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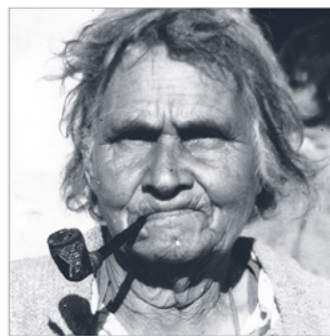
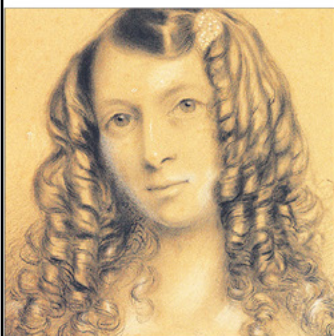
# BIOGRAPHY FOOTNOTES

The Newsletter of the National Centre of Biography

Issue 19, April 2019  
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## Recovered lives

*Twenty-eight Australian  
women who disappeared  
from history*



Front cover of *Recovered Lives*. The biographies were produced by the National Centre of Biography and *Inside Story* and published as a lift-out in the *Canberra Times* on 8 March, International Women's Day.

# FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK



## Welcome to Issue 19 of *Biography Footnotes*

The National Centre of Biography was established in 2008 in the wake of the 2007 Gregory Report which called on the Australian Dictionary of Biography to 'extensively change [its] nature'. While 'the *ADB* volumes and *ADB* Online would remain the central activity around which other activities would revolve' the NCB/*ADB* needed 'to act as a focus for the study of biography in Australia and be a hub of innovative biographical work internationally'.

NCB staff have stepped up to this task. Christine Fernon produces this newsletter and all staff contribute to a regular column, 'Life Sentences', in the *ANU Reporter*. The Centre hosts ANU.Lives, the ANU Press's series in biography. Its latest publication, *True Biographies of Nations? The Cultural Journey of Dictionaries of National Biography*, edited by Karen Fox, is at the press. The first issue of the NCB's periodical, *Australian Journal of Biography and History*, edited by Malcolm Allbrook, was released last November. More recently we collaborated with *Inside Story* to produce (as a lift-out in the *Canberra Times* and online at [Inside Story](#)) profiles of 28 women whose achievements have been overlooked.

Our website activity also continues to grow. Our newest staff member, Dr Stephen Wilks, is leading the Department of the House of Representatives-funded pilot project which will see biographies of all past and present Speakers, Deputy Speakers and Clerks of the House added to *People Australia*. Hopefully, the project will lead to a full Dictionary of the House of Representatives to complement *The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate*. Dr Allison Cadzow is also working with us to extend and adapt AIATSIS's map of missions and

stations in NSW to give place context to the biographies in the *ADB*, particularly Indigenous biographies relating to Aboriginal reserves and missions. Drs. Joy McCann and Mary Anne Jebb joined us last year as casual research editors.

During 2018 we also farewelled some of our long-term volunteers and supporters. Helen Jones (1926-2018), a long-standing member of the *ADB* South Australian Working Party, wrote 29 *ADB* articles, her first in 1985 and her last in 2011. Duncan Waterson (1937-2018) a stalwart of the Queensland Working Party also wrote 29 entries. His entry on [John Duggan](#), politician, appeared online in 2016. Brian Fletcher (1931-2018) a NSW Working Party member for many years wrote 21 *ADB* articles; the first published in 1966, the last, on Alice Kelso King, is yet to be published. Historian Eric Richards (1940-2018) wrote 19 *ADB* articles. These contributors were conspicuous in their output. John Molony (1927-2018) wrote 6 entries and read drafts of hundreds more. Despite being very ill, last July Barry McGowan (1945-2018) submitted an article on Billy Sing, a World War I Chinese-Australian AIF sniper. We are very grateful for the assistance they gave to the *ADB*. The project could not exist without its volunteer authors and working party members.

Melanie Nolan

Director, National Centre of Biography  
General Editor, Australian Dictionary of Biography

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## Congratulations

to Emeritus Professor Tom Griffiths, chair of the ADB's Editorial Board, and his wife, Emeritus Professor Libby Robin (Fenner School of Environment and Society) who were jointly awarded the American Society for Environmental History 2019 Distinguished Career in Public Environmental History award.

The citation reads:

'We discussed the career of several excellent candidates for this award. In the end we felt strongly that Libby Robin and Tom Griffiths should jointly be awarded this distinguished prize. They have — through their work in communities and museums, through engagement for ICEHO (the International Consortium of Environmental History Organizations), through the establishment of the AUS-NZ-Network in Environmental History, through regular workshops for doctoral students in Canberra over the last 20 years (to which ASEH members were invited as special guests), through their outreach activities and involvement with environmental artists and environmental NGOs — dedicated a quarter century (essentially their whole academic career) to public environmental history. They have been selfless, never self-promoting'.

It is unusual for this great honour to go to scholars outside the United States of America.

## Visiting Fellows

The NCB is host of three Visiting Fellows in 2019.

**Professor Hans Renders**, Director of the Biography Institute at Groningen University, Netherlands, and a member of the Advisory Council of the Biographers International Organisation, joined us in February for six weeks.

While here he worked on two projects, 'Traditions in Biography: Australia and Public Opinions' and a biography of artist Theo van Doesburg. He also met



with PhD candidates, held a workshop for the NCB on 'Different Lives: Global perspectives on Biography in Public Cultures and Societies', led a Biography Workshop on 'Old Lives, New Questions' and gave a lecture to the School of History's seminar series.

Hans is in discussion with Malcolm Allbrook and Melanie Nolan about editing a special issue of the *Australian Journal of Biography and History* and is also planning a return visit in 2021 as co-organiser (with the NCB) of an international conference on biography and history.

**Dr Ashley Barnwell**, Lecturer in Sociology, University of Melbourne, will be in Canberra as a research fellow at the National Library of Australia but will also be a visitor with us from May to July. While here she will lead a Biography Workshop on 27 June on intergenerational memory in settler colonial society.

**Professor Lawrence Goldman**, Research Professor in History at the University of London, and a former general editor of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, will be visiting us from October to December. He will be working on his book, 'Victorians and Numbers', which looks at the first age (1820s-1860s) of 'big data' when administrators, statisticians, social investigators and social scientists struggled to generate and interpret social data. While here he will lead a Biography Workshop as well as a School of History Seminar.

## Biography Workshop

The NCB is again running its monthly workshops. All are welcome to attend.

The group meets at the ANU, usually on the last Thursday of the month at 11am. Authors are invited to come along and share with us the joys and difficulties in researching and writing biography.

The full year's program will be posted on the NCB's [website](#) as it becomes available. You can also join our mailing list to receive monthly notifications: [ncb@anu.edu.au](mailto:ncb@anu.edu.au) Many of the workshops are taped and can be found either under the individual listing on our events page or the NCB's Soundcloud page <https://soundcloud.com/ncb-adb>

We have already held three workshops this year. As mentioned, in **February** Hans Renders led a workshop on the traditions and current questions in the world of biography. The recording can be found at <http://history.cass.anu.edu.au/centres/ncb/events/hans-renders-old-lives-new-questions>

In **March** PhD student Rhys Williams discussed the role of the individual in history. Do individuals shape events or do events shape individuals?

In **April** Peter Fitzsimons, who has written 10 biographies, and sold 2 million books, shared his particular approach to the genre; what he looks for in a subject and why he zeroes in on 'the story'.

### 30 May

Gwenda Tavan will talk about Arthur Calwell, Ageing and the Defence of White Australia: A Psycho-Social Analysis.

### 27 June

Ashley Barnwell will discuss Family Secrets, National Silences: Intergenerational Memory in Settler Colonial Australia.

Further ahead, in **July** we will be joined by Patricia O'Brien, **August** by Gabriel Carey, **September** by Patrick Mullins and in **October** by Lawrence Goldman. Their topics will be listed on our website closer to their dates.

# NEWS (cont'd)

## Advance Notice

### 11 July

The NCB is holding a roundtable discussion on politics and the implications of auto/biography and life writing. Panellists will include Dr Sinead McEaney (Open University, London) who has worked on autobiography as a form of protest and Dr Mary Besemeres (ANU), former editor of *Life Writing*.

### 26-27 September

The NCB is holding a research workshop on convict biography. Keynote speakers will include Dr Rebecca Kippen (Monash Uni) and Babette Smith. PhD candidates working on convict biography who are interested in attending should contact: [melanie.nolan@anu.edu.au](mailto:melanie.nolan@anu.edu.au)

## NEW BOOKS PRESENTED TO ADB LIBRARY

The ADB Library, which was started back in the early 1960s, has a wealth of useful Australian biographical reference works. It is still being added to thanks to generous donations. We recently received:

Maxwell J. Coleman. *The Doers: A Surgical History of St Vincent's Hospital Sydney 1857-2007* (2018). It includes profiles of all the surgeons who worked at the hospital up to 2007.

Ian Pfennigwerth, *Bravo Zulu: honours and awards to Australian naval people, vol. 1, 1900-1974* (2016); *vol. 2, 1975-2016* (2018). Presented to the ADB by Commander Alastair Cooper, on behalf of the Sea Power Centre, Australia.

