

History and heritage news from around Australia

Newsletter

October 2024

No. 56



Welcome to the October 2024 Newsletter (Number 57). This issue does not have an overall theme. Instead, we invited contributions on a range of history related topics, which we trust you will enjoy.

There are two articles on digitisation – Planning digitisation projects, which I have contributed. In Floods provide focus on the value of digitising collections Pauline Hitchins has looked at the potential impact of climate change on local collections and planning for the unthinkable.

There is an extensive report on the 59th Western Australian State History Conference by Bruce Baskerville. The Keynote speaker Gary Martin challenged the ‘audience to move beyond old pioneer stereotypes’.

Ruth Kerr’s contribution Wi-Fi at the Dig Tree discusses the launch of free open access Wi-Fi at the Burke and Wills Dig Tree Reserve Tree in far western Queensland by Dr Denver Beanland AM, chair of the Dig Tree Committee of The Royal Historical Society of Queensland (RHSQ).

In What has changed and what hasn’t in Melbourne’s iconic laneways Rosalie Triolo discusses the background to the Royal Historical Society of Victoria’s current exhibition, ‘The Story of Melbourne’s Lanes: Essential but Unplanned’, which was launched on 3 October.

Nick Swain introduces us to Henry Beaufoy Merlin, one of several early commercial photographers travelling through Victoria and NSW. The Canberra & District Historical Society has 23 original Merlin Carte de Visite photographs of Queanbeyan and district from the 1870s.

The Maritime Museum of Tasmania is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Museum President Chris Tassell outlines its history and achievements. The origins of its collection date back earlier and begin with the Ship Lovers’ Society of Tasmania, which formed in 1931.

John Pearn and Stephen Sheaffe’s contribution Bicentenary Commemoration of the First Settlement at Redcliffe, looks at the settlement’s brief history. The conference held in conjunction with the commemoration was attended by some of the descendants of the original party.

The work by Australians Sir Lindsay Ride, and his wife May, in documenting the occupants of the Old Protestant Cemetery in the former Portuguese colony of Macau is the subject of Roslyn Russell’s article Australians document an East India Company Cemetery in Macau.

Christine Yeats FRAHS
FAHS President

Contents

Introduction	1
Planning Digitisation projects.....	2
Floods provide focus.....	4
Waves of change: WA conference.....	6
Wi-Fi at the Dig Tree	9
Melbourne laneways	10
Travelling Photographer.....	12
Maritime Museum 50	13
Redcliffe Bicentary	15
East India Co Cemetery.....	17

RIGHT: Looking down Tallarook Street in Seymour towards Emily Street, the morning after the 2022 flood peak.



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Planning digitisation projects

Planning a digitisation project is an exciting and essential task for local historical societies.

This process allows societies to preserve valuable historical materials while making them more accessible to the public. The approach to planning such a project involves several key steps that can help ensure its success.

First, societies must clearly define the project scope. This means identifying which materials they want to digitise. Items could include photographs, manuscripts, oral histories, maps, or physical artefacts.

It is important to consider the significance of these materials, their condition, and how they resonate with the local community. Engaging members of the society in this selection process can foster a sense of ownership and enthusiasm.

Local historical societies in Australia should set clear goals for their digitisation projects, such as preserving fragile materials, increasing accessibility, and enhancing educational resources. Objectives might include digitising a specific number of items within a defined timeframe and creating a user-friendly online platform with consistent metadata standards.

Metadata plays a crucial role in enhancing the accessibility and usability of collection items. It is basically 'data about data' It provides information that helps describe, organise, and find other data.

For example, if you have a photo, the metadata might include details like when it was taken, who took it, where it was taken, and what the photo is about. This extra information makes it easier to search for and understand the

main data, whether it's photos, documents, or videos.

In developing the project it is also crucial to address the impact of climate change by safeguarding vulnerable collections from environmental threats and promoting sustainable practices in digitisation efforts. Additionally, societies can raise awareness about climate issues through educational resources, ensuring that both cultural and environmental heritage are protected for future generations.

Assembling a project team is crucial. This team might include a project manager to oversee the initiative, an archivist to provide expertise in preserving materials, and an IT specialist to manage technical aspects.

Involving volunteers from the community can also be beneficial, as they may bring

CABBAGE TREE HAT, c1870-1920



Name/Title - Cabbage Tree Hat

About this object - A cabbage-tree hat that is believed to have belonged to Mr F.J. (Francis John) White of Saumarez, near Armidale. Hats such as these were commonly worn in rural Australia, and were woven from the fibre of the native cabbage tree palm (*Livistona australis*). They are a distinctly Australian form of hat, made from Australian materials.

Mr F.J. White was a significant local landowner and grazier from the 1870s until his death in 1934.

It is not known where he obtained the hat, although such hats were made at the Armidale Gaol. The White family had extensive holdings in the Hunter Valley, and also in Queensland, where F.J. visited numerous times.

Date Made - c.1870-1920

Period - 19th Century

Medium and Materials - Braided; Cabbage tree fibre

Measurements

H: c.170mm

W: c. 330mm

Subject and Association Keywords - Saumarez

Subject and Association Description - Francis John White, 1854-1934, owned Saumarez Station near Armidale from 1874 until his death. The Saumarez Homestead is now owned and managed by the National Trust.

Object Type - Male Headwear

Object number - 2021.40.1

Armidale Regional Council Museums entry for a Cabbage Tree Hat on eHive.

Administrative Metadata might also include information on image size, resolution, camera or scanner, copyright information and when and by whom it was digitised.

Continued

Planning digitisation projects

valuable skills and a strong commitment to the project.

A significant decision that societies face is whether to manage the digitisation process in-house or to engage external companies. In-house digitisation can be cost-effective and allows for greater control over the materials. It also offers opportunities for community involvement, as volunteers can assist with tasks such as scanning and data entry.

However, in-house efforts can be resource-intensive, requiring time and expertise that might be in short supply.

On the other hand, outsourcing to external companies can provide professional expertise and high-quality digitisation. These companies often have specialised equipment and experience, which can save time and ensure that materials are handled correctly. While this option can be more expensive, it might be worth the investment

for societies that lack the necessary resources.

Developing a comprehensive budget is essential for any digitisation project, regardless of whether it is done in-house or outsourced. Societies should outline all expected expenses, including equipment, software, and potential fees for external services.

This budget can also serve as a foundation for seeking funding from various sources, such as government grants, community fundraising efforts, or corporate sponsorships.

Selecting the right technology and equipment is another critical aspect. If societies choose to digitise in-house, they will need appropriate scanners, cameras, and software. The choice of equipment will depend on the types of materials being digitised. For those opting for external services, it is essential to research potential providers and understand their offerings.

