

Biography Footnotes:

the newsletter of the National Centre of Biography

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Season's Greetings from the NCB



Standing L-R: Niki Francis (Biographical Register Officer), Pam Crichton (NSW desk editor, ADB), Dr Samuel Furphy (Research Fellow and Victorian desk editor, ADB), Scott Yeadon (computer programmer), Max Korolev (at back) (Digitisation Officer), Dr Brian Wimborne (researcher), Dr Barbara Dawson (Commonwealth desk editor, ADB), Dr Rani Kerin (Research Fellow and Smaller States desk editor, ADB)
Seated L-R: Dr Paul Arthur (deputy head, NCB, and deputy General Editor, ADB), Christine Fernon (Online Manager), Karen Ciuffetelli (Administrator), Professor Melanie Nolan (head, NCB, and General Editor, ADB).

Karen Ciuffetelli Awarded University Medal

Congratulations to the NCB's Administrator, Karen Ciuffetelli, who received a university medal in November for 25 years of service to the ANU.

Karen began working at the ANU in 1985 as a typist in the Coombs Typing Pool. In 1992 she moved to the ADB as an Administrative Assistant. She recalls that one of her main tasks, in those pre-personal computer days, was typing the handwritten entries submitted by ADB authors. Following the retirement of Edna Kauffman in 2007, Karen was promoted to Administrator.

She looks forward to working at the NCB for many more years.



Directions for 2011

The National Centre of Biography has a busy year planned for 2011, with the completion of a number of projects and the beginning of others.

Australian Dictionary of Biography

The last batch of entries for volume 18 of the ADB (those with surnames beginning L-Z who died in the 1980s) will be sent to Melbourne University Press in December 2011. The volume will be launched, both as hardcopy and online, in mid-2012.

A start will be made on entries for those who died in the 1990s. The names of people to be included from that period will be finalized during the year and the first batch of invitations sent to authors.

The ADB's biennial Editorial Board meeting will be held in the first half of 2011. Topics to be discussed include promoting research on Indigenous history, and encouraging more academics to be involved with the ADB both as authors and specialist readers of entries.



The ADB website will get a 'facelift' in 2011. As well as getting a new 'look', (see above) designed by Swell Design Group, who also developed the website for Obituaries Australia, the two ADB websites (one - <http://adb.anu.edu.au/> - explains the structure of the organisation and its history, while the other - <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/adbonline.htm> - has the ADB entries) will be merged. We have been wanting to merge the sites for some time but had to wait until the ADB's software was re-engineered.

The first batch of thematic essays, collective biographies, group lists and digitised reference material will be added to the 're-jigged' ADB site during the year.

Obituaries Australia

Obituaries Australia will be launched on 22 March 2011. The site contains published obituaries of Australians, and those who have had a strong association with the country, since white settlement. The obituaries are being indexed using the same fields as those in the ADB. We have also included a field for cause of death, and are mapping relationships (familial, educational, associational, events), and linking obituaries to relevant digitised resources.

We hope the number of obituaries included in the site will increase rapidly during the year and will be inviting people to send us copies of published obituaries (that are out of copyright) and to help index them. We will also be talking to newspaper and magazine publishers about reproducing recent obituaries.

The NCB's volunteer, Margaret Lee, will continue searching the National Library's digitised newspapers for the obituaries of people with entries in the ADB, who died prior to 1952. We are making it a priority to add these obituaries to OA.

University Teaching

Two more PhD students will be joining us in the new year, bringing the total number of students at the centre to six.

We are also offering, for the first time in 2011, an internship at the ADB for History honours students, and are finalising arrangements for a Master in Biographical Research and Writing to be offered in 2012. (see page 3).

Outreach

Visiting Fellows for 2011 include Professor Peter Robinson who recently took up a position at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada. He was previously the co-director of the Institute for Textual Scholarship and Electronic Editing at the University of Birmingham.

The NCB will continue to hold its monthly Biography Reading Group meetings in 2011 and will host a number of workshops/conferences. Professor Melanie Nolan is convening the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History Conference, which has biography as its theme, at the ANU in September (see page 7). Dr Paul Arthur will host a workshop on digital humanities during Professor Peter Robinson's visit to the centre.

Several publications are planned for the NCB's ANU.Lives E-Press series in 2011, including a collection of papers on the history of the ADB and a collection emanating from the NCB's conference, 'The Seven Dwarfs and the Age of Mandarins, 1940s to 1960s', held in September 2010. Writers who have spoken to the NCB's Biography Reading Group during the last two years have been invited to contribute to a book about the challenges faced by biographers.

NCB Digitisation Facility

The NCB has secured a \$160,000 Research Infrastructure Block Grant (RIBG) from the ANU's College of Arts and Social Sciences. This will enable us to employ a full-time digitisation technician in 2011-12. As well as scanning reference material for the ADB and Obituaries Australia – using the centre's Guardian AO scanner – the technician will digitise material for other research projects in CASS.

Deaths of ADB Authors

It is with sadness that we report the loss of the following ADB authors during 2010:

Frank Fenner, Ben Gascoigne, James Griffin, Keith D. Howard, Laurie Ross, J. W. Shaw and Kenneth W. Tribe.

Rani Kerin joins the NCB

Dr Rani Kerin is well-qualified for her new position as Research Fellow at the National Centre of Biography. Not only did she write a biography of Charles Duguid for her PhD thesis, *Doctor Do-Good? Charles Duguid and Aboriginal Politics, 1930s–1960s*, but wrote the ADB entry on educationists, Anton and Anna Vroland, and has taught courses on memory and oral history.



After completing her PhD at the ANU in 2004, Rani accepted a lecturership at the University of Otago, New Zealand, where she taught courses on New Zealand and Australia in the Twentieth Century, Early Australia and New Zealand History, Australian Indigenous History, and Oral History.

Rani returned to Australia and the ANU in November to take up her appointment at the NCB. As well as editing ADB entries, she will be supervising PhD students, teaching a course on 'Writing Biography' for the NCB's Masters program, and continuing with her own research projects. These include a biography of anthropologist, historian and Aboriginal-rights activist, Diane Barwick, and a collective biography of Nimbin's pioneer hippies, that is, the 500 or so people who attended the Age of Aquarius festival in the town in 1973 and stayed to set up a commune.

