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### Contact Details

All correspondence should be addressed to the Editor, *Australian Journal of Biography and History*, National Centre of Biography, School of History, RISS, 9 Fellows Road (Coombs Building), Acton, ANU, 2601, or [Malcolm.Allbrook@anu.edu.au](mailto:Malcolm.Allbrook@anu.edu.au).

**WARNING: Readers are notified that this publication contains the names and images of deceased persons.**

### **About the Journal**

The *Australian Journal of Biography and History* is an initiative of the National Centre of Biography (NCB) in the Research School of Social Sciences at The Australian National University. The NCB was established in 2008 to extend the work of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and to serve as a focus for the study of life writing in Australia, supporting innovative research and writing to the highest standards in the field, nationally and internationally. The *Australian Journal of Biography and History* seeks to promote the study of biography in Australia. Articles that appear in the journal are lively, engaging and provocative, and are intended to appeal to the current popular and scholarly interest in biography, memoir and autobiography. They recount interesting and telling life stories and engage critically with issues and problems in historiography and life writing.

The journal publishes peer-reviewed articles on Australian historical biography, including biographical studies, studies relating to theory and methodology, and the associated genres of autobiography, life writing, memoir, collective biography and prosopography. We are especially interested in articles that explore the way in which biography and its associated genres can illuminate themes in Australian history, including women in Australian society, family history, transnational networks and mobilities, and Indigenous history.

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Articles should be in the range of 5,000 to 8,000 words (excluding footnotes), although longer submissions may be considered after consultation with the Editor.

Style and referencing: please use footnotes in Chicago style, and follow Australian spelling.

# ARTICLES



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# Community collaborations: The Australian National University and the Canberra & District Historical Society

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MALCOLM ALLBROOK

This second number of the *Australian Journal of Biography and History* is the result of a joint project between the School of History at The Australian National University (ANU) and the Canberra & District Historical Society (CDHS). The idea of a collaboration had been mooted when, as the inaugural editor, I discussed the idea with a society member, James McDonald, that as one of its earliest ventures, the new journal should focus a number specifically on Canberra biography. As a relatively recent appointment to the university, I had not been aware of the previously close relationship between the university and the society until a conversation with Patricia Clarke, a long-time and continuing member of the society's committee, and a regular contributor to the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (ADB). Pat had arrived in Canberra in 1957 with her husband, the former prisoner-of-war, federal public servant and author Hugh Vincent Clarke (1919–1996),<sup>1</sup> and had quickly become involved in 'the unexpectedly rich cultural and intellectual life'<sup>2</sup> of their new home town. The CDHS was but one of the cultural organisations that attracted members from a cross-section of Canberra society. But perhaps more importantly to the Clarkes, it was unusual in that it brought together historians from the recently established ANU, and capable and committed lay practitioners.

Most people had jobs in the public service or at the ANU but in their spare time were involved in a whole lot of areas—literature, amateur theatre, and an array of intellectual and cultural societies. There were clubs everywhere, and they flourished. People arriving in Canberra were surprised at how active it was, and how many interesting people were involved.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Chris Coulthard-Clark, 'Clarke, Hugh Vincent (1919–1996)', Obituaries Australia, National Centre of Biography, The Australian National University (hereafter Obituaries Australia), accessed 11 June 2019, [oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/clarke-hugh-vincent-1560](http://oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/clarke-hugh-vincent-1560).

2 Malcolm Allbrook, 'Pat Clarke', in *Biography Footnotes*, issue 18, February 2018, 9, accessed 11 June 2019, [history.cass.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/docs/bf-no-18\\_1.pdf](http://history.cass.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/docs/bf-no-18_1.pdf).

3 Allbrook, 'Pat Clarke', 9.

In his *History of Canberra* (2014) Nicholas Brown commented that in the 1950s the number of societies exemplified the opportunities that a place part capital city, part country town could provide. Indeed 'voluntarism was ... often all there was to meet a need',<sup>4</sup> and services, as well as community facilities and cultural initiatives, often came about through the efforts and persistence of residents. Yet in 2019 this feature of Canberra life that had so attracted the Clarkes seems to have largely evaporated, and with it the previously close, almost symbiotic, relationship between ANU and the CDHS. The society had formed at a meeting at the then Canberra University College (CUC) on 19 December 1953, largely on the instigation of William Phillip Bluett (1871–1968), a former newspaperman, local government politician and landholder. A prolific correspondent to the local press, Bluett had the ability to motivate others, and to do so across social boundaries. A colleague, Philip Selth, who was to become a secretary of the CDHS and the author of six *ADB* biographies, remembered him as one of those 'energetic souls who spend their lives shaping the communities around them'.<sup>5</sup> Born at Wagga Wagga, Bluett had acquired interests in a number of Sydney newspapers, until he chose a life on the land, and purchased Koorabri in the Brindabella ranges in 1911. Involved heavily with the Queanbeyan-Canberra and District Chamber of Commerce, he unsuccessfully sought election to the Lower House seat of Goulburn in 1925 as a progressive candidate. Among the many causes he advocated, he was particularly keen on local history and the need for a local historical society, and was aggrieved that contemporary Canberrans appeared uninformed and, in their ignorance, promulgated errors about the past. By 1953 he had decided that, with over 40 years having passed since the foundation of the capital, the time had come to establish a historical society.<sup>6</sup> The inception meeting drew an audience of 73, including 'leaders of thought in our National City',<sup>7</sup> and descendants of those who had settled the area before it became Canberra. Bluett stressed that the society should devote itself to the 'true picture' of Canberra history, and be prepared to 'give both sides of the story ... on one side the land-owners and the free settlers and on the other the convicts'.<sup>8</sup> It should also 'gather as much material as possible' about the Aboriginal people of the region, a subject he professed to know something about.<sup>9</sup> Importantly, the meeting adopted two recommendations that were to define its future activity: first to establish archival facilities 'to promote the compilation of authentic historical records'; and second to involve itself in protecting the district's heritage, 'places of historic and aesthetic interest'.<sup>10</sup>

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4 Nicholas Brown, *A History of Canberra* (Port Melbourne, Vic.: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 152.

5 'An Ideal Figure to Study a District', *Canberra Times*, 6 February 1985, 20.

6 'Why Not an Historical Society for Canberra?' *Canberra Times*, 7 October 1953, 2.

7 'An Historical Society for Canberra', *Canberra Times*, 10 November 1953, 2.

8 'Canberra Historical Society Formed', *Canberra Times*, 11 December 1953, 2.

9 'Aborigines Advised Ainslie to Choose Duntroon', *Canberra Times*, 30 April 1954, 2.

10 *Canberra Times*, 11 December 1953, 2.



The make-up of the first committee reflected Bluett's vision that the society should broadly represent the people of Canberra and its district, and involve academics, public servants, journalists and representatives of the 'old settlers', such as the Campbell, McIntosh and Cameron families. As a small city, Canberra in the 1950s remained a place where boundaries between groups that in larger places might be exclusive were malleable, a feature that many found appealing, or at least compensation for the relative dearth of entertainment and recreation facilities. Yet many found the city small, sterile and introspective. Paul Hasluck, who came to Canberra from Perth with the Department of External Affairs in 1941, was at first annoyed by the place:

The best that can be said for it is that it is a completely sterile and safe cage in which public servants can work clearly without any major excitements to disturb their routine. One misses the intellectual movement that there was in Perth.<sup>11</sup>

His wife Alexandra wondered what she had done to deserve exile in Canberra. 'My idea of hell has always been of a freezing region,' she wrote, 'and here I am for my sins.'<sup>12</sup> The Haslucks later came to appreciate what Canberra had to offer—from involvement in repertory to academic and scholarly life—and found it not so inferior from other capitals in its cultural and intellectual life as Paul had imagined. Indeed, by 1948, before he was elected to the federal parliament, he was attracted by the possibility of a return to Canberra, either in a research role with the new ANU, or teaching undergraduates at the CUC. The college, which had been offering degree courses since 1930, was itself shaped by the particular circumstances of the growing city, being conceived partly to reassure potential recruits to the public service that they 'would not be coming to an educational desert'.<sup>13</sup> All students during its early years were part-time, and most were public servants who attended lectures 'dutifully, if often sleepily, between 5.00 and 9.00 pm' at various temporary quarters around the city.<sup>14</sup> During the 1950s, however, after the appointment in 1949 of John 'Joe' Burton as principal and professor of economic history, the college entered a period of growth and consolidation. Four 'foundation professors' took up appointments at the reinvigorated college: Manning Clark as professor of history; Fin Crisp as professor of political science; Heinz Arndt as professor of economics; and A.D. Hope to the chair in English. At its Childers Street base, a 'lively community' formed, where the 'whole staff, clerical as well as academic, congregated each morning in the tea room'.<sup>15</sup> By contrast, ANU had been conceived as an institution befitting

11 Geoffrey Bolton, *Paul Hasluck: A Life* (Nedlands, WA: UWA Publishing, 2014), 105.

12 Ann P. Hunter, 'Hasluck, Dame Alexandra Margaret (Alix) (1908–1993)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, The Australian National University (hereafter *ADB*), adb.anu.edu.au/biography/hasluck-dame-alexandra-margaret-alix-18561/text32678, published online 2017, accessed 15 June 2019.

13 S. G. Foster and Margaret M. Varghese, *The Making of the Australian National University: 1946–96* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1996), 8.

14 Foster and Varghese, *The Making of the Australian National University*, 144.

15 Foster and Varghese, *The Making of the Australian National University*, 148.

the grandeur of a national capital, and began life in 1948 with the appointment of Sir Douglas Copland as vice-chancellor.<sup>16</sup> In the Research School of Social Sciences, made up of six departments, Laurie Fitzhardinge began work in 1951 as reader in sources of Australian history. This was his second stint in Canberra, having from 1934 been research officer responsible for Australian collections at the Commonwealth National Library (from 1960, the National Library of Australia), until moving to Sydney as a lecturer in classics at the University of Sydney.<sup>17</sup> He had become imbued with the potential of a national biographical project comparable to the British *Dictionary of National Biography*, and immediately set about laying the groundwork for what was to become the *Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB)* by employing Pat Tillyard (from 1954, Wardle) to help compile a comprehensive biographical register that, when the dictionary commenced in 1957, comprised a major source.<sup>18</sup> The same year as Fitzhardinge arrived, Oskar Spate was appointed professor of geography in the Research School of Pacific Studies. A ‘polymath whose interests knew no mental or geographical boundaries’, he had broad research interests that traversed the Indian subcontinent, New Guinea and Fiji, while also extending into the Australian cultural landscape.<sup>19</sup> Fitzhardinge, Tillyard and Spate, with Manning Clark, were in 1953 to become members of the new CDHS committee, with Fitzhardinge, Clark and Tillyard active members and office-holders over the first decade of the organisation’s life. Another ANU academic, the economic historian John Bailey, son of the then Commonwealth solicitor-general Sir Kenneth Bailey, was also a significant early member, being the society’s first treasurer until he moved to Oxford to undertake doctoral studies in 1955.<sup>20</sup>

Throughout the 1950s, although its population almost doubled during the decade, Canberra remained a small place ‘with all the benefits and drawbacks that small towns tend to offer’.<sup>21</sup> As well as working together, people ran into each other constantly, meeting and talking ‘at the local shops, perhaps about the local school or the housing problem, and on weekends their families shared picnic spots at Weston Park or along the Murrumbidgee River’.<sup>22</sup> The voluntarism that Nicholas Brown identified as a feature of the period extended to organisations such as the CDHS, in which academics such as Clark, Spate, Fitzhardinge and Bailey could not only exercise their scholarly interests, but also be involved in community and social service. The first committee was indeed a polyglot body involving people from

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16 Foster and Varghese, *The Making of the Australian National University*, 8.

17 Graeme Powell, ‘Fitzhardinge, Laurence Frederic (Laurie) (1908–1993)’, *ADB*, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/fitzhardinge-laurence-frederic-laurie-384, published online 2017, accessed 12 June 2019.

18 Patricia Clarke, ‘Wardle, Patience Australia (Pat) (1910–1992)’, *ADB*, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/wardle-patience-australie-pat-17092, published online 2016, accessed 14 June 2019.

19 Foster and Varghese, *The Making of the Australian National University*, 107.

20 Jack E. Richardson, ‘Bailey, Sir Kenneth Hamilton (1898–1972)’, *ADB*, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bailey-sir-kenneth-hamilton-9404, published first in hardcopy 1993, accessed 14 June 2019.

21 Foster and Varghese, *The Making of the Australian National University*, 149.

22 Foster and Varghese, *The Making of the Australian National University*, 149.

a range of backgrounds and professions. Apart from academics, and landowners such as Bluett, it included people such as Loma Rudduck, wife of the architect and town planner Grenfell Rudduck,<sup>23</sup> and Mrs Lyndsay Gardiner, both of them active in a number of community organisations. Another foundation committee member was Arthur Thomas Shakespeare, editor of the *Canberra Times*, which had been founded by his father Thomas in 1926. He also was active in many community and quasi-governmental organisations such as the ACT Advisory Council and the ANU Council and, having sold out of the newspaper, was to become chair of the first Canberra television station, which was founded in 1957 and started broadcasting in 1962.<sup>24</sup> The representative nature of the committee was rounded out by the election of J.H.L. Cumpston, by 1953 in retirement after a career in which he had served for over 20 years as the Commonwealth director-general of health and had written biographies of the explorers Charles Sturt, Thomas Mitchell and A.C. Gregory.<sup>25</sup>

During the first decade of the CDHS, Fitzhardinge and Clark each served two terms as president, and attended meetings as often as they were able; Wardle joined the council in 1960 and served for 20 years, becoming president from 1965 to 1967.<sup>26</sup> Clark was by the 1950s entering a period of academic prominence that required him to be away from Canberra frequently. Nonetheless, when he was at home he took seriously his role with the CDHS and while president (1957–59) rarely missed a meeting. His enthusiasm for the work as well as the potential of the society is unsurprising given his interest in Australian historical source material, exemplified by the publication of his two-volume work *Select Documents in Australian History* (1950, 1955). While the works for which he is best known—the six volumes of his *History of Australia*—were not to start appearing until 1962, his journals demonstrate that throughout the 1950s and early 1960s he was preoccupied with the conceptual development of his magnum opus.<sup>27</sup> As Mark McKenna described, Clark was one of the first Australian historians to consider both the importance of place and the biographies, particularly the inner lives, of the characters who populated Australian history. The goals of the CDHS to collect, preserve and organise historical source materials and to cultivate relationships between its members and those who had ‘made’ Australian history were thus entirely consistent with Clark’s priorities as a historian. The CDHS brought together the kind of people he was interested in and felt comfortable with, rather than his fellow academics, many of whom he disdained or mistrusted as being overly concerned with questions of theory over

23 Ian W. Morison, ‘Rudduck, Grenfell (1914–64)’, *ADB*, [adb.anu.edu.au/biography/rudduck-grenfell-11583](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/rudduck-grenfell-11583), accessed first in hardcopy 2002, accessed 14 June 2019.

24 H. J. Gibbney, ‘Shakespeare, Arthur Thomas (1897–1975)’, *ADB*, [adb.anu.edu.au/biography/shakespeare-arthur-thomas-8525](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/shakespeare-arthur-thomas-8525), published first in hardcopy 1988, accessed 14 June 2019.

25 Michael Roe, ‘Cumpston, John Howard Lidgett (1880–1954)’, *ADB*, [adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cumpston-john-howard-lidgett-5846](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cumpston-john-howard-lidgett-5846), published first in hardcopy 1981, accessed 14 June 2019.

26 Clarke, ‘Wardle, Patience Australia (Pat)’.

27 Mark McKenna, ‘Clark, Charles Manning (1915–1991)’, *ADB*, [adb.anu.edu.au/biography/clark-charles-manning-225/text29719](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/clark-charles-manning-225/text29719), published online 2015, accessed 15 June 2019.

history. Throughout the 1950s, including during Clark's terms as president, the question of how the documents and sources of history should be stored became increasingly pressing for the society and Clark attended many meetings to try and resolve the problem of a headquarters. In his 1959 presidential address, he urged members to maintain their resolve: local history, he said, 'provides the mass of detail that other horizons shun'.

The Society must have an office, some space of its own from where it can function better; where members, friends and visitors could drop in. This would be to the material benefit to the Society. The Society cannot be allowed to continue operating inefficiently.<sup>28</sup>

Clark's uneasy relationship with his university-based colleagues reflects a wider rejection by academic historians of local and family history, as well as biography, as Melanie Nolan has described.<sup>29</sup> As the discipline of history became ever more professionalised throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, historians distanced themselves from what they regarded as 'antiquarianism' and, while biography and local and family history continued to flourish, they did so outside the academy and away from the gaze of the 'professional' historian. Academic historians, Nolan wrote, 'particularly those who wanted to think of history as a science, or at least a social science, considered biography to be anecdotal, unrepeatable, unrepresentative, subjectively interpreted single examples, simply n=1'.<sup>30</sup> The location of the *ADB* within a university was unusual in the annals of national biography projects,<sup>31</sup> and to some extent was a consequence of the perspectives of those such as Clark, Fitzhardinge and the first chairman of the *ADB* editorial board, Sir Keith Hancock, who understood the importance of archives and source materials, while also recognising that historical knowledge did not necessarily reside solely in the halls and tutorial rooms of universities.

Indeed, the university(ies) and the CDHS enjoyed a close relationship, particularly during the 1950s, '60s and '70s, which extended from practical support to common interests and membership. Until at least 1965, the CUC and ANU supported the society where they could, the former providing its senior common room for general meetings, an arrangement that continued after the society took custodianship of Blundell's farmhouse in 1964, and ANU contributing secretarial and copying services to produce society reports and the journal. Fitzhardinge and Clark gave papers at society meetings, Fitzhardinge served on the editorial board of the society's

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28 Canberra & District Historical Society, *Annual Report* (Canberra: The Society, 1959), 6.

29 Melanie Nolan, 'Kindred Practices? Local, Family, and ADB Historians', *Whole Histories: Keeping the Stories Alive* (Yass, NSW: Yass & District Historical Society, 2017), 113–23.

30 Nolan, 'Kindred Practices?', 115.

31 The Canadian dictionary of national biography is the only such project, apart from the *ADB*, to be attached to a university history department. It is associated with two universities, the University of Toronto and, in keeping with its bilingual product, the Université Laval in Quebec City.

journal, and helped coopt colleagues such as the historians Allan Martin and Robin Gollan, the prehistorian John Mulvaney and the anthropologist W. E. H. Stanner to give papers at society meetings. The relationship between the society, and the CUC and ANU, which amalgamated in 1960, became if anything even closer after the establishment of the *ADB*.

Apart from Fitzhardinge and Tillyard, Nan Phillips was an active member of the society and at the same time was on the staff of the *ADB*. To Don McDonald, a long-time office-holder (1968–74; president, 1969–71),<sup>32</sup> she almost personified the society and was involved in every aspect of its operations, from administration to events organisation. At the same time, Geoffrey Serle, general editor of the *ADB* from 1975 to 1987, considered her the ‘heart and soul’ of the *ADB*. She saw her role as helping to establish the society’s holdings, and thus, as McDonald wrote in an obituary, ‘to provide accurate and complete information about the region’s history with individual members being encouraged to interpret that material’.<sup>33</sup> Seeing the potential of regional historical societies working together to form a unified voice, she was active with the Federation of Australian Historical Societies as secretary and treasurer. She was employed as the *ADB* administrator from 1962 to 1983, and in addition showed herself to be a competent researcher and author, writing 10 *ADB* articles, and assisting in the preparation of many more. Jim Gibbney (1922–1989) was another whose work straddled the society and ANU by virtue of his employment with the *ADB*, where he worked from 1965 until 1983. Born and educated in Western Australia, after gaining a BA from the University of Western Australia, he moved to Canberra to take up a position as a trainee librarian at the Commonwealth National Library in 1950. He became interested in archives and, over the next few years, formed the view that archivists, librarians and historians should work cooperatively, as their roles were very closely associated, particularly in relation to biography. Indeed in his view, in order to be effective in any of these fields, one should be competent in the others. Intimately involved with the Biographical Register at ANU, he not only authored an extraordinary 81 articles for the *ADB*, but also contributed his research skills to many more. At the same time, he was honorary archivist with the CDHS.<sup>34</sup> While undertaking this role, he authored two local histories, *Eurobodalla: A History of the Moruya District* (1980) and *Canberra 1913–1953* (1988), for which he had been awarded a PhD the same year, and prepared *Historical Records of the Australian Capital Territory: A Guide*, which was published posthumously in 1991.

32 Philip Allan Selth, ‘McDonald, Donald Ian (Don) (1923–1990)’, *Obituaries Australia*, accessed 19 June 2019, [oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/mcdonald-donald-ian-don-15360/text26569](http://oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/mcdonald-donald-ian-don-15360/text26569).

33 D. I. McDonald, ‘Phillips, Nancy (Nan) (1908–1984)’, *Obituaries Australia*, accessed 18 June 2019, [oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/phillips-nancy-nan-814/text26570](http://oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/phillips-nancy-nan-814/text26570).

34 Gibbney is third on the *ADB* authors ‘honour roll’, after the incomparable Gerry Walsh, author of 195 *ADB* articles, and Martha Rutledge (née Campbell), another long-term *ADB* staff member and member of the CDHS, who authored 172 articles.

Thus the *ADB* and the CDHS in many ways have common origins and interests, and particularly during their early days were almost codependent. Yet over the intervening years, the disjuncture between the society (with its focus on local historical sources, archives and heritage) and the academy (with its prevailing interest in broad historical themes and change), which early members such as Clark, Fitzhardinge, Wardle, Phillips and Gibbney sought to bridge, has if anything widened. This was only partly due to physical separation of the entities that reduced the opportunities for collegiality that had characterised the society's early days. The space problems that had so concerned the society's early committees, partially resolved by Blundell's farmhouse in 1964, were improved by the acquisition in 1977 of premises at the Griffin Centre in the heart of the city's central business district, and subsequently the society's current headquarters at the Curtin shops. It has now been some time since an ANU historian has served on the society's committee. Although members such as Pat Clarke continue their membership of the society and their involvement with the *ADB*—Pat being a long-time member of the *ADB*'s Commonwealth working party and a regular contributor to the *ADB*—there now seem fewer opportunities than ever for the entities to explore and develop their common interests. This might be partly explained by the increasing absorption of the *ADB* into the academic structure of ANU. After a review of its operations in 2008 (the 'Gregory Review'), the *ADB* was integrated into a new research centre—the National Centre of Biography—within the School of History. The new body was charged with the aim of becoming the leader in Australian biographical research, which meant developing a scholarly infrastructure of collaborative research, publication and outreach, and an active involvement in the school's postgraduate and teaching programs. Many of the *ADB* staff thus became academics, with the accompanying demands to pursue private research agendas and scholarly publication, as well as to take on teaching responsibilities. Yet concurrently, during the period since World War II, there has been a steady 'mainstreaming' of biography, local and family history back into academic history, with individual case studies being increasingly seen as useful in illustrating social and cultural change:

there has been a move away from thinking in terms of larger structures toward looking at the many different ways in which individuals understand and think about the world and represent themselves within it in 'lived reality'. Biography, or 'using lives', has come to be seen as a research methodology in itself. It allows analysis of context and historiography, and a rethinking of what is important in history.<sup>35</sup>

This issue of the *Australian Journal of Biography and History* is intended partly to recognise and honour the close relationship of the past, but also to reiterate the close and continuing relationships between the study of biography, as exemplified by the *ADB*, and the practice of local and family history and heritage, the mission of the society. Most of the contributors are members of the society, and have been involved in the often painstaking and minute study of aspects of the history of

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35 Nolan, 'Kindred Practices?', 116.



Canberra and its region for many years. In 'A City and Its People: Canberra in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*', Karen Fox, a research fellow at the National Centre of Biography and a research editor with the *ADB*, explores Canberra history by discussing some of wide array of people 'who have lived, worked, loved and fought in the Canberra district', and who are represented in the *ADB*, as well as its ancillary websites, 'Obituaries Australia' and 'People Australia'. James McDonald, in his article 'A Good Sheep Station Ruined', examines the pastoral origins of the Canberra district, finding that the industry in the region was, before the founding of the capital city, once a centre of innovation and enterprise, with stations such as Henry 'Babe' Curran's Ginninderra becoming a national exemplar of the wool industry. In a second essay, 'Migration as an Opportunity for Reinvention: Alfred and Margaret Rich of Gundaroo', McDonald discusses the potential of immigration to remake oneself, essentially to redefine identity, using the biographies of two people, both of whom had faced disadvantages in England because of their racial backgrounds, in establishing new lives and careers at Gundaroo.

The next article, 'Three Years in the Life of Chief Constable Patrick Kinsela', by Gillian Kelly, examines the role of the first policeman in the district, who took up his posting at the nascent town of Queanbeyan in 1837, and in many ways exemplified the system of justice in the region until his early death in 1841. Kinsela is an unusual biographical subject as very little is known about his life until he assumed the role, while from then on, his life and times come into focus by virtue of his reports, reports in the local press and colonial government inquiries. Kelly, however, finds evidence that he attained his position of responsibility through his membership of military networks of patronage that spanned the British Empire, and found expression in the New South Wales colony. Michael Hall, in his essay 'The Sentinel over Canberra's Military History', explores the connections between the Anglican Church of St John the Baptist, now in the Canberra suburb of Reid, and the military, and the war experiences of some of its parishioners. The final two essays of the volume move towards aspects of the modern history of Canberra, the first exploring the life stories of Vince and Viola Kalokerinos who, for many years, ran a milk bar at Curtin, a place that has assumed a prominent place in both the commercial and social history, and indeed has become almost a part of the folklore, of the city. Their story is a reminder of the impact of non-English speaking people, particularly Greeks, on the development of Canberra, and their willingness to work long hours to provide essential services to a population that was made up largely of government employees. Finally, Nick Swain discusses the life and work of one of Canberra's early photographic entrepreneurs, Les Dwyer, who came to Canberra as a construction labourer in 1924 but, as a consequence of the Depression and workplace injury, converted a hobby into an enterprise. As an energetic and capable photographer, he was one of those who, along with Jack Mildenhall, Richard Strangman, Alex Collingridge, Fred Bareham and Maxwell Ahearne, was responsible both for creating a visual culture and a pictorial record of the city in the twentieth century.





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# A city and its people: Canberra in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*<sup>1</sup>

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KAREN FOX

A search of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (*ADB*) and the associated websites that make up the People Australia portal produces remarkably few individuals born in Canberra: just eight as of May 2019.<sup>2</sup> To some extent, the shortage of Canberra-born figures in the *ADB* and its companion websites is a consequence of the city's relatively recent founding, chosen as the future capital of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1908 and officially named in a ceremony a little more than 100 years ago. Designed and constructed to be the country's capital, Canberra has been a city of immigrants. It is likely that the numbers of individuals born in Canberra whose stories are told in these websites will increase dramatically in the future, partly thanks to additions planned to the websites, but also reflecting the significance of the city's role as Australia's capital in the twentieth century and beyond. Despite the small numbers of Canberra-born, however, the People Australia websites include a wide array of people who have lived, worked, loved and fought in the Canberra district. In this essay, I explore Canberra's history through some of the people who have shaped it, with a focus on those whose stories are told in the *ADB* and its associated websites.

## Founding of Canberra

As a capital city, Canberra's history is relatively short. The land on which it stands, however, has been inhabited and tended for thousands of years. Archaeological evidence shows that there has been habitation in the area for over 20,000 years. Rock painting at locations such as Yankee Hat, campsites and rock shelters like

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1 This essay was originally prepared for Canberra's centenary celebrations in 2013, and published online for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and in *Using Lives: Essays in Australian Biography and History*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2014), [adb.anu.edu.au/essay/7](http://adb.anu.edu.au/essay/7). It appears here largely as written, with minor revision to bring it up to date.

2 They are: politician John MacPherson; Mary Cavanagh, the widow of local resident Patrick Cavanagh; James Benjamin Sibrey, who later lived in north-west New South Wales; Amelia Alice McIntyre, who is listed in People Australia but for whom there is as yet no associated entry; shearer Michael Scannell; forester Ray Margules; St John Ambulance chief executive officer Charles Campbell; and musician Barnaby Ward. The search was conducted on 10 May 2019 using the 'Advanced Search' function on the People Australia website: [peopleaustralia.anu.edu.au/advanced-search/](http://peopleaustralia.anu.edu.au/advanced-search/).

that at Birrigai, ochre quarries at Red Hill and in the Gungahlin area, and stone tools found around the district are among the traces that testify to a rich history of habitation by Aboriginal people.<sup>3</sup>

European settlers first arrived in the area in the 1820s, following exploration in search of the Murrumbidgee River by Charles Throsby, a surgeon and settler, and Joseph Wild, an emancipist in Throsby's employ. The first European to claim land in the district was Joshua John Moore, an absentee landlord who took up 1,000 acres at a location he referred to as 'Canberry'. Not long after, James Ainslie brought sheep to the area and stocked 4,000 acres of land for Robert Campbell.<sup>4</sup> Increasing his holding, which he called Duntroon, by the 1840s Campbell held 'the choicest selections' on the Limestone Plains, as the area was known.<sup>5</sup> Later, one of Campbell's sons, Charles, would provide for the building of a church and a school at Duntroon; the church, that of St John the Baptist in Reid, is still an important part of Canberra life. Other landholders soon joined Moore and Campbell. In a census taken in November 1828, three stations besides Duntroon and Canberry were listed at or near the site that would become Canberra: Ginninderra (held by George Thomas Palmer), Jerrabomberra (John Palmer) and Quinbean (Timothy Beard). The first resident landholder in the district was John MacPherson, who named his land Springbank. His children Helen, born in 1830, and John Alexander, born in 1833, were claimed to be the first non-Indigenous children born in the region.<sup>6</sup>

Further European settlers arrived in the 1830s, and by the middle of the decade much of the good pastoral land in the area had been parcelled out in government grants. The locality had a postal service, in Queanbeyan, from 1836, and that same year its first doctor, William Foxton Hayley, arrived and started a practice. In 1838 a police magistrate, Alured Tasker Faunce, was appointed, and the first resident minister of religion, Anglican priest Edward Smith, arrived in Queanbeyan.<sup>7</sup> Small villages and towns grew up around the station properties, and the European population of the region, including both free settlers and assigned convicts employed by landholders, gradually increased. Local Aboriginal people could sometimes camp on or near the stations, and were thus able to remain on their own land. Some worked as guides or stockmen, as did Johnny Taylor, who had grown up on the Ginninderra

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3 Josephine Flood, *Moth Hunters of the Australian Capital Territory: Aboriginal Traditional Life in the Canberra Region* (Canberra: J. M. Flood, 1996), 3, 28–33; Josephine Flood, 'Aboriginal Sites Around Canberra', *Bogong* 4, no. 3 (September–October 1983), 10–11. The 'mute witness' such evidence gave to 'a long-continued occupation' was recognised in the *Canberra Times* in 1931. 'Aboriginal Art in the Territory', *Canberra Times*, 30 October 1931, 4.

4 Lyall Gillespie, *Canberra: 1820–1913* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1991), 1–10.

5 Margaret Steven, 'Campbell, Robert (1769–1846)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, The Australian National University, [adb.anu.edu.au/biography/campbell-robert-1876/text2197](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/campbell-robert-1876/text2197), accessed 3 July 2013.

6 Gillespie, *Canberra: 1820–1913*, 15, 18; Dorothy Fitzpatrick, 'MacPherson, John Alexander (1833–1894)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, The Australian National University, [adb.anu.edu.au/biography/macpherson-john-alexander-4135/text6621](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/macpherson-john-alexander-4135/text6621), accessed 3 July 2013.

7 Gillespie, *Canberra: 1820–1913*, 23, 75.

station, and who was one of the Ginninderra cricket team's finest players in the 1860s and 1870s.<sup>8</sup> The district gained direct parliamentary representation in 1843, when the first elections for the New South Wales Legislative Council were held; (Sir) Terence Murray, who held land at Yarralumla (now the site of Government House), was elected unopposed.

By the middle of the century, the European population of the region had grown considerably. The landscape had been substantially altered by clearing for cultivation and construction, stock grazing and the shooting of native wildlife. New waves of European arrivals intensified the struggle for survival faced by local Aboriginal people, who were contending with the pressures of disease, dislocation, hostility from those who had invaded their lands and loss of resources.<sup>9</sup>

The 1860s were a 'turbulent' decade in the Canberra region.<sup>10</sup> Among other developments, a revival of bushranging occurred, possibly stimulated by discoveries of gold deposits in the area. Most notorious were the 'Jingera Mob', who based themselves near Captains Flat and conducted robberies and hold-ups around the locality, including of the Queanbeyan–Sydney mail coach and stores at Gundaroo and Michelago. The gang's activities were largely brought to an end with the capture of Thomas and John Clarke, two of the ringleaders, in 1867, and bushranging once more declined.<sup>11</sup> A large number of new selections were occupied during the 1870s and 1880s. Large properties in the region generally bred sheep, with some also grazing cattle, while grain was mostly grown by free selectors with smaller holdings.<sup>12</sup> One local grain-grower who became well-known was William Farrer, the son-in-law of Leopold Fane de Salis of Cuppacumbalong. Once a tutor to the Campbell family at Duntroon, Farrer later experimented with wheat breeding at Lambrigg, along the Murrumbidgee River, eventually succeeding in producing wheat varieties that had increased resistance to rust.

As the twentieth century dawned in the district, its small centres were mostly 'well organised, with thriving churches, schools, and various sporting clubs and associations'.<sup>13</sup> The area was emerging from a period of severe depression during the 1890s, and was soon to gain a new importance as the seat of the federal government, the result of a decision at the 1899 premiers' conference that a capital city for

8 Ann Jackson-Nakano, *The Kamberrri: A History of Aboriginal People in the ACT and Surrounds*, Aboriginal History Monograph 8 (Canberra: Aboriginal History, 2001), 105, 123; Gillespie, *Canberra: 1820–1913*, 34, 59; 'Local and District News', *Queanbeyan Age*, 28 January 1869, 2; 'Local Items', *Newcastle Chronicle*, 9 February 1869, 3.

9 Flood, *Moth Hunters*, 40–41; Gillespie, *Canberra: 1820–1913*, 42–44; Jackson-Nakano, *The Kamberrri*, 105, 108–67.

10 Gillespie, *Canberra: 1820–1913*, 127.

11 Gillespie, *Canberra: 1820–1913*, 134–37; Lionel Wigmore, *Canberra: History of Australia's National Capital* (Canberra: Dalton Publishing Company, 1972), 21; 'Capture of the Bushrangers Thomas and John Clarke', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 May 1867, 5.

12 Gillespie, *Canberra: 1820–1913*, 155, 159, 171.

13 Gillespie, *Canberra: 1820–1913*, 73–74, 217.

the new Commonwealth of Australia should be located in New South Wales, no less than 100 miles from Sydney. It took a considerable time, and much debate, before the Canberra site was selected, however. In late 1899 Alexander Oliver was commissioned to enquire into the choice of a suitable site. Considering a range of factors, including accessibility, water supply and climate, he examined 23 potential locations. When he made his recommendations in October 1900, his preference was for Bombala, although he also suggested the Yass–Canberra area and the city of Orange as possibilities.<sup>14</sup>

There followed a fierce struggle over the matter. At Sir William Lyne's instigation, federal parliamentarians visited a number of nominated sites; the press indulged in much mirth at this 'distinguished picnic ... progressing at hurricane speed through the country' and, when Lyne later planned visits to other parts of the new Commonwealth, he found himself dubbed the 'Minister for Picnics'.<sup>15</sup> A royal commission was established by the new Commonwealth Government; chaired by an architect, John Kirkpatrick, it recommended the city of Albury in 1903. Disagreement and conflict over the question of the new capital's location continued, however, with first one and then another city seeming to be in the ascendancy. Not until 1908 was agreement reached that the site should be the Yass–Canberra region, after a vigorous campaign in favour of the site was waged by the Queanbeyan Federal City Committee. Local community leaders who were influential in the choice of Canberra included the owner of Yarralumla station, Frederick Campbell; newspaper proprietor John Gale; politician (Sir) Granville Ryrie; Andrew Jackson Cunningham, of Lanyon station, and his brother James, of Tuggranong; and later politician (Sir) Austin Chapman.<sup>16</sup>

## Canberra becomes the seat of federal government

Following the choice of Yass–Canberra, the area was surveyed by Charles Scrivener, and an agreement as to the extent of the capital territory was reached between the prime minister, Alfred Deakin, and the premier of New South Wales, Sir Charles Wade. The new territory was declared in January 1911. Shortly after, a competition to design the capital city opened, with proposals invited from around the world and a first prize of £1,750.<sup>17</sup> The entries were considered by a committee chaired

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14 Wigmore, *Canberra*, 26; Jim Gibbney, *Canberra 1913–1953* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1988), xiii; 'The Site of the Federal Capital', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 October 1900, 8.

15 'The Federal Capital', *Evening News* (Sydney), 14 February 1902, 4; 'The "Minister for Picnics"', *Register* (Adelaide), 18 November 1902, 5.

16 On the campaign, see Susan Mary Woolcock Withycombe, *Gale Force: John Gale and the Siting of the National Capital* (Queanbeyan: Queanbeyan & District Centenary of Federation Committee Inc., 2001).

17 Wigmore, *Canberra*, 49.

by John Coane, which reported to Home Affairs minister King O'Malley as adjudicator. O'Malley's role was strongly criticised, as he held no relevant professional qualifications, and, after he declined to yield on the matter, a boycott of the competition was instigated by the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Institute of Civil Engineers and affiliated organisations.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, more than 100 entries were received. The winner was announced in May 1912; it was the work of American architect Walter Burley Griffin and his wife Marion Mahoney Griffin. In the meantime, the first Commonwealth facility in the territory, the Royal Military College at Duntroon, had already opened; soon-to-be military hero (Sir) William Throsby Bridges was its first commandant, and its instructors included Henry Macartney and Harold Chumleigh.

Opposition to the Griffins' design as overly complicated and too expensive led O'Malley to refer it to a departmental board of experts, who recommended a mish-mash of the four top-placing designs. Having presented this recommendation to parliament, O'Malley initiated work on the new capital. The first foundation stones were laid, using golden trowels, by the governor-general, Lord Denman, the prime minister, Andrew Fisher, and O'Malley on 12 March 1913 at a ceremony attended by official guests including former prime minister Chris Watson and future prime minister Billy Hughes. At this occasion the name of the new capital was revealed. It had been selected from several hundred possibilities suggested by the public, which ranged from the striking to the ridiculous; among the offerings were 'Austral', 'Wattleton', 'Federalia', 'Eucalypta' and 'Cookaburra'.<sup>19</sup> Following the laying of the foundation stones, the governor-general's wife, Lady Denman, took the name from an inscribed gold card case and declared it to be 'Canberra'.<sup>20</sup>

A few months later, the Griffin plan was reinstated as the blueprint for the new city, following a change of government. The new prime minister, Joseph Cook, gave responsibility for the Federal Capital Territory to William Kelly, who was minister without portfolio in his government. Griffin, who had been unhappy with the proposed changes to his design, was appointed federal capital director of design and construction. Soon, however, he was embroiled in conflict with officials, including the new resident administrator of the territory, David Miller, who had chaired the departmental board that recommended the discarding of his design, and the director-general of works, Percy Owen. This, together with the outbreak of World War I in 1914, greatly delayed progress on the new capital. A royal commission, conducted by Wilfred Blackett, investigated the situation, and in 1917 expressed support for Griffin. Only a few years later, however, the government determined

18 Wigmore, *Canberra*, 51.

19 Wigmore, *Canberra*, 57; Gillespie, *Canberra: 1820–1913*, 249; Campbell Phillips, 'On This Day: Australia's Capital City Named', *Australian Geographic*, 12 March 2013, accessed 28 May 2013, [www.australiangeographic.com.au/blogs/on-this-day/2013/11/on-this-day-australias-capital-city-named/](http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/blogs/on-this-day/2013/11/on-this-day-australias-capital-city-named/).

20 Wigmore, *Canberra*, 57.

that Griffin should not continue to act as director of design and construction; his employment ceased in late 1920, and he reluctantly took no further part in the city's development.<sup>21</sup>

A Federal Capital Advisory Committee was appointed, headed by (Sir) John Sulman; its secretary was Charles Studdy Daley. The committee began meeting in 1921. Unable to support the expenditure necessary to bring 'ideas of monumental grandeur' into being because of the impact of spending during the war, the committee adopted a two-stage approach, in which simple, utilitarian buildings would be erected, later to be gradually replaced with more permanent, and more imposing, structures.<sup>22</sup> The committee was succeeded by the Federal Capital Commission (FCC), with (Sir) John Butters at its head; it held its first meeting in November 1924. The Bruce–Page Government decided that the next government would meet in Canberra, and the commission was given the task of ensuring that Canberra was ready for parliament and public servants to arrive there in 1927.<sup>23</sup> A month later the new city gained its own newspaper. The *Federal Capital Pioneer* was produced by Alexander Murray, and announced its arrival as 'the first newspaper printed and published on Federal City Territory' in December 1924.<sup>24</sup> The paper appeared weekly until October 1926, when it was transformed into a historical magazine under pressure of competition from the *Canberra Times*, founded by Thomas Shakespeare and edited by his son Arthur; Murray was later proclaimed missing in Britain, having arrived in London to establish a claim to a baronetcy.<sup>25</sup>

Canberra grew rapidly as the moment for the arrival of the federal parliament drew nearer. Three hundred and seventy-one plans for shops, schools, houses or non-government offices were approved in 1926–27.<sup>26</sup> The construction workforce living in the area increased, with large numbers of labourers living in tent camps and shanty towns as well as in workers' cottages erected for their accommodation. Among the residents of the camps was Lewis Lasseter, who later excited the hopes of gold-seekers with his claim that he had discovered an immense gold-bearing reef in Central Australia.<sup>27</sup> Many new buildings were completed, including hotels, offices, houses, a picture theatre and a community hall. In October 1926 a statue of the King, George V, reached Canberra, and was stored in a large case in Parliament House in preparation for its erection.<sup>28</sup> Ten days later the first public servant transferred from Melbourne: J. F. C. Whittle, arrived with his wife and they lived in a hotel until

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21 Gibbney, *Canberra 1913–1953*, 29–43; Wigmore, *Canberra*, 78.

22 Gibbney, *Canberra 1913–1953*, 66.

23 Gibbney, *Canberra 1913–1953*, 98, 111–12.

24 *Federal Capital Pioneer*, 3 December 1924, 1.

25 Gibbney, *Canberra 1913–1953*, 105; 'Missing Mr A. K. Murray', *Canberra Times*, 14 January 1929, 1.

26 Wigmore, *Canberra*, 97.

27 Gibbney, *Canberra 1913–1953*, 114.

28 'King's Statue', *Canberra Times*, 1 October 1926, 1.

a house was ready for them.<sup>29</sup> The Duke of York opened the provisional Parliament House, designed by John Smith Murdoch, at a ceremony on 9 May 1927 at which Dame Nellie Melba sang the national anthem. The city centre was officially opened by the prime minister, Stanley Bruce, in December.

Not all of Canberra's residents were happy with their new home. Plagued by dust when it was sunny, mud when it was raining and innumerable flies, as well as being deprived of the vote in either state or federal elections by their move to the capital territory, many were discontented.<sup>30</sup> Determined and creative inhabitants worked hard to create a community, alleviating the discomfort. Residents came together in a variety of organisations and activities. Sir Robert Garran, the Commonwealth solicitor-general, became the first president of the Canberra Society of Arts and Literature and was vice-president of the Canberra Musical Society. His wife Lady Garran and her friend Pattie Tillyard, who was the wife of Robin Tillyard, a scientist at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, welcomed new arrivals. A musical group called the Stromberra Quintet was formed, including among its members Walter Duffield, the first director of the Commonwealth Solar Observatory on Mount Stromlo, and his wife Doris; the quintet participated in an event billed as Canberra's 'first Philharmonic concert' on 15 May 1926.<sup>31</sup> The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported in December 1927 that the city had 'become a centre of gaiety', with parties held by Lady Groom, the wife of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Sir Littleton Groom; Penelope Gullett, the wife of the member for Henty, (Sir) Henry Gullett; and Lucie McLaren, the wife of the secretary of the Department of Home and Territories, (Sir) John McLaren.<sup>32</sup> Ruth Lane-Poole, who designed and furnished the interiors for the Prime Minister's Lodge and Government House, was an ardent promoter of Canberra and took a prominent role in developing the city's cultural and social life; her husband, Charles, was acting principal of the Australian Forestry School.

## Canberra in depression and war

Almost immediately after the opening of Parliament House, the workforce employed in the construction of Canberra began to be cut. The number of people employed in the task shrank from 3,086 in January 1927 to 1,018 in October 1928, and many of the workmen's camps were closed or torn down.<sup>33</sup> Matters were not improved by the advent of the Great Depression. With a population of less than

29 Gibbney, *Canberra 1913–1953*, 124; 'First Transfer from Melbourne for National Library', *Canberra Times*, 14 October 1926, 9.

30 Wigmore, *Canberra*, 109–11.

31 'The First Philharmonic Concert at Canberra', *Federal Capital Pioneer* (Canberra), 25 June 1926, 2.

32 'Social Life at Canberra', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 December 1927, 5.

33 Gibbney, *Canberra 1913–1953*, 142.



7,000 people, Canberra's development stagnated. Work was halted on the Australian War Memorial, the building of which had been advocated by Charles Bean, the official historian of World War I. Construction did not resume until 1933, and the memorial was not opened until 1941. Planned transfers of public servants from Melbourne were cancelled, and public building projects largely halted.<sup>34</sup>

As the Depression eased in the second half of the decade, a revival began in the new capital. A new advisory body, the National Capital Planning and Development Committee (NCPDC), was created to oversee Canberra's development in 1938, and the same year the territory was renamed the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). The city's growth was soon threatened again, however, when war was declared in September 1939. Much important government business was located in Melbourne or Sydney during the war, and Canberra's position as the national capital somewhat diminished. The dispersal of government functions between Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney caused politicians and public servants to have to travel continually between the three centres.<sup>35</sup> A tragic outcome of this constant travel was the deaths of three cabinet ministers, the chief of the general staff and several others when a Royal Australian Air Force Hudson crashed on its approach into Canberra on 13 August 1940. Among the victims were Geoff Street, the minister for the army and for repatriation; Jim Fairbairn, the minister for air; Gullett, the vice-president of the executive council; and Sir Brudenell White, the chief of the general staff. The *Canberra Times* described the accident as a 'severe blow to [the] war administration', with 'the proportions of a national disaster'.<sup>36</sup>

With the war's end in 1945, Canberra faced new difficulties, among them growing pressure on housing and shortages of labour and materials. (Sir) Bill Dunk, appointed head of the Public Service Board in 1947, stated the following year that housing shortages were restricting the abilities of departments to transfer their officers to Canberra. He also commented on the necessity for the city to provide for young people and to 'progress culturally', citing in particular need for a theatre.<sup>37</sup> Plans were made to move successive government departments to Canberra, some within three years and others in stages within 10 years, but nevertheless delays continued.<sup>38</sup> In some areas, however, progress occurred relatively quickly after the war. The project to establish a university in Canberra, first recommended in 1927 by a committee that included Sir Mungo MacCallum, Lyndhurst Giblin and (Sir) Robert Wallace, bore fruit. While tertiary education had begun in 1930 with the establishment of Canberra University College as an associated college of the University of Melbourne—an institution keenly supported by prominent Canberra

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34 Gibbney, *Canberra 1913–1953*, 159, 164, 188.

35 Wigmore, *Canberra*, 135–36.

36 'Army Chiefs Perish in Canberra Air Disaster', *Canberra Times*, 14 August 1940, 1.

37 'Public Service Board Envisages Plans for Next Three Years', *Canberra Times*, 31 August 1948, 3.

38 Wigmore, *Canberra*, 142; 'Public Service Board Envisages Plans', *Canberra Times*, 3.



resident (Sir) George Knowles—the Depression had ended hopes for a national research university.<sup>39</sup> In 1946, however, The Australian National University was founded, with four research schools and an academic advisory committee of eminent individuals who were envisaged as prospective directors for the schools: Sir (later Lord) Howard Florey (medical research), (Sir) Mark Oliphant (physical sciences), (Sir) Raymond Firth (Pacific studies) and (Sir) Keith Hancock (social sciences). Community building efforts continued as well. With other Canberra women, Yseult Bailey, the wife of (Sir) Kenneth, worked to establish preschool education in the capital; she was later president of the ACT branch of the National Council of Women.

## Growth and development

In the early 1950s, Canberra remained relatively underdeveloped. Although ‘a cosy and friendly community’, visitors’ first impressions were ‘rarely complimentary’ and migrants often arrived with considerable misgivings about their new home.<sup>40</sup> The city lacked a ‘central focus’, with suburbs seeming disconnected from each other and the ‘unifying elements’ present in Griffin’s design still unrealised.<sup>41</sup> Many buildings were intended to be temporary, while others had not begun to be constructed, and the advice of the NCPDC was frequently ignored or circumvented.<sup>42</sup> The situation would soon change, however. In November 1954, a Senate select committee chaired by John McCallum was appointed to inquire into the development of the city. By this time, spurred by his wife Dame Pattie and daughter Heather Henderson, Prime Minister Robert Menzies, who had initially disliked Canberra intensely, had become one of the city’s great champions, determined to ensure it became a place fit to be the national capital.<sup>43</sup> The select committee’s report was a ‘turning point’ for Canberra, for it led to the creation of the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) in 1957.<sup>44</sup> With (Sir) John Overall as commissioner, and Bill Andrews and Grenfell Rudduck as associate commissioners, the NCDC was tasked with continuing the development and building of the city. Peter Harrison became chief planner in 1959.

From this point, Canberra’s development and expansion proceeded much more rapidly. Houses, offices, schools and other amenities sprang up, and with continuing transfers of public servants from Melbourne to Canberra, the city finally attained its position as the seat of federal government in practice as well as in name. New

39 Gibbney, *Canberra 1913–1953*, 167.

40 Gibbney, *Canberra 1913–1953*, 269–70.

41 Eric Sparke, *Canberra 1954–1980* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1988), 1–2.

42 Sparke, *Canberra 1954–1980*, 3–11.

43 Sparke, *Canberra 1954–1980*, 31–32.

44 Sparke, *Canberra 1954–1980*, 50.

public buildings were constructed in quick succession, among them the Reserve Bank, the Royal Australian Mint, the Canberra Theatre Centre and the Deep Space Tracking Station, located south of the city at Tidbinbilla. A variety of new embassies appeared, including those of France, Canada, Israel and Malaysia. With the completion of new roads and suburbs, Canberra also became more integrated, no longer a disparate collection of suburbs but a whole city, and one that was becoming increasingly sophisticated. Amenities increased, from restaurants to squash courts to traffic lights.<sup>45</sup> And, after decades of disagreement as to the form that should be adopted for the ornamental lakes envisaged by Griffin, a design was at last settled and construction begun. The valves on the newly constructed Scrivener Dam were closed on 20 September 1963, and by the end of April the following year Lake Burley Griffin was filled.<sup>46</sup>

Having been well and truly set in motion, the city's development continued apace after the resignation from office of its champion, Menzies, in 1966. There was a new mood. Retiring from the position of director and manager of the Canberra Tourist Bureau in May 1968, J. C. Dovey reflected on the changes that had taken place since his arrival in the city 40 years before. Prior to the establishment of the NCDC, he said, 'Canberra was a place that did not know where it was going'. Dovey saw Canberra as 'a city of opportunity', and expected it would continue to grow.<sup>47</sup> A monumental new National Library building, designed by Walter Bunning, was opened alongside the lake that year, the colossal spout of the Captain James Cook memorial fountain was inaugurated in 1970, and offices and suburbs continued to sprout across the landscape. In order to accommodate future growth, plans were adopted for a series of satellite towns, to be constructed in adjoining valleys, with ridges and hilltops maintained as areas of bush.<sup>48</sup> By the early 1970s, Canberra had been transformed. The city's population had risen from 39,000 in 1958 to 155,000 in 1972, two new town centres had been settled in the Woden Valley and Belconnen, and in Gough Whitlam—the son of Fred Whitlam—the country for the first time had a prime minister who had lived in Canberra in his youth.<sup>49</sup>

## Reaching 100

Canberra's rapid growth continued during the 1970s, with the population growing by 12,000 people per year in the first part of the decade, and significant pressure on housing.<sup>50</sup> Another new town centre, Tuggeranong, was inaugurated in 1973, and

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45 Sparke, *Canberra 1954–1980*, 101–5.

46 Sparke, *Canberra 1954–1980*, 131–41.

47 'Canberra "Not Ready Yet for Swinging Nightlife"', *Canberra Times*, 13 May 1968, 10.

