‘Taking the Long Journey’: Australian Women who served with allied countries and paramilitary organisations during the Great War

Selena Williams

On 17 February 1918, Douska Kahan who was born in Sale, Victoria in 1884, sailed from New York to Bordeaux, France to begin work with the American Red Cross. This study will examine Douska’s experiences and ‘road to war’ and that of many other independent Australian women who worked with medical and paramilitary organisations for countries other than their own, during the Great War. Some joined the medical services of England, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada while others took on humanitarian and philanthropic work using remarkable initiative and resilience in the face of living conditions that were often harsh and unrelenting. There was also the constant risk of illness or injury from shell fire and if working on a hospital ship, from mines and torpedoes.

This thesis will explore the circumstances around the war service and ‘road to war’ of this largely undocumented group of women, to examine factors that governed their war service in England, Serbia, France, Belgium and Egypt. Why did these independent women serve for a country other than Australia? How did they deal with patriarchal controls, both private and political? This thesis will use standard social, cultural and women’s history methodology to examine the pattern of female travel, class, social and religious background and the gendered division of labour and gender and war. It will therefore ask to what degree, the motivations and war service of these women was guided by value-systems, institutional practices and traditions.

By undertaking a transnational study of political, economic, social and cultural factors, this study will show if war service expanded or restricted the identities of these women. Was their war service valued and by whom, or was as it hidden behind the exploits of the ‘digger’ and the profoundly masculine Anzac Legend that developed when the war ended?
This thesis seeks to examine the relationship between imperialism and the London settlement house movement between 1880 and 1914. Significantly, settlement houses were established in an age of empire building. I will explore the ways in which university settlers depended on empire for much of their language, their methods of investigation and their proposals to alleviate poverty. I will also investigate the ways in which the London settlement houses and distant outposts of empire were linked in the British imperial imagination as sites subject to the social control involved in the relationship between coloniser and colonised.

Combining the study of the university settlements with discourse analysis and post-colonial theory, this study views the slums as spaces of imperial encounters. The settlers’ presence in the slums involved a profound cultural imperialism. Central to the movement was a sense of cultural superiority and a determination to elevate the culture of the slums. The scope of the settlers’ activities reflected the determination of the movement’s leaders to transform the intellectual and physical landscapes of the slum dwellers.

Although they were explicitly established as ‘residential colonies’, the impact of imperialism on London’s university settlement houses remains under explored. Historians have examined the contributions of settlement houses to social policy, philanthropy and the church’s mission to the poor. Most recently, Seth Koven has examined the interplay between sexuality and philanthropy in the settlements. Contra to this literature, this dissertation will focus on the links between class, ‘race’ and empire in the settlement houses. It is concerned with the motivations of the ‘settlers’ and the dynamics of encounter within the settlements. The settlement houses were one of Victorian Britain’s most celebrated experiments in cross-class ‘brotherhood’, but they were also fraught with paternalism, cultural elitism and dubious agendas with regard to class and power.
Thesis Abstract

Chasing Rainbows: Australia as Regional Peacekeeper in Bougainville, East Timor and Solomon Islands

Kimberley Doyle

What informed the relationships, power dynamics and interactions between Australian peacekeepers and local people during peacekeeping operations in the Pacific between 1997 and 2006? It has been with a broad brushstroke that historians have asked questions about just what exactly Australian peacekeepers did when deployed in the Pacific. We know about peacekeeping from an operational and policy perspective, but we have next to no idea how that translated into everyday realities. What kinds of things happened between peacekeepers and local people in the Pacific? Why?

I will use approaches of postcolonial and gender theorists to critically analyse this space. The specific operations are: International Force East Timor (INTERFET) and its successor, the United Nations Transitional Authority in East Timor (UNTAET); the Truce and Peace Monitoring Groups (TMG and PMG) in Bougainville; and the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). The study is based primarily upon an oral history project I will conduct with peacekeepers.