Like many of the alternative society groups of the 1960s and '70s, the Nimbin hippies were good record keepers and have left a considerable archive, including journals, newsletters, oral histories, ephemera and photographic records. Much of this is available at the National Library, including the archive of the Aquarius Festival's Director, Graeme Dunstan.

Rani is particularly interested in exploring the hippies' adoption of Aboriginal spirituality and iconography. They called themselves the 'new Aborigines', held corroborees and included Aboriginal motifs in their art.

Her reworked PhD thesis on Charles Duguid will be published by Australian Scholarly Publishing in 2011.

NCB Staff Movements

Dr Samuel Furphy, who began a three-year postdoctoral fellowship with the NCB in April this year, has been promoted to Research Fellow, effective from 1 January 2011. Dr Karen Fox will take up the remaining two years of the fellowship.

Dr Janet Doust, who recently concluded her two-year contract as the ADB's Small States desk editor, will return to the ANU's School of History as a Program Visitor in 2011.

Study@NCB

The National Centre of Biography is continuing to develop its courses in biography and life writing by offering a special ADB internship for 4th year honours students in 2011, and a Master's by coursework in 2012. The Master's may be especially attractive to students who wish to upgrade their qualifications to pursue a PhD or to some of the 17,000 members of genealogical societies and professional writing groups who wish to write biography.

ADB Internship

The ADB internship offers 4th Year History honours students a unique opportunity to understand the issues involved in researching, writing and publishing biography in a digital environment, and to produce a substantial piece of work of publishable quality.

Interns will spend a period of time with NCB staff editing an ADB entry and guiding it through all the stages of publication, including the digitisation and post-processing of relevant resources.

They will also research and write a 500-word ADB entry and a 5000-word thematic essay. Both pieces will be published on the ADB online website if of sufficient standard.

Master in Biographical Research and Writing

The NCB will offer a one year, full-time (two years, part-time) Master in Biographical Research and Writing beginning in 2012. Students with a BA or equivalent experience will be eligible to enrol. They will be required to complete two compulsory courses and a choice of elective courses to the value of 48 points. Students studying for a Master of Studies may include any of the individual units as part of their course.

Compulsory Courses

- Writing Biography (6 units) - Dr Rani Kerin
- Reading and Writing History (6 units) OR History and theory (6 units) - Dr Alex Cook and Dr Mark Dawson

Elective Courses (36 units must be undertaken)

- Oral history, memory and life stories (6 units) - Dr Maria Nugent
- Biography and society (6 units) - Professor Paul Pickering
- Digital histories and biographies (6 units) - Dr Paul Arthur
- Biographical practices (6 units) - Dr Samuel Furphy
- ADB internship (12 units) - Professor Melanie Nolan
- Biographical research project (12 units) - Professor Melanie Nolan

The NCB was successful in its application for a CASS Flexible Coursework Master's Development Funding grant in 2010 which enabled us to employ Dr Karen Fox to work with staff to develop the Master's as a flexibly taught program.

The NCB also offers a M.Phil and PhD.

For further information about any of the courses contact the Director of the NCB, Professor Melanie Nolan at melanie.nolan@anu.edu.au

The Seven Dwarfs and the Age of the Mandarins

In early November the NCB held its latest biographical conference at the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House.

The conference focused on leading postwar Australian public servants, a group of which were famously known as the 'Seven Dwarfs' because of their diminutive stature.



Professor David Horner

Keynote addresses considered postwar reconstruction and Keynesian economics, providing valuable context for biographical sketches of Sir Frederick Shedden, Sir Roland Wilson, Sir John Crawford, Dr Nugget Coombs, Sir Paul Hasluck, Joe Burton, Sir Arthur Tange, Sir James Plimsoll, Sir Frederick Wheeler, Sir Allen Brown, Sir Kenneth Bailey and Alf Conlon.

The conference was organised by Christine Fernon and Samuel Furphy from the NCB, in conjunction with John Nethercote, Editorial Fellow for the ADB and Adjunct Professor of the Public Policy Institute at the Australian Catholic University. The proceedings will be published by ANU E-Press as part of the ANU Lives series in biography.

The NCB thanks the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House, the Public Policy Institute at the Australian Catholic University, the Economic Society of Australia, the Australian and New Zealand School of Government and the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia for sponsoring the conference.



Twelfth Biennial Labour History Conference, 15-17 September 2011

The National Centre of Biography, in association with the Canberra branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, is organising the Twelfth Biennial Labour History Conference, *Labour History & Its People*, to be held at the Manning Clark Centre, Australian National University, on 15-17 September 2011.

The conference marks the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History by ANU academics.



Labour historian and Director of the National Centre of Biography, Professor Melanie Nolan, is convening the conference which has as its theme the role of biography in the study of Australian labour history.

Keynote speakers:

- Kim Sattler, Secretary of UnionsACT, who has been involved in the establishment of the National Museum of Labour History in Canberra)
- Professor Stuart Macintyre (University of Melbourne), will discuss '50 Years Hard Labour: A Retrospect'

Call for Papers:

Contributions by way of papers, themed discussion panels, audio/visual presentations and performances are invited from history professionals, labour activists and others.

Intending contributors should send an abstract of not more than 500 words to the convenor (Professor Melanie Nolan) by **1 February 2011**.

Papers may be submitted for formal academic refereeing but must reach the convenor by **1 March 2011**.

All papers (maximum length 5000 words) must be submitted by **1 August 2011** for distribution at the conference.

A book of selected conference papers will be published in 2012.

For further information contact the conference convenor, Professor Melanie Nolan, at melanie.nolan@anu.edu.au

The conference is supported by the Noel Butlin Archives Centre, ANU, the Research School of Humanities and Arts, ANU, the College of Arts and Social Sciences, ANU, and Canberra-based trade unions.

The ADB: A View of the Australian People

The *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, known to scholars and the trade as the *ADB*, has entered its sixth decade. With seventeen volumes, and one more to go in 2012 to harness those (L-Z) who died in the period 1981-1990, it stands as a work of towering scholarship. Yet, the *ADB*'s presence with its rich, at times surprising tapestry of the lives of men and women who participated in Australian life over the first 200 years is, perhaps, not as widely known as it deserves to be. Its persistent reader and sometime corrector, Barry Jones, tells the story of how, arriving at the Australian National University last December as an invited speaker to celebrate the Dictionary's half century of history, he found himself stumbling into another disciplinary get-together for direction and was met with the startling question: 'What is the *ADB*?'