48 Sparke, *Canberra 1954–1980*, 151.

49 Sparke, *Canberra 1954–1980*, 188.

50 Sparke, *Canberra 1954–1980*, 210–11, 234.

work on a new dam, the Googong, began two years later. A decision with a major impact on the city was made in 1974, when the site for the new Parliament House was finally settled as Capital Hill. As elsewhere in the country, the decade also saw considerable social and political ferment. Eric Sparke observed that these years had ‘something of the character of an Age of Dissent’ in Canberra.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps inspired by a nationwide mood of activism, Canberrans increasingly questioned plans made for the city’s development and decisions taken on a range of projects.

Among other fights, considerable opposition was expressed to the erection of a telecommunications tower on Black Mountain. Objections were made on ecological as well as aesthetic grounds, and a Committee to Save Black Mountain was formed to resist the plan. In 1973, a group of demonstrators interrupted work on the tower’s construction.<sup>52</sup> Following a failed attempt to block the tower in the High Court of Australia, the tower was eventually opened, amid protests, by Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser in 1980.<sup>53</sup> Resistance also occurred to the development of a casino in the city. Griffin’s original design had included a casino, to have been placed where the Australian War Memorial was located. The casino mooted in the 1970s was not the pleasure garden envisaged by the Griffins, however, and it aroused a sizeable opposition. A committee formed to prevent its development, driven by moral concerns and by a belief that a casino would debase the national capital; the committee circulated a petition and delivered letters around Canberra homes.<sup>54</sup> The casino plans were abandoned, though only temporarily, in August 1977.<sup>55</sup>

The capital was also the scene of demonstrations relating to nationwide issues. One of the most evocative acts of protest was the creation of an Aboriginal tent embassy in 1972. A response to Prime Minister William McMahon’s 1972 Australia Day speech refusing to accept land rights, the embassy graphically displayed the feeling of many Aboriginal people, including from the Canberra region, that they had become aliens in their own land.<sup>56</sup>

Canberra’s development slowed after the Liberal–Country Party coalition came to office under Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser in 1975, under the pressure of a struggling economy.<sup>57</sup> In 1979 the *Canberra Times* reported that Fraser was soon to make ‘[a] major statement on the social and economic situation of the ACT’, which faced ‘record unemployment levels ... and a growing small-business

51 Sparke, *Canberra 1954–1980*, 245.

52 ‘Demonstrators Disrupt Work on Tower Site’, *Canberra Times*, 22 September 1973, 1.

53 Peter George, ‘Tower Project Backed by High Court’, *Canberra Times*, 18 February 1975, 1; ‘Protests as PM Opens Tower’, *Canberra Times*, 16 May 1980, 1.

54 Sparke, *Canberra 1954–1980*, 267; ‘Committee to Oppose Casino for ACT’, *Canberra Times*, 22 July 1977, 7.

55 Ian Myerscough, ‘Cabinet Bars Casino’, *Canberra Times*, 4 August 1977, 1.

56 Bain Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2003), 345; Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus, *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: A Documentary History* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1999), 174.

57 Sparke, *Canberra 1954–1980*, 291–96.

collapse'.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, some large projects had continued. The National Gallery and the High Court were completed, work was undertaken towards the creation of a national museum and, most significantly, work was begun on the new, permanent Parliament House. A design competition was launched in April 1979, with the winner, Romaldo Giurgola, chosen the following year. The first sod was turned by Fraser on 18 September 1980.<sup>59</sup>

The new Parliament House opened in Australia's Bicentennial year, 1988, just two years after Canberra's population had reached 250,000.<sup>60</sup> At the end of the year, the territory was given full self-government through an Act of the Commonwealth Parliament. The question of self-government had been considered as long ago as 1910, when a provision for the creation of a local legislature was removed from the Bill for the Seat of Government (Administration) Act.<sup>61</sup> Different proposals for some form of self-government for the ACT were made at various times over the following decades, and eventually in 1985 a plan was determined and a timetable declared by Bob Hawke's Labor Government.<sup>62</sup> The first election under self-government was held in March 1989, and a 17-member Legislative Assembly began sitting. In May the territory's first government was formed, and Chief Minister Rosemary Follett became the first woman head of government in Australia.

Another new town centre, Gungahlin, was launched in 1991, and through the 1990s and 2000s Canberra continued to grow and develop. In 2003, however, the city was hit by a terrible natural disaster, a devastating firestorm. Bushfires had been burning around the edge of the territory for over a week. On Saturday 18 January, a hot and windy day, the fires burned steadily closer to Canberra's outer suburbs, and a state of emergency was declared in mid-afternoon. Shortly after, the fires reached the city. In the hours that followed four people died, while more than 400 were injured and over 500 homes and businesses were lost, as well as buildings, telescopes and other infrastructure at the Mount Stromlo Observatory. In the aftermath of the fires, there was considerable controversy regarding failures in preparations and responses to the fire threat. Ten years after that terrible day, Canberra remembered its loss even as it celebrated its 100th year.

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58 Ross Andrews and John Jesser, 'PM to Act Soon on Canberra's Problems', *Canberra Times*, 12 June 1979, 1.

59 Sparke, *Canberra 1954–1980*, 291–322.

60 Sparke, *Canberra 1954–1980*, 323; 'Seven Years to Build a House', *Canberra Times*, 9 May 1988, 44S.

61 Sparke, *Canberra 1954–1980*, 273.

62 Sparke, *Canberra 1954–1980*, 334–36; 'Town Council for ACT', *Canberra Times*, 3 December 1985, 1.

## Conclusion

In 2013 the city of Canberra celebrated its centenary with an avalanche of special events, publications, exhibitions and other commemorative activities. But as its history demonstrates, the choice of 2013 as its 100th birthday was in some ways an arbitrary one. The city was not simply 100 years old. Its beginning could be dated to 1911, when the Federal Capital Territory was declared, or to 1908, when the Yass–Canberra site was chosen. Further back, it was not quite 200 years since Europeans arrived to live in the region and a settlement known as Canberra—or Canberry or other variations—began to grow. And the Canberra region has a much longer history than that, with Aboriginal people occupying its hills and valleys for more than 20,000 years. The city has had several existences, often simultaneously: as federal capital and centre of the nation’s political life; as quiet rural community; and as source of nourishment and life for its Aboriginal custodians. As a planned city, Canberra has evoked a range of reactions from those who have lived, worked and sojourned in it, and it has developed its own distinctive character. Its history is the product of many stories—local and national, personal and communal. As its centenary celebrations recede into the past, Canberra’s story continues.

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# A good sheep station ruined

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JAMES MCDONALD

The quip that Canberra is ‘a good sheep station ruined’ has been repeated since at least the early 1960s. But it may have entered the local vernacular decades earlier; perhaps coined by an old farmer annoyed by the burgeoning beige of the young city’s concrete brutalism. These days, the jibe lives on as part of the smorgasbord of wit indulged by an ever-lengthening queue of Canberra bashers.<sup>1</sup> If the capital is not being criticised as a blight on the landscape or the source of the nation’s political woes, it is bagged for its sleepy ways by detractors too hip for a quieter pace. What is certain is that Canberra will never win itself a popular image as long it remains the seat of government. It may or may not be true to say that our politicians and administrations since 1913 have disappointed us and, therefore, ‘ruined’ this good sheep paddock, but the first part of the aphorism is certainly fact. Indeed, the Limestone Plains had world-class sheep stations. At times its fleeces secured world-record prices.

Post-invasion, the pastoralists and agricultural workers on the Limestone Plains consistently over-achieved.<sup>2</sup> At Booroomba, near Tharwa, William Davis senior set up innovative boiling down works for tallow manufacture to make ends meet during a downturn in the late 1840s. At the same time, his son (William Davis junior) turned Ginninderra estate into a model farm, admired throughout the colony. In the early 1860s some local wheat growers were getting in excess of 60 bushels to the acre. Later, William Farrer famously developed his robust drought- and rust-resistant high-yielding strain of wheat at Lambrigg station. The Smiths and McCarthys at Hall, and the Campbells at Duntroon bred some of the best working horses in the country. In 1873 the local blacksmith, Florence McAuliffe, was adapting the latest Scottish methods to forge prize-winning ploughs. A few decades later, the Gribbles at Gungahlin ensured that the Limestone Plains was one of the first districts to access new steam technology for threshing and chaff-cutting operations. At ‘Hazlebrook’, Oaks Estate, during the early 1880s the Bull brothers set up a wool-washing and fellmongering works, which was later operated by George Tompsitt. In the 1890s fine Angus and Devon herds were bred in the region. In the same decade, the district’s orchardists were so successful that they were

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1 The earliest written reference I can find to the quip is in the *Canberra Times*, 7 November 1967, 18.

2 Not to mention, of course, the ancient history of land management in the region preceding the British invasion. See Bill Gammage, *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia* (Crowns Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2011).

exporting bins of apples to London, long before Batlow emerged as the dominant apple area in south-western New South Wales. This was all achieved despite record floods, drought and the economic depression of the 1890s.

Into the first years of the new century, the Majura wheelwright Walter McIntosh was manufacturing his own wool presses. In 1905 the farmers at Ginninderra set up an early farmers' union, well ahead of its time.<sup>3</sup> And then, after the formation of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT; Australian Capital Territory (ACT) from 1938), there is the impressive record of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, which had experimental paddocks where many of Canberra's northern suburbs now sprawl.<sup>4</sup> Well before King O'Malley, the Minister for Home Affairs, drove in the first survey peg for the city in February 1913, the Limestone Plains district had established itself as an important agricultural district. But, as we will see, in the field of fine wool production, the region excelled. It produced some of the best clips of the postwar wool boom, snapped up by international buyers from the Milanese fashion houses and the costume departments of the Muscovite theatres.

## Grazing before the FCT

Before the Territory was established in 1913, European occupation and farming had followed a similar pattern to other areas in south-western New South Wales (NSW). Absentee 'squires' had been quick to monopolise river frontages and grassland plains. They despatched overseers and convict teams with small flocks and herds to establish

3 For the boiling down works, see Bruce Moore, *Cotter Country: A History of the Early Settlers, Pastoral Holdings and Events in and around the County of Cowley, NSW* (Lyneham, ACT: Greg Moore, 1999), 70. For the early wheat growers and high yields, see Samuel Shumack, *An Autobiography, or Tales and Legends of Canberra Pioneers*, ed. J. E. and Samuel Shumack (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1967), 48, 111, 114, 155–57, 161–62; Lyall Gillespie, *Canberra: 1820–1913* (Canberra: AGPS Press, 1991), 162, 259–66. The literature for Farrer is voluminous, but see Archer Russell, *William James Farrer, a Biography* (Melbourne, Vic.: Cheshire, 1949); the entry in the *ADB*, C. W. Wrigley, 'Farrer, William James (1845–1906)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, The Australian National University (hereafter *ADB*), adb.anu.edu.au/biography/farrer-william-james-6145; and Errol Lea-Scarlett, *Queanbeyan: District and People*, (Queanbeyan, NSW: Queanbeyan Municipal Council, 1968), 68. For horse breeding, see Gillespie, *Canberra: 1820–1913*, 148–49, 160; Leon R. Smith, *Memories of Hall* (Canberra: Roebuck Society 1975), 18. For McAuliffe and Wilson, see Shumack, *An Autobiography*, 76; James McDonald, *Three Henry Currans* (Canberra: Sorley Boy, 2018), 289–304. For the Gribbles' traction engine, see Smith, *Memories of Hall*, 49, 53, 77, 90–92; Lyall L. Gillespie, *Ginninderra, Forerunner to Canberra: A History of the Ginninderra District* (Campbell, ACT: L. L. Gillespie, 1992), 95–96, 101–2, 222; Dorothy Mulholland, *Far Away Days: A History of the Murrumbateman, Jeir and Nanima Districts* (Murrumbateman, NSW: Murrumbateman Old School Grounds Committee, 1995), 199–201; James McDonald, 'The Chaff Cutters: the Gribbles of Ginninderra', *Canberra Historical Journal* 79 (2017): 11–19. For the Oaks Estate tannery, see Karen Williams, *Oaks Estate: No Man's Land* (Canberra: K. Williams, 1997), 150–51. Thanks are due to Gillian Kelly for alerting me to this. For beef cattle, the Ginninderra Farmers' Union, McIntosh's wool presses, and early apple production, see Gillespie, *Canberra: 1820–1913*, 195–96, 202, 257; Gillespie, *Ginninderra*, 155–58.

4 See Brad Collis, *Fields of Discovery: Australia's CSIRO* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2002), 103, 107–92, 221–29.



remote farms. Some of the main stations set up in this manner in the late 1820s were Moore's Canberry (near Acton), Campbell's Pialligo (later called Duntroon), John Palmer's Jerrabomberra, George Palmer's Ginninderra (then spelt 'Gininderra', but now known now as Gold Creek), and the grants of Donnison and Klensendorlffe at Yarralumla.<sup>5</sup> Murdoch's Tuggeranong and MacPherson's Springbank (the remnant, now an island in Lake Burley Griffin) followed soon after in the 1830s.<sup>6</sup>

From the outset, it looked like the Limestone Plains district was destined to be prime sheep country. Early flocks were sourced from stock selected from Macarthur's pens. By the late 1830s the two biggest stations, Duntroon and Yarralumla, were running about 25,000 head each, which made them some of the largest sheep stations in the colony.<sup>7</sup> But it was not just the quantity that was of note; the quality of Canberra wool quickly became apparent. In 1869 Andrew Cunningham at Lanyon took out the fine wool prize at the NSW agricultural show for his Negretti rams.<sup>8</sup>

With no fences, these early spreads required large workforces of shepherds, hay-stackers, bullockies, drovers, cooks, gardeners, carpenters, blacksmiths, wheelwrights and general farm labourers. They recruited convicts and a trickle of bounty migrants and emancipists ('lags'), many of whom later established their own small farms on poorer ground or as tenants within the larger stations. At Ginninderra, William Davis junior employed Ngunnawal drovers.<sup>9</sup> But in the early 1860s came a flood of free selectors, largely as a result of Robertson's land reforms.<sup>10</sup> One local selector, Samuel Shumack, who witnessed this dramatic change at his own family's 100-acre selection at Weetangerra, described the resentment of the large landholders.

William Davis—who was father's employer and the squatter on whose land we selected—has 20,000 acres, excluding some thousands of acres of Crown land for which he paid very little, yet he resented our efforts to strike out for ourselves and laughed at what he derisively called 'Shumack's Folly'.

'Three years', he said, 'will see Shumack and his family sadder and wiser, for shortage of water will drive them out.' His prophecy miscarried!<sup>11</sup>

5 For the first four of these pastoralists, see the articles in the *ADB* at: L. F. Fitzhardinge, 'Moore, Joshua John (1790–1864)', *ADB*, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/moore-joshua-john-2475; Margaret Steven, 'Campbell, Robert (1769–1846)', *ADB*, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/campbell-robert-1876; Margaret Steven, 'Palmer, John (1760–1833)', *ADB*, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/palmer-john-2533; Margaret Steven, 'Palmer, George Thomas (1784–1854)', *ADB*, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/palmer-george-thomas-2532.

6 Generally, see David Meyers, *Lairds, Lags and Larrikins: An Early History of the Limestone Plains*, ed. Kevin Frawley (Pearce, ACT: Sefton, 2010), 14–37; Nicholas Brown, *A History of Canberra* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 6–36.

7 Gillespie, *Canberra: 1820–1913*, 29–30.

8 Gillespie, *Canberra: 1820–1913*, 147–48.

9 Lyall L. Gillespie, *Aborigines of the Canberra Region* (Campbell, ACT: L. L. Gillespie, 1984), 34–35, 56–61; Gillespie, *Ginninderra*, 36–40.

10 See Bede Nairn, 'Robertson, Sir John (1816–1891)', *ADB*, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/robertson-sir-john-4490.

11 See Shumack, *An Autobiography*, 46. The Shumack homestead, Springvale, stood where the Cameron Offices in the Belconnen Town Centre are now located.

Like the Shumacks, many of Canberra's free selectors became successful farmers. By the first decade of the twentieth century, the Limestone Plains was a mix of larger stations (the remnants of the original runs) and smaller but emerging properties. The grip of the squatters had been loosened. Over these years there was also less reliance on grain farming (perhaps due to the low and erratic seasonal rains) and an increasing investment in livestock.

In the 1906–13 period, pastoral life in the district was again forced to reorganise. Speculation was mounting that the new Federation's national capital would be situated close to Queanbeyan, if not at the township itself. Eventually, the authorities announced the location and the resumption of hundreds of properties and part blocks to form its new FCT.<sup>12</sup> Survey work began in earnest in 1911, although political decision-making lingered. Land developers anticipated a windfall, while farming families feared ruin. Only about 12 per cent of the 912 square miles of the soon-to-be-FCT was Crown land. There were around 220 freehold landowners farming in the district. Resumptions began in earnest in 1913 and compensation was paid at amounts significantly below the true value of the land.<sup>13</sup> In those days there was certainly the view that good Canberra sheep stations were being ruined.

Some of the larger families tried fighting the acquisition, but invariably lost. The few who took the government to court had costs awarded against them, which meant that they lost even their compensation money. The locals formed a Vigilance Committee through which, collectively and respectfully, they had hoped to consult with the Commonwealth Government, but the administration had no appetite for genuine dialogue. King O'Malley reacted bitterly to the efforts of the landowners for proper compensation. Many old families left the district in disgust, not being able to abide the thought of remaining as tenants on land they had once owned.<sup>14</sup> Others had more serious disputes to resolve, particularly farmers whose properties straddled the border. The arbitrary cartographic division meant that, in some cases, properties were partitioned in such a way that at least one of their new blocks became unviable as a separate farm. Some of these, such as Edmund Rolfe at Gold Creek, continued the fight and were eventually compensated more adequately.<sup>15</sup>

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12 This is a story eloquently conveyed by B. Maher and G. Wood in 'Title Fights: Jeremiah Keeffe and the Federal Capital Territory Vigilance Association', *Canberra History Journal* 62 (2009): 19–24. Also see Frank Brennan, *Canberra in Crisis: A History of Land Tenure and Leasehold Administration* (Canberra: Dalton, 1971), 18–56; and Matthew Higgins, 'Surveyors at the Snowline: Surveying the ACT–NSW Border, 1910–15', *Canberra History Journal* 47 (2001): 2–8.

13 Maher and Wood, 'Title Fights', 20–21.

14 For example, the Harcourts and Craces at Ginninderra, and the Keeffes at Guises Flat.

15 Specifically, Rolfe's 3,940-acre Gold Creek station was resumed in 1915 for £13,500.



Figure 1: Edmund Rolfe of Gold Creek.

Source: Author's collection.

An unexpected effect of these land resumptions was that wool production actually increased in the decades after 1913. This seems to have occurred because the bigger pastoralists left and the balance shifted in favour of the smaller farmers who found sheep rather than cattle more 'affordable' to run. Flocks displaced some herds. The sheep stock of the FCT more than doubled from 1922 to 1932.<sup>16</sup> Of course, as the suburbs grew—particularly from the population influx of the early 1960s—the farmers diminished in number and their sheep flocks with them.

Despite the cadastral carnage, there were unique opportunities. The changes meant that, if farmers were willing to take the risk of leasing cheap properties affected by the acquisition, they could either establish a new farm or expand an existing holding, albeit in the knowledge that, in a generation or two, suburbs would eventually swallow up your hard work. On the NSW side of the border, farmers could purchase portions of split properties from disgruntled border farmers willing to sell them off cheaply, or they could lease these parcels from the land speculators who had swooped to purchase as much as they could in the wake of the bureaucratic destruction of 1913–15.<sup>17</sup> On the FCT side, the government was keen to arrange cheap leases on abandoned properties and a number of local entrepreneurs purchased them, particularly those with contiguous blocks. There was even a very solid allegation of corruption debated in parliament. David Miller, King O'Malley's departmental secretary, was one of the two key administrators of the land resumptions. His son, Selwyn Miller, was said to have fraudulently benefited from the bidding process for bundled leases.<sup>18</sup>

16 In 1922 the combined FCT sheep flock was reported as 105,379; in 1932 it had grown to 280,859. *Canberra Times*, 28 September 1933, 2.

17 For example, the speculative purchases of H. F. Halloran, for whom, see John Atchison, 'Halloran, Henry Ferdinand (1869–1953)', *ADB*, .

18 See Maher and Wood, 'Title Fights', 23.

## Canberra graziers before the wool boom

When the 1913 dust had settled, there were a number of pastoralists operating successfully on the fringes of the national capital. The 28 September 1933 edition of the *Canberra Times* published a summary of the best wool-growers in the FCT, showing a mix of seven growers, some established and some emerging. These were:

- Glenwood station, the estate of the recently deceased James Vincent Hibberson who had invested heavily over the years in stud rams.<sup>19</sup>
- A number of holdings run by different members of the ubiquitous Southwell family in the northern reaches of the FCT who had built their bloodlines on Merriman stock; particularly Lindsay Edwin Southwell at Fairview.<sup>20</sup>
- The Kilby Brothers at Hall who based their flock on Starr and Son's rams from Dalton.<sup>21</sup> From this pioneering family there was also James Kinloch Kilby of Parkwood who was described as one of 'the oldest breeders in the district'.<sup>22</sup>
- Harry Vest of Weetangerra, a small grazier producing some of the finest quality fleeces that had also been based on Merriman bloodlines.<sup>23</sup>
- The Moore brothers of Hall, known for their sturdy flock of large-framed sheep with heavier fleeces.<sup>24</sup>
- The well-established station of Frank Snow at Cuppacumbalong, where he ran a large flock on rolling pasture.<sup>25</sup>
- The emerging Deasland stud of Henry 'Babe' Curran at Ginninderra who had also invested in Merriman stock and was showing much potential as the youngest of these graziers in 1933.

19 For Hibberson, see Smith, *Memories of Hall*, 18; Gillespie, *Ginninderra*, 70, 90, 94, 159, 225; Chris Newman, *Gold Creek: Reflections of Canberra's Rural Heritage* (Canberra: Gold Creek Homestead Working Group, 2004), 28.

20 The Southwells were one of the most numerous families in the district. See L. L. Gillespie, *The Southwell Family: Pioneers of the Canberra District, 1838–1988* (Canberra: Southwell Reunion Committee, 1988); and the interviews of Una West and June Southwell by Bert Sheedy in 1974 (National Library of Australia (NLA) recording Bib. ID 5151247) and Jean Southwell by Matthew Higgins on 16 September 1991 (NLA recording Bib. ID 1400847). For Lindsay Southwell, see Gillespie, *Ginninderra*, 80, 185, 241–42.

21 The Kilbys were a prominent family from the Hall district. The three brothers, who operated at the Falls under the partnership known simply as Kilby Brothers, were Clyde, Bruce and Cleon. See Smith, *Memories of Hall*, 66; Gillespie, *Ginninderra*, 228–29.

22 For James Kilby, see Smith, *Memories of Hall*, 16–17; Gillespie, *Ginninderra*, 161–66.

23 The obituary of his father, Richard Vest (*Queanbeyan Age*, 24 November 1922, 6) tells us that he came to Australia from England as a young man and established himself working for the Campbells at Duntroon, and then at Yarralumla, where he married Christina Kilby. Cf. Margaret Clough, *Spilt Milk: A History of Weetangerra School, 1875–2004* (Canberra: Weetangerra School, 2004), 44.

24 In particular, James Courteney Moore of Gledeswood was a leading farmer and elder of the Anglican community (Smith, *Memories of Hall*, 22; Gillespie, *Ginninderra*, 165, 185–86, 234; and Neil Manton, *St Michael and All Angels: The History of a Village Church* (Charnwood, ACT: Parish of St Barnabas, 1999), 5, 15, 23).

25 Snow hosted Elizabeth II when she stayed at Cuppacumbalong during the royal visit in 1954. See Moore, *Cotter Country*, 117.



Figure 2: Goulburn Wool Sales, 1957: assessment of the Deasland Clip (HH Yass Brand), which had just achieved two world-record prices. Babe Curran is the man in the dark suit at the right.

Source: Author's collection.

The article also mentioned a number of breeders on properties over the border who exhibited at the FCT Shows.<sup>26</sup> Babe Curran's property at Ginninderra, perhaps the most successful of these FCT/ACT graziers during the postwar wool boom, provides a good case study of the experience of Limestone pastoralists as Canberra grew. His case in many ways is atypical in that he was self-made and had to build up his flock and landholdings from scratch, but Curran became the best among them and the largest wool producer of the FCT/ACT. The Deasland clip of Ginninderra illustrates how good the Canberra pasture could be.<sup>27</sup>

26 Another article (*Canberra Times*, 31 March 1943, 3) lists 12 leading graziers of each FCT district as a potential donor for a wartime fund-raiser. The men are: F. S. Southwell (probably Fred) for Ainslie, Athol C. Kilby for Hall, Ernie Cavanagh for Mulligan's Flat, Henry 'Babe' Curran for Ginninderra, R. Cameron (probably Rupert) for Weetangerra, Philip H. Champion for Kambah, Frank Snow for Cuppacumbalong, F. J. McCormack ('F. J.' is a misprint for 'T. J.' [= Timothy J.]) for Tuggeranong, Rockley Buckmaster for Uriarra, David Watt Cargill for Fyshwick, D. Cameron (probably Donald junior) for Duntroon, and R. Read (probably Robert 'Bert') for Jerrabomberra. Four of these 12 men share surnames with the seven families of the 1933 article.

27 For Curran's career and dominance of the wool sales from 1944 to 1964, see James McDonald, 'When Ginninderra Grew the Golden Fleece', *Canberra History Journal* 75 (2015): 15–23.



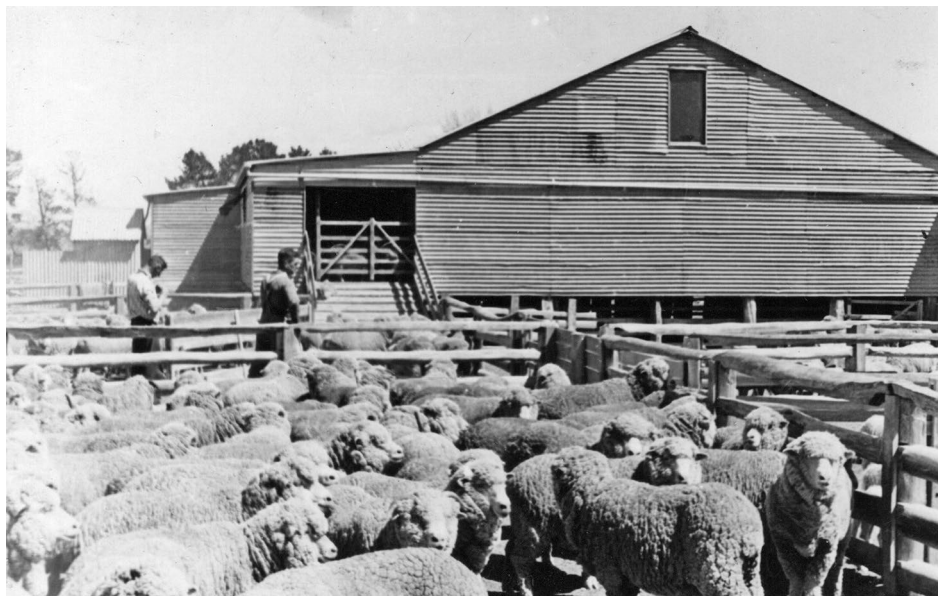


Figure 3: L–R: Noel Burton (leading hand) and Babe Curran in the mustering yards outside the Deasland shearing shed, 1940.

Source: Author's collection.

Curran was one of those who took advantage of the changes of 1913, methodically building up a mix of over 14,000 acres (much of it in the ACT) on which he ran a flock of over 10,000 of Australia's finest merino sheep. Without an inherited farm or head start, in a sense, he had no choice but to look to the opportunity of the land resumptions. His mother, Agnes Gribble, was from a local family who had dominated the district's threshing, chaff-cutting and hay-stacking market since 1861. His father, Henry Roland Curran (known as 'Harry'), had been orphaned when young and had spent his working life at a blacksmith's forge, and indeed was the last full-time blacksmith of the ACT.<sup>28</sup> Babe's older brother, Arthur 'Chappie' Curran, ran what little land the family had; largely near the Ginninderra smithy, taking in Percival Hill. Babe Curran's first paid work was as a roustabout at Gungahlin station.<sup>29</sup>

In 1921 Curran married Amy Reid. At first, they lived in one of the deserted Palmerville cottages near the old convict barracks in the vicinity of the now suburban Giralang. By 1927 they had saved enough to buy the lease for Deasland, a run-down 1,200-acre property and homestead built for the Harcourt family in 1893.<sup>30</sup>

28 For Harry Curran, see McDonald, *Three Henry Currans*, 91–110.

29 Obituary in *The Queanbeyan Age*, 15 October 1964, 4.

30 Deasland was built in 1893 by George Harcourt. See Gillespie, *Ginninderra*, xxi, 41, 104–5, 175–77, 182–86; G. Barrow, *Canberra's Historic Houses: Dwellings and Ruins of the 19th Century* (Canberra: Dagraja Press, 1998), 12–13. Since the Harcourts walked away after the 1913 land resumption, the property had had three short-term lessees as well as one manager and had been in serious decline.

The Currans repaired the fences, improved the pasture with superphosphate and better land management and borrowed heavily to assemble quickly the infrastructure necessary for them to create a functional sheep station. By the 1950s, Curran was leasing or purchasing blocks at Ginninderra, Gungahlin, Mulligans Flat, Wallaroo, Murrumbateman, Tallagandra and Wee Jasper. Through hard work and business nous, he transformed this patchwork of paddocks into some of the best superfine wool-producing pasture in the nation. In his later years, Curran said that he was very deliberate in not consolidating a single holding. He explained the strategy by saying that in this way he could never be burnt out. As a seven-year-old, he had witnessed the devastating bushfires of 1905, in which many properties and homes in Ginninderra village were destroyed.<sup>31</sup> It had also been a cheap way of accumulating enough pasture to maintain a large flock.

Curran saved everything he earned and slowly built up a flock, agisting wherever he could and grazing on common land and on roadsides and stock routes ('the long paddock'). He seems to have started his own bloodline with a pen or two purchased from the Crace family at Gungahlin, or from his father-in-law, Richard Reid, a small (but successful) grazier at nearby Tallagandra.<sup>32</sup> Given the piecemeal nature of the sources, there is not a comprehensive picture of how Curran built up his bloodline, but enough basic information has survived to show that, at first, he was frugal, but later made some ambitious stud investments. A newspaper report says that he bought a mob of 'expired' Merryville ewes in 1919, Sir Walter Merriman's sheep stud near Yass.<sup>33</sup> Expired ewes were old sheep with only one or two lambing seasons, at best, left in them. It was not until the 1930s that Curran could afford to buy stock at prime age. In 1936 he bought a single ram for 35 guineas (about \$4,500 in modern value).<sup>34</sup> The accounts covering the war seasons for Curran's Deasland clip have survived. In them we can see a significant investment in bloodlines during the period. His stud purchases at this time represented 23 per cent of the total Deasland clip expenditure for the war years, about \$280,000 in modern value.

It took the Currans about 25 years to get everything in place, but the records soon flowed for the 'HH Yass brand' clip run out of the old Deasland shearing shed where the roundabouts of Nicholls now circle. Curran briefly held the top price for merino wool under the wartime appraisal scheme; the period when government regulators controlled markets over the five wool seasons between 1940 and 1944.<sup>35</sup>

31 Gillespie, *Ginninderra*, 141–42.

32 For the Craces, see C. Coulthard-Clark, 'Gungahlin Revisited', *Canberra History Journal* 26 (1990): 26–34. For the Reids, see Lyall L. Gillespie, *A Pictorial History of the Read/Reid Family in Australia, 1849–1979* (Canberra: L. L. Gillespie, 1979).

33 For which, see David Moeller, *The Merryville Type: How Excellence Bred Brilliance* (Copacabana, NSW: Lexington Avenue Press, 2001).

34 According to the Reserve Bank of Australia's 'Pre-decimal Inflation Calculator'. The other estimates of current value provided in this paper are also derived using this tool.

35 *Canberra Times*, 28 October 1944, 2.

He topped the Goulburn or Sydney wool sales on at least 19 occasions, set the NSW record in eight seasons, and achieved the highest national and Commonwealth prices for a season six times. In the postwar period, with the return to an open market, top wool prices for the best bales of Australian superfine wool increased almost 11-fold. It is reported that in 1945 Curran set a world-record price. At this sale, two Italian fashion mills competed for his clip.<sup>36</sup> It is also said that he became the first wool-grower to get over £1 for 1lb of wool (i.e. a ‘pound for a pound’) and £100 for a single bale. In 1956, he set another world record, this time for ‘broken wool’. He was also the first to reach 150d as an average price per pound for an entire clip.<sup>37</sup>

Table 1: Curran’s wool records.

Record	No. of times	Seasons
FCT/ACT record (season)—top price	25	1933/4, 1935/6, 1937/8–1945/6, 1947/8–1959/60, 1964/5
Goulburn wool sales—top price (This was primarily where he sold his clips)	17	1940/1–1945/6, 1947/8–1950/1, 1952/3–1958/9
Sydney wool sales—top price	2	1935/5, 1938/9
NSW record (at time of sale)—top price	10	1944/5–1945/6, 1948/9, 1950/1, 1952/3–1956/7, 1958/9
NSW record (season)—top price	8	1945/6, 1948/9, 1952/3–1956/7, 1958/9
Australia record (at time of sale)—top price Merino	7	1944/5–1945/6, 1952/3–1956/7
Australia record (season)—top price Merino	6	1945/6, 1952/3–1956/7
Commonwealth record (season)—top price Merino	6	1945/6, 1952/3–1956/7
World record—top price Merino	1	1945/6
World record—top price broken wool	1	1956/7
World record—top price—average per clip	1	1956/7

Source: Compiled from contemporary newspaper reports.

Despite the acclaim and the financial rewards that followed, Curran remained uncomfortable in the face of praise and did his best to deflect attention. In 1954, upon breaking a national record, he told a *Canberra Times* reporter: ‘I would like to give credit to Sir Walter Merriman, because the sheep were founded on Merryville blood over the last 35 years’.<sup>38</sup> Of course, Curran had his share of setbacks. The 1946/7 season was a bad one, as can be seen from Table 1. His continuing challenge was

36 *Canberra Times*, 30 October 1945, 3; 5 November 1945, 3; 5 December 1958, 2 (retrospective article noting the 435d world record, etc.). The winning bidder was the Emeregildo Zegna woollen mill of Trivero, which today manufactures for brands including Gucci, Yves Saint Laurent, Christian Dior and Dunhill.

37 *Canberra Times*, 22 November 1956, 1; 26 November 1956, 6.

38 *Canberra Times*, 3 December 1954, 2.



lack of capital and the need to build up his own infrastructure: specifically, bores and dams, shearing shed, livestock races and holding pens, dog yards, hay sheds and shearers' quarters.

The 'Deasland Ledger' of the 1938–44 seasons shows how crippling the bank interest, rent and leasehold fees were, despite Curran's success. Together, these costs represented just over 33 per cent of the family's operational costs. Their competitors may have faced higher rates as landowners, but nowhere near the Currans' expenses in rent and interest. Thus it is possible that, were it not for the wool boom, Curran would have struggled to service such a high level of debt and would not have been able to have expanded so quickly.<sup>39</sup>

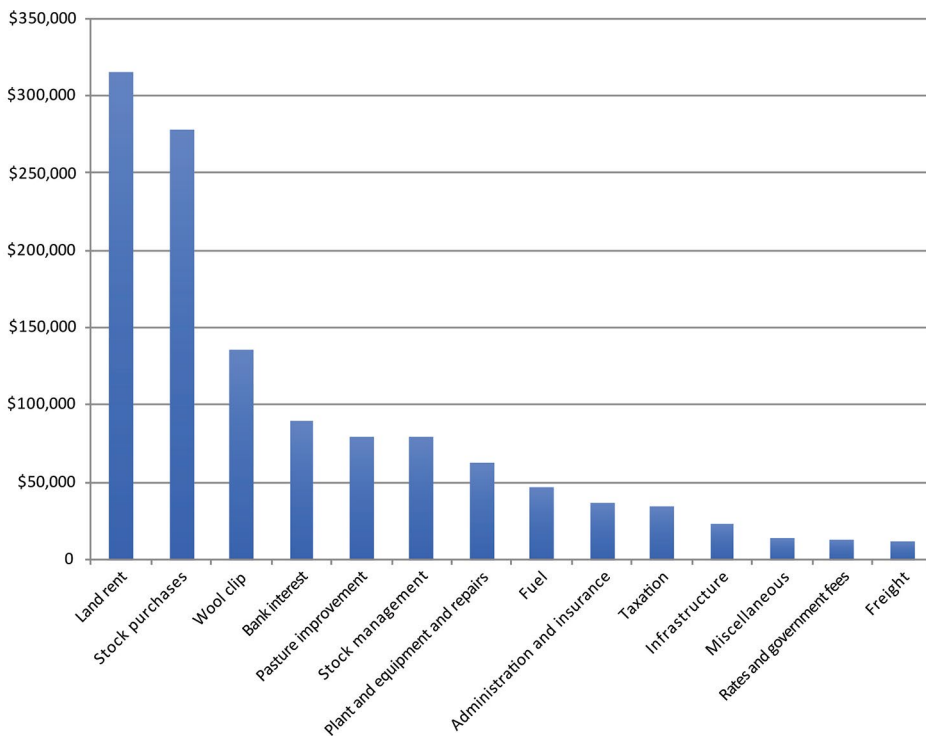


Figure 4: Deasland clip expenditure in modern value (1938–44).

Source: Compiled by James McDonald: Wartime accounts, Curran family, known as the 'Deasland Ledger', 1938–44.

<sup>39</sup> Curran was also reported as being financially naive. He was taken advantage of in at least two bad cash loans he had provided to acquaintances and also found himself in taxation trouble after receiving poor accounting advice. *Canberra Times*, 24 October 1963, 11.

Curran also faced problems with soil erosion, drought, fire, stock theft, noxious weeds like Scotch thistle, wild dogs, foxes, crows attacking lambs, and plagues of rabbits.<sup>40</sup> But his successful record as one of Australia's premier wool-growers of the 1944–64 period was based on sound principles of land management. As already mentioned, he deliberately split his holdings so that he could never be burnt out by a single bushfire. He always kept multiple sources of water and feed, was relentless in his battle against pests, and kept his pastures free of burr and weeds so that the wool stayed as clean as possible. Curran meticulously maintained his fences, despite not owning much of his land. He invested heavily in dams and bores and took measures to stabilise the badly eroded gullies leading into Ginninderra Creek.<sup>41</sup> But he claimed that the main principle was never to overstock and to always plan ahead for bad times, particularly as merino pasture tended to be poor pasture. He was conscious of the need to keep his flocks as active as possible, which had the effect of making the wool finer, and never to let them overgraze. Plenty of feed was always available for the bad times and Curran was usually the leading lucerne grower in the district. There were always at least four haystacks at 'Deasland' in the early days.<sup>42</sup>

As the Australian wool industry peaked in the 1950s and the labour market was as close as it would become to a state of 'full-employment', it grew increasingly hard for wool-growers to attract the best shearers. Some estimates put the wool-dependent labour force as high as 20 per cent of employment, nationally. Curran recognised the benefits of a good team of shearers and invested funds to attract them. A bad shearer could devalue a fleece and, worse still, injure a fine ram or ewe. Former Deasland shearers have reported that they would sign on with the Currans in preference to other graziers in the district because the pay was better and the shearers' quarters and food were excellent.<sup>43</sup>

Another key to the success of the 'Deasland clip' was the fact that, despite his limited capital, Curran was prepared to invest generously in technical advice to maintain and improve his bloodline. During the war years he paid double wages to 'Os' Southwell, the best of the district's wool classers, and his own son, Richard, also became an expert wool classer.<sup>44</sup> The combination of the father's expertise as a grazier and the son's technical knowledge became a significant advantage in the

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40 *Canberra Times*, 18 April 1952, 2. Cf. J. C. Garran and L. White, *Merinos, Myths and Macarthur's: Australian Graziers and Their Sheep, 1788–1900* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1985), 201–10.

41 These measures are reflected in purchases recorded in the 'Deasland Ledger' (1938–44): e.g. tree regeneration stock (18). This document is transcribed in full with commentary in McDonald, *Three Henry Currans*, 333–401.

42 This may have been something he learnt at an early age from his mother's family, the Gribbles, who were expert reapers and hay-stackers. See Gillespie, *Ginninderra*, 179–186; McDonald, 'The Chaff Cutters', 11–19.

43 Reported by ex-shearer, Len Coulton, 2006. Cf. the late Lionel Moore, Ginninderra shearer, interviewed in a feature on Curran's career, broadcast on ABC Television's *7.30 Report*, 22 March 2013.

44 'Deasland Ledger', 2, 6, 14, 28, 35.

later years. When Richard took over the property after his father's death in 1964, he maintained the success of the Deasland clips and achieved top prices in his own right, until the properties and flocks were dissolved in 1971.

There are still a few Canberra locals, who remember Babe Curran, his energy, generosity and his outstanding record in putting Canberra on the wool-growing map, but few Nicholls, Ngunnawal and Crace residents would know that the finest merinos in Australia once grazed where their children now play. When the subject of the wool industry in Australia arises, what comes to mind for most people are the celebrated achievements of John Macarthur, Walter Merriman and others.<sup>45</sup> But standing quietly in the background is a Canberran, who had it much harder than his predecessors. He had no easy money behind him. He built his wool empire on a cobbled estate, borrowed capital, the sweat of his brow and a nose for fine wool. Record wool prices were achieved with a flock primarily pastured on the northern outskirts of Canberra. Limestone Plains's sheep pastures are now gone, but whether they were 'ruined' is a matter of personal judgement and one's views of the political impact and success of the Australian Parliament and the city that has grown up around it.

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<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Charles Trimby Burfitt who devotes 40 per cent of his book to Macarthur: *History of the Founding of the Wool Industry of Australia* (Sydney: Government Printer, 1913), 4–42. A more balanced account is provided by Garran and White, *Merinos, Myths and Macarthurs*. For Merriman, see G. P. Walsh, 'Merriman, Sir Walter Thomas (1882–1972)', *ADB*, [adb.anu.edu.au/biography/merriman-sir-walter-thomas-7561](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/merriman-sir-walter-thomas-7561).



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# Migration as an opportunity for reinvention: Alfred and Margaret Rich of Gundaroo

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JAMES MCDONALD

Along with their neighbours in the fledgling Taralga, Gundaroo and Gungahlin communities in the years 1857 to 1893, Alfred Mainwaring Rich and Margaret Phillips made valuable contributions to local life.<sup>1</sup> For many years, they ran private schools and, thereby, held a key role in these communities, being responsible for the development of their children. To all who knew this couple in their adopted country, they appeared to be quintessentially English in character and heritage. When Alfred died in 1893, he was honoured with an obituary, which specifically noted his connections to the English landed gentry:

News has been received of the death of Mr. Alfred Mainwaring Rich, who died at the residence of his son at Gunning. The above-named gentleman who was highly connected—being the brother of the late Major General Rich—was formerly a resident here for many years and was well known both here and at Gundaroo.<sup>2</sup>

But all was not what it seemed. Alfred Rich had used his migration as an opportunity to omit certain elements from his past and to reinvent himself. Australia offered free settlers the chance to build new lives. Some took it further and built new identities. This is certainly what Alfred did, but, as this paper suggests, he may have paid a price for self-deception.

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1 According to Parish records, Alfred Rich was baptised 3 March 1823 at Shinfield, Berkshire. Margaret Phillips was born in 1840 at Leeds (see her enumeration in the 1841 and 1851 England censuses).

2 *Queanbeyan Age*, 24 June 1893, 2. Alfred was the youngest of four brothers. The others were: Reverend Edward John William Henry Rich (1815–1895); Major-General William Charles Rich of the North India British Army (1818–1903); and Thomas Lionel Rich, Curate of Cambourne (b. 1820). William Charles Rich is the major-general mentioned in the obituary, although he was not yet deceased, as claimed.

## A rich heritage concealed

It may be true that Alfred Mainwaring Rich's father was indeed of minor gentry stock, but the Richs were viewed as usurpers in England. The family had Jewish origins and had won its wealth and titles during the dissolution of the monasteries.<sup>3</sup> As such, they were viewed as 'Shylocks', whose ancestors had profited from simony. They were also resented for taking the side of Parliament in the English Civil War.<sup>4</sup> In these respects, they were considered 'gentry' in title only. Making matters worse for Alfred was that his mother's side had Mughal Indian heritage, and there is even evidence pointing to African ancestry through a manumitted slave on the South Atlantic island of St Helena. Alfred's mother's complexion was so dark that her British citizenship had to be explained to the 1851 census officer. In subsequent censuses some of her cousins were even described as 'African coloured'.<sup>5</sup> He may well have been the first person of African heritage to visit the Limestone Plains. It would be interesting to imagine what the conservative Gundaroo and Gungahlin communities would have thought if they had discovered that they had entrusted the care and tutelage of their children to a teacher of mixed heritage.<sup>6</sup>

Margaret Phillips also shielded a non-Anglo past. She, too, came from a Jewish family on her mother's side.<sup>7</sup> Her paternal line was nouveau riche, as the Phillips family had recently prospered as merchants in Leeds and through their marriage into the very wealthy, and very Quaker, Nicholson family of Roundhay Park, Leeds.<sup>8</sup> Although her family was welcomed as philanthropists, employing, as it did, many locals and Waterloo veterans on the redevelopment of the parklands, it was never really embraced as an equal by the established local gentry.

3 The Rich family were London mercers, prominent in the area of St Lawrence Jewry. Richard Rich (c. 1497–1567) successfully navigated his way through senior bureaucratic positions in the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I. He benefited from the dissolution of the monasteries and was raised the first Baron of Leez. He was said to have perjured himself in the trial of Thomas Moore. He was criticised for regularly switching sides and was even voted in 2005 by a BBC panel of historians as the 'worst Briton of the 16th century'. But his Jewish heritage is not widely known and his precarious position, as such, goes a long way to helping understand his actions. It was not until the Cromwellian Republic that the Jews were welcomed back into England after the purge and expulsion of 1290. See Simon Schama, *A History of Britain* (New York: Hyperion, 2000), 196–97; Robert Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain* (London: Little, Brown, 2004), 49–51.

4 Prominent Parliamentarians from the Rich family in the Civil War period were Robert Rich (second Earl of Warwick) and Henry Rich (first Earl of Holland). Alfred Rich was also descended from other pre-eminent Roundhead families, including John Hampden, Robert Pye (junior), the St Johns and Apsleys.

5 For example, Anne Brooke in the 1901 England census.

6 Prejudices on the basis of race, religion and culture were severe among the settler community in Ginninderra and Gungahlin. For example, Thomas Gribble senior told Samuel Shumack a story about his own family's views, when he heard that his son (Thomas Gribble junior) had married an Irish girl, even though she was from a Protestant planter family. He said that when his wife heard the news she broke down and cried, 'Oh Lord, what have we done that our son should disgrace his family and marry an Irish savage'. See Samuel Shumack, *An Autobiography, or, Tales and Legends of Canberra Pioneers*, ed. J. E. and Samuel Shumack (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1967), 79–80.

7 Family members had been told that Margaret Phillips was Jewish. At present, no documentary proof has been found; however, recent DNA tests of the matrilineal line have corroborated the family story of Jewish descent.

8 Margerer's uncle, William Nicholson Phillips (post Nicholson), inherited the £60,000 Roundhay Park estate of his Quaker uncle, William Nicholson senior. See Neville Hurworth, 'The Life and Family of Thomas Nicholson of Roundhay Park', *Oak Leaves* (Oakwood and District Historical Society), part 1 (Spring 2001): 1–8.



Figure 1: James Phillips, c. 1860.

Source: Author's collection.



Figure 2: Margaret Rich (née Phillips), c. 1870, Sydney.

Source: Author's collection.

Margaret's father, James Phillips, was widowed around 1840 and was busy establishing business interests across the world in concert with a few of his brothers. They traded cloth and other goods and even travelled to Australia, where they carved out the rural property 'Kareen', near Scone.<sup>9</sup> The family found places for Margaret and her cousins in a school for clergymen's children, similar to that attended by the Bronte sisters.<sup>10</sup> This arrangement lasted until they could be brought out to New South Wales (NSW).<sup>11</sup> Two of them, Margaret and her cousin Sarah, were educated as school tutors. When they arrived in the colony in 1859, the Phillips girls were presented as models of English gentlewomen and were both quickly married off to promising young school principals.<sup>12</sup> The marriages may even have

9 'Kareen' was a 100-acre dairy farm near Scone, where James Phillips built a three-bedroom stone house. By the time his brother, Thomas, joined him, it was also renowned as a horse stud. See, for example, its description in the *Scone Advocate*, 29 December 1893, 3.

10 The Brontes's school, of course, was Cowan Bridge. The school attended by the Phillips girls was established in 1833 at Casterton, Cumbria. It is not known how the Phillips families managed to secure enrolment in what was primarily a charitable institution for the daughters of poor clergymen, but they might have been among a small number of 'paying customers' whose fees subsidised its operation for the broader enrolment. The Quaker network of the Nicholsons may also have been a factor in securing their candidature.

11 According to the passenger records for the *Parsee*, the girls migrated on assisted passage, which is remarkable, given the good financial position of the family. The family may have overstretched finances with the new venture in Australia, or perhaps they were simply taking advantage of the scheme to obtain a cheap fare.

12 Sarah's husband was John Beresford Boate (1824–1901), with whom she first settled at the Collector, Gundaroo and Sutton schools. See the NSW Teachers Rolls; Errol Lea-Scarlett, *Gundaroo* (Canberra: Roebuck Society, 1972), 39, 46, 76; Lyall L. Gillespie, *Early Education and Schools in the Canberra Region* (Campbell, ACT: L. Gillespie, 1999), 65–66, 85, 133, 141–42, 165.

been prearranged. Margaret's uncle, Stephen Phillips, was himself a schoolmaster and probably acted as a remote matchmaker. It seems more than coincidence that both Phillips women quickly wed local teachers. Once the marriages were complete, the extended Phillips family had five teachers working in three schools across the Goulburn district.

James Phillips seems to have been a driven man, who had a clear plan for his children. Margaret was virtually an orphan. Her mother died when she was an infant and she would have barely known her father, who had placed her into boarding school at an early age before leaving the country to pursue his business interests. He only sent for her when a placement and possible marriage was arranged at the other end of the world. Remarkably, Margaret complied with his distant plans.

It was clear that both Alfred's and Margaret's families had long since converted to Christianity. But, while Alfred did his best to conceal knowledge of his heritage, the memory of Margaret's Jewish ancestry and her sense of difference was retained and passed down, albeit privately, within the family. Publicly, however, it was a very different matter.

Alfred's father was Charles Lewis Henry Pye Rich (1784–1840), who dissolved his family holdings in Berkshire to resettle in Somerset. He was half-French and had been born and raised in Amsterdam where his father was a banker and the Crown's part-time ambassador in the Netherlands.<sup>13</sup> Alfred's mother, Maria Tippet (1798–1886), was related to Chovvakkaran Moosa (1745–1807), a Mughal pepper merchant of Thalassery, who was so wealthy that he had lent money to the British East India Company.<sup>14</sup> His mother also seems to have had African heritage through the Masons, who were planters on St Helena. Despite the considerable wealth of these families, it must have been hard for the mixed-race Tippets and Masons to find genuine acceptance in nineteenth-century England.<sup>15</sup>

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13 Certificate from the register of the English Episcopal Church in Amsterdam.

14 For Moosa, see A. P. Ummer Kutty, *Keyi Charitram* (Thalassery, 1916), 185–208; M. P. Mujeeb Rehman, 'Merchants, Colonialism and Indigenous Capital: Chovvakkaran Moosa and the English East India Company', *Advances in Arts & Ideas* 3 (2007): 129–39. The connection to Moosa is confirmed in the will of William Henry Tippet, Magistrate of Patna (proved 1834), who married his daughter, Mussooruat Sauer Nhaunus.

15 Although it is not certain, it seems likely that the family's African heritage was first derived from Thomas Mason, who appears to have been a slave who won his freedom on St Helena by helping the reconstruction effort on the island after the brief Dutch annexation of 1673. He was probably freed around 1680. If the local minister and the St Helena Council could vouch for their good character, and if they had become Christians, slaves could be freed within seven years and were allowed to take up small landholdings and cattle allotments on the island, like any new planters. For Governor Field's manumission measure, see the extract from a letter to the St Helena Council from the Directors of the East India Company (dated 19 December 1673); cf. Thomas H. Brooke, *History of the Island of St Helena: From Its Discovery By the Portuguese To the Year 1823*, (London: Kingsbury, Parbury, and Allen, 1824), 101, and Hudson Ralph Janisch, *Extracts From the St. Helena Records*, (London: B. Grant, 1885), 2–3. It is ironic that when Captain James Cook visited St Helena in 1775 he was entertained by James Tippet and his father-in-law's mixed-race family. Benjamin Mason's plantation was selected by the islanders as a 'model', showing Cook how the slaves on their plantations were well treated, as they had been harshly criticised by his colleague Joseph Banks four years before in 1771.