## Congratulations

to ADB authors and members of Working Parties who received Australian honours since the last newsletter:

### Queens' Birthday Honours (2018)

Companion (AC) in the General Division  
Em. Professor Geoffrey Harcourt

Member (AM) in the General Division  
Ms Gael Newton  
Dr Robert Ridel  
Professor David Walker

Medal (OAM) in the General Division  
Dr Barry McGowan  
Mrs Leone Scrivener

### Australia Day Honours (2019)

Companion (AC) in the General Division  
late Em. Professor Pat Troy

Officer (AO) in the General Division  
Mr Gary Humphries  
Mr Charles Woodard

Member (AM) in the General Division  
Professor Frank Bongiorno  
Dr Alison Broinowski  
Mr Paul Davey

Assoc. Professor Paul Lancaster  
Dr David Stevens

Medal (OAM) in the General Division  
Mr Terence Birtles  
Mr Grantlee Kieza  
Mr Raymond Steward

## Deaths of ADB authors

It is with sadness that we note the deaths, that were reported to us since February 2018 of the following ADB authors:

Vic Carroll  
Peter Coleman  
Michael D. de B. Collins Persse  
Jill Conway  
Peter Corris  
Betty Cosgrove  
Bill Crowley  
Sue Ebury  
Brian Fletcher  
Peter Groenewegen  
Les Hetherington  
Robert Holland  
Helen Jones  
Barry McGowan  
John Molony  
Peter Pierce  
A. N. Preston  
Eric Richards  
Betty Snowden  
Pat Troy  
J. Neville Turner  
Duncan Waterson  
Evan Whitton

## NCB PhD Candidates



NCB PhD candidates, L-R: Tom Gardner, Jenni Bird, Michele Horne, Josh Black, Nichola Garvey, 2019

Three new PhD candidates have joined us at the NCB this year, bringing the total number of students to a record high of eight.

Josh Black's topic is 'Inside the Recent Political Past: Memoirs, Autobiographies and Diaries as Australian Political History'.

Michele Horne is looking at 'Sir Edward "Weary" Dunlop and his role in the national narrative, post Second World War to the present time'. Michele co-wrote the forthcoming ADB entry on Dunlop.

Tom Gardner's thesis is 'The High Road through the Middle Kingdom: G. E. Morrison in Private and Public Travel Writing'.

They join co-existing students, Jenni Bird, Nichola Garvey, Elizabeth Hellwig, Stephen Kinnane, and Susan Priestley.

## Entries for those who died in 1995 are being added to the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* website this year. As usual they include a diverse range of people:

Most Melburnians will have heard of the legendary Footscray Australian Rules footballer **Ted Whitten** (1933-1995). Playing 321 games for his beloved 'Bulldogs' between 1951 and 1970 he came to be regarded as the most accomplished player of his era. Following his retirement as a player he entertained audiences as a sports commentator and football panellist, and was a Victorian and All Australian AFL selector. Since 1985 the E. J. Whitten medal has been awarded to the best Victorian player in State of Origin football.

**Jean Arnot** (1903-1995). A librarian at the State Library of NSW (her great love was cataloguing), she was twice overlooked for senior positions because of her gender. In the 1930s she joined the Council of Action for Equal Pay, chaired the women's council of the NSW Public Service Association for many years, and was president of the NSW branch of the National Council of Women. In retirement she continued to work as a cataloguer, for both private and public libraries, wrote *ADB* entries, and remained active in many organisations. Her pragmatic approach to catalogues influenced a generation of staff and students.

**Andrew Olle** (1947-1995) began his broadcasting career in Brisbane in 1967 as a news cadet with the ABC. In 1977 he moved to Sydney and to national current affairs programs including *Four Corners*, *Sunday*, and the *7.30 Report*. Interviewing was his forte. From 1987 he also presented a popular morning radio show on Sydney radio station 2BL. There was widespread shock and grief at his sudden death from brain cancer. An old friend, Peter Luck, noted that 'it's not often that a nation mourns a journalist'.

**Isabel Letham** (1899-1995) achieved local fame in Sydney in 1915 as a woman surfer. She had her sights set on Hollywood however, and in 1918 set off for America. While she had no luck pursuing a film career she did soon become a well-known swimming teacher and by 1926 was instructor at the luxurious City Women's Club in San Francisco. A serious accident and the 1929 Wall Street crash saw her return to New South Wales where she again taught swimming, including synchronised swimming, and promoted women's surfing.

**Ted Noffs** (1926-1995), Methodist and Uniting Church minister. Brought up as an Anglican, by 1943 he had joined the Methodist Church, becoming a minister in 1952. In 1963 he helped Alan Walker found the Lifeline counselling service and the next year he set up the Wayside Chapel in Kings Cross, at that time Sydney's most seamy district. The chapel started the country's first drug referral centre, 24-hour crisis centre, and Life Education Centre, all providing models for other cities and countries in handling and preventing drug addiction.

**Alice Zakharov** (1929-1995) politician. Elected to federal parliament in 1983 as an ALP senator, she described herself

as 'a socialist, a unionist and a feminist' and was proud of her working background as a school teacher and trade unionist. She was a founding member of the government's status of women committee. In 1993, at the Victorian launch of the Federal government's campaign to Stop Violence Against Women, she disclosed that she was a survivor of domestic violence in her second marriage.

**David Wynn** (1915-1995), winemaker. He took control of his family's winemaking business in 1945 expanding its growing and production capacity, including the establishment of a large vineyard at Modbury and Coonawarra in South Australia. A keen innovator, he took up the abandoned prototype of the soft-pack wine container, improving its tap mechanism and lining, before launching it in 1971. The popularity of Wynn's winecask and the invention's subsequent adoption by other companies helped to substantially increase the consumption of table wine in Australia.

**Gwen Harwood** (1920-1995) wrote her early poems under various pseudonyms which she felt expressed the different parts of her personality. In 1963 she published her first collection of poems and collaborated with composer Larry Sitsky, writing libretti for 'Fall of the House of Usher'. She also wrote libretti for James Penberthy, Ian Cugley, and Don Kay. She won numerous poetry awards and prizes, including the Victorian Premier's Literary Award (1989). One of Australia's most significant poetry prizes, the Gwen Harwood Poetry Prize, is named for her.

**Max Harris** (1921-1995), is probably best remembered for the 1944 Ern Malley hoax. Poets, **Harold Stewart** (1916-1995) and **James McAuley**, who detested modernist poetry, concocted, in one afternoon, verse purportedly written by dead modernist poet, Ern Malley. Harris thought the work was brilliant and published it in a special issue of his journal, *Angry Penguins*. Harris, a poet himself, was also co-founder of the Mary Martin Bookshop, founder of a number of literary journals, including the *Australian Book Review*, columnist (of 27-years duration) for the *Australian* newspaper, and a TV arts commentator.

**Genevieve Batterham** (1955-1995). Soon after meeting her husband Kim in 1978, Genevieve was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. She went on to make several award-winning films about her developing impairment. She also fought for disability rights and helped to reform NSW's 1977 Anti-Discrimination Act to make discrimination on the basis of disability illegal. In November 1980, anticipating the International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981, she coordinated the largest street march of people with disabilities seen to that point in Australia. She also shocked many by discussing the sexual needs of the disabled. As her health deteriorated she turned to art, finding in painting a means of expressing what she could no longer express in talk, text, and film.



## Malcolm Allbrook pays tribute to two ADB friends Les Hetherington & Barry McGowan

In September 2018, within a week of each other, the Australian Dictionary of Biography and the Australian National University lost two great friends, Barry McGowan (1945-2018), and Les Hetherington (1955-2018), both from cancer. As a recent arrival at the ADB I knew neither well, yet over the past few years I have enjoyed many conversations with both Les and Barry.

### Vale Les Hetherington 1955-2018

Les Hetherington, who held an MA from the University of Sydney and a BLitt from the ANU, was a constant presence in the ADB corridor, and soon after we met he invited me to join Melanie Nolan, Steven Foster, Sam Furphy and Peter Brown on his PhD supervision panel. He had worked in the public service for 31 years, but had decided to take an early retirement so he could focus his energies on history, his life-long interest. His topic, and the way Les told the story, was full of interest and complexity. He was writing a family biography, 'Vaillante Soeur: Marie Caroline Niau and her family in France, England and Australia, 1820-1956', a transnational, cross-generational, and women-centred microhistory of Marie Caroline Niau, her daughter Josephine Hyacinthe Niau, and their family, commencing with their background and life in France up to 1871. It covered their residence in England through the 1870s, their 1880 migration to Australia as a result of a failed attempt at South Sea island colonisation, and their subsequent lives in this country until their deaths in 1933 and 1956. It involved him researching in France and translating letters, diaries, and publications from French to English. Thus, in order to deal properly with the large archive of historical material, Les had to learn French, a problem which might have put many off, but not Les.

His curiosity about the multicultural background of his Australian family was piqued in a number of ways. He had discovered that a great aunt Clara had married George Yan at Kiandra in 1896. George was the son of a Chinese gold miner and storekeeper, 'Tom' Yan (also identified as Fook Ying), a Cantonese man born around 1845, and his German de facto wife, Catherine Wortz, born at Weidner in Schreisheim, Baden-Wurtemberg, in 1846. Later he found that another great aunt, Annie, was the widow of an eastern Riverina hawker turned farmer known only as Sahib Dad, who had come to Australia from British India in the late 1880s. His grave in the Wagga Wagga monumental cemetery is inscribed with perhaps the cemetery's oldest, if not only, quotation from the Koran. Les's work experience in cultural diversity and in the public service, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, contributed to his ambition to understand non-British European settlers in Australian history. Sadly, at the time of his death on 4 September 2018, he was not far off submitting his thesis; his pre-submission presentation was to be on 24 October and he was on schedule to submit by the end of the year.