There are many answers. Cutting its swathe through differing epochs of Australian history, lining the shelves of Australian, international, institutional and private libraries, the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* stands as a work of basic reference variously praised as 'an eye-opening source of new biographical knowledge', 'a national record', 'an enthralling story of the history of Australia told through its people', an 'invaluable quarry for researchers', and 'a unique pathway to social history'. Thomas Keneally admits that he plundered the *ADB* for his *Australian: From Origin to Eureka* (2009). A covey of reviewers of individual volumes have also extolled it as 'a great read', 'a browser's paradise', and 'the bedside book of bedside books'. And, with a dash of polish, the scholarly Paul Brunton, reviewing the 'missing persons' *Supplement 1580-1980* published as an additional volume in 2005, summed this interesting concoction up as 'an illuminating and engrossing gallimaufry'.

Given this singular work of national scholarship is held to be both one of the largest joint projects in the social sciences ever to be undertaken in Australia, and one of the most important achievements of the ANU, it is surprising that its history is so little known. The genesis of the idea for an Australian national biography found its roots in the ANU where it was shaped originally in the early fifties when Laurie Fitzhardinge, the bibliographically oriented Reader in the Sources of Australian History, began to build a 'Biographical Register'. It was, however, the distinguished expatriate historian, Sir Keith Hancock, who, arriving as founding Director of the Research School of Social Sciences in 1957, seized upon the Dictionary idea and, in the words of one obituarist, 'turned imaginatively a set of cards into a great national achievement of historical scholarship'.

As Australia's archbishop of historians, with a particular zeal for building bridges between colleagues, disciplines and minds, Hancock (who had served as a member of the central committee of Britain's *DNB*) called together a Conference of Historians in Canberra later that year to discuss, among other issues, the Dictionary concept. His proposal for a collective approach to a national dictionary with its headquarters at the ANU, but linked to a network of scholarly co-operation across the country, drew a ready response from the key historians in the State universities. The plan marked a milestone in Australian history, a field then in its investigative infancy, undervalued in university courses, and hungry for research.

The project was pioneering. Britain's famous *Dictionary of National Biography* (the *DNB*) was the munificent contribution to the literary world of publisher, George Smith, for which the Oxford University Press had assumed financial responsibility in 1917. *The Dictionary of American Biography* was brought out under the auspices of the American Council of Learned Societies with a liberal benefaction from the proprietor of the *New York Times*, while the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, about to be launched, had a private bequest of a million dollars. Of Australian benefactors there were none. Rather, the

Australian Dictionary was to be built as a great voluntary enterprise that turned on academic philanthropy and scholarly zeal. 'With a skeleton staff, limited funds, and the enthusiastic co-operation of the people all over Australia', Hancock wrote later, 'the work began'.

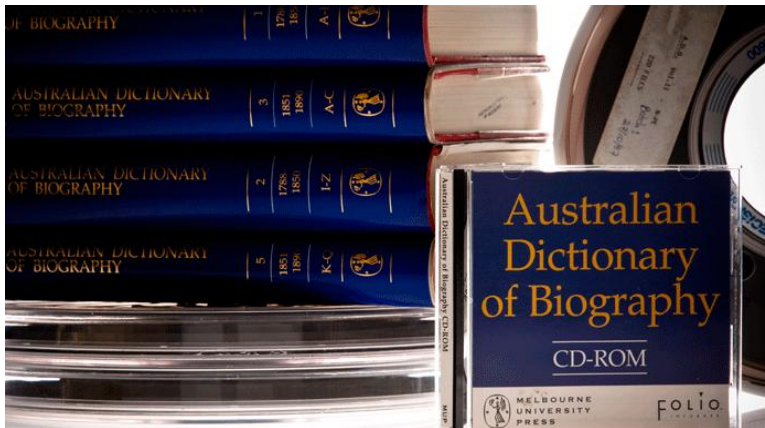


Former ADB Biographical Register Officer, Anthea Bundock, stands alongside the 180 drawers of BR cards created by ADB staff between 1954-1983

The first task was to devise the processes and structure on which a national edifice could grow. This included a small Editorial Board established at the ANU under Hancock's chairmanship in June 1959; a National Committee of experienced historians drawn from the State universities, and a series of Working Parties in each State composed of academics and chosen members of the wider community who had the responsibility of drawing up names for inclusion and possible contributors, and submitting them for wider scrutiny. The design of the project was of great compass and span. It was to be more adventurous and egalitarian in its contents than the *DNB*, embracing all strands of Australian life from elite governors and political figures, through soldiers, naval officers, clergymen, pastoralists, bureaucrats, teachers, businessmen, writers, artists, scientists and professional others down to colourful eccentrics and vagabonds and, in the early volumes, visitors to the country who had made an impact on Australia in the course of famous careers. Planned in chronological blocks spanning the periods, 1788-1850; 1851-1890; 1891-1939, inclusion in the first twelve volumes was on the individual's *floruit* (the period of his/her major flowering and contribution). In the periods 1940-1980 and 1981-1990 the date of death became the marker for inclusion.

The early years of the Dictionary proved an act of faith. Recruited from historical research in Britain as assistant editor and Hancock's key associate, I was 'the skeleton staff'. Together we faced many hurdles. A major one arose from the fact that there was little research and few experts to write on Australia's formative years. One such was the independent historian, Malcolm Ellis, a special feature writer for the *Bulletin*, a man of many contacts, and the biographer of Governor Lachlan Macquarie, the convict artist Francis Greenway, and John Macarthur. Ellis had attended the 1957 Conference of Historians and Hancock seized upon the value of involving this academic 'outsider' in Dictionary affairs. He was swiftly appointed joint editor with Manning Clark of the first

two volumes covering 1788-1850 and, as such, became a member of the New South Wales Working Party and the Editorial Board.