Army records show that Alfred enlisted on 12 August 1845 (aged 22) in Lieutenant-Colonel H. K. Bloomfield's 1/11th North Devonshires, which served in Australia from 1845 to 1857. Although the 1841 England census shows that Alfred had been apprenticed to a medical practitioner, his employer died and he did not complete his training. In his enlistment papers, Alfred's designation was 'labourer', which suggests that he had fallen upon hard times and may have been estranged from his wealthy family.<sup>16</sup> There appears to have been a fundamental flaw in Alfred's character, but while he was living within the structure of his regiment or within the structure of his marriage, he seems to have been able to conceal it.

Upon arrival his regiment was posted to Hobart, but due to internal discipline problems with the existing troops in Sydney, the North Devonshires were redirected to help restore order in the city. The incumbents had become unpopular in Sydney for their rough treatment of civilians and convicts alike. In contrast, the North Devonshires proved to be a popular regiment, returning to garrison Sydney in response to a public petition in 1848. Thereafter the regiment occupied Victoria Barracks until it returned to England in 1857. At this time about 100 men purchased their discharge in order to remain in Sydney. According to the last NSW pay sheet of the regiment, Alfred was discharged at Sydney on 11 October 1857 with six months pay. He settled at Macarthur's property, Richlands, near Taralga, where he found employment as a schoolteacher.<sup>17</sup> Margaret was also soon teaching at Richlands and they were married in the house of her uncle, Stephen Phillips, principal of the school.<sup>18</sup>

In Australia, Alfred had already begun sowing the rumour that his family had a castle and manorial holdings in England, and that he had only joined the army and left his native country in despair, having been blamed for a riding accident that took the life of his sister.<sup>19</sup> These stories were inventions, but they were willingly consumed by his colonial friends and, ultimately, by his own children. Only after the investigations of his descendants, which began in the 1960s, was it discovered that there was no castle, no sister and no reluctant émigré.<sup>20</sup> Even the profession that he claimed and, on occasion, practised (surgery) was an exaggeration. More recently,

16 Regimental records relating to Private Alfred Rich (number 2,451).

17 Lyall L. Gillespie, *Ginninderra, Forerunner to Canberra: A History of the Ginninderra District* (Campbell, ACT: L. L. Gillespie, 1992), 238.

18 But note that the marriage certificate says they were wed in the house of Mr W. Phillips, which seems to be an error. Also note that Stephen Phillips established the first school at Taralga, which suggests that there was a pre-existing relationship with Alfred.

19 Family stories reported by his daughter, Sarah Reid (née Rich), and passed on to her grandchildren, Lyall Gillespie and Nell McDonald.

20 Alfred's grandson, Cecil Rich, travelled to England in the early 1960s to test the veracity of the family tradition and was the first to discover that there was little basis for many elements of the family tales. However, Cecil did unearth documentation that showed the Rich paternal line was part-French and, ultimately, of Jewish origin.

his paternal Jewish heritage, his maternal Mughul roots and possible slave ancestry have also come to light, now that there is ready electronic access to records held in the India Office and the archives and parish registers of St Helena.<sup>21</sup>

In Alfred's defence, it must have been difficult for someone of mixed heritage to find acceptance in nineteenth-century English society. Perhaps Alfred saw the non-Anglo origin of his family as something best shed in the antipodes. In Gundaroo and Gungahlin, Alfred's dark complexion would not be scrutinised as it had been in conservative and more homogenous Somerset. People in the colony were perhaps thirstier for the more gentele elements of life from the old country, and this is what their gentrified schoolteachers, Alfred and Margaret, offered them. Moreover, in late nineteenth-century NSW, Alfred and Margaret could hope to be judged on their merits, rather than on their racial backgrounds. It is also noteworthy that both Margaret and Alfred were the youngest children in their respective families. Both, therefore, had to struggle a little harder to achieve success. In Australia there were more opportunities for those with the ability and energy to seize them.

## The Gundaroo and Gungahlin years

Around 1867 Alfred and Margaret moved to Nelanglo (now Bellmount Forest), near Gundaroo. Here they combined farming with the provision of teaching services. In the 1840s, the prime riverfront acreage at Gundaroo had been secured in large parcels by a small number of established families, including the McLeods at Barnsdale, the Dyces at Tillygrieg, the Packers at Esther Mead, and the Guises (ex-squatters) at Jerrabiggery.<sup>22</sup> The bulk of the Gundaroo workforce consisted first of convicts, then, after transportation ceased in 1840, there came a flow of 'bounty migrants'. In the 1841 NSW population census the place was listed as having 388 inhabitants. Convict representation had dropped significantly with only 90 remaining. By the time the Richs arrived in the mid-1860s, the population was mainly composed of tenant farmers or small landholders. In the 1850s a number of the larger properties had been broken up for tenant farmers and a new influx of smaller free selectors, who had humbler origins but enough capital and motivation to take advantage of the opportunity to buy good land.<sup>23</sup>

It was into this maturing community that Alfred and Margaret arrived to set up school to the north of Gundaroo. Just 18 months later, Margaret's sister Sarah and her schoolmaster husband, John Beresford Boate, ran schools at Gundaroo and

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21 Note that the early St Helena records can now be accessed through the British Library's 'Endangered Archives Project' ([eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP524](http://eap.bl.uk/database/results.a4d?projID=EAP524)) and the University of the Witwatersrand ([www.historicalpapers.wits.ac.za/?inventory/U/collections&cc=AB2073/R/](http://www.historicalpapers.wits.ac.za/?inventory/U/collections&cc=AB2073/R/)).

22 Lea-Scarlett, *Gundaroo*, 1–18.

23 An example would be the Read/Reid families from Tintinhull in Somerset, who are still in the district to this day. See Lyall L. Gillespie, *A Pictorial History of the Read/Reid Family in Australia, 1849–1879* (Campbell, ACT: L. L. Gillespie, 1979), 3–8.

neighbouring Sutton from July 1868 until May 1873. Although the two families were not financially influential within the Gundaroo community, they wielded significant influence in the area and enjoyed a privileged position in its civic life. As ‘local gentry’, who were also responsible for the education of the district’s children, they would have been viewed as cultural exemplars and intellectual leaders. Alfred was actively interested in literature and dabbled in comic verse that he occasionally submitted to the *Goulburn Penny Post* under the nom de plume ‘Jeremiah’.<sup>24</sup> He even provided valuable ad hoc medical assistance and is recorded as having been friendly with the local medical practitioner, Dr Hidler.<sup>25</sup> Alfred himself was called upon, on occasion, to provide emergency medical assistance. For example, in 1879 Curtis Dyce, a workman on the Gundaroo bridge, slipped and badly broke his leg. Alfred successfully set the fractured limb.<sup>26</sup>

But Gundaroo in the 1860s was a relatively polarised community. It could be argued that the Richs and Boates would not have related closely to the local Irish, many of them Catholic, Gaelic-speaking emancipists or bounty migrants, who tended to congregate in clusters of smaller holdings at Mugwell, Back Creek and towards Tallagandra.<sup>27</sup> Conversely it could also be argued that many Irish would not have wanted Alfred and Margaret to be their social mentors. Common ground for the Richs and Boates would have been found with the Protestant landowners and their families located along the river frontages and in the new township itself. In this context, Alfred and Margaret would have presented themselves as orthodox Anglicans. The Catholics, on the other hand, had no church of their own; worshipping instead at makeshift altars set up by Michael Brennan, the resident priest at Yass, or itinerant clergy visiting from St Mary’s in Sydney.<sup>28</sup> The first Catholic church at Gundaroo, St Josephs, was not built until 1881.<sup>29</sup> Thankfully the intermingling of cultures and perspectives in the new country would eventually dilute these prejudices. For example, the Presbyterian Gundaroo squire Donald McLeod junior donated some his family’s land to be used as a non-denominational cemetery (primarily by local Catholic families), when Rev. Galliard Smith refused to bury non-Anglicans in the general cemetery.<sup>30</sup>

24 Republished in Lyall L. Gillespie, *Early Verse of the Canberra Region: A Collection of Poetry, Verse and Doggerel from Newspapers, Other Publications and Private Sources* (Campbell, ACT: L. L. Gillespie, 1994), 29.

25 Shumack, *An Autobiography*, 105. It is interesting that Dr Hidler is described by Shumack as a reformed alcoholic. Alfred also appears to have been ‘on the wagon’ while Margaret was alive, and the two men may have found support in each other’s experiences battling alcohol dependency.

26 Lea-Scarlett, *Gundaroo*, 96.

27 Speaking Irish by convicts in Australia invoked a penalty of 15 lashes, yet it was still the common language of Irish immigrants in the 1820s. See C. Fritz, ‘Language, Change and Identity: The Irish in Nineteenth-century Australia’, in *Irish-Australian Studies: Papers Delivered at the Ninth Irish-Australian Conference, Galway, April 1997*, ed. Tadhg Foley and Fiona Bateman (Sydney: Crossing Press, 2000), 57–66.

28 For a summary of Fr Brennan’s career, see *Nepean Times*, 4 August 1914, 8; Brian Maher, *Planting the Celtic Cross: Foundations of the Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn* (Canberra: B. Maher, 1997), 93, 98, 101–4, 109, 115–16, 119, 294; Brian Maher, ed., *Sesquicentenary 1862–2012: Diocese of Goulburn, 1862–1948; Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, 1948–2012* (Canberra: Rev. Brian Maher, 2012), 58.

29 Lea-Scarlett, *Gundaroo*, 39.

30 Lea-Scarlett, *Gundaroo*, 52–53, 101, 146; McLeod’s generosity is recognised at the cemetery in a plaque.

But just as the couple had created new lives for themselves at the centre of their adopted community, tragedy descended. Margaret died unexpectedly in May 1880 at her residence in Nelango. The cause of death was 'internal abscess', for which she received treatment over a six-day period. She was buried in Gundaroo general cemetery in an unmarked grave.<sup>31</sup> Alfred struggled to cope after his wife's death. As suggested above, it seems that he had an unstable temperament, unsuited to grief. Matters may not have been helped by the fact that he was living a life of half-truths. His financial position was poor and he proved unable to provide for his five surviving children, who ranged in age from 13 years to a few months. Alfred junior, the eldest, sought farm work at Gunning. The directories and other records show that, eventually, he became a labourer at Goulburn. Sarah (aged 10) remained with her father for a few years before taking up a domestic position with the Collett family at Queanbeyan. She later married Richard Reid, an emerging grazier at Spring Flat, Tallagandra. The youngest children were fostered out. Honorah Cartwright (née Reid) of Tallagandra took in Frances (aged six). Florence went to live with the Jones family at Gundaroo and later married their son. Lionel, a baby of just five months, was fostered by the Elliots in Sydney.<sup>32</sup>

In August 1881 Alfred moved to Gungahlin, where he established a small private school located on premises adjacent to the Anglican stalwarts, the Gribbles.<sup>33</sup> He ran the school for several years, servicing Gungahlin, Ginninderra, Mulligans Flat and Tea Gardens, but closed it, in March 1892, when enrolments waned and his health started to fail. He took the opportunity to retire to Gunning, where he lived with his son.<sup>34</sup> After Margaret's death he turned to alcohol. As we have seen, the children had already been 'farmed out'. Some financial respite came when his mother died in 1886, and he seems to have been in receipt of a stipend from her estate thereafter.<sup>35</sup> But at some time before he died, the payments he was receiving from England also ceased. It is said that Rev. Galliard Smith, through whom the payments were administered, had reported his heavy drinking bouts to the trustees of the estate.<sup>36</sup> Temperance, it seems, must have been a condition upon which the payments were predicated. Despite Alfred's shortcomings, it seems clear that he was a well-educated and talented man, able to turn his hand to soldiery, teaching, farming and medicine. He appeared to be the sort of 'refined English gentleman' who people admired and whose flaws (such as his drinking) were readily overlooked. He died in June 1893 at Gunning, aged 70, and, like his wife, was also interred in an unmarked grave.<sup>37</sup>

31 NSW death certificate.

32 Gillespie, *A Pictorial History of the Read/Reid Family*, 12.

33 *Goulburn Evening Penny Post*, 23 August 1881, 4. Cf. Gillespie, *Early Education and Schools*, 36–37, 139.

34 See Lyall L. Gillespie, 'Ginninderra: A Centre of Early Education', *Canberra Historical Journal*, n.s. 12, (September 1983): 27–33; Lyall Gillespie, *Canberra: 1820–1913* (Canberra: AGPS Press, 1991), 92; Gillespie, *Ginninderra*, 61, 204, 238; Gillespie, *Early Education and Schools*, 36–37.

35 He also may have acted as an agent in Australia of his brother, Thomas Rich, who had investments in the newly founded Bank of Australasia (the investment is noted in the 1861 England census).

36 Lyall Gillespie reported to me in 2004 that his father, William Gillespie, contacted Rev. Smith's daughter, who confirmed the stories, but was unable to secure copies of the relevant correspondence.

37 Recently descendants have made arrangements for plaques to be positioned at both graves.



Figure 3: Alfred Mainwaring Rich junior, c. 1890, Goulburn.

Source: Author's collection.





Figure 4: Sarah Reid (née Rich), c. 1910, Sydney.

Source: Author's collection.

Although relatively little is known about them, there is enough information to support the gist of the story that Alfred Rich left England deliberately to seek out a new and obscure life for himself, even if the detail of the circumstances was invented. We can never know what his reasons were, but it seems likely that it was a deliberate process of reinvention. What is certain is that he and Margaret were happy together and raised a fine family. But what is also apparent is that, after Margaret died, Alfred did not cope on his own. The people of Gundaroo and Gungahlin probably had no idea that African, Indian and Jewish blood ran through Alfred and Margaret's collective veins. Their neighbours in England would have known, or suspected, and probably not have embraced them in the way that the Australian communities did. Overall, it must be said, therefore, that their reinvention in Australia was a success. Most colonials wanted to believe that, in their midst, grew scions of English gentry grafted onto rough Australian bush-stock. It may have made them feel less distant from the memory of their own British homes.





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# Three years in the life of Chief Constable Patrick Kinsela

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GILLIAN KELLY

On 3 December 1831 the ship *Margaret* sailed into Port Jackson carrying Australia's new governor, (Sir) Richard Bourke, his wife and family, his official suite and 40 persons, including servants.<sup>1</sup> They included 'a few old soldiers who have served with him and now serve him'<sup>2</sup> and, among their number, probably also as a soldier, was Patrick Kinsela.<sup>3</sup> A stout and powerful man in the prime of his life, he was single, educated and seemed to move comfortably within the society of New South Wales in the 1830s. It was not until 1835 that he appeared in a public record and by then he was then living at Government House.<sup>4</sup> Almost nothing is known about Kinsela's biography, apart from three short years when he became, and in many ways characterised, the police presence in the Canberra region. During these years, the last of Kinsela's life, he suddenly comes into focus in the documentary record. By examining his activities as a law officer, as well as his personal life, we can learn much about the region during its very earliest years of colonial settlement. A characteristic of settlement was that officialdom often followed on the heels of the first European incursions into an area. Those such as Kinsela thus faced the task of imposing law and order on a society that, at the time, seemed beyond the reach of government. The challenges he faced in doing so would have broken many, and show that some in the nascent community resisted the imposition of law and order. Yet after three years, and having survived persistent attacks on his character, and the way he went about his role, Kinsela had largely succeeded.

Jane, Kinsela's wife, was born in 1806 in County Cork, daughter of Daniel Mehegan and Mary Thompson, a Protestant family, and of this there is no doubt. On 3 October 1836 she arrived in Sydney on the *Duchess of Northumberland*, as Mrs Jane Wigmore.<sup>5</sup> The female immigrants from the ship stayed in temporary quarters at the rear of Government House<sup>6</sup> until domestic positions could be found for them.

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1 *Sydney Gazette*, 3 December 1831; Kinsela's application to advertise land sales, 10 July 1840.

2 *Sydney Monitor*, 9 November 1831, 3.

3 Application to advertise land in Section 2, Village of Queanbeyan, 11 July 1838. This document states Patrick arrived on the same ship as the late governor, i.e. Richard Bourke on the *Margaret*.

4 *The New South Wales Calendar and General Post Office Directory*, 1835.

5 Elizabeth Rushen, *Colonial Duchesses: The Migration of Irish Women to New South Wales before the Great Famine* (Collins Street East, Vic.: Anchor Books Australia, 2014).

6 *Sydney Monitor*, 7 October 1836, 3.

In 1835 Kinsela also lived at Government House.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps this is where they met. The entitlement certificates for the *Duchess of Northumberland* note that Jane then went to stay with relatives in the colony.<sup>8</sup> She was certainly joined in Queanbeyan in later years by two sisters and a brother, but the identities of her relatives in the colony in 1836 remain a mystery. Mr Wigmore also remains a mystery. Apart from the 15 months between Jane's arrival and her marriage to Kinsela there is no other reference to the name Wigmore in connection to Jane.

It is possible that Kinsela was also born in County Cork, but there is no evidence that this was so. He was undoubtedly Irish and definitely of the Catholic faith. That he was an educated man with some claim to recognition is reflected in the colonial secretary, (Sir) Edward Deas Thompson, and Captain Alured Faunce, and even local landowners and magistrates James Wright and Terence Aubrey Murray, according him with honorific 'Mr' in a time when this was a noted mark of respect. It is likely he was a military man and may have been the Patrick Kinsela who earned a Waterloo Medal in 1816. Alured Faunce, his father-in-law Kenneth McKenzie, Sir Richard Bourke, Joshua John Moore owner of Canberry, Murray's father and father-in-law, as well as James Hartley the runaway, Robert Harvey the signatory to Patrick's records, James Pegg, John Rae and even the father-in-law of both Henry Buckley and Hirst were all military men and many were at Waterloo.

Kinsela may also have been the man from Wexford who served with the 2/40th (Somersetshire) Regiment of Foot. After Waterloo the regiment was escort for convict ships and then was deployed to guard New South Wales and Tasmania between 1823 and 1829, before transfer to India and return to England just in time to have joined the *Margaret* to New South Wales. He may have belonged to the 21st Regiment, North British Fusiliers, or any of the other regiments connected to the established society of New South Wales and within whose circles he was recognised. The evidence is coincidental, circumstantial and inconclusive but intriguing.<sup>9</sup> This was an era when people were recognised according to their place in the hierarchy of a class-conscious society. The familial interconnections in the Queanbeyan district were abundant and the acquisition of land paramount. Kinsela's unexplained place in the world seemed to be understood by those who deemed themselves to be the leaders of the community, but apart from those three short years from 1838 to his death in 1841, of Patrick Kinsela it seems there is little more to tell.

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7 *The New South Wales Calendar and General Post Office Directory*, 1835.

8 NSW State Archives, Entitlement Certificates of Persons on Bounty Ships 1832–42, NRS 5314.

9 James Hugh Donohoe, *The British Army in Australia 1788–1870: Index of Personnel* (Sydney: J. S. Shaw North, 1996); Australian Joint Copying Project War Office, WO 12, Reels 3772–3774, Pieces 5336–5339.

## The district in the 1830s

The County of Murray was at the extremity of the Nineteen Counties of New South Wales. In the 1830s it was reached only by rough tracks that followed the trails of Aboriginal people and were defined by the passage of horses, carts, bullock wagons and moving stock. The European settlers were mainly overseers for large landholders and convicts who managed the sheep whose wool would make fortunes on the British markets. Very few owners lived in the Limestone Plains area of County Murray and there were none of the facilities that defined European social living: no villages, only a scattering of permanent houses; no shops, churches or schools—indeed, no women or children—and, overwhelmingly, no immediate officers of the law who could manage the district. The place was developing as a lawless, rough and quite frightening place infested with runaway convicts and sly grog sellers. The climate was hard and, by 1837, the district was entering an extreme drought of some three years.

Late in 1834 a ‘wandering publican’ with an extraordinary quantity of rum set himself up on a central station<sup>10</sup> and sold the alcohol off to assigned servants on the estates around him. This event caused any pretence of authority to disappear, and the resulting unbridled drunkenness motivated the cessation of the shearing season. So severe were the consequences that Robert Campbell, because of the insubordination and loss of control on Duntroon, refused to pay debts accrued by his long-trusted manager, Mr James Ainslie.<sup>11</sup> In 1835 Ainslie left Duntroon and returned to Scotland, and Charles Campbell, son of Robert, became the manager.

## The arrival of the new police magistrate and constable, 1837

Over the next several years James Wright of Lanyon, Terence Aubrey Murray of Yarralumla station and Robert Campbell of Duntroon made continual representations to the colonial secretary for a police force to be established in the district. In November 1837 Governor Richard Bourke appointed Captain Alured Tasker Faunce as police magistrate at the non-existent village of Queanbeyan. His immediate tasks were to engage the staff who would work in his district and to arrange for buildings in which to house them, hold court and provide a lock-up. Queanbeyan was merely a red square labelled ‘Village Reserve’ on the map of County Murray. Within that square was a fenced enclave with a store, run by Buckley and

<sup>10</sup> Believed to be Klensendorlffe’s Elizabeth Farm. Klensendorlffe owned a licensed premise at Tahmoor.

<sup>11</sup> *Sydney Gazette*, 1 January 1835, 3. In the 1830s the title Mr was used to denote a gentleman without other title, and it is significant that Campbell, despite the circumstances, used this title for Ainslie.

Hirst, Skeate's blacksmith's shop and a scattering of sod huts used by shepherds. Faunce had to look further afield and rented, for the police force, buildings on Canberry station, owned by Joshua Moore, but leased by Murray.<sup>12</sup> Faunce later described the buildings as sheds that had to be turned into proper huts.<sup>13</sup> The annual rental to Murray was £50.

Faunce recommended to the colonial secretary Edward Deas Thompson the appointment of William Hanna as clerk of the bench, Mr Patrick Kinsela as chief constable, James Pegg, free, as lock-up keeper, and James Crossley, Peter Connell and William Jones as ordinary constables. The appointments were to commence on 1 January 1838. Kinsela wrote to the colonial secretary, at Faunce's request, to confirm that Crossley and Connell were free by servitude while William Jones had declined the appointment. Faunce had an unfortunate history in his previous appointment but Bourke had some sympathy for him. The editor of the *Sydney Gazette*, however, did not share Bourke's attitude and Faunce sued the *Gazette* for libel, applied for leave from Queanbeyan and remained in Sydney until the end of March while he attended the Supreme Court action he had instigated.

Kinsela meanwhile commenced work on the sheds at Canberry. He employed convict labour cutting poles and stripping bark to repair the roofs and to bolt down the slabs top and bottom to beams securing the buildings as a temporary lock-up and courthouse. He then presented an account to the colonial secretary for the purchase of the necessary hardware, extra rations and soap for the convicts and a fee for a female to clean the courthouse.<sup>14</sup> The account was rejected because no formal permission had been granted despite Bourke's implied directions to Faunce to do whatever was necessary to provide a courthouse, lock-up and accommodation for the force.

The registers of St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, record that Patrick Kinsela and Jane Wigmore married in Sydney on 6 February 1838 by Father Charles Lovatt.<sup>15</sup> Kinsela's signature, witnessed by Lovatt, is a cross mark and the marriage witnesses were Ester and Robert Harvey.<sup>16</sup> As Kinsela was a literate man and was in Queanbeyan on that date, it is most likely that he and Jane were married in County Murray, the event recorded in Lovatt's notebook and, as was the custom, later transcribed into the formal register of St Mary's, Sydney. The couple lived at Canberry from where Patrick took control of policing, while Faunce was in Sydney pursuing his

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12 Index and Registers of Land grants, Lease Moore to Murray, NSW State Archives, Microfilm 229.

13 A. T. Faunce to Colonial Secretary, 6 December 1838, NSW State Archives, 4/2416.

14 Listed were padlocks and keys, staples, hasps and chains, forms, locks and hinges and other unnamed provisions. Faunce to Colonial Secretary, 1 December 1838, NSW State Archives, 38/3223 and following.

15 St Mary's, Sydney, Register of Baptisms, Burials and Marriages, N0 465, Vol. 87–90, Reel 5034, Nowra Library.

16 Patrick was an educated, literate man. This indicates he was not present and either the marriage was performed by proxy or in another place, the ceremony being recorded in an itinerant priest's notes and transcribed.

defamation action, battling with the court system and the *Sydney Gazette*. In his absence two unpaid magistrates, Terrence Aubrey Murray and James Wright, sat on the bench.

The first court session convened on 23 February 1838 without the police magistrate, who returned late in March, and this left Kinsela solely in charge of the small and unstable police force. The turnover of ordinary constables was astounding. Kinsela, however, was considered reliable and trustworthy and quickly developed a reputation for his energy in dealing with the recalcitrants. The court system, though, had to deal immediately with the petty crimes of wayward convicts, particularly those assigned to magistrates Wright and Murray. Their punishment for the crimes of insolence, laziness, disobedience, disorderly conduct and neglect of duties was usually a harsh sentence of the lash and provided validation for the necessity of the existence of the court.<sup>17</sup>

## Enforcing the rule of law

Dealing with sly grog shops, runaways and bushrangers were Kinsela's main objectives in creating a safe district. He began by targeting the illegal sales of spirituous liquors, especially at the store of Buckley and Hirst. This, with its associated outbuildings and Skeate's smithy's shop, was the only building within the boundaries of the designated village reserve. As early as 5 February Kinsela found Henry Buckley retailing a quart of wine to convict Samuel Shaw.<sup>18</sup> He continued to make arrests at the store for the same crime until eventually Buckley and Hirst sold out to John Gray who had financial assistance from Robert Campbell. At the same time, the licensed Elmsall Inn opened in a solid stone house on the perimeter of Duntroon with licensees William Hunt and Joseph Kaye. There was thus now a legal outlet to balance the crackdown on the illegal sale of spirituous liquors.

Within six months, Kinsela had closed down half a dozen grog shops. Establishments at Gundaroo, Bredbo, the Monaro, Stonequarry and Bungendore all closed and the illicit grog was confiscated. He applied to the colonial secretary for compensation of £5 for each of five successful charges he had brought, with three recalcitrants being charged with one offence of illegally retailing spirits, and another with two. The application included a covering letter signed by Faunce, Wright and Murray, but to no avail. The matter took months to resolve, as it required the attorney-general's opinion as to whether Kinsela was entitled to a share of the government's financial gains that came from his actions. The official advice was that as the prisoners had been unable to pay the fines levied against them, any monies received had to cover

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17 Colonial Secretary's letters, convicts and others, Queanbeyan depositions 1838–1844, NSW State Archives, N4/5650.

18 Colonial Secretary's letters, NSW State Archives, N4/5650.

costs.<sup>19</sup> Early in 1839 Kinsela (as chief constable) advertised a large quantity of spirituous liquors for sale at the Queanbeyan police offices. Later, Kinsela's detractors alleged that the proceeds of this sale would line his own pockets.

In Kinsela's efforts to maintain order, the pursuit of runaway convicts was equally as important as the closing of grog shops. Runaways posed the problem of increased crime through theft and bushranging as the absconders sought ways to survive. During 1838 and 1839, almost one runaway each week was recaptured and faced the punishment of 50 lashes. By 1840 this had slowed to under 20 for the year.<sup>20</sup>

While Kinsela was not a teetotaler, nor was he immoderate. If this had been the case the Sydney press, fed by local informants, would have used to its maximum damaging effect in its attempts to destroy Faunce, if not Kinsela himself. However, on at least one occasion he threw discretion to the winds. One Alex Weatherhead was overlanding 500 cattle with a team of drovers from the south coast to Adelaide, coming up through Araluen and Braidwood. They camped one evening at Long Swamp and overindulged at Hyland's Inn. Having just settled down for the night the men were disturbed by a very tipsy Kinsela who was on the rampage searching for a runaway. One of the drovers, Henry Benson, did not take kindly to the intrusion and was insolent, causing Kinsela to collar him. Benson threatened to knock his white hat off and no sooner had he uttered the threat than the hat rolled and a scuffle ensued. The gathering was greatly amused as Kinsela was fully clothed with a top coat and Benson wore nought but a shirt, and a very short one at that. Weatherhead split them up but Kinsela foolishly drew his pistol, causing the drovers to join the melee and toss the pistol away. Kinsela returned to the inn where he was staying. The next morning the drovers found the pistol and returned it to Kinsela who wore 'a much bruised face'. Benson was not happy and insisted Kinsela replace his shirt. The matter was eventually settled to apparently everyone's satisfaction with another round of drinks!<sup>21</sup>

In August 1838 Kinsela again recognised a runaway. 'William Peel' was working with William Rusten on Craven, Edward Harrison Cliffe's property next to Yarralumla. In court on 23 October Rusten admitted that he knew 'William Peel' was really James Hartley and that he was a runaway. Hartley was taken into custody and Rusten was charged and found guilty of knowingly harbouring an absconder. The usual punishment for this offence was 50 lashes. The presiding magistrates, Faunce, Murray and Wright, were of the opinion that Rusten was guilty of disorderly conduct and, taking the circumstances into consideration, adjudged him to be

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19 Letters from Patrick Kinsela and Magistrates Faunce, Wright & Murray, memoranda in margins from Deas and Attorney-General, letter from Colonial Secretary to Faunce, Colonial Secretary Letters In and Out, 1838, NSW State Archives.

20 NSW State Archives, Bench record, NRS 3342.

21 Alexander Weatherhead, *Leaves from My Life: Being Fifty-Six Years' Experience on the South Coast of New South Wales, Australia* (Eden Museum, 1984), 16.

reprimanded.<sup>22</sup> Hartley had been harboured by men in that area for several years and Kinsela produced evidence to this effect against Wright, Murray and Charles Campbell. Hartley had been assigned to Robert Campbell's brother-in-law, John Palmer of Parramatta, in 1825. When Charles Campbell went to court, Murray and Wright sat on the bench even though they, too, would face charges for their part in the same offence. This marked a turning point in the relationship between Faunce and Kinsela and Murray and Wright.<sup>23</sup>

When Hartley was taken into custody, he was ill and in need of the medical assistance of Dr Hayley, who presented a bill for £5. Again the colonial secretary denied it, with some outrage, declaring he was astonished that such a claim had been made and that Faunce had supported it. Faunce's letter was interesting in its subtlety—he suggested that several other persons were implicated in harbouring Hartley and that undoubtedly there would be ample funds to support their cases.<sup>24</sup>

By April 1838 the surveyor James Larmer had drawn up his plan for the first square mile of the village of Queanbeyan. Larmer noted in his field book that Kinsela had applied to have the 10 lots on Monaro Street advertised for sale.<sup>25</sup> The *Government Gazette* advertised the blocks in July 1839 and by December Mrs Emma Rowley (née Hunt) owned two of them. An inn and a store were built and by 1840 William Hunt and Joseph Kaye had moved their Elmsall Inn and store from the edge of Duntroon to these buildings, thus making alcohol legally available within the embryonic village.

On 11 December 1838 Kinsela's son, James, was born at 'Cambry' on the Limestone Plains. James was baptised with Murray as his godfather on 3 February 1839 by Bishop Polding. James's obituary recorded that he was born in his father's hut on the capital site. Just two days later, Murray wrote to the colonial secretary requesting a pay rise for Kinsela, in recognition of his performance.<sup>26</sup>

The year 1838 had been an incredibly difficult one with inadequate buildings, especially the lock-up, constant staff changes and the impossible task of recruiting good men into the roles. Hanna, clerk of the bench, had resigned early. By June 1838 Pegg had resigned and was replaced by John O'Connor in whom Kinsela had great hopes,<sup>27</sup> but he, too, resigned and was replaced by George White who, in turn, was replaced by William Forsyth. John Rae, a free man, left his employment with Murray to become clerk of the bench, but quickly returned to Murray. Kinsela

22 NSW State Archives, Bench record, 23 October 1838, NRS 3342.

23 NSW State Archives, 4/2507; Bruce Moore, *The Lanyon Saga* (Canberra: Canberra Publishing Co., 1982).

24 NSW State Archives, Deposition Book for Assigned Persons (Queanbeyan Court of Petty Sessions), 1838–44, NRS 3341.

25 Field Book, Plans and Descriptions Queanbeyan, 15 April 1839, James Larmer, Surveyor, NSW State Archives, NRS 13889 item 468.

26 T. A. Murray to Colonial Secretary, 5 February.

27 T. A. Murray to Stewart Mowle, 17 July 1839.



found himself undertaking the role of clerk of the bench, for which he received an extra £75 per annum, and later accepted the additional role of keeper of the slaughterhouse.<sup>28</sup>

## Hostility of the press

While Kinsela achieved a measure of success in investigating crimes, capturing criminals, including bushrangers and murderers, and imposing control over illegal grog shops, he achieved little recognition in the press. Its sole purpose where Queanbeyan legal matters were concerned was to print a barrage of false allegations against the local constabulary. Anonymous correspondents aligned with equally anonymous landowners provided scurrilous information, much of it denigrating Kinsela. It began in January 1839 when the *Sydney Gazette* attacked Queanbeyan's law enforcement team. The editor felt that it would have been remiss for him not to keep an eye on the situation, but distance and the reticence of the local people to inform made proper scrutiny difficult. Until he was certain of his sources, he stated, he would not print a word against anyone involved, but now some reliable anonymous sources had come forward and the editor believed that Governor Gipps had no option but to investigate.<sup>29</sup>

The *Sydney Monitor* joined the affray with a statement from Marulan asking if it was true that if a ticket-of-leave holder applied to the Queanbeyan court for a conditional pardon the chief constable would object unless he received a fee varying from 10 to 30 shillings.<sup>30</sup> A variation of this complaint was that Kinsela would write petitions for the illiterate, but levy a charge. The *Sydney Herald* became part of the bandwagon with a letter from a writer who hid behind the nom de plume 'Squat'. He claimed the constables were frequently intoxicated and that one had threatened the utmost violence with a firearm. This same constable was accused of accepting a bribe to present an application for a ticket-of-leave to court.<sup>31</sup>

It was clear that while Faunce was named, the informants and the editors who published the information, no matter how accurate or incomplete, were actually after the chief constable and his team. The charges insinuated that the scourger was often away, among other reasons, looking out for sly grog sellers for the benefit of the chief constable. There was a suggestion that Kinsela only appeared monthly to receive his pay. A horse suspected of being stolen or strayed had been worked continuously and starved by the police to the extent that it died. Another horse was supposedly sold without the required notice being published—the unspoken

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28 *Government Gazette*, 1837–39.

29 *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 22 January 1839, 2.

30 *Sydney Monitor and Commercial Advertiser*, 14 October 1839, 2.

31 *Sydney Herald*, 9 March 1840, 2.



responsibility for lodging those advertisements was Kinsela's. He was further accused of taking Faunce's place as observer of floggings and often reducing the sentence; and further, that culprits who were supposed to have received a flogging often showed no evidence of it happening. In this same vein, an anonymous writer suggested that Kinsela would lessen the severity of a flogging in return for the victim giving sworn evidence favourable to the Crown in particular court cases. There were other issues: the colonial secretary's office refused to appoint and pay a doctor to oversee floggings although Dr William Foxton Hayley was practising in Queanbeyan.

On 18 September 1839 the court finally moved from Canberry to Queanbeyan. The courthouse and lock-up were sited on the flat on the riverbank away from the reach of floods on Faunce's Dodsworth that bordered the Village Reserve. The courthouse was a small detached slab-built hut covered with wooden shingles with a low skillion on one end and plastered inside and out. The lock-up and keeper's room were in the middle of a building of four rooms. A kitchen stood on the left-hand end and a small store on the other, and a slab wall divided the lock-up from the keeper's room.<sup>32</sup> The government now paid the rent for these official buildings to Faunce.

Late in 1839 Murray travelled to Sydney to appear before an enquiry into policing in the colony. Despite the press allegations, he clearly understood the difficulties of providing an effective police force and alleged that it was neglect at the highest levels, rather than local issues, which compromised police integrity. The lack of suitable buildings was high on his list of grievances. Among other concerns, the size of the local police force was entirely inadequate under any circumstances and if the constables were not escorting prisoners to other places, they were rushing around in different directions issuing subpoenas, as the laws of the day demanded, to those required to appear in court in the next few days. The minutiae of daily policing in the Queanbeyan district did not appear in the reports of this enquiry, but in Queanbeyan this was far from the case.<sup>33</sup>

It was Faunce's responsibility to ensure formal observation of corporal punishments. He delegated this task to Kinsela, who on occasion ordered remissions. This led to assertions in the press that there were corrupt motives behind the remissions. It also led to some of the magistrates ordering assigned servants to strip and show their backs in order to observe the extent of the injuries received. This direct attack on Kinsela so concerned Faunce that he immediately wrote to the colonial secretary saying such practices would lead to insubordination among the convict population.

32 Clerk of Works to Colonial Architect, 18 June 1850, Colonial Secretary letters, NSW State Archives.

33 *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 3 December 1839, 4.

In January 1840 the full bench of the Queanbeyan magistrates met to discuss the situation. By this time, Murray's brother, James, and Nathaniel Stephen Powell had joined the bench. On 1 February Faunce reported the discussions to the colonial secretary. The local force had been reduced to three men including Kinsela, Connell was the only constable (doubling up as scourger and lock-up keeper) and the pay of 3 shillings and threepence a day was so low that it was impossible to recruit good men. He requested an increase of five ordinary constables and two mounted police, expressing the fear that otherwise the district would be unprotected.<sup>34</sup> Three days later Wright, citing complaints made about increased neglect of duty and discipline within the police force, called the attention of the bench to the subject. The majority of the bench agreed that the constable (Kinsela) ought to be dismissed. Faunce had other ideas and had the matter adjourned until the following court day. When that day arrived neither Faunce nor Kinsela were present. They had been sighted on the Molonglo Road by one 'Paddy Contract' who reported that Faunce told him Kinsela was 'as worthy and respectable a man as any member of the bench'.<sup>35</sup>

Faunce took leave to visit his family at Liverpool. Wright, Murray and his brother James used his absence to lay charges against the police magistrate. Referring to a lack of discipline within the local force, they claimed procedures were not being followed, and this was exacerbated by Faunce's absolute refusal to work with his fellow magistrates. Nathaniel Powell, the fourth magistrate, was not consulted, nor did he sign the complaints.<sup>36</sup> Quite incongruously, within weeks, Mr William Edye Manning of the Campbelltown Quarter Sessions also wrote to the colonial secretary suggesting that eight of Wright's convicts had all escaped from Lanyon together and that the matter should be the subject of an enquiry.

## An enquiry is convened

This provided a tipping point, and two highly respected Sydney justices, Charles Windeyer and L. North, were appointed to conduct an enquiry into the administration of justice in the town. The enquiry opened on 15 May 1840 with several weeks allowed for hearings, most of them closed to the public. It was a somewhat farcical but thorough experience with complaint after complaint heard. Witnesses were asked to prove Murray and Wright correct in their interpretations of the situation. Faunce, in giving his evidence, alleged that the justices were after Kinsela, not him, as retribution for Kinsela's charging Wright and Murray with

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<sup>34</sup> Letter dated 1 February 1840.

<sup>35</sup> *Sydney Herald*, 9 March 1840, 9.

<sup>36</sup> Letters to Colonial Secretary, Faunce to Colonial Secretary, 19 December 19, 1840, 4/2416, NSW State Archives.

harbouring James Hartley. Faunce claimed that since that event the magistrates had given Kinsela no peace, even though not months before they had been extremely happy with his work to the point of Murray recommending he receive a higher salary.

On 11 June, Justices Windeyer and North presented their decisions to the colonial secretary. They concluded the charges came under three headings. The first concerned a laxity of discipline and here they found Faunce had acted entirely appropriately in each case. There did not appear to be any lack of control and they believed Faunce had done everything possible to maintain strict discipline. The second was the apparent irregularities that had long prevailed in the district and of these Kinsela's demeanour in the courtroom bothered the magistrates most. Windeyer and North concluded that there were differing opinions on the bench, with two dissenting judgements. However, they reported:

From the evidence of suitors attending Court it would certainly appear that the Chief Constable assumed fully as much importance as might be expected from one who probably considered himself, with justice, a zealous and useful, if not favoured, officer.<sup>37</sup>

Of the allegations by the press against Kinsela, only two were discussed: the first being that he ordered the remissions of corporal punishment, with the case of William Williams being cited. Williams was held on consecutive charges, each punishment being 50 lashes. The press said he had received 40 strokes out of the 100 ordered. The Bench Book said he received the full 50 for the first charge, but only 40 for the second. The reason given in the Bench Book was that Kinsela did not believe Williams could bear the last 10. The other matter was the accusation of Kinsela taking payment from prisoners. No witnesses had been called who could prove this had ever happened but Faunce had not tried to clear the air with the other magistrates on 4 February. While there was no evidence of Kinsela's guilt, it left him open to the accusations in the papers. The third matter was the want of cooperation on the part of Faunce with his fellow magistrates. The justices believed that what the complainants saw as lack of cooperation appeared to them to be reasonable and fair differences of opinion. They concluded that the difficulties could easily have been overcome by there being a better understanding on the bench.

## Policing after the enquiry

And so life moved on. In March 1840 Faunce had formalised what appears to have been an established arrangement with Kinsela. He had a memorial drawn up that leased to Kinsela about 4 acres of land with two or three cottages and outbuildings. This land was bounded by the Queanbeyan River to the west, Faunce's land to

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37 Colonial Secretary's Letters Queanbeyan – The Late Commission of Enquiry, Sydney, 11 June 1840.

the south, Faunce's land and the courthouse to the east and the Village Reserve to the west. There was no rent to be paid by Kinsela but he was responsible for improvements including those already made, with Faunce having the right to resume the property if Patrick did not meet the covenants placed in the agreement. This agreement became Jane's lifeline in just under a year.<sup>38</sup> In July 1840 Kinsela again applied for land to be advertised for sale—this time on the eastern side of the river, closer to the courthouse and lock-up. The land in question was all the allotments facing Booth Street in Section 2. The request was submitted in Kinsela's name by the same Robert Harvey who witnessed his marriage to Jane; this time all four blocks were sold to Hunt and Kaye.

Towards the end of the year word reached Queanbeyan that the notorious 'Gipsey' Clarke had escaped custody near Bathurst. James Clarke, known as Gipsey, was a true bushranger feared by all who encountered him. He had served some years as an assigned servant in the Queanbeyan district and so had contacts there. He escaped from an escort in early November 1840 and by the end of the month, with the aid of an excellent horse, had insinuated himself back into the Bungendore district, hoping to go unrecognised by the authorities. Magistrate Powell, however, did know Gipsey and sighted him on his property. A message to Queanbeyan brought Kinsela and Corporal Morrison (of the mounted police) to search the property where Clarke was recaptured. Three free men, Toms, Field and John Campbell, and one government man were charged with harbouring him.<sup>39</sup> Clarke was returned to Sydney in March 1841 and pleaded guilty to being illegally at large with a firearm in his possession. He was sentenced to transportation to a penal settlement for the term of his natural life. The capture was truly a coup for Kinsela. Faunce applied to the colonial secretary for a reward to offset Kinsela's expenses,<sup>40</sup> but again it was denied because the government received no income from the capture.

## The night of 23 February 1841

Mary, daughter of Kinsela and Jane, was born in Queanbeyan on 5 February 1841. Less than three weeks later, on the evening of 23 February, Kinsela visited William Hunt at his home, the Elmsall Inn, in Monaro Street. They shared an ale but on the word of everyone present, and later Dr Hayley, the men were in no way affected by alcohol. At about 10 o'clock Kinsela and Constable John Scott left in their cart to return to home. It was a moonless and very dark night and Hunt's servant, Henry Lomas, offered Kinsela a lantern, which he declined, saying he preferred to drive in the dark. They crossed the river below the inn and continued east along its edge.

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38 Memorial, Lease and Counterpart, 22 March 1840, No. 357 B. R. Faunce to Kinsela; Letter Faunce to J. E. Manning, Registrar, 2 March 1841.

39 Queanbeyan Bench Book 1838–1896, 18 November 1840; *Sydney Monitor*, 1 December 1840, 2.

40 Letters to Colonial Secretary, Faunce to CS, 19 December 1840.

Scott warned Kinsela that he was too close to the steep bank and he pulled a little further away, putting the horse to a trot. Scott reminded him of the creek that ran into the river that was difficult to negotiate even in daylight, but it was too late. The cart and horse rolled into the creek bed, pinning both men under it with the horse tangled in the rails and unable to get up.

Scott stated the accident had knocked him out and he had not realised Kinsela was dead. He cooed for help for some time. William Hunt heard him and responded but when no one appeared, he retired. Scott then started to call 'Murder!' in the hope this would gain more attention than the cooes and he was right. Mrs McKeahnie, living in Gray's complex, ran across the road to Hunt's Elmsall Inn to get help. Hunt and Lomas were joined by storekeeper Edward Cantor and between them they extricated Scott who had crushed ribs. He 'was much hurt and was carried home'.<sup>41</sup> Kinsela, too, was carried home. Young James remembered the distress of his mother when two ticket-of-leave men brought in his father's body. Dr Hayley pronounced that death was caused by a dislocation of the neck, the result of the accidental upsetting of a cart. Kinsela was buried in the small cemetery on the Molonglo River close to The Oaks house.

His death was widely reported. On 4 March the *Australasian Chronicle* stated:

[Kinsela] was a very active officer, a friend to the poor, and always ready to attend when called on. He had obtained a few enemies for himself by being zealous in the discharge of his duty.

On 9 March the *Sydney Herald* recorded:

The fate of poor Kinsela was a lamentable one, being snatched off in the prime of life, and in the midst of happiness, leaving a young wife and two infant children to deplore his untimely end, and bewail the loss of a good husband and father. His loss will also be felt in this district, where he had proved himself a diligent and efficient officer of the police, and servant of the public. We regret to say, that it has been insinuated by one or two of the parties, that he was intoxicated at the time of the accident, but this is a falsehood, as the depositions taken before the Police Magistrate will prove. The accident occurred entirely from the bad state of the road and darkness of the night. A verdict of accidental death was recorded.

Then in March, almost three weeks after the accident, the *Sydney Gazette* printed a letter to the editor:

I have seen a person who has just come from Limestone; he reports that the Chief Constable and another man were killed by the upsetting of a dray in a creek in that neighbourhood; it is said the parties were drunk, but this is contradicted, as Kinsela was a sober man.

<sup>41</sup> NSW State Archives, Bench record, NRS 3342.

The references to intoxication were misleading. It is a certainty that if alcohol was a problem for Kinsela the newspapers, particularly the *Sydney Gazette*, in their misguided attempts to destroy Faunce if not Kinsela himself, would have latched onto such abuse and used it to support their claims of mismanagement in the district.

Kinsela died intestate and, within weeks, Faunce had written to John Ede Manning, the curator of intestate estates, requesting that Jane Kinsela be allowed to manage her own affairs without Manning's interference. He stated that she had land with two or three cottages that could be rented, a few cows and three horses branded in her son's name. There were a few debts both for and against the estate and he believed that if the government took charge then the cost of management would eat up her only means of existence. This letter was supported by a similar one from Sir John Jamison.<sup>42</sup> As a result Jane was able to continue in her home on the river<sup>43</sup> with her two very young children until her marriage to William Hunt in 1842.

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<sup>42</sup> Faunce to J. E. Manning, Registrar, 2 March 1841.

<sup>43</sup> NSW Census Queanbeyan, 1841.

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# The sentinel over Canberra's military history: Some parishioners of St John's commemorated on the ACT Memorial

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MICHAEL HALL

In 1912 the author Miles Franklin, the self-styled literary bishop of Monaro, who was then living in Chicago, United States of America, visited the office of the architect Walter Burley Griffin. Griffin had been announced as the winner of the international design competition for the federal capital of Australia and he had in his office a cyclorama and maps of the Canberra site that had been sent to competitors. 'It made me homesick', she wrote to her aunt, Annie Franklin, 'to see the spire of the little old church where poor Parson Smith held out so long'.<sup>1</sup>

The 'little old church' was the Anglican Church of St John the Baptist, which has served the people of the Canberra district since it was consecrated in 1845. Together with its churchyard and the nearby schoolhouse, St John's reflects the evolving story of Canberra over the last 175 years, and among the elements of that story is the role that hundreds of people living within the church's parish have played in the various wars and military engagements involving Australia. Some of them are connected to Canberra and St John's from the mid-nineteenth century. Others came to help build the new city after the site was chosen in 1908, or were transferred with the public service, fulfilling in part Canberra's destiny as the national capital.<sup>2</sup> Their military service is commemorated on the ACT Memorial on London Circuit, and on various plaques, honour rolls and graves in the St John's precinct.<sup>3</sup>

On Wednesday 12 March 1845 the church was dedicated as the 'Church of Saint John the Baptist at Canberry'.<sup>4</sup> By coincidence, it was on Wednesday 12 March 1913 that 'Canberra' was named as the federal capital of Australia in a ceremony on Kurrajong Hill, across the Molonglo River from the church. It was Franklin's

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1 *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 3 August 1912, 15. Miles Franklin quotation courtesy of Ross Maxwell, great-grandson of Annie Franklin. The spire was completed in 1877, two years before the birth of Franklin.

2 The Seat of Government Act 1908 passed federal parliament in December 1908.

3 ACT Memorial website: [www.memorial.act.gov.au](http://www.memorial.act.gov.au). To be eligible for the ACT Memorial an individual had to be associated with what is now the ACT prior to service. Some of the people commemorated at St John's arrived in the ACT after their war service and are not on the ACT Memorial.

4 A. H. Body, *Firm Still You Stand: The Anglican Church of St John the Baptist, Its Parish and Parishioners, 1841-1984* (Canberra: St John's Parish Council, 1986), 14.



‘Parson Smith’, the Reverend Pierce Galliard Smith, who is as responsible as anyone for the spelling of Canberra as it was he who first began using it in parish registers and in correspondence from around 1856.<sup>5</sup> It was also Parson Smith who conducted the funeral service for Fred Young at St John’s in October 1900, the first known casualty of a war involving someone from Canberra.

## Fred Young

William Frederick Young, or ‘Fred’, as he was known, was born on 29 June 1877 at Round Hill (Mount Painter) near the contemporary suburbs of Cook and Aranda. The family property, now known as Glenloch, was on the northern edge of the current National Arboretum and adjoined the selection of his grandfather James Young, a former convict who was transported to Australia in 1836.<sup>6</sup> Fred’s father, William Young, married Bridget Grady at St John’s in 1871, part of the long association of the Young family with the church. Fred was baptised there and both his father and grandfather served for years as churchwardens at St John’s.<sup>7</sup>

A dispute between William Young and his neighbour, Frederick Campbell of Yarralumla, over fencing and access to a road resulted in a lawsuit in 1882 and the forced sale of the Young property.<sup>8</sup> When his father died in 1894, the 16-year-old Fred became the family breadwinner. Eventually the family moved to a rented house near St John’s, which, ironically, was on the Campbell-owned Duntroon. Fred volunteered with the New South Wales (NSW) Bushmen’s Contingent in December 1899 and sailed for South Africa the following month. He served as a Trooper in D Squadron of the 1st NSW Mounted Rifles and saw action in March that year fighting the Boers at Poplar Grove, Orange Free State, and four days later at Driefontein. After a week of forced marches on limited food and water, the British forces entered Bloemfontein, the Orange Free State capital, where enteric fever was rife. There Young, who had been slightly wounded in the earlier fighting, became an unfortunate victim of the disease. He was repatriated to Australia and admitted to St Vincent’s Hospital in Sydney in August 1900.

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5 Body, *Firm Still You Stand*, 41.

6 James Young was assigned to James Wright of Lanyon in 1836 and moved to Cuppacumbalong with him in about 1848. He and his wife Margaret had at least 60 grandchildren, one of whom was Ethel ‘Effie’ Clara Young (born 1894, Narranderra, New South Wales), a cousin of Fred Young. She married the war historian Charles Bean in 1921 and they lived at Tuggeranong until 1925.

7 Body, *Firm Still You Stand*, 86.

8 *Queanbeyan Age*, 14 April 1882, 2. There were other fights in the region between the free selectors and the large landowners (e.g. Gribble vs Crace in 1885, see *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 March 1885, 5; 27 April 1885, 4; 5 May 1885, 4; 19 February 1886, 4; *Queanbeyan Age*, 23 February 1886, 2).

Although it seemed for a while that he might recover, Young died from enteric fever at St Vincent's on 4 October 1900. His body was returned by train to Queanbeyan where the cortege, accompanied by the mayor and aldermen, proceeded through the town and then on to St John's. A distressed Bridget Young fainted during the funeral.<sup>9</sup> Parson Smith would soon come to understand her grief.

## Bradshaw and Pierce Smith

Pierce Galliard Smith served as incumbent at St John's from June 1855 until November 1905. He arrived from Britain with his wife Emily and their two eldest children, only a few weeks before assuming his role at Canberra, where four more children would be born, including a second son, William Bradshaw Smith, usually referred to as 'Bradshaw' or 'Brad', who was born on 3 December 1862. Described by a visitor in 1872 as a 'young ruffian of some 9 summers old' who could 'make himself very agreeable but also to the contrary', Bradshaw, like his older brother Pierce, was the cause of much consternation to Parson Smith.<sup>10</sup> The Smith boys were adventurers, sometimes broke, and they frequently asked their staid and frugal father for financial assistance.