Creating a clear workflow is vital for ensuring that the digitisation process runs smoothly. Societies should outline each step of the process, from selecting materials to uploading digitised items online. A well-structured workflow can help streamline tasks and ensure consistency in how materials are handled.

Additionally, establishing metadata standards is crucial for making digitised materials searchable and accessible. Societies should determine the types of metadata needed for their collections and adhere to established standards. This will help ensure that future users can easily find and understand the materials.

Community engagement is a key component of a successful digitisation project. Societies should involve local residents at every stage, from planning to implementation. Hosting public meetings to share project goals and gather feedback can foster a sense of involvement and support. Engaging volunteers can also strengthen community ties and encourage participation.

Finally, ongoing monitoring and evaluation are essential after launching the digitisation project. Societies should collect feedback from users and team members to assess what is working well and what might need improvement. Metrics such as user engagement and the number of materials accessed can provide valuable insights into the project's impact.

In conclusion, local historical societies in Australia should approach digitisation projects through careful planning and community involvement. By defining project scope, establishing clear goals, choosing between in-house and external digitisation, and engaging with the community, societies can successfully preserve and share their rich histories.

With a thoughtful approach, digitisation can become a powerful tool for connecting communities with their heritage and ensuring that history is preserved for future generations.

SOME USEFUL LINKS

<https://www.history.org.au/collections/> especially Making Collections Accessible

<https://www.history.org.au/disaster-planning-and-recovery/>



Scanning graphic - RHSV

Floods provide focus on the value of digitising collections

In these days of climate challenges, it's not about having a flood plan but planning for the unthinkable!

That's the experience of Richmond Rivers Historical Society's long term president Dr Robert Smith.

Every town has a flood point touchstone, he says, when local discuss flood peaks. For Lismore it was 1974 – until 2022 when flood waters were two metres higher!

Like many towns across NSW and Victoria affected by those floods, it's taken more than two years to be able to consider a return to their original premises.

The importance of digitisation and cataloguing a collection becomes more than evident with such a disaster. On the positive side, disaster recovery can also divert efforts to fulfil the preservation and sharing of local history into new and innovative solutions.

With floods encroaching the building where a collection



Rochester Historical & Pioneer Society Museum complex: the relocated Salvation Army Hall (left), was above the flood level so items from the former Common School were relocated there.

is kept, there's the rush to move items to safe ground, the need to find an ongoing alternative storage area, carry out remediation and repairs to the building and hopefully, eventually, return the items to their home.

All of which takes time, volunteer hours and money. The recovery is also a distraction which can divert resources from existing digitisation and cataloguing projects.

And while we all recognise the increasing difficulty of engaging volunteers, a flood or fire can often impact individuals and their personal life and thus reduce their ability to assist.

Storms often lead to restricted access to the area or lessen its appeal, reducing visitation and other sources of income so that volunteers have to turn to grant applications to both repair damage and make up for lost income.



From Carneys Hill, Seymour, looking southwest down High Street to Archie Jones' house - Seymour Historical Society file pic of 1973 floods.

In Rochester, Victoria, in 2022, floods from the Campaspe River inundated the 1874 Common School which housed the museum's main displays but, luckily, the adjacent relocated Salvation Army hall was higher than the floods and the volunteers managed to move the collection to safety.

Reopening was delayed because most of the volunteers had to deal with damage to their own homes, explains Rochester Historical and Pioneer Society secretary John Foster.

"All the volunteers are now back in their renovated or new homes but others in town are still waiting and the town is still suffering."

And although the museum reopened some time ago, and

Continued

Floods provide focus on the value of digitising collections

has quite good visitation, several volunteers have left the district and are no longer involved with local history.

Another current project the society is managing is the restoration of the windows in 98 year old Salvos hall, so it should be looking great for its centenary.

In Seymour, Victoria, the Goulburn River flooded the museum in the Pioneer Free Library on the edge of Kings Park. Seymour and District Historical Society volunteers managed to rescue all but a few items and acquired a storage area at the Uniting church hall.

Too damaged to save was a piano once owned by local undertaker Mr Doyle and some photographs.

The Mitchell council, which owns the building, has carried out repairs and now the volunteers are working at sorting, cleaning and making some decisions about deaccessioning items.

The Society has managed to obtain some grants, a welcome new volunteer is working on digitising photos and other records and there's a new website in the works, says research officer Nancy Halpin.

In January 2024 there was more rain but not as serious and they hope to reopen early in the new year – three years after the floods.

Getting back on track after COVID shutdowns, the Richmond River Historical Society in Lismore had extended openings and had several events and exhibitions in the works when it too was hit by floods from Wilsons River which runs behind its premises in the old Lismore Chambers.



The former Lismore council chambers, now home to Richmond Rivers Historical Society museum, faced extensive repairs and renovations after the 2022 floods. Image: Brendan Beirne.

The collection was moved to shipping containers in the carpark, which again had to be moved when another flood threatened.

The first issue to be addressed was rampant mould in the building. The downstairs area needed a lot of remediation work and the upstairs, where the main museum is located, needed to be thoroughly cleaned. All the collection items had to be checked and thoroughly cleaned before being placed into storage.

However, the Society has managed to obtain a 'pop up' premises further along Molesworth Street and provide a program of regularly changing exhibitions as well as publishing books on the region.

"We continue to present more of the region's history to the community and explore newer ways of doing so," said Dr Smith.

The society has been reviewing its holdings, such as hard copy newspapers, paring back to those not available on Trove or where

good clear copies could be required for publishing.

A state government grant will be used to install new display cabinets, lighting, shelving and workstations.

"This will go a long way in helping us rebuild the museum in a really contemporary way and once again opening it to the community and tourists," said Robert.

The museum is expected to return to its permanent site in coming months and has initiated a survey asking the public what they would like to see in the refurbished building and the stories that should be told.

Despite extreme challenges, like all history volunteers, all three groups have managed to continue their work to collect, research and share their local history and find new and innovative ways to tell those stories.

Pauline Hitchins

Waves of Change: Rewarding state conference in Western Australia

More than 140 people attended 'Waves of Change' the 59th Western Australian State History Conference in Dongara's Priory Hotel, hosted by Irwin Districts Historical Society on 6-8 September 2024.

The Conference theme partly referred to the diverse maritime and fishing heritage of Dongara and Port Denison, and partly to looking at new developments and ways of doing local history and local museums.

Both strands were woven throughout the program for a sociable and informative conference.

After the Friday evening 'twilight welcome' at the Marine Rescue Centre in Port Denison, Saturday morning heralded the start of the conference proper.