The ADB has been published in many forms

For a halcyon time all went merrily. But Ellis proved a dominant initiator, impatient in collaboration and procedural matters, and temperamentally driven to 'get things done'. He wanted command, and unsympathetic to the dictum, 'Never resign: wait until you're sacked', he was a great resigner. During his three tempestuous years' association with the

Dictionary, he resigned no less than five times, until his sixth brought him down. This made for interesting but turbulent times and ended in Ellis' bitter public attack on Dictionary affairs in his article published in the *Bulletin* in June 1962, 'Why I have resigned. The Australian Dictionary of Biography – Intrigues, Inefficiency, Incompetency'.

Under rearranged editorships, the two inaugural volumes were published in 1966-67 under the first General Editor, Douglas Pike, and, seen at once as 'a major enterprise', gave a critical kick start to Australian history and established the ADB's scholarly base. Across five decades a veritable army of the country's historians have thrown their knowledge and energy into the Dictionary's growth, serving (often doubling up) as members of the National Committee, the Editorial Board, as volume or General Editors, and crucially and in large part, as unremunerated contributors to the emerging work. In the long span of years, a rising stream of young graduates and researchers have added new expertise, while an extending family of librarians, State and Territory archivists and public records offices, national institutions and a plenitude of rare and specialist societies and consultants at home and overseas have underpinned the taxing accuracy of the work.

It is, however, the Working Parties, State, Commonwealth, regional and one or two Specialist ones (the Armed Forces a case in point) with their informed and enthusiastic members, who have provided the core of the Dictionary's activity, their lists of inclusions of key and 'representative' Australians flowing up through the National Committee and Editorial Board to the volume editors and General Editor. Five of these 'editorial supremos' to date (Douglas Pike, Bede Nairn, Geoffrey Serle, John Ritchie and Di Langmore) have overseen periods of increasing complexity in Australia's history. These have run the gamut of significant economic and social change, rural enterprise, industrialisation, migration, urbanisation, unionism, growing professionalisation, scientific and technological progress, prosperity, depression, multiculturalism, art, literature, education, sport, conservative and radical politics, and several major wars.

It was Pike, a former Church of Christ minister who believed he could toss off a one sentence sermon as he mounted the pulpit, who laid down the ADB's concise style of presentation (the bane of many eager contributors) along with a cautious and considered approach to biography. This, with some variations, has been sustained by his four

successors, the influential Geoffrey Serle setting his imprimatur on the work with his belief that the *ADB* was 'a national cultural landmark' which should 'improve the national memory'. Nonetheless prime questions have confronted the General Editors over the invasion of the subject's privacy and the nature of critical biographical approaches. The record eventually published of Nellie Melba's death from septicaemia caused by a facelift in Europe was fiercely contested by her family but was published in the interests of the biography of 'a public figure'. In Volume 10, the question of 'critical' biography and its invasion of the private life was dramatically focussed by Catholic historian, James Griffin, in his probe of Cardinal Mannix's personal bigotry and intellectual shallowness which evoked intense public criticism. On content, more recent editorial approaches have encouraged greater democratisation of the *ADB* to include more women, the Indigenous, and a larger intake of 'representative' lesser known Australians even as entries have shrunk significantly to reflect the country's mounting population.

2006, however, ushered in major change. Digitised, the *ADB* went online and opened its immense store of knowledge to a new and rapidly extending audience. Now, rather than having to search through print volumes alert to when the person died or 'flourished', one can, with a finger tap, reach them under a 'People' list; discover under 'Occupations' that there are, to name a few, some 122 governors, 503 barristers, 174 architects, 70 wheat growers, 24 high commissioners, 234 explorers, 18 Prime Ministers, 25 jockeys, 22 bakers, 16 thieves, and one kidnapper; and identify the 'Authors' of entries.

At the National Centre of Biography, established at the ANU in 2008, plans are also afoot for using the *ADB* online to map and study relationships between people and to offer thematic entries. 'History', Thomas Carlyle once summed up, 'is the essence of innumerable biographies', and the seventy million hits received under 'Australian Dictionary of Biography' on the Internet attest to its enduring interest and importance.

'Growth is the thing I love' Sir Keith Hancock had said. Without question, he, the distinguished line of General Editors, the committees, the Working Parties and the massive band of contributors have reason to be justly proud.

by Ann Moyal

Dr Ann Moyal pioneered the study of the history of Australian science and telecommunications. Awarded a Doctor of Letters from the ANU in 2003 for her published work, she has also received an AM and a Centenary Medal for her contribution to science and technology in Australia. Ann has maintained a strong interest in the *ADB* over the years and in 2009 gave a paper on its early day at the symposium on the *ADB*'s history.

Literary Expatriates in the ADB

It is almost an article of faith among biographers and historians that when Australians choose to become expatriates, the arbiters of culture covertly declare them ‘unpersons’ and see to it that they are deleted from the hall of fame. For example, in his history of postwar expatriation, *When London Calls* (1999), Stephen Alomes remarks in passing that ‘distinguished Australian expatriates often do not appear in Australian biographical dictionaries, apparently “written out” of Australian society’.¹ Similarly, with respect to the initial ignoring of Frederic Manning’s war memoir *Her Privates We*, Manning’s biographer has said: ‘It is not difficult to guess why. Frederic Manning had become an expatriate. Australians, who are always so quick to claim any writer or artist as Australian, even if he (or she) was born in another country, are equally quick to disown any Australian-born writer who has the temerity to leave Australia.’² These two assertions date from 1999 and 1974 respectively, so this is no extinct point of view. But does it happen to be true?

The best, because in principle the most disinterested, evidence on this point is to be found in the way expatriates are treated in authoritative reference works. These are particularly useful because, whether they are continuously accumulative (as online versions now are) or are issued in annual volumes (like *Who’s Who*), they are rarely pruned of entries once they are in place. They preserve, therefore, the fossil remnants of cultural attitudes that once governed the selection of entrants but which in some cases no longer apply. (One thinks of the inclusion in the past of aristocratic or military nonentities, or today’s greatly increased tally of entries on women of note.) From these fossil remnants can be extracted some details of the policies that once governed—and to a degree still govern—the inclusion or otherwise of literary expatriates.

The two most important biographical compendiums of information about authors are the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (ADB) and *Austlit: The Australian Literature Resource*. The first defines its scope as being those ‘individuals [*i.e.* not necessarily Australian citizens] who have made a prominent contribution to the Australian nation ... including representatives of every social group and sphere of endeavour’.³ *Austlit*, which started in 1999, has a much wider coverage than the ADB, whose first volume was published in 1966, but its biographical details are usually more abbreviated. *Austlit* declares that its ‘inclusion criteria’ encompass authors ‘born in Australia and resident overseas but maintaining links to Australia’.⁴ What exactly is meant by ‘maintaining links’ is left vague, perhaps deliberately.