Les's wider research interests included Australian involvement in the South African and First World wars, and Australian



Les Hetherington, 2017

military regional and local history from the gold rushes to the Second World War. Again, there was a family link: three of his great uncles fought in the Australian Imperial Force during the First World War. He is the author of articles published in the *Journal of Australian War Memorial, Wartime, Sabretache* (the journal of the Australian Military History Society), *France Australia Review*, the *Canberra and District Historical Society Journal* and many other places. His most recent article appeared in the *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* in their June 2018 issue. Les was not only a member of the Wagga Wagga and District Family History Society, but the editor of *Murrumbidgee Ancestor*, its journal. In 2017 he published a recommendation in that journal to those writing their family histories to emulate the style and approach of the ADB when constructing biographies! He volunteered to write articles for the ADB and indeed told me that becoming an ADB author was one of the many items on his bucket list. Shortly before his death, the ADB published his biography of the air force officer and city inspector [Ronald Hubert](#) (1914-1992); his immaculately researched and sensitively written biography of the painter, sculptor, lithographer, and printmaker [Helen Lempriere](#) (1907-1991) was published posthumously.

We knew that Les was unwell, but to his friends in the ADB, he made light of his illness, continuing to visit regularly, making his unhurried way down the corridor, stopping at each office for generally long conversations with little regard for impending appointments. Les and I had many chats

particularly about his Helen Lempriere article, and he derived enormous pleasure from his typically thorough research and the task of writing about her remarkable life. His death came as an enormous shock; to Robyn, Philippa and William go our sincere condolences.

## **Vale Barry McGowan (1945-2018)**

Dr Barry McGowan OAM, completed his PhD thesis 'Dust and Dreams: A Regional History of Mining and Community in South East New South Wales, 1850-1914' in the Faculty of History at the ANU, in 2001, supervised by Ann Curthoys, John Merritt, Ian Farrington, and Richard Baker. He became a prolific and distinguished contributor to our understanding of the history of mining in Australia, and the major role of the Chinese in that history. Barry was also a researcher for the ADB online project from 2004 to 2007. He was particularly active in the history of mining in the south-east of New South Wales, providing the communities who live in this region, as well as many residents of the Australian Capital Territory, with an enriched understanding of the area in which they live. His activities included not only his reports and published histories, but also tours of old goldfields. He was a generous contributor to mining and community history through many local and national organisations.

The role of the Chinese in the Australian gold mining industry formed a major theme in Barry's work and represented a powerful re-reading of Australia's colonial past. He brought to the writing of such histories a deep expertise in historical archaeology that informed his interpretation of landscapes and of material evidence. He often worked as a commissioned or consultant historian and took his professional expertise into the wider community. Some of his books, such as his outstanding *Australian Ghost Towns* (2002), attracted a large national audience, a success that attested to his enviable ability to tell the stories of our past in an engaging manner as well as in a way that also met the highest standards of our profession. As recently as 8 August 2018 a letter from Barry, who was gravely ill, appeared in the *Canberra Times* advocating the heritage significance and tourist potential of the Captain's Flat mine.

Barry made himself known to me soon after I started work at the ADB, when he called in to my room in the Coombs Building to tell me about his co-curated exhibition at the Orange Museum in which his research informed the stories of Chinese residents of the region, particularly their activities as gold miners, and their relationships with the Aboriginal people of the area. He urged me to visit, and so, over a weekend in June 2017, I paid my first visit to the town with the main aim of viewing his small, though vivid exhibit. Thereafter he kept me informed about his travels throughout NSW and early this year triumphantly presented me with a copy of the results of his researches for the ADB library. Barry had a great affection for the ADB and was always willing to present papers, to act as a peer-reviewer, and support students and visiting fellows, most recently the Xian scholar Dr Tiping Su, who spent a year in the School of History researching the representation of Chinese residents and visitors in the ADB and who Barry visited at his home in 2017. Barry



Barry McGowan, 2012

delivered a stimulating and beautifully researched paper on Chinese-Aboriginal family histories at the National Centre of Biography's 'Related Histories' conference in November 2017, and had submitted a proposal for a paper at last year's 'Re-Framing Indigenous Biographies' conference. Author of the ADB article on the businessman and Chinese community leader [William Liu](#) (1893-1983), he enthusiastically agreed to take on the biography of the legendary Chinese Australian World War I sniper Billy Sing (1886-1943), even though at that time, unbeknown to me, he was starting to suffer the effects of his cancer. Joking that I could have offered him a slightly more uplifting assignment than one who went by the nickname 'Killer', he completed the task just before he died after a lengthy period in hospital. He was determined to finish, politely but firmly refusing my offers to relieve him of the task, telling me after his discharge that he 'should be right now'. It is a great pity that he did not live to see its publication this year.

I knew Barry as a great conversationalist who could talk about history at great length and who had a love of the bush, particularly the stories of the men and women who left remnants of their past lives, lives which he was able to make vivid through his vast knowledge and story-telling skills. It was only at his funeral that I learned about his family life, his wide circle of friends, and of Barry as a man who loved singing and music-making, an intensely spiritual and community-minded man. We will miss him, not only for what he brought to the ADB and the School of History, but for his friendship and selfless devotion to history.

**Dr Malcolm Allbrook is managing editor of the ADB and editor of the Australian Journal of Biography and History.**



# OBITUARIES (cont'd)

## Chris Cunneen and Stephen Garton farewell fellow NSW ADB Working Party member, Brian Fletcher

In the 55 years since publication of volume 1 of the *ADB* few of its supporters have been more steadfast than Brian Hinton Fletcher, who died in June last year at the age of 86.

He was born on 24 September 1931 at Uxbridge, near London, the son of a clerk, Sidney Hinton Fletcher, and a seamstress, Mabel, née Alexander. His parents separated six years later and his mother married an Australian-born actor, Carl Schaeffer. Brian was educated at Maidstone Grammar School in Kent and in January 1949 the family, including Brian and the two sons of his mother's second marriage, arrived in Sydney.

With his parents farming at Glenorie then Wilberforce, Brian studied at the University of Sydney, obtaining a BA with honours, MA, and a Diploma of Education, and becoming a favourite of the influential professor John Ward. In between stints of teaching at Westmead Junior Technical School and Drummoyne High School, he worked as a teaching fellow and temporary lecturer at the university. In 1958 he married Beverley Wright, also a teaching fellow at the university. They were to have four sons and a daughter. In 1960 he was employed as a lecturer in modern history in the newly established Faculty of Arts at the University of New South Wales, Kensington.

There Brian joined a history team that included Bede Nairn. So when Nairn, assisted by Ward, set out to rescue the Sydney arm of the fledgling ADB enterprise after the damage caused by the idiosyncratic Malcolm Ellis (see Nolan and Fernon, *The ADB's Story*, pp 63-77, 90-92), Brian was at their sides, and became a founding member of the New South Wales working party, set up in 1962. As a result, he contributed eight articles to volume 1 (published 1966) and six to volume 2 (1967). Notable among these early contributions were his assessments of the lives of [William Balmain](#), surgeon and landholder; [Francis Grose](#), soldier and lieut-governor; [James Ruse](#), pioneer and smallholder; and [Arthur Phillip](#), admiral and governor. This last article, nearly seven pages long, was a substantial contribution to Australian historiography in itself.

Brian's contributions escaped the savaging meted out to some entries in these two volumes by Malcolm Ellis in reviews published in the *Bulletin*. Indeed, he was singled out for some praise: 'a few [articles] by Professor Crowley, Mr B. H. Fletcher, Professor Davidson, Mr J. M. Bennett and some others are of a standard that one might expect from a combined effort by the history departments of all the Australian Universities'. Ellis wrote that 'one very encouraging feature' of the *ADB* was that 'the younger historians of the younger universities have produced work yards ahead of the older men'. Therefore, it was fitting that when the time came for the *ADB* to include Ellis, himself, in volume 14 the working party turned to Brian to write the article, and a considered, fair and dispassionate job he made of it too.

Brian continued to be a valued member of the New South Wales working party in the succeeding years. He was already a well-established, wise and knowledgeable member of the committee when Chris Cunneen arrived for his first meeting in 1974, though Brian contributed no entries for volumes 3 to 12.

In 1973 he was offered a Senior Lectureship at his alma mater, becoming, along with Ken Cable and Heather Radi, the core of the growing Australian history staff at the University of Sydney. Student numbers rose rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s, along with high



Brian Fletcher, photo courtesy of Angela Vernicos, n.d.

demand for honours and PhD supervisions. Brian was a popular supervisor and he nurtured the careers of a number of the most significant early colonial Australian historians of the next generation, such as Grace Karskens and Carol Liston. Brian's generosity and mentoring extended more widely as he took younger appointments to the Department, such as Stephen Garton, under his wing. Indeed, later he worked to ensure that Stephen replaced him on the working party of the ADB.

In 1987 Brian was appointed to the inaugural Bicentennial Chair of Australian History at Sydney in recognition of his significant scholarship and leadership in the field. By then he was the author of a number of major monographs, articles and chapters, including *Landed Enterprise and Penal Society* (1976) and *Ralph Darling: A Governor Maligned* (1984). As Bicentennial Professor he continued to play a vital role in research and teaching but also embraced the public outreach dimensions envisaged in the government funding for the Chair, giving public lectures and presentations to community groups, local history societies, museum curators and the like all around the country. He retired from the University in 1999 and produced a number of commissioned histories, on the Mitchell Library, the Rotary Club of Sydney, and the Australian Club, as well as books on Anglicanism in Australia and on Hymnody and the Australian Hymn Book. In all he wrote some fourteen books.

After he left the working party in 1989, Brian resumed writing *ADB* articles, particularly on historians — [Charles Bateson](#) (volume 13), [Ellis](#) and [Hessell Hall](#) (volume 14) and [Frank Bladen](#) (supplement) — as well as on the YWCA leader [Charlotte Austin](#) (supplement). He also contributed a substantial entry on [Sir Hermann Black](#), economist, public-affairs commentator and university chancellor (volume 17). His last article for the *ADB*, on his historian colleague and fellow NSW working party member Alice Kelso King, is written and awaiting publication.