Members of the Wattandee Littlewell Aboriginal Corporation under the guidance of elders Thomas Cameron and Annette Bynder performed a moving Sweeping Dance with a narrated explanation, then a warm and inclusive Welcome to Country from Elder Thomas.



The Sweeping Dance clears away negative energies, and makes way for new beginnings

In the Priory Conference Room, the formal and friendly official opening was made by the Hon Sandra Carr MLC for Agricultural Region.

Keynote speaker Gary Martin, Curator of Greenough Museum and Gardens, drew on his long experience of how a museum can change, survive and remain, challenged the audience to move beyond old pioneer stereotypes, and focused on four key

points: permanence, inclusivity, sustainability and participation.

The days of the local museum as a guardian of pioneer relics has passed, at least in those museums that are thriving and evolving. How do we keep moving as we approach WA's 200th?

Permanence means asking what is best for the collections, maintaining viability, not struggling on to the last surviving member and just hoping someone will take it all on.



ABOVE: Welcoming smiles at the registration desk.

RIGHT: The conference brochure.



Continued

Waves of Change - WA conference

Inclusivity means including Aboriginal histories under Aboriginal guidance, letting people tell their own stories, encouraging community exhibitions, loaning objects to other community groups, using languages besides English.

Sustainability means realising museums are businesses, keeping good records and sound finances (building trust), philanthropy and DGR, and having opening hours that suit visitors.

Participation means really valuing volunteers and not taking them for granted, a good mix of skills and capabilities, regular meetings, socialising and fun, team building.

Gary's presentation can be summarised in the motto "engaging-evolving-enhancing". Resting on our laurels is a luxury no local museum or history research centre can now afford – if it ever could.

Continuing the theme, Thomas Cameron and Annette Bynder spoke of their long-term project preserving and interpreting the former Littlewell Aboriginal Reserve at Mingenew, and how they have been able to bring younger generations back to their heritage.

Jeff Murray spoke on using maps in local historical research, with some great examples from the stock routes and pastoral stations, as well as some warnings on identifying inaccuracies and gaps in map materials.

Tarun Preet Singh spoke on the history of Sikh migration to WA since the 1890s, and how the Sikh community in WA has become increasingly aware of its rich heritage across the State.

Heather Hunwick's paper on the



Bruce Baskerville and Tarun Preet Singh at the empty grave.

links between 19th century food reformers in the US and UK that turned out to be very influential in WA, especially through the Greenough-born Mary Farrelly née Maley.

Two tours on the Saturday afternoon were both fully booked. One took in a leisurely stroll along the left bank of the Irwin River on the Old Port Road, through 'Old Dongarra' and a picturesque setting that belied the ferocity of occasional floods before reaching Denison House (*below*) (the Old Benedictine Monastery).



The other tour by bus explored Edwardian-era Dongara on the north bank of the river, and the hamlet of East End, exploring the town's Sikh heritage.

A highlight was alighting at Dongara Cemetery to view the empty grave site of local community and Sikh leader Sojan Singh and exploring the story of Sikh cremations in Dongara (which helped legalise cremation for all in 1929).

The tour concluded at the Old Police Station and Courthouse with a viewing of the Sikh store journals and a lovely Indian-themed afternoon tea from Sea Folk Café.

Saturday evening saw the conference dinner held in the Priory Conference Room.

Between courses IDHS Patron and local community and fishing industry leader John Fitzhardinge shared some amusing anecdotes from the early days of the crayfishery in the Abrolhos Islands, before the evening came to a convivial conclusion.

Sunday morning began with the RWAHS and Affiliated Societies business session, which included some important discussions about annual reporting and volunteer insurance, as well as the presentation of the annual

WA State Conference



A Merit Award was presented to Busselton Historical Society.

Merit Award to Busselton Historical Society.

After morning tea, Dr Howard Gray spoke on tracing the changing research and interpretations of the Batavia shipwreck (1629) and posing the question 'where next?'.
Su Dhu (*below*) gave a very moving presentation on the Flat Sea project, researching and memorialising the many fishers lost at sea, especially those for



whom no bodies were ever recovered (every WA coastal historical society should be involved in this project).

Bruce Baskerville moved back onshore with a look at two historical local institutions, the Irwin Commons and the Victoria District Co-operative Flour Mill to demonstrate a history of people working together rather than competitively;

Matthew Pavlinovich drew oohs and aahs with his talk on the Midland Railway Company and a rich selection of historic train and station images, and his emphasis on the ways local societies can work together to create regional networks

Film producer Paul Barron's reflections on making the 'Such Was Life' series, which has now involved several historical societies and museums across the Batavia, Gascoyne, Goldfields and South West regions, gave insights into how we can all extend the audiences for our museums and history

publications, and bought the session to a close.

The afternoon tours included a bus tour of historic Middle Irwin and the James Drummond Wildflower Walk.

A maritime theme pervaded the second tour with a viewing of the Blue Marlin boat restoration project and then the Packout Room Museum of Fishing and the Sea and the third tour was of the Old Priory itself, which had been largely designed with help from Old Dominicans (students)

In hosting the conference, the IDHS was assisted by many corporate, public and private sponsors and philanthropists and numerous local volunteers (members) who have worked for months to get everything just right in the conference planning and operation.

Next year, the 60th Conference will be held in Cockburn.

**Bruce Baskerville, Chair,
Irwin Districts Historical Society
(IDHS)**



**MIDLAND RAILWAY COMPANY
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA LIMITED**

Wi-Fi at the Dig Tree

Free open access Wi-Fi has been launched at the Burke and Wills Dig Tree Reserve in far western Queensland by Dr Denver Beanland AM, chair of the Dig Tree Committee of The Royal Historical Society of Queensland (RHSQ).

The Royal Historical Society of Queensland (RHSQ) installed the free open access Wi-Fi at the Burke and Wills Dig Tree 326 kilometres west of Thargomindah in far western Queensland, near the South Australian border.

This means that visitors when stopping off at the Dig Tree Reserve on their journey around inland Australia will now be able to pay the Conservation Fee when visiting the Dig Tree by using the QR Code and making payment online with their credit card at the entrance to the site as well as making telephone calls, texting messages, using the internet, and generally using their electronic devices.

The Wi-Fi is linked to Starlink and at considerable expense was installed by Field Solutions who specialise in this work in western Queensland. Funds for the installation of the Wi-Fi came from Conservation Fee monies over recent years following the major upgrade of the Dig Tree Reserve in 2020.