A sampling of the ADB does not bear out the contention that a permanent departure for England (or anywhere else) automatically rules out any chance of meeting the Dictionary’s criterion for inclusion: that is to say, of having made a ‘prominent contribution to the Australian nation’. Indeed, the opposite seems to be the case. The mere fact of birth and a few years of education, even when followed by a total life-long disconnection from the country, has sometimes been deemed sufficient for an entry.

¹ Alomes, *When London Calls*, 4.

² Pringle, ‘Her Privates We’, 121-2. In fact, far from being ‘disowned’ Manning has entries in *ODNB*, *ADB* and *Austlit*, and these along with his two biographies all give full weight to his Australian origins.

³ Quoted from <http://adb.anu.edu.au/frequently-asked-questions#determines>

⁴ Quoted from <http://www.austlit.edu.au.ezproxy.flinders.edu.au/about/scopepolicy>

It is not too much to say that some of these inclusions are peculiar. Does Joseph Jacobs (1854-1916) deserve his article in the *ADB*? Consider: he left Australia forever as a young man of nineteen to start his formidable career as an anthropologist and linguist. He gained an international reputation as the foremost historian of Judaism after moving to New York in 1900. How much of a future could he have had in those roles had he stayed at home? He had no further contact whatsoever of a public kind with Australia. The same is true of the philosopher Samuel Alexander (1859-1938) who left Melbourne at the age of eighteen, having won a scholarship to Balliol College, Oxford. The last of the big metaphysical system-builders in the wake of Kant and Hegel, his *Space, Time and Deity* was acclaimed for a while. He spent his entire career at Manchester University and died there in 1938, having utterly lost his connection with Australia. In what ways did these men make a 'prominent contribution' to the nation?

A similarly puzzling case is the entry on Richard Hodgson (1855-1905). The athletic and boisterous Hodgson trained in law, but soon discovered he was more fitted for science and philosophy. He already had an interest in parapsychology before leaving Australia for Cambridge in 1878, when he was twenty-three, where he held for a while a minor teaching post in philosophy. More importantly, he was one of the founding members of the famous Society for Psychical Research in London in 1882 and became a tireless investigator of, and entertaining writer on, claims for the supernatural. His first great success was his devastating critique of the frauds of the guru Madame Blavatsky, for which he travelled to India. He lived in America from 1887, existing in one room on a tiny salary while devoting himself entirely to paranormal research and writing reports for the SPR, and he returned only once to England and never to Australia. Although there were psychic circles and mediums in Melbourne at the time of Hodgson's acute investigations, as Richardson's *The Way Home* attests, he would never have had the opportunities he had in Boston. In particular, he would never have met the 'Queen of Mediums', Mrs Leonora Piper, whom he investigated minutely for seven years and regarded as absolutely genuine. It was she who convinced him of *post-mortem* survival; so much so that in 1905 he told a friend, 'Sometimes I can hardly wait to get over there. I am sure that when I do I can establish the truth beyond all possibility of doubt. ... But I suppose I am good for twenty years more at least.' He died within two weeks. Some communications from him were received afterwards via Mrs Piper and others, but despite Hodgson's cheerful assurances nothing very convincing emerged about life on the Other Side, any more than it ever did from the mediums of Down Under who also sought to hear from him.⁵ After death, as in life, Hodgson's Australian antecedents never figured in any way whatever in his career.

The philosopher Samuel Alexander, like other expatriate authors of note, has not only an *ADB* entry but also one in the British *ODNB*, the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (to give it its current name). This august reference tool, which started publication in 1885, declares that it treats those 'noteworthy' people of all times and all walks of life, no matter where domiciled, who have left their mark on the history of the British Isles and its 'possessions and colonies'. It will be seen how broad this ambit is: in principle, it could include any 'noteworthy' Australian, whether an expatriate or not, up to the date of Federation, just as it might include any American up to the end of the Revolutionary War, whether resident in the United States or not. In practice, the policy for inclusion seems to be a good deal tighter than that, but it is still quite extensive as far as Australian authors are concerned. Naturally the *ODNB* has entries on those who spent good portions of their lives in England and gained their fame there, like Martin Boyd,

⁵ Baird, *Hodgson*, 286.

Vere Gordon Childe, Alan Moorehead, Rosa Praed, H. H. Richardson, Christina Stead and Patrick White. But it also has a generous range of entries about many others active by 1950 with Australian backgrounds of varied definiteness who also appear in the *ADB*, such as Francis Adams, Carleton Kemp Allen, F. M. Alexander, Oscar Asche, Will Dyson, Fergus Hume, Arthur Lynch, Colin MacInnes, Frederic Manning, Jill Neville, Grafton Elliot Smith, Catherine Helen Spence, Angela Thirkell, Walter Turner, and Anna Wickham.

Some especially striking points emerge about the Australian unwillingness to ‘surrender’ its expatriates in the case of those people with parallel entries. One noteworthy person in this category is Gilbert Murray (1866-1957). It is inconceivable that Murray, the son of a politician, could ever have become the most able classics scholar of his generation, and a tireless promoter of peace via the League of Nations, had he stayed in Australia. In fact the issue never arose. Murray was removed to England as a boy for his schooling, and the single return visit he made as a young man, in 1892, did not detain him.⁶ He had no further creative interaction with his birth country whatsoever, and the long and thorough article on him by Christopher Stray in the *ODNB* devotes about five lines, surely the right amount, to his antipodean origins. Despite this, there has been a very marked reluctance to hand over Murray to the world of English scholarship. He has been claimed as Australian, and even as an ‘Australian’ dramatist, on the grounds (so it has been said) that his translations and staged performances of the Greek playwrights ‘suggest Australia is being played out by means of texts which never overtly invoke Murray’s homeland’.⁷ This is surely drawing a very long bow. Why should Murray’s translations ever have been encoded in such a fashion? What possible motive could Murray have had for doing so? Although he married into the aristocracy he was perfectly at ease with his place of birth and quite capable of writing about it when he wanted to. He started to write an autobiography in his old age in which his boyhood experiences figure disproportionately, and on the strength of that it has been claimed that ‘the fact that Murray chose to construct himself as the boy from the bush is almost as important as whether or not that construction is historically verifiable’.⁸ Apart from the question whether people’s attempts to ‘construct’ themselves as anything should be accepted at face value in a biography, this is to skew the perspective entirely. Murray hardly began to tell his life story (he rightly called it a ‘fragment’) and only took it up to his appointment as a professor at Glasgow in his early twenties, by which time he had already spent half his life in England. *Seventy years* of his overseas life are missing altogether. Had he taken it right up to his ninetieth year (he died in 1957 at the age of ninety-one) no doubt those first eleven years would have fallen into their proper place: important to the degree that youthful experiences are always important, but negligible over the span of a very long and productive life spent entirely in another country which had his total allegiance.

