Collaboration and Methods: Behind the Scenes in Researching the Long History of Drought Assistance in Australia

Wednesday 6 August 2014, 4:15-5:30pm

School of History Seminar Series
Speakers: Rebecca Jones, Karen Downing and Blake Singley
School of History, ANU

McDonald Room, Menzies Library, ANU

Rebecca Jones, Karen Downing and Blake Singley will pull the curtain on their recent forays into an interesting mix of methods and sources that together, they hope, will add new dimensions to the long history of government drought assistance in Australia. We have begun to chart monetary assistance through financial records in official Year Books; visualise the language of legislation and newspaper commentary; and correlate these findings with firsthand accounts of drought in personal writings and oral history interviews. Each of these approaches has its challenges and opportunities and these will be the focus of this presentation. This is very much a work-in-progress seminar where critique of our methods and discussion of our tentative conclusions will be very welcome.

Dr Rebecca Jones is an ARC Postdoctoral Fellow in the ANU School of History working on the project, ‘Slow Catastrophes: drought resilience amongst farmers and agricultural communities in Australia, 1880s-2000s’, exploring the way people in Australia respond to and survive drought. She is the author of Green Harvest: A History of Organic Farming and Gardening in Australia (CSIRO Publishing, 2010).

Dr Karen Downing is assistant editor of History Australia journal, executive officer of the Australian Historical Association, and recipient of a 2013 ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences grant for a pilot project using digital humanities tools on an environmental history topic. She has also been working as researcher with Rebecca Jones. Her book, Restless Men: Masculinity and Robinson Crusoe, 1788–1840 (Palgrave Macmillan), has just been published.

Dr Blake Singley is a lecturer in the ANU School of History (teaching ‘Convicts and Settlers: Australia 1770s to 1870s’ this semester), the current Nancy Keesing Fellow at the State Library of NSW and has been working as a researcher with Karen Downing. His thesis investigated national identity through food and is titled ‘Recipes for a Nation: Cookbooks and Australian Culture to 1939’.

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ALL WELCOME
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