Since undertaking a major upgrade of the site, which was completed in 2020, the Society has carefully husbanded its Conservation Fees to enable the savings to be available to undertake this work. Although we made many attempts to get a grant or support from all three levels of government, as well as from Telstra, we were unsuccessful over several years, so the Society proceeded by itself.

Because of the location some 1400 kilometres west from Brisbane we believe it was most important to have Wi-Fi for a



ABOVE: Dr Denver Beanland, Dig Tree Reserve Chairman, and Allan Every of Field Solutions.

RIGHT: Signage at the site.



several reasons. One of which is that today many visitors do not carry much if any cash and payment by credit card has become so much the norm.

At the site, payment by cash at the "Honesty Box" is still available. The website allows visitors, as well as others, to obtain a better understanding of the story and the place while allowing online bookings to be made using thedigtrees.com.au website.

The Bulloo Shire Council, which

is geographically larger than the state of Tasmania, has a very basic bush camping facility adjacent to the Reserve. There is a basic toilet facility available but no shops, fuel, showers, water or power. Also, visitors must bring their own firewood.

Unfortunately, our Ranger at the Dig Tree recently resigned after obtaining a better employment opportunity and so we are searching for a new Dig Tree Ranger. Details can be found at thedigtrees.com.au should anyone be interested.

Ruth Kerr



RHSQ members at the launch (from left) former member for Ryan Jane Prentice, Denver and Lee Beanland and Prof John Pearn.

What has changed and what hasn't in Melbourne's iconic laneways

Melbourne's laneways are a Melbourne icon. The tribute is bestowed by many thousands of local visitors per month, especially the city dwellers and workers, but also by large numbers of interstate and international visitors who visit the lanes expressly to 'take in' their unique atmosphere. Or, is it, that the laneways' unique elements 'take in' the visitors? There is no questioning that the laneways provide a fascinating, interactive dynamic.

A wander by anyone through the lanes and nearby arcades reveals groups and individuals, no matter locals or out-of-towners, almost instinctively 'slower' in their walking, shopping, eating or drinking than those in the main streets outside. The out-of-towners also reveal themselves as slowed in a different way, looking upwards or sideways

for the first times as they move through the seasonally naturally chilly, hot or air-conditioned surrounds. C19th and C21st worlds sit comfortably side-by-side.

For most of their history, the lanes have been crowded sites of manufacture across long days and, in some quarters, of disrepute across long nights (if not also by day).

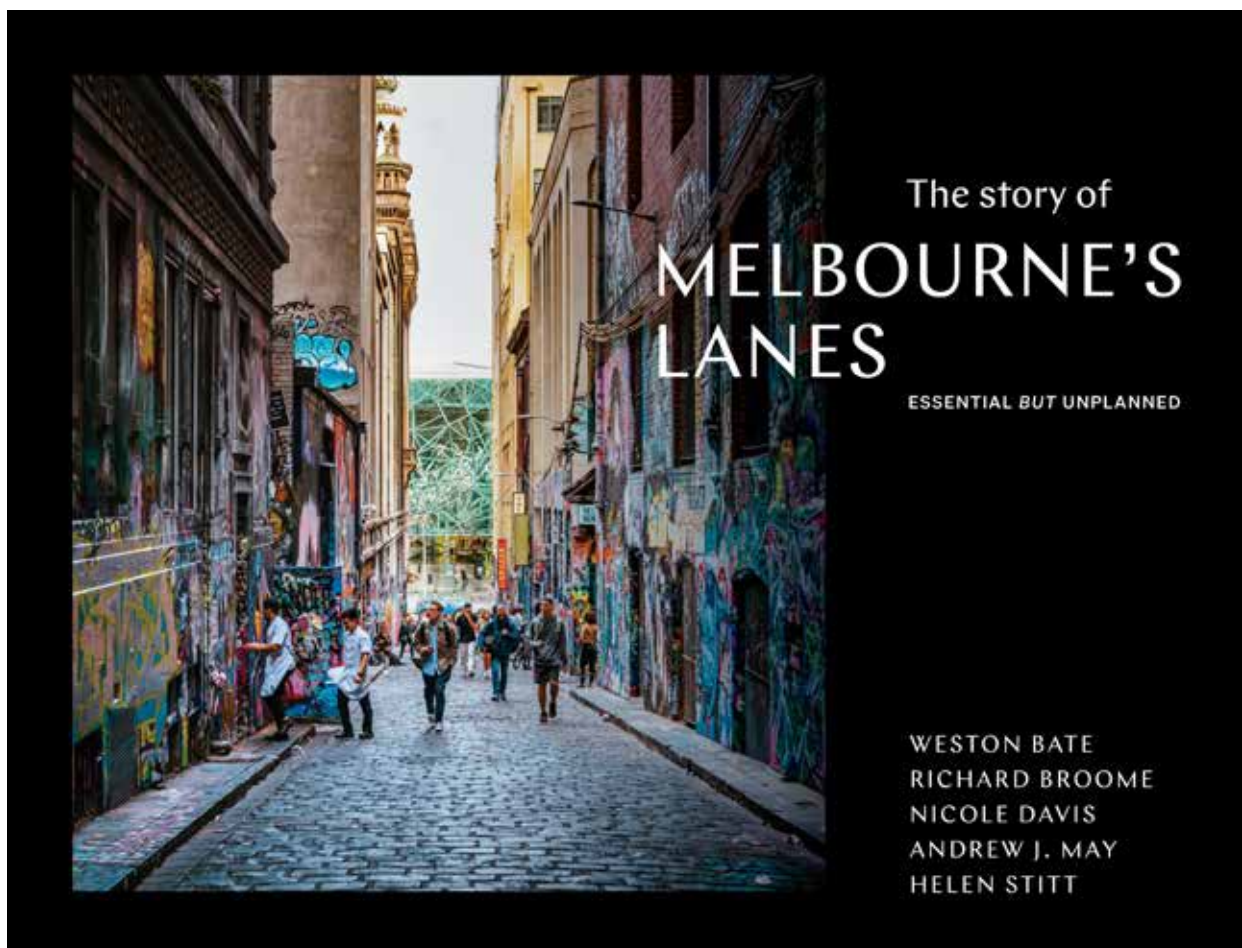
Many sites have retained their identities reaching back near enough 200 years by a variety of means. There are old or more recently-indicated references to some lanes' former-trades by way of their names, even though their current purposes are vastly more recreational as noted above.