The *ADB* also has an entry on Murray’s colleague and protégé at Cambridge, Melian Stawell (1869-1936), another brilliant classical and literary scholar. At university she so overwhelmed her examiners that one said she was not merely a scholar of Greek, but *was* an ancient Greek. Melian Stawell must have been a formidable character: aquiline in features, imperious in manner and idealistic in attitude, who even as a baby was said to

⁶⁶ Peter Porter, ‘Australian Expatriate Writers in Britain’, asserts that Murray ‘ventured from South Australia to become the most distinguished professor of Greek of his time’ (136). Murray had no connection with that State, and ‘ventured’ is an odd verb to use of a boy of eleven being taken to school in England by his mother.

⁷ Schafer, ‘Tale of Two Australians’, 122. Murray’s case for being regarded as an ‘Australian’ scholar/dramatist was, in fact, queried long ago by bibliographers. See Miller, *Australian Literature* (1940), 12.

⁸ Schafer, ‘Tale of Two Australians’, 119.

have a 'kind of visionary look'.⁹ She left home forever in 1889 at the age of twenty to attend Newnham College, where she took a First in the classical tripos. She held a tutoring post there in 1894-95, but resigned after a year for health reasons. She never married and lived as an independent scholar. She was the first person in the field of classical philology to demonstrate that some of the indecipherable Minoan writings on Crete are an early form of Greek. Her books, which were few and conceded nothing to popular tastes, could never have furnished a living, and presumably she lived on family inheritances. (Stawell's mother was widowed at Naples during a family visit to England in 1889, and mother and daughter lived together until 1921.) It is unlikely that Melian Stawell gave a minute's thought to returning to Australia permanently. She died at Oxford in 1936. One might think that Stawell is far more deserving of an entry in the *ODNB* (which, surprisingly, she does not have) than in the *ADB*, since her scholarly endeavours contributed nothing to Australian society: her only claim there is that she was the youngest daughter of the ten children of the Chief Justice of Victoria.

A more recent example is Eric Partridge (1894-1979), the hugely prolific lexicographer of slang. As in other cases, it is instructive to compare his entry in the *ADB* by Geoffrey Serle with its equivalent lengthy account in the *ODNB* by Jonathon Green, where Partridge's entire antipodean background is given just a few lines. Partridge is indeed a very unlikely character to 'count' as an Australian writer. He does not even begin to meet the *ADB*'s inclusion criteria. He was not born in Australia and he left permanently after taking his first degree in Brisbane in his early twenties. For all his vast output as a self-supporting man of letters, Partridge wrote no single work on any aspect of the Australian language and his only publication on any Australian topic whatsoever was a little booklet on part of the history of Queensland University. A memorial volume to him, a British production published just after his death, skips over his antipodean origins so quickly as to imply they are hardly worth mentioning.¹⁰ He occupied almost daily the same seat K1 in the Reading Room of the British Museum for over fifty years and in the course of a long life never showed any disposition to return. He was the complete immigrant expatriate. Did he make a 'prominent contribution' to his birth country?

A final case worth mentioning is that of the novelist-journalist Evadne Price (1896-1985). Some mystery surrounds her earliest life. She is said to have been born in a ship off the Australian coast in about 1896 and records exist showing that she spent a few years of her childhood in NSW. But she must have been taken to London (probably by a surviving parent) before she was out of her childhood, for she was acting on the stage by the age of fifteen and had become a London newspaper columnist before she was seventeen. By the onset of the Second World War she was had become famous for her First World War novel/memoir *Not So Quiet: Stepdaughters of War*, written under the pseudonym of Helen Zenna Smith. She was a war correspondent between 1943-45, and as the war ended was the first female reporter into Belsen, where, surrounded by corpses and introduced to the 'beautiful beast' of the camp, Irma Grese, she knocked her to the ground with a punch in the face. She also got into Hitler's abandoned fortress at Berchtesgaden, where she wrote her name triumphantly across the Fuehrer's giant bedroom mirror in lipstick. None of her highly varied work—it included a long stint as a magazine's astrologer—related to Australia and she had no further connection whatever with the country until she returned to Sydney in her old age, to die at Manly in 1985. Bafflingly, in an oral interview of 1977 she asserted she had been born in Sussex and, further, that she had 'never been to

⁹ Stawell, *My Recollections*, 192.

¹⁰ Crystal, ed. Partridge (1980).

Australia' until arriving there the year before. This is just one example of Price's muddying of the biographical waters, especially with respect to her marriage to Ken Attiwill, another expatriate journalist.¹¹ Price's eventful career has already earned her an entry in the *ODNB*. It is unclear whether she will be regarded as 'lost' to the country by the *ADB*, as her death date has so far precluded an entry. Still, elsewhere she is regarded almost universally as an Australian author—by *Austlit*, for example—and again on the most tenuous grounds.

In both the *ADB* and *Austlit*, the way people who are presented as 'Australian writers' implies a marked reluctance to surrender an expatriate even in the teeth of the evidence that the experiences which forged them happened overseas, where such reputation as they still enjoy was made. The treatment of such people as Gilbert Murray is inconsistent in the *ADB*. He has an entry whereas George Egerton, who was born Mary Chavelita Dunne in Melbourne in 1859, does not. And this is despite the fact that she was taken to Dublin at the same age as Murray, and went on to become the author of the infamous story-collection *Keynotes* (1893) and other sexually radical works. It was a sufficiently striking career to earn her an entry in the *ODNB*. Yet it makes no more sense for the *ADB* to include Murray than to exclude Egerton.

by Peter Morton

* Associate Professor Peter Morton teaches in the English department at Flinders University, where he is writing a book titled *Lusting for London*, about Australian literary expatriates in England before 1950.