At least Parson Smith's eldest son seemed to have prospects. Christened Pierce Eaglesfield Smith, he was born on 14 May 1853 at Featherstone Castle in Northumberland, England, where his father was then the chaplain. Pierce left Canberra at the age of 19 for the Gulf country in north Queensland where, 10 years later, he was in partnership with members of the de Salis family at Savannah Downs on the Flinders River. The de Salis's owned Cuppacumbalong near Tharwa, part of the parish of St John's, but also held extensive pastoral leases in Queensland. In 1878 the families were connected by marriage when Mary Smith, the second daughter of Parson Smith, wed George de Salis at St John's.

After finishing his schooling, Bradshaw joined his brother at Savannah Downs, later writing to his father: 'I have worked harder here than I have ever done or will ever do again for anyone'. He did not stay long, travelling and working throughout the north and trying his hand at prospecting in the East Kimberley goldfields in Western Australia. Like most prospectors Smith did not enjoy much success, but with the misplaced optimism commonly found on goldfields, Bradshaw thought: 'I think I can see the way to make a good thing out here'.<sup>11</sup>

9 *Queanbeyan Age*, 10 October 1900, 2.

10 Body, *Firm Still You Stand*, 52 (observation by Rev. Stanley Howard in 1872).

11 P. Wardle, *Some New Light on the Rev. Pierce Galliard Smith as Revealed by the De Salis Letters* (Canberra: Canberra & District Historical Society research paper, 1960), 27–8.

The de Salis family lost their pastoral interests in Queensland, as well as Cuppacumbalong, in the economic depression and drought of the early 1890s. Pierce Smith found work in Queensland until enlisting with the NSW Imperial Bushmen in March 1900. He left the following month for South Africa to fight the Boers but by September his family had received news that he was to be invalided home. It was only a few months before he found a position as manager of Hodgson Downs, in the Roper River region of the Northern Territory.<sup>12</sup> After seriously injuring his leg in a riding accident, he endured a 300-mile journey for medical treatment, but by then the wound had turned septic and his leg had to be amputated. Eventually he recovered, married in 1907 and bought a property at Oldbury near Sutton Forest, in the southern highlands of NSW, where he died on 14 July 1914.

Bradshaw meanwhile had drifted through various jobs in northern Australia in the 1890s when, in 1899, after again requesting money from his father, he tried his luck in the New Guinea goldfields. Failing to make his fortune there, he returned to Canberra in late 1900, ostensibly to recover from a bout of malaria, but his restless character meant that he did not stay for long. In January 1901 he enlisted with the 2nd Scottish Horse in Victoria and sailed for South Africa soon afterwards. An experienced bushman and confident horseman, Smith was well-suited to fighting on the high veldt. He quickly rose to the rank of sergeant in his regiment, a part of Colonel Benson's No. 3 flying column. As they returned to camp on 30 October 1901, the Boers attacked the guns at the rear of the column at Bakenlaagte, near Bethal in Transvaal.

Smith's squadron of Scottish Horse had just gained the edge of a ridge to defend the guns when the Boers charged. Most of the defenders were killed but the survivors stubbornly held on and enabled the column to escape. Smith was found dead, and was buried where he fell on the battlefield.<sup>13</sup> In 1903 a memorial tablet, designed by his mother Emily, was placed inside St John's Church.<sup>14</sup>

## Eric de Salis

Parson Smith and his wife lost not only a son to war; they also lost a grandson, Eric de Salis. Baptised Charles Eric Fabius Fane de Salis by his grandfather three months after his birth on 4 May 1891 at Cuppacumbalong, Eric was the youngest child of George and Mary de Salis. After the de Salis family sold Cuppacumbalong, they moved a few kilometres down the Murrumbidgee River to Lambrigg, the home of

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12 Pierce Smith was a neighbour of Aeneas Gunn and his wife Jeanne, author of *We of the Never Never*.

13 *Queanbeyan Observer*, 24 January 1902, 2.

14 Body, *Firm Still You Stand*, 71.

George's sister, Nina, and her husband, William Farrer, who were not only Eric's aunt and uncle but also his godparents. They lived there until 1900 when his father bought Soglio, a property near Michelago.

De Salis enlisted in the light horse on 20 August 1915 at Holsworthy near Sydney and joined the 2nd Light Horse Brigade Machine Gun Squadron in Egypt the following year. The machine gun squadrons provided support for the light horse and would move rapidly into position, unload their guns from their packhorses, assemble them and open fire as quickly as possible. Through late 1916 and early 1917 the light horsemen fought in an oasis-by-oasis advance, through the desert of the Sinai, to Palestine—their progress was determined by access to water as much as Turkish resistance. After the charge of the light horse secured Beersheba on 31 October, the next task was to clear the Turks from the hills to the north around Tel el Khuweilfe, a prominent position with more precious water. An attack there by British infantry and the Imperial Camel Corps on 6 November had stalled, and their position had become precarious when de Salis's squadron entered the fray.

'They charged in a very gallant manner', according to the official war history, 'and at once came under a murderous machine-gun and shrapnel fire.' They rushed their guns up the hill to within 40 yards of the Turks, and 'although the teams were shot down almost to a man, their very gallant action caused the Turks to pause and gave the 3rd (Camel) Battalion breathing-time to size up their position'.<sup>15</sup> It was Melbourne Cup Day, and de Salis and a mate were discussing the race as they galloped into action. They had mounted their gun and commenced firing when de Salis was mortally wounded. He died at a casualty clearing station and was buried nearby, although the gravesite is unknown. De Salis was posthumously awarded the Military Medal and is commemorated at the Jerusalem War Cemetery in Israel.

## Ernie and Charlie Mayo

The parish records of St John's show that the second marriage at the church was that of Alfred and Mary Ann Mayo in 1846. Among their many descendants who served in armed conflicts were two of their grandsons, Ernie and Charlie Mayo.<sup>16</sup> Ernest 'Ernie' Frederick Mayo was born on 8 April 1888 in Queanbeyan, youngest son of John and Wilhemina Mayo. His father worked for the Campbells on various

<sup>15</sup> H. S. Gullett, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–18*, vol. 7, *Sinai and Palestine* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1936), 423. Gullett's son bought Lambrigg in 1949 and it is currently owned by the family. The property was a wedding gift from Leopold Fane de Salis of Cuppacumbalong to his daughter Nina when she wed William Farrer in 1882.

<sup>16</sup> The history of war service by descendants of Alfred and Mary Mayo extends six generations to Blaine Diddams MG (born in Canberra, 16 December 1971). Diddams, a member of the Special Air Service Regiment, died from wounds on 2 July 2012 in Afghanistan.

properties at Duntroon, Rob Roy and Tharwa, but after he died in 1903, his widow and youngest children, including Ernie, lived in the disused schoolhouse next to St John's, before moving to Queanbeyan.<sup>17</sup>

Mayo worked as a labourer before the war and enlisted at Liverpool near Sydney on 29 October 1914, embarking for Egypt just before Christmas that year with the 13th Battalion. He landed at Gallipoli late on 25 April and the following morning his company was ordered up to what became known as Quinn's Post, the most precarious of the positions held by the Anzacs. Here the Turks were barely 40 yards away and could easily throw grenades into the Australians trenches. Mayo was twice wounded by shrapnel within the first week and was evacuated for treatment.

While convalescing in Egypt he wrote home about the landing at Gallipoli:

'It was terrible to see our comrades getting shot in the boats', he said, 'but heedless of it all our boys kept on pushing forward till they got a firm footing on shore. It seemed a relief when the shells from our gun boats started screeching overhead in reply to the enemy's land batteries. I have often wished to see naval guns in action, so my wish has been gratified at last.'<sup>18</sup>

He returned to Gallipoli in August when his battalion twice charged at the Turkish trenches on Hill 60 without success. It was part of a final failed attempt by the British forces to break the stalemate on Gallipoli.

After the evacuation from Gallipoli and further training in Egypt, Mayo and the 13th Battalion (by then part of the 4th Division of the Australian Imperial Force) was sent to France. In August 1916 the 4th Division fought at Pozières, attempting to force their way a few hundred metres to the heavily fortified and bunkered Mouquet Farm. In a 10-day tour it took six successive night attacks to get within striking distance of the farm before, exhausted and battered by constant German shelling, they were relieved. By the end of the month Mayo had been promoted to corporal and the 13th Battalion were back for another, ultimately unsuccessful, crack at 'Moo Cow' Farm.

In February 1917, at the end of a cold winter on the Somme, the Germans began retreating to their heavily fortified Hindenburg Line. The 4th Division was ordered to capture the village of Bullecourt but there the Hindenburg Line was protected by several widely spaced double belts of barbed wire, designed to channel attacking troops towards the German machine guns. Usually the attacking infantry would be supported by artillery, but at Bullecourt the Australians would, for the first time, go into battle with tanks.

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17 Hope Hewitt, *Canberra's First Schoolhouse: A Social History of Canberra's First School, Now St John's Schoolhouse Museum, 1845–1986* (Canberra: Schoolhouse Museum Board of Management, 1987), 94.

18 *Queanbeyan Age*, 13 July 1915, 2.

The first attack was aborted when the tanks failed to arrive and a second attempt was ordered for the following day, 11 April 1917. Mayo, who by then had been promoted to sergeant, and the other men of the 13th Battalion lay out on the snow-covered ground before dawn, awaiting the tanks. Several of them arrived, but late, and even then they moved so slowly that the troops outpaced them. Against all odds, the 4th Division broke into the German trenches and may have held their position with artillery support, but none was forthcoming. The Germans counter-attacked and by noon the men of the 13th Battalion were faced with a horrendous choice. Captain Harry Murray, who had earned the Victoria Cross two months earlier, ordered a retirement. 'To the left', Murray said, 'there are two things now—capture or go into that.' 'That' was a 'hail of bullets from 4,000 rifles and 15 machine guns'.

Ernie Mayo did not make it back.<sup>19</sup> His body was never found. The following month the 2nd Division of the AIF launched an attack on Bullecourt, this time with artillery support, and managed to hold its gains. German counter-attacks drew in the 1st Division and then the 5th Division to which Ernie's older brother, John Charles Mayo (known as 'Charlie'), belonged. He had been born on 28 January 1881 in Canberra and, like his parents and grandparents, Charlie was married at St John's Church; on 15 February 1905 he wed Florence Roberts—one of the last weddings celebrated by Parson Smith before his retirement. Although he worked for the Campbells at Duntroon, Mayo moved to Cuppacumbalong when that property was bought by George Circuit and his partners. When Cuppacumbalong was sold in 1912, Circuit purchased Uabba station near Lake Cargellico in western New South Wales and Mayo and his family moved with him.

He enlisted on 2 December 1915 at Cootamundra and embarked for Egypt as a private with the 17th reinforcements to the 2nd Battalion. After the Gallipoli campaign the AIF underwent a reorganisation in Egypt and Mayo was transferred to the 54th Battalion, which he joined in France in August 1916 after it had been decimated at Fromelles. Like his brother, he spent the winter of 1916–17 in the trenches of the Somme near Flers. In May 1917 he found himself on the battlefield at Bullecourt. On the morning of 15 May the Germans attacked the 54th Battalion's position in force; although the Australians repelled them, their casualties were severe. Mayo had nearly finished bandaging the head of a mate wounded during the German assault when a bomb landed between them and exploded, killing them both. They were buried where they fell and, as it was with his brother, Mayo's body was not recovered. He and Ernie are commemorated on the roll of honour on the north wall of St John's.<sup>20</sup>

19 Thomas A. White, *The History of the Thirteenth Battalion, AIF* (Sydney: Tyrells Ltd for 13th Battalion AIF Committee, 1924), 97.

20 The Mayo brothers are also commemorated on the Australian National Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux in France.

## Ern Murray

A headstone in the churchyard at St John's tells us that 'An Anzac Rests Here'. It is the grave of Ernest (Ern) Murray who landed at Gallipoli with the first Australians at dawn on 25 April 1915. He was born on 1 December 1880 at Surry Hills, Sydney, although he grew up on the Monaro at Cowra Creek and Michelago where his father, John, operated goldmines. By then his mother had died and his father had married May Cade, daughter of the Michelago policeman. From an early age Ern worked with his father, learning about mining and the operation of machinery. In 1909 John moved his family to Canberra where he hoped to gain construction contracts, but when they did not eventuate he opened a bakery and general store close to St John's, which became their church. May Murray was treasurer and secretary to the Parish Council before the war and organist for many years.<sup>21</sup>

Shortly after helping his father establish himself, Murray left Canberra to work at a mine near Adaminaby. There he met Ruby Monaghan, who thought that he was different from the other miners because he attended church and did not drink at the dances. They married in Sydney in September 1914. By then Murray had found work as an engineer's mechanic at the Royal Military College, Duntroon, and, following the declaration of war in August 1914, had enlisted in Sydney. He was allocated to the 1st Field Company Engineers and sailed for Egypt a month after his wedding.

The first Australians to land at Gallipoli belonged to the 3rd Infantry Brigade, but they were supported by the 1st Field Company Engineers whose job it was to cut barbed wire, demolish Turkish defences and disable enemy artillery. Murray was aboard the HMS *Queen* with the infantry as they sailed toward Gallipoli on the night of 24 April 1915. Like many soldiers he kept a diary in which he recorded the events of that night:

Left 'Queen' at 1.30am with destroyer towing (the four boats with troops). Landed at 4.30am amid a perfect hell of lead fired when we were 200 yards away and we charged through until we were only 10 yards away from the enemy. Infantry charged magnificently & drove the Turks back over 1 mile by midday. Shrapnel on landing & heavy firing continued all day, but the operations were carried out splendidly.<sup>22</sup>

At Gallipoli, Murray worked on building observation posts, machine gun emplacements and trenches, and his mining skills were employed on tunnelling towards the Turkish positions to advance the Anzac's front line. Tunnels also had a defensive role. In July, Murray supervised a fatigue party of infantry digging from

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21 Body, *Firm Still You Stand*, 113. The site of Murray's bakery is commemorated by a plaque in Commonwealth Park.

22 James Murray, *Canberra's First ANZAC: Ernest Murray 1880–1935* (Yeppoon, Qld: The Author, 2002), 30.



Steele's Post when they detonated a mine and destroyed the enemy's tunnels near German Officers Trench.<sup>23</sup> After the evacuation in December 1915, Murray was transferred to the newly created 14th Field Company Engineers. He fought on the Western Front at Fromelles in July 1916 and, later that year, at Flers on the Somme, he pegged out and supervised construction of jumping-off trenches for an attack on The Maze. In April 1917 Murray defused two mines under a house at Doignies left there by the Germans as a booby trap. For these actions he was mentioned in despatches. His courage and contempt for danger saw him awarded the Military Medal at Polygon Wood in September 1917 and, a month later, a bar to the Military Medal for rescuing six men wounded in a German artillery barrage near Westhoek in Belgium. He was wounded in a mustard gas attack the following January, evacuated to England and eventually returned to Australia in September 1918.

After the war Murray was granted leases to two soldier settler blocks in the Narrabundah area, which he and Ruby called Kurrumbene. His wife had grown up on the land and together they turned their property into a productive farm. Yet like many of the soldier settlers in the Australian Capital Territory, Murray struggled during the Great Depression to pay the rent on his leases and to make ends meet.<sup>24</sup> He was still suffering health effects from the war and began making regular visits to hospital in Sydney to receive treatment for leukaemia. He died from the disease on 28 July 1935.

## Fred Ward

In September 1915 Major General Sir William Bridges, founder and first commandant of the Royal Military College at Duntroon and commander of the 1st Division of the AIF, was buried in a grave on the slopes of Mount Pleasant after a funeral service at St John's. While in Canberra, Bridges and his wife Edith had been parishioners at St John's and had become friends with the rector, Fred Ward. As her husband's body was laid to rest, Lady Bridges turned to Ward and told him: 'It is your turn now'.<sup>25</sup> Ward enlisted a month later.

Frederick Greenfield Ward was born at Acton, England, on 10 January 1876. He came to Australia around the turn of the century as a lay reader in the Anglican diocese of North Queensland at the suggestion of Bishop Christopher Barlow. His older brother, John, was already working there as a curate. After studying at

<sup>23</sup> Murray, *Canberra's First ANZAC*, 32.

<sup>24</sup> Susan Pfanner, 'Soldier Settlement Subdivisions in the Federal Capital Territory after World War I', *Canberra Historical Journal*, no. 37 (March 1996): 25–34.

<sup>25</sup> Simon Ward, grandson of Frederick Ward, personal communication.

a theological college in Brisbane, he followed Bishop Barlow and his brother to the diocese of Goulburn in 1904, was ordained a priest in 1907 and served in parishes in the Riverina until becoming the incumbent at St John's in 1913.<sup>26</sup>

Ward sailed from Sydney in November 1915 as a chaplain, with the rank of captain, attached to the 30th Battalion Headquarters, arriving in Egypt the following month. He was transferred to the 32nd Battalion in March the next year and began ministering at 'Duntroon Plateau', a sandy hill near the Suez Canal. When the 32nd Battalion was sent to France with the 8th Brigade in June 1916, Ward went with them. The brigade was decimated at the Battle of Fromelles in northern France in July 1916, and Ward had to deal with the trauma suffered by the survivors.

During the bitterly cold winter of 1916–17 on the Somme, Ward's capabilities came to the fore. The 8th Brigade occupied trenches near Flers and Ward established a soup kitchen at Waterlot Farm, just behind the front line. He was commended for his 'cheerful disposition', despite the death and carnage around him, as he dispensed hot soup and cocoa to troops returning from the trenches. To distract the soldiers he organised (and participated in) snowball fights and concerts and visited the men in the trenches where he would conduct sermons. He closely followed the 8th Brigade with his soup kitchen, setting it up at Delville Wood in February 1917 and then, after the 8th Brigade captured Bapaume, moved it to the eastern edge of the town, where he operated it while under constant artillery fire from the Germans. When the brigade advanced eastwards to Beugny, Ward soon followed and, although he was forced to evacuate after the village was heavily shelled, within minutes of the bombardment ceasing he was back at his post providing hot soup to the soldiers. Ward 'knows that a good feed does more than a sermon at times', wrote one man, 'and when he speaks they listen'.<sup>27</sup> For his work on the Somme, Ward was mentioned in despatches and awarded the Military Cross.

In May 1917 he was evacuated to England for treatment of varicose veins. It was recommended that he return to Australia to recover, which he did in November 1917, but a further medical examination found him unfit for service and he was discharged on 2 January 1918. He travelled to New Zealand shortly afterwards and married Braidwood-born Margery Towle in Auckland on 28 January 1918. The couple returned to Canberra where he resumed his duties at St John's. Over the next few years, two sons were born in Canberra before the family left Australia for England in 1929.<sup>28</sup> Ward served as the incumbent at Brockham Green (1929–36),

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26 Body, *Firm Still You Stand*, 110.

27 *Queanbeyan Age*, 1 February 1918, 2.

28 Ward's eldest son, Edwin 'Ted' James Greenfield Ward (born in Canberra, 16 October 1919), was appointed chaplain of the Royal Chapel in Windsor in 1955 and, although his appointment there ended in 1967, he remained a chaplain to the Queen until his death on 22 November 2005. Simon Ward, son of the Venerable Ted Ward, personal communication.

Docking in Norfolk (1936–50) and finally as curate-in-charge sequestration at Bagthorpe near Norwich until his retirement in 1956. He died at Norwich Hospital on 7 February 1963.

## Stan Atkinson

The 3rd Battalion played a significant part in local history during World War II as it had become, before the war, a militia unit headquartered in Canberra. Known as the Werriwa Regiment (after the Ngunnawal name for Lake George), hundreds of local men trained with the 3rd Battalion and served in the war either with it or with other military units. Among them was Stan Atkinson.

William John Stanley Atkinson was born at Skipton in rural Victoria on 7 December 1910 and joined the Postmaster-General's Department in 1925 as a telegraph messenger, before transferring to Canberra in 1928 as a clerk in the public service. He married Elizabeth (Betty) Arnott at Queanbeyan on 24 October 1930 and they lived at Braddon. An accomplished singer and theatrical performer with the Canberra Amateur Operatic Society, Atkinson was also a prominent Australian Rules footballer in the 1930s, winning premierships with both the Acton and Ainslie clubs. He enlisted in the militia in Canberra in January 1937 and was appointed lieutenant in the 3rd Battalion on 10 February 1939. By the time he was mobilised in October 1940, he had been promoted temporary captain.

After the Japanese landed near Lae, New Guinea, in March 1942, the 3rd Battalion was sent to reinforce Port Moresby. Atkinson became commanding officer of the 3rd Battalion's B Company, leading them two months later onto the Kokoda track. On 18 October 1942 the 3rd Battalion attacked the Japanese at Templeton's Crossing high in the Owen Stanley Ranges. As Atkinson attempted to bandage one of his men who had been wounded in the chest, a sniper shot at him, the bullet passing between his back and his pack, hitting his dixie. He urged the remainder of his men forward and they began 'yelling and whooping' as they charged 'headlong over vines and logs and through scrub with guns blazing and mortars exploding'. They routed an enemy twice their number and captured a headquarters area where they found food, equipment and documents. After the battle Atkinson was heard singing, 'I knew he had a fine baritone voice from his Canberra days', recalled one of his men, 'and it was as pleasing to hear as it was unexpected.'<sup>29</sup> For his inspiring leadership and personal bravery, Atkinson was awarded the Military Cross.

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<sup>29</sup> Colin Kennedy, *Port Moresby to Gona Beach: 3rd Australian Infantry Battalion 1942* (Turner, ACT: C. Kennedy, 1992), 97.

He led his men throughout the Kokoda campaign and on towards Gona on the north coast of Papua, but became ill with malaria and returned to Australia in January 1943. Transferred to the 2/4th Battalion in July 1943, he served on the north coast of New Guinea from November 1944 in the campaign against the Japanese near Wewak and the Prince Alexander Ranges until July 1945 when he was attached to headquarters in Lae.

Atkinson worked for the Department of External Affairs after the war and served as treasurer at St John's (1951–57). In 1960 he was licensed as a deacon in the church and then was ordained as an Anglican priest at St John's on 21 September 1962. An appointment followed to St Philip's Church, O'Connor, where he ministered until 1964. He also served with the church at Delegate (1964–66), Canterbury (1966–67) and Torrens (1967–76) until he retired in August 1976. Atkinson died on 7 October 1996, aged 85 years, and his ashes were interred in the columbarium in St John's churchyard.

## The sentinel

The church's military connection began with the arrival of the Royal Military College at Duntroon in 1911. The incumbent of St John's, Rev. Arthur Champion, was appointed Honorary Chaplain to the college and he conducted the first Anglican service there shortly after the first cadets were attested in June that year.<sup>30</sup> Sixty per cent of former cadets and staff at the Royal Military College who enlisted in World War I were Anglican and regularly attended services at St John's.<sup>31</sup> There are numerous windows and plaques on the walls of the church commemorating former parishioners, and the original regimental colours for the Royal Military College and the 3rd Battalion hang from the gallery balustrade.

After Charles Campbell, a pilot with the Royal Flying Corps, was shot down over France and killed in 1917, his father, Frederick Campbell, the nemesis of William Young, had a stained-glass window installed in the church. William Bridges is also commemorated by a plaque in the church, as is Eric de Salis. On an outside wall is an honour roll of 60 parishioners who died in the Great War and in the churchyard are the graves of more than 40 returned servicemen from that conflict. Fred Ward donated two lanceolate windows made from fragments of stained glass

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30 Body, *Firm Still You Stand*, 105. Champion, rector at St John's from 1909 to 1913, lost two sons in World War I.

31 Michael Hall, 'The ACT Memorial and the First World War', *Canberra Historical Journal*, no. 78 (March 2017): 6.

he collected from ruined churches on the Western Front, and the names of several hundred parishioners who served in World War II are recorded in a hand-printed remembrance book kept in a shrine inside the church.<sup>32</sup>

In 2006 the ACT Memorial was dedicated in a ceremony at Ainslie Place in Civic. Along with an online database, the memorial commemorates the men and women from the Australian Capital Territory who have served in wars and on humanitarian and peacekeeping missions. Yet tucked away in a small, often unnoticed corner of the city is St John's, standing 'like a sentinel' over so much of Canberra's history.<sup>33</sup> With its tangible reminders of the cost of war it is, nonetheless, a peaceful place in which to contemplate the sacrifice and service of its parishioners in conflicts around the world.

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32 The remembrance book was donated in memory of Sir Cyril Brudenell White, Bridges's chief of staff, who died in 1940 when his aeroplane crashed near Canberra airport. He was Chief of the General Staff at the time of the crash on 13 August 1940. H. S. Gullett also died in the accident.

33 Body, *Firm Still You Stand*, 103; from a poem about St John's by Rev. Arthur Hopcraft (1906).



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# From Kythera to Canberra: Vince and Viola Kalokerinos: A migration study

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JOHN KALOKERINOS<sup>1</sup>

The story of Vince and Viola Kalokerinos is, in many ways, typical of the stories of migration from Greece to Australia in the mid-twentieth century. Vince and Viola migrated to Australia for the opportunities it provided and together raised their three children. The café and milk bar they owned and ran became a community hub, serving and strengthening the community that welcomed them. Following Vince's death, Viola's community contributions grew in numerous ways, many far from typical for a migrant woman of her generation.

## Kythera

Valerios Kalokerinos, known in Australia as Vince, was the fourth of five children—Petros, known as Paul (b. 1933), Maria (b. 1934), Dimitri, known as James or Jim (b. 1936), Valerios (b. 1939) and Kaiti, known as Kathy (b. 1955).<sup>2</sup> Their parents Ioannis Kalokerinos (1896–1987) and Kyriaki Kalokerinos (née Comino) (1912–2003), were born in the small village of Alexandrathes in the Kytherian hinterland. Before marrying Kyriaki, Ioannis served in the Greek army for around six years, mostly on Greece's northern border. His experiences, like those of many soldiers who witnessed the horrors of war, stayed with him throughout his life.

Like most inhabitants of the island of Kythera in the early twentieth century (and for many centuries before), Ioannis and Kyriaki were subsistence farmers. They had two bulls and some sheep and they worked their plots of land, harvesting fruits and vegetables and selling or bartering any surplus oil produced by their olive trees. The children all contributed their labour.

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1 John Kalokerinos is the son of Valerios (Vince) and Viola Kalokerinos and dedicates this essay to them, including on behalf of his brother and sister, Matthew and Kathy.

2 A note on names: many foreign names were anglicised when migrants arrived in Australia because Australians in that era were uncomfortable with unfamiliar or exotic names: H. Gilchrist, 'The Greek Connection in the Nineteenth Century', *Canberra Historical Journal* 14 (1984): 9. As can be seen, the adopted names often bore little or no resemblance to the original.



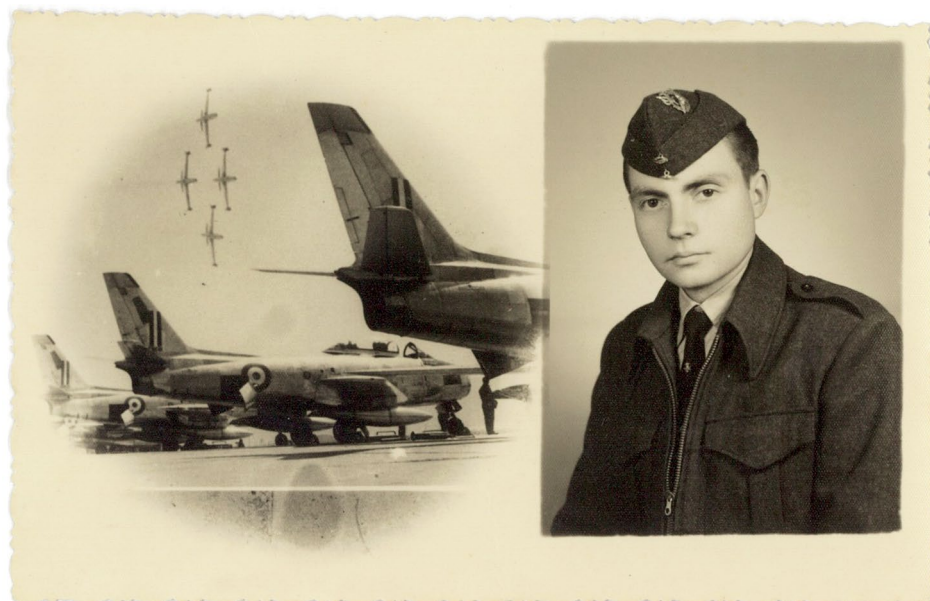


Figure 1: Vince Kalokerinos, Greek airforce service.

Source: Kalokerinos family collection.

Kythera, located to the immediate south of the Peloponnese, forms part of the Ionian island group. It is endowed with a romantic history (it is reputedly the birthplace of Aphrodite, the mythical goddess of beauty and love), and boasts picturesque villages and beautiful beaches. However, like many Greek islands (and unlike mainland Greece), Kythera has limited educational and employment opportunities and is not agriculturally rich. Its inhabitants often fought to make their living through subsistence farming; the rocky and hilly terrain and windswept fields made earning a living from agriculture difficult.

This hardship and lack of opportunity has led to the phenomenon of Kytherian migration. Throughout its history, the island has been a source of net emigration, to the Peloponnese, Crete, Asia Minor, Athens and, later, the United States of America, Australia and elsewhere. Although at times in its history the population has reached around 13,000, such peaks never lasted and its population has remained relatively static at a little over 3,000 since the 1950s.

Kythera (along with Ithaca and the Aegean island of Kastellorizo) was one of the main sources of early Greek migration to Australia from the 1890s.<sup>3</sup> In Australia, most Kytherians settled on the east coast of Australia, particularly in small towns and cities across Queensland, New South Wales (including the Australian Capital

<sup>3</sup> Hugh Gilchrist, *Australians and Greeks*, vol. 1, *The Early Years* (Rushcutters Bay, NSW: Halstead Press, 1992), 10, 78, 190–91; vol. 2, *The Middle Years* (Rushcutters Bay, NSW: Halstead Press, 1997), 247.

Territory and region) and Victoria, where the first generation of migrants saw opportunities in small businesses and catering, predominantly in what became the classic Greek cafés and milk bars.<sup>4</sup> Risson has estimated that the Kytherian-descent population in Australia exceeds 60,000.<sup>5</sup>

The Australian sons and daughters of the hard-working Kytherian migrants have included many notable figures, across a range of fields of human endeavour. In medicine, Dr Archie Kalokerinos (1927–2012) was a pioneer in the use of vitamin C to treat Indigenous infant mortality, and the author of several books on topics ranging from Aboriginal health to opal mining. His three brothers also became doctors. In law, the Hon. Theodore Simos (1934–2009), was made a Queens Counsel in 1974 and appointed a Justice of the NSW Supreme Court in 1995. Simos was leading counsel for the British Government in the celebrated ‘Spycatcher’ case (*Attorney-General, United Kingdom v. Heinemann Publishers Australia Pty Ltd* [1988] HCA 25). He was opposed in that case by a future prime minister—Malcolm Turnbull. In politics, the Hon. George Souris AM (b. 1949) was a member of the Legislative Assembly of NSW (1988–2015), a minister (1991–95 and 2011–14) and leader of the National Party of NSW (1999–2003); and the Hon. James (Jim) Samios AM MBE (1933–2011) was a member of the Legislative Council of NSW (1984–2003), Parliamentary Secretary (1988–95) and deputy leader of the Liberal Party in the Legislative Council (1995–2003). In academia, Manuel James Aroney AM OBE (1932–2011) was a professor of chemistry at the University of Sydney. He was also a board member of a range of significant public bodies, including the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) and the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs. In philanthropy, Sir Nicholas Laurantus MBE (1890–1980) was the first Greek-born Australian to receive a knighthood. In the arts, George Miller (b. 1945) became a world-renowned film producer, director and writer. His films include the Mad Max series, *Lorenzo’s Oil*, *The Witches of Eastwick*, *Babe* and *Happy Feet*.

## Migration to country NSW

When Valerios was growing up, Alexandrathes had about 20 children and a school. The school has long since closed and there is only a handful of children in the village today. After finishing school, Valerios undertook compulsory military service in the Greek air force and resolved soon after to leave Kythera to pursue the opportunities available in Australia. Following in the footsteps of his brothers

4 The Kytherian café phenomenon has been the subject of numerous studies, for example Effy Alexakis and Leonard Janiszewski, *Greek Cafes and Milk Bars in Australia* (Canberra, ACT: Halstead Press, 2016); Toni Risson, *Aphrodite and the Mixed Grill: Greek Cafes in Twentieth Century Australia* (Ipswich, Qld: T. Risson, 2007). On the Kytherian presence in Canberra, see Anastasios Myrodis Tamis and Demetrios A. Tsolakis, *The History of Greeks of Canberra and Districts* (Melbourne: National Centre for Hellenic Studies and Research, 1999).

5 Risson, *Aphrodite and the Mixed Grill*, 190.

Petros (Paul Calokerinos),<sup>6</sup> who came to Australia in 1948, and Dimitri (James or Jim Calokerinos), who came to Australia in 1952, Valerios arrived on the *Patris* on 22 July 1962.<sup>7</sup> The vessel, whose name is Greek for ‘homeland’ or ‘mother country’, was a large passenger ship that ferried tens of thousands of migrants from Greece to Australia, making a total of 91 voyages between 1959 and 1975.<sup>8</sup> Most of the migrants during this period were from rural and regional parts of Greece, often from islands.

Eventually all five siblings emigrated to Australia. This was part of a phenomenon denounced in some quarters as a cultural haemorrhage of the Greek nation, but there was arguably little alternative for people seeking greater opportunities than those available in their homeland.<sup>9</sup> Valerios travelled with his brother Paul, who was returning to Australia from Kythera with his bride Helen (née Petrohilos, who was also Kytherian). Paul was in business in Manilla, in the New England region of NSW, where he operated the York Café and the Canberra Café with his cousin John Travassaros and uncle Bill Summers (‘Summers’ is an anglicisation of the name Kalokerinos, which is Greek for ‘summer’ or ‘fair weather’). This was a familiar pattern for Kytherian migrants to Australia for much of the twentieth century. As Hugh Gilchrist OAM, the foremost historian of Australian-Greek relations noted, economic, familial and linguistic factors favoured partnerships between shop owners, and particularly family concerns involving brothers, uncles, nephews and cousins.<sup>10</sup> Paul settled in Manilla and became a respected and much loved presence in the town, remaining in the café trade until his retirement in 2017 at the age of 84.<sup>11</sup>

Upon their arrival in Sydney they were met by relatives of Helen, Charlie (Kosmas) Tzannes and his wife Politimi, who drove them to Tamworth. There they stopped at the Acropolis Café, which was co-owned by Valerios’s brother Jim, who was so pleased to see Valerios that he would not let him leave. He immediately set him to work in the café. After some time Valerios left to work for the Kontakos family at the Golden Bell Café, also in Tamworth. But in 1966 Paul and his young daughter Kathy were injured in a car accident and the family pleaded with Valerios to come

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6 Some branches of the family adopted the ‘C’ spelling of the surname.

7 Passenger List, National Archives of Australia, K269, ‘22 July 1962 Patris’; digital copy accessed 21 April 2018. He disembarked in Sydney on 29 July 1962.

8 Stergos Kastelloriou, ‘Remembering the “Patris”: The Iconic Ship That Brought Thousands of Greeks to Australia’, SBS Online, updated 19 June 2017, accessed 22 April 2018, [www.sbs.com.au/yourlanguage/greek/en/article/2017/06/14/remembering-patris-iconic-ship-brought-thousands-greeks-australia](http://www.sbs.com.au/yourlanguage/greek/en/article/2017/06/14/remembering-patris-iconic-ship-brought-thousands-greeks-australia).

9 Gilchrist *Australians and Greeks*, 1:214.

10 Gilchrist, *Australians and Greeks*, 1:191.

11 Paul Calokerinos’s story has been told in Sandy Thorn, *Old Timers: Magnificent Stories from Mighty Australians* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2011). See also Alexakis and Janiszewski, *Greek Cafes and Milk Bars in Australia*, 225.

to Manila and help Paul at the serendipitously named Canberra Café.<sup>12</sup> He duly did so. He worked hard and further learned the café trade, like countless other Kytherians and other Greeks had before him.

Valerios became an Australian citizen in August 1967. Reflecting the difficulty in the Australia of that era of using unfamiliar or exotic names, the name recorded on his citizenship certificate was Vince Summers. Henceforth known in Australia as Vince, he retained the use of Kalokerinos throughout his life. During these early years, when Vince knew little English, much of his work was back of house—cooking for the café, peeling potatoes for chips and related tasks. It was his first time cooking but he learnt on the job, also improving his English by speaking with locals and taking correspondence courses. He lived with Paul's family in rooms behind the café, which were heated with a wood stove. In these years, he took great joy in seeing his nieces Kathy (b. 1963) and Mary (b. 1965) grow up.<sup>13</sup> He set up a table tennis table in the restaurant and they played in between serving customers. He had relatives and friends (predominantly Kytherians) who owned and worked in cafés in Tamworth and Armidale, and other nearby towns, and he enjoyed catching up with them, exchanging news and stories and playing backgammon. In the little spare time he had, he enjoyed fishing in Lake Keepit, hunting rabbits and ducks for stews, and attending local football matches.

## Canberra and the Curtin Milk Bar

Vince's brother Jim left New England in 1967 and moved to Canberra. He told Vince about the rapid growth the capital was undergoing, and urged him to move there, where he could acquire his own shop. Vince was initially cautious but, after a few years, began to relent. One Thursday in November 1971, he drove down to Canberra and Jim took him to the Curtin Milk Bar, a popular sandwich shop owned by a Greek migrant couple, George and Kaiti Toulkidis, who in turn had purchased the shop from its original owners, the Nikias brothers Bill, Leo and Alex. Vince was initially unimpressed with its location as it was not on the main street, a prize position for cafés in 1960s country Australia. However, it was on a corner location in a thriving shopping centre in a well-located suburb, and he soon realised its potential.<sup>14</sup> In fact, his conversion was astronomically fast; he purchased the shop on the weekend and by Monday he had started work—so much for due diligence, exchange and settlement! He was to own and manage it for the rest of his life.

<sup>12</sup> So named because it was opened in 1927, the year that the provisional Parliament House in Canberra was officially opened.

<sup>13</sup> Paul and Helen later also had a son, John (b. 1975).

<sup>14</sup> 'Old-Fashioned Values Retained', *Canberra Times*, 29 September 1991, 9.

Vince moved in with his brother Jim and sister Maria in Curtin. The shop was a seven-days-a-week enterprise, and he threw himself into it with gusto. Over the course of his ownership, he regularly improved it and saw that it was stocked with the latest chocolates and confectionery. The shop is fondly remembered by former customers for its milkshakes and bags of mixed lollies. In those days, it also sold fruit drinks, cigarettes, tobacco and firecrackers and had popular arcade games. With time, however, all these disappeared. The on-site production of fruit drinks was uneconomical with the wide availability of mass-produced drinks and juices, while arcade games were superseded by home entertainment systems. Firecrackers were banned, and sales of cigarettes and tobacco became uneconomical due to the number of break-ins generated by stocking them, the decline in smoking and their availability more cheaply through supermarkets.

When the nearby Woden Plaza opened in 1972, trade at the Curtin shops declined and Vince recognised the need to diversify his offerings. Noting that Curtin had no pizza shop, he installed a pizza oven a few years later. It proved a wise decision, as he soon acquired a reputation for the high quality of his pizzas, with customers travelling across Canberra for them. They were distinguished by the features that typified the food offerings of Greek migrants: good quality and substantial quantity, with efficient and friendly service, at a reasonable price.

## Viola and marriage

Viola Kalokerinos (née Torakis) was born in 1953 in the village of Karvounathes on Kythera. She was the first-born child of Mathios (1920–2001) and Chrissoula (Chryso) Torakis (née Kalligeros) (1924–2015) and was followed by a brother, Petros (1955–87), and a sister, Zografoula (Foula) Coroneos (b. 1960). Her parents were subsistence farmers and her father was also a fisherman. Karvounathes, a village in the centre of Kythera, is scarcely larger than Alexandrathes and is only a little over 20 minutes from it by foot. It was a trip Mathios Torakis made many times, selling fish door-to-door on his donkey. Indeed, one of his customers was the Kalokerinos family of Alexandrathes. In 1975 Vince, following the pattern of many migrants of that generation, returned to Greece to find himself a bride. He did so, all in little over a month. Having met Viola after the church service for Kythera's major religious feast day, 15 August, on 17 August they were engaged and on 27 September they married. Although this seems a short engagement by today's standards, for Vince and Viola it was all the time necessary, given that his family knew hers, and also knew Viola. Vince indeed remembered Viola as a little girl from before he left for Australia. There was a difference between them in age of around 13 years—again, not unusual in Greece at that time. In any case, theirs was a successful partnership of 28 years, cut short only by Vince's death in 2003.





Figure 2: Viola Kalokerinos (née Torakis).

Source: Kalokerinos family collection.



Figure 3: Vince and Viola Kalokerinos, 1977.

Source: Kalokerinos family collection.

Soon after the wedding the couple flew to Australia, arriving in Sydney on 12 December 1975 and driving to Canberra the next day. The date is notable. Viola recalled that a federal election was taking place, memorable for Viola because, after seven years of dictatorship, the distinguished statesman Konstantinos Karamanlis had only recently returned from self-imposed exile in Paris to restore democracy to Greece. The other major impression she had on arriving in Canberra was how small and rural it was compared with Athens, where she had lived and worked for the past few years.<sup>15</sup> Canberra's population in 1975 was around 200,000, while Athens then had a population of around 2,750,000. The early years were very challenging for her, but she adjusted quickly to her new home and discovered the wonderful things that her community and her new country offered.

Despite early reservations, she learned to drive, after much prodding by Vince, who explained to Viola that she would not be able to participate fully in community life without driving. Learning English was another early challenge: 'I did not speak one word of the language. I was just 22 and it was very hard'.<sup>16</sup> In a 2015 oral history interview, she recalled how people wished her a merry Christmas and happy new

15 Viola Kalokerinos, interview by Ann Smith, 26 February 2015, Curtin Living Memories Project, Canberra & District Historical Society, accessed 28 June 2018, [www.canberrahistory.org.au/CurtinLivingMemories/John%20and%20Viola%20Kalokerinos.html](http://www.canberrahistory.org.au/CurtinLivingMemories/John%20and%20Viola%20Kalokerinos.html).

16 'A Treasure Trove of Memories', *Chronicle* (Canberra), 6 August 2013, 14.



year in December 1975, but with her limited English, she had no idea what they were saying.<sup>17</sup> She learned a little through weekly language classes, but much more from customers and neighbours. The Curtin community was warm towards her and always made her feel welcome.<sup>18</sup> She became an Australian citizen in August 1979. Being away from her family was something that she accepted early, staying in touch largely through correspondence. In those days, Kythera only had one telephone per village, so telephone contact was impractical. She would not return to Greece until 2009, a year after selling the shop.

For many years Viola made a range of products for sale in the shop, including *kourambietes* (Greek almond shortbread biscuits) and other sweets, such as carrot cake, florentine slice, and lemon and coconut slice. Although she enjoyed much Australian cuisine, she found it very different. Vegemite was immediately a no-go. When she was told about the meat pie, she thought that it would be a local variant of the spinach and cheese pies she knew and loved. Upon breaking one open, she declined to try it and after more than 40 years in Australia, she had still not tasted one. In January 1977, Vince and Viola's first son John was born. A little over five years later the twins Matthew and Kathy arrived. With no family in Canberra and Vince dedicated to the shop, raising the children, particularly twins, was a further challenge for Viola. Typical of the 'café kids' of Greek-Australian cafés and milk bars, all three children worked in the shop, serving customers, washing dishes, stacking shelves and fridges and cleaning floors from when they were old enough to see over the counter, reach the milk-shaker and use the cash register. This exemplified what Gilchrist has referred to as the family basis of self-employment in Greek businesses.<sup>19</sup>

Consistent with traditional migrant family roles, Vince undertook all of the administration and management of the business and Viola played a supporting role. As the years passed, he was increasingly looked up to by fellow shopkeepers in Curtin and his advice and support were sought on local matters. He was well-liked for his easygoing nature and his sometimes cheeky sense of humour. Due largely to the personalities of Vince and Viola, the milk bar increasingly became a community hub, a welcoming place for all generations. Vince and Viola were delighted when it was recognised at the 2001 ACT Business Excellence Awards for its customer service to seniors, and in 2003 Viola was proud when it won the Inclusion in Small Business Award at the ACT Inclusion Awards on the International Day of People with a Disability.<sup>20</sup> The milk bar came to be regarded as an institution and a local icon, loved by the community.<sup>21</sup>

17 Viola Kalokerinos, Curtin Living Memories Project, 2015.

18 Leonard Janiszewski, interview for *In Their Own Image: Greek Australians National Project*, 7 July 2002.

19 Gilchrist, *Australians and Greeks*, 1:215.

20 'And the Winners Are...', *Canberra Times*, 10 December 2003, 21.

21 Carolyn Brody, Peter Forster and Margitta Acker eds, *Curtin Turns 50: The Story of a Canberra Suburb 1964–2014* (Fyshwick, ACT: The authors, 2016), 134; David Chalker and Barbie Robinson, eds, *100 Views of Canberra* (Griffith, ACT: PhotoAccess, 2013).



Figure 4: Vince in the milk bar, July 2002.

Source: © Effy Alexakis, photowrite.



Figure 5: Vince and Viola, outside the milk bar, July 2002.

Source: © Effy Alexakis, photowrite.

Vince and Viola saw many changes in the community, as the children of the first residents grew up and started their own families. They employed many locals in the shop over the years, and were the first employers of many people who described the experience as a constructive preparation for going onto greater things. In an oral history interview on the occasion of Curtin's 50th anniversary, Kirsten Mann, a former staff member, described Vince as encouraging and supportive, the most popular man in Curtin and a patient and gentle boss. He took an interest in his staff and was pleased when he heard that they had excelled in their studies or their subsequent careers.<sup>22</sup> Vince and Viola regarded many of the staff as family and maintained friendships with them long after they ceased working in the milk bar.

Being a seven-day-a-week business, opening from early in the morning until 8 pm every night (and 9 pm on Fridays) there was little time for holidays or for getting sick. The only days off were the public holidays at Easter, Christmas and New Year, and these only in the later years: 'Our life wasn't the best because we worked seven days a week. It wasn't very easy ... We didn't have any holidays the first few years – not at all. Not even Christmas Day.'<sup>23</sup> There was only one family holiday of more than three days, being a week-long trip to Brisbane and the Gold Coast in December 1989 for the marriage of a cousin. Even this was only possible because Vince's sister and brother-in-law, Kathy and Chris Plumidis, worked with Vince in the shop for a few years after moving from Tamworth.<sup>24</sup> Vince's relentless long hours and dedication to the shop meant that he had little spare time. He rarely had the opportunity to attend his children's school functions or sporting activities, but he always wanted to hear about them after the event and took pleasure in regaling customers with news of their progress. He and Viola sought to raise the children cognisant of their Greek roots—speaking Greek at home, eating Greek food, attending Greek school and worshipping in the Greek Orthodox faith. Greek values, particularly the value of education, were important to them both and they were pleased that John, Matthew and Kathy all finished school and graduated from university.

Vince cared about the Curtin community but also about the Greek community. He was a foundation life member of the Hellenic Club of Canberra and a member of the Greek Orthodox Community and Church of Canberra and Districts. He held the view that all Greeks in Canberra should be members of both institutions.

22 Kirsten graduated from The Australian National University and subsequently entered the Australian Public Service. She contributed to the climate change review conducted in 2008 by Professor Ross Garnaut (himself a former customer of the milk bar): Curtin Turns 50 Project, 'Kirsten Mann—Networking at the Curtin Milk Bar', SoundCloud, accessed 28 June 2018, [soundcloud.com/curtin-turns-50/kirsten-mann-networking-at-the-curtin-milk-bar](https://soundcloud.com/curtin-turns-50/kirsten-mann-networking-at-the-curtin-milk-bar).

23 'A Treasure Trove of Memories', *Chronicle* (Canberra), 14.

24 Vince's younger sister Kathy and her husband Chris Plumidis met in Australia and were married in Tamworth in 1979. They moved to Canberra from Tamworth in 1987 and initially worked at the milk bar, before acquiring their own café, the Liberty Snack Bar, at the Belconnen Markets. They had two sons, James (b. 1980) and John (b. 1983).

He contributed to the establishment of the Kytherian Brotherhood of Canberra and Districts in the 1980s and was its president from 1989 to 1992, until work commitments prevented him from serving any longer. Viola was similarly limited in the time available to her for community activities but she also regularly attended church and was a volunteer at the Greek-Australian Aged Home in Kingston where Vince's older sister Maria was a resident from 1996 until she passed away in 2015. In 1995 Viola joined the Kytherian Brotherhood committee.<sup>25</sup> For her, it was a modest first experience of service on a community board. At that time, no one anticipated that much more experience was yet to come.

## Vince's death and the final years in the milk bar

In 2002, in an interview with the eminent cultural historians Leonard Janiszewski and Effy Alexakis, Vince spoke of the predicament of his generation:

Our generation got caught. We had to work for ourselves, then send money to our parents and also support our children—so we really had to work for three generations.<sup>26</sup>

In the same interview he spoke of his plans to retire soon and take a trip to Greece, which he had not visited since 1975. Unfortunately, this was not to be. On 23 August 2003, he suffered an aortic aneurysm, essentially where the aorta bulges and weakens, causing a leak of blood throughout the body. Once an aortic aneurysm starts to tear, an operation is rarely successful and so it was in Vince's case. He died on the same morning, at the age of 64. His health had been good, but the many years of exacting and relentless work had taken their toll. There was great sorrow from family, friends, his customers and the community he had served since 1971. The Greek Orthodox church in Kingston overflowed at his funeral.<sup>27</sup> He was eulogised in the ACT Legislative Assembly as 'the king of Curtin' in a condolence motion by the Leader of the Opposition, Brendan Smyth MLA (who had been raised in and around Curtin), who commented that 'Vince's story in many ways is the story of migrants to Australia and the story of many Canberrans'. Smyth recalled that several years earlier, when the Curtin shops had undergone refurbishments, the community had arranged for a plaque in the Curtin square, outside the milk bar, to honour Vince's long service to the community.<sup>28</sup> He spoke of Vince's generosity to charitable causes and to customers and friends who had faced bereavements or other difficulties, sending trays of sandwiches and cakes. Throughout the speech, Smyth highlighted Vince's strong service ethos and his love of family—not only

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25 Tamis and Tsolakakis, *The History of Greeks of Canberra and Districts*, 125.

26 Alexakis and Janiszewski, *Greek Cafes and Milk Bars in Australia*, 227.

27 ACT Legislative Assembly, *Hansard*, 2003 Week 9, 3,322–23.

28 '30 Years of Service Honoured', *Chronicle* (Canberra), 3 April 2001, 5.



his own family, but also ‘his extended family, which probably would be half of the Woden Valley’.<sup>29</sup> In an interview in 2002, Vince spoke of the long hours and hard work involved in the shop, but said that its best aspect was that it was very social; ‘we don’t say “Yes please”, we say “Hi Joe or George, how’ve you been?”’.<sup>30</sup>



Figure 6: Vince and Viola, 2003.

Source: Kalokerinos family collection.



Figure 7: The Kalokerinos twins’ 21st birthday; from left John, Kathy, Viola, Matthew, Vince.

Source: Kalokerinos family collection.



Figure 8: Community plaque to honour Vince’s community contribution.

Source: Kalokerinos family collection.

There had been no warning of any health problems. Accordingly, Vince’s death was a shock for which Viola and the family were quite unprepared. Viola was left with a dilemma: what to do about the shop? Given that Vince had managed the business, she did not feel confident about taking it over, and felt that the only option would be to sell the shop and retire, even though she was only 50. Friends and customers suggested that she sell up and take on a lighter workload. After a few months, however, she took counsel from some old family friends who suggested that she was

29 ACT Legislative Assembly, *Hansard*, 2003 Week 9, 3,219–20. Helen Cross MLA also delivered a tribute, referring to Vince as a friend to thousands of people and to his generosity, kindness, tact and big heart: ACT Legislative Assembly, *Hansard*, 2003 Week 9, 3,322–23.

30 Janiszewski, interview for *In Their Own Image*.

capable of continuing, and she resolved to do so. The staff rallied, and all three of the children took on additional responsibilities, particularly Matthew, who reduced his university study load in order to work in the shop full time. Fortuitously, Vince's brother Jim, who had lived in Kythera for many years caring for their aged parents, had only recently returned after their mother passed away earlier in 2003. He made an enormous contribution to the running of the shop in the years after Vince's death.