RHSV's publicity for the launch of its current exhibition, 'Melbourne's Storied Laneways'

declared, 'When we think of today's gussied-up tourist-friendly laneways like Guilford Lane and Hosier Lane, it is hard to imagine that a mere 50 years ago the laneways were workaday places full still of small factories and light industry. And earlier still there was the desperation of Little Lon', in this latter case referring to the crime and brothels of Little Lonsdale Street.¹

Victorian era lacework still elegantly decorates a few verandahs and upper facades, and people usually shake their heads on learning that much of Melbourne's spectacular gold rush verandahs and lacework were forcibly prised off many buildings and ruthlessly disposed of without time for public objection.

As Graeme Davison explained in his first documentary, 'The Lost



What has changed and what hasn't in Melbourne's iconic laneways

City of Melbourne, a different rush sought to make Melbourne look 'modern' as an Olympic host in 1956.²

Victorians who visit the city often have a favourite Melbourne laneway defined in terms of 'coffee, cuisine or couture'. The RHSV exhibition's curator, David Thompson, chose a fascinating assortment of lanes to capture all interests.

The exhibition, which will run through to the close of 2024, encourages laneway lovers to either visit the exhibition first, then the laneways, or act in reverse, to form a fuller picture of the peoples and activities that have gifted the laneways to Melbourne today. Moreover, there is the tantalising contrast; the lanes are not all 'boutique and beauty'.

In the back-shadows of some, one can almost see a dunny-can man trying to be invisible, or other characters of the past with their illegal trades of the past trying to do the same. The exhibition explains how its viewers will gain 'glimpses of those rough and ready laneways that serviced the city, and a

frisson as the mouths of some still grimy and squalid laneways beckon us deeper in' (or not). In 2024, CCTV tries to minimise current forms of illegal trade and would seem to be successful in keeping the lanes relatively safe and compliant in all regards.

Much basic brick architecture remains but, in some places without shopfronts, the walls are coated thickly in many multiple paint layers of street art or graffiti, or bill posters such that the spaces between bricks and mortar barely exist. Cobblestone laneways and kerbs remain defiant in other locations.

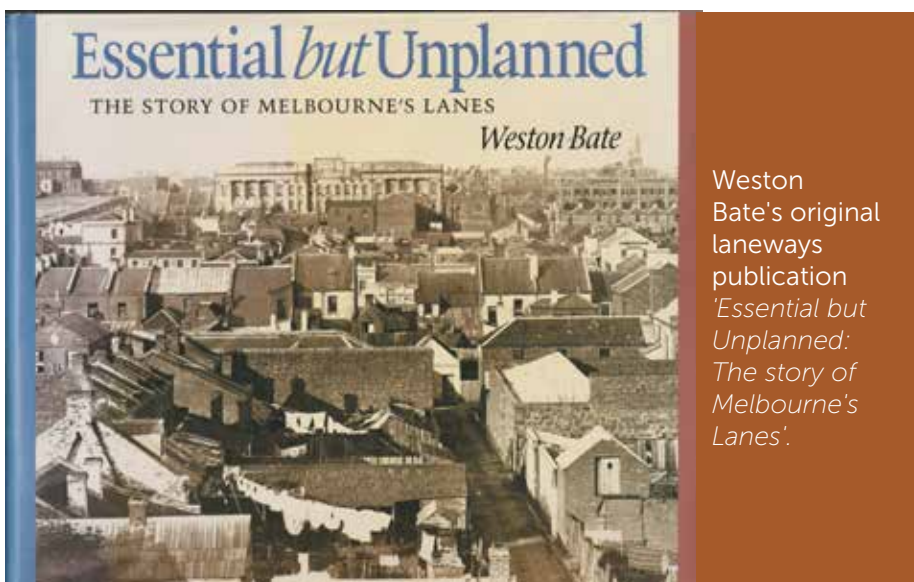
Yet a relatively new addition to Flinders Lane is the painting on the road of three white writhing eels in place of a pedestrian or 'zebra' crossing. Aside from their safety function, the crossing cleverly denotes how the Short-Finned Eel found in many Victorian river systems once swum in creeks now encased in deep drains beneath the very lanes. Untested legend has it that eels still find their way back and forth through the drains that run between inner Melbourne, the Yarra River and Port Phillip Bay.

Although this writer would still recommend using a map or guided tour, of which there are many available online, one of Melbourne's tourism website says playfully of the lanes, '[F]orget maps, things change so quickly around here'.³ Yes, the lanes have changed and quickly over time. Increasingly more are becoming chic, while the arcades retain their grandeur and, fortunately, there are efforts now to preserve all such vestiges of Victorian era marvellous Melbourne.

Elsewhere, lanes remain shadowy because to brighten them would be too developmentally dishonest. The lanes are both historic and contemporary, with continuity and change co-existing to create character. Even the Short-Finned Eels, once free-swimming until perhaps harvested by Aboriginal people, are brought to the consciousness of 2024's passers-by. As bland high-rise developments block out the horizon, may the lanes hold their unique history in Melbourne's modern-day.

The Story of Melbourne's Lanes: Essential but Unplanned was launched on 3 October, a 'marvellous' event with its own history, building on the initial work of Weston Bate in his 'Essential but Unplanned'⁴ and one of RHSV's 2024 highlight achievements.

Rosalie Triolo
RHSV



Weston Bate's original laneways publication 'Essential but Unplanned: The story of Melbourne's Lanes'.

1 - 'Melbourne's Storied Laneways,' promotional text, RHSV, 2023

2 - Graeme Davison, David Kilderry, Robyn Anear & Rohan Storey, 'The Lost City of Melbourne', dir. Gus Berger, Melbourne, 2023: <https://www.thelostcityofmelbourne.org/>

3 - Melbourne, Every Bit Different: <https://www.visitmelbourne.com/regions/melbourne/destinations/laneways>

4 - Weston Bate, *Essential but Unplanned: The Story of Melbourne's Lanes*, Griffin Press, Melbourne, 1994

Henry Beaufoy Merlin - Travelling Photographer

Trawling through the depths of the Canberra & District Historical Society's archives. I came across a collection of 23 original Carte de Visite photographs of Queanbeyan and district, taken in early 1870 by Henry Beaufoy Merlin (1830-1873).

He was one of several early commercial photographers who travelled through Victoria and NSW. Subsequently I have come across more of his photographs and some taken in 1890 by another travelling photographer, Charles Kerry.

Their photographs provide wonderful snapshots of life in the Queanbeyan district, well before the national capital existed. Quite a few of these photographs were published in Errol Lea-Scarlett and Tim Robinson's book *First Light on the Limestone Plains. Historic Photographs of Canberra & Queanbeyan*, published by CDHS in 1986.