The first part of the thesis explores how the organisations, nation and international community to which peacekeepers belonged were shaped by gendered, racial and imperial discourses, structures and practises? Did these influence peacekeepers' ideas about themselves, peacekeeping and the people and places to which they were deployed? The second part of the thesis will meet peacekeepers in-country to examine the actual interactions, relationships and exchanges that occurred, and then attempt to discern why they happened as they did. Did peacekeepers come with certain types of identities? Were these articulated, validated, negotiated or destabilised in-country? Was there change or continuity in peacekeepers' pre-deployment ideas and attitudes? The final part of the thesis makes connections across the operations to say something broader about the continuities and changes of Australian peacekeeping in the Pacific as a region in this period.
Thesis Abstract

‘Victims of American Independence’: A collective biography of Barbary captives and American nation-building, 1785-1840

Brett Goodin

This dissertation examines the construction of American nationhood through a collective biography of James Cathcart (1767–1843), Richard O’Brien (1758–1824) and James Riley (1777–1840). As ‘ordinary’ citizens they were swept up in, and actively participated in the literal and ideological construction of nationhood as: merchant sailors, accidental explorers, white slaves, diplomats, politicians, lobbyists, bureaucrats, authors, and surveyors and pioneers of the American South and West.

The role of ordinary citizens in shaping the American Revolution, its ideological underpinnings, and ongoing nation-building, is explored through the combined approaches of social history, collective biography and biographical-microhistory.

Although Cathcart, O’Brien and Riley were unusual individuals, no aspect of their lives was unique to them, and how they responded to the more uncommon experiences, such as being held as white slaves in North Africa, reveals how ordinary citizens perceived the emerging American notions of nationhood, liberty, race and masculinity.

Diplomatic and military historians have monopolized the study of America’s conflict with the North African ‘Barbary States,’ and have confined these studies to the waters of the Mediterranean and ‘the shores of Tripoli.’ Although American captives loudly identified themselves as ‘victims of American Independence,’ the conflict’s cultural and political influences upon America were not explored until Lawrence Peskin identified the 1785-1816 conflict as a nation-building experience in his 2009 book Captives and Countrymen. However, like his predecessors, Peskin did not follow any of the 700 American captives once they returned to America, where they continued to leave significant marks through their explorations and occupations – marks which reflected the same values and virtues that were admired in them as captives. This dissertation is the first study to pursue American captives of the Barbary States, beyond their captivity, as the agents and embodiment of American nation-building in the early republic.
This thesis examines and interprets how cookbooks reflected and influenced developments in Australian culture and society during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Cookbooks have not simply been utilitarian texts that served their purpose in the kitchen as instruction manuals. Whilst this undoubtedly was their primary function, they embodied more than just food and domestic culture but also mirrored many aspects of the society that has produced them.

This thesis questions how, and to what extent, cookbooks reiterated gendered norms within the domestic and public sphere. It also explores how changing notions of nation, race and class occurring in Australian society were manifested through culinary texts. Finally it examines how contemporary discourses surrounding science, health and technology were reflected in cookbooks.

This dissertation draws upon aspects of cultural history in its approach to the study of cookbooks and involves a close reading of these texts. This particular approach functions as a method of understanding the context in which the past has been produced. Understanding this context involves an analysis of social practices in their many shapes and forms, like the production of cookbooks and preparation of food, that form the ideas, beliefs and habits of the individuals or period under scrutiny.

By focusing on cookbooks this thesis will illuminate how these texts played an influential role in the construction of Australian culture that extended far beyond their original intended use. The use of cookbooks also allows for the innovative use of a rarely utilised primary resource as a new prism through which to view changes occurring in Australian culture and society. This study will produce a richer picture of Australian social culture, both at the domestic and public level, and contribute to the field of Australian social and cultural history.
Thesis Abstract

Ubiquitous Lines: A history of the introduction and use of barcode technology in Australia - 1965 to 1989

Arnold Ellem

This research asks what is the relative importance of local, international and technical factors in the introduction and use of a new technology, in particular the barcode. The research takes an externalist rather than an internalist approach, that is instead of facing and focusing on technology, this research looks outwards from technology to its relationship with a society.