**Dr Chris Cunneen and Professor Stephen Garton are members of both the NSW Working Party and ADB Editorial Board**



## Melanie Nolan discussed John Molony's association with the ADB during a tribute to his life at University House, ANU, 1 March 2019

John Molony (1927-2018) lived a full life. A small part of that was his role in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and his related work as a biographer. As current general editor, I was asked to talk about those two matters. These roles were not insignificant and I think they are representative of the man. It is useful to reflect upon them because he brought to them the same qualities that he brought to other aspects of his life.

John's initial involvement with the ADB was quite brief, just 8 short weeks as a research assistant, which developed into a strong association with the Dictionary of more than half a century. Let me briefly mention four particular aspects of his involvement.

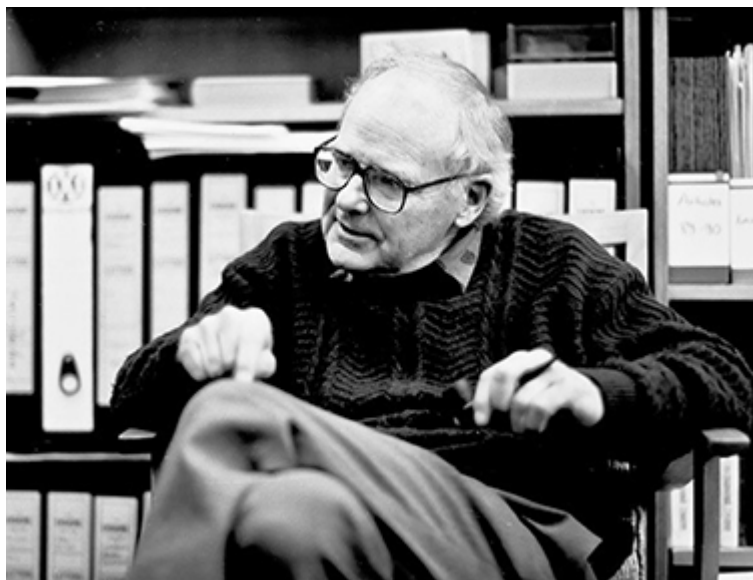
First, John was a biographer sharing common cause with the ADB. He wrote biographies of Ned Kelly (1980), John Plunkett (1973), Thomas Davis (1995), and James Cook (2016). His *The Native-Born: the first white Australians* (2000) is most instructive. It was written in the ADB's congenial company; up to about ten years ago, he scarcely missed a day's work at the ADB office. John acknowledged the friendship, encouragement, advice, and criticism of Phil Bradley, Bede Nairn, John Ritchie, and Gerry Walsh. In *The Native-Born*, he also outlines a biographical approach, which lies at the heart of the ADB mission. He did not want to write about the native-born in the abstract, 'although perhaps that would have some value', he thought that would leave the native born as 'mere phantoms'. The native-born made up a quarter of the population in the 1810s and 1820s, before the gold rushes temporarily swamped their ranks. John wrote about their identity and status; 90 per cent of the early native born who had convict parentage 'were made to feel second-rate and outsiders to society'. He saw both the prosopographical (or group) and individual (or biographical) possibilities of using the ADB, a promise that we are striving to realise. As he said 'it is principally in the ADB that I have found the material needed to give flesh to some of the native-born'. Articles on John Batman, James Kelly and Haratio Wills informed his history but, so too, did others in the ADB's Biographical Register files, which John consulted, whom we are only now adding to the ADB websites. At the same time John added lives to our corpus. In this he was instructing us.

Secondly, John became the 'safe hands', which the ADB called upon to sit on its selection and review committees. Most of all, he was on the team for the important 1986 review that recommended continuation of the ADB following completion of volumes 1-12.

From the point of view of day-to-day life at the ADB, he was always there, a kindly sage and an amiable and reassuring presence. He

once pointed out to one of my predecessors that, though he had been 'reduced to the lay state', he was still a priest. His demeanour was certainly that of a liberal and compassionate clergyman. If he observed anyone struggling with a personal or professional problem, he was quick to offer them practical help.

Thirdly, he joined the body of voluntary co-operative scholarship that is the ADB. He wrote six ADB articles between 1967 and 2008, which is more than the average. More importantly, when John returned in 1993 from being Professor of Australian Studies at University College, Dublin, he became an ADB visiting fellow. The title kept changing over a quarter



of a century of his association: later he was a reader and then later still an editorial fellow. He read all our articles and helped us be fair and consistent as well as saving us from error because we had looked at articles so many times we couldn't see mistakes any more. He acted as a fresh pair of eyes. This was especially so in his areas of expertise: the Catholic Church and of the Australian and Democratic Labor parties. He was reading ADB articles up to the end — actually he owed us two articles. We will miss his overview, gentle criticism and wise advice.

Fourthly, John was an autobiographer publishing two memoirs — *Luther's Pine* (2004) and *By Wendouree* (2010). He was an early participant of the pattern in Australian historiography of historians writing about themselves, helping us perhaps to understand the history the historian constructs. He developed the subjective and personal approach more generally after Barry Ninham and he founded (1999) the ANU Emeritus Faculty. John took responsibility for having the life stories of its members recorded and for developing an oral history program. We will be the beneficiaries of this initiative for years to come.

Having spoken about our institutional debt to John, I will conclude with my own gratitude to him. When I joined the ADB in 2008, John was very kind. I think people were worried that the ADB was being taken over by a New Zealand vandal. He would come to talk to me to see how I was going and 'learn me' the ADB ways. He gave me invaluable advice on who or what might give me problems. So, I benefitted from a personalised Molony 'tutorial' programme. For his part John was loyally looking out for the ADB he valued so much. His outstanding quality was his passion for the things that he believed in, whether it was the Catholic Church, Australian Rules, Ned Kelly, or even the ADB! He cared about the welfare of the Dictionary and its people. In this as in other ways he was never destructive. John was always constructive.

**Professor Melanie Nolan is director of the National Centre of Biography and general editor of the Australian Dictionary of Biography**

# OBITUARIES (cont'd)

## **Helen Jones (1926-2018) was a long-term member of the ADB South Australian Working Party Working Party and wrote 29 ADB entries**

Helen Patricia Jones, a fifth generation South Australian, was born on 5 September 1926 in Adelaide, South Australia, the eldest of six children (five daughters and a son) of Arthur and Myrtle Cashmore (née Grubb). Arthur Cashmore, a Master Baker, owned and operated a bakery on Henley Beach Road, Torrensville, not far from the family home at Lockleys.

Helen Jones was educated at Lockleys Primary School and at Walford House School, where inspiring female teachers fostered her interest in English and History. She went on to complete a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Political Science and History in 1948 at the University of Adelaide, whilst working as a cadet in the Barr Smith Library. Her academic mentor was Professor G.V. (Jerry) Portus whose lectures and radio talks piqued her interest in the history of education and labour. By 1950 she had commenced a Master of Arts and had started to lecture at the University in Political Institutions.

In 1949 she married Dr Geoffrey Jones, a radiologist, and, shortly thereafter put her academic life to one side to focus on her husband and their four children, Tom, Rosemary, Philip and Jennifer.

During the mid-1960s Jones returned to the University of Adelaide to complete her Masters in History, submitting her thesis *The History of commercial education in South Australia with special reference to women*, and graduating, in 1969. She then joined the staff of the Adelaide Kindergarten Training College as a lecturer in history; quickly establishing rapport with her enthusiastic students. During the 1970s she wrote twenty radio scripts for the ABC's education programmes on diverse subjects, partly inspired by Portus' example.

Helen Jones's research into significant pioneers in women's education and political rights led her to enrol in 1974 as a PhD candidate in History at the University of Adelaide, in the field of education and the status of women in South Australia.

In 1975 Helen Jones became the first woman to join the South Australian Working Party of the Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB), a role she continued until 2009. In this role Helen significantly widened the pool of names for inclusion in the Dictionary, particularly through increasing the number of women whose lives and achievements were to be memorialised. Indeed, during her tenure on the ADB Working Party, South Australia earned the distinction of nominating, and including, a higher proportion of women than any other Working Party. Helen then proceeded to prepare many of the entries about the women whose inclusion she championed, eventually contributing 29 magnificent essays. As well, Helen was very generous with her time, finding material, and encouraging and helping others (especially rising scholars) to undertake and complete the writing on other subjects she had come across in the course of her research.

In 1982, Jones was awarded her PhD by the University of Adelaide for her thesis *Women's education in South Australia: Institutional and social developments 1875-1915*.



Helen Jones, photo by Geoffrey Jones, c.1986

This would form the basis of her 1985 book, *Nothing seemed impossible: Women's education and social change in South Australia 1875-1915*. This was the first thoroughly researched study of women's education in Australia, examining both formal education and less formal modes, particularly in the workplace and the home. These themes suggested a broader study with wider relevance and, a year later, Jones produced the landmark publication, *In her own name: women in South Australian history*. Although this book was apolitical and neutral in tone, her work necessarily made the link between women's education and political action. Jones drew upon the techniques of fine-grained social history, enlivening her account with anecdotes and personal experiences of otherwise overlooked and marginalised women. Her meticulous analysis of the path to political enfranchisement taken by South Australian women (the first in Australia and among the first in the world) stands as a model of such research, founded principally upon primary sources. This book provided inspiration for feminist writers and speakers, as well as for students of social and political history. Published shortly before South Australia's sesquicentenary celebrations during 1986, the book, together with Jones's service on the Women's Executive Committee of the Jubilee 150 Board, helped to ensure that South Australian women of substance were recognised in a range of commemorations, as in the series of 150 biographical plaques placed along North Terrace.