The names of Merlin and his assistant Charles Bayliss (1850-1897) will be familiar to those who know about the famous Holtermann Collection of photographs of Hill End and Gulgong in the early 1870s and Bayliss' 360o panorama of Sydney taken from the top of the Sydney International Exhibition building in 1879. Merlin died in 1873 aged in his early 40s. The chemicals used to develop the photographs could have contributed to his and Bayliss' early deaths (Bayliss died aged 47).

Merlin and Bayliss had started their business in Melbourne as the American and Australasian Photographic Company – Bayliss as Merlin's apprentice.

In 1870 Merlin and Bayliss travelled from Melbourne to Sydney, stopping along the way in the many towns they passed through including Yass,



Loading at the Severne Mill on the Queanbeyan River, taken from Mill House. Beaufoy Merlin, 1870. CDHS collection.

Braidwood, Queanbeyan, Goulburn and Parramatta. Merlin advertised ahead of his arrival that he would be taking photographs of every house in the town. The photographs in the possession of CDHS also show he was canny enough to take photographs of businesses and institutions such as churches – all with people in them to increase the chance of sales.

When travelling they had to take their processing equipment with them in a cart as pictured below. Wet glass plate photographs had to be processed on site.

The Carte de Visite technology meant that each glass plate produced four prints, making them more affordable and plentiful than previous glass plate images. Thus, there are

copies of these images in some other collections such as that of the Queanbeyan and District Historical Society. The images also turned up in photographic albums – some presented to local dignitaries. One such album is in the collection of the Canberra Museum and Art Gallery (CMAG). It belonged to Canon Alberto Dias Soares who was the architect for the Diocese of Goulburn from 1864 to 1877 and the rector of Christ Church in Queanbeyan (c1857-1877).

The photographs taken by these travelling photographers are a priceless record of the early days of the many localities they visited.

Nick Swain



Queanbeyan with Bungendore Hill in the background showing Merlin's photographic cart with Charles Bayliss seated, 1870. Photograph courtesy Keith Forsey.

Maritime Museum of Tasmania marks 50th anniversary

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the formal establishment of the Maritime Museum of Tasmania although its collection's origins are earlier beginning with the Ship Lovers' Society of Tasmania.

Formed in 1931 the Society brought together those working in maritime industries and with an interest in Tasmanian history. It was probably Tasmania's first historical society and among the earliest with a specific interest in maritime heritage in Australia.

One of the three principal objectives of the Society was "the study, collection and preservation of maritime records, pictures, books, souvenirs and models". During its first year of activity the Society began to develop its collection which grew rapidly. The Tasmanian Nautical Exhibition organised by the Society in 1936 and held at the Hobart Town Hall gives some indication of the extent of this growth.

Although the Society provided material from its collection for display at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery it was not successful in its aim of developing a dedicated maritime gallery at the museum. In 1955 the Society became actively involved in the group lobbying the Tasmanian Government to develop a folk museum in the historic Battery Point property Narryna. The Van Diemen's Land Memorial Folk Museum, opened in 1957 with one of the exhibition rooms centred on Hobart's maritime history drawing upon the Society's collection.

The continued growth of the collection acted as a catalyst for members of the Society together with other supportive community members to establish the Maritime Museum of Tasmania. Their first project was to develop



The former Carnegie Library became the Maritime Museum in 1999.

new displays in the hall at St George's Anglican Church, Battery Point. Known as the "Mariners' Church", the Church had a long association with Hobart's seafaring community. The new displays opened in 1974 and through the support of the Museum's volunteers was able to open most days of the week.

After the distraction of the acquisition and subsequent, financially successful disposal of the Cheynes II whale catcher in the late 1970s, the continued growth of the collection encouraged the Museum to relocate to Secheron House, Battery Point. Leased from the Tasmanian Government the new venue was opened in 1983 by the Museum's patron The Governor of Tasmania, Sir James Plimsoll. One of the finest houses in Battery Point, Secheron House was originally built for colonial surveyor George Frankland in 1831 but its relatively isolated location limited visitor access.

Within a few years for a variety of reasons not the least ease of visitor access the search for a larger and ideally more strategically located site began. Circumstances were to see the former Carnegie Library

building offered to the Museum and through the support of the Hobart City Council it became the Museum's new home in 1999.

Located at the corner of Argyle and Davey Streets immediately opposite Constitution Dock in the centre of Hobart this has proved to be an ideal location for the Museum to present its active exhibitions and community programs.

In 2010 the *Westward*, the only Tasmanian built yacht to win two Sydney to Hobart Yacht races (1947 and 1948) was donated to the Museum. Built of Huon pine at Battery Point by Jock Muir as a fishing cruiser the *Westward* is notable in being the only winner of this classic blue water race with a fish well.

Maintained by the Museum's volunteers the *Westward* is often seen on the Derwent and with the support of TasPorts is moored in Constitution Dock opposite the Museum. At much the same time the Museum also resolved its continuing collection storage challenges by acquiring a new collection store in the Hobart suburb of Cambridge.

Continued

Maritime Museum of Tasmania marks 50th anniversary

Since its establishment the Maritime Museum has operated as a community-based not for profit charity dependent upon its own income generating initiatives and community generosity.

Although the Museum does not receive recurrent government funding it does through Arts Tasmania receive grant funding to support the operation of the Tasmanian Maritime Heritage Network.

This informal group of more than 30 museums, heritage organisations and heritage sites across the state aims to promote and protect Tasmania's rich maritime heritage.

Recent initiatives have included the Australian National Maritime Museum supported hull scanning project to document historic Tasmanian boats, the Tasmanian shipwreck artefact collections survey supported by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife

Service, as well as a variety of seminars and workshops.

A significant achievement of the Network is the work of members in finding appropriate custodians both within and beyond Tasmania for maritime heritage material that may otherwise be lost to the community.

In 1936 the Ship Lovers Society of Tasmania led a campaign to save the oldest surviving building in Battery Point, Semaphore Cottage from demolition.

Built in 1816 as part of the Mulgrave Battery, Hobart's first defence fortification, it housed the soldiers serving the guns.

However, within just a few years, the cottage was by 1824 being used to support the operation of the semaphore signal system.

Originally intended to provide information about imminent shipping arrivals the system was expanded dramatically following



View of the exhibition "Shaped by the Sea" in the Carnegie Gallery.

This exhibition gallery was originally the reading room in the Tasmanian Public Library which opened in 1907 and was built with the financial support of philanthropist Andrew Carnegie



Built in Battery Point, Hobart by Jock Muir in 1946 as a recreational fishing cutter the *Westward* was to win to Sydney to Hobart yacht races. Photographed in Constitution Dock after winning in 1947 the *Westward* continues to be sailed by Maritime Museum volunteers and can still be seen moored in Constitution Dock.

the establishment of the penal settlements at Port Arthur and elsewhere on the Tasman Peninsula to become the largest in the Australian colonies.