My research contributes to the historiography of technology by expanding the limited coverage of Australian experiences and of the introduction of imported technology into Western rather than non-Western countries. My research continues themes of technology as a non-deterministic human creation and valuing multiple factor interaction over a single factor when explaining technological change. The research focus is the retail industry and particularly the grocery sector, given their close public association with the pervasive use of barcodes. The historiography of retailing is overseas focussed with the treatment of Australia often restricted to a single region or dominated by a single perspective. My research extends those treatments, taking a national view with wider social, economic, political and cultural perspectives.

This history combines case studies with policy critique to examine the introduction of barcodes into Australian supermarkets and retail stores, illustrating how this was a dynamic process changing in narrow time intervals. This research uses public and private sector archival records, analyses publications ranging from trade journals to newspapers and periodicals, reviews cultural expressions of the technology and includes interviews with key figures. A predominately chronological narrative will argue that local conditions and their interactions with international and technical factors are as significant as those international and technical factors, even if technology is imported.
Hidden in Plain View: Aboriginal People and Places in Southeastern Sydney 1840-1900

Paul Irish

How did Aboriginal people adapt to the growth of cities? Typically, the interest of historians has moved with the frontier. Histories of later periods have highlighted the decimation of local people and their later replacement by unconnected Aboriginal immigrants, though a sparse archival record has limited testing of these ideas. As Australia’s first settlement, Sydney has been used as a textbook example, but recent digitisation of archival records has enabled past theories to be scrutinised by allowing detailed consideration of individual Aboriginal people as Sydney grew from town to city in the mid to late 19th century. Preliminary research for this project confirms work from remote parts of Australia, which demonstrate Aboriginal adaptation as a temporally shifting interplay of a range of complex factors, including Aboriginal cultural practices, the limitations and opportunities of settlement and Aboriginal/European relations and government policy, within a specific environmental context.

A range of data and approaches are needed to reveal and interpret this complexity. Archival, archaeological and environmental data are spatially analysed to reveal shifting patterns of Aboriginal movement and settlement location not otherwise apparent. Such ‘geo-biographies’ of Aboriginal people also allow their lives to ‘speak’ beyond the snippets of information recorded by European observers, even with a close reading of such sources. Interpretation is also informed by anthropological concepts of connection and cultural change, and archaeological and environmental perspectives on factors influencing Aboriginal settlement.

Sydney’s Aboriginal history is significant beyond its borders due to its status as the place of first impact. Whilst not downplaying the severity of colonial impact, the study explores an adapted continuity not previously apparent, connecting early colonial Aboriginal people to the origins of contemporary urban communities in Sydney and the memories of current Aboriginal populations.
Thinking History Through Bodies and Place: mobile and situated historical narratives and encounters in south-west Central Australia

Shannyn Palmer

The predominantly Pitjantjatjara speaking population of south-west Central Australia are often spread out over vast distances, yet remain connected in a wider landscape of significance. Why do Aboriginal people in the South-West move over this ‘landscape’ in the ways that they do? And how has this seemingly constant state of movement in remote Australia changed since colonisation, particularly in regards to encounters with non-Aboriginal travel, technology and culture? The absence of Aboriginal perspectives in the historical record, and an archaeological bias in heritage work has meant that Aboriginal people have to live amongst non-Aboriginal representations of their history that often reify Aboriginal culture and perpetuate binaries that render ‘authentic’ Aboriginal history as rooted in a pre-contact past. A deeper engagement with the complex layers of history, dwelling and travel in this Central Australian landscape reveals not only the embodied and embedded nature of Aboriginal historical practice, but also the complex and dynamic nature of Anangu culture and connection in contemporary Central Australia.