Jones's published research also largely underpinned the South Australian Women's Suffrage Centenary celebrations during 1994 and, in that year, she published a revised and expanded edition of *In her own name*, subtitled *A history*



# OBITUARIES (cont'd)

*of women in South Australia from 1896*. The design of the tapestries commemorating the women's suffrage centenary, which hang in the South Australian House of Assembly, drew on this research.

Helen Jones's academic career was significant and included positions as Lecturer in the Department of Education at the University of Adelaide, and Lecturer at the de Lissa Institute of Early Childhood and Family Studies at the University of South Australia.

Helen Jones's meticulous research and scholarship resulted in an influential corpus of biography and history illuminating a previously neglected field of Australian historical research. Her careful and balanced accounts of the efforts and achievements of Australian women (and South Australian women in particular) in winning political rights and autonomy during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries represent a crucial resource for subsequent research. Her data-rich analysis, never didactic and rarely political in tone, provides a

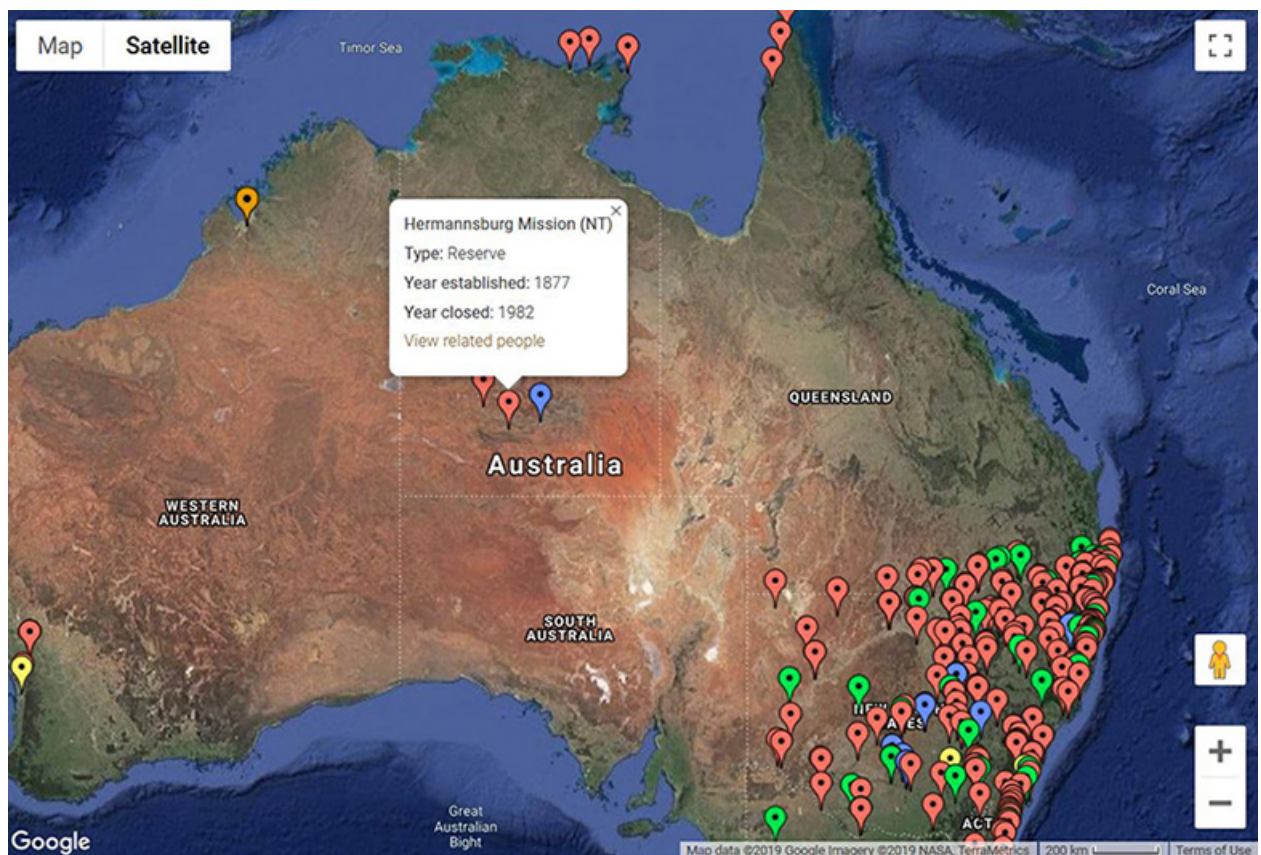
useful counterweight to more rhetorical accounts.

Helen Jones was recognised for her contribution to historical studies. Her awards included the Tinline Scholarship of the University of Adelaide in 1948, the Chancellor's Medal from Flinders University in 1994, Membership of the Order of Australia (AM) in 1995, and the Australian Dictionary of Biography Medal in 2009.

Helen Jones died on 6 July 2018, and her life was celebrated with a well-attended memorial service on 19 July 2018.

*This obituary draws heavily on both the Biographical Note prepared by Lee Hayes of the Rare Books and Special Collections Unit of the Barr Smith Library of the University of Adelaide ([www.adelaide.edu.au/library/special/mss/jones/](http://www.adelaide.edu.au/library/special/mss/jones/)), the interview with Jenny Palmer included in the J.D. Somerville Oral History Collection (OH 505/7) of the State Library of South Australia ([www.slsa.sa.gov.au/archivaldocs/oh/OH505\\_7.pdf](http://www.slsa.sa.gov.au/archivaldocs/oh/OH505_7.pdf)), and on the recollections of members of the South Australian Working Party of the ADB. It is published with permission.*

## Aboriginal reserve/mission map



The Aboriginal reserve/mission map is an ongoing NCB project that builds on a map released by AIATSIS last year which plotted Aboriginal missions, stations, reserves and camps in New South Wales.

We are developing the map by extending its coverage to all states and territories as well as including children's homes. We are also linking the missions, stations etc. to relevant entries in our websites.

A small grant from the ANU's College of Arts and Social Sciences has enabled us to employ Dr Allison Cadzow to make a start writing short articles about each mission, reserve etc.

You can access the map via all of our online biographical websites through the browse button (select the 'Maps' button) in the main menu bar.

# SERVANTS OF THE HOUSE

## Stephen Wilks reports on the NCB's latest project *The Dictionary of the House of Representatives*

The National Centre of Biography has embarked on an exciting new project to chart one of the most prominent groups largely missing from Australian political biography — the men and women who have served as Speaker, Deputy Speaker, or Clerk of the House of Representatives.

The Department of the House of Representatives has engaged the Centre to research-edit and publish online biographies of the 67 people who have held these positions since Federation. The entries will appear on both the NCB's *People Australia* website and the parliamentary website in 2020. The Department will add thematic articles on the roles of these three related offices.

The project will include entries derived from the extensive revision of the 25 entries on Speakers, Deputy Speakers and Clerks currently in the *ADB*. While none of the project entries will form part of the *ADB*, they are likely to be used to inform future *ADB* revisions and additions. The core of each biography will be the subject's service as Speaker, Deputy Speaker or Clerk, but with space to provide a balanced account of the entire life of the subject. Some individuals led relative private lives, raising demanding challenges in how we locate sources, especially for the Deputy Speakers and Clerks.

The current Clerk of the House, David Elder (an ANU history graduate, incidentally), has rightly observed that 'Australians are used to seeing the day to day political struggle of the House on the news but this project will tell us a much more reflective story about the role of the House and how it works. As an institution it is absolutely central to our democratic framework. The project will help explain three of its key offices'.

MPs elected by the House to be Speaker or Deputy Speaker have normally stood apart from the politics of the day to fulfil their responsibilities on behalf of the whole House. The Clerks are principal advisers on House operations, a much less public role. The former Liberal MP Neil Brown initially wondered 'what the Parliament would be like without the Clerks and the other officers...I know now it just would not work at all'.

Few Speakers, Deputy Speakers, and Clerks ever became household names. One of the best known is the former Premier of South Australia and first House Speaker, [Frederick Holder](#). Following some tense debates in the wake of the fall of the [Fisher](#) government in 1909 Holder collapsed in the House, giving us as he did so what could be considered Australia's shortest famous political speech — 'Dreadful, dreadful!' He died soon after, still in the parliament building, a sad end to a distinguished pioneering figure who sought to embed the independence of the Speaker. Others are largely unknown yet promising subjects, such as Walter Nain who crossed party lines by staying on as a wartime Speaker after the Fadden Government fell in October 1941.

The Clerks are renowned for their dedication and discretion. Probably the most colorful was also the longest serving, [Frank Green](#) (1937-55). A renowned raconteur and confidant



Speaker of the House of Representatives, Littleton Groom, with the Clerk of the House, Walter Gale. Mildenhall Collection, National Archives of Australia, 1927

of Prime Ministers [Lyons](#) and [Curtin](#), Green was decidedly atypical: during the Cold War he openly socialised with Communist Party members. Green was discomforted by the notorious Fitzpatrick-Browne case of 1955, during which these two Sydney figures were gaoled by order of the House for the rare offence of contempt of parliament. He was something of a historian and in retirement chaired the *ADB*'s Tasmanian Working Party. Green would have taken pleasure in being described in his own *ADB* entry as being 'a popular figure of Rabelaisian strength'. His memoir, *Servant of the House*, is a rich vein of political anecdotes.

