



William Robert Wake (1755-1830) and St George's Church, Great Bromley

## WRITING THE BIOGRAPHY OF AN 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY CHURCH OF ENGLAND CLERGYMAN: WILLIAM ROBERT WAKE

### Biography Workshop

National Centre of Biography (ANU)  
11am – 12:30 pm, 27 May 2021

### In Person

Seminar Room 5.72  
Level 5, RSSS Building  
146 Ellery Crescent

### Zoom option

Meeting ID: 849 0058 9945  
Password: 630803  
URL: [https://anu.zoom.us/j/84900589945?](https://anu.zoom.us/j/84900589945?pwd=eHNDcTVxZmNZNlBmNnBOeEh0VW94Zz09)  
[pwd=eHNDcTVxZmNZNlBmNnBOeEh0VW94Zz09](https://anu.zoom.us/j/84900589945?pwd=eHNDcTVxZmNZNlBmNnBOeEh0VW94Zz09)

The clergyman William Robert Wake (1755–1830) was not an important character in terms of the Anglican hierarchy, but the large quantity of surviving documentation enables a biographer to look at some of the issues affecting his life in some depth. The Church of England was a strange organisation, to which Wake had to adapt, through good times and bad. This culminated in family tragedy, brought on by his own mismanagement of a situation created by churchmen with more traditional values. His career gradually disintegrated owing to his independent spirit and desire to make the Church more responsive to the needs of the common people. He was critical of the way Church and State in England were like two sides of the same coin, and was attracted by the ideas of the anarchist political thinker William Godwin with whom he became, for a time, a close friend. This eventually caused Wake's undoing, when he promoted education for children that was more vocational than strictly High Anglican, and challenged the prerogatives of the patron of his parish.

**Dr Alan Roberts** is a member of the Independent Scholars Association of Australia, has a doctorate in urban history from the University of Sydney, and has tutored in History at Macquarie University. In the 1980s he worked as a contract historian and has been very involved in oral history and the local history movements, especially the Canberra & District Historical Society and the Federation of Australian Historical Societies. He was co-author of a handbook of oral history published by Allen & Unwin. As a public servant in the 1990s, he was involved in many aspects of heritage management, and in retirement he has devoted himself to architectural history and family history. He is the author of a history of the pioneering family of George Johnston (leader of the Rum Rebellion), a history of the Shine Dome (Australian Academy of Science) and co-author of *100 Canberra Houses: A Century of Capital Architecture*.