Managing the shop was an exhausting commitment, but Viola felt that her raising had prepared her for it. On the occasion of a symposium to mark the 60th anniversary of the Canberra & District Historical Society, she reflected:

I am tough ... I grew up on a small island and I was always helping my parents because they were farmers so I was involved from when I was a little girl. It was a great thing for me because that made me stronger and able to cope with a lot of things in life.<sup>31</sup>

Although managing the shop in these years was unrelenting and exhausting for Viola, it was also therapeutic; it kept her engaged with the broader community and helped keep Vince's memory alive. Viola managed the shop for a further five years and only sold it in June 2008, by which time all three children had completed their tertiary studies and entered the workforce in their chosen areas of the law, government and teaching.<sup>32</sup> Among the encomia congratulating Viola upon her retirement was a hand-delivered letter from the ACT Chief Minister Jon Stanhope AO, MLA. Although he lived on the other side of Canberra, Stanhope had been a periodic visitor to the milk bar, finding it a good place to read or work through his papers over a coffee. In his letter, he wrote:

I have been informed that you have chosen to sell the Curtin Milk Bar after dedicating the majority of your life to its customers. I am aware that you, and your late husband Vince, were greatly admired and that your happy dispositions will be one of the qualities that will be remembered and cherished by your loyal customers ... I am sure that your absence will be greatly felt within the Curtin community.<sup>33</sup>

## Viola and the community

After retiring from the shop Viola became increasingly involved in the community. She felt a strong need to give back to many of the groups and individuals who undertook worthy community work and which had supported her family's business

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31 'A Treasure Trove of Memories', *Chronicle* (Canberra), 14.

32 'Milk Bar Matriarch Hands Over Curtin Keys', *Canberra Times*, 6 July 2008, 3. The milk bar changed hands a few more times over the next decade. In late 2017 it closed, with the building in which it was housed slated for demolition and redevelopment.

33 Jon Stanhope AO to Viola Kalokerinos, June 2008, private collection.

and she ‘walked the talk’ in her commitment. She supported the local schools and churches in their donation drives, joined the Woden Rotary Club and volunteered with Palliative Care ACT and with the Greek-Australian Home for the Aged in Kingston. Joining L’Arche Genesaret, a charity that provides services to people with a disability through supported living, she cooked meals at her home once a month for the members based in and near Curtin. For many members of the L’Arche community, the milk bar had been a sanctuary, and a coffee and a cake there was a regular treat for many members of the community and an important part of their social life. Vince and Viola had ensured the shop was open every day of the week including Sundays, to ensure its availability before and after church, often for limited return.

In 2010 Viola joined a steering committee and rallied community support for the establishment of a community branch of the Bendigo Bank in Curtin.<sup>34</sup> It was a cause she felt strongly about; Vince had, some years earlier, lobbied to stave off the closure of the Curtin branches of the Commonwealth and Westpac banks, and felt it was particularly important to have a local banking facility for shopkeepers and for the aged in the community. Following a two-year campaign with much intensive community activity by Viola, Bendigo Bank opened its Curtin branch in June 2012.<sup>35</sup>

Viola also supported the Canberra Mothercraft Society, which managed the Queen Elizabeth II Family Centre (QEII) and provided postnatal and early childhood health and social services to families in the Australian Capital Territory and region since 1926.<sup>36</sup> The centre moved to Curtin in 1997 and Viola joined its board in 2009, serving in a range of executive positions and as its president from 2015 to 2017. The chief executive officer of QEII, Mary Kirk AM RN, reflected on Viola’s contribution, in particular her honesty and leadership by example, and her strength in getting the right people together to forge strategic alliances and common understandings, often literally around her kitchen table.<sup>37</sup>

In 2012 Viola was appointed by the ACT Government as deputy chair of its Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing, serving until 2017.<sup>38</sup> This reflected her concern for improving the quality of life of older people.<sup>39</sup> Over time, Viola developed greater support for women in leadership positions and as role models. In 2018, she joined the Executive Committee of the ACT Division of the National Council of Women.

34 ‘Push for Curtin Community Bank’, *Chronicle* (Canberra), 20 April 2010, 1.

35 ‘Curtin Banking on Itself for Service’, *Canberra Times*, 8 June 2012.

36 ‘90 Years of the Canberra Mothercraft Society Caring for Babies and Their Parents’, *Canberra Times*, 11 November 2016.

37 Correspondence with author, 2 August 2018.

38 ‘Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing’, *Canberra Times*, 13 March 2012.

39 ‘Older Migrants Should “Get More Involved”’, *Canberra Times*, 29 June 2011.



Viola's community service was acknowledged in a number of forums; an extraordinary feat for a woman who had migrated to Australia from Greece with only college-level education, limited English and relatively limited means. In 2013, to commemorate Canberra's 100th birthday, the federal Member for Canberra, Gai Brodtmann MP, named Viola among 100 women honoured by UN Women for their contributions to Canberra.<sup>40</sup> In 2015 she was nominated by the ACT in the Local Hero category of the National Australia Day Australian of the Year Awards. Following her nomination, she explained her motivations:

I don't like wasting my time ... I believe we must all get involved with each other. I don't feel I'm a hero but I try to help as much as I can. When I lost my husband ... the community helped me go on with my life.<sup>41</sup>

Viola's service was honoured in a variety of other ways, including being named 'Lady of the Lake' at the 2008 Woden Valley Community Festival and being crowned 'Queen of Curtin'.<sup>42</sup> She also had her image reproduced as part of a public mural depicting people who have contributed to the well-being of the Woden community.<sup>43</sup> It was her drive to improve her community and the people around her that inspired her activity. In a 2014 interview, she stated:

If you can make a little difference in their life I think it's very, very important and I am very happy to do that. If someone now needs help, I am happier to spend the time for them than spend it for myself and relax. If I don't do something like that then at the end of the day I don't feel happy.<sup>44</sup>

Clearly, Vince and Viola's joy was in serving the community, not merely food service. Their journey is in many ways both a typical and yet unique version of the migration that has made modern Australia. They both felt privileged to live in Australia—and their community in Canberra in particular—and felt an obligation to give back to it.

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40 Parliament of Australia House of Representatives, *Hansard*, 21 March 2013, 3,032.

41 'Viola Volunteers for 16 Community Groups: Australian of the Year Awards 2015', SBS News online, accessed 27 May 2018, [www.sbs.com.au/news/viola-volunteers-for-16-community-groups-australian-of-the-year-awards-2015](http://www.sbs.com.au/news/viola-volunteers-for-16-community-groups-australian-of-the-year-awards-2015).

42 These ideas were the brainchild of legendary showbusiness publicist and long-time Curtin resident Coralie Wood OAM. The 'coronation' occurred at the December 2016 launch of a history of Curtin: 'Queen of Curtin Crowned as Suburb Celebrates a Book Marking Its 50th Birthday', *Canberra Times*, 8 December 2016; Helen Musa, 'Lively Tribute to Suburb in Community Book', review of *Curtin Turns 50*, ed. by Carolyn Brody, Peter Forster and Margitta Acker, *City News*, 16 December 2016, accessed 27 May 2018, [citynews.com.au/2016/review-lively-tribute-suburb-community-book/](http://citynews.com.au/2016/review-lively-tribute-suburb-community-book/).

43 The mural was painted on the wall of Corinna Chambers, adjacent to Melrose Drive, and was commissioned by the Woden Valley Community Council: 'Melrose Drive Mural, Woden', Woden Valley Community Council Inc., 24 April 2018, [wvcc.org.au/melrose-drive-mural-woden/](http://wvcc.org.au/melrose-drive-mural-woden/).

44 'ACT Aged Home Volunteer up for Local Hero', *Aged Care insite*, 5 November 2014, accessed 27 May 2018, [www.agedcareinsite.com.au/2014/11/act-aged-home-volunteer-up-for-local-hero/](http://www.agedcareinsite.com.au/2014/11/act-aged-home-volunteer-up-for-local-hero/).

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# Leslie John Dwyer (1892–1962): ‘Man about town’

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NICK SWAIN

Many people are aware of the unique record of Canberra’s early development recorded by the government photographer Jack Mildenhall.<sup>1</sup> But few know of the National Library of Australia (NLA) collection of nearly 2,500 images of Canberra life from the 1920s to the 1960s by commercial photographer Leslie John Dwyer.<sup>2</sup> Many more of his photographs are held in other collections, including by the Canberra & District Historical Society (CDHS) and the ACT Heritage Library, by his family and by the many families, clubs and organisations (including parliament and diplomatic missions) for which he took photographs. During the 1930s Les was one of several commercial photographers in Canberra. These included the talented Richard Strangman, active in Canberra for about 30 years from 1927,<sup>3</sup> Alex Collingridge, Fred Bareham and Maxwell Ahearne. None matched Dwyer for his work ethic and cultivation of useful connections.

Dwyer came to Canberra as a carpenter and quickly immersed himself in civic life. The Depression forced him to make a living from his hobby, photography, and he did not look back. By the time he died in 1962 he was one of the best-known men about town, as he appeared at numerous functions, took countless photographs and contributed to the community in many other ways. His contribution to the community is recognised by the naming of a street in his honour in the suburb of Forde.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Mildenhall Photographic collection, National Archives of Australia (NAA), A3560.

2 See Les and Daryl Dwyer collection, 1942–65, Trove, [trove.nla.gov.au/version/183197170](https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/183197170).

3 See ‘R C Strangman’, photo-web, [www.photo-web.com.au/strangman/default.htm](http://www.photo-web.com.au/strangman/default.htm).

4 Much of the information in this article derives from the Dwyer family, especially Ian Heffernan (Les’s grandson) and his mother, the late Roma Heffernan (Les’s daughter). Much of Roma’s information was contributed by Marie Sexton, who dedicated many years to documenting the NLA’s Dwyer collection of photographs of the city. Both she and Roma worked at the NLA.



Figure 1: Les Dwyer in his studio at the shop, Manuka Shops.  
Source: National Library of Australia, nla.pic-vn5981561.

Dwyer was born to Frederick James Dwyer and Emily Olive Dwyer (née Long) in 1892 at Granville, near Parramatta, Sydney, the fourth of seven siblings. At the time of his birth, Granville was an emerging industrial area, benefiting from being at the end of the Sydney–Parramatta railway line. But like most of the country, it was also suffering the effects of a serious economic downturn. In 1917 Les married Eileen Louie Campbell Hughes at what is now the inner-city suburb of Ashfield.<sup>5</sup> At this time World War I was still underway, military conscription had been voted against for the second time, and a general strike had just ended in New South Wales. By the year of his marriage, this once highly desirable residential area was on the decline and many of its higher income residents had moved to the North Shore of Sydney Harbour. The newly married Dwyers were also on the move, the most likely reason being to seek work. Their first child Nola Olive was born at Barraba (near Narrabri) in 1918, Roma Mary at Melbourne in 1920 and Daryl Leslie at Narrabri in 1922.

The family arrived in Canberra in 1924, Dwyer as a member of the building force of the Department of Works and Railways.<sup>6</sup> There was much work to be done to prepare for the move of public servants to the new city and the opening of the provisional parliament house. Family sources suggest the Dwyers moved straight into the Westlake workers' settlement, which was located at the place now known as Stirling Park, at Yarralumla. By late 1926 Westlake, also known as the Gap, consisted of 62 rudimentary weatherboard cottages.<sup>7</sup> Dwyer's brother, Harry, a bus driver, took up residence there on 9 August 1926, so it is likely he moved in with his brother's family.<sup>8</sup> Westlake was an area of the fledgling national capital set aside from the 1920s to 1950s for labourers involved in building the new city and their families. In its earliest days accommodation was basic, consisting of tents and humpies, but during 1921 an upgrade came in the form of buildings from the former Molonglo Internment Camp at the place later known as Fyshwick. In 1924 the standard of housing further improved after H. M. Rolland, director of works and chief architect, designed portable wooden cottages to accommodate married men and their families. These cottages remained in use until after World War II.<sup>9</sup>

Roma Heffernan recalled that, from his earliest days in Canberra, her father was always active in his business and very involved in community activities. Prime Minister R. G. Menzies, who knew Dwyer well, called him 'The Mayor of Manuka' and said that Les was busier than he was.<sup>10</sup> He was actively involved in many organisations,

5 NSW Births, Deaths and Marriages.

6 Information about Dwyer joining the building force in 1924 comes from the ACT place names search facility on ACTmap (Leslie Dwyer Street, Forde). Biographical information was supplied by Les Dwyer's daughter, Mrs Rona Heffernan.

7 Ann Gugler, *The Builders of Canberra 1909–1929. Part 1, Temporary Camps and Settlements* (Canberra: C.P.N. Publications, 1994), 211.

8 A. Gugler, personal communication, 20 June 2016.

9 Gugler, *Builders of Canberra*, 16–17.

10 M. Sexton, internal NLA email, 15 November 2011.

often as a foundation committee member. These included the Canberra Chamber of Commerce, the Manuka Traders' Association, the Royal Canberra Golf Club, the Federal Golf Club, the Canberra Bowling Club, the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows and the Parents and Citizens committee of Telopea Park School in 1927. The family first worshipped at St John the Baptist in Reid, and later, when they moved to Griffith, at St Paul's, Manuka.

Dwyer became an invaluable member of the Westlake Social Service Association, established in 1925.<sup>11</sup> Such associations were important in the early days of Canberra, especially during its construction phase, as they aimed to improve social amenities in the city. They were individually initiated in April 1925 by John Butters, the Federal Capital Commission (FCC) chair, and united under the Social Services Association in February 1926. The FCC supplied a permanent secretary, J. H. Honeysett, the commission's social service officer.<sup>12</sup> The associations were one of the few ways ordinary residents of Canberra could represent their needs to government.

Under the 'energetic guidance' of Dwyer, who filled the role of honorary secretary, the Westlake Social Service Association was very active and promoted improvements to local services and amenities. Its 1926/7 annual report described Westlake as 'one of the more lively' in promoting the social welfare of the locality's residents. A children's playground and tennis courts, both of which became a focus for community activities, were testament to Dwyer's energy, as well as the 'zeal' of the Chairman Mr S. Champ.<sup>13</sup> The tennis courts became the venue for competitions between the various settlements and suburbs.

The formation of a Canberra lodge of the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows (MUIOOF), a fraternal organisation to promote personal and social development, was reported in May 1926, with Dwyer, the Noble Grand Master, the contact for inquiries.<sup>14</sup> The order arranged a Christmas party at Eastlake (now Causeway) Hall that year, and Dwyer 'was the old man himself, and handed cheer to the children from off the tree'.<sup>15</sup> While he continued his involvement with this charitable organisation for some years, he also joined similar ones, and often assumed senior and organisational roles. Thus when in 1943 a Friendly Societies Council was formed in Canberra, he became president at the first annual meeting.<sup>16</sup>

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11 Gugler, *Builders of Canberra*, 220.

12 Jim Gibbney, *Canberra 1913–1953* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1988), 99–101.

13 Canberra Social Service Association, 'Second Annual Report 1926–27', NAA A6266, G1927/2731.

14 *Canberra Community News*, 11 May 1926, 7.

15 *Canberra Times*, 22 December 1926, 9.

16 *Canberra Times*, 6 February 1943, 4.

The Dwyers left Westlake in March 1928 when they moved to Ainslie. At this time the Federal Capital Commission was seeking to replace the temporary camps with permanent housing.<sup>17</sup> Yet accommodation remained segregated and Ainslie was a workers' suburb with a minimum building cost set at £700.<sup>18</sup> From 1928 to 1932 the family had a house at 11 Corroboree Park, and remained there throughout the Depression. The electoral roll prepared for the 1928 Liquor referendum showed Dwyer's occupation as a carpenter. The difficult times appear to have been recognised by a 20 per cent reduction in rent.<sup>19</sup> The house was typical of the suburb—a FCC type 19 with two bedrooms and a veranda. This was a tight squeeze for a family of five; it eased somewhat when the veranda was enclosed in 1930, a common occurrence in Canberra.

The Depression put a temporary end to construction in Canberra, and government employment was severely curtailed.<sup>20</sup> A workers' compensation claim lodged by Dwyer for a back injury sustained on 30 May 1932 described him as a 'casual relief worker' by the parks and garden section of the newly formed Department of the Interior. This was probably 'sustenance' work that was allocated sparingly to help the unemployed get by. His claim was successful and he was recommended for light duties. Five months later the family had left its house at Ainslie.<sup>21</sup> The combination of casual work and back injury could have made it difficult for the family to remain there, and where they lived after leaving Ainslie is unclear. There seems little doubt though that Dwyer saw this as the moment to try to make his hobby of photography profitable. He had been taking pictures of the new capital from the time he arrived—the earliest image in the NLA collection is from 1924, and there are a number from the following year—and it is possible that he used photography as a means of supplementing his wages.

The family may have moved to Manuka (the name of the shopping centre in the suburb of Griffith) where Dwyer had established a photographic stall in 1929, the first business to provide a complete photographic service to the ACT. Small shops, which had no residential component, were available on the east side of what is now known as The Lawns after 1927. By 1935 the electoral roll places the Dwyers at an unspecified Manuka location, so it is possible, even likely, that they rented one of the nearby cottages attached to shops fronting the main streets of the shopping centre. Indeed, it was largely because of Dwyer's advocacy that The Lawns at Manuka came to be such a vital part of the aesthetics and ambience of the shopping arcade.

17 Nicholas Brown, *A History of Canberra* (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 76.

18 Peter Freeman, ed., *The Early Canberra House: Living in Canberra 1911–1933: An Anthology* (Fyshwick, ACT: Federal Capital Federal Press of Australia, 1997), 16.

19 FCT Property and Tenancy Register online at Archives ACT.

20 Gibbney, *Canberra 1913–1953*, 163.

21 L. J. Dwyer, Claim under Commonwealth Employees Compensation Act 1930, NAA A1, 1932/4805.



By 1933 Dwyer's reputation was boosted when the local architect Malcolm Moir used his images to illustrate an article in the prestigious journal the *Architectural Record*.<sup>22</sup> He also possessed a personality suitable to his trade, his daughter Roma describing him as outgoing, friendly and energetic. Always out and about meeting people at Parliament House, embassies, functions and sporting events, these characteristics helped him maintain the high profile essential for his business.<sup>23</sup> 'Short, stout, loaded down with camera equipment and always wearing a trilby', Dwyer quickly became known as a 'man about town'.<sup>24</sup> As well as taking the photographs, in his small Manuka shop he processed, printed and tinted (in the days before affordable colour photography) both his own work and, in the age of the Box Brownie and other simple and cheap cameras, that of his customers. In his shop he had a velvet-curtained space for formal photographs, often of politicians, other VIPs and wedding groups. With his car, ACT 5, always at the ready, he was on constant alert to photograph events, disasters, people and activities of a place that was still a small community.

Dwyer's energy and ubiquity were essential for one in his profession, and there was stiff competition, even at times resentment, between Canberra's commercial photographers. Some felt that Jack Mildenhall had an unfair advantage as he was employed directly by the government and came to monopolise departmental photography and at least one competitor complained.<sup>25</sup> An inquiry resulted in Mildenhall's monopoly ceasing in 1935.<sup>26</sup>

Business grew strongly and, by 1940–41, Dwyer was sufficiently financially secure to build a house and garage at Stuart Street, Griffith. The architects were the highly regarded husband and wife team of Malcolm Moir and Heather Sutherland, and the builder H. V. Hunt.<sup>27</sup> The same year he extended his Manuka studio and installed more modern equipment including improved lighting and new backgrounds. He also advertised that he had employed the services of one of Sydney's leading colourists and was offering members of the armed forces a special concession on the cost of portraits of men in uniform.<sup>28</sup> From around the late 1940s the *Canberra Times* began using more of his photographs. When snow fell in July 1949 the newspaper marketed prints of his photographs for two shillings and six pence. These included two light-hearted subjects: 'Snow Man arrested for loitering' and 'All snow dog sits on Tucker Box', both published on 20 July 1949.

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22 *Canberra Times*, 23 August 1933, 2.

23 Marie Sexton, personal communication, 8 June 2018.

24 Nick Swain and Meryl Hunter, *Manuka History and People 1924–2014* (Canberra: The authors, 2015), 222–24.

25 *Herald* (Melbourne), 28 November 1933, 8.

26 NAA. Mildenhall photographic collection. Fact Sheet 222.

27 *Record of Building Applications and Permits Issued*. Archives ACT; Canberra House website, accessed 6 June 2019, [www.canberrahouse.com.au/](http://www.canberrahouse.com.au/). The house was demolished in 2018.

28 *Canberra Times*, 27 September 1940, 5.

Dwyer took an active role with trade and professional organisations, and had been a member and then a councillor representing Manuka interests of the Canberra Chamber of Commerce since 1934.<sup>29</sup> He became inaugural president of the Manuka Traders Association when it was formed in 1949. Under his leadership the association immediately became active, pressing for improved postal and telephone facilities, bituminising laneways, enforcing traffic regulations and seeking to include Manuka on the route of special shopping buses between Civic and Kingston.<sup>30</sup> The now much appreciated Lawns at Manuka Shops were developed largely because of his advocacy and became a vital part of the aesthetics and ambience of the shopping arcade.<sup>31</sup>

Dwyer's energy extended to sporting organisations, including tennis and bowls, but particularly golf. The Acton temporary public golf course had been established in 1922 and the first 11 holes of a permanent course were opened in 1925 in the grounds of the now submerged old Acton Racecourse. The adjoining (Royal) Canberra Golf Club was formed in July 1926. The Acton public golf course languished during the Depression but was resurrected in 1933 when dairy farmer Alexander Stuart successfully requested Percy Gougard, secretary of the works and services branch of the Department of the Interior, to approve the necessary rehabilitation works.<sup>32</sup> Dwyer later lodged an application to the Department of the Interior for permission to form a golf club.<sup>33</sup> The Acton Golf Club was established in May 1933 partly because for many enthusiasts the fee of one shilling charged by the Canberra Golf Club was high.<sup>34</sup> Dwyer became foundation club secretary in June 1933, and during his period of office committee meetings were held in his Manuka shop. Initially the new club struggled to compete with its rival, and also suffered from hardships imposed by the economic conditions and the slow development of Canberra. The club later adopted its current name—the Federal Golf Club—and moved in 1947 to its present location at Red Hill. Its first nine-hole course was opened in 1949, and a second nine holes was completed two years later.

A member of both clubs, Dwyer was a handy golfer himself, competing regularly in the annual Easter Cup at the Royal Canberra.<sup>35</sup> In 1949 Dwyer offered a trophy, the Federal Canberra Bowl, for competition, between the Federal and Royal Canberra clubs. The first match was played in 1950 and they continued annually until 1962, the year Dwyer died. The competition continued irregularly until

29 *Canberra Times*, 28 November 1934, 2.

30 *Canberra Times*, 11 February 1949, 3.

31 Sexton, personal communication, 8 June 2018.

32 Don Selth, *More than a Game: Canberra's Sporting Heritage, 1854–1954*, (Port Adelaide: Ginninderra Press, 2010), 48.

33 Sexton, personal communication, 8 June 2018.

34 D. S. Clues, *The Federal Golf Club Story 1933–1983* (Canberra: Federal Golf Club, 1983), 4.

35 *Canberra Times*, 28 March 1959, 15. The Royal Canberra Golf Club confirmed in July 2018 that Les Dwyer scored a hole in one on the second in 1929.



1971, and then went into abeyance until the battered remains of the original were discovered and restored in 1991 and the annual competition resumed. Dwyer was also an enthusiastic lawn bowler. In 1948 he and a number of like-minded men met in the Manuka Hockey pavilion (now demolished and the site of Manuka Terrace in Flinders Way, Manuka) to discuss the formation of a new bowling club. He moved that a bowling club be formed in the Griffith area and thus the Canberra South Bowling Club was born—many of its members were Manuka traders.<sup>36</sup> Dwyer was an active member for many years and on 28 March 1960 he became the singles champion.

Dwyer and Eileen celebrated their Silver Wedding anniversary on 31 January 1942, hosting a party at Barton House, a privately operated hostel that had opened mid-1941. Their elder daughter Nola, who often helped out in the shop, married John Armstrong of Malvern, Victoria, in 1946. Son Daryl served in the AIF during World War II, and married Elaine Purcell at St John's Church, Canberra, on 25 February 1950. Roma married a Victorian, Roy Peter Heffernan, in February 1946.

After Dwyer's sudden death in 1962, his son Daryl took over and expanded the business until he too died in 1967, after which his widow closed the enterprise. In 1972 the NLA purchased from her 1,897 negatives (of which 446 are glass plates) and 528 black-and-white photographs. The NLA catalogue has entries for 115 of these images, of which 102 are digitised.<sup>37</sup> The earliest photograph in the collection is dated 2 March 1924 and is of the Hotel Canberra under construction.<sup>38</sup> The others demonstrate Dwyer's broad interests and versatility, and include Canberra buildings, state and royal visits, diplomatic staff and functions, parliamentary occasions, local events, weddings and other social functions.<sup>39</sup> There are large numbers of high-quality original portrait photographs in the collection, predominately members of federal parliament, senior public servants or members of the diplomatic community. As was usual for the time, almost all were men. Even so, the portraits have considerable political significance. A significant number of members of parliament used Dwyer's portraits for their biographical entries in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Handbook, a standard historical work, which has ensured that they have become standard images. He also took a considerable number of photographs of events and places, and thus recorded some of the city's memorable moments, including the opening of Federal Parliament (1927), the Canberra floods (1926, 1945, 1956), royal visits (1934, 1958), the 1940 Canberra air disaster and the funeral of John Curtin (1945).

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36 Swain and Hunter, *Manuka: History and People*, 224.

37 See Les and Daryl Dwyer collection, 1942–65, NLA, nla.gov.au/nla.obj-142687712.

38 NLA PIC/14442, album 1251, item 194.

39 NLA catalogue entry for the Dwyer collection of photographs of Canberra.

Les Dwyer was a self-made man who through necessity made a living from his hobby of photography. He was enterprising, hard-working and made sure he was well-known and available. His life reflected Canberra's varying economic circumstances and uneven growth. The family experienced Canberra from the unstable employment of a labourer in a worker's settlement, progressing to more permanent public housing in Ainslie, the dislocation and hardship of the Depression, to a steady business and permanent accommodation at Griffith. Dwyer was both a participant and a recorder of Canberra's growth; his extraordinary contribution to sport and social services matched the endeavour he showed as an amateur turned professional photographer. Yet his importance as a documentary photographer is not as well appreciated as his significant body of work deserves. Extensive work is well under way at the National Library of Australia to fully document and assess his photographs and make them more readily accessible.



# REVIEW ARTICLES



# Paul Burke:

## A wake for Tracker, larrikin Aboriginal leader: A personal response to Alexis Wright's *Tracker: Stories of Tracker Tilmouth*

(Sydney, NSW: Giramondo, 2017), 640 pp., PB \$39.95, ISBN 9781925336337

It is because of their 'larrikin streak' that Australians refuse to stand on ceremony ... To be a larrikin is to be sceptical and irreverent, to knock authority and to mock pomposity, engaging in a practice known as 'taking the mickey'—or more often, 'taking the piss'. To call someone a larrikin is also to excuse their bad behaviour, offering an affectionate slant on their disrespect for social niceties and raucous drunkenness with mates. Often, too, it is a reference to someone's ockerness: the broadness of their Australian accent and facility with crude slang.<sup>1</sup>

Who was it who said that eulogy is a place where truth goes to die? Hagiography is always a possibility in a collection like this. The long quotations from the transcript of interviews with Tracker himself are supplemented by many short pieces taken from his friends and colleagues soon after his premature death from cancer in 2015, aged 62. It is evident that the editor, Alexis Wright, struggled with the material in a number of ways: its bulk, its repetitiveness, whether such an approach would project the experience of meeting this flamboyant character, whether it should try to plumb the mercurial depths below Tracker's clowning. Some of the initial signs do not instil confidence in its avoidance of hagiography: the fact that Wright seems to have accepted Tracker's terms about who should contribute to the volume and the constant reiteration from Wright that Tracker was 'a visionary Aboriginal leader'. But ever so gradually, I began to realise that Wright had included material from which a more balanced view could emerge, if sometimes requiring a reading against the grain of Wright's forgiving introduction. It is as if Wright, despairing of the difficulties of the traditional biography in the mode of Bildungsroman, has nevertheless secreted in plain view the material from which a balanced view could be constructed: a sort of invitation to the reader to construct their own biography. I am not sure whether this material is readily apparent to those who did not know Tracker. I encountered Tracker briefly when I worked as a lawyer at the Central Land Council (CLC) and seven years later when I was one of the legal advisors to the National Indigenous Working Group (NIWG) on the Wik amendments to the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth). That relatively modest interaction does not give me any

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1 Melissa Bellanta, *Larrikins: A History* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2012).

claim to authoritative knowledge. But it does give me a head start in identifying the material that Wright, to her credit, leaves in the book allowing the image to become clearer of the larrikin struggling with the visionary, and so often winning.

Perhaps unintentionally, the more forthright contributions also open up, rather intimately, the nature of the tensions between Indigenous leaders. This topic is generally hidden by circumspection and the etiquette (mostly honoured in the breach by Tracker) of avoiding direct public criticism of other Indigenous leaders. This is again where Wright held her nerve and resisted saving Tracker from his own hyperbolic (sometimes ludicrously so) criticism of named individuals both black and white. I also take the opportunity to tell a few of my own Tracker stories. There probably should be a website dedicated to collecting this still scattered material.

### Story 1: Tracker the occasional grog runner

My first field trip with Tracker was as a young CLC lawyer accompanying him to Yuendumu, where I was to get instructions on establishing a Warlpiri pastoral corporation that could be affiliated with a regional umbrella corporation, one of Tracker's early unfulfilled grand plans (p. 491). In his new Prado, one of the perks of his position as deputy director, we called into Hoppy's Shop on the way out of Alice Springs and Tracker purchased a slab of beer to take to Bill McKell, the garrulous white manager of the existing cattle company. I could not believe it. The law at the time forbade taking liquor into a 'dry' area like Yuendumu and the penalties included the automatic forfeiture of the vehicle. The police compound at Yuendumu was full of such vehicles, many of them also brand new. Was Tracker really willing to risk his new car, fines, his reputation, my reputation as a lawyer and for what? Tracker brushed aside my protests saying that Bill McKell had a liquor permit, a fact that in my legal opinion would not have been a defence for us. Sure enough, as we approached the Yuendumu turnoff, well within the dry area, Tracker stopped the vehicle on a small rise, obviously on the lookout for police (his earlier belief in the legality of his delivery suddenly evaporating). As there were no police in sight, we proceeded directly to Bill McKell's house where Tracker nonchalantly delivered the slab (possibly part of a stratagem to keep McKell content so that he would not interfere with the meeting the following day). The young conscientious lawyer had just failed his first test for larrikinism.

## Black larrikinism

Various stories in the book attest to Tracker's unlikely friendships, especially with the hard men and eccentrics of the political right (Bill Heffernan, Bob Katter) and the hard men (or was it just big, gruff men?) among the senior bureaucrats (Bob Beadman). Among these, it is Bob Katter who I think has the greatest insight into the origins of Tracker's personal style by emphasising his period as a stockman, if in Katter's sometimes impenetrable, scatological verbal style (pp. 330–32). In Tracker's willingness to have a blazing row with Katter, replete with obscenities from the stock camp, and his lack of intimidation by politicians at any level, Katter saw in Tracker the head stockman telling the owner of the station what to do. He also saw Tracker's way of telling stories as being equally a thing of the First Australians and of the bush cattle-ringer. I think this direction of interpretation could be taken even further by suggesting that Tracker's fidelity to larrikinism, even when it was counterproductive to high-level political strategy, may stem from his continuing commitment to the era in his life when he was a stockman, with all its egalitarian ethos, its seeking after humorous diversion and its admiration for the well-told yarn.

I was witness to one such incident (of larrikinism winning over political strategy) during the negotiations about the Wik amendments to the Native Title Act in 1997. A very diverse group of Aboriginal leaders from the various land councils, and their legal advisors, had painstakingly hammered out a position paper. One of its first outings was at a hearing of a parliamentary committee into the amendments at which several of the Aboriginal leaders, including Tracker, were chosen to speak to the position paper. To the amazement of all the legal advisors, Tracker in his usual nonchalant way stated a position at variance with the position paper. We all looked at Tracker's CLC lawyer, Chris Athanasiou, who was suitably embarrassed, and one of us whispered through gritted teeth 'this is not what was agreed'. Chris did chase after Tracker following the hearing, but if we were expecting Chris to be his minder and pull Tracker into line that was way beyond Chris's considerable abilities. With complete lack of a sense of irony, Tracker was the first to criticise Geoff Clark, then a commissioner of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), who tried a bit of his own freelancing. Without consulting any other members of the NIWG, Clark dramatically escalated the political rhetoric by calling for a farm-gate boycott (presumably to punish the pastoral leaseholders for not welcoming the coexisting Indigenous rights recognised by the High Court in Wik, although the political strategy was unclear).

The book recounts examples of sage advice to Tracker from his friends and fellow Aboriginal leaders about toning down his joking and clowning so that his ideas would be taken more seriously (most significantly from his long-term friend and ally David Ross [p. 532] and his close collaborator on economic matters Greg Crough



[pp. 457–58]). As far as I can tell Tracker rarely took that advice. The higher the risk and the more inappropriate the circumstance, the greater the payoff for larrikinism. Patrick Sullivan was the first anthropologist to write about a larrikin style of politics among the Aboriginal leaders of the emerging Aboriginal-controlled organisations of the 1970s, in his case community councils, outstation resource centres and the Kimberley Land Council.<sup>2</sup> Rowse's review summarises it well:

Sullivan's concluding discussion of Aboriginal political style—'larrikin', willing neither to prepare nor to follow through, locally disputatious and given to schism and enmity, and impatient of the formalities with which Europeans disguise the petty, personality-based features of their own political behaviour.<sup>3</sup>

What is interesting is that Sullivan's description of an Aboriginal political style matches in some respects, particularly the amplification and glorification of personal animosities, what in Wright's book is typically described as Tracker's distinctive personality. Yet, Sullivan tends to see its origins within the broader powerlessness of the Aboriginal position and an initial socialisation of Aboriginal leaders into 'the turbulent subculture' of bitter and personalised competition around what Austin-Broos later described as 'allocative power',<sup>4</sup> decision-making over limited resources granted by government to Aboriginal councils and service organisations. Tracker managed to bypass this sort of 'training', but he still adopted the larrikin style especially when confronted with more rational (and in Sullivan's terms, more modern) Indigenous leaders (see below).

## Relations within the Indigenous political leadership

What comes through clearly in the contributions of David Ross, Owen Cole and Tracker himself is how important these three were to each other. Critically, they liked and respected one another, they all came from humble beginnings, all decided to support each other in seeking further education and in each other's engagement in the new Aboriginal organisations of the self-determination era. They all had a hard-nosed approach to political engagement. This gives a uniquely Aboriginal and historical twist to the phrase 'rising with his circle'. What also comes through is how the steadiness of the other two seems to have continually saved Tracker from the self-destructive tendencies of his own eccentricities and excesses. I wonder what

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2 Patrick Sullivan, *All Free Man Now: Culture, Community and Politics in the Kimberley Region, North-Western Australia*, Report Series (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 1996).

3 Tim Rowse, Book Review of *All Free Man Now: Culture, Community and Politics in the Kimberley Region, North-Western Australia*. *Australian Aboriginal Studies* no. 2 (1997): 62–63.

4 Diane Austin-Broos, 'Places, Practices, and Things: The Articulation of Arrernte Kinship with Welfare and Work', *American Ethnologist* 30, no. 1 (2003): 125, doi.org/10.1525/ae.2003.30.1.118.

would have become of *Tracker* without the loyalty and forbearance of 'Rossie' and 'Colesy'. From my own experience, I would endorse Wright's acknowledgement in her introduction that *Tracker* could be a divisive figure. I witnessed this among the senior staff of the CLC where David Ross, in comparison, was universally respected. Those who got exasperated with *Tracker* would readily follow Rossie into battle again and again.

Outside of this intimate circle, a large supportive infrastructure enabled *Tracker* to shine and to sometimes quarantine his self-destructive impulses. This infrastructure was the legislative framework of the Northern Territory land councils. The fact that the CLC is a Commonwealth statutory authority with dedicated funding outside the normal budgetary processes underpins a high degree of organisational stability. Moreover, the land council monopoly on processing land claims and dealing with mining and exploration on Aboriginal land (combined with its lack of official responsibility for health, education, local government services and liquor restrictions) meant that it was locked into largely positive processes that, with proper management, would be well received by the traditional owners. Because of its focused official functions, the land council would not be held responsible for the decline in social conditions throughout the 1980s and up to the present. Its legislative framework also insulated its Aboriginal employees to some extent from petty local demands and personality politics. The non-responsiveness of land council employees could always be justified in the relatively acceptable terms that responding to particular local demands was unfortunately outside the functions of the land council and they were prohibited by an outside force (the Land Rights Act) from complying. In a similar way and at a lower level, Aboriginal field officers could say to their relations that land council guidelines prohibited them from transporting liquor in CLC vehicles. In addition there were safeguards within its legislation mandating decision-making by the traditional owners and ratification at a general land council meeting made up of representatives from the whole area; in other words, institutionalising a process for legitimating CLC decisions among its constituency. In saying this I do not wish to minimise the difficulties of recruiting and managing a large staff, the constant political battles of defending the rights granted by the Land Rights Act, and dealing with a very complicated local Aboriginal politics, including contentious mining royalty distributions. What I am suggesting, however, is that the Northern Territory land councils provided a uniquely privileged base from which capable Indigenous leaders could thrive, gain experience and project themselves into the territory and national political arenas—a sort of aristocracy of Indigenous leaders. While *Tracker* obviously brought considerable knowledge, contacts and ideas to the land council, he also benefited from having such a relatively stable base with a large professional staff. This is also true of David Ross and the previous director, Patrick Dodson, and of Marcia Langton, who worked in various roles at the CLC in the 1980s

(including as one of the professional staff anthropologists). But what I want to assert is that Tracker's high-wire larrikin act had two safety nets: his close circle of loyal Aboriginal colleagues and CLC.

What is striking about the material in this book is Tracker's hypercriticism of other Indigenous leaders: particularly Noel Pearson (pp. 265–66, 404, 454), Marcia Langton (p. 266), Patrick Dodson (p. 404), Warren Mundine (pp. 266, 365), Alison Anderson (pp. 446–47), Darryl Pearce (p. 463) and Wayne Bergman (p. 463). Comparing the most criticised (Pearson, Langton, Dodson) to his inner circle, one is immediately aware of a possible hierarchy of educational achievement. There is some evidence in the book of Tracker's sensitivity to his own considerable but more modest educational achievements; for example, where he compares Pearson, Langton and the Dodsons unfavourably with the Aboriginal leader Freddie Pascoe running an Aboriginal pastoral company in north-west Queensland:

They [the likes of Freddie Pascoe] are not going to have the degrees of the Pearsons of the world, or Langtons, or Dodsons, but they are going to be doing it ... To me they [Pearson, Langton, Dodson] are neo-colonialists—they have come to colonise the blacks again. As far as I'm concerned they do not have any answers because they have not been around long enough to study the problems. (p. 352)

More directly he disingenuously claimed not to understand what Pearson and Langton were on about because 'It is all academic' (p. 266); disingenuous because here Tracker underplayed his own educational achievements. In a similar way, only this time more playfully, he (strategically?) cast himself and Murrandoo Yanner as 'field niggers ... out in the fields slaving' as opposed to 'the corn-feds, [who] live in the house with the master' (per Murrandoo Yanner, p. 250). As with many such instances recounted in this book, accurate interpretation is elusive. In its exaggeration of the differences between himself and the (marginally) more educated other Aboriginal leaders, it can be considered as the humorous hyperbole of the larrikin and so as light-hearted and inconsequential. But there is also a serious dagger to the heart wrapped inside it—the accusation of betrayal.

At one level, I understand the ideological split between the likes of Tracker and Pearson but, at a deeper level, the complete lack of recognition by Tracker of the many similarities in their positions and approaches is perplexing. It is easy to imagine, for example, the predictable response of those committed to a rights agenda in the political sphere to Pearson's proposed welfare reforms that involved undercutting some hard-won rights. The sense of the betrayal of the rights agenda would have been exacerbated by a sense of political betrayal of the long-standing Aboriginal alliance with the Australian Labor Party when Pearson deliberately framed his reform agenda in terms that would be attractive to the conservative side of politics, especially in the long conservative reign of John Howard's prime ministership (1996–2007). Politics in the Northern Territory was equally bitter during the long period of Country–

Liberal Party governments (1974–2001), which never failed to play the race card at election time and were committed at every turn to undermining the land councils. I get that.

What is difficult to follow is Tracker's animus when he shared broadly similar analysis and goals to Pearson's agenda (something also noticed by Bob Beadman, p. 570). The contemporary economic dependency, including welfare dependency, is a critical part of both Pearson's and Tracker's analysis. Pearson advocates a return to the 'real economy' and a moving away from the poison of the welfare economy.<sup>5</sup> In this book we hear of Tracker's commitment to the building up of a 'segregated' Indigenous economy enabling Indigenous people to negotiate with the encapsulating society from a position of strength, and his contempt for the idea of a welfare-based economy as an oxymoron (pp. 343–55). Tracker also acknowledges that after years of welfare dependency many Aboriginal people in remote communities do not have the immediate capacity to take up jobs in their own economic enterprises; they are not job ready (p. 350). Moreover, economic development has always been a part of the Cape York agenda. Where Tracker and Pearson seem to part company is in the need to address immediate crises of law and order, and substance abuse.<sup>6</sup> This is where the Cape York agenda has always seemed more plausible to me. Surely all the grand plans for economic development, even if they reach their fulfilment, will have limited immediate effect on the social conditions of the remote communities? There is a mismatch between an expected long-term effect of 'segregated' economic development and the immediacy of the decline in social conditions. For reasons outlined below, I also think that both Tracker and Pearson overemphasise the significance of economic motivation for Aboriginal people in remote communities.

Tracker could not find it within himself to admire Pearson's pragmatism and strategic nimbleness in being able to deal with conservative governments, even though Tracker himself kept open lines of communication with selected conservative politicians who he identified as fellow eccentrics. For Tracker it is all about Pearson's empire building and the incendiary accusation of running assimilationist programs on behalf of conservative governments (p. 404). Of course, this is not to say that Pearson does not have a darker side to his public persona and there is no denying Pearson's tightly controlled and well-funded group of organisations.<sup>7</sup> However, focusing on this tends to ignore other similarities between them, such as their antagonism to the

5 See, for example, Noel Pearson, *Our Right to Take Responsibility* (Cairns, Qld: Noel Pearson and Associates, 2000); Noel Pearson, *Welfare Reform and Economic Development for Indigenous Communities* (Sydney: Centre for Independent Studies, 2005).

6 See Noel Pearson, 'There Is Nothing That Government Can Do for You That You Are Unwilling to Do for Yourself: Sir Robert Menzies Lecture'. Melbourne: Sir Robert Menzies Lecture Trust, 2011.

7 See Jane Cadzow, 'Cape Crusader', *Good Weekend Magazine*, 25 August 2012; Paul Sheehan, 'Dropping Bombs and Stoking Feuds: The Other Side of Noel Pearson', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 August 2014.

Greens because of their potential to inhibit Indigenous economic development on their own land and their attraction to the idea of an Aboriginal organisation being the interface between all arms of government and remote Aboriginal communities.

Tracker is scathing about Pat Dodson and the whole reconciliation strategy: 'That is wonderful for whites, nothing better than hugging a big bloke that has got a big white beard: I have been blessed' (p. 389). Tracker's nemesis Marcia Langton has occasionally also been critical of framing the national debate in terms of reconciliation. While she managed to maintain a relationship of mutual respect with Dodson, Tracker typically needled him. During the discussion of the Wik amendments he was particularly delighted by a Bill Leak cartoon indicating Prime Minister John Howard's contempt for the reconciliation process. It showed Howard and Dodson at a candle-lighting ceremony and, in a second frame, Howard's smug satisfaction when the candle is revealed as a fire cracker which explodes in Dodson's face. Tracker photocopied the cartoon and personally distributed copies to other members of the NIWG during a meeting at which Dodson was present.

There were a few Indigenous leaders exempt from Tracker's scorn: Murrandoo Yanner and Michael Mansell (p. 262), Mick Dodson (pp. 257, 262) and Fred Pascoe, the mayor of Normanton (p. 352). Murrandoo Yanner shared Tracker's deep suspicions of Pearson's opening to the conservative side of politics. This and their natural inclination towards oppositional politics meant that Tracker was uniquely placed to reach out to Yanner during the difficult negotiations over the Century mine and induct him into the world of doing good deals with mining companies, a staple of CLC's ongoing work (if from a better negotiating position than the native title process available to Yanner).

## Tracker and Aboriginal women leaders

Wright seems to have had a rather charmed relationship with Tracker, notwithstanding their occasional heated arguments (p. 13). Other Aboriginal women, especially in leadership positions, did not fare so well. Again Wright does not try to tidy up Tracker's image too much, although she seems to accept Tracker's explanation of why he did not implement a Women's Council at the CLC: advice from the chairman, Wenten Rubuntja, to support a women's ritual meeting instead (the Womens' Law and Culture meetings [p. 409]). Wright includes second-hand stories of his misogyny in relation to some Indigenous women leaders: Pat Turner (former CEO of ATSIC), Marcia Langton and Olga Havnen (pp. 267–69). The stories of the intense personality clash between Tracker and Marcia recounted in the book resonate with my memories as well. Their antagonism could probably be predicted from the contrast between the male world of Tracker's larrikinism

and the intellectual intensity, feminism and quickness to vitriol of Marcia's.<sup>8</sup> What he had against Pat Turner, a distant cousin I believe, I do not know. But I recall Tracker's gratuitous insults directed at her at a meeting of NIWG by suggesting ATSIC, of which she was CEO, was most likely to sell out the Indigenous position in negotiations with the government over the Wik amendments to the Native Title Act.

As the various stories in this book indicate, Tracker's attitude to Indigenous women leaders was more than a case of personality conflicts. I personally observed Tracker explaining to a neophyte minister, Senator Margaret Reynolds, assisting the prime minister on the status of women (1988–90) that, in Aboriginal society, men are the bosses. The minister sat there in the CLC conference room studiously taking notes of the conversation. Of course, with Tracker, one was never quite sure whether he was expressing his considered view or simply taking advantage of a situation that presented itself for further high-level larrikinism and material for later yarning to receptive audiences.

## Tracker and the Labor Party

Wright helpfully brings together some of the stories about Tracker's abortive bid to become a Labor politician ('I Am Counted as a Pet Nigger', pp. 275–92). She tries to let the material speak for itself but, of course, it never can. Does anyone who reads this book really think that Tracker being a Labor Party senator would have been good for the Labor Party and good for Tracker? Party discipline would have been torture for Tracker and enforcing it would have been torture for the Labor Party. Tracker would have been a miserable square peg in a round hole. It was a mad plan that Tracker had the good sense to pull out of early. This did not dissuade him from casting himself, very uncharacteristically, as the hapless victim of racial exclusion within the Labor Party. Some notable Labor politicians fell for that story (a 'great tragedy' according to Gerry Hand [p. 280], 'one of my greatest disappointments' according to Martin Ferguson [pp. 281–82]).

The tributes in the book from senior Labor Party figures attest to Tracker's skill at purposefully networking with the powerful, at least in the Labor Party (Laurie Brereton [pp. 308–11]; Nick Bolkus [pp. 316–19]; Daryl Melham [pp. 320–23]); yet another parallel with Pearson. A surprise in the book, then, is his absolute nastiness towards and dismissiveness of Warren Snowdon, the long-standing and hard-working member of the House of Representatives for the Northern Territory. Snowden's links with the CLC and numerous Indigenous leaders go back a long way.

8 See Peter Robb, 'Who's Afraid of Marcia Langton', *The Monthly*, April 2011.

He has over the years played a critical role in collaborating with Indigenous leaders in raising the profile of Indigenous issues within the Labor Party and with various Labor prime ministers. About this stalwart of the Indigenous struggle, Tracker has this to say:

You are getting people continuously wanting to be blessed, Warren Snowdon wanting to be blessed by the blacks for representing them for 27 years without producing anything. That is a classic, absolute classic. That interview [in the documentary film *Utopia*] summed up Warren Snowdon's political contributions in about five minutes, there was not much to talk about. You can have good intentions but unless you can deliver, forget it, do not even mention it. (p. 389)

I do wonder what Wright thought of passages like this. As already stated, I am grateful that Wright kept her nerve and included them, but I wonder whether she thought this was just another example of Tracker 'fearlessly speaking his own mind'. I also recall being delighted at times by Tracker's unguarded and deflating opinions about well-respected public figures—that is, in conspiratorial, private conversation. There seems to be a transformation of such passages when they appear in print. They gain a solidity and considered character that perhaps suffers from being taken out of context. They present Tracker as ungracious, petty and carelessly vindictive. His typical self-mocking bravado does not come across on the page. Maybe this is also what various contributors really mean when they use exculpatory euphemisms like Tracker being a 'complex character'.

If one had the space, an analysis of the phrase 'not delivering', used by Tracker and by Murrando Yanner, as a harsh critique of Indigenous and non-Indigenous politicians, could also be undertaken. It evokes a politics of delivering the spoils of office but covering vastly different degrees of difficulty. Thus, according to Yanner, Tracker 'delivered' by turning up and providing useful advice. Yet Snowdon failed to 'deliver'—for example, by failing to convince his caucus colleagues to oppose the Intervention.



## Tracker the political tactician

### Story 2: The Wik amendments and Tracker's jar of vaseline

In 1997 there were tense meetings of the NIWG on native title, a group consisting of the Indigenous leaders of the major land councils and of ATSIC including Pat Dodson, Peter Yu, David Ross, Tracker, Noel Pearson, Mick Dodson, Aden Ridgeway, Geoff Clark, Marcia Langton, Pat Turner, Lois O'Donoghue, Charlie Perkins and Terry O'Shane, among others. All were seasoned political campaigners and had a long history with each other, some of it described in this book. One of the historical tensions dated back to the original negotiations for the Native Title Act in 1993: the politics between the so-called 'A Team' and 'B Team' of Indigenous negotiators. Michael Mansell contributes his version of those events in this book (pp. 239–46), as does Tracker (pp. 246–47). In essence the differences revolved around those who wanted to publicly support the negotiated outcome with the then Prime Minister Paul Keating (the 'A Team': Noel Pearson, Lois O'Donoghue, Marcia Langton, Pat Dodson and David Ross) and those who wanted to continue their advocacy efforts with the Senate to improve the Keating deal (the 'B Team': Aden Ridgeway and Michael Mansell). These differences tended to be expressed in the bitter language of selling out Indigenous interests and having been manipulated by Keating's superior tactics (Mansell, pp. 239–46). With this rather contentious history, the same group were under even more pressure in 1997 because they were facing the conservative government of Prime Minister John Howard, which was unsympathetic to the Wik decision's recognition of coexisting Indigenous rights on pastoral leases.

Into this volatile group strode Tracker with his trademark buffoonery. There were many meetings aimed at hammering out an agreed position, especially before John Howard announced his 10 Point Plan and, in effect, set the parameters of the political debate. At one of these meetings Tracker castigated his fellow Aboriginal leaders for their lack of effective strategy. He placed on the table a small gift box and invited those at the meeting to examine its contents, which, according to Tracker, would reveal the flaws in their current discussion. The box contained a jar of Vaseline, the implication being that the present stance of the working group was only making it easier for the government to sodomise them. Predictably, the reaction from the other leaders present ranged from one of disdain, to offence and bemusement.

The fact that I am recounting this incident after so many years is, I suppose, some testament to Tracker's theatrical flair. But my own reaction at the time, unchanged after reading this book, was that this was an empty and preposterous gesture. Tracker had not put forward any particular alternative strategy, alternative arguments or alternative way of garnering the public support, which was required to pressure the government.\* I now see it as a ham-fisted attempt to intimidate other Indigenous leaders into conceding to him the running on issues of strategy. Of course, none of them were willing to do this.

\* In his contribution, Chris Athanasiou, a CLC lawyer who worked closely with Tracker, suggested that Tracker did have a strategy:

Early on, Tracker had been prepared to trade off native title processes to secure recognition, economic development and heritage protection. Those were the keys to him, and he tried to move the National Indigenous Working Group to that position. (p. 271)

Tracker's attempt to exploit concerns within the NIWG about being outwitted by government in negotiations raises many issues (beyond the scope of this paper) that continue to inform differing positions among Indigenous politicians about the big political issues of the day. What is it to take a strong position? How are ideas of strength, leadership and courage deployed in the tensions between long-term, difficult-to-achieve goals and shorter term, incremental improvements that may be achievable? In Tracker's case, he attempted to deploy ideas of the superiority of economic analysis as something more telling, more fundamental, and therefore as something stronger than legal analyses.