The briefest serving Clerk is John McGregor, who in September 1927 after just a few weeks in the job also collapsed in the House. He was carried out by Members including doctor MPs [Earle Page](#) and [Neville Howse](#) before passing away in the Canberra Community Hospital on the site of to-day's ANU campus.

Issues that this project will explore include the relationships Speakers had with governments and their party; how they contributed to changes in parliamentary procedures; and the Speaker-Clerk relationship. Perhaps it will even help to define the extent to which there is a distinctly Australian version of the Westminster system.

The project is being guided by an expert Project Advisory Group chaired by Catherine Cornish, Clerk Assistant (Procedure) in the Department of the House of Representatives. Other members include Emeritus Professor Judith Brett, La Trobe University; Emeritus Professor Geoff Gallop, University of Sydney; Mr Ian Hancock, Editorial Fellow, National Centre of Biography, ANU; and Associate Professor Paul Strangio, Monash University.

**Dr Stephen Wilks, a recent addition to the National Centre of Biography team, will be research editing most of the contributions, in addition to drafting a few himself. For further information, contact [stephen.wilks@anu.edu.au](mailto:stephen.wilks@anu.edu.au) or (02) 6125 2349. His biography is on page 17.**



# THE ART OF BIOGRAPHY

**Rani Kerin's meditation on 'The Art of Biography' (or what I learned from Tom about writing lives). A paper prepared for the symposium to mark Professor Tom Griffiths formal retirement from the ANU's School of History in November 2018. Tom will continue as chair of the ADB's Editorial Board.**

I'd like to start with a story about a story.

Titled 'The Art of Biography', it was published in the mid-1980s in a collection of short stories by Penelope Lively called *Pack of Cards*.

One day — I can't remember exactly when, but I was around half-way or more through my PhD, so it was probably around 2002 or 2003 — I found it (the story) in my pigeonhole here at the ANU.

It was in one of those yellow internal envelopes and I could see from the previous recipients' list that Tom had received the envelope last, so I knew that whatever was inside had come from him.

There was no note: just the photocopied pages, joined with a paper clip.

I recycled the envelope and kept the contents. I wrote on the front page 'See Tom'.

I read the chapter; it was beautifully written, but it didn't seem very relevant to my work. I wasn't sure why Tom had given it to me — but I kept it anyway.

Tom often left interesting things in my pigeonhole: some inspiring, some practical. I considered 'The Art of Biography' to fall into the former category: inspiring, but not very useful.

I recently re-read the story and it all became clear; I think I get it now.

'The Art of Biography' is a fictional story about an eager young biographer who, towards the end of his research journey, when all the sources have been examined and the first chapters drafted, finds another person to interview.

He doesn't really want to interview her; he doesn't think there's any point — she, Miss Rockingham, was a contemporary of his subject, Edward Lamprey, but no-one in Lamprey's family had ever met her; he thinks it'll be a waste of time and he's got other things to do. He's a bit arrogant.

The story starts with the biographer and Miss Rockingham — 'who's 80 if she's a day' — having a cup of tea and chatting about mundane matters. His mind wanders; the interview ends and, as he's about to leave, she asks, 'would you like to see the letters?'

'Letters, Miss Rockingham?'

About 200, she says, upstairs, in two shoeboxes; no, maybe three.

'Letters to whom, Miss Rockingham?', the biographer asks.

'To me', she replies. 'Edward Lamprey and I', she says, a little stiffly, 'loved each other for many years'.

The biographer knew that Lamprey's marriage had been an



Rani Kerin, 2011

unhappy one; he'd wondered about that, but hadn't pursued it — no sources; no-one to ask: not relevant.

Miss Rockingham didn't want the letters to leave her house, but she invited the young biographer to stay with her while he typed them out — this is in pre-digital days (no quick photographs or scans; each letter had to be typed by hand on a typewriter).

The biographer lives with Miss Rockingham for a few weeks, gaining insights that change the whole direction of his research. At one crucial point he reflects: 'I feel really involved for the first time; it's not just work anymore, I actually care about him as a person'.

'The Art of Biography' is full of emotion, drama, passion, and insight; it's a story about a journey of self-discovery for the biographer whose relationship to his subject changes from one of duty to one of deep understanding borne of empathy, openness, inquisitiveness, and vulnerability.

Relationships, especially the relationship forged between biographer and subject, are revealed as crucial. The art of biography, we learn, is relationships; is patience; is commitment; is asking the right questions and listening to the answers; sometimes, it is also luck.

As I said, when I first read the story, I didn't really get it; I was too busy looking for quotable quotes to see the bigger picture. The essay wasn't practical; I couldn't use it in my PhD, so I filed it away.

# THE ART OF BIOGRAPHY (cont'd)

So naïve, so young, so arrogant — or, more kindly, still learning.

Here's the thing.

I wasn't doing a biography.

Other people may have thought that's what I was doing (in fact most probably did think that's what I was doing) but I most certainly and determinedly was not writing a biography.

Just to make sure that was clear to my readers, I wrote on page 3 of my dissertation: 'This thesis is not a biography'.

I acknowledged that it was 'biographical', but that's as far as I was prepared to go.

I wasn't doing a biography because I didn't understand what biography was; my view was warped by a prejudice that one still finds, occasionally, in academia and elsewhere, that biography is somehow something less than history; happily, that view is changing.

So, if I wasn't doing a biography, what was I doing? If I wasn't a biographer, what was I?

At my first job interview post-PhD, the selection panel asked that very question: 'What type of historian are you?'

The job was for a teaching position in Australian history; they already knew my specialisation was Indigenous history, so I figured that neither of those were going to cut it as answers.

I was stumped.

At various points in my PhD candidature I'd worried at length — at Tom — about my lack of theoretical focus or positioning; other students seemed to have a clearer grasp on this: they were doing feminist, environmental, or post-colonial history etc., informed by various clever theories and theorists.

What was I doing? To which Tom would kindly, gently, repeatedly, point out that I was doing a biography informed by theories of history — of knowing the past — that were embedded in everything I did (... but I wasn't doing a biography... 'This thesis is not a biography'.)

So, when the selection panel asked what type of historian I was, after floundering for a moment, I answered (I kid you not): 'I'm a good one'.

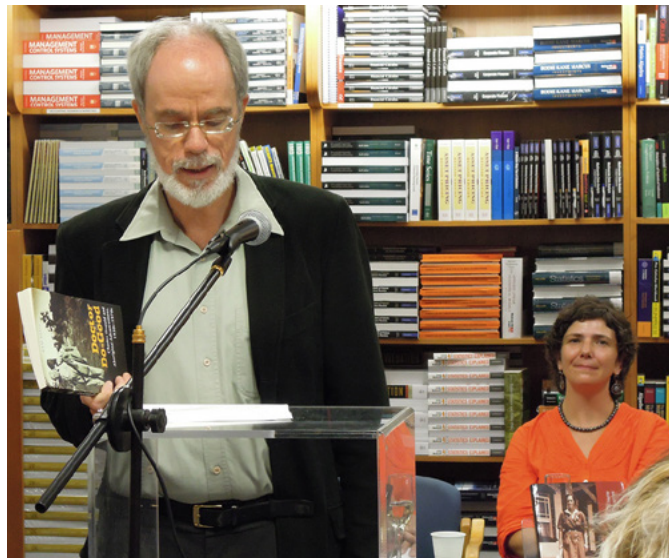
They laughed. I got the job. I moved to New Zealand.

Five years later, a very dear friend who did her PhD at the same time as me and was also a student of Tom's, sent me an ad for a job at the ANU. I wasn't in the market for a new job, I liked my job, but I had a look anyway.

It was for a research position in the National Centre of Biography; my friend thought it was perfect for me. Silly friend, I thought, fondly; I'm not a biographer.

But then, over the next few days, I thought about it. I thought about all the work I'd done — the articles and chapters I'd amassed, the book I was working on — and the penny finally began to drop.

It was a slow drop.



Tom Griffiths launching Rani Kerin's book, *Doctor Do-Good: Charles Duguid and Aboriginal Advancement, 1930s-1960s* (2012), photo by Paul Arthur

I thought I might be able to repackage myself as a biographer — maybe.

Turns out it wasn't hard; no repackaging required. I'd been a biographer all along.

Tom, of course, knew that from the start. He knew that when he first met me as a fresh-faced summer research scholar in the year before I did honours; he knew it when I returned to do my PhD; he knew it when I wrote and asked him to be a referee for the job.

I got the job. I did it for a few years, then I left, now I'm back, working as a research editor at the Australian Dictionary of Biography.

Tom has been associated with the ADB since 1999, first as chair of the Commonwealth Working Party and, since 2006, as chair of the Editorial Board; he's always been a champion of biography — and of me.

These days, as well as working for the ADB, I also supervise students at Federation University, many of whom are doing biographies.

Happily, none of them have any weird hang-ups about biography.

Happily, nor do I (anymore).

I'm a biographer.

I immerse myself in sources about lives lived to discover truths about known and unknown worlds; I delve deeply into realms of experience, both familiar and unfamiliar, to gain new insights into past practices, ideas, actions and events; I explore questions of motivation — inspiration, desperation, loyalty, desire, revenge, ambition, love — to understand why people did things in the past.

My art is biography.

Thanks Tom.



## **Malcolm Allbrook discusses the Re-Framing Indigenous Biography Conference convened by the NCB in November last year**

On 15 and 16 November 2018, the National Centre of Biography, in association with the ARC Discovery Project 'An Indigenous Australian Dictionary of Biography' and the ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences, held an international conference at the Centre for China in the World, ANU. Convened by Shino Konishi (University of Western Australia), Tom Griffiths and Malcolm Allbrook, the conference was attended by about 100 people, and was a great success, with a wonderful variety of papers and stimulating discussion.