Peter is interested in receiving feedback about his comments on the treatment of Australian expatriates in the *ADB* and *Austlit*. He can be contacted at petermorton@adam.com.au

¹¹ 'Evadne Price' [obituary], *Times* [London], 19 April 1985, 14; Foster, ed. *Self Portraits*, 108-9; Acton, 'Price, Evadne'.

Biography Reading Group



Brenda Niall was the guest speaker at the Biography Reading Group in May

The NCB established the Biography Reading Group in March 2009 as part of its commitment to 'co-ordinate the activities of biographers throughout the College of Arts and Social Sciences and the ANU'.

About 25 staff and students, and interested members of the public, regularly attend the monthly meetings. Two people have also flown in from interstate for particular meetings while a PhD student drives down from Sydney to join the group.

Rather than read and discuss books as most reading groups do, the BRG decided, at its first meeting, that it would more beneficial to invite a different biographer to each meeting to discuss, in an informal setting, the range of methodological and ethical issues they faced in their work.

Guest speakers in 2009 were chosen from the wealth of writers living in, and around, Canberra. Ann Moyal, who was writing a sequel to her book *Breakfast with Beaverbrook: Memoirs of an Independent Woman*, was the BRG's first guest speaker. NCB Biography Fellow, Ian Hancock, followed with a discussion on writing political biography. Nicholas Brown and Sue Bowden spoke of the difficulties of jointly writing a biography of Rick Farley. David Lee talked about his new book on S. M. Bruce while Beverley Caine discussed her current project (since completed) on *History and Biography*, as well as the difficulties she had faced in writing the collective biography of the Stracheys.

In 2010 we ventured further afield for speakers and were joined by Kate Grenville, Susan Varga, Brenda Niall, Willa McDonald, Judith Brett and Mark McKenna. Two members of the BRG, Niki Francis, who is writing a PhD thesis on artist Rosalie Gascoigne, and ANU Law Professor, Kim Rubenstein, who is writing a biography of Joan Montgomery, also led a discussion about the ethical and legal issues faced by biographers.

While it has been a privilege to attend the meetings with Australia's leading biographers, we have often wondered whether we should tape the sessions and make them available, if not as podcasts, then at least as archival recordings for future researchers. In the end it was decided that the use of a tape recorder might impede the often frank discussions at meetings. A number of guest speakers have agreed, however, to contribute essays to a forthcoming book about writing biography to

be published by the NCB's ANU.Lives E-Press series in 2011.

We never anticipated, when we started the BRG, that guest speakers might also benefit from the opportunity of talking to us. This was particularly the case for Pamela Burton whose first biography *From Moree to Mabo: The Mary Gaudron Story* was published in November. Pam attended the BRG as a guest speaker in mid-2009 and felt so invigorated by the exchange that she returned as a member. She credits (literally, in the acknowledgements of her book) the BRG with helping her complete her book.

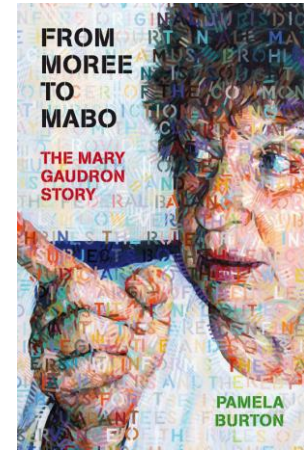
When she spoke to the group her manuscript had been rejected by a number of publishers and she was somewhat despondent about completing the biography which had been occupying her time for 12 years. Various BRG members rallied around her. One suggested a different publisher to try, another gave suggestions about repackaging the book to make it more saleable, another, who had gone to the same Catholic school as Mary Gaudron, offered to critique Pam's chapter on Mary's education. Another member, who was writing a PhD thesis on judicial biographies and had flown in from Newcastle to attend Pam's session, met with Pam afterwards and continued to exchange emails. At the NCB's symposium on 'Biography, Politics and Gender' later in the year, Pam also met NCB PhD student, Chris Wallace, who has written a number of biographies, and the award-winning biographer, Jacquie Kent, both of whom encouraged her in her work and kept in contact.

The BRG will regroup on the last Thursday of February 2011 to discuss how it will proceed during the year. Anyone wishing to join the group should contact the NCB on ncb@anu.edu.au.

Pamela Burton's book is reviewed on page 19



Pamela Burton with her book *From Moree to Mabo: The Mary Gaudron Story*. Pam became a regular member of the BRG after attending the group as a guest speaker



Gaudron's reluctance is compensated for by the author's tireless research and the generous co-operation of many friends and colleagues and the index glitters with famous names of those associated with Gaudron and who did co-operate, from Michael Kirby, who wrote the foreword, to former Prime Minister Bob Hawke. The Gaudron story is a dazzling story of triumph and success interspersed with the drama and excitement of the courtroom and sensational trials.

Mary's glittering career at Law school also had its downside. As with other women students she suffered from the embedded discrimination against women as lawyers and the mindless banter of some male students, both of which she fearlessly challenged, because Mary was no pussy cat. Known as Merciless Mary she did not mince her words when angry and often used coarse language, though she was always correct and formal in her public work, for Mary was bold as well as brilliant and blazed a trail for women in Australia to challenge male privilege in the professions.

19

also closely analysed by Burton, herself a lawyer, and these give the book substance and authority and, though a bit daunting, will no doubt be eagerly devoured by practicing, putative and student lawyers, as well as general readers.

Her brilliance as a barrister was quickly recognised and rewarded. Only six years after being admitted to the Bar in 1968, Gaudron was appointed Deputy President of the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. A further accolade came in 1981 when she was appointed Solicitor-General of New South Wales where she appeared in many high profile cases such as the affairs of the Nugan Hand Bank, the activities of crime boss “Abe” Saffron, and the *Age* tapes, cases which were both stressful and scandalous. A rich and disturbing account of criminal and corrupt activities in the 1980s and which required all of Mary’s talents and prowess, is engrossing reading. She remained in this demanding post until she was appointed to the High Court in 1987, where she remained until she retired in 2002, a public figure for more than fifteen years and a long way from the working class cottage in Moree.