Intensive fieldwork will be foundational to a methodology that will use digital media to record Aboriginal histories and map the routes that they trace through the landscape. These digital histories will be augmented with archival research, particularly focusing upon the fieldwork diaries and extensive image collection gathered by anthropologist Frederick G.G. Rose. My research seeks to demonstrate, by incorporating the use of new media, traditional historical methods and a collaborative approach to research, that it is possible to open up a space whereby historians can think history through bodies and places as well as the archives and time. In working together with Anangu to produce creative histories of this Central Australian landscape my research seeks to create a dialogue between two very different historical practices and in doing so create a space for Aboriginal people to engage in history making and knowledge exchange while also exploring new and non-textual methods for historical thinking, writing and representation.
Thesis Abstract

From forgotten corner to paradise? Bega Valley in the late Twentieth Century

Fiona Firth

In 1965 the far south coast of NSW was seen as a forgotten corner with a narrow economy based on farming, forestry and fishing and a traditional conservative society.

Between 1965 and 1996 the population of the area doubled. Newcomers, attracted to the small coastal villages and the rural hinterland, brought with them lifestyles, dreams and expectations that were often in stark contrast to the lives and aspirations of the locals. This study will review three contests over what was allowed on the private land that the new settlers acquired. The first was a clash between locals and a newcomer over the traditional access route to a much loved picnic, fishing and safe swimming spot. The second related to the regulation of owner building as a marker of the independence sought by new settlers. The third centred on the preservation of amenity in a rural-residential locality.

Drawing on oral history I will interview people involved in these disputes to discover why there were contests over activities on private land, and about the experience of living in a contested landscape at a time of rapid social and economic change. The ‘sea change’ phenomenon has been studied extensively by sociologists, but the history of the ‘sea change’ and how individuals on both sides of the process were forced to engage with each other, with governments and with place itself, is much less studied.

The search for the rural idyll, and the desire for a non-urban lifestyle, are powerful narratives in modern Australia and have led to a re-population of rural and regional areas along the eastern seaboard. This study will bring a qualitative perspective to experiences on the far south coast - an alternative ‘alternative mecca’.
The Axe and the Thin Hemp Line: Capital Punishment in Papua New Guinea, 1945-1975

Murray Chisholm

How do unlegislated processes interacted with the formal legislated processes in the administration of the death penalty?. The fate of a person who was condemned to death in the Trust territory of Papua and New Guinea lay in the hands of the Governor-General of Australia. He took advice from the Cabinet, the Administrator of Papua and New Guinea and the Judge. This discretionary process allowed many factors to intrude into a legal process. In a post-colonial age, and under the eye of the UN regime, questions of administrative control, civilisation, morality, gender and politics intruded into this process in intriguing ways and this will be examined. This requires an analysis of events that look at much at the personal beliefs of people involved as structural pressures; interpreting the players’ own analysis exposed by their discussion of civilisation, expediency, gender, shame, taboo and culpability.

This thesis follows from historical research into punishment and colonialism particularly Martin J. Weiner’s An Empire on Trial and Hank Nelson’s “The Swinging Index”. Weiner concludes that colonial punishment is understood by examining the particularities rather than the generalities. Nelson establishes the unique nature of capital punishment in PNG prior to the period of this thesis.

To test these claims I will focus on written discussion over whether to grant clemency to a condemned Nuiginian. Techniques of literary criticism are required to interpret the subtexts and implications of the arguments presented by the public, journalists, judges and politicians. Here conceptualisations of gender, power and status in the literature will be useful to understand all the people involved. Subaltern readings are also required to try to understand the Nuiginians’ negotiation of their path through colonialism.
"Vaillante Soeur": Marie Caroline Niau and her family in France, England and Australia, 1850 TO 1933

Les Hetherington

How did late 19th and early 20th century European and Australian women respond to conflict and loss, reacting to circumstances impacting on their individual, family, work and civic lives? How were they shaped by others' expectations? How did their responses intersect with issues of gender and identity?

These questions will be explored through a microhistorical, transnational, collective biography of Marie Caroline Niau and her family, particularly her mother, Marie Louise Jacobs, sister Eugénie and daughter Josephine Hyacinthe, based on Marie Caroline's recollections of her life from 1870 to 1888, published in 1930 as Souvenirs d'une Parisienne aux Antipodes. Gaps she left are filled by biographies of her sister, an account by her daughter of the fraudulent colonisation scheme that brought the family to Sydney, family correspondence and other documents in the archives of the Little Sisters of the Assumption in Paris, and records in France, England, Queensland and New South Wales, broadening the study to the period from 1850 to the 1930s.