Fullagar, Macquarie University; Shino Konishi, UWA; Arini Loader, Victoria University of Wellington); 'Stories' (Grace Karskens, University of Sydney; Katerina Teaiwa, ANU; Natalie Harkin, Flinders); and 'Futures' (Malcolm Allbrook, ANU; Alistair Paterson, UWA; Leah Lui-Chivizhe, University of Sydney).

An innovative aspect of the conference was a series of biography 'slams', in which participants spoke (or sang) of



some of the conference speakers and attendees

back row, L-R: Shino Konishi, Katerina Teaiwa, Alice Te Punga Somerville, Hineitimoana Greensill, Rebecca Collard  
front row, L-R: Leah Lui-Chivizhe, Julie Gough, Julie Andrews, Arini Loader, Natalie Harkin, Brenda Croft, Jodi Haines

It opened with a conversation between Tom Griffiths and the award-winning writer Alexis Wright, author of *Tracker* (Giramondo 2017), a collective memoir of the Indigenous political thinker and activist Tracker Tilmouth. Keynotes were given by the University of Waikato scholar Alice Te Punga Somerville, and the Canadian academic Ashley Glassburn Falzetti. The first was a public lecture at the National Portrait Gallery entitled 'Te Rangihiroa, Oodgeroo, Te Hurinui, Hemuera and me: Indigenous biographies without borders', and took place simultaneously with the opening of the new National Portrait Gallery exhibition 'Facing New Worlds'. Falzetti's lecture, 'Both/And: Anti-Colonial Approaches to Writing Indigenous Life Stories', opened the second day.

Papers were grouped into a series of broad themes: 'Challenges' (Michael McDonnell, University of Sydney; Julie Gough, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery); 'Ways' (Kate

their biographical projects for five minutes, followed by a further five minutes' discussion. This format allowed speakers to discuss their work, some of them in-progress, and gave participants an opportunity to hear about the wonderful range of Indigenous projects and the diverse approaches to writing biography. Slam presenters were Laurie Allen (Newcastle University); Jodi Haines (University of Tasmania); Brenda Croft (ANU); Lucy Davies and Kate Laing (La Trobe); Louise Martin-Chew; Suzanne Spinner; Alec O'Halloran; and Kathryn Wells (ANU).

The project team plans to prepare an edited volume of essays arising from the conference papers, which we hope will be ready for publication next year.

**Dr Malcolm Allbrook is the managing editor of the ADB and editor of the Australian Journal of Biography and History.**

## **Malcolm Allbrook** introduces us to the first issue of the NCB's *Australian Journal of Biography and History*

In December the National Centre of Biography launched its new scholarly journal; the *Australian Journal of Biography and History*, published by ANU Press. A journal has long been planned and was one of the recommendation of the 2007 Gregory review of the operations of the ADB. The review recommended incorporation of ADB functions into a new research centre — the National Centre of Biography — within the School of History (RSSS), to become the leader in Australian biographical research, together with a scholarly infrastructure of collaborative research, publication, and outreach, and active involvement in the School's postgraduate and teaching programs. Although the ADB had for some years commissioned and published thematic essays online, the journal has broader aims to support innovative research and writing to the highest standards in the field, nationally and internationally. It publishes peer-reviewed articles on Australian historical biography, including biographical studies, studies relating to theory and methodology, and the associated genres of autobiography, life writing, memoir, collective biography, and prosopography. We are especially interested in articles that explore the way in which biography and its associated genres can illuminate themes in Australian history, including women in Australian society, family history, transnational networks and mobilities, and Indigenous history.

With the formation of an editorial board and agreement by ANU Press to publish, the first edition of the *Australian Journal of Biography and History* is now complete. Two editions each year will be published; one is to be thematic with a guest editor, the other subject to a call for papers. The first edition includes nine articles and eight book reviews. An introductory chapter by Malcolm Allbrook and Melanie Nolan surveys Australian biographical writing, concluding that the principles of autobiography and prosopography have bestowed distinctive characteristics to Australian biography, partly a response to particular national historical characteristics, not least of which is postcolonial impetus in the country since World War II, as well as the nature of the archive and its extraordinary value in a digital environment. I anticipate that future numbers of the *Australian Journal of Biography and History* will dwell further upon such matters, including the interrelationships of biography and theory. In this first issue, a diverse range of essays primarily relates to questions of individuals and the contexts in which they functioned, exploring as Daniel Meister puts it, the 'middle ground' between a life and the times. Four of the articles concern Australian women who operated and negotiated various fields of endeavour, only one of which — the role of headmistress of a girls' school — was unambiguously a women's domain. The profile of Miss Annie Hughston (1859-1943) by Mary Lush, Elisabeth Christensen, Prudence Gill and Elizabeth Roberts, all of them former students at Fintona Girls' School during Hughston's long tenure, shows how a strong figure could have perhaps a disproportionate influence on women entering male bastions. Similarly Nancy Atkinson, a pioneering bacteriologist at the University of Adelaide, was not only a scientific researcher of note but a teacher of generations of graduate students. Yet when the chair in her field finally became available, as Emma McEwin notes, she



was overlooked in favour of a male English import, despite having acted in the role for many years. She was valued it seems more for her teaching than her research, a classic tendency to ascribe to women in scientific circles a nurturing, rather than a knowledge-creating function. Jean Andruana Jimmy (1912–1991), a Yupngayth woman from Mapoon in north Queensland, also became prominent in community leadership and land rights activism, areas which had been assumed to be male spheres. Yet leading her community was by no means as revolutionary as was often assumed by outside European observers, for Andruana saw herself resuming a role that was entirely consistent with women's responsibilities, as Geoff Wharton describes. Sophie Scott-Brown, in her portrait of the playwright and director Eunice Hangar's interpretations of the works of William Shakespeare, examines the nature of reading as 'a simultaneously social and individualistic activity' and its implications for understanding the way Australians have read English writers.

The article by Brendan Dalton on his distant ancestor Fredrick Dalton, a journalist and later a gold commissioner on the New South Wales goldfields, explores the potential of nineteenth-century mobilities in the formation of identity. In Dalton's case, he twice remade himself, the first time by escaping seemingly difficult circumstances in the United States to begin a new career with a new identity in Australia, and later by engineering his disappearance from his Australian family to resume his previous life.

Karen Fox explores how family history can illuminate an understanding of legal and power relations in a geographic setting, in this case Sydney. The Stephens and the Streets,



# NEW BIOGRAPHY JOURNAL (cont'd)

who between them produced four chief justices of New South Wales, at least four judges, and a number of barristers and solicitors, formed what can be called a legal 'dynasty' that exercised significant influence in the legal arena, as thus in politics and political administration. The article on André Kostermans, a renowned Dutch Indonesian botanist, by Michèle Horne, is also on one level a story of shifting identity. Her subject was born in the Dutch East Indies, and after training in botany in Holland, returned to take up his profession in the land of his birth. Interned by the Japanese during World War II, he used his skills to supplement the diet of his fellow prisoners of war, many of them Australian, as well as to develop a 'bush' procedure for producing surgical-grade alcohol, actions which undoubtedly saved the lives of many. After the war, and having taken out Indonesian citizenship, his career was almost ruined by the government's response to his homosexuality. In the final essay, the University of Xian scholar Tiping Su, who spent a year as a visiting scholar at the ANU in 2015-16, discusses the problem of the 'missing' Chinese

in the *ADB*, explaining the various issues in identifying and historicising the many Chinese who sojourned in Australia, as well as those who stayed. In concluding he identifies a number of significant Chinese people who might warrant inclusion in the *ADB*, and proposes ways by which Australian and Chinese scholars might together approach the task both at a collective and an individual level.

The journal is published as a free e-book by ANU Press, and is also available in hard copy via the press:

<https://press.anu.edu.au/publications/australian-journal-biography-and-history-no-1-2018>

**Dr Malcolm Allbrook, managing editor of the *ADB* is also editor of the Australian Journal of Biography and History. You can watch an interview of Malcolm discussing the journal at <https://youtu.be/ujjuvIAGPio>**

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## Introducing the NCB's latest recruit, Dr Stephen Wilks

Stephen Wilks joined the National Centre of Biography in August 2018 as research editor for the Dictionary of the House of Representatives project, focused on Speakers, Deputy Speakers and Clerks of the House.

Stephen's career began with his studying both economic history and economics at Monash University, a carefully judged balancing of his love of history with an effort to appear viable on the job market. While somewhat vague about the precise dates of this, he admits that the foremost student figure on campus at the time was a riveting public speaker with long golden locks named Costello. Much later, Stephen was quoted in the official history of Monash as having once earnestly asked his fellow undergraduate Tony Pratt what he might do for an income after graduation. ('Cardboard boxes' was the answer.)

Upon graduating he embarked on a decidedly mixed career in the Commonwealth Government based in Canberra and overseas, stretching up to 2018. This included service in AusAID, as well as the Departments of Infrastructure, Regional Australia, Innovation, Immigration, Trade and Foreign Affairs. At the Australian Embassy in Jakarta he worked on aid to the Indonesian education sector; later he was based in the Australian Consulate-General in Hong Kong, from where he sought to advise the Immigration Department in Canberra.

Working in government was leavened by a shadow career writing book reviews and articles for newspapers and magazines. Stephen contributed over seventy of these to the late Fairfax Media and other publishers, mainly on modern Australian, British, and United States history and biography — but occasionally on anything else editors thought it appropriate to entrust him with, such as accounts of psychopathy and of Victorian Britain's penchant for arsenic poisoning. He twice won the ACT Writers Centre Reviewer of the Year Award, for which he received high quality wines as prizes. He subsequently served as a resolutely sober judge for this award.