It was Mary’s childhood experiences in Moree, shadowed as it was by local Aboriginal disadvantage and discrimination, her working class background, plus the obstacles she faced as a woman fighting for recognition in the fiercely male dominated profession of law, which Burton sees as instilling in her a fierce resistance to any form of discrimination. She became a passionate advocate of human rights and her zeal for justice and equality was evident in the famous Mabo case which found that native title did exist in Australia. Her judgement in this is a highly regarded decision and a major development in Australian law. Mabo was followed by other outstanding judgements in human rights cases such as Wik and the Hindmarsh Island trial. These are only the highlights of Mary’s splendid achievements and are all the more remarkable because of the challenges she had overcome on the way.

It is clear Burton admires Gaudron enormously and there are frequent mentions of her brilliance, kindness, intelligence, and so on, though this is balanced by descriptions of the coarse language she sometimes used and her ferocious fits of anger which caused some people to see her as improper, greedy and unlikeable. Burton tells us that if she lost a case she would be absolutely hysterical and her colleagues “would have to organise rosters to take her drinking until she got over her misery”. The striking Sally Robinson portrait on the cover vividly depicts this aspect of Gaudron’s vigorous character.

Though the narrative gets rather tortuous in places it is fair to say that Burton has covered every angle of Gaudron’s life and character. From detailed accounts of her childhood, to which she attributes many of Mary’s views and character, to the intricacies of legal proceedings, she keeps a light touch and firm control of the material. Burton has delivered a lively and in-depth account of one of Australia’s most famous judges.

by Sylvia Marchant

Sylvia has worked in the Australian Senate as a Senior Research Officer, wrote and edited entries for the Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate, and the Australian Dictionary of Biography and has written feature articles and book reviews for a variety of publications.

* This review first appeared in the *Canberra Times*, 20 Nov 2010, ‘Panorama’, p 26

Life Sentences –Melbourne Cup

The editor of the ANU Reporter invited the National Centre of Biography to contribute a series of columns on subjects in the Australian Dictionary of Biography which would be of interest to its readers. This is the most recent of the columns appearing in the series 'Life Sentences'.

If the Melbourne Cup truly is 'the race that stops a nation' then surely it must feature among the thousands of entries in the ADB. Sure enough, a search of the ADB online yields 111 hits.

Top of the list is the notorious bookmaker and entrepreneur John Wren (1871-1953), who boasted that his Collingwood-based 'tote' was built on Carbine's victory in 1890. Other ADB entries that mention the race include biographies of pastoralists, businessmen, politicians, priests, journalists, artists, designers, engineers, and trainers and jockeys.

The Sydney-born studmaster Etienne De Mestre (1832- 1916) trained Archer, the winner of the first two Melbourne Cups, but he ran into financial trouble in 1882 when a large bet on the Victoria Derby/Melbourne Cup double went awry. De Mestre's rival John Tait (1813-1888) owned and trained four horses to Cup victory and was notable for approaching racing more as a business than a sport.

The ADB features 25 jockeys, including David 'Darby' Munro (1913-1966), who won the first of his three Melbourne Cups riding Peter Pan in 1934: "Swarthy and poker-faced, he was known, among other names, as 'The Demon Darb'". The leading Melbourne Cup jockey remains the "abstemious but jovial" Bobby Lewis (1878-1947), who rode four winners.

The Melbourne Cup is as much a social institution as it is a horse race. This is largely due to the egalitarian civil engineer Robert Cooper Bagot (1828?-1881), who transformed Flemington Racecourse into a truly public space, paving the way for the first crowd of 100,000 in 1880. In the 1920s the advent of radio took public interest to a new level. The colourful broadcaster Eric Wilfred Welch (1900-1983) called 27 cups for 3LO and 3DB. He advised punters: "Never bet on anything that can talk". Turf journalist Herbert Austin Wolfe (1897-1968) used the by-line 'Cardigan' after the 1903 Melbourne Cup winner, which his grandfather had trained. In 1932 Wolfe reported Phar Lap's victory in the Agua Caliente Handicap in Mexico, after gaining permission to land a plane on the course so that he could fly straight to San Diego to cable home the story. He covered 21 Melbourne Cups for Melbourne's *Herald*.

The influence of the cup in the political sphere is evident in the ADB's biography of Prime Minister John Curtin (1885-1945): "He was a student of racing form but hardly ever betted, apart from an annual £1 on the Melbourne Cup". Similarly, sport and religion merge where the Melbourne Cup is concerned. In the 1950s Catholic priest John Patrick Pierce (1909- 1970) instituted a Melbourne Cup mass at St Francis's Church. The ADB also reveals the allure of the race for Australians with a creative bent, including the artist



Australian Ballet performance of *Melbourne Cup*, 1963 (from NLA collection)

Martin Frank Stainforth (1866-1957), who painted several Melbourne Cup winners and was renowned for his “ability to depict speed and movement”. In 1962 the set and costume designer Ann Rachel Church (1925-1975) created “bawdy and elegant costumes, as well as opulent, extravagant settings” for the Australian Ballet’s production Melbourne Cup.

Due to longstanding equine restrictions, many of the most famous Melbourne Cup identities are not included in the ADB. In 1977 regular ADB author Barry Andrews addressed this deficiency by penning a biography for “LAP, PHAR (1926-32), sporting personality, business associate of modest speculators and national hero”. Read by Andrews during an after-dinner speech at a *Making of Sporting Traditions* conference, the biography concluded: “Tall and rangy, known affectionately as ‘Bobby’, ‘The Red Terror’ and occasionally as ‘you mongrel’, Lap died in mysterious circumstances in Atherton, California, on 5 April, 1932, and was buried in California, Melbourne, Canberra and Wellington. A linguist as well as a businessman, he popularised the phrase ‘get stuffed!’ although owing to an unfortunate accident in his youth he left no children”.

by Dr Samuel Furphy

Postdoctoral Fellow, National Centre of Biography

reprinted from the *ANU Reporter*, Spring 2010



Prisoners of war at the Sime Road POW camp in Singapore held a special frog race Melbourne Cup meeting in 1942 (from AWM collection)