued that, if open to the possibility of looking, '[t] here should be no difficulty ... in finding men and women with whom to identify oneself emotionally'. Bate's bold reference to 'emotion' was something 'new'. Moreover, he asserted 'reproof to those who would belittle both the interest and significance of local history'.¹ The failing was theirs, not that of any competent local historian.

Bate would in later times not have referred to the ordinary 'man' or, in the lines below, refer only to Brighton's traditionally male occupations of 'merchants and market-gardeners'. To be fair, those occupations were especially common in Brighton, and Bate enjoyed writing poetry rich in alliteration, juxtapositions and general lyricism. For these reasons, and all the more in the world of 1962, he might be excused. But his preface was also ground-breaking for the inclusion of an environmental perspective: 'I make no apology ... for the criticisms I have levelled at the brash way we fill our land with houses and shout "Progress!" as we trample on our roots'.²

Weston Bate and Geoffrey Blainey (with the latter's local history, *A History of Camberwell*, 1964), have often been championed for bringing a freshness to, if not initiating overall, what is today considered 'exemplary local history and heritage writing' nationally.³ Their



Weston Bate, *A History of Brighton*, Melbourne University Press, Parkville, 1962, p. v.

works have been considered by most to be historically accurate, thoroughly readable, well-illustrated by description if not inclusion of visual sources and to have embraced diverse peoples, places and perspectives. Until the scholars' emergence from the University of Melbourne and Max Crawford's school of history, the '3Ps' had been largely overlooked by scholarly historians who had focused on the great personages and places of activity in Australia, more often Anglo-Saxon or Celtic males with high social, economic and political status. Bate and Blainey

had different focuses, and they found the minutiae and the exception. Graeme Davison, in reflecting on Bate in the 2012 RHSV Augustus Wolskel Lecture which celebrated 50 years since *A History of Brighton*, noted Bate's wider embrace:

Local history, Weston contended, was a window on the world, not a retreat from it. It required the same qualities of imagination, analytical rigour and literary flair as national or international history. By connecting people to the places where they lived,

Significance and Relevance of Local History

it had a unique humanizing and democratising function.⁴

Blainey would say in 1963 of *A History of Brighton* that it was 'perhaps the most illuminating and careful slice of suburban history so far written in Australia'.⁵ Interestingly, when Bate wrote his 1983 edition, he, himself, offered his 1962 preface along with only one brief paragraph for 1983, declaring that, 'If I was beginning now, of course, the social analysis would be different' – and that was all.⁶ While true, enough commentators had declared over the 20 years that sufficient of his history and heritage 'ingredients' were 'right'.

Readings that demonstrate how and why local history is interesting, significant and relevant

The following five publications amidst shelves of many are listed because, when asked to write on the relevance of local history and heritage, they were first to come to my mind.

- I re-visited Bate's *A History of Brighton* to see if it was still remarkable and with lessons for a local historian today. Over 60 years since creation, notwithstanding a few moments that jar the reader in 2023, it still pays attention to diversity of peoples, places and perspectives within a suburb's local history. It asserts for me that local historical societies will more successfully attract leaders, members and volunteers and be able to argue for their existence if they embrace the diversity of peoples, places and perspectives that have constituted the past, and constitute the present, of their community's life
- Tom Griffiths, *The Art of Time Travel: Historians and their Craft*, Black Inc., Carlton, 2016, although not written as a manual for and about local

history, addresses what was so special about the work of different Australian historians, and so richly is such a manual.

- GM Hibbins, C Fahey & MR Askew, *Local History: A Handbook for Enthusiasts*, George Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1985, was a handbook for me as a secondary school teacher of local history within Australian history at Years 9 and 10 many years ago and helped start me on the journey of imaginative and multi-faceted, while accurate, local history writing. Works such as this helped me step beyond considering the written word as the principal historical primary source.
- RHSV's *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 84, no. 1, 2013 (right) published five 'papers' from the 2012 conference, 'Celebrating Fifty Years of Local History in Victoria'. Davison's lecture was only one item, Bate spoke for himself, Andrew Lemon introduced proceedings, a panel comprising Richard Broome, Charles Fahey, Don Gibb, John Lack and Susan Priestley offered their views on what makes successful local history, and Carole Woods spoke on the Victorian Community History Awards being a showcase and 'flagship' of local history successes. This number of the RHSV's journal is well worth accessing.
- Rosalie Triolo, Helen Doyle & Katya Johansen, *Writing and Publishing Local History: A Guide for First-Time Authors and Historical Societies*, RHSV, Melbourne, 2017, is available for free download: <https://www.historyvictoria.org.au/publications/writing-and-publishing-local-history/> While the *raison d'être* for local history writing is taken largely as a 'given' by the authors, the publication sets out foremost to support new



authors with the ingredients for publications that are historically accurate as well as interesting, significant and relevant to their own and a wider readership – again embracing a diversity of peoples, places and perspectives.