## Tracker and economics

Throughout the book Tracker identifies himself as an economist, although also as having a science degree. One of the drawbacks of unconventional biography is that we never find out exactly what degree or diploma he obtained from Roseworthy College. But his interest in economics and economic approaches to Aboriginal self-determination is clear. He tried to envisage an economically sustainable Indigenous estate that would be an economic power within the broader economy and ensure greater respect in the political arena, both laudable and long-term goals. This is the basis on which Wright and others apply the term 'visionary' to Tracker, although there is plenty of evidence presented in this book of his impatience and boredom with implementation, and his frequent inability to distinguish between his good ideas and his 'hare-brained schemes', as Leslie Alford, a fellow alumnus of

Roseworthy College, described them (p. 469). It seemed to me that Wright was also a little intoxicated by the vision because she repeatedly failed to ask him difficult questions about implementation, or how such a vision related to the contemporary circumstances of Aboriginal people and the non-economic aspects of the imagined prosperous future.

Of course economic expertise does not exist in a vacuum. The broader society is characterised by the privileged nature of economic discourse, despite the many failings of economists and economic theory—one need only think of the global financial crisis and, in our own little corner of the world, the failure of the privatisation of electricity production and distribution. There is a mystique about private enterprise and economics such that business metaphors, like a company being ‘a brand’, are applied to all sorts of social phenomena as if they trump moral and political considerations. The concept of ‘the economy’ is central to our contemporary social imaginary.<sup>9</sup> Tracker tried to wield the mystique of economics in his contests with other Indigenous leaders more comfortable with the discourse of civil and political rights. Some economists have tried to enlarge the explanatory power of economics by exploring the relationship between economics and psychology, for example, to explain seemingly irrational stock market movements.<sup>10</sup> In Tracker’s hands, however, economic analysis tended towards a doctrinaire economic determinism. On such a view, moral and political discourses are epiphenomenal.

Thus Tracker in 1997 tried to argue with the NIWG that its focus on legislation and the political process around the Wik amendments was misconceived because these processes were all subject to more fundamental economic considerations. I recall having conversations with Tracker’s legal advisors in private about his extreme economic determinism, which they acknowledged, and suggesting that even if politics is determined by economics ‘in the last instance’ (to use Althusser’s slippery phrase), we still had to deal with Prime Minister John Howard’s misconceived belief that he was in charge of the country. Tracker never did win those arguments with the other Indigenous leaders of the NIWG. I surmise it was partly because of his diminished credibility with many of them because of his clowning, but also because he was never able to present a coherent strategy that would work within the very tight timeframes of the political cycle. In addition, the prospects for some grand alliance between Indigenous interests and big business (if that was what he had in

9 Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

10 On including ideas of human fallibility and reflexivity, see, for example, George Soros, ‘Fallibility, Reflexivity, and the Human Uncertainty Principle’, *Journal of Economic Methodology* 20, no. 4 (2013): 309–29.

mind) seemed unlikely given the seduction of so many of them to Howard's brand of business certainty through legislating for extinguishment in the case of uncertain leasehold tenures.<sup>11</sup>

I know it was difficult to have a proper discussion with Tracker about economic matters because he typically took a bombastic rhetorical stance of stating his opinions as irrefutable. But I do wonder whether Wright tried very hard. Questions could have been asked about the role of Indigenous people in Tracker's economic vision. For example, were they to be shareholders, directors or employees? Tracker seems to acknowledge that many of the Indigenous people in the remote communities were not job ready because of generations of welfare (p. 350, and yet another parallel with Pearson). This means that most Aboriginal people in remote communities would not be able to take up the employment opportunities, to be created by economic development, in the short term and it is unclear how this might change in the medium and longer term. So it seems that the immediate (and perhaps longer term) roles envisaged for Indigenous people were as shareholders and directors. This is a very similar model to the way the Northern Territory land councils work—a small group of Indigenous representatives and directors with a large non-Indigenous staff, working on behalf of a larger Indigenous group who remain uninvolved although benefiting in tangible, if diffuse, ways. It is the model of the gatekeeper/advocacy organisation that Tracker tried to sell to his constituency as the benefits of having a cheeky dog guarding the gate (pp. 172, 548). My question is: how do such organisations transform the social conditions of their disengaged constituency? In the language of community development, how does such a strategy create a skilled and more self-reliant constituency?

The land councils can rightly point to ranger programs as a model answer to these sorts of questions.<sup>12</sup> And indeed they are. But what about everyone else in the remote communities? Other experienced anthropologists question whether

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11 By 'uncertain leasehold tenures' I mean those leases that were not covered by the Wik decision, which was about pastoral leases only. Other leases may or may not have completely extinguished native title depending on the application of the legal principles enunciated in the Wik decision. The 10 Point Plan and the subsequent legislation pre-empted the judicial consideration of those other kinds of leasehold tenure and legislated that, unlike pastoral leases, they completely extinguished native title rights. The 10 Point Plan and the subsequent legislation preserved the coexisting, although reduced, native title rights on pastoral leases and the Right to Negotiate on pastoral leases where partial native title rights survived.

12 See, for example, Jon Altman and Seán Kerins, eds, *People on Country: Vital Landscapes, Indigenous Futures* (Sydney: Federation Press, 2012). In referencing Jon Altman's work here, I do not mean to suggest that Altman's views aligned with Tracker's; indeed, Tracker takes a broad swipe at Altman's work (p. 451). But Tracker's accusation that Altman's theories are based on the assumption that Aboriginal society would be decimated is a misrepresentation of Altman's work. Contrary to this misrepresentation, Altman emphasises the continuing significance of traditional economic activity, his central idea of the 'hybrid economy'. As always, Tracker's hyperbole and swinging denigration gets in the way of clear exposition. Tracker having avoided the discipline of writing down his ideas does not help. He seemed to be in favour of Aboriginal people engaging in the wider economy and becoming economically strong through that engagement. This seems to be contrary to the main thrust of Altman's ideas of government subventions supporting culturally worthwhile environmental and land management work. But it is not clear.

Indigenous rangers and other similar jobs will only ever apply to a small minority<sup>13</sup> and whether they are based on a false ideas of a completely separate and unchanging domain of customary environmental knowledge.<sup>14</sup> A common assumption in the public domain seems to be that people in remote communities are happy living their cultural lives—the happy traditional owner, somehow separable from generational problems of transmission of cultural knowledge, epidemics of ill health, substance abuse, law and order problems, and domestic violence. These are the intractable ‘wicked problems’ that Indigenous non-government organisations and governments are continually grappling with and that seem impervious to a political strategy based on ‘delivering’ more rights and more funding. I know that Tracker was well aware of these problems. I recall him on TV, apparently trying to shock his Aboriginal constituency out of complacency, by bluntly stating that their future was the dialysis hostels of Alice Springs. My point is that the links between Tracker’s economic vision and the ‘wicked problems’ were never convincingly set out.

I also detect in Tracker’s fascination with big economic opportunities and economics more generally a masculinist bias, as if the big questions of Indigenous economic development and political strategy were for men, and other questions of health, education and substance abuse were for others (women?) to worry about. The fact that his economist friends were men provides a clue, if not conclusive evidence.<sup>15</sup> While Tracker was disparaging of most of the white advisor types as ‘white trash’ or ‘do-gooders’, his preferred white economist friends seem to have had a privileged relationship with him. Indeed, Toly Sawenko is one of the few non-economist white advisors who seemed to be able to negotiate the very narrow path towards friendship and mutual respect with Tracker (pp. 479, 486, 547–8).

It is a pity that Tracker was so antagonistic to anthropology (notwithstanding his provocative view at the time that he appreciated Strehlow’s recording of Arrernte culture).<sup>16</sup> In Peterson’s early analysis of land rights,<sup>17</sup> he would have found

13 Nicolas Peterson ‘What Is the Policy Significance of the Hybrid Economy?’ In *Engaging Indigenous Economy: Debating Diverse Approaches*, ed. W. Sanders (Canberra: ANU Press, 2016), 55–64, doi.org/10.22459/CAEPR35.04.2016.05.

14 K. de Rijke, R. Martin and D. Trigger, ‘Cultural Domains and the Theory of Customary Environmentalism in Indigenous Australia’, In *Engaging Indigenous Economy: Debating Diverse Approaches*, ed. W. Sanders (Canberra: ANU Press, 2016), 43–53, doi.org/10.22459/CAEPR35.04.2016.04.

15 Cf. Marcia Langton, ‘The End of “Big Men” Politics’, *Griffith Review* 22 (2008): 11–38.

16 For Tracker’s anti-anthropologist rant see pp. 367 and 451. Tracker’s contrarian views about Strehlow I recall as a personal communication from Tracker on a work trip to Yuendumu; ‘provocative’ and ‘contrarian’ because most Aboriginal leaders of the time were antagonistic to Strehlow who had amassed a collection of sacred objects and sold photographs of secret-sacred ceremonies to be published overseas (see Barry Hill’s *Broken Song: T. G. H. Strehlow and Aboriginal Possession* (Sydney: Knopf, 2002)). Indeed, CLC was at the time involved in a bitter and ultimately unsuccessful struggle with the Northern Territory Government about its plans to purchase sacred objects and research materials from Strehlow’s widow and to set up the Strehlow Research Centre to administer them (John Morton, ‘Romancing the Stones: The Past and Future of the Strehlow Collection’, *Arena Magazine* 4 (1993): 39–40; Robyn Smith, “‘Stuff at the Core of Land Rights Claims’: The Strehlow Collection”, *Journal of Northern Territory History* 20, no. 4 (2009): 75–93).

17 Nicolas Peterson, ‘Capitalism, Culture and Land Rights: Aborigines and the State in the Northern Territory’, *Social Analysis* 18 (1985): 85–101

confirmation about the relative precariousness of governmental commitment to land rights and its economic basis. He may also have appreciated the concept of the 'Aboriginal domestic moral economy'<sup>18</sup> and theorising of the imperviousness of kin networks to economic incentives for frugality and capital accumulation (see p. 443 for Tracker's version: 'their money is everyone else's money'). He would have hated Sutton's arguments about traditional cultural traits exacerbating contemporary social problems<sup>19</sup> as being too much like Noel Pearson's. I wonder whether he would have seen anything of himself in Sullivan's description of 'Aboriginal political style' from a previous era.

## The depth psychology of Tracker

It is Tracker's close friend Owen Cole who alerts us to the elusiveness of Tracker's psychological make up, suggesting that a team of eminent psychiatrists after spending a week with Tracker would either end up mad or rewriting their textbooks (via Sean Bowden, p. 284). I do not propose to go down the track of the psychoanalysis of Tracker, although there is much material in this book to ponder: Tracker's constant need of an appreciative audience; his unswerving commitment to larrikinism; his restlessness and continual travel; his lack of follow-through and his disinterest in committing his ideas to writing; his boastful competitiveness with other Aboriginal leaders; his ludicrously hypercritical judgement of them; and his need to paint himself as the master tactician who would avoid being a sell-out, unlike them. Nathan Miller, his collaborator on horticultural projects, noted his lack of patience with implementing his ideas and the need for others to take them before anything eventuated (p. 487). One contributor, Greg Crough, his close collaborator on economic matters, ventured a little way down the path of depth psychology. Beyond the bluster and iconoclastic public stance of Tracker, he wondered whether a certain reserve, which he sometimes detected in Tracker, was evidence of an underlying lack of confidence (p. 545).

For me one of the most poignant stories in the book, and one revealing possible deep hurt, are those concerning Tracker's reaction to the Stolen Generation. Typically, Tracker made outrageous jokes about his own membership of the Stolen Generation, that his relations tried to give him away (recounted by Geoff Clark, p. 564). Michael O'Connor, Tracker's unionist friend, was in touch with him on the day of The Apology and surmised that it was a very rough day for Tracker (p. 535). Tracker also told Martin Ferguson directly that he could not attend The Apology because there were too many memories (p. 336). Murrandoo Yanner tells the story

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18 Nicolas Peterson and John Taylor, 'The Modernising of the Indigenous Domestic Moral Economy', *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 4, no. 1–2 (2003): 105–22.

19 Peter Sutton, *The Politics of Suffering: Indigenous Australia and the End of the Liberal Consensus* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2009).

of Tracker attending one of the first Stolen Generation conferences in Darwin (pp. 324–25). He became irritated with the roomful of people crying and pouring out their pain and after about half an hour of this he got up and exploded, ‘no one bloody took youse away, your parents gave you away and look at you, I wouldn’t blame them’ and walked out, much to Yanner’s embarrassment. Yanner interpreted this incident as a reflection of Tracker’s strength in not showing how the experience affected him. But it seems to me, together with the accounts of his reaction to the day of The Apology, that this incident does reflect a deep hurt. Tracker’s brother William was apparently more forthright. He stated that, after returning from Snake Bay, he could not fully reconnect with his family in Alice Springs because he could not speak the language (as told by Nathan Miller, p. 488).

## Conclusion

I fear this extended review may seem a bit sour. That has not been my experience of reading the book. For me it was like a virtual reunion with some of my old colleagues and acquaintances, although I am not sure how readers who did not know Tracker will struggle through the 600 pages of this book. For them it might be like the out-of-control eulogies at contemporary Aboriginal funerals in Central Australia, which sometimes go on for hours, reducing some of the mourners to a despair that they will ever reach the end.

I am not so hardhearted as to be completely inoculated against Tracker’s rough charm. There is still a part of me that misses the mad bastard. I appreciate Wright’s diligence in finding out about Tracker’s early life and for making contact with his house parent from his Croker Island days, Lois Bartram, who, as well as providing stability and care for him throughout his early life, contributed the wonderful photographs of the very young Tracker. I have discovered too late that Tracker had a sentimental attachment to Alan Paton’s novel of the early years of black struggle against apartheid in South Africa, *Cry, The Beloved Country*. Lois Bartram apparently read it to them as children. I, like many matriculation students of my era, read it at high school. Maybe a discussion of that book would have been a way down the narrow road.

I am, though, none the wiser about the official justification for the removal of Tracker and his siblings from their parents. One suspects this lacuna, like the absence of any account of his family life with his wife and daughters, is out of respect for the sensitivities of his wider family and their right to privacy and private grief.



### Story 3: Tracker's wedding story

On another long trip to Yuendumu, Tracker had a bigger audience of lawyers in the Toyota and naturally fell into the role of storyteller/entertainer. He recalled his time as a young stockman in Alice Springs chasing various pretty young Aboriginal women, his rising ardour only to be prematurely extinguished by his more genealogically knowledgeable relations revealing 'that's your sister [cousin]'. After several incidents like this, Tracker said he resolved to marry a white woman. That turned out to be Kathy. Her family came from a very conservative outback town in Queensland, Cloncurry, where the wedding was held. Tracker took as his best man a cousin who was considerably darker than him. As they approached the church, filled with all of Kathy's white relations and friends looking around apprehensively to catch their first glimpse of Tracker, his cousin was first to appear at the door of the church to the audible gasps of the congregation, followed by sighs of relief when Tracker finally appeared around the corner and it became clear who was the groom. Tracker said that any apprehensiveness his in-laws may have had soon melted when the grandchildren started to appear.

My main critique of the book is the unresolved tension between the introduction and the body of the book. Wright's larrikin-style hyperbole about Tracker as the visionary leader is not sustained throughout. There we confront slabs of Tracker's incoherent, grandiose verbal sludge, which very infrequently contains a gem. Like others I have discussed the book with, I wonder why Wright decided to put so much time and energy into recording Tracker's story when there are so many other deserving Aboriginal leaders whose stories could be told. Obviously, they are not as interesting as Tracker's story. Or is it just an Indigenous version of the cult of celebrity, which prefers a commitment to being an outrageous character above all else? Finally, although encouraged by Wright to do so, I wonder if I have taken the book too seriously. This is perhaps the final revenge of Tracker who in so many ways demanded to be taken seriously, but who could just as easily flip into larrikin mode and assert that he was just yarning.

## James Keating:

### Denise George, *Mary Lee: The Life and Times of a 'Turbulent Anarchist' and her Battle for Women's Rights*

(Adelaide, SA: Wakefield Press, 2018), 270 pp., PB \$34.95, ISBN 9781743055960

### Myra Scott, *How Australia Led the Way: Dora Meeson Coates and British Suffrage*

(North Melbourne, Vic.: Arcadia, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2018), 120 pp., HB \$34.95, ISBN 9781925801422

### Clare Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom: The Australians Who Won the Vote and Inspired the World*

(Melbourne, Vic.: Text Publishing, 2018), 560 pp., HB \$49.99, ISBN 9781925603934

On 17 June 1911, almost 200 Australasian women congregated on the Victoria Embankment in the afternoon sun, waiting to lead the 'imperial contingent' in the Women's Coronation Procession. Led by Lady Anna Stout, representing the first self-governing country to enfranchise all women, the New Zealanders were followed by a larger group of Australians, including Margaret Fisher, the wife of the prime minister. Despite their pioneer enfranchisement, the antipodeans stood a kilometre behind the 'famous women' pageant that led the procession toward the Albert Hall. Timed to coincide with George V's coronation, the day had a carnival atmosphere. Forty thousand women from 16 nations and Britain's imperial possessions, clad in organisational or national colours, marched united in their demand that Britain enfranchise its women. Among the banners paraded through Westminster was Australia's most iconic contribution to the British campaign, a 4 m<sup>2</sup> piece of hessian, adorned with two classical figures: imperious Britannia standing beside her daughter, Minerva, the latter draped with the Commonwealth's heraldry. The allegorical tableau, bearing Minerva's unpunctuated plea—'Trust The Women Mother As I Have Done'—lies at the heart of several new histories that revisit the stories of Australia's suffragists. Collectively, they retell them in greater detail than previous

iterations and, in some cases, go further, situating these women as the vanguard of a youthful nation, ‘daughters of freedom’ that built a democratic Commonwealth and exported its values to the world, long before the cataclysmic impact of World War I.<sup>1</sup>

Dora Meeson Coates, the subject of Myra Scott’s *How Australia Led the Way*, painted the banner several years earlier in bohemian Chelsea. It was her eighth year in London and, alongside her husband, George, she had carved out a life on the fringe of the art world. Along the way, she co-founded the influential Artists’ Suffrage League (ASL) and joined the Women’s Freedom League (WFL), a pacifist direct-action group established by disaffected members of the Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU). Given Meeson’s peripatetic youth, her midlife embrace of suffragist militancy was not her first encounter with the organised demand for the vote. Born in Hawthorn in 1869, Meeson moved to London as a child, then migrated with her family to New Zealand in 1881. There, she encountered her life’s passions: painting and feminism. While she trained at the Christchurch School of Art, the city became the epicentre of the women’s suffrage campaign. In 1893 Dora added her name to the 24,000 others on the ‘monster’ suffrage petition.<sup>2</sup> It is unclear if she voted in that year’s election, New Zealand’s first under the universal franchise, but by 1895 the Meesons were again on the move. Back in Melbourne, Dora attended the National Gallery Art School, where she met George Coates. The pair showed promise, Dora more than George, but when Coates won the school’s travelling scholarship in 1896, she accompanied him to Europe. The pair were engaged while studying in Paris, but Meeson’s father forbade their union until 1903, when they began to earn a living as commercial illustrators.

Experience as a graphic artist provided an ideal background for Dora’s entry into the Edwardian suffrage movement. With votes for women no closer to reality after the ‘liberty-loving Liberals’ took power in 1906, suffragists turned to spectacular action.<sup>3</sup> Over the next decade, they developed an unmistakable political iconography as they sought to communicate directly with mass audiences. This was the work of groups like the ASL, established in 1907 to coordinate the ‘mud march’.<sup>4</sup> The sight of 3,000 women trudging through London in the February rain was perhaps not the spectacle its organisers envisaged, but, as Meeson Coates understood, it constituted a turning point in the campaign. Soon after, she won the constitutionalist National

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1 See especially Marilyn Lake, ‘1914: Death of a Nation’, *History Australia* 12, no. 1 (2015): 7–24.

2 At least 30,000 women signed 13 suffrage petitions in 1893. Of these only the ‘monster’ roll has survived. *The Women’s Suffrage Petition, Te Petihana Whakamana Pōti Wahine, 1893* (Wellington: Archives New Zealand, Te Rua Mahara o Te Kāwanatanga, National Library of New Zealand, Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa, and Bridget Williams Books, 2017).

3 Clare Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom: The Australians Who Won the Vote and Inspired the World* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2018), 186.

4 The ASL was affiliated with the constitutionalist National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies. It should be noted that the militant Women’s Social and Political Union, and affiliated organisations like the Suffrage Atelier, contributed equally to this vibrant visual culture.

Union of Women's Suffrage Societies' (NUWSS) poster competition. In short order, she sent her propaganda postcard 'Taxation without Representation' to Margot Asquith, the wife of the reviled anti-suffragist Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, and illustrated the ASL's satirical pamphlet *Beware! A Warning to Suffragists* (1909). The coronation procession, which saw militants and moderates cooperate in the hopes that 1911 would be 'the wonder year' when women won the vote, was by far the biggest stage for her work. Along the 5 km that she carried the heavy banner, it was seen by hundreds of thousands of spectators and, as reactions in the British press revealed, the Dominion's 'impudent' message resonated with metropolitan audiences.<sup>5</sup>

Disappointingly, given her subject's promise, Scott's short book is a missed opportunity. Commissioned in 2003 by the Office of the Status of Women to celebrate the centenary of women's federal enfranchisement, the version published by Arcadia is functionally identical to the original.<sup>6</sup> The book's promised additions are in short supply: they neither include further research, nor rectify significant omissions, like the failure to mention that Meeson Coates's banner debuted in 1908. Beyond the obvious, the lack of revision is a problem for a book marketed as a biography, of either the artist or her most enduring work, not least because the original only sporadically covered Meeson Coates's career. Instead, much of the manuscript considers the fortunes of her contemporaries who made up Australia's 'talented suffrage diaspora'.<sup>7</sup> In this telling, no sooner had her banner been folded away in 1912 than Meeson Coates simply faded from view. The irony is that for the past 20 years, contra Scott's introductory claim, historians have extensively documented Australian women's efforts to 'teach feminists in the Imperial "heartland"'.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps uniquely of these figures, our picture of her subject's life and art remains half-formed.

5 Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom*, 13, 452.

6 Myra Scott, *How Australia Led the Way: Dora Meeson Coates and British Suffrage* (Canberra: Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women, 2003).

7 Jill Liddington, 'Was the Suffrage Campaign Truly International? Votes for Women in Edwardian England, 1903–1914', in *Politische Netzwerkerinnen: Internationale Zusammenarbeit von Frauen 1830–1960*, ed. Eva Schöck-Quinteros, Anja Schüler, Annika Wilmers and Kerstin Wolff (Berlin: Trafo, 2007), 329–30.

8 June Hannam, 'International Dimensions of Women's Suffrage: "At the Crossroads of Several Interlocking Identities"', *Women's History Review* 14, no. 3–4 (2005): 544. See, for example, Stephen Anderson, 'The Accidental Suffragist from Australia: Muriel Matters and the Political Advance of British Women', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 99, no. 1 (2013): 36–54; Barbara Caine, 'Australian Feminism and the British Militant Suffragettes', *Papers on Parliament* 41 (2004): 11–27; Carly Millar, 'The Making of a Feminist: Bessie Rischbieth Encounters the English Suffragettes', *Lilith*, no. 12 (2003): 78–94; Ann Nugent, 'Nellie Alma Martel and the Women's Social and Political Union, 1905–09', *Hecate* 31, no. 1 (2005): 142–59; Lynne Trethewey and Kay Whitehead, 'Beyond Centre and Periphery: Transnationalism in Two Teacher/Suffragettes' Work', *History of Education* 32, no. 5 (2003): 547–59; Angela Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonialism and Modernity* (London: Oxford University Press, 2001); Robert Wainwright, *Miss Muriel Matters* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 2017).

Clare Wright's much more ambitious and accomplished book can be read as *How Australia Led the Way's* spiritual successor. *You Daughters of Freedom*, the second book in Wright's 'democracy trilogy', is similarly concerned with Australia's place in the world. Like Scott, she uses a cast of emblematic expatriates and political tourists to demonstrate 'how the world's newest nation became a global exemplar' of democratic practice. Wright also opens with Meeson Coates, narrating her encounter with the banner—purchased by the Commonwealth in 1988—during a tour of Parliament House, and ends with the aftermath of the 1911 march.<sup>9</sup> Here, the similarities end. Wright is a talented storyteller who uses a much larger canvas to both narrate the history of Australia's women's suffrage campaigns and to ensure that Australians' part in Britain's 'epic [suffrage] drama' is restored to its rightful place in national and world history.<sup>10</sup>

*You Daughters of Freedom* is segmented into three parts. The first, 'Purity', begins where *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka* left off, spanning the history of the demand for the female franchise from 1854 until the first federal election under universal white suffrage in 1903.<sup>11</sup> By unfolding vivid vignettes, Wright effectively conveys white women's lot before the vote. Through the devastating tale of Maggie Heffernan, a lone mother sentenced to death for drowning her infant son, Wright demystifies what today seems 'strange' about the suffragists' ideology. In unravelling Maggie's desperate circumstances alongside the successful campaign for her release, she lays bare their quietly radical belief that women's enfranchisement would cleanse the polity of intoxicants and toxic masculinity. In what is an unabashedly national, and occasionally nationalist, history—in the introduction we twice learn that Australia offered a more distinctive global object lesson than New Zealand, because it was a 'nation-state' not a mere 'colony or Dominion' (neither claim is correct)—the rash of colonial and state enfranchisements between 1894 and 1908 play second fiddle to the story of Federation and the 1902 Commonwealth Franchise Act.<sup>12</sup> Following in the footsteps of Vida Goldstein, who spent 1901 lecturing in the United States, Wright explores the rising 'international reputation ... of the new nation'. Over the following decade, Australia provided progressive observers abundant 'data for cold hard research'. The concatenation of women's enfranchisement with the provision of old-age pensions, the eradication of sweated labour, the subsequent rise in women's wages and improvements to married women's property rights became staples of Anglophone suffrage propaganda.<sup>13</sup> Yet, as they sold these successes overseas, Goldstein and the other women who fell short of winning federal office until 1943 were painfully aware of how distant equality remained.

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9 Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom*, 13.

10 Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom*, 9.

11 Clare Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2013).

12 Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom*, Author's Note, 11–12.

13 Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom*, 127, 130.

The following sections, 'Courage' and 'Hope', transpire between Britain and Australia, taking the reader from 1905 to 1911. Here, Wright traces the antipodean influence on the British suffrage movement through the lives of five women who cut their teeth in the Australasian suffrage campaigns, then used these experiences to assist the bitter metropolitan struggle. Their efforts were altruistic and self-interested, as they sought to safeguard their hard-won rights 'outside the sanctuary of the antipodes' before extending them to their British sisters.<sup>14</sup> Alongside Goldstein and Meeson Coates, we follow puckish Nellie Martel, the Sydney suffragist and elocutionist turned WSPU organiser; the South Australian actor and WFL provocateur Muriel Matters; and the Anglo-Australian suffragist, socialist and sybarite Dora Montefiore. All five played 'the Australian card' in Britain where, Wright argues, the democratic lacquer on their once shabby colonial origins opened doors in the suffrage campaign. In 1906 Montefiore, who had lived in London since 1893, found her Hammersmith residence the temporary headquarters of the fledgling WSPU, as her tax resistance campaign reached its dénouement during a six-week siege by bailiffs. The union also welcomed Martel, who became one of its 'deadliest weapons' after her arrest during a 1906 raid on the Commons.<sup>15</sup> Despite the precedent set by her compatriots, Matters found a more congenial home in the WFL. Drawing on her theatrical training, she specialised in political stunts, chaining herself to the grille hiding the Ladies' Gallery from the floor of the Commons in 1908, and flying over the opening of parliament in a WFL blimp the following year.

Despite their successes, the 1900s were frustrating years for the suffrage diaspora. Their 'democratic charms' notwithstanding, the Australians could not persuade Britons to abandon the 'half-loaf' of partial enfranchisement and embrace universal suffrage.<sup>16</sup> As Wright relates, like so many others, colonials who entered the Pankhursts' orbit usually left bruised and burned-out. Months after Nellie Martel and Emmeline Pankhurst were attacked by a mob at the 1908 Newton Abbott by-election, the Australian was ousted as a paid organiser, around which time Matters, Montefiore and Meeson Coates abandoned militancy. Only Vida Goldstein, enmired in the Victorian suffrage campaign, maintained ties with the union. From Melbourne, she convinced federal politicians to pass resolutions attesting to the unbridled success of women's enfranchisement. Their endorsements, which were conveyed to Herbert Asquith, circulated across the world, ensuring that Goldstein received a rapturous response when she finally arrived in Britain, addressing huge crowds as the WPSU's guest in 1911. Yet for all her celebrity, Goldstein was unable to shift the barometer in Britain. When the Liberals withdrew their support from a partial franchise bill soon after the coronation procession, the WSPU ended its

14 Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom*, 406.

15 Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom*, 248.

16 Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom*, 427.

ceasefire and began the sustained campaign of property damage that ended the 'Edwardian suffrage era' and continues to characterise popular understanding of the movement. Australians, as Wright notes, followed these events with 'horror and awe', convinced by the escalating violence that British suffrage was a purely domestic concern.<sup>17</sup> Only the upheaval of World War I could shake the entrenched conservatism that bound British society enough for a partial suffrage bill to pass in 1918, long after the 'daughters of freedom' had retreated from the front lines or returned home.

Wright begins her history with three caveats, foremost the reminder that the qualifications that barred most people of colour, including Indigenous Australians, from voting take 'a good deal of the gloss off patriotic gloating' about the Commonwealth's democratic experiment.<sup>18</sup> As Penny Russell explains, in a book that celebrates one of Australia's foundation stories, the disclaimer is salutary.<sup>19</sup> However, the introductory warning is one of the few occasions where Wright engages seriously with the suffragists' prejudices. While she delineates the 'breath-takingly candid' bigotry that led federal legislators to make race, rather than gender, the defining feature of Australian citizenship, the book sidesteps the suffragists' complicity in the Commonwealth Franchise Act's colour line: 'if any of the women present in parliament to witness their historic victory were uncomfortable with the racial sting in the tail of this exceptional democracy, they were keeping mum'.<sup>20</sup>

Some in the gallery might have found the inscription of white supremacy in the Commonwealth's DNA uncomfortable, or worse. What's clearer is that the suffragists were not silent witnesses to the racialisation of Australian citizenship. Rather, they aided its construction. Mary Lee and Vida Goldstein presumably understood the consequences of the compact they forged between 'the united forces of Labour and Women' and, in Goldstein's case, spruiked as a political strategy to North American suffragists.<sup>21</sup> Although she returned from that trip a critic of the Jim Crow South, like many of her new friends, Goldstein was not above race-baiting when it suited her. In October 1900, for example, the cover of her newspaper, *Australian Woman's Sphere*, featured a cartoon contrasting disenfranchised womanhood, represented by a blonde student, with caricatures of male voters: the drunk, the wifebeater and the fop. Among these undesirable electors stood racial 'others': a Chinese man smoking opium and an Indigenous man toting a boomerang and a bottle of grog, each intoning 'I have a vote'.<sup>22</sup> Such rhetoric resonated in New South Wales, where the Womanhood Suffrage League (WSL) routinely decried the exclusion of white

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17 Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom*, 461–63.

18 Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom*, x.

19 Penny Russell, 'You Daughters of Freedom Review: Clare Wright on our Suffragettes in Britain', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 October 2018, 24.

20 Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom*, 121–26.

21 Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom*, 111.

22 'Voters and Voteless', *Australian Woman's Sphere*, October 1900.



women from an electorate that included ‘blackfellows and naturalised aliens’.<sup>23</sup> Such sentiments make it hard to believe that when Goldstein declared her support for the Immigration Restriction Act from the hustings in 1903, ‘her beef was chiefly with capital, not colour’.<sup>24</sup>

As Angela Woollacott has made clear, there is little value in ‘morally indict[ing]’ Goldstein’s attitudes. Despite her prejudices, she was not just a woman of her time. Rather, Goldstein took more enlightened positions than most of her contemporaries. Even her 1911 admission that she ‘believ[ed] more firmly than ever in the wisdom of a White Australia’ was inflected with profound unease at the extent of her racial privilege during a stopover in Ceylon.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, if the suffragists are enshrined as nation-builders, offering Australians a founding story bound to the principles of democracy, justice and progress, we must reckon carefully with the extent of their complicity in the Commonwealth’s foundational injustices. At the very least, the suffragists’ fraught relationship with the racialised foundations of Federation trouble the book’s epigraph, uttered by a man many would have disenfranchised, the escaped slave turned abolitionist and universal suffragist Frederick Douglass.

Whereas Scott and Wright consider Australian exports, Denise George takes the opposite path, tracing the life of the Irish migrant social reformer Mary Lee. For many Australians, Lee’s story is so entwined with her role in South Australian women’s achievement of full democratic rights that it is easy to forget she arrived in 1879 as a middle-aged widow, abandoning five adult children and a 30-year teaching career. George’s account, the first extended study of Lee’s life, takes the reader beyond her fateful landing on the Semaphore Jetty.<sup>26</sup> Instead, it opens in County Monaghan, where Mary Walsh was born to a working-class family most notable for its allegiance to the Orange Order. Beyond these sectarian origins, her childhood remains opaque, but, as George explains, she was an early beneficiary of Ireland’s national education system. Introduced in 1831, the policy changed 10-year-old Mary’s life. Equipped with an elementary education, she became a teacher, which, alongside her marriage to George Lee, a church musician, elevated her into the middle classes. Within a year of their wedding, the tentacles of imperial governance again changed Lee’s path. As the Great Famine struck in 1885, George and Mary joined the diaspora.

23 See, for example, ‘Womanhood Suffrage’, *Evening News*, 16 July 1895, 6; ‘No Vote, No Tax: A Woman’s Protest’, *Evening News*, 5 March 1898, 5; ‘Womanhood Suffrage’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 September 1901, 5.

24 Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom*, 143.

25 Angela Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonialism and Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 44–45; Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom*, 400–1.

26 Lee’s *Australian Dictionary of Biography* entry, for example, contains a single sentence on her life before 1879. Helen Jones, ‘Lee, Mary (1821–1909)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, The Australian National University, [adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lee-mary-7150](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lee-mary-7150), published first in hardcopy 1986, accessed 25 April 2019.

After several nomadic years, the family settled in Cambridgeshire. Life was tough; alongside raising the couple's eight children in deprived Barnwell, Mary taught 187 girls at the local school, circumstances that formed the wellsprings of her hard-bitten feminism. In 1860, the Lees moved south, and Mary opened a school in Hammersmith. George died soon after, leaving Mary reliant on her business income. After spending the next 20 years educating the daughters of London's aspirational classes, she made an unlikely emigrant. Upon learning that her youngest son, Benjamin, had contracted tuberculosis in Adelaide, she and her daughter Eva booked their passage south. Their reunion was short-lived. Soon after Mary's arrival, Benjamin died. Little did she know it, but her search for consolation through charity set her on course to become one of the most famous women in South Australia.

One of George's strengths is her articulation of the intersections in Lee's politics. As she emphasises, witnessing the precarious lives of women in the Cambridge slums and Adelaide's deprived West End politicised Lee. She entered public life in 1883 as secretary of the Social Purity Society's Ladies Committee, campaigning for legislative measures to protect working-class girls from the twin evils of 'violence and seduction'.<sup>27</sup> Seven years later, alongside Augusta Zadow, she established the Working Women's Trade Union (WWTU), to combat their exploitation by predatory capitalists. By the time the demand for women's enfranchisement had blossomed into an organised movement, Lee had a reputation as a scabrous letterist. Her knack for courting controversy, and selling newspapers, served her well as secretary of the Women's Suffrage League (1888–95). Over the next six years, Lee's barbed exchanges with anti-suffragists and broadsides against fickle politicians proved vital in keeping the subject in the public eye.

From the outset, Lee conceived of the WWTU as both a vehicle to mobilise working-class women and a means of ensuring the United Trades and Labour Council would parlay its support for women's enfranchisement into political action. As WWTU vice-president, she persuaded union bosses to assist the League's petitioning efforts and ensured that universal suffrage featured on the United Labor Party's inaugural manifesto.<sup>28</sup> Lee resigned from the Council in 1893, devoting the next two years to gruelling regional lecture tours as she strove to keep pressure on the colony's legislators. She returned to the circuit victorious, after the passage of the 1894 Adult Suffrage Bill, to encourage women to vote. Yet, despite her devotion to public service, Lee did not enjoy the privilege—afforded to her contemporary, Catherine Helen Spence—of living out her years as 'the grand old woman of South Australia'.<sup>29</sup> Instead, she was relegated to the margins of colonial life.

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27 'Social Purity Society', *Adelaide Observer*, 8 December 1883, 35.

28 'Letter to Women', *Adelaide Observer*, 22 March 1890, 8; Women's Suffrage in South Australia Scrapbook: United Trades and Labour Council of SA Minutes, Letters, Newspaper Articles, 324.623 W872d, State Library of South Australia, Adelaide.

29 'Miss Spence and the Woman's Suffrage Victory', *Weekly Herald*, 21 December 1894, 3.

Despite George's careful research, her subject remains enigmatic. She was, at once, a hard-up Irish widow—hardly social dynamite—and a charismatic rabble-rouser. As Wright notes, Lee cultivated 'friends in high places', counting the wife of the South Australian premier, Julia Holder, as her 'best mate'.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, Lee's disdain for convention ensured that she was never well liked. Given her uncompromising advocacy on behalf of working women, the public animus she engendered was unsurprising. However, it was compounded by her willingness to turn the weapons she used to destabilise the patriarchy against her allies. While George emphasises Lee's gentler qualities, demonstrated in her mediation of the WSL of New South Wales's 1894 leadership dispute, she omits the story's coda. When her friend Lady Mary Windeyer resigned as president, Lee ceased writing to her successor as an act of solidarity, depriving the league of a valued advisor.<sup>31</sup> She bristled at sharing the limelight and let it be known that, despite their common ends, she found the Woman's Christian Temperance Union odious: 'we know the plane on wh. they live, move & have their being & I am not in sympathy with them'.<sup>32</sup> The mistrust was mutual. Asked about Lee's legacy, the union's president, Elizabeth Nicholls, rubbished 'the notion that she was the only earnest worker ... on the League or outside its ranks'.<sup>33</sup> Such misgivings, George contends, manifested in the lacklustre contributions to her testimonial funds, acts of public indifference that not only stung Lee, but condemned her to live her final years in poverty.

Harping on these discordant moments may seem uncharitable, but they offer rare insights into Lee's character. Beyond their common subject, what unites all three texts is that they are, emphatically, accounts of public lives. Readers seeking something akin to Mineke Bosch's incisive studies of the emotional culture of transatlantic suffrage internationalism or June Purvis's new biography of Christabel Pankhurst, in which her subject is considered in light of her extensive friendship networks, will be disappointed.<sup>34</sup> In Scott's and Wright's cases, such silences stem from their archives. Both rely primarily on published sources. As indispensable as digitised newspapers have become over the past decade—Wright's livelier portrait of Meeson Coates tells this story in microcosm—a dearth of personal or organisational papers circumscribes these histories. When they were not suppressing news about the suffragists, newspapers necessarily documented spectacular moments—stunts

30 Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom*, 69.

31 Mary Lee to Lady Mary Windeyer, 4 January 1894, MLMSS186/14/275, SLNSW. She only resumed regular correspondence with Rose Scott and the WSL on the eve of the enfranchisement in 1902.

32 Denise George, *Mary Lee: The Life and Times of a 'Turbulent Anarchist' and her Battle for Women's Rights* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2018), 180; Mary Lee to Scott, 25 March 1897, A2271/261, SLNSW.

33 Elizabeth Nicholls, 'Mrs Mary Lee and the W.C.T.U.', *South Australian Register*, 23 December 1895, 2.

34 Mineke Bosch, 'Gossipy Letters in the Context of International Feminism', in *Current Issues in Women's History*, ed. Arina Angerman, Geerte Binnema, Annemieke Keunen, Vefie Poels and Jacqueline Zirkzee (London: Routledge, 1989), 131–52; Mineke Bosch with Annemarie Kloosterman ed., *Politics and Friendship: Letters from the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, 1902–1942* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990); June Purvis, *Christabel Pankhurst: A Biography* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018).

like Matters's dirigible flight—rather than the endless meetings, fundraisers, public engagements and correspondence to which these activists devoted their lives. In addition to losing the essence of their work, we learn little about how jarringly self-possessed colonials 'fit' in metropolitan life a decade after Kate Sheppard and Catherine Spence singularly failed in their efforts at suffrage evangelism. Despite antipodean and Scandinavian women's pioneer achievements, many in the 'introverted' British movement regarded their struggle as the 'storm-centre' of international suffragism.<sup>35</sup> To give but two examples: reading more about why WSPU members expelled Martel, or balancing the claim that Montefiore invented the census resistance movement against the WFL's records, would offer a clearer picture of Australians' importance to the British campaign.<sup>36</sup> George is conscious of these absences, and turns to what Kiera Lindsey calls 'speculative biography' to breathe life into her subject. Whereas Mary Ann Gill soars off the page in *The Convict's Daughter*, elevated by Lindsey's overtures to the reader, the effect is not as mesmerising in *The Life and Times of a 'Turbulent Anarchist'*.<sup>37</sup> Instead, George's imagined Lee, tending to a stew or murmuring confidences in her 'strong Irish accent', seems uncanny, emphasising the chasm between her vibrant public persona and her veiled interior life.<sup>38</sup>

*You Daughters of Freedom* begins with Clare Wright's realisation, following a public discussion of *Suffragette* (2015), that: 'I had mistakenly assumed Australian women already knew their own history'.<sup>39</sup> Her book together with the biographies of Mary Lee and Dora Meeson Coates do much more than simply fill this gap. They remind us of women's integral role in the struggle to create an idealistic, democratic and ethnically homogenous Commonwealth; a nation that, for good and ill, held intrigue for progressives across the world.<sup>40</sup> Bracing and briskly told, these activists' stories deserve a wide readership. However, the integration of their biographies with the story of a nation searching for its identity and place in the world is far from seamless. Wright concludes that Meeson Coates created not a banner in her Chelsea studio, but 'a founding document'. An artefact that reveals as much about the outsized 'aspirations and identity of the young nation as the still-wet constitution'.<sup>41</sup>

35 The phrase was coined by the American suffragist Carrie Chapman Catt in 1908 and quickly adopted by her British counterparts. Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865–1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 200–1; Sumita Mukherjee, *Indian Suffragettes: Female Identities and Transnational Networks* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 30.

36 Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom*, 247, 389–91.

37 Kiera Lindsey, *The Convict's Daughter: The Scandal That Shocked a Colony* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2016); Kiera Lindsey, "Deliberate Freedom": Using Speculation and Imagination in Historical Biography', *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Programs* 50 (2018): 1–16.

38 George, *Mary Lee*, 29–30.

39 Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom*, 7.

40 For more on the centrality of white racial kinship to progressive networks across the English-speaking world, see Marilyn Lake, *Progressive New World: How Settler Colonialism and Transpacific Exchange Shaped American Reform* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019).

41 Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom*, 473.

As with all founding documents, careful attention reveals that its provenance is a little more prosaic and its meaning more ambiguous than at first glance. Perhaps Meeson Coates, an experienced political cartoonist, left a subtler message in her depiction of Britannia, gazing into the horizon, scarcely aware of Minerva's fingers on her shoulder.



# BOOK REVIEWS





# Alastair Cooper review of:

## Peter Jones, *Australia's Argonauts: The Remarkable Story of the First Class to Enter the Royal Australian Naval College*

(West Geelong, Vic.: Barrallier Books trading as Echo Books, 2016), 761 pp., \$59.95, ISBN 97809994624611

*Australia's Argonauts* is indeed a remarkable book. It is both individual and institutional history; social and military history; policy and operational history; and examines these issues over much of Australia's twentieth century. Written by retired Vice Admiral Peter Jones, it describes the personal and professional lives of the 28 young Australians selected to form the first group of students for the Royal Australian Naval College, the Pioneer Class, who joined the Navy in 1913. By virtue of the broad approach it takes, *Australia's Argonauts* goes beyond most military and naval history, which more typically focus on individual people or ships, or on more specific aspects of particular operations, policy or equipment capability. For this reason alone the book is without many close parallels.

After Federation in 1901, there was extensive debate about the form Australia's naval forces should take. This was resolved in 1911 with the transition of the Commonwealth Naval Forces into the Royal Australian Navy, the announcement of the purchase of ships and submarines to form a Fleet Unit and the establishment of training facilities for the sailors and officers to operate them. While Australia's navy was consciously and closely modelled on and integrated with Britain's Royal Navy, there were significant differences from the start. These were driven in part by Australian officials and in part by Royal Navy officers on loan to Australia, who aimed to establish a training system both appropriate to Australia and without some of the problems of the original British model. The result was a conscious Australian choice; though it was necessarily similar to its Royal Navy antecedents, it was sufficiently different to distinguish it and the officers it produced. The process to establish what became the Royal Australian Naval College provides the starting point for *Australia's Argonauts*, as it describes the selection process and broad social background of the first naval cadets. While the book's focus is on the members of the Pioneer Class, it provides extensive descriptions of the naval officers and academic staff who shaped the college at its outset.

*Australia's Argonauts* describes the Pioneer Class's education and training, which commenced at age 13, at Osborne House in Geelong and then at Jervis Bay; their subsequent dispatch to Britain to join Royal Navy ships during the second half of

World War I; their service through the interwar period and then as more senior officers during World War II and the Korean War. The longest-serving officers were compulsorily retired at age 60 at the end of 1959. While some reached high rank, most notably Vice Admiral Sir John Collins who served for seven years as the first naval member of the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board and chief of naval staff, there was a wide range of personal and professional lives. Several did not pass the Naval College course; one died from meningitis and two died in accidents at sea before they reached the age of 20; the winner of the King's medal for the top cadet midshipman left the Navy during postwar retrenchments to pursue a business career; some found the Navy life was not to their liking and resigned; some struggled with alcoholism; several were killed in action during World War II. A significant number of this class played leading roles as operational commanders during the Pacific War, with roles ranging from Task Group and warship command and the creation and direction of the famous Coastwatcher network, to the organisation of the Navy in Australia and the supply of munitions and technology for its ships. *Australia's Argonauts* describes the part these people played in events throughout their professional lives; while it is clearly focused on the Royal Australian Navy, the activities of those who did not pursue a naval career are also described.

The book has its origins in the author's experience in the late 1980s as a more junior officer working for the then chief of naval staff, Vice Admiral M. W. Hudson. In preparing to remember the life of what he thought was the last member of the Naval College's Pioneer Class, Peter Jones discovered how little was known of many, what they had done in life and that at least one was still alive. Initially the project to describe the life and service of this group fell to Tony Grazebrook, the defence reporter and naval historian; a natural choice given his deep knowledge of the Royal Navy's senior officer cohort and the history of both the British and Australian navies. With Tony's passing and the completion of his own full-time naval service, Peter Jones took up the project again and built on the research to that point. This is significant for at least two reasons. First, the book is based on over three decades of research by two students of the Royal Australian Navy's history. In doing so they have shed light on people and periods of history that had not been studied with such detail or, in some cases, studied at all. So *Australia's Argonauts* is based on a large body of original research, which shows through in the final product. Second, recalling the breadth of the subject, the research task that was needed to produce a book like this was very large, made even bigger simply because of the small number of other historians who have done significant work in this field.

There are few parallels for a book of this nature, certainly in the field of Australian military history and likely in Australian history or military history more broadly. Written several decades earlier, Rick Atkinson's *The Long Grey Line* is perhaps the closest. *The Long Grey Line* is an account of the service of the West Point Class of 1966, which suffered one of the highest proportions of casualties of any West Point class and whose service covered some of the most turbulent periods of the

US Army's history. Even this book has the advantage of a narrower chronological focus and more readily accessible primary sources, highlighting the achievement in the research for *Australia's Argonauts*.

The relatively underdeveloped nature of Australian naval history is even more pronounced in the area of naval personnel. *Australia's Argonauts* stands alongside the work by historians such as Ian Cunningham, Kathryn Spurling and Jason Sears, and more recently Ian Pfennigwerth and Christine Reghenzani, to have placed a focus on the people of the Royal Australian Navy and the social context in which they served. This makes the work particularly valuable for the contribution it makes and the insight it provides into naval culture. Given the contemporary appreciation for the importance of culture as a crucial element in the success of an organisation, *Australia's Argonauts* should be very useful, not just for those interested in navies or military organisations, but students of social history more broadly.

The book is not without its faults, although these are perhaps the inescapable consequence of the task attempted. With such a broad scope it raises and addresses numerous questions, and integrating them into a single narrative must have been a challenge. By attempting to describe the lives of so many people, doing justice to their professional and personal experiences, over the best part of four decades, *Australia's Argonauts* is sometimes difficult to keep up with, as the reader has to follow the lives of over 30 people (students and staff) and make sense of the breadth and diversity of the events in their lives. This is no reflection on the quality of the writing, which is good, but simply a reflection of the scope. Some of the events could and have been the subjects of books in their own right and to describe them from a Pioneer Class-centric perspective is both original and challenging. For example, the ironically named 1918 Battle of May Island, in which many of the Pioneer Class were involved as midshipmen and one was killed, was a complex and confusing series of navigation accidents that occurred in poor visibility at night. The description in the book is accurate and written with care and precision, but needs to be read with equal care and precision and would have benefited from better charts or diagrams to aid clarity. Paradoxically, even at its considerable 761-page length (with the text finishing after 642 pages), there are also many questions that could have been explored further, particularly more comparative analysis of the Pioneer Class against other classes from the Naval College, the other service colleges and Australian society more generally. The book is in this sense more descriptive than analytical history.

*Australia's Argonauts* is published by Echo Books and is very well produced for something of this scale with such limited production resources. This publisher is noteworthy for its innovative processes. *Australia's Argonauts* might not have been a viable commercial publishing proposition when it was first conceived; however, the disruption driven by electronic publications and innovations that have followed have enabled books with much smaller print runs to appear. For a subject that

is somewhat niche in practice, if not in scope or application, publishers such as Echo Books are significant and valuable partners. There are a small number of editing errors, which are minor distractions rather than significant problems. Given its breadth and difficulty to categorise, it would likely have been a challenging publication prospect for a mainstream publisher. Acknowledging the implications for cost and complexity, more maps and charts would probably have helped in the description of some of the operational aspects, where the physical orientation and special relationships of people, islands and ships is so crucial to understanding what occurred and why people reacted as they did.

So, is it worth it? Absolutely yes. Peter Jones writes engagingly and authoritatively. His knowledge of the Australian Navy as an institution and the research that he conducted for this book is evident and one of reasons the book is so good. What is also apparent is the regard the author had for the people about whom he writes. The Pioneer Class and the staff of the Royal Australian Naval College are described with compassionate insight. There are no unnecessary judgements and the people are understood on their own terms and the context of their time.

For naval historians, this is a significant reference work. It also lights the path for other historians by demonstrating what can be done and what else remains to be done. For example, between 1913 and 1958 most naval officers joined as 13-year-olds, with subsequent changes progressively increasing that age to the current 17–18-year-old minimum. There is little work that describes the changes and the impact on the Navy, nor places them in the context of contemporary Australian society. Similarly, the 1986 commencement of training most officers at the joint service Australian Defence Force Academy had a significant impact on the culture and cohesion of the Navy officer corps, but it has not been studied in any detail. Looking at individuals, the survey of the first 28 officers through the Naval College, and the fascinating lives they led, naturally leads to wondering about the hundreds and thousands who followed in their footsteps; there are many opportunities for further research and publication.

For Australian historians, this is a work that provides an insight into an Australian national institution that is not always well understood. Far from being slavishly or unthinkingly British in its approach, the Royal Australian Navy was consciously Australian from its inception, actively using and benefiting from its relationship with the Royal Navy: *Australia's Argonauts* describes one major element, personnel policies, of this process.

*Australia's Argonauts* is an important contribution to naval and Australian history; its account of the first class at the Royal Australian Naval College is unlikely to be surpassed. The book should definitely be held by all Australian and international tertiary libraries, by those with an interest in naval and military history and also in twentieth-century social history.

## Carole Ferrier review of:

### Helen Bones, *The Expatriate Myth: New Zealand Writers and the Colonial World*

(Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2018), 242 pp., PB \$35.00,  
ISBN 9781988531175

Since August 2016, and continuing until now, considerable consternation has pervaded both Houses of the Australian parliament in relation to Section 44 of the Australian Constitution—that specifies that one cannot run for election as a Member of the House of Representatives or a Senator if one has citizenship of two countries, or ‘dual nationality’. Over the past two years, this clause (designed at Federation to prevent any disloyalty in the event of a war breaking out between one’s two nationalities) has led to at least 15 members resigning from their seats—and more still nervously researching past antecedents—and having to be replaced, in some cases by a new self with the tie to the original country officially severed for ever. (This was an ironic event in that the successive resignations politically problematised Australia’s vaunted ‘successful multiculturalism’, and doubly ironic in that almost all of those concerned were ‘from’ white settler states or the Mother Country of the Commonwealth.)

Helen Bones’s discussion in *The Expatriate Myth* of the processes of the construction of a ‘national literature’ describes some similar anxieties about who could or should be considered a New Zealand author or creator of literature. Should this be on the basis of birthplace; or of continuing residence; or of the content or settings of their writing, it was asked. Bones contends, reasonably, that ‘Concentrating upon the writers’ nationality makes it impossible to create an accurate picture of the context within which they created literature’ (p. 72) and, accordingly, she comes up with a number of other angles to investigate.