Since the saving of the cottage, a semaphore signal staff has been reconstructed.

Now the Maritime Museum working with the Hobart City Council is working on re-opening the cottage to interpret its history, the original intent of the Ship Lovers Society.

For the Maritime Museum of Tasmania this is a fitting way of celebrating its own 50th anniversary while acknowledging its origins.

Chris Tassell
Museum President

Bicentenary Commemoration of the First Settlement at Redcliffe

The Royal Historical Society of Queensland, in partnership with two other local historical Societies, History Redcliffe and the Bribie Island Historical Society, were honoured to convene the conference at Redcliffe on the 7 September 2024.

The conference was to commemorate the establishment of the first European Settlement at Red Cliff 200 years ago on the 14 September 1824.

A conference committee of ten members from the three organizations was established in February 2023. The conference hosts extended the warmest of welcomes to all - and in the words of the Gubbi Gubbi People, Wunya ngulum.

Professor John Pearn and Stephen Shaeffe were the co-convenors. The committee met regularly at the rooms of History Redcliffe to organize this event. Everyone contributed magnificently. It was an extremely successful event with 240 attendees and the papers delivered were all professionally researched and delivered.

The Moreton Bay Settlement, established on 14 September 1824 was a small penal outpost far from Sydney, and eventually it became the foundation of the modern State of Queensland. It was imposed on the lands of the Indigenous People who had lived in the northern littoral of a tidal bay called Moora.

The Settlement was established at Red Cliff Point, the Redcliffe of today. During the melting of polar ice at the end of the last Glacial Maximum (29,000-19,000 B.P.), the sea rose, and the topography of the present Moreton Bay began to form. The land of the region, as we know it today, was formed some

6,000 years ago. The Indigenous People had lived in this fruitful and abundant region on both the islands in the Bay and along its littoral. It was the home of the Gubbi Gubbi [Kabi Kabi], the Djindubbarri and the Ningy Ningy [Ningi Ningi] Peoples, clans or groups of the wider Undambi Peoples. The different groups spoke dialects of Turrbul and Gubbi Gubbi.

Their life was stable. A rich oral tradition has it that life was secure, with food provided by the sophisticated use of fishing nets and coordinated social action; and "fire farming" to flush game and promote grass regrowth.

Throughout the millennia, the region was a place of great cultural significance to the Peoples of the region. The Turrbul word, Karingaibah, means "Place of Kippa Rings". The culture of the Indigenous Peoples of the Redcliffe Peninsula was sophisticated, with complex Indigenous lore and law. The Indigenous way of life was entwined with the land and its produce and with the sea and its bounty.

The region was noted for its ceremonial meeting places, with regular ceremonies held at ceremonial sites, both separated (for men's and women's ceremonies) and communal events.

The two cultures, Indigenous and European, were incomprehensible to each other. The Europeans were ignorant of the Indigenous concept of regional ownership, and had no concept of Indigenous lore, ceremony or ritual. The Indigenous People had no concept of European life and the social mores of 19th-century British subjects. Unlike European law and custom, Indigenous lore and custom was enduring

and not subject to rapid change. Communication was challenging, if not impossible — and the language of each was incomprehensible to the other.

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

It was John Oxley who sailed into Moreton Bay in December 1823 searching for an appropriate place to establish a penal settlement and he encountered two ticket-of-leave men near Bribie Island who had been landed in Moreton Bay earlier that year

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

The Moreton Bay Settlement at Red Cliff saw many 'firsts' — the first confrontation between Indigenous men and the European expeditioners, and the first European death when Private

Continued

Bicentenary Commemoration of the First Settlement at Redcliffe

Felix [Phelim] O'Neil died on 15 March 1824. It witnessed the first European birth.

The Settlement was the foundation of the military in Queensland and also where medicine, as we know it today, began in Queensland. It was where agriculture was first attempted, albeit unsuccessfully – but was the foundation of what was to become a huge export industry in the centuries ahead. In November 1824 the settlement was visited by Governor Brisbane, Justice Forbes, the first Chief Justice of New South Wales and others

Unlike the experience of the Indigenous Peoples who had lived in apparent harmony with the land and sea, indeed who had prospered in this, their homeland, this European Settlement was, in many respects, a failure. The supply of fresh water was inadequate for the Settlement. Within weeks of the landing, there was no medicine for the treatment of the convicts, more than half of whom had become ill.

Following its second visit in December 1824, the Amity did not return for five months, and the supply of goods was inadequate. The men, women and children of the Settlement existed on 'salt meat and field pease'.

The sandy soil was poor and there was no manure or fertiliser initially to grow vegetables, let alone the planned 100 acres of maize. The heat and humidity were distressing to the Europeans.

There was no suitable timber in the neighbourhood for the building of huts and both timber and grass for thatch (as a substitute for shingles) had to be obtained miles away. Because of the extensive inter-tidal sandflats, the site was unsuitable as a port.

The Indigenous People of the land, not unreasonably, resented the intrusion of the European Settlement, and relationships deteriorated to the point of conflict.

The Settlement was abandoned in April-May 1825, and, by July,

the personnel and all material goods had been transposed to the northern banks of the Brisbane River. The Gubbi Gubbi People called the abandoned site, Humpybong.

A Bicentenary was a time to reflect on these facts of history, and to view and interpret them through the lens of 21st century analysis. In the 21st century, historians no longer speak of "discovery" of these lands – as those colleagues of Indigenous identity and descent rightly say that "the land was never lost". Thus, this Bicentenary has a very different flavour from that of the Centenary events of 1924, and those of the Sesquicentennial commemorations held in 1974.

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

The original party consisted of 29 volunteer convicts under the supervision of the 40th regiment of foot led by Lieutenant Henry Miller. Descendants of the convicts and the soldiers attended the conference and especially of Lieutenant Miller.

Fourteen papers were presented including papers about the aboriginal people who first occupied the land, and 12 papers were read by title only. They will all be published in 2025. It was a great day.

**John Pearn and
Stephen Sheaffe**



Australians document an East India Company Cemetery in Macau

This graveyard, together with the nearby Camoens grotto and gardens, is so pleasing a sanctuary so close to the heart of a crowded, noisy city, that its very serenity invites frequent visits. Moreover, it is small and self-contained, it spans a short period of time, and its tenants are all foreign settlers, many being associated in some respects. It thus offers a conspectus of an immigrant society living on the south China coast a century and a half ago.¹

The graveyard is the Old Protestant Cemetery in the former Portuguese colony of Macau (now a Special Administrative Region of China). The author of these words was an Australian physiologist, World War I veteran and later Colonel in the British Army Aid Group in World War II, and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hong Kong, Sir Lindsay Ride (1898–1977).