Key quotes for convincing others

For the times when you need to quickly argue a case to anyone who needs convincing, there are the many quotes from eminent commentators available online for 'why history matters' (or similar). Google searches for 'why local history matters' and 'why heritage matters' will yield further finds.

Good luck in your work with local history and heritage.

Rosalie Triolo

¹ Weston Bate, *A History of Brighton*, Melbourne University Press, Parkville, 1962, p. v.

² Bate, 1962, p. vi.

³ Geoffrey Blainey, *A History of Camberwell*, Jacaranda, Brisbane, 1964.

⁴ Graeme Davison, 'Fifty Years of Victorian Local History', *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 84, no. 1, 2013, p. 120.

⁵ Geoffrey Blainey, 'Review of *A History of Brighton*', *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, vol. 11, no. 41, October 1963, pp. 133-34, in Davison, p. 123

⁶ Weston Bate, *A History of Brighton*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1983, p. vii.

Contributors

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Dr Don Garden, OAM FFAHS, FRHSV, is the Immediate Past President of the FAHS, former Co-Chair of GLAM Peak, Immediate Past President of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and a former member of the Australian Heritage Council.

He is Honorary Secretary of the Royal Society of Tasmania, an Adjunct Professor at James Cook University, Committee member of the Old Treasury Building Management Committee (Melbourne), Committee member of the Sandringham & District Historical Society, life member of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) and the Albany Historical Society, and member of many community history and heritage groups.

Don taught History and Environmental History at the University of Melbourne and has written 17 books on a mixture of local and regional histories, biography, company history, an environmental history of Australia and the Pacific and a history of El Nino events in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.

Caroline Homer



Caroline Homer is on the FAHS, Blue Shield Australia and Dover History Group committees and is President of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association.

A retired archivist and librarian with a keen interest in land records. Caroline is currently researching early land subdivisions in Dover, Tasmania. Caroline is also a keen kayaker, paddling the waters of Port Esperance bay every day.

Amy Morrison



Dr Amy Morrison is curator at the Centre of Democracy in Adelaide. She graduated with a PhD in History in 2018. Her research focused on women

in resistance networks in Paris during World War II.

She has presented and published on this work that grew out of her thesis. From 2019 to 2022 she worked at the University of Adelaide as a tutor in various history courses before joining the History Trust of South Australia in 2021. She is passionate about sharing history and encouraging young people to understand the relevance of history.

Sue Steggall



Dr Susan Steggall is an art historian with a strong interest in Australian sculpture, particularly contemporary installation and site-specific work.

Her publishing credits include a biography, *A Most Generous Scholar: Joan Kerr, Art and Architectural Historian* (2012), a memoir, *Alpine Beach: A Family Adventure* (1999), several novels influenced by the visual arts, plus art-related articles; exhibition and book reviews; book chapters and essays.

She has been a member of the Independent Scholars Association Inc since 1998 and was editor of its journal, the ISAA Review from 2010-2015.

Continued

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Nick Swain has been a member of the Canberra & District Historical Society since 2007 and is currently Secretary and Immediate Past President. He is an ACT delegate to the FAHS. Nick has written several articles on the early history of the national capital, co-authored a book on one of Canberra's oldest shopping centres – Manuka. He is keen to promote and protect the heritage of his local area.

Nick has been involved in a number of projects to enhance the CDHS' digital presence so its collections are more widely known and accessible. These projects include developing a new website with a Trove accessible catalogue of the CDHS collection and setting up the Canberra & District History Facebook page. He is currently coordinating the rehousing of a nationally significant collection thanks to a Community Heritage Grant.

Rosalie Triolo



Dr Rosalie Triolo, FRHSV, is Vice-President of the RHSV and an adjunct senior lecturer in History education and history of education in the Faculty of Education at Monash University. For 25 years, she helped facilitate the development of specialist teachers of History for Australian and overseas schools.

She was President for six years of the History Teachers' Association of Victoria and a Board member for a further 24 years. She is an elected or invited member of other Victorian and Australian historical and education bodies, and presents and publishes widely.

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Christine is a Past President of the Independent Scholars Association of Australia (ISAA), Deputy Chair of ISAA NSW, Convenor of the Assessment Sub-Committee of the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Committee and Chair of the Jessie Street National Women's Library Board. Christine is an archivist, researcher and professional historian with a particular interest in women's history.

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