

Biography Workshop

Dr Nick Brodie

Mitchener, Rutherford, and the Brodies: Telling big history with genealogies of people and places

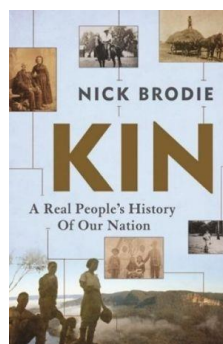
Date: Thursday 29 June 2017

Venue: McDonald Room, Menzies Library, ANU

Time: 12 midday until about 1.30 p.m.

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When asked about my speciality I often respond that I'm a methodologist, because history is something that you do as well as the things that happened. Exploring that tension, this paper reflects on some of the biographical threads that I have followed over the past few years while trying to make methodological history accessible to a broad public audience – especially by using people to revise master narratives, rather than situating people in master narratives. Epic inter-generational novels like James A. Mitchener's *The Source* and Edward Rutherford's *Sarum* did so much to configure my historical sensibilities that they have informed my research agendas, especially in *Kin*. Similarly, in 1787 I deliberately used several 'characters' to re-tell some of our ostensibly best-known and most-rehearsed stories, locating the interpretative relationship between primary evidence and meta-narrative at the surface of historical writing – rather than leaving the manuscripts 'behind-the-scenes' as with much traditional history-telling.



Nick Brodie is an ANU alumni and the author of *Kin: A Real People's History of Our Nation* (2015), *1787: The Lost Chapters of Australia's Beginnings* (2016), and *The Vandemonian War*, forthcoming this August. He edited and commentated the letters of George Martindale in *Dodging the Devil: Letters from the Front* (2016), and has authored academic papers on topics ranging from antique poor boxes to colonial manuscripts.