The Old Protestant Cemetery itself is quintessentially English and would be a familiar sight to people across the Anglosphere. The reason for its establishment is directly related to the clash of Christian denominations in the nineteenth century. Portuguese Catholicism forbade the interment of non-Catholics in Catholic soil. The whole of Macau was regarded effectively as a 'Catholic' terrain, although in practice Protestant burial was permitted outside the city walls, a practice which at times also conflicted with Chinese burial practice. The families and friends of Protestants who died in and around Macau faced a distressing

level of uncertainty, even hostility, when the time came to bury their dead.

The solution was a dedicated Protestant burial ground. This was negotiated by Robert Morrison, the first Protestant missionary to China (he was also employed by the East India Company), with the Portuguese Governor Castro Cabral. The need was urgent: Morrison's young pregnant wife had died suddenly and he was unable to inter her with another dead son, owing to Chinese opposition to opening the grave. Cabral's diplomatic assent allowed for the land to be purchased by the East India Company in 1821, and for Mary Morrison to become the cemetery's first occupant. An adjoining site was purchased in 1827, with a building to be used as a mortuary chapel.

The cemetery in this location had a brief period of active use: it was closed in 1857 when the Portuguese authorities decreed that no further burials could take place within the city limits, and in

1858 land was purchased outside the city walls. This became the New Protestant Cemetery; the former burial ground became known as the Old Protestant Cemetery.

The Old Protestant Cemetery contains over 160 graves and grave markers, ranging from monumental tombs to simple slabs. They honour the lives of distinguished men and women and humble folk alike, and people of a number of nationalities – British of course, and also Americans, Dutch, Germans, and Scandinavians. Many of them were very young, in their twenties and thirties at the time of their deaths.

Sailors of all ranks are buried there, often after departing this life through death from disease, wounds and accidents in the maritime location of 'Macao Roads'. Some interred in the cemetery died as a result of the infamous Opium Wars waged by the British in the 1840s against the Chinese empire.

Sir Lindsay Ride, whose description of the Old Protestant Cemetery began this article, and his wife May, made the documentation of the cemetery's occupants a major project of their later years, only ceasing work when illness overtook Sir Lindsay in 1971.

The Rides' meticulous and comprehensive endeavours resulted in an enormous manuscript collection which was later collated, abridged and edited by Bernard Mellor and published in 1996 as *An East India Company Cemetery: Protestant Burials in Macao* by Hong Kong University Press.



The old Protestant Cemetery, Macau
Image Roslyn Russell

Continued

Australians document an East India Company Cemetery in Macau

In addition to documenting the graves and monuments in the Old Protestant Cemetery, the Rides installed one last batch when they discovered a number of grave markers in 1971, 'piled up unceremoniously in the New Protestant Cemetery'. They obtained funds from the Cemetery Trustees to rebuild a retaining wall and had the 23 gravestones set into it. Some of these are for really young children and even babies of a few months' old.

One of these gravestones is that of Thomas Pennington. His memorial was erected by Alexander Allison, the master of a British ship, in memory of 'his apprentice Boy who died on board at this Port on the 1st January 1861', as a result of a fall into the ship's hold – a poignant reminder of the risks of life at sea in the nineteenth century. As with the other gravestones rescued from the New Protestant Cemetery by the Rides, this one

has no further documentation as it was not included in the records of the Old Protestant Cemetery.

The last occupant of the Old Protestant Cemetery was Sir Lindsay Ride himself. After his death in 1977 he was cremated and his ashes buried in an unmarked location on the lower level of the cemetery and a memorial tablet erected.

The Old Protestant Cemetery is planted with Bauhinia and Frangipani trees, the latter known in Macau as Eggflower because of the yellow blush at the heart of its petals. Its fragrant blooms act as a point of familiarity, at least for Australians. They are also a silent tribute to two Australians whose work has rescued the stories of those who lie here, far from home, at peace in a foreign land.

Roslyn Russell

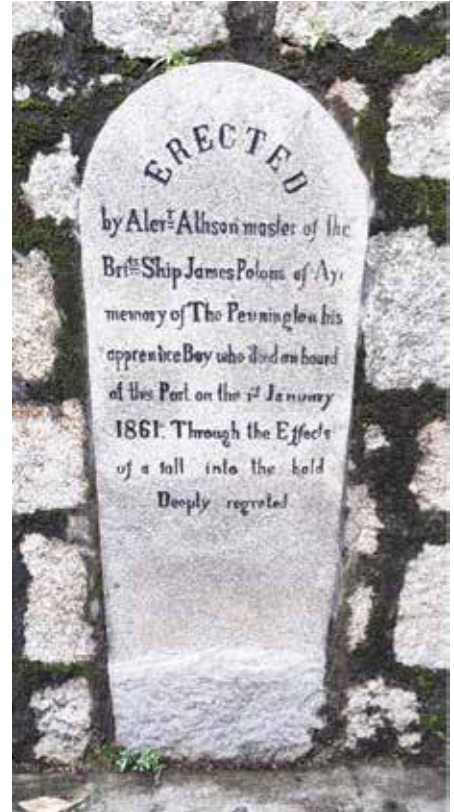
The author would like to acknowledge the assistance of Jan Bos in the preparation of this article.

¹ Lindsay and May Ride, *An East India Company Cemetery: Protestant Burials in Macao*, abridged and edited from their manuscripts with additional material by Bernard Mellor, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong, c1996, p. xiii.

² J. R. Poynter, 'Ride, Sir Lindsay Tasman (1898–1977)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/ride-sir-lindsay-tasman-11524/text20557>, published first in hardcopy 2002, accessed online 4 September 2024.

³ An East India Company Cemetery, pp. 274–275.

⁴ John O'Regan, 'Foreign death in China: symbolism, ritual and belief in the Old Protestant Cemetery in Macau', *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*



Memorial marker for Thomas Pennington.

Image Roslyn Russell



ABOVE: Grave of Jacques Pierot.

RIGHT: Grave of Wilhelm Meeseberg, supercargo of a Dutche East India Company vessel.

Images Jan Bos



FAHS Newsletter October 2024

Editor: Christine Yeats

Design & Production: Pauline Hitchins

Federation of Australian Historical Societies (Inc.)

Postal address: PO Box 315, Curtin, ACT, 2605, Australia

Email address: admin@history.org.au

ABN: 89 217 386 291