Jacqueline Dwyer’s Flanders in Australia, a collective biography of the Playoust family published in 1998 – similar in approach to Tim Bonyhady’s Good Living Street (2011) and Edmund de Waal’s The Hare with Amber Eyes (2010) – is a rare published account of a French Australian family from the Niaus’ time. In this study, contextualised by collective family histories like Stephen Foster’s A Private Empire (2010), Emma Rothschild’s The Inner Life of Empire (2011), and Melanie Nolan’s Kin (2006), and works by scholars such as Natalie Zemon Davis, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Carlo Ginzburg, Alain Corbin and Jan Goldstein, textual analysis of Madame Niau’s recollections provides insights into the lives of a small number of related individuals, highlighting their ‘exceptional normality’ and illuminating wider aspects of Australia’s history, including cultural identity retention in the overwhelmingly British society of colonial and post-colonial Australia.
This thesis is an intellectual biography of British historian Raphael Samuel (1934-1996) which focuses on his historical work in relation to critical theories of education. Raphael Samuel is best known as being the founding force behind History Workshop and History Workshop Journal. In his later career he took a close interest in heritage and public memory making. Throughout his working life Samuel assumed multiple roles as organiser, critic and writer, but it was his role as an educator which underlined all of his activities. This thesis corresponds to some of the debates in educational thinking during the late 20th century. In conjunction with the development of interest in the politics of civic society and culture, much inspired by the Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci, education ceased to be seen as a politically neutral ground. The role and relationship of education to society became a significant and contested political issue, as indeed it remains today. Raphael Samuel, through his emphasis on the way in which history is produced, can be seen as both representing and contributing to the various discourses of education that ran throughout the late twentieth century in Britain.

The main research questions this thesis intends to address include: why did education become a key site for political debate? How can Samuel's work be seen to represent a particular strain of educational thought? Why did history constitute a particularly productive ground for social critique? This thesis is going to combine a biographical approach with a critical discourse analysis, which focuses on the dialogic and relational aspects of between different discourses and within the broader political context. The broad themes of this thesis centre on the relationship between education, society, and the individual, and the changing location of history as a subject within the sociology of knowledge.
Earle Page and the Shape of Australia - a Study of Ideas about National Development

Stephen Wilks

The career of Earle Page, one of Australia’s longest-serving and most influential political figures, illuminates the nature and impact of distinctively Australian bodies of thought about national economic and social development.

Such thought and associated organised movements were the basis of policy and intellectual debates on decentralisation, regionalism, new states, technology, economic planning and federalism, which sought to realise Australia’s development potential. Page synthesised such ideas into a prescriptive vision, and for decades enlivened and led important policy debates.

Page’s Country Party political context was the subject of excellent studies in the sixties and seventies by B.D. Graham and Don Aitkin. The ideas on national development which constituted his main interest have received less detailed attention. Recent work such as by James Walter has started mapping Australia’s many practically-minded ‘organic intellectuals’, but much remains to be done on the precise nature and origins of their varied ideas, how they sought to exert influence, and what political success they had and why.

Drawing on his personal papers and those of associated activists, Page provides a good basis for a biographical approach to delineating and assessing this history. Although frequently determinedly idiosyncratic, his longevity, his tenacious advocacy, and his breadth of interests embody and specify much. He was a bridge between thinkers on Australian development and formal politics. Page’s particular determination to decentralise and regionalise industry and population underlay much of his activity, including such remarkable initiatives as the 1931-2 campaign to separate New England from New South Wales, and his 1938-9 attempt to establish machinery for national economic planning.

Page’s extensive career also illuminates related questions of how policy formulation changed radically in the post-war years; and of whether ambitious national development initiatives were as widely accepted by past Australian governments and the general public as is often assumed to-day.