

The Women of Little Lon: Biographies of the Unknown

Biography Workshop

National Centre of Biography (ANU)
Thursday 31 March 2022
11am - 12:30 pm

Zoom only

Meeting ID: 849 0058 9945
Password: 630803
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When does a family history become a biography? After establishing the usual births, deaths and marriages data, how do we reconstruct the lives of women like Madame Brussels, Melbourne's most famous brothel keeper of the nineteenth century, when we have very few letters or personal information available beyond what is written in newspapers and the archives of officialdom? What can we really know about such women? This talk will include discussion about 'decoding' nineteenth century archival sources, and assessing what archaeological resources can offer the biographer by exploring the spatial elements and material culture of people's lives.



Barbara Minchinton started her professional life as a librarian, but got waylaid by having children and discovering family history. Her doctorate on land settlement in the Otways answered her questions about the peculiarities of the place where she grew up, but working as a historian with archaeologists has subsequently raised a whole lot more about the nature of nineteenth-century Victorian society. *The Women of Little Lon: Sex Workers in Nineteenth-Century Melbourne* came from work on the archaeological digs at Little Lonsdale Street, Melbourne. She is currently working on a biography of Madame Brussels and her husband.