One main theme, or trope, in the discussions is that of exile, or travel, to another place. In the period upon which the book focuses (1890–1945), the main countries to which these New Zealand writers voyaged were principally the United Kingdom (habitually, and popularly, designated as ‘Home’) and sometimes Canada or the United States. Particularly in the earlier years of the twentieth century, publishing and distribution of books and magazines was dominated by Britain—both physically (conservative author and printer Geoffrey de Montalk described New Zealand’s production values as those of ‘bandaged moas’ [p. 78]) and also in terms of ‘the networks of the colonial writing world’ (p. 73)—many of which, back then, orbited around the ‘colonial centre’, Britain or, mainly, London. (In the earlier

period, antipodean libraries—ranging from large institutional ones to those on sheep stations—along with numerous bookshops, were also very significant in the circulation of literature.) Bones quotes Lyons and Arnold's research on the 'closed market' that gave British publishers exclusive rights of distribution and copyright over 'an imperial cultural space ... shared [by Australians] with Canadians, South Africans, Indians, New Zealanders and other readers of the Empire' (p. 81). Australia/Australasia was the largest offshore market for British books, and this continued right up until the 1980s when British publishers obtained access to the American market. While there was often resistance to the term 'Australasia', since it might suggest a swallowing up of 'Maoriland' by Australia, there were benefits for the former in their proximity.

There had also been 'an earlier connectedness of Australasian literary worlds' (p. 57), Bones suggests, citing figures such as the Australian *Bulletin* containing 10 per cent New Zealand writing (1890–1900), or Jock Phillips's suggestion that the magazine's 'Australasian cultural world based in Sydney and Melbourne' appeared to have 'Queensland and New Zealand as its provinces' (p. 57).

At the turn of the century, newspapers were a quite substantial outlet for writers of stories in particular, but also essays and poems. For those such as the New Zealand popular novelist May Scott, who got to publish in 1957 the autobiographical narrative *The Unwritten Book*, 'the networks of the colonial writing world' (p. 73) could be investigated to market one's work. The *Manchester Guardian* accepted one of Scott's stories and proposed to take more. Eileen Duggan survived financially as a full-time poet by publishing her poems in newspapers and magazines in Ireland, the UK, Australia and America (p. 11), without needing to travel overseas to make contacts. Jane Mander lived in Paris for a time, but also sent articles to newspapers, including the Christchurch and Auckland *Sun*. In 1926, there were 61 daily newspapers in New Zealand; these were, Bones suggests, 'an important tool of colonial communication and dominance ... providing a sense of regional community but also maintaining ties to Home by reproducing information from Britain' (p. 31).

When they did travel to England, New Zealanders had a few advantages over many others—leaving aside the rather twee 1927 formulation in the *Christchurch Press* that New Zealand was the 'youngest of Britain's colonies' and, accordingly, 'a little dearer to the mother's heart', with its denizens able to feel at home, at Home (p. 168). New Zealand had an image of being socially progressive, especially in relation to being first to introduce national women's suffrage, in 1893 (p. 128). Bones quotes Raewyn Dalziel arguing that this 'was in one sense a conservative victory', since 'it did more to reinforce traditional gender roles than to extend the options available to women' (p. 128). The resistance to excessive alcohol consumption and domestic violence was, however, not merely moralistic, enshrining the tradition of women as guardians of the home and family; the vote was not merely a liberal reform irrelevant



to the working class. The analysis here would have benefited from some reference to texts such as, for example, Susan Magarey's *Passions of the First Wave Feminists*, John McCulloch's thesis on the suffragist Elizabeth Brentnall or accounts of women's struggles in the Australasian socialist press of the time. The New Zealand example and the subsequent achievement of (white) women's suffrage—serially, in various Australian states, and federally—gave great encouragement to British suffragettes (who achieved the vote for propertied women in 1918, extended to all women over 21 in 1928) and to other European campaigners. Leaders of the suffrage struggle in Britain were divided on class lines, with Sylvia and Adela Pankhurst breaking away from the nationalistic support for World War I adopted by Emmeline and Christabel, their mother and sister. Adela, indeed, participated in the beginnings of the Communist Party in Sydney—though she changed later to become a defender of Empire and militarism, and at rallies crossed swords with Jean Devanny, by then a leader of public agitation for the party. Bones's cultural history of the evolution of a (national) notion of New Zealand literature tends to marginalise the role of socialist ideas as they found expression in and through practices of the Left and the Communist Party (the latter, in its early days before the rise of Stalinism, had progressive positions on sexuality).

Going along with the received idea of a hegemony of puritan, petty bourgeois consciousness tends to reinforce it: Bones gives only a diffident defence of Jean Devanny, in relation to a review in 1930 by Isabel Maud Cluett (Peacocke) of one of her novels, '*Bushman Burke* may be said to be a riotous "saga of sex," and, though her stories all have a New Zealand background ... the dramas she unfolds have small relation to New Zealand life, its conditions and traditions' (p. 102). In response to the review's dismissive hostility, Bones comments, somewhat apologetically, 'it is possible that the themes Devanny addressed and their consequent association with New Zealand communities ... the reviewers found jarring' (p. 102). She does also mention that repressive societies can generate political and creative oppositional practices and responses, but writers who did engage in them hardly appear in her very short bibliography of 'Primary Sources: Novels, Poetry and Memoirs'. Kirstene Moffatt's bibliography, 'The Puritan Paradox' (that records material from 1860 to 1940) recognises the contradictory social effects of sexual repression, and provides critical summaries, in its second part, of works by writers who might be considered to challenge the puritan mindset.

Certainly, New Zealand was historically a very patriarchally oriented society, but recent readers may be more inclined to sympathise with Moffatt's 2012 enthusiasm for another Devanny novel, of which she produced a scholarly edition, *Lenore Divine* (1926), and her opinion that it is 'impossible to overestimate the radicalism of Devanny's fiction'. Bones's account underestimates the quality and influence of feminist creative and critical writing both in the period focused upon and later, and it could have given some space to critiques provided by those using feminist

methodologies from the 1960s, including, in New Zealand, Riemke Ensing, Aorewa McLeod, Heather Roberts, Rachel Barrowman, Mary Paul, Michelle Leggott and others, and the substantial writing of a number of critics in Australia. Bones does mention that, in relation to ‘Curnow’s brand of nationalism’, it was the case that ‘from the 1970s, feminist and Maori historians protested about their exclusion from this version of national identity’ (p. 187, n. 44), and that Patrick Evans noted in 1990 that women writers of earlier times had ‘seemed to melt away’ (p. 197, n. 90), for a while at least. Denis Glover had lamented earlier writing as ‘the daisied path of pallid good taste’ that inclined to a preference for ‘leisurely-whimsy, feminine mimsy’ writing, while Rex Fairburn, in a letter to Glover in 1934, expressed his hostility to ‘the Menstrual School of poetry’ (p. 55). Some women writers resorted to male pseudonyms; Edith Lyttleton wrote with unspecified gender as G. B. Lancaster, and ‘in reviews of her early books, about rough working life in New Zealand and Australia, words such as “virile,” “forcible,” “strong” and “masterful” occurred again and again’ (p. 160). More deliberate was Jessie Weston’s adoption of the pseudonym, ‘C. de Thierry’ for her writing on politics and for military magazines: ‘Only her editor knew she was a woman’ (p. 160).

Drawing upon the perspective of Patrick Brantlinger’s *Rule of Darkness*, Bones suggests that ‘adventurous narratives’ of the time ‘developed and perpetuated colonial attitudes towards the rest of the world’. These included the orientalist stereotype of the ‘colonial exotic’. There were various anxieties about the decline of the British empire, giving rise, according to Rob Dixon, to ‘tales of regenerative violence on the colonial frontier’ (p. 90). Bones comments that, during the period upon which she focuses, it appeared that ‘Maori writers in English numbered very few’ (p. 90). She also mentions that both Katharine Mansfield and Frances Hodgkins wore a tiki; that Mansfield wrote in her journal, in 1907, ‘give me the Maori or the tourist—but nothing between’ (p. 209, n. 5); and that Jessie Mackay referred to ‘unstoried waters’ (p. 105), to which Bones politely notes that ‘of course they were not unstoried’, this ‘Anglo-Colonia’ (p. 166) conceit ignores ‘centuries of Maori tradition’ (p. 105). The waters, indeed, had actually been storied in Māori culture since before the Battle of Hastings in Britain. And as for voyaging across the sea, Māori had visited Australia and Tahiti in the late eighteenth century and travelled from Aotearoa to Britain before the annexation by Britain in 1840. Moehanga of Ngāpuhi visited London in 1806 and was received at Court; Hongi Hika, the Ngāpuhi chief, travelled with a group to England in 1820; he had an audience with George III, worked on a Māori grammar in Cambridge, and returned with muskets from Sydney. By 1842, the Māori language could be heard on Sydney’s docks. So, could this literary history of Aotearoa New Zealand have been a bit more ‘bicultural’—even if it is the case that Māori people did not publish a large amount of ‘literature’ in the English language until the 1970s. Bones briefly references the politician and cultural historian and activist Apirana Ngata, who, Linda Tuhiwai Smith recalls, recorded ‘ancient Maori songs’ (including one about kumara) in the 1920s.

Bones's *The Expatriate Myth* investigates a rather narrow proposition about the New Zealand 'national literature' and its producers, but the book suggests lines of enquiry that can encourage and enrich readings of what is a substantially interesting and significant body of literature, and its distinctive context. It is rich in suggestive detail—despite what I said above about sometimes wishing for more. And, thank goodness, she chose a publisher that still allows its authors to use normal, precise and detailed endnotes, so that readers seeking to follow lines of investigation do not have to try to contact the author (hoping they are not dead or disappeared overseas!), in order to identify, locate or evaluate their sources.



## Kay Saunders review of:

### Leigh Straw, *The Worst Woman in Sydney: The Life and Crimes of Kate Leigh*

(Sydney: NewSouth, 2016), 272 pp., PB \$32.99, ISBN 9781742234793

### Leigh Straw, *Lillian Armfield: How Australia's First Female Detective Took on Tilly Devine and the Razor Gangs and Changed the Face of the Force*

(Sydney: Hachette Australia, 2018), 306 pp., PB \$32.99, ISBN 9780733638107

Leigh Straw has secured her reputation as one of Australia's most prolific and versatile writers by these two companion books. Her sheer versatility is astounding, not only its breadth but in its consistent quality and inventiveness. As a historian at Notre Dame University in Western Australia, she is best known for her study of Fremantle and its seedier side. Her recent conference papers on the plight of returned servicemen for World War I again shows a sympathy and depth of understanding for a person young in years but mature in compassion and insight.

Straw's novel *Limestone*, published in 2015 in Edinburgh, is a police procedural, set in her familiar territory of Fremantle where a young Detective Sergeant, Claire Patterson, is attempting to find the identity of a serial killer. The characters and their interrelationships within the police service allow considerable scope of a continuation as a series. Unfortunately the book did not receive the attention or critical acclaim it merited. No doubt the difficulties of distribution hampered a wide readership.

Her first foray into these biographies, so entwined and mirrored almost as a parable of good and evil, was disguised in the form of a historical novel. Set in the 1920s, *Sophia Lane* (2015) takes the reader into the dark and violent world of inner Sydney when it was still dangerous and raw. Ruth Park's novel *Harp in the South*, published in 1948, is set in this environment, although the trilogy consists of a family saga where sectarianism proves a fertile theme for the intergenerational drama. In Straw's fiction, the storyline is more contained. Lyndsey Collier, an ambitious young woman from the bush, joins the police force as a novelty in the all-male domain of law enforcement. Her life and career are ruined, not by the criminals and prostitutes, but by a corrupt officer. Being fiction, there is a romance between Collier and a man of somewhat dubious character.

Straw uses the device to construct her complex narrative by employing a young journalist who attempts to record Collier's life story at the end of her life. The parallels between the choices women make in both professional and private domain are skilfully explored. As far as researchers know, in real life Lillian Armfield did not pursue sexual romances with men; though, somewhat as a tantalising afterword, Straw ponders whether Armfield had an illegitimate daughter left behind with her family in Mittagong.

By choosing Kate Leigh as her subject, Straw was indeed a brave woman. The excellent studies by Larry Writer on Tilly Devine and Leigh, as well as his work on the Razor Gangs of the 1920s in inner Sydney, clearly marked out a territory, at first glance, hard to enter. With the endorsement and encouragement of Writer, a supportive colleague, Straw perforce does cover some of his territory, just as I did in my study of Tilly Devine in *Notorious Australian Women* (2011). However, the material is so rich and diverse that it allows multiple forays, adding texture to the pioneering studies by Writer. Previously, much of the sagas was contained in lurid features in the tabloid press rather than serious analysis.

These more popular books on Leigh and Armfield are difficult to write for anyone trained in academic research and writing. There can be no discussion of methodology or theory. Footnotes are kept to the minimum. The central story has to buzz along with the sure hand of an experienced biographer, keeping to the main highways of the life without diminishing the lure of the interesting byway or side street or, in this case, unhealthy lane clogged with drunken bodies and garbage. Academics have the safety of the whole superstructure of conventional discourses.

Yet the capable writer has to undertake the same degree of research in the archives, memoirs and newspapers, and seamlessly weave it into the narrative without being obtrusive or obvious. In this regard Straw excels. Her primary research is thorough and impressive but at no time does it deter from the telling of each woman's life. The environment they inhabited, Leigh as a criminal entrepreneur in sly-grog, cocaine, prostitution and protection rackets and Armfield as force of the law to counteract these nefarious undertakings, is skilfully depicted. Not in a sensational or lurid manner but as a geography of appalling poverty, where the survival of the fittest was a rule for the criminals. For Leigh, her dual role as a drug dealer and Madame, often forcing vulnerable girls and women into the lower echelons of prostitution, alongside her Janus face of local matriarch giving benefit to the community before the days of social security, is scrutinised as both logical and consistent.

For Armfield no such dilemmas presented themselves as the first policewoman in Australia, entering the NSW service in 1915. This was the same year as the United Kingdom initiated this new role that extended a woman's role from Police Matron to a police officer, albeit with more limited duties, opportunities and pension. This coincided with their recruitment in a select number of states in the United States.

Armfield's duties were conceived to encompass the female domain of runaway girls, vulnerable, destitute women and prostitutes. By necessity this brought her into contact with the crime entrepreneurs like Devine and Leigh. This is not to say that Armfield was not exposed to life-threatening danger. 'Botany Mary', a noted cocaine dealer, threatened her with a red-hot iron and arrests were made with knife-wielding male criminals. Armfield was permitted to carry a revolver given the occupational hazards and perils she faced daily.

At the other side of the law, Leigh faced constant danger and potential death from rival gangs as well as violence within her own circle with hard-drinking, violent sexual partners. Long terms of imprisonment were an occupational hazard to be endured. These were a serious worry as her complex business could collapse or be eclipsed by rivals such as Devine. Her business, however, thrived until the nature of the industries she was involved in saw new players with more modern methods.

Both women were essentially pioneers. Despite Prohibition and later the Depression, the United States produced few women like Devine or Leigh. Stephanie St Clair ran a prosperous sly-grog enterprise in Harlem, and women like Texas Guinan operated popular speakeasies. Women like Bonnie Parker and Ma Baker in the next decade were essentially part of a bank robbery operation rather than career criminals with a diverse portfolio. In this instance, they resembled famous male gangsters in New York City and Chicago, though these gangs operated along ethnic lines. Devine and Leigh were successful business women in their own right not 'gangsters' molls'.

During the 1920s and into the 1930s the changes in the drug laws allowed new opportunities for the unscrupulous trader. In the nineteenth century, patent medicines given to teething babies and fractious children contained large doses of opium. Laudanum, a mixture of opium and alcohol, was readily and legally obtainable as an antidepressant and sleep inducer. Women used these products to soothe menstrual cramps. Seemingly innocent remedies such as Godfrey's Cordial and Bonnington's Irish Moss contained cocaine, as did Coca-Cola until 1905. Cocaine was available in pharmacies without prescription as a 'pick-me-up' for adults.

Canadian and Australian soldiers on the Western Front found the pleasures of cocaine and laudanum a balm to the horrors of trench warfare. It was after the epidemic of addiction of men returning from war that alarm bells rang over the toxicity and addictive qualities of these drugs. Legislation in the early and mid-1920s across the English-speaking world addressed this issue. Given the prolonged exposure of children to soporifics and presumably addiction, it is a wonder that alarm had not been earlier expressed.



This is where Leigh enters a new market outside of her usual fare of prostitution and sly-grog. She was not without competition. But her business acumen and organisational skills saw her operations lead the Sydney market. It was never a major element of her business, though an intensely lucrative one.

Unlike morphine or heroin, cocaine contained a glamorous reputation. Sherlock Holmes, in the Arthur Conan Doyle stories *The Sign of Four* (1890) and 'A Scandal in Bohemia' (1891), takes cocaine when he feels depleted or morose. Agatha Christie's well-regarded novel *Death in the Clouds* (1935) contains the character of a chic cocaine-addicted Countess. Drug addiction also features in her novel *And Then There Were None* (1939). Other popular crime novelists of the period like Ngaio Marsh, who often sets her fiction in the theatrical world, explore the issue of addiction. In *Enter a Murder* (1935) a wealthy theatrical impresario runs a cocaine racket on the side of his legitimate business. The prolific American crime novelist Elizabeth Daly also has cocaine running through her milieu of smart, sophisticated Upper East Siders.

This fictional representation was not the reality for cocaine and other drug taking in Sydney in the interwar years. The trade was sordid, dangerous and highly competitive. In July 1930, Armfield arrested Leigh on drug charges. The next year saw her arrested for attempted murder. Five years later, Leigh appeared again in court charged with possessing phenobarbitone.

Yet in other respects the lives of Leigh and Armfield run as parallels. Both were born into rural poverty in the 1880s. Armfield trained as a nurse, working in Callan Park Hospital for the Insane before joining the NSW police in 1915. She slowly worked her way up to Sergeant First Class by the end of her career in 1949. Though given a generous pay-out, she was not entitled to a pension and lived frugally. Leigh took the other route of alliances with criminals and establishing her own crime operations. Though, like Devine, she made enormous amounts of money, she failed to pay her income tax and was declared bankrupt in 1954. Both died in relative poverty after a lifetime as independent women. Vince Kelly wrote a major book on Armfield in 1961, 10 years before her death. It contains valuable oral reminiscences. Leigh waited until Larry Writer explored her life as a career criminal.

Straw's companion biographies are lively, thought-provoking and challenging. Exploring the lives of two women who defied convention by rejecting marriage and motherhood as a woman's sole occupation and inhabited the dangerous streets of inner-city Sydney of the interwar years, both are role models of independence and ambition. This is not to endorse the nefarious activities of Leigh's enterprises or her pervasive violence. In many respects the two women were each other's mirror image, the light and the dark, the good and the evil.

# David Roth review of:

## David Hastings, *Odyssey of the Unknown Anzac*

(Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2018), 185 pp., PB \$29.95,  
ISBN 9781925523539

The tragic story of George McQuay, who returned from World War I to long-term care in mental institutions, may well stand for the experiences of many mentally broken ex-service personnel. As C. J. Dennis wrote: “I’m only ‘alf a man” ’e said. “I’ve seen so much uv death”. Diggers returned to broken relationships, destroyed friendships and lost jobs, alcoholism, and all too many to lifelong confinement in asylums. David Hastings’s biography traces the early life of McQuay, his erratic behaviour en route to the Western Front, his escape to London as a vagrant and arrest there, and his subsequent 12-year confinement at Callan Park Hospital for the Insane in Sydney. Of particular interest to this reviewer is Hastings’s sympathetic description of the care of mentally ill veterans, initially at Broughton Hall, a military facility for ‘troubled’ veterans, and then at the adjacent Callan Park if their condition was long-term or unmanageable. Hastings also gives a moving account of McQuay, the ‘unknown patient’, as a living focus for the grief and longing of countless bereaved parents and siblings.

McQuay became known as the ‘Unknown Patient’ because he persistently identified himself as ‘George Brown’ after his apprehension in London in 1916. ‘Brown’ gave an incorrect regimental number, which made him impossible to find in Australian Army records. He was thought to be an absent-without-leave Australian soldier because he could not give a coherent account of himself and wore an Australian slouch hat. ‘Brown’ was found to be unfit for duty on account of mental illness and was returned to Sydney in late 1916. Initially he was sent to Number 13 Australian Auxiliary Military Hospital (Broughton Hall). Since patients were admitted putatively as ‘voluntary’ patients, this allowed them to avoid the stigma of being certified as insane, a requirement for involuntary admission to an asylum. Because of his ‘aggressive habits’, ‘Brown’ was soon sent to the Darlinghurst Reception House (an evaluation facility), certified and transferred to Callan Park. He was diagnosed with ‘dementia praecox’ (now known as schizophrenia) and ‘delusional insanity’. ‘Brown’ would not or could not give the names of friends or relatives, and he would not allow his picture to be taken. Hastings hypothesises that these tactics allowed him to escape punishment for desertion. Despite circulation of ‘Brown’s’ description, no contacts could be found. Thus ‘Brown’ became known as the ‘Unknown Patient’.

Conditions at Callan Park had been deteriorating since the late nineteenth century due to persistent overcrowding, and during the war due to staff shortages and financial cutback. Yet I am inclined to think that Hastings somewhat overstates the maltreatment of patients. Complaints from the public had indeed led to the calling of the New South Wales Royal Commission into Lunacy Law and Administration in 1923. Hastings focuses on a number of complaints from some patients at the commission who testified to inter-patient violence and the food being 'unfit to eat'. Yet the annual Reports of the Inspector-General of Mental Hospitals show that violence, while impossible to totally prevent, was at a relatively low level. My research into the menus and other related evidence indicates that the food, although basic, was indeed 'fit to eat'. Although constrained by limited budgets, management took some care to meet dietary requirements according to the nutritional knowledge of the day. In the end, as Hastings acknowledges, the royal commission found that allegations of poor treatment were 'greatly exaggerated'. Nevertheless, he draws attention to continuing claims of whitewash. But the numerous letters of praise from ex-patients tabled at the commission, and their gratitude for kind treatment, give a much more nuanced picture.

Hastings also refers to 'bizarre' methods used in US mental health care in the 1930s, such as prolonged sleep over seven or eight days induced by barbiturates, or treatment with ultraviolet light. While barbiturates and other hypnotics were used at Callan Park to assist sleep, 'deep sleep' therapy was not used in Australia until the Chelmsford scandals of the 1960s and 1970s, long after 'Brown's departure. Ultraviolet therapy had been successfully used to treat skin conditions since 1896 in Europe and had become a standard therapy by the 1920s. It may have been used on 'Brown'. There is evidence that US patients lost 'teeth, tonsils, appendixes and colons' as part of treatments for mental illness in the 1920s and 1930s, as Hastings claims. Nevertheless, he presents no evidence that any of these therapies were used on 'Brown' during his time at Callan Park. While hypnosis was tried on 'Brown' without success to attempt to bring back his memory, he refused thyroid treatment. There is no record of any other treatment.

The 'butterfly' moment, as Hastings expresses it, was the withdrawal of the Red Cross supply of tobacco to veterans at asylums in 1923. New South Wales asylums had issued a tobacco ration to all patients until 1918, when no new patients received further supplies—visitors could still donate tobacco. After four years of 'famine', and no response from a request to tobacco companies, the Returned Sailors and Soldiers League decided to launch a public appeal for a tobacco fund in early 1928. To attract publicity, they supplied the press with accounts of friendless old soldiers struggling with mental illness at Callan Park, including the story of the 'Unknown Patient'. An explosion of grief followed, with hundreds of letters from people all over Australia with missing sons or brothers asking for a description or photograph. 'Brown' became the focus of pent-up grief and loss. He was persuaded

to allow a photograph to be taken. The photograph and description were published in newspaper articles, on pamphlets distributed by the League and on League noticeboards. Two New Zealand childhood friends, now living in Australia, soon identified 'Brown' as George McQuay, who had enlisted in the New Zealand Army in 1915. When they visited Callan Park, McQuay recognised them and talked about old pals. It appears that 'Brown' had dropped hints about his New Zealand background several times to Callan Park doctors, once as early as 1917, but apparently these hints had been brushed aside and buried in the files. Brown was quickly reunited with his mother, brought from Taranaki to Sydney at New Zealand Army expense. Like many Australian mothers, Emma McQuay had searched in vain for her lost son, engaging a solicitor to make inquiries.

McQuay's New Zealand Army experiences and the details of McQuay's earlier life at Taranaki are for the first time supplied by Hastings. Together with Hastings's hypothesis about the reasons for McQuay's alleged evasiveness, these provide invaluable context and understanding for McQuay's long-term confinement in mental asylums in Australia and New Zealand. Apart from the departure of his father, an alcoholic, when McQuay was 12, it seems that he had had a happy family life, but he was a poor scholar. Hastings suggests that McQuay was already showing signs of mental disturbance before the war, such as his apparent dismissal when his employer was short of labour and indications of social isolation, a known symptom of schizophrenia. McQuay had some sort of breakdown on ship en route to the front in 1915, being disciplined several times. On landing in Egypt, the New Zealand Army ignored the shipboard medical board recommendation that he be shipped home as medically unfit. Although it is not clear from Hastings's account that McQuay was at Gallipoli, we know he was at Lemnos, where, according to his own later account, he 'disgraced himself'. He went AWOL several times on return to Egypt, but was sent on to the Western Front. At the front, McQuay may have had a traumatic experience, such as being buried by a shell, although there is no evidence other than his own account. From Hastings's account, it seems that he deserted soon afterwards and somehow made his way to London where he was picked up wandering about the city.

During the war, four New Zealand soldiers were executed for desertion—they were posthumously pardoned in 2000. Hastings conjectures that McQuay was aware that the Australian Army did not execute deserters and hence posed as an Australian, avoiding all questions about family or friends, giving a false military number and violently resisting photography until well after the conflict. Hastings also supposes that McQuay may have been additionally motivated by the white-hot 'white feather' hysteria of the war years in New Zealand and elsewhere in the British Empire, when young women were encouraged to reflect on the manhood and patriotism of 'shirkers'. He did not want to be shamed in front of family and friends. Yet it seems clear from McQuay's Callan Park case notes, his military records and his subsequent

confinement at Porirua Mental Hospital in New Zealand until 1931 that McQuay did not simulate his mental condition. It seems that the tipping point of the League's tobacco drive for McQuay was his apparent acceptance, after the flood of publicity in 1928, that the jingoistic passions of the War and the appetite for punishment had for a long time segued into grief and heartbreak. And he still missed his family.

Returning home to New Zealand in 1928 with his mother and two Callan Park attendants, McQuay was medically examined, certified and sent to Porirua in Wellington. After some remission of symptoms during his voyage home, McQuay's mental state deteriorated and his chances of recovery were stated to be 'practically nil'. Despite this assessment, McQuay was soon allowed home on leave in Stratford for a probationary period of six months. Emma McQuay had to pay for an attendant while her son was on home leave, the government would only pay his Porirua expenses. The Army hastened to sanitise McQuay's military record. While at home, he was honourably discharged as of November 1916 and was awarded the 1914–1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal, medals awarded to most New Zealand soldiers who had served overseas. McQuay's home leave was repeatedly extended until he was formally discharged as 'unrelieved' in 1931. At home he was confined to his room and kept away from other people from fear of a return to violence. But he was not imprisoned and allowed out for excursions and family reunions with his minder. He was accepted by the local community in Stratford as a 'character'. In 1951 McQuay died from heart failure and was given a military funeral. As Hastings suggests, people like Emma McQuay and the hundreds of correspondents to the 'Unknown Anzac' are not counted among the casualties of the war. They should be.

Hastings's book is the first study that I am aware of that fills in McQuay's antecedents and his postwar life in New Zealand. Other studies have described McQuay's life at Callan Park in some detail. Hastings's suggestion that McQuay consciously hid his identity in order to avoid punishment and disgrace, while food for thought, is speculative. The latter's actions may be fully explained by his burden of mental illness. I cannot entirely agree with Hastings's metaphor that McQuay was an 'Odysseus'. McQuay was by no means 'skilled in all ways of contending', as Homer has it, but he was certainly a 'man of trouble' (the Greek meaning of 'Odysseus'). The book is a timely reminder that not all grievously wounded soldiers returned home physically disfigured or disabled. Many physically intact men bore lifetime mental scars that never healed, as did the families of the missing. It will be of interest in understanding the fate of mentally unfit men in war and its aftermath, at first despised or even executed, then stigmatised, isolated and broken.

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# Philippa Hetherington review of:

## Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Mischka's War: A European Odyssey of the 1940s*

(Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2017), 313 pp., PB \$34.99, ISBN 9780522867855

Sheila Fitzpatrick is a world-renowned historian of the Soviet Union now based at the University of Sydney, known best for her revisionist work on Stalinism that uses social history to understand how life was experienced in the aggregate in the context of terror. In one of her most influential books, *Everyday Stalinism*, Fitzpatrick offers us *Homo Sovieticus*, the Soviet everyman, as a heuristic through which to understand how the average person experienced the everyday in the 1930s.<sup>1</sup> In *Mischka's War*, Fitzpatrick turns her regular mode on its head. Here, she takes an individual life and traces its singularity, complexity and inability to be reduced to the 'average'. Not insignificantly, the individual life she chooses is that of her late husband, the theoretical physicist Michael Danos. She emphasises that the book is 'a historian's book, not a memoir, but it's also a wife's book about her husband' (p. xvi). Writing it is an act of love, as well as an attempt to understand better the man taken from her too soon, and finally a reflection on what one person's story can tell us about war and its aftermath.

Fitzpatrick's chance meeting with Danos on a plane in 1989, with which she opens the book, was one of life's happy coincidences. Here was a historian of the Soviet Union falling in love with a Latvian who had lived part of his life under Soviet occupation and retained family ties to Riga, a city that had flourished under the Russian empire, suffered under Nazi and Soviet wartime incursions, and would emerge from its Cold War shadow to independence two years later. But, as any good historian of Eastern Europe knows, questions of ethnicity and nationality in the region were more complicated than the designation 'Latvian' would suggest. While he was born to a Latvian mother and Hungarian father in Riga in 1922, Danos was reluctant to define himself as 'Latvian'. He grew up speaking German (the shared language of his parents and of the traditional Baltic German elite), Latvian (his mother's tongue) and Russian (the language of the imperial overlords until 1917). He answered to both Misha, the Russianised diminutive of his name, and Mischka, the German one. In childhood, he was Hungarian by citizenship, although he rarely expressed any affinity for that country. Finally, according to

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<sup>1</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism. Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

whispered family lore and Fitzpatrick's own archival digging, it seems more likely than not that his father was Jewish, the son of German-speaking converts to Catholicism whose surname Danos had originally been Deutsch. The likelihood that Mischka had a Jewish background becomes significant later in his story, when his voluntary relocation to Dresden during the war raises the question of how he could have put himself into such clear personal danger.

Mischka's childhood was marked by study, athletics and a brooding sense that Riga was a backwater that he would need to leave to make his mark on the world. Fitzpatrick recalls feeling the same way growing up in Melbourne. The aura of sleepiness was shattered, however, with the outbreak of World War II. For Latvia, in the wake of the Molotov-Rippentrop pact, this meant occupation by the Soviet Union from 1940. This was a time of arbitrary terror that marked the Danoses' lives—for example, two of Mischka's cousins were arrested and deported to the Gulag. This regime was soon replaced, however, by Nazi occupation in the context of Operation Barbarossa. While no supporters of the Nazis, for Mischka and his family German occupation seemed less random, menacing and violent than that of the Soviets. This was in part Hitler's explicit plan: the Baltics were given a high degree of autonomy compared to other occupied lands, due to the supposed cultural 'closeness' of the region to Germany. It was also, of course, a result of the fact that the Danoses did not (on paper) belong to the group of people most targeted by the violence of the Nazi regime, namely Riga's Jewish inhabitants. Whether Mischka and his family were aware of their Jewish heritage or not, they do not seem to have felt worried about it during the war years. Olga, Mischka's mother and the book's second major 'character', took in Jews from the Riga Ghetto to work for her tailoring shop, which offered them some measure of protection. Her own sister was sent to a concentration camp for hiding Jews in her apartment, and Mischka had the harrowing experience of happening upon a Jewish mass grave in the woods in 1943. But, with the exception of these brushes with genocide, everyday life—Fitzpatrick's persistent focus—continued in a surprisingly normal fashion.

All this would change with the imminent threat of conscription to the Waffen-SS, whose Latvian Legion was created in 1943. Sensing the danger of enlistment into the Nazi war machine, Olga found a loophole that would get at least one of her sons out. The German government had recently set up a study exchange program that allowed Latvians (among others) to study at universities in the Reich. Here was Mischka's ticket from wartime Riga, but it necessitated him going into the jaws of the beast. Always eager to further his physics study, Mischka appears to have departed relatively willingly, albeit it was a wrench to leave his family. His mother also managed to escape in 1944 by moving her tailoring business to the Sudetenland; his father and two brothers were not so lucky. Mischka himself ended up in Dresden, where he experienced the Allied firebombing of the city in early 1945 and left a startling eyewitness account of the destruction that adds to the richness of

Fitzpatrick's book. Despite this horror, the impression one gets of Mischka's time in Nazi Germany is of the surprisingly quotidian nature of life. His time was marked by romantic entanglements and a holiday in the southern German mountains; despite his visceral disgust with the Nazi regime, Mischka maintained an attachment to the people he met there.

With the war over, Mischka and his mother became Displaced Persons (DPs) in Germany, refugees under the care of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). Here, again, we have the opportunity to witness the interplay between Fitzpatrick's biographical focus and her broader research interests, which currently concern Soviet DPs. In what was becoming a pattern, Mischka and Olga's experience as DPs was rather singular. First, there was their status as Baltic subjects who had neither served with the Nazis nor been forcibly removed to Germany as slave labour, as had many other Eastern Europeans. Second, there was the fact that, although their home country was now in the Soviet Union (and most Soviet DPs were expected to be repatriated), the Allies did not recognise the Soviet annexation of Latvia and thus did not expect Mischka or Olga to return. Finally, at various points in time they were 'free-livers'—DPs who lived outside the camps and for whom UNRRA was only nominally responsible. In Mischka's case this was because he had recommenced university study, going on to do a PhD in theoretical physics at Heidelberg. For her part, the ever-resourceful Olga managed to restart her tailoring business even in the context of postwar scarcity. In the end, Mischka and his new wife Helga were among the last DPs to be resettled outside Germany in 1951. Despite initial reticence, the United States had recently begun accepting large numbers of refugees, and that is where the displaced Danoses found themselves at the dawn of a new decade.

In confronting the singularity of Mischka's experience in postwar Germany, Fitzpatrick directly addresses the value of studying individual lives as prisms into broader changes. Overall, she argues, the Danoses' experiences were not typical of DPs as a whole. 'But apart from the question of what was typical, there's the question of what was possible (that is, conceivable) within the parameters of DP experience' (p. 254). As a scholar who has spent much of her career tracing social change as a broad, proliferating phenomenon, the narrowing in to an individual life leads Fitzpatrick to ask new questions of a given historical moment, weighing what was possible against what was typical and what was singular against what was representative.

On a personal level, Fitzpatrick also confronts the question of how individual relationships influence scholarly investments. Throughout his life, Misha, as she called him, would assert that, while both were horrendous, the Soviet occupation of Riga was worse than that of the Nazis. His experience of the arbitrariness of Soviet violence would stay with him for life, and lead him to an understanding of Soviet society predicated on the ubiquity of fear. This interpretation looks much

like that proffered by the 'totalitarian school' of Sovietologists who wrote in the Cold War context of the 1950s and 1960s. These were the very scholars Fitzpatrick set herself against when she took to writing the social history of Stalinism, which emphasised that the banality of everyday life could coexist with violence and terror. Yet Misha would become her greatest defender when they married, and Fitzpatrick proudly recounts how vigorously he decried the 'assassins' who criticised her work. And indeed, she notes that, later in life, Misha himself came to believe that 'in the Soviet Union, material shortages of just about everything, from shoes to housing, were more on most people's minds than fear' (p. 50). This was the central argument of her book *Everyday Stalinism*. Who influenced whom, the historian or the eyewitness? In asking this, Fitzpatrick raises important questions about the relationship between our lives and the stories we tell about them, at the same time as offering a moving and gripping memorial to her beloved husband.

# Frank Bongiorno review of:

## Sylvia Martin, *Ink in Her Veins: The Troubled Life of Aileen Palmer*

(Crawley, WA: UWA Publishing, 2016), 350 pp., PB \$29.99, ISBN 9781742588254

It could be hard being a Palmer. In their times, they were Australia's most famous literary family. Vance, best known as a novelist, was widely respected in his day, if now largely unread and forgotten by all but literary scholars and cultural historians. Nettie, his wife, was a Higgins, the niece of the Arbitration Court president and creator of the Harvester Judgement that enshrined the concept of a national living wage. She was a poet, more often a literary critic, a regular contributor to the press, and the author of histories and biographies.

The Palmers had two daughters. The younger of them, Helen, made a career in Sydney as a teacher, author of children's books and educational texts, and left-wing editor. She wrote the words of the 'The Ballad of 1891', which featured in the 1950s musical *Reedy River*. Through the journal *Outlook*, she contributed something to the intellectual reckoning that came for the left after 1956 with the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian uprising and Nikita Khrushchev's Secret Speech to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Helen was the rational, no-nonsense, sensible one. It was telling that she made a life for herself away from Melbourne, where the family occupied a venerable place in left-wing political and literary circles. She was close to her father, whose success as a novelist many critics thought hindered by the lack of emotion in his characters.

Sylvia Martin, with her fine reputation as a biographer of neglected but fascinating Australian literary women, has produced a superb biography of the Palmers' elder daughter, Aileen. I recall coming across Aileen's name, from time to time, as I worked through the Palmer Papers in the National Library 20 years ago. In particular, there was a 1948 letter from Edith Young, a friend of the Palmers living in Britain, that discussed Aileen's experience of life in Spain in the civil war and in London during the Blitz. A reply to a letter from Vance, the occasion of the correspondence was Aileen's mental breakdown in Melbourne, a critical moment in her life as Martin shows, and one that presaged years spent in and out of institutions in her home town. The letter—clearly the product of an author familiar with psychoanalysis—also frankly discussed Aileen's gender and sexual ambiguities: 'she early made an emotional transference from the feminine to the masculine role' (p. 243).

I remember, at the time I first read it, wondering what family life would be like for a young woman such as Aileen—she was still only 33—having her life analysed in this way in a friend’s correspondence with her father. Martin provides an eloquent answer in this book. The Palmer family was close, loving and claustrophobic. The unkind might suggest that while Aileen was living in London, Vance and Nettie drew on their substantial expatriate network as if it were a spy network. But Martin is not unkind, and the allegation would be unfair. They were loving parents who worried over their brilliant, troubled daughter’s safety and well-being during a time of war.

She gave them plenty to worry about. Vance and Nettie believed in the power of words to change the world. Aileen criticised her mother on this account, writing: ‘No basis for tacit understanding had ever grown up between Nora [Nettie] and me. She has always had a passion for verbalising everything. It is almost as though nothing exists for her until it has been put into words’ (p. 21). Aileen inherited that reverence for the written word—as well as remarkable facility with language—but she decided to give the world a push along.

Aileen is perhaps best known to historians for her role as an Australian volunteer on the Republican side in Spain during the civil war, in which she worked as a nurse and interpreter. Martin provides a vivid account of these years, which Aileen regarded as the best of her life. She suggests, however, that Aileen’s experience in Spain might have left a legacy of post-traumatic stress disorder, as we would call it now.

Seemingly fearless in the face of danger—and there was plenty of danger to go around—she had great difficulty finding a place for herself in postwar Melbourne. How banal it must have seemed to a woman who had for years been at the centre of things, in the front line of the struggle against the fascists! A woman who, with a friend, had been arrested and fined for throwing red paint over the doorstep of 10 Downing Street to protest appeasement now found herself, after the war, back in what she called the ‘[w]orld of comfortable, cushioned people, stuffed men’ (p. 219).

She was also back at home, living with her parents. From her childhood, Aileen had filled exercise books with stories, writings that were lovingly shared within the family. But the great novel never came, despite much effort over many years. On her return to Melbourne, as she explained, ‘my contacts with people didn’t give me the required stimulus for bringing the drama of my past to life’ (p. 220).

At the heart of the book, and this failure, is Aileen’s loving but fraught relationship with the intense, somewhat humourless Nettie. ‘Aileen’, says Martin, ‘recognised how alike she and Nettie were, not in their “good qualities” but “weaknesses”’ (p. 237). Both had in their own way ‘led very disciplined lives at one time or another’, Aileen reflected, ‘and yet find self-discipline extremely hard: we have scattered minds,

with farflung contacts and interests, and find construction on any scale very hard' (p. 238). She felt protective of her mother, yet could also compare her with Medea, 'gobbling up her own children' (p. 263). And to add to the sense of ambivalence, she felt guilty that her own birth had prevented Nettie from developing her career as a poet, while recognising that puritanism was at the heart of Nettie's own literary failure, as Aileen saw it.

The book's title comes from a reflection by Nettie in a letter to her own mother, at a time when she had decided to put motherhood of Aileen ahead of her poetry. 'I don't want ink to run in Aileen's veins', she said (p. 35). But there was fat chance of that not happening in a household such as the Palmers'. The wider world of her parents was dominated by progressive literary types, and Aileen herself became a teenage communist. Vance and Nettie also moved around: Melbourne, Emerald in Victoria's Dandenongs, Caloundra on Queensland's Sunshine Coast and Catalonia in Spain. The shy and nervy Aileen came with them, but she wanted a 'firm house' (p. 44) that her parents seemed unwilling to give her.

Aileen shone at school, eventually attending Presbyterian Ladies College—like Nettie before her—where she developed a romantic attachment to a Miss Hutton, the French teacher. It is hardly surprising that Aileen would have so admired Henry Handel Richardson's *The Getting of Wisdom*, set in that very school, with its depiction of Laura's crush on Evelyn. Nettie helpfully invited Miss Hutton home and even more helpfully lent her a copy of *The Getting of Wisdom*, which was pointedly unavailable in the PLC library. Vance merely teased Aileen about an advertisement he'd seen for Hutton's Pork.

Studying literature and languages at the University of Melbourne gave her a substitute family of sorts, 'the Mob', with its bohemian relationships between young women and secret understandings and codes. Aileen combined this activity with wider left-wing political associations at a time when the world seemed headed for disaster. Her family was encouraging of her activities, if often worried by the almost manic way in which she threw herself into political activity in competition with her studies. But there were first-class honours for her thesis on Proust. No one seemed to doubt her talent or promise.

The dutiful daughter, who buried herself in her own writing late into the night, typed up her parents' work with efficiency and, later in life, cared for her ageing mother, could be exasperating. But after the war, Aileen was wounded by her mother's growing indifference to her creative work. As Nettie's own health deteriorated, it becomes fairly obvious that she increasingly detached herself, calling on Helen in Sydney for assistance in dealing with Aileen's difficulties and, until his death in 1959, relying on Vance as family diplomat. Vance himself had a much-loved brother, Wob,

who spent most of his life in an asylum in Queensland. It seems likely that this was not only a source of family shame, but of worry about inherited instability, especially as Aileen's declining mental health became such a concern to the Palmers.

But while this story has powerful tragic dimensions—the account of the insulin-glucose and electroconvulsive therapy that Aileen endured in Melbourne institutions is particularly harrowing—it is less a story of failure than an act of recovery and reconstruction. Martin insightfully and respectfully surveys Aileen's published and unpublished writings, the draft novels as well as the fragments of memoir and the poetry that increasingly became Aileen's preferred genre, and were disliked by her family because so bound up in their minds with in her mental illness, drinking and instability. But the extracts selected from her oeuvre for inclusion in the text clearly suggest a woman of considerable talent.

There is much in this book of interest to practitioners of the biographer's art. Martin's use of Aileen's manuscript writings is, as already hinted, deft and intelligent. There is a restraint in much of the prose; not in the sense of an author being unwilling to chance her arm, but one who recognises the sheer complexity of her subject and the dangers of over-analysis.

Nor is Martin herself prone to wandering into the story. The biographer clearly wants to ensure that a woman who lived in the shadow of a dominant family is not, on this occasion, overshadowed by a biographer insistent on playing their part in the story as detective or psychoanalyst. Martin occasionally records her responses to evidence, such as a 1966 rejection letter from the Commonwealth Literary Fund, preserved in Palmer's papers but torn in two. But she keeps a dignified distance at other times and, as one of the most intelligent and sensitive Australian writers on love between women, she deals with Palmer's romantic and sexual life with the insight and sensitivity one would expect. There are also some beautifully executed passages on many of the photographs presented in the book's plates, which are allowed to do just the right amount of biographical work that photos of this kind should do. They are not, in this manner, merely decorative or add-ons but integral to Martin's reading of Aileen's life.

The key photograph, perhaps, is one of Vance and Nettie at Ardmore, the home of Nettie's family in Kew that became the Palmers' and eventually, for a time, of Aileen's herself. Vance and Nettie, grey-haired literary elders by this time, probably around 1950, are standing in front of a portrait of Aileen, painted in London by Madge Hodges just before the war. In the painting, Aileen is a woman of the world, cigarette in hand, short hair, a model of poise and sophistication—and, of course, a contrast to the life that was by then unravelling in Melbourne (the photo would have been taken shortly after her first breakdown).



Martin discusses the photo at the beginning her book. But it is there again near the end, where she quotes Guido Baracchi, an old family friend, writing to Aileen that the painting, which he saw whenever visiting Vance and Nettie, ‘spoke poignantly to me about you’ (p. 275). The painting also figures in the biography’s afterlife. Martin was unable to locate it during her research but, after publication, she received an email from a woman who had known Aileen through the Kew branch of the Communist Party. Her father, a lawyer, had befriended Aileen; she had bought the painting from Aileen when she was selling Ardmore in the 1970s and it was still on the wall of her home. As Martin has since commented, ‘Looking at the lost portrait in full colour hanging in the company of this friend, a member of the party she devoted her life to, it struck me that Aileen had finally moved beyond the shadow of her parents into the light’.<sup>1</sup>

This is a meticulously published biography, in many ways made possible by Aileen’s own work in preserving the Palmer Papers, one of the great collections in the National Library of Australia, a treasure trove of material on Australian literary life. Tellingly, she thought it should include manuscripts from members of the entire family, not only Vance and Nettie. Martin has also travelled to the key sites in Aileen’s life in Spain and England.

There is a lovely image at the beginning of the book, of Martin finding one of Aileen’s Spanish civil war poems ‘being given a stirring reading in Spanish by a bearded young man on a YouTube video’ (p. 3). There is also something stirring about the thought of Aileen Palmer living on archivally in this manner, with the internet and digital technology making her words accessible to people who will never go anywhere near the Palmer Papers, Aileen’s small body of published work or, indeed, this fine biography. Here is something for biographers to contemplate: that their subjects live ghostly lives, in a range of surprising ways, long beyond their death. We have long known of the biographical afterlife. But the traces of those lives can now be witnessed with a few clicks on the computer. That has implications for biographers narrating lives, but also for readers who, with little effort, can now move quickly beyond the judgements of the biographer and the materials of the biography. Sylvia Martin’s *Ink in Her Veins* is perfectly pitched for such times.

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1 Sylvia Martin, ‘The Lost Portrait’, *Inside Story*, 23 April 2018, [insidestory.org.au/the-lost-portrait/](http://insidestory.org.au/the-lost-portrait/).



# Malcolm Allbrook review of:

## Gabrielle Carey, *Falling Out of Love with Ivan Southall*

(North Melbourne, Vic.: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2018), 106 pp.,  
PB \$29.95, ISBN 9781925801538

During the 1960s and '70s, Ivan Southall was close to being an international superstar. Born in 1921 and living until 2008, the Australian author, an exponent of a genre that came to be known as 'young adult fiction', published 23 books, which sold in the hundreds of thousands, and were translated into over 20 languages. He remains the only Australian recipient of the Carnegie Medal, which he won in 1971 for his novel *Josh*, thereby joining such luminaries of the Anglosphere as C. S. Lewis, Walter de la Mare and Mary Norton. In Australia his books were virtual fixtures on school English curricula, which was when I first encountered them. *Ash Road* (1965) made a deep impression on my adolescent mind, so much so that I was inspired to read the third volume of the trilogy, *To the Wild Sky*, published in 1967. I never quite managed to get to *Hills End* (the first of the trilogy), nor did I ever get around to reading any other Southall books, but to one who had only recently arrived in Australia from recently independent Uganda, I still recognise the books as a vital part of my acculturation.

They captured the imagination, so much more honest, even raw, than the fare I had consumed to that point. The Enid Blyton children in the *Famous Five* and the *Secret Seven* seemed tame and controlled by comparison, more like scouts and guides, and so very English. Southall's characters spoke like the kids around me, and in some ways they taught me a little about being Australian. There was something compelling about their impossible predicaments—caught in the path of an unstoppable bushfire, left alone in an airborne light plane after the pilot inconveniently died—that was simultaneously horrifying and alluring. Would my siblings and I respond so heroically if the adults in my life suddenly disappeared? It took Southall some time to arrive at the formula that would cement his popularity. He had published nine books by 1962 in a series of Biggles-style dramatic adventures featuring a superhero pilot, Simon Black. As he told the oral historian Hazel de Berg, even though they sold quite well, he found them unsatisfying: 'Typical of the time but mimicking the books I had read as a child. All I was doing was perpetuating the old British imperial myth' (p. 16). In the *Hills End* trilogy, however, the protagonists are children who, even amid disaster, are capable of escaping insurmountable odds to survive flood, bushfire and accident without the protection and guidance of adults.

Reading *To the Wild Sky* as an eight-year-old, Gabrielle Carey, like many others, was deeply influenced by Southall. In fact it was this book that brought her 'fateful, deliberately difficult' (p. 5) decision to become a writer. She wondered if she had ever corresponded with the man who inspired her decision, for, as she relates, as a compulsive letter-writer she had written to many of her literary idols, and it was likely that Southall was one of them. At the National Library of Australia, the Southall archive includes 25 folders of letters from young fans, and although a letter from Carey was not among them, her quest soon changed. No longer was it a mild curiosity motivated by self-interest; she became enthralled by the archival evidence of Southall's young readers' devotion, and this to one who was often 'reviled by his critics, and accused of racism, sadism, and even raping the child mind' (p. 6). The remarkable aspect about this trove of letters was the care he had taken not only to organise but to respond thoughtfully and directly, sometimes at length, to each correspondent, signing off 'your sincere friend'.

The title of this little book, though, is an apt precursor of the course of its narrative. Starting with her desire to discover more about Southall's life in an 'effort to understand the person behind the books' (p. 47), Carey soon finds herself becoming disillusioned with her childhood hero. She discovers that, at a time when he was devotedly writing to his thousands of child fans, his own family life was in ruins, his marriage failing and his three children 'locked out of his study and largely out of his life' (p. 52). His son Drew recalled that he and his siblings were forbidden to go anywhere near their father while he was working; they couldn't be heard, or even be seen through his study windows. Southall left everything to do with family life to his wife Joy, his sole responsibility to put a roof over their heads: 'I used to wish that my father would beat me up because at least it would have been some contact' (p. 53).

Thus the contrast between Southall the writer skilled at expressing emotion on paper and Southall the person distant from his own children is an ambiguity that Carey seeks to understand. But the books that meant so much to her as a child now provide little succour. In fact she almost hates *Hills End*, the book that had so inspired her as a child:

I now find Southall's writing frustrating in style and substance. He is preoccupied with boys and masculinity, his protagonists are perpetually misunderstood, the adults relentlessly bullying and ignorant, and his tone winey. Worst of all, there is not even a modicum of humour. (p. 98)

Yet she discerns something appealing about Southall's uncompromising determination to earn a living from his writing and, more importantly, to be true to his calling. He had discovered, as Carey concludes, 'his true talent: the ability to write books in which his young readers could recognise themselves, a pleasure that he had sorely missed while growing up' (p. 60). But to do this, he felt compelled to be solitary, to spend almost his whole life thinking or writing in silence. 'In a sense,'

writes Carey, 'his books ... can be seen as reflecting his continuing struggle with conventional Australian masculinity.' She thinks that, had she met him, she might have found this characteristic appealing: 'the emotional, over-sensitive, slightly tortured sole; the gentle man in a world of boofy blokes' (p. 70).

At 106 pages, *Falling Out of Love with Ivan Southall* is a short but vibrant and attractive book, which makes no claim to be a biography. If it must be classified, it can perhaps be described as a biographical memoir, more about the author's life with Southall, and what she might learn as a writer from one who was dedicated to his art, but whose books have largely fallen from public attention. She is interested in her subject as an emotional being, but biographical detail, even though utilised with flair and skill, is subordinate to her desire to understand her subject, particularly his ability to connect with his readers at an emotional level, while remaining disconnected from his own family to the point of sterility. Unlike the subject of Carey's previous book, Randolph Stow (*Moving among Strangers*, 2013), it is difficult to imagine a resurgence in popularity of the many works of Ivan Southall. Possibly his legacy will in the future draw the interest of other biographers, joining Stephany Evans's 2006 work, *The Loved and the Lost*, currently the sole Southall biography, published just before his death. Or perhaps not. Sometimes an author is only relevant to his own times, and becomes an anachronism. As Carey discovered, those who once loved Ivan Southall may never return to the fold.



