

National Centre of Biography News

July 2024

In this newsletter we celebrate a major thesis award, welcome a new staff member, share upcoming events, and provide plenty of reading and listening material to keep you busy. Got biographical news to share? Send us an email at ncb@anu.edu.au.



The Australian Crowd, by Stephen Baxter (2014)

Children's history & biography

In the first week of July, while many of my colleagues attended the Australian Historical Association's annual conference in Adelaide, I travelled to Newcastle-upon-Tyne for the Children's History Society's biennial conference. The theme was 'Children's Worlds Through Time' and I was honoured to deliver a keynote address on 'The Childhood Imagination'.

Since I joined the NCB/ADB as research editor last year, I have often reflected on the relationship between children's history and biography. I must confess a certain self-interest, but I do believe that the two fields would benefit from a closer dialogue, especially considering the growing emphasis on age as a central category of analysis alongside gender, class and ethnicity. Childhood and youth are also formative phases of the lifecycle, of biography, and although the ADB is experimenting with new ways of writing biography, most entries still adopt a chronological approach that begins with childhood.

On many occasions over the last few months, I have wondered to what extent we have ever really considered how childhood and youth is represented in the ADB. How do our authors and research editors write about childhood and youth? How is childhood imagined and what purpose have these imaginings or representations served over time? What childhoods are deemed worthy of inclusion? Which are not? Where are children in the ADB?

One of the great strengths of biography is that it is such a great 'conversationalist': biographers can enter interesting and productive conversations with so many subfields and disciplines. The CHS Conference was energising, not only for my own research but also for my work as a research editor. I am hoping there will be an opportunity in the future to explore some of the questions about childhood and age in the ADB. I suspect we would be pioneering to do so!

-Dr Emily Gallagher, historian & research editor

News & notices



New staff member

The NCB is very excited to welcome Dr Shauna Bostock to the team as Indigenous Australian Research Editor. The author of *Reaching Through Time: Finding my family's stories* (Allen & Unwin, 2023), Shauna brings a wealth of experience in First Nations family history and biography to the role. Welcome Shauna!



PhD thesis prize

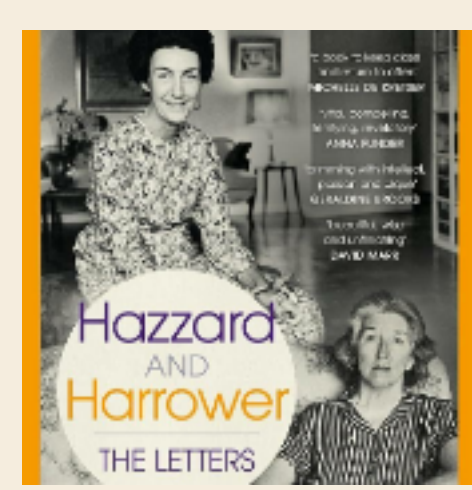
A huge congratulations to Dr Emily Gallagher who has won the Australian Historical Association's Serle Award for her thesis 'The Childhood Imagination in Australia, 1890-1940'. The judges praised her work as 'extremely beautiful, wonderfully crafted both in structure and content, and highly inventive in its use of sources and argument... a striking contribution to children's and educational history in Australia and internationally.' Read the full citation [here](#). Well done Em!



Home truths

Several members of the NCB team travelled to Flinders University earlier this month for the Australian Historical Association's conference on 'Home Truths'. They gave the following papers:

- Dr Karen Fox: 'A Tale of Two Reputations'
- Dr Sam Furphy: 'Matthew Moorhouse and Aboriginal Protection policy in South Australia'
- Dr Michelle Staff: 'Telling the truth through (or about) feminist biography'
- James Watson: 'Fibro Home Truths: On Contested Asbestos Histories in Australia'



ANU/Canberra Times meet the author events

Two upcoming talks may be of interest to biography readers and writers.

- On 16 July Brigitta Olubas and Susan Wyndham will be in conversation with Julianne Lamond on *Hazzard and Harrower: The Letters*.
- On 22 July Cassandra Pybus will discuss her new book, *A Very Secret Trade: The dark story of gentlemen collectors in Tasmania*, with Prof Mark McKenna.

More details [here](#).



Biography workshop

This month's Biography Workshop will see A/Prof Greg de Moore speak about his book *Tom Wills: The Insubordinate Life of an Australian Sporting Legend* (updated edition published 2023). More info [here](#).



Follow us on socials

Curious about the lives of people from Australia's past? Follow us on [Instagram](#) to have their stories shared with you every single week.

To read & listen



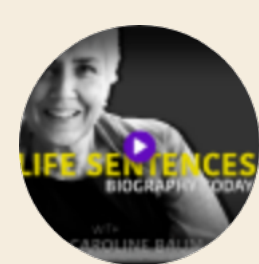
Reimagining the ADB

In the July issue of the *Australian Book Review*, Melanie Nolan and Michelle Staff reflect on where the ADB is at as we enter the mid-2020s. Read their piece [here](#).



An extra-ordinary collaboration

Based on the ABC docuseries, *Tony Armstrong's Extra-Ordinary Things* is now showing at the National Museum of Australia. These things share important human stories, says Michelle Staff. Read her review for *Inside Story* [here](#).



Life Sentences podcast

In the latest *Life Sentences* podcast episode, 'Brief Lives' (21 June), director Melanie Nolan speaks to Caroline Baum about the ADB. Listen [here](#).

ADB feature entry

CONTENT WARNING: childhood illness and death.

Each month we highlight a new addition to the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

The focus on children's history in this newsletter drew our attention to the entry on **Troy Lovegrove**, HIV-AIDS child activist, published in 2021.

Just seven years old when he died from the disease, during his short life Troy bravely challenged prejudices and educated the public by sharing his story.

Read his full ADB entry [here](#).