# Colin Milner review of:

## Bruce Grant, *Subtle Moments: Scenes on a Life's Journey*

(Clayton, Vic.: Monash University Publishing, 2017), 438 pp., PB \$34.95,  
ISBN 9781925495355

Bruce Grant has been living a remarkable life. In our age of professional specialisation, information overload and widespread education, it is not really very easy or even feasible for anybody to become a genuine polymath in the old Renaissance sense of the *uomo universale*. But Grant—author, journalist, academic, arts administrator and diplomat—has made a good stab at it, even if that was not his actual intention on life's journey. He has, however, tasted and seen much of what the gift of life has to offer and his variegated career is of a type that is fairly unusual in Australian public life, as is the notable outcome that he has managed to achieve distinction in several different fields of endeavour. In particular, Grant has done so in several different genres of writing, having published novels, non-fiction books, essays, short stories and, now, memoir. A spirited attempt to travel the polymath's journey in the wider world may give a person a greater range of knowledge and experience than is often the norm, adding breadth, depth and nuance to judgements and conclusions, especially on issues in public life. This is especially what makes Grant's memoir *Subtle Moments: Scenes on a Life's Journey* so interesting and worthwhile a read.

Memoir—like biography in general—can be particularly engaging for the reader who likes to follow the hopes, fears, achievements, disappointments, failures and, sometimes, even the moments of transcendence and enlightenment that can be traced in one person's journey, either in full or in part, through life. And, if the memoirist subjects life experience to due reflection, wisdom may be the rewarding result. In its modern form, the genre has been around for several centuries, as evidenced by the famous *Mémoires*<sup>1</sup> of Marguerite de Valois, first published in the seventeenth century. In modern Australia, Henry Parkes was perhaps the earliest prominent figure in public life to publish a substantial memoir, at an advanced age, in *Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History*.<sup>2</sup> On the cultural side, one of the earliest Australian-born women to do so was Nellie Melba in her *Melodies and Memories*.<sup>3</sup> Many an eminent memoirist has achieved distinction already in life, though this is not always the case—Henry David Thoreau's memoir *Walden or Life*

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1 Marguerite de Valois, Queen of Navarre, *Memoirs* (London: J.C. Nimmo, 1892) in English translation.

2 Sir Henry Parkes, *Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History*, 2 vols (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, first published 1892, reprinted 1971).

3 Nellie Melba, *Melodies and Memories* (London: Thornton Butterworth, Ltd, 1925).

*in the Woods*,<sup>4</sup> about his experiences living in a cabin by Walden Pond in nineteenth-century Massachusetts, would eventually make its author's reputation. But Thoreau was also engaged in a spiritual quest, one that helped to make his book a classic of the genre by creating something extraordinary out of the solitary circumstances of his daily life.

As a convinced secular humanist (though well aware of religious and spiritual dimensions in culture and society), Grant would probably not claim such an expansive aim for his effort. Now in his 90s, he has, nevertheless, written a book that benefits from the long and considered perspective of the years plus the advantage that the author really has nothing left that he has to prove and is thus freed to write about what he most wants to say. Grant writes feelingly in the Introduction.

Undertaking these memoirs has meant discovering the person who took the journey. Writing about yourself is harder than writing about others real or imaginary ... The challenge is not the famous blank sheet of paper but how to select from an overflowing basket.

There is always a choice to be made by a memoirist like Grant in how much focus should be placed on the subject's public as against personal life. While some may relish a more confessional approach—one, indeed, that the current *zeitgeist* seems often to demand—the balance Grant has chosen allows him to advocate strongly for his most cherished views on Australia's place in the world, without creating a doorstopper of forbidding length. Personal life is certainly not ignored, however; Grant's tale of his three marriages and his now blended family has its own complexities and interest and, at times, affecting poignancy. But, for this reviewer, it is Grant's story of how a lad from rural Western Australia made his way in the world, as a scholarship boy to Perth Modern School, establishing himself as a journalist, then as a student at the University of Melbourne, going on to become a foreign correspondent in London, Singapore and Washington, and then to undertake roles of cultural and diplomatic leadership, that best helps to explain the person who came to hold such distinctive and interesting views about Australian and world affairs.

The overall impression one gets from his memoir is that, at heart, Grant is a writer, a vocation that has sustained him and still serves to give him a voice in public life. Two of his books, in particular, had a formative influence on this reviewer—as a youthful Australian public servant and aspiring diplomat in the mid-1980s—in thinking about Australia's place in the world. One was *Gods & Politicians*,<sup>5</sup> Grant's book about India, and in particular his time as Australia's High Commissioner in New Delhi during 1973–76, a period when both Australia and India experienced crises in their democratic political systems—namely, the declaration of an Emergency by the (Indira) Gandhi Government in India and the dismissal of the Whitlam

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4 Henry David Thoreau, *Walden or Life in the Woods* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1908 edition).

5 Bruce Grant, *Gods & Politicians* (London: Allen Lane, 1982).



Government in Australia. Following my own undergraduate studies in Asian history and politics, plus a visit to India and Nepal in 1979, as well as longer periods based in Singapore (where my parents were living at the time), reading Grant's book helped me as a young Australian to make sense of what had been rather an intense, youthful experience of Asia.

The other book was *The Australian Dilemma: A New Kind of Western Society*.<sup>6</sup> Grant set out the Dilemma, as he saw it, in the first chapter, at pages 4–5:

Here is a double dilemma of Australian existence. The dilemma of Australian nationhood is the desire to be a nation, while lacking the will and the capacity to defend the national territory. The dilemma of Australian civilisation is that Australia is white, capitalist and Christian in a part of the world subject to ancient and powerful Asian influences. Cherishing western values, Australian have become intellectually and materially dependent on the power centres of the western world to protect them from Asia, thus inhibiting the growth of the Australian nation. While the situation is slowly changing, the double dilemma remains. Until Australians seek for themselves a new form of Western civilisation, their nationhood is crippled.

There are aspects of this characterisation that we might now, half a lifetime later, want to modify (as Grant above suggests—and no doubt hopes—might be required), but, at the time, the case made for it in this book impressed me, and no doubt many others, and it still rings true in important respects.

Grant has made a significant contribution over several decades to thinking on how Australia, as a nation still mainly Western in its institutions and culture, might become more comfortable and assured in its own part of the world—in a sense, reconciling its history and geography without having to make a disorientating choice between them. The task began when his work as a foreign correspondent informed Grant's first major publication *Indonesia*<sup>7</sup> in 1964 and cross-cultural themes involving Australians and Asians imbued three novels published as recently as 2014–15. As co-author with then foreign minister Gareth Evans on *Australia's Foreign Relations in the World of the 1990s*,<sup>8</sup> Grant also had a notably more direct role in helping to shape official and expert thinking on Australian foreign policy in the immediate post–Cold War era.

Grant's memoir tells the story behind these and his other major publications with a lifetime's awareness of the writing process. Its text derives from both personal memory and his writings, including fictionalised accounts of real events in his life. Grant explains in the Introduction:

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6 Bruce Grant, *The Australian Dilemma: A New Kind of Western Society* (Rushcutters Bay, NSW: Macdonald Futura Australia, 1983).

7 Bruce Grant, *Indonesia* (Parkville, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1964), new editions published in 1966 and 1996.

8 Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant, *Australia's Foreign Relations in the World of the 1990s* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1991). A second edition was published in 1995.

One difficulty from having delayed writing these memoirs is that many of the people in them have died, so that I have not been able to check whether my recollection of encounters with them is accurate. I did not regularly keep a journal and my recollection is often dependent on memory, haphazard notes and what I was writing at the time or have written since.

On the cultural side, this reviewer particularly enjoyed reading about Grant's close involvement with the Melbourne Spoleto arts festival, which was established as the third in a series for each of which the eminent Italian-American composer and librettist Gian Carlo Menotti was artistic director. The first season took place in 1986. Having myself attended the second Spoleto festival in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1985, and being aware that Spoleto itself is a small Italian city, it had struck me that a city the size of Melbourne was perhaps an unusual choice for a festival model that appeared to thrive on easy accessibility and intimacy in its location. But Grant's account educated me on how the Melbourne version (which unfortunately I was never able to attend) developed thanks to the existing Italian arts festival based on the retailers of Lygon Street in the inner-city suburb of Carlton, which clearly helped to give it a real sense of community. Its eventual transformation into what is now known as the Melbourne International Arts Festival was, however, a sensible progression to make after several seasons. And the festival still honours its Spoleto origins.<sup>9</sup>

*Subtle Moments* is published by Monash University Publishing, which over the past decade or so has established a fine reputation as an important publishing house for the humanities and social sciences in Australia. Its advertised specialties include Asian studies, politics and the study of Australian history, culture and literature, making it a good fit for Grant's memoir.

This book stands comparison with another fine memoir by a distinguished Australian—*Prosper the Commonwealth*<sup>10</sup> by Robert Randolph Garran, completed shortly before that author's death at the age of 89 years in 1957. Like Grant, Garran was a polymath, in fact a lawyer and public servant in his livelihood, but, again like Grant, basically a writer at heart. Garran too was devoted to the land of his birth but had cosmopolitan interests and was an early advocate of Australia's destiny in Asia in the 1930s. Both Grant and Garran have written for us memoirs that derive much of their value from the longevity of authors whose considered views on issues in our public life are fortified by experience but motivated essentially by a genuine love of their country. We need more like them.

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9 'About', [www.festival.melbourne/2019/about/](http://www.festival.melbourne/2019/about/).

10 Sir Robert Randolph Garran, *Prosper the Commonwealth* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1958).

## Josh Black review of:

### Patrick Mullins, *Tiberius with a Telephone: The Life and Stories of William McMahon*

(Brunswick, Vic.: Scribe, 2018), 784 pp., HB \$59.99, ISBN 9781925713602

From first to last, Patrick Mullins's outstanding biography of Sir William McMahon is delivered as an artful tragedy. The opening pages reveal the spectre of a tired and embittered former prime minister, rife with deeply entrenched character flaws, and enthusiastic to leave his mark upon the historical record of his decades of public service. McMahon's 'intransigence', his inability to 'allow another hand to intervene', are established at the outset (p. 3), and shape the reader's approach to the entire gamut of this colossal volume. Though making no pretence to having produced a psychoanalytical study, Mullins must receive high praise for employing the craft of historical research to the fullest extent in order to penetrate a personality that often proved impossible for observers of McMahon in his own lifetime. The diminished reputation of the subject has prompted many to 'write off' McMahon as the worst prime minister in Australian history; Mullins has made it his mission to write McMahon back into the story of Australia in the twentieth century. He has spectacularly succeeded.

Mullins's exhaustive bibliography and his meticulous investigation of primary sources more than ably make up for the fact that, as he records in his acknowledgements, he produced this account 'without the co-operation of the McMahon family, and without access to McMahon's papers' (p. 637). He has methodically consulted published works of both a popular and a specifically scholarly nature, and has made excellent use of oral histories from the National Library and his own interviews. Even in his account of the trials and tribulations of McMahon's early years, Mullins is able to transcend investigative obstructionism by doggedly trowelling through decades of newspaper clippings, collecting the relevant births and deaths certificates and triangulating the various conflicting stories that McMahon himself told throughout his lifetime. It is this investigative success that enables the author to legitimately embed the tenor of tragedy in the subject's early years. Accounting for 'an errant life, insecure, always in flux', the text records that by age 18 McMahon had endured the deaths of a grandfather, mother, brother and father, leaving him 'well and truly alone' (pp. 8 and 16).

The years between his coming-of-age and his election to the House of Representatives in 1949 appear almost as a lark for McMahon, contrary to the overriding themes of the book. The author describes 'a lax student', sauntering around the halls of

St Pauls College, and ultimately untouched by the ravages of the Great Depression that uprooted the nation around him (p. 24). Whether forced by lack of primary sources or prompted by lack of a compelling narrative to sustain about McMahon in that period, Mullins proves masterly at embarking on useful tangential surveys of the social, political and economic scene in which the subject began to prosper in 1930s Sydney. The audacious figure of Jack Lang; the ego-driven 1939 showdown between Menzies and Earl Page; and the onset of World War II are all woven neatly through the stories of McMahon's time as a legal partner and serviceman. Occasionally, the problem of source availability forces the author to make assumptions about his subject's opinions and experiences, but it is nothing less than this combination of imagination and deduction that enables the narrative to continue uninhibited where sources might be lacking.

As we delve into the political career of the former member for Lowe, we begin to see the antics of modern campaigning on display, as well as the deep-seated, Machiavellian survival instincts that characterise McMahon's style. In 1949, as Menzies sets about appealing to the electorate and rebranding himself as 'Bob', McMahon enlists the help of a nine-year-old boy to help 'spruik his candidature' to constituents and construct a relatable persona (p. 71). This is arguably a mid-century manifestation of what Frank Bongiorno has described as the 'game that virtually every politician with serious leadership aspirations has to play': to appear to be 'one with the people', but simultaneously special.<sup>1</sup> Equally recognisable is the author's espousal of McMahon's broader ethical approach to the 'game' of politics. 'Politics had to be played hard, ruthlessly, if he were to receive his reward' (p. 87). Such an ethos is likely to be both familiar and ugly, intriguing and repulsive, to a politically apathetic contemporary readership.

Relatively early in this biography, the Shakespearean dimensions of McMahon's political career are set in stone. Mullins outlines the three key tenets (and, some argue, flaws) of his approach to ministerial and cabinet government: a love for the perks of the job; a constant search for information outside of the public service; and a 'zealous protection' of his own position (p. 93). It is chiefly for the third reason that he has come to be remembered, in the words of Duncan Hughes, 'as a latter-day Tiberius who constantly shafted colleagues and leaked government secrets to his own advantage'.<sup>2</sup> Even before Menzies's moves towards retirement, McMahon is

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1 Frank Bongiorno, 'Just a Regular Joe (or Bill or ScoMo): How Our Leaders Work Hard at Being "Ordinary"', *The Conversation*, 20 September 2018, accessed 5 March 2019, [www.abc.net.au/news/2018-09-20/how-our-leaders-work-hard-at-being-ordinary/10284766](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-09-20/how-our-leaders-work-hard-at-being-ordinary/10284766).

2 Duncan Hughes, 'Tiberius with a Telephone Review: Patrick Mullins' Life of a Neglected PM', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 January 2019, accessed 5 March 2019, [www.smh.com.au/entertainment/books/tiberius-with-a-telephone-review-patrick-mullins-life-of-a-neglected-pm-20190128-h1akh6.html](http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/books/tiberius-with-a-telephone-review-patrick-mullins-life-of-a-neglected-pm-20190128-h1akh6.html).

seen trying to gather the numbers for an eventual leadership tilt. One of the most often repeated accusations against McMahon in this work is that of leaking cabinet deliberations to journalists for personal gain.

For historians, political scientists and constitutional scholars, there are several facets of the narrative that deserve lengthy attention. This biography is exciting not just for its character portrait, but also for its fusion of agent-centrism and structural evolution when accounting for public policymaking in this period. For one thing, on the political front, the heated clashes in the Holt, Gorton and McMahon cabinets reflect not only personality differences, but also serious ideological challenges in the Coalition partnership between the Liberal and Country parties. McMahon and the implacable John McEwen are in many ways signifiers of the almost irreconcilable differences between the two parties, their guiding philosophies and their competing constituencies. For another, the book situates McMahon's laborious ministerial efforts in the context of the evolution of the public service from a postcolonial shell to a vast bureaucracy, replete with the creation of a National Urban and Regional Development Authority (later expanded into the Department of Urban and Regional Development), the restructuring of the newly named Department of Foreign Affairs and the fusion of the prime minister's department and cabinet office into the modern bureaucratic juggernaut, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. McMahon's own role in these evolutions vacillates between that of departmental reformer and overdemanding tyrant. Beyond that, Mullins is unsurpassed in his efforts to account for the changing nature of Commonwealth–state relations during McMahon's career, driven chiefly by 'the steady accretion of power towards the Commonwealth' (p. 339). In each of these areas of public administration, personality and political drama are balanced brilliantly with a historian's respect for the structural processes of institutional change.

One of the features of the book is the way in which diametric opposites and bipolarities steadily drive the narrative towards its prime ministerial and retirement endgame. The robust debates between McMahon and McEwen over protectionism speak to well-worn schisms in the government. McMahon, backed by the Treasury, appears as a precursor to the path toward neoliberalism in the 1980s, making the case for attracting foreign capital and relying less on taxpayer-funded industry subsidisation. McEwen, backed by the Department of Trade, incessantly argues for preserving predominantly Australian ownership of corporations and advocates for the protection of industries with the potential to be impacted by the changing economic realities of the post-1945 new world order. McMahon's time as Treasurer, as recounted here, is dominated by this great clash of egos, economic ideologies and party allegiances. Mullins beautifully balances the politics of trade and protectionism with the politics of personality until the disappearance of Harold Holt, at which point this rivalry becomes deeply personal and politically spiteful. Petty though

McEwen's veto against McMahon appears, the subject himself still appears frightfully un-empathetic when we read of his anxiety to get to Canberra and his first words upon learning of Holt's death: "But Jack's already there!" (p. 236).

Having detailed McMahon's time as foreign minister under Gorton, Mullins paints a portrait of a tragic and uninspiring prime minister, a victim to the forces of change around him rather than the master of those forces. From the first instant, McMahon is weak on his feet, appearing second best in a no-confidence moved by the imposing Gough Whitlam. The diabolical dynamics of the McMahon–Gorton relationship are laid bare, with the fullness of their impact on Cabinet and parliament accounted for. Some of the more amusing passages might lead one to conclude that McMahon's was a tragedy of style; stories of his notoriously botched toast at the White House, his poor responses to the Labor Party at the despatch box and his dreadful performance on the hustings in 1972 create the illusion of a man totally incapable of undertaking the job he had coveted, and into which his colleagues had desperately thrust him in March 1971. Indeed, the image of a tired PM 'sitting at his desk, pale, head back, knuckles white' on the arms of his chair visually crystallises his leadership like no other description in the text (p. 558). That said, however, a number of the things about which he felt aggrieved were clearly at the peripheries of his control: the changing dynamics of the popular press; the constant public attention given to more popular figures, including Gorton, Whitlam and rising ACTU President Bob Hawke; the total collapse of Liberal Party unity ('He was going to have to fight the election alone' [p. 573]); and the public sidelining of his government's policy achievements in childcare reform, Papua New Guinean self-government and the withdrawal of combat troops from Vietnam.

One of the greatest strengths of this book, lying latently within the narrative, is its implicit comparison with the contemporary political malaise. By way of biographical narrative, we are subtly encouraged to question certain sociopolitical issues raised by McMahon's experiences that are yet to be satisfactorily resolved. For one thing, the status of women in the Liberal Party is cast into doubt in Mullins's account of the 1949 elections, in which no woman was preselected for the NSW Liberal Senate ticket. Edith Shortland called it "unofficial discrimination against women within the party" (p. 69). Though *Tiberius* was written well before the 2018 leadership spill, the modern parallels here are obvious to the conscious reader. Passages about McMahon's approach to industrial relations turmoil on the waterfront also necessitates questions about the party's underlying assumptions. In its assault on the Waterside Workers Federation in the mid-1960s, Howson tells us that the "party has never been so united" (p. 175). Once again, parallels can be drawn with a contemporary Coalition Government united by little other than its anti-unionist attitudes. For the media's part, there are episodes of intense interference by Rupert Murdoch, intervening on John McEwen's behalf, and then on the ALP's behalf, against McMahon; this is all too familiar for a contemporary readership who, in 2018, was reminded that,

internationally, ‘there is concern about the ability of Murdoch to influence political debate’.<sup>3</sup> On the world stage, McMahon’s acute difficulties deciding on diplomatic recognition of the People’s Republic of China is reminiscent of the anxieties modern Australia still experiences when it feels itself torn between the US Alliance and the imperative to engage constructively with the superpower of our own region. The issue of what to do with former and recently deposed prime ministers in Australia is also one that spans the generational divide here: scenes with exiled ministers and prime ministers smouldering on the backbench recur throughout this book, and arguably connote that vivid phrase recently coined by Malcolm Turnbull, ‘miserable ghosts’.<sup>4</sup> Of the many pertinent questions that McMahon’s political life should raise, these are perhaps some of the most pressing for our own consideration.

A word must be said about the unique, dual-narrative structure of this book. Interspersed between the chronologically organised chapters are scenes, or rather short sketches, of McMahon’s enormous difficulty writing his autobiography (better understood as memoir). Mullins’s innovative approach to structure and foregrounding of the challenge of life writing forces us to question the reliability of the sources and sometimes distrust the words of McMahon where they appear. On page 1, McMahon aspires to ‘write history himself’. His failure in this task, and his failure to work with the not-so-indefatigable ghost-writer Bowman, serves as the perfect linchpin for the entire biography. As the subtitle of the book hints, McMahon figures in these sketches as a man of many stories, some of which were more credible than others, and some of which were downright false. The reader is neatly sutured to the perspective of Bowman; we are, like him, confronted by ‘the gulf’ between McMahon’s version of events and the primary sources (p. 110). Bowman and Mullins, as ghost-writer and biographer respectively, share the same challenge to establish a reliable narrative. The difficulty of that task is never more evident than in assessing McMahon’s role in Gorton’s downfall: ‘The trail simply ran cold’ (p. 399). Despite, or perhaps in spite of, these challenges, Mullins has managed to make McMahon a uniquely frustrating but painfully human biographical subject. Like Bowman, we see the “unpleasant little turd” in his character, but so too do we feel impressed by the subject’s capacity for relentless hard work (p. 88). Mullins’s structural choices allow him to more fully extrapolate the curious character of the man under investigation, and it is the pinnacle achievement of this author’s production.

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3 Anne Davies, ‘Inside the News Corp Tribe: How Powerful Editors Shape the News’, *Guardian*, 21 September 2018, accessed 5 March 2019, [www.theguardian.com/media/2018/sep/21/inside-the-news-corp-tribe-how-powerful-editors-shape-the-news](http://www.theguardian.com/media/2018/sep/21/inside-the-news-corp-tribe-how-powerful-editors-shape-the-news).

4 Nick O’Malley, ‘Why are Some Politicians Better Equipped for Life After Leadership than Others?’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 December 2018, accessed 5 March 2019, [www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/why-are-some-politicians-better-equipped-for-life-after-leadership-than-others-20181206-p50kr7.html](http://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/why-are-some-politicians-better-equipped-for-life-after-leadership-than-others-20181206-p50kr7.html).

In the end, the ultimate tragedy established by this remarkable and ground-breaking biography is that Sir William McMahon's legacy, however great or small the reader may feel that to be, has gone undefended, without an author to preserve it for posterity. As Mullins puts it, the 'legacies of McMahon's time in office would be overshadowed, and even built over' (pp. 599–600). His laborious efforts notwithstanding, McMahon never published a memoir or autobiography and his defence of his legacy was essentially left to fade with his death. Patrick Mullins has set about addressing that imbalance in the historical record, and scholars nationwide must laud him for the monumental work he has thereby created.



# Kathryn Wells review of:

## Phil Sandford, *The Lion Roars: The Musical Life of Willie 'The Lion' McIntyre*

(Self-published, 2018), 214 pp., PB \$22.00, ISBN 9781925579840

Sandford's musical biography of jazz pianist and blues singer Willie McIntyre offers a glimpse into the jazz music and music-making of a group of mostly young men in Melbourne around and after World War II. Rather than personal nostalgia,<sup>1</sup> the musical biography specifically portrays the collective, as well as the individual, creation of music.<sup>2</sup> It gives a sense of the discoveries of new sounds as well as documenting the development of jazz styles amongst the musicians. Sandford provides an insight into jazz practice and specific musical lives that differed from the norm, rendering an understanding of how people experienced and contributed to changes of style in postwar Australia.

In 1939 jazz dancing was considered by some to be immoral and jazz lyrics were considered risqué: about smoking pot, sex, racism, drinking, dancing, blues, poverty, masculinity and feminism. In response to the introduction of the first ABC Radio Jazz Program, Harold Davies, professor of music at the University of Adelaide, declared that jazz was barbaric and a sign of a decadent civilisation.<sup>3</sup> Yet, what we observe through Sandford's biography is a group of well-educated young men from the south-east of Melbourne, accountants like McIntyre and his fellow band members, scientists like electrical engineer Tony Newstead and George Tack, who studied agricultural science and worked for the CSIRO, immersing themselves in a world of new ideas and new sounds. Along with the various Palais bands' members from the industrial northern suburbs who became modern jazz players,<sup>4</sup> the jazz musicians saw themselves not as barbaric but as 'men with enquiring minds' living

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1 See jazz reminiscences published in the last two decades, including Harry Stein's autobiography, *A Glance Over an Old Left Shoulder* (Sydney, NSW: Hale & Iremonger, 1994), centring around his position as president of the Eureka Hot Jazz Society; following Dick Hughes, *Daddy's Practising Again* (Richmond, Vic.: Martin Books an imprint of Hutchinson of Australia, 1977); the contrasting Sydney-based scene the focus of John Clare/Gail Brennan, *Bodgie Dada and the Cult of Cool* (Kensington, NSW: UNSW Press, 1995); as well as the Annual Bell Jazz Lecture Series delivered at Waverley Library, Sydney, 1993–2014.

2 David Gramit, 'Unremarkable Musical Lives: Autobiographical Narratives, Music and the Shaping of Self', in *Musical Biography: Towards New Paradigms*, ed. Jolanta T. Pekacz (New York: Routledge, 2016), 159–78.

3 See Clement Semmler, 'Whither Jazz?', Fifth Bell Jazz Lecture, Waverley Library, 20 September 1997.

4 For example, Bruce Clarke and others came from Brunswick and Billy Hyde from Moonee Ponds. Andrew Bisset, *Black Roots White Flowers: A History of Jazz in Australia*, revised (Sydney, NSW: Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1987), 129. Bisset also documents the links with Australians hearing American jazz bands at the Hammersmith Palais in London, then returning to creating Palais bands for the Wentworth Café in Sydney, 1920, followed by the Palais de Danse, St Kilda, 1923 (p. 14).

in a conservative milieu (p. 15).<sup>5</sup> The various jazz sounds created by them were energetic and exciting, and their enjoyment, and those of audiences, might be said to give way to hedonistic abandonment.

Sandford suggests these diverse trad jazz players made a subtle but important, and 'staggering' contribution to Australian culture, witnessed by their ever-expanding audiences adopting a more worldly view about music, dancing, racism and entertainment that went beyond mild to roaring approval. Sandford presents Willie McIntyre as a contrast between the conservative norm of the 1940s and 1950s and the radicalism of jazz: from a suit-wearing mild-mannered accountant by day to a rollicking jazz pianist and blues singer by night. McIntyre gave himself the moniker 'The Lion' after the African American Willie 'The Lion' Smith (1897–1973), an immaculately dressed jazz man, a master and composer of Harlem stride piano,<sup>6</sup> who was much admired by McIntyre. Sandford's approach to understanding McIntyre's musicality is to explore the lineage of his inspiration, learning and playing.

McIntyre is relatively unknown historically.<sup>7</sup> However, the risk of trivialising his personal history is addressed by Sandford as he shows how McIntyre and his fellow musicians negotiated their musical experiences in the emerging postwar world. The inspiration for the author to undertake the research and tell this story was when 10-year-old Sandford heard McIntyre play in the early 1950s, an event that inspired Sandford to take up jazz piano. His purpose of documenting the role of Willie McIntyre as a jazz pianist and singer in the postwar jazz scene in Melbourne and Adelaide is an ambitious task. There is a lack of traditional sources: there are neither diaries, letters nor taped interviews with the subject, although a few dozen recordings survive. Sandford's 26 interviews conducted in 2015 expand on five interviews by Andrew Bisset in the 1970s (held at the National Library) and six by Tom Wanless and Bruce Chalk in the mid-1990s (held at the Australian Jazz Museum), as well as the John Whiteoak interviews, to convey not only the feeling of the swing sessions at various venues but also the network that created the Melbourne jazz scene. Sandford's methodology and purpose in this musical biography, based on extensive interviews about the aural experience, reflects the jazz writer Bruce

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5 Roger Bell in Nigel Buesst, *Jazz Offcuts* (North Carlton, Vic.: Sunrise Picture Company, 1983), DVD.

6 Willie 'The Lion' Smith, named The Lion after his valour in World War I, was known to have influenced Duke Ellington who described him as 'a keyboard gladiator' and wrote 'Portrait of The Lion' for him. See Ian Carr, Digby Fairweather, Brian Priestley and Charles Alexander, *The Rough Guide to Jazz*, 3rd ed. (New York; London: Rough Guides, Penguin Books, 2004), 746.

7 Bisset's *Black Roots White Flowers* mentions McIntyre twice in the context of the Melbourne jazz scene of the 1940s and 1950s, and Bruce Johnson, *Oxford Companion to Australian Jazz*, mentions him five times but mostly in lists and some photograph captions. Even Lorraine Barnard, the *Australian Jazz* reviewer of this book, notes her unfamiliarity with McIntyre.

Johnson's argument that hearing jazz music, a genre that exists primarily in a unique moment of performance, has helped shaped modern consciousness and allowed us recreate our sense of identity through collective improvisation.<sup>8</sup>

In documenting McIntyre's early jazz days, Sandford shows the development of modern improvised jazz in the late 1930s, mostly swing music. This follows Whiteoak's research that revealed 300 to 400 dancers turning up on Sunday afternoons at the Fawkner Park Kiosk in St Kilda. Instead of hearing the jazz dance music of earlier years, audiences, including fellow musicians, now heard highly improvised music, both collectively and solo.<sup>9</sup> Several future members of the Tony Newstead Band went to the sessions, including trumpeter Newstead, drummer Don Reid and clarinetist George Tack, who along with McIntyre formed a quartet with an unknown bass player in 1941. We see McIntyre establish himself on the jazz scene by 1942.

Sandford's revelations about style arise from his exploration of how McIntyre and his fellow jazz musicians were inspired and learnt their jazz. Like jazz itself, born out of New Orleans African rhythms, slave-hollers, Creole melodies and European instrumentation with collective improvisation; developed as African American blues and then 'jazzed up' by getting it moving;<sup>10</sup> McIntyre explored the blues, then New Orleans rag-style piano. In particular, he listened to the New Orleans polyphony of the pianists and vocalists Jelly Roll Morton and, especially, Fats Waller, as well as the boogie and blues pianist Jimmy Yancey. McIntyre absorbed their strong rhythmic style of playing piano and singing, and, like Fats Waller who grew up with spirituals, hymns and field hollers, McIntyre's vocal style included shouting the blues. He was regarded within the jazz scene by his contemporaries as playing a unique combination of stride, boogie woogie and blues as part of a Chicago-style free jazz band.

Sandford shows how World War II had a profound impact on the development of Australian jazz. During McIntyre's war service in Papua, based at the Seventeen Mile clinic outside of Port Moresby, a Red Cross hut not far away at the Seven Mile doubled as a jazz club every Sunday afternoon. Serendipitously, old playing mates gathered: Tony Newstead, Sid Bromley and Don Reid as well as McIntyre—who was recalled as doing more playing with the American bands than Newstead (p. 43). This was an unusual experience for Australian jazz musicians in the context

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8 Bruce Johnson, 'Jazz and Society. Sound, Art, Music—Living', Inaugural Bell Jazz Lecture, Waverley Library, 9 October 1993, see lecture index at [ericmyersjazz.com/index-bell-lectures](http://ericmyersjazz.com/index-bell-lectures).

9 See John Whiteoak, *Playing Ad Lib: Improvisatory Music in Australia 1836–1970* (Sydney, NSW: Currency Press, 1999), 238–41, and while McIntyre is not featured in Whiteoak's classic account of St Kilda's Fawkner Park bands and players, there are detailed interviews and accounts of the Frank Coughlan Band, Bob Tough and Benny Featherstone as well as Don Reid, who later played in a band with McIntyre.

10 Geoff Bull, 'Jazz: What's In A Name?', Sixth Annual Bell Jazz Lecture, Waverley Library, 19 September 1998, see lecture index at [ericmyersjazz.com/index-bell-lectures](http://ericmyersjazz.com/index-bell-lectures).

of the union ban on African American bands visiting Australia from 1928 until 1954.<sup>11</sup> More unusual was when McIntyre managed during a visit to Brisbane in 1944 to gain entrance into the Dr (George Washington) Carver Club, which had been formed as a segregated club in 1943 for and by Negro servicemen with the Red Cross Jazz Unit.<sup>12</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander activists, poets, musicians and singers, as well as many women, attended dance nights held on a converted ice-skating rink. McIntyre's first postwar recording was his composition the 'Carver Club Special'. The importance of subtle levels of influence and an understanding of these historical episodes is illuminated through the biography where we learn that 'swing-jump' jazz trumpeter Morris Goode, whose previous tour was with the American Teddy Hill Big Band featuring trumpeters Roy Eldridge and Frankie Newton, made his debut at the Carver Club where he played with McIntyre (p. 49). However, Goode's historical impact has previously been secured by an image of him playing with fellow trumpeter Roger Bell on the cover of the program of the first Australian Jazz Convention in 1946, after he had formed a quartet with the Bells. Sandford's work shows other strands to the jazz web.

The postwar flourishing of the Melbourne jazz scene is often credited to Roger and Graeme Bell; this is confirmed by Sandford in his interviews with drummer Don Reid, although Reid notes how the Tony Newstead Band, of which he was a member, as well as other bands built up their own audiences, and styles, around the 1946 Convention. The dominant style of the Melbourne trad jazz scene was New Orleans, with the Bells and others reviving Dixieland postwar (p. 101).<sup>13</sup> Sandford's research confirms that Andrew Bisset was right to correct Max Harris, writing in *The Australian* from 1972 to 1974, who portrayed Australian jazz as evolving from Graeme and Roger Bell's Dixieland jazz, followed by Don Burrows (and Bob Barnard)—despite jazz developing out of jazz dance bands across Australia in the 1920s and 1930s and the existence of both trad and modern styles. Sandford details how the freer Chicago style of jazz,<sup>14</sup> favoured by Tony Newstead's 'South Side Gang' and characterised by piano introductions and a succession of solos, was unlike the two lengthy trumpet ensembles favoured by the Bells and Frank Johnson. The Newstead Band took it a step further using a double bass instead of a tuba, and guitar instead of banjo, creating a simple but effective modern jazz sound. Yet this apparent simplicity accommodated complex contrasts, from the melodic middle register trumpet sounds of Newstead through McIntyre's passionate blues with a focus on the 'blue note', adding a flattened note or lower pitch (as well as

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11 Lee Gordon organised concerts with Artie Shaw and Ella Fitzgerald who arrived in July (although Fitzgerald arrives later as she was refused the first-class seats she bought), then Gene Krupa and Louis Armstrong's band arrived in August 1954, in Bisset, *Black Roots White Flowers*, 163.

12 This followed the formation of the segregated Booker T Washington Club in Surry Hills, Sydney, in July 1942 and the North American club in Townsville, October 1942. See Bisset, *Black Roots White Flowers*, 81–85.

13 Trumpet player Frank Turville commented that 'Melbourne was the New Orleans of the South' in Buesst, *Jazz Offcuts*.

14 Adopted from Chicago-born Bix Beiderbecke and his New York-based players.

giving it more grit), to make sure that every note counted. Contemporaries like Frank Johnson, who expressed admiration for the Chicago style, and Dick Hughes, who commented on earlier, vehement arguments about styles, suggested that the relevant existence of bop and cool (which the trad players refused to countenance), the virtues of hot jazz, big band sounds or small combos and swing (and dead swing), while hotly debated at the time, were a nonsense—as the key element was the enthusiasm for jazz, in which blues has remained an undercurrent.<sup>15</sup> However, the emergence of different styles is in no doubt.

Sandford's interviews with half a dozen players during the period of the 1946 Convention take the reader to individual sessions of music where McIntyre played in town halls and clubs, on riverboats, at festivals; to the songs that were played and to the exhilarated feeling of those present. We are permitted to linger on the verandas of private bohemian jazz fans who hosted the musicians, smell the air, savour the drinks, hear the visiting female vocalists and appreciate the general mayhem. Keith Hounslow described the 24-hour jazz parties: 'we'd be down there night after night ironing ourselves out but having a hell of a good time' (p. 73). By 1949, the Tony Newstead Band with its Chicago-style jazz had a heavy playing schedule at concerts, clubs, ballrooms, theatres, private parties and parades that extended not just throughout Melbourne but to Adelaide. McIntyre's frequent trips to Adelaide to see wartime comrades resulted in annual jazz events hosted by the Walkerville Football Club and the North Adelaide Cricket Club, and saw some recordings in Adelaide. From this focus on McIntyre, we see how the friendships and camaraderie between players forged during the war influenced the playing and sound of many different trad jazz sessions outside the influence of the Bells' Dixieland sounds—whether Newstead's Chicago sound or Dave Dallwitz's composition 'Back of Bourke',<sup>16</sup> all contributing to the emergence of an Australian jazz sound.<sup>17</sup>

While the immediate postwar jazz conventions were perhaps a beacon in a sea of postwar conservatism in Australia, the perceived association of Melbourne jazz with radical left-wing views was partly due to where the new Uptown Jazz Club (established in 1946) was situated—the Eureka Youth League Hall—above the Eureka Communist League. The league founded the Eureka Hot Jazz Society and funded the 1947–48 tour of the Melbourne trad jazz Graeme Bell Band to Eastern Europe. However, the radicalism of the Eureka societies supporting the experience of jazz due to its association with described Negro protest and expression about their life experiences did not necessarily extend to the Australian musicians, although they participated in supporting African American musicians. The first African American

15 See Dick Hughes, 'Jazz and the Press, Related Airs and Themes', Third Annual Bell Jazz Lecture delivered at Waverley Library, 23 September 1995, see lecture index at [ericmyersjazz.com/index-bell-lectures](http://ericmyersjazz.com/index-bell-lectures).

16 Dallwitz's composition was later improvised around by Bob Barnard. See Bisset, *Black Roots White Flowers*, 137–38.

17 See also John Shand, *Jazz: The Australian Accent* (Sydney, NSW: UNSW Press, 2006).

jazz musician to arrive as a soloist in Australia since the deportation of members of Sonny Clay's band in 1928, and the consequent union ban on African American musicians, was the trumpet and cornet player Rex Stewart in 1949. He arrived for the 4th Jazz Convention and a five-month tour with the Graeme Bell Band, with the Bells given credit for conceiving and organising the tour.<sup>18</sup> Sandford's meticulous research shows that this tour was organised by Eve Dennis, a Canadian painter living in Australia and a friend of McIntyre's (p. 85). On arrival, after being greeted on the tarmac by Roger Bell and friends, with their instruments, Stewart headed for a jam session with the Tony Newstead Band. McIntyre and Stewart improvised together on a blues theme, before the Tony Newstead Band opened the first concert of Stewart's tour at the Melbourne Exhibition Hall in front of 4,000 people. Sandford documents how this was the highlight not only of the Tony Newstead Band members' careers but for many other jazz musicians to hear the 'staggering' form and quality of their fellow jazz musicians as they played with Stewart. The song order was remembered by many of them half a century later. Consequently, the Tony Newstead Band took over the Leggett Ballroom gig held by the Bells while the Bells toured with Stewart. A decade later in New York, in 1959, Tony Newstead joined Rex Stewart on stage for a night with the Eddie Condon band, in a style characterised as 'Nixieland', and a tribute to Tony Newstead notes that Newstead released more records in the United States than he did in Australia.<sup>19</sup>

Back in Melbourne, after the Bells finished touring with Rex Stewart and the Tony Newstead Band was renamed the 'South Side Gang', McIntyre and the others finished the year playing at Claridges Club with Stewart and Georgia Lee, the stage name of Dulcie Pitt, a singer of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Jamaican descent. While not documented by Sandford, Lee was well known from singing with the Red Cross Jazz Unit in Queensland during the war and in Sydney by 1948 for her interpretation of 'Strange Fruit', a song later made famous by Billie Holiday. In Melbourne across the club scene she was initially co-billed with Graeme Bell as well as Bruce Clarke, the Port Jackson Jazz Band, the Quintones and George Trevare before headlining her own shows, touring New South Wales and Queensland and then onto Gerald's in London. In 1956 Georgia Lee returned to tour Australia in a feature spot with Nat King Cole, and again with Cole and his third Australian tour in 1957.<sup>20</sup> Thus, a very subtle picture of the depth of playing interaction between different jazz players on different stages is revealed by Sandford's musical biography of McIntyre, relatively unknown historically to date. We see how McIntyre, along with others, like Georgia Lee, contributed to the depth of Australian jazz here and in the international jazz scenes.

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18 See Bisset, *Black Roots White Flowers*, 161.

19 Victorian Jazz Club, 'Tony Newstead Tribute—Jazz, Family and a Wonderful Life', YouTube, 14 November 2017, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWA7pZ2V4cc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWA7pZ2V4cc).

20 See Kathryn Wells, 'Georgia Lee—"Original Diva of Jazz and Blues Down Under" (1921–2010)', Indigenous Biography Conference Slam, ANU, Canberra, 16 November 2018.

In a steady, even-handed chronological narrative, Sandford steers a course between the rocky shores of the exponents of different styles, with acknowledgement and without disparagement of the Bells and their Dixieland revival playing partners. Nevertheless, Sandford offers insight, through emphasising an aural awareness, of how McIntyre contributed to a new jazz style that ‘mediated transitions’ to modern jazz,<sup>21</sup> part of the sound of a modern Australia. Both the early, raspy live recordings and later studio-produced sounds found on the accompanying CD and website have some value, as do the small selection of relatively low resolution black-and-white photographs, but it is through extensive interviews, event lists, a discography and references to contemporary media, along with the use of thorough footnotes, that Sandford details how musicians of different styles contributed to the development of jazz in Melbourne. Sandford’s well-documented research will be much appreciated by historians of Australian jazz.

Sandford is keen to provide an evaluation of McIntyre through an analysis of his unique style, noting characteristics such as his use of a percussive right-hand attack and a Cuban bass line, as well as stride, playing right-hand chords on the beat and single notes on the left, sometimes with chordal interjections and counter melodies. Yet he considers his unique style was always permeated by his knowledge of the blues. Furthermore, McIntyre sung directly to the audience without looking at the keyboard and often used gags and humour, in the tradition of vaudeville, to engage with the audience. Sandford documents the comments of many of his contemporaries, with Dave Dallwitz describing McIntyre as:

an enigmatic blues singer, his work being an unfathomable mixture of genuine expression, calculated satire and perhaps bad taste [and yet] ... His pianistics are staggering. He loves to dream along for, say the first four bars of a twelve-bar blues, only to break out on the fifth bar into the most incongruous display of musical fireworks that you can imagine (p. 151).

Drummer and cornet player Wes Brown said simply, ‘he was one of the leading players in the trad jazz world’. Bill Haesler, the jazz historian, recalled that Graeme Bell used to say, ‘I wish I could play with the spontaneity that Willie had’ (p. 153).

It is hard to disagree with Sandford’s arguments that McIntyre should be regarded as a historical jazz figure as they are well supported. His work offers a unique perspective of the Melbourne jazz scene from the 1930s to the 1950s, engaging the reader with McIntyre’s musical network. While there is little formal theoretical, historical or thematic analysis, nor exploration of McIntyre’s personal life and views (perhaps unknown?), Sandford’s musical biographical approach of presenting an individual artist within a cultural web, creating music outside the norm of social

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21 For a discussion of the importance of styles generally in postwar Australia; see Nicholas Brown, “Sometimes the Cream Rises to the Top, Sometimes the Scum”: The Exacting Culture and Politics of Style in the 1950s’, *Australian Historical Studies* 27, no. 109 (1997): 49–63, doi.org/10.1080/10314619708596042.



practice, offers a timely and relevant contribution to the history of Australian jazz. The lived experiences of musicians developing new styles shows the relevance of both exploring niche historical episodes and, in particular, changing styles to understanding changing times. Understanding the music making of McIntyre and his fellow band members as they developed their style will interest any student of jazz or Australian cultural history.



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## Notes on contributors

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Malcolm Allbrook is managing editor of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (ADB) and a research fellow in the National Centre of Biography at The Australian National University (ANU). He has authored and co-authored four books: *Never Stand Still* (with Darraga Watson, 2013), *Henry Prinsep's Empire* (2014), *Carlotta's Perth* (with Mary Anne Jebb, 2017) and *Barddabardda Wodjenangorddee: We're Telling All of You: The Creation, History and People of Dambeemangaddee Country* (with Valda Blundell, et al., 2017).

Josh Black is a PhD candidate in the School of History, ANU. His research, entitled 'Inside the Recent Political Past: Memoirs, Autobiographies and Diaries as Australian Political History', examines the production and proliferation of political memoirs in Australian literary culture. He completed his Bachelor of Arts (Honours) at the University of Wollongong, with a research project entitled 'For What Purpose?: The Political Memoirs and Diaries of the Rudd-Gillard Labor Cabinet'.

Frank Bongiorno is Professor and currently Head of the School of History at the ANU having previously held appointments at Kings College London and the University of New England. His books, *The Sex Lives of Australians: A History* and *The Eighties: The Decade that Transformed Australia*, both won ACT Book of the Year. He has also written books and articles on labour history and Australian politics and served on a number of boards in the arts and history fields. He is president of the Canberra and Region Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History.

Paul Burke has had a long career as a lawyer and anthropologist. In his legal phase he worked for Aboriginal legal aid and the Central Land Council in Alice Springs. Following his conversion to anthropology he has worked on native title claims and undertaken anthropological research. His first book, *Law's Anthropology: From Ethnography to Expert Testimony in Native Title* (2011) is a Bourdieu-inspired account of the interaction of law and anthropology in native title claims. His most recent work, *An Australian Indigenous Diaspora: Warlpiri Matriarchs and the Refashioning of Tradition* (2018) is a detailed ethnographic account of the cultural implications of Indigenous migration away from traditional country. He is an honorary lecturer at the School of Archaeology and Anthropology at ANU.

Commander Alastair Cooper has served in the Royal Australian Navy at sea and ashore, including as the research officer to the Chief of Navy, worked in private sector telecommunications and as a public servant in the Department of Defence, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Attorney-General's Department. He is the author of a number of papers on Australian naval history and military strategy. He is currently the Deputy Director of the Sea Power Centre – Australia.

Carole Ferrier is an Emeritus Professor at the School of Communication and Arts at the University of Queensland (UQ). In 1975 she was founding editor of *Hecate: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Women's Liberation*; from 1999, she became editor of the *Australian Women's Book Review*. From the 1990s she was Director of the Women, Gender, Culture and Social Change Research Centre at UQ and President of the Australian Women's and Gender Studies Association for several years. Her publications include *Gender, Politics and Fiction: Twentieth Century Australian Women's Novels* (1985), *As Good as a Yarn with You* (1994), *The Janet Frame Reader* (1995), *Jean Devanny: Romantic Revolutionary* (1999) and *Radical Brisbane: An Unruly History* (2004).

Karen Fox is a research editor for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and a research fellow in the National Centre of Biography in the School of History at ANU. Karen specialises in Australian and New Zealand history, and she is especially interested in women's, gender and feminist history; imperial and colonial history; the history of celebrity; and biography and life writing. She has taught Australian and imperial history and biography at ANU, and she is the author of *Māori and Aboriginal Women in the Public Eye: Representing Difference, 1950–2000* (2011).

Michael Hall is a life member of the Canberra & District Historical Society (CDHS) and has served as a volunteer guide at St John's Schoolhouse Museum since 2006. He has written numerous articles for the CDHS Newsletter (of which he was editor for 11 years) and the *Canberra Historical Journal*. In 2004, he began compiling a database of men and women from the Canberra district who served in World War I, which was used in the creation of the ACT Memorial in 2006. Since then he has been a volunteer researcher working on the ACT Memorial database, and has written many articles on local servicemen and women for the ACT Heritage Library's stories from the ACT Memorial website, as well as providing research on soldier settlers for ArchivesACT's 'Repat and Rabbits' website.

Philippa Hetherington is Lecturer in Modern Eurasian History at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London, researching and teaching the cultural, social and legal history of imperial Russia and the early Soviet Union in global and transnational context. In 2017 she was a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Laureate Research Program in International History at the University of Sydney, and also Kathleen Fitzpatrick Visiting Fellow. She is a co-investigator

on the three-year AHRC project ‘Trafficking, Smuggling and Illicit Migration in Gendered and Historical Perspective, c.1870–2000’ and is a British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award holder. She is currently publishing her PhD ‘Circulating Subjects: The Traffic in Women and the Russian Invention of an International Crime’ (Harvard, 2016).

John Kalokerinos JP FAICD holds Bachelor degrees in Arts (History) and Law (Honours) and a Master of Law from the ANU. He was the winner of the Lady Isaacs Prize for Australian History at the ANU (1995). John was born and lives in Canberra and has served on a range of government and community boards, including the University of Canberra Council, the ACT Place Names Committee, the Australian Institute of Company Directors (ACT Division), the Canberra Symphony Orchestra, the Hellenic Club of Canberra and the National Heart Foundation (ACT).

James Keating is a historian of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Australia and New Zealand. His work focuses on women, feminism and Australasian and international social reform movements. He was the 2018 David Scott Mitchell Fellow at the State Library of New South Wales, teaches history at UNSW, and serves on the *Journal of Australian Studies*’ editorial committee. His work has been published in *Australian Historical Studies*, *History Compass* and *Women’s History Review*, and he is preparing a history of Australasian suffrage internationalism and its limits for Manchester University Press.

Gillian Kelly OAM is retired and has a passion for local history that commenced in her home town of Goulburn when she was young. She later added a graduate diploma in local and applied history to her qualifications. Living in Queanbeyan, with its underlay of Canberra’s history, piqued her interest in the lives of those who dwelt there at the edge of the remote County Murray in the first half of the nineteenth century. From her belief that a great deal of the history of the area has been written by the powerful, she seeks to unravel the contributions of ‘common people’. As well as writing for local and overseas publications, she has edited several history journals and researched and published a history of the mechanised lace-maker migrants from the midlands of England and Calais in France to Australia in 1848, the largest migration ever of workers from a single industry to this country.

James McDonald is an ex-Classicist who has worked at the University of Sydney and ANU. He is currently editing a three-volume commentary on Xenophon’s *Hellenika*. In recent years he has published widely on a range of topics from Canberra’s pastoral history.

Colin Milner is a PhD candidate in the School of History at ANU, writing on Robert Randolph Garran and the Australian Commonwealth. A former diplomat and public servant, he was Australia’s Special Representative to Nauru in 2004–05.

He has served on many official Australian delegations, including in the United Nations, Commonwealth of Nations, Pacific Islands Forum and (as a dialogue partner) in ASEAN. A graduate in Arts and Law from the University of Sydney, he is admitted as a Barrister of the Supreme Court of New South Wales. He has also worked professionally as a singer in the Western classical tradition.

David Roth is a PhD candidate researching the history of mental health care in the School of History at ANU after training in chemistry and a long career in the IT industry. His thesis topic is 'Life, Death and Deliverance at Callan Park Hospital for the Insane 1877 to 1923'. He has particular interests in the mortality of the mentally ill and the history of medications. His publications include 'Chemical Restraints at Callan Park Hospital for the Insane before 1900' in *Health and History*. David has contributed to the Civil Liberties Association's submission to the Royal Commission on Aged Care. He is a member of the Australian Historical Association and the Australian and New Zealand Society for the History of Medicine.

Kay Saunders AM is a widely published historian at the University of Queensland. She was a Director of the National Australia Day Council, a Council Member of the Australian War Memorial and the National Maritime Museum of Australia and a Senator of the University of Queensland (2002–06). Originally trained as an anthropologist, she has published widely in the fields of race relations, gender studies, war and society studies and the federation of Australia, most recently the trilogy, *Deadly Australian Women* (2013), *Notorious Australian Women* (2013) and *Scandalous Australian Women* (2014).

Nick Swain's interest in Canberra's history began over a decade ago when he purchased a house in one of the city's heritage Garden City precincts. A keen interest in researching its early residents led to a broader curiosity in the early days of Canberra's development as the Federal Capital, including its early commercial activity and the interplay of heritage issues and local planning. He is currently President of the Canberra & District Historical Society and facilitates the ACT Regional Studies Network. He is working towards increasing awareness of the many unique holdings in the CDHS collection.

Kathryn Wells is a PhD candidate in the School of History at ANU working on 'Song, Swing and Survival: Indigenous Global Intersections and Local Rights Movements'. She grew up in Western Australia and Fiji, graduating in history from University of Western Australia and with a Master of Letters thesis completed at the ANU. Previously she worked for Aboriginal advocacy and arts organisations, collecting institutions including the Australian Museum, National Museum and National Library Australia, as well as Parliament House as an advisor to MPs and for Parliamentary Committees.