Stephen Wilks hard at work, 2019

Stephen believes in the power of contingency rather than that of fate, not least as a chance meeting led him to be invited to study for a doctorate in Australian history from the ANU. He duly graduated in 2018 after submitting a thesis on ideas on national economic and social development in twentieth century Australia, focused on the career of the little studied, often disparaged yet quite remarkable [Earle Page](http://aph.org.au/earle-page). He has published several articles on Page and his agenda, such as for the Australian Policy and History network (<http://aph.org.au/earle-page>). A book on Page and his ideas about national development is in preparation with ANU Press. Stephen promises that this will deal with many important strands in Australian history including the early Country Party, federalism, decentralisation, regionalism, economic planning, electrification and higher education.

Stephen undertakes museum guiding as a hobby and is often to be spotted in the vicinities of the Australian War Memorial, the National Library, and suchlike institutions. He continues to suspect that Schopenhauer was an optimist.

# RECOVERED LIVES

In mid-2018 Peter Browne, editor of the online magazine *Inside Story*, approached the National Centre of Biography's director, Melanie Nolan, with a proposal that the NCB commission profiles of significant women in Australia whose achievements had been overlooked when they died, and who were also missing from the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

The resulting biographies were published in a *Canberra Times* lift-out *Recovered Lives: Twenty-eight Australian women who disappeared from history* on 8 March, International Women's Day. They were also featured on *Inside Story's* website and will be published on the NCB's *People Australia* website. Several will be developed into *ADB* entries. In keeping with the *ADB's* practice, some of the biographies are of 'representative' women.

Nichola Garvey's two articles look at the fate of five convict women sent to Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania). **Catherine Henrys** (c.1806-55) was convicted of a further 49 offences after arriving in the colony in 1836. The '**Huddersfield Four**', were named for the city in England in which they were sentenced to transportation in 1845 after robbing the drunken son of a wealthy manufacturer.

Alison Alexander also has two articles, the first on English-born gentlewoman **Mary Morton Allport** (1806-1895), who settled with her husband in Van Diemen's Land in 1831, and is thought to be Australia's first professional artist. Alexander also wrote the profile of **Mathinna** (c.1835- ) an Aboriginal child who was taken from her people in 1841 by **Lady Jane Franklin**, wife of the governor of Van Diemen's Land, who wanted to try her hand at 'civilising' her. Mathinna was abandoned when the Franklins left the colony in 1843.

Barbara Dawson's profile of **Ann Hordern** (c.1791-1871) reveals that she was the founder of Anthony Hordern retail stores. Ann formed the idea of starting the business on her first trip ashore after landing in Sydney in 1835 and remained the driving force behind the venture.



Ann Hordern, c.1863, State Library of New South Wales

In another case of mistaken credit, Julie McIntyre reveals that it was **Mary Penfold** (1816-1895), and not her husband, Christopher, who was the founder of Penfold Wines at Magill, South Australia, in the 1830s. Mary continued to run the business until 1884. By then the company was producing a third of all wines made in the state.

Karen Fox examines the life of the trailblazing doctor **Iza Coghlan** (1868-1946), one of the first two women to graduate from medicine from the University of Sydney in 1893.

Peter Davies writes about **Lucy Hicks** (1833-1909) who, at 27 years of age, and a mother of 4 children, took on the job of running both Sydney's Female Immigration Depot and the Government Asylum for Infirm and Destitute Women, making

her one of the most senior female public servants in NSW.

Meg Foster reveals the complicated life story of Aboriginal bushranger **Mary Ann Bugg** (1834-1905), the partner of Captain Thunderbolt (**Fred Ward**), and how she created her own legend.

Kathryn Wells writes about Piltindjeri woman **Katipelvild 'Pinkie' Mack** (1858-1954), from Raukkan, South Australia, who was a renowned song woman with deep cultural knowledge.

Deborah Jordan profiles **Ina Higgins** (1860-1948), one of the first Australian women to work professionally as a landscape architect. She was also active in the women's suffrage movement and the Women's Peace Army in Victoria during WWI. In 1915 Higgins played a leading role in establishing the Women's Rural Industries Cooperative to assist women suffering extreme hardship.

Madeleine Lindsell bowls us over with the story of the **Gregory** sisters, **Nellie** (1863-1950) and **Louisa** (1865-1903), members of the famous Australian Gregory cricketing family. In 1886 the sisters captained the opposing teams of the first recognised women's cricket match at the Sydney Cricket Ground and did much to promote women's cricket in NSW.

Melanie Nolan pieces together the life story of '**Bondi Mary**' (1870-1941), a homeless woman who had lived for many years in the Bondi area of Sydney and died alone in a park shelter. As Madame Pacquer she had operated a successful dressmaking business until 1913. A gas explosion in her building led to her young son being hurled through a window onto the ground 30 feet away. She subsequently suffered a breakdown and took to living alone on the streets.



Nellie Gregory, n.d.

Nicole McLennan recalls the time when soprano **Lili Sharp** (1876-1964), was described as 'a new Melba' and an 'Australian Nightingale'. With her husband Charles King (or, as he preferred, Monsieur Rafalewski), an accomplished pianist and violinist, Sharp travelled overseas in 1901 to study and perform. They toured widely, claiming to have presented some 1000 concerts, before returning to settle in Sydney in 1912.

Alexandra McKinnon presents articles on friends **Nell Malone** (1881-1963) and **Kathleen Ussher** (1891-1983) who worked for the Scottish Women's Hospitals in Europe as nurses during WWI, but then led quite different lives. Malone became the governess of Maud Linder, the daughter of prominent French film star Max Linder. Malone's life became permanently intertwined with Maud's when Max killed his



# RECOVERED LIVES (cont'd)

wife in 1925 before taking his own life. Ussher became a journalist in Hollywood after the war, mainly focusing on the rising careers of Australian actors. She moved to England in 1930 and again concentrated her journalism on expatriate Australians. She also published books about Australia.



Ella McFadyen in 1972 with one of her little dragon friends, State Library of New South Wales

Emily Gallagher profiles **Ella McFadyen** (1887-1976) the popular editor of the children's page of the *Sydney Mail* (1915-1932). She received thousands of letters from her young readers. McFadyen also wrote poetry, published children's books, and was an experienced naturalist. Such was her knowledge of Australian lizards that the Taronga Zoo and Australian Museum sent several to her for care.

Elizabeth Kwan recalls the matriarch of Darwin's Chinese community, **Granny Lum Loy** (c.1887-1980). Born in Guangdong Province, China, around 1887, she arrived in Darwin about a decade later. After her husband's death in 1918 she supported herself and her daughter by starting a mango plantation.

Michal Bosworth and Charlie Fox pay tribute to **Roma Gilchrist** (1909-1983), a key figure in the women's movement in Western Australia from the 1930s to 1960s. A communist in her youth, she later joined the New Housewives' Association, later the Union of Australian Women. As the UAW's president (1957-71) she led campaigns for peace, Aboriginal rights, childcare, kindergartens, and improved maternity care.

Shannon Loveday reveals the role that **Roma Craze** (1915-1995) played at Britain's Bletchley Park during WWII. Based in the Signals Intelligence and Traffic Analysis Group, Craze was one of the first five women to work at the secretive facility, home to legendary analysts and codebreakers.

Ann Rees tells us the stories of two Australians abroad. **Sylvia Breamer** (1897-1943) was one of the earliest Australians to 'make it' in Hollywood. Moving to America in 1916, she was soon hailed as 'the most successful new young lady of the year'. At the peak of her fame in 1924 she married a celebrity doctor and retired from movies. When they divorced in 1928, she tried to make a comeback but was unsuccessful in the new age of 'talkies'. In 1943 **Julia Moore** (1925-



Julia Moore at the UN General Assembly, 1946, United Nations Archives, 292973

1986) was selected as one of Australia's first three female diplomats. Two years later she was appointed third secretary to the Australian delegation to the United Nations in New York. When she married, however, the Public Service Board insisted that she follow protocol and resign. Julia waged a war against the provision but ultimately lost and was forced to resign, as were the other two women diplomats when they married.

Ross Carpenter has a biography of **Sadie Cambridge** (1899-1968), Sydney-born champion ice skater. With her husband, Albert Enders, she became a leading world coach in singles, ice dance, and pairs. They also travelled with ice shows in Australia, Europe, Britain, and South Africa.

R. D. Lappan profiles aviatrix **Jessie Miller** (1901-1972). In 1927, accompanying Bill Lancaster, she became the first woman to fly from England to Australia. She then competed in air races in America, worked as a test pilot for the Victor Aircraft Company, and was the first woman to earn a commercial pilot's licence in Canada. In 1929 she became a founding member of the Ninety-Nines, an international organisation for female pilots.



Jessie Miller in her biplane at Parks Airport, Illinois, during the inaugural All-Woman Transcontinental Air Race, 24 August 1929, Henry Schnittger Photograph Collection/Saint Louis University Libraries Archives & Digital Services

# DATABASE OF AUSTN GRADUATES

## **Richard Harrison** brings us up to date on the progress of his database on Australian graduates

Later this year I will be publishing a **free**, online database of graduates from Australian universities between 1856 and 1945. This database has grown out of a larger project on Australian elites (still in progress), which I wrote about in *Biography Footnotes*, issue no 10 in 2011, and extends my earlier work on graduates, noted in issue no 14, in June 2015.

This new database will include around 25,000 graduates who earned about 40,000 bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in all disciplines. Coverage includes all of Australia's degree-granting institutions of the time: the universities of Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Tasmania, Queensland and Western Australia, as well as the Melbourne College of Divinity. The database will supersede my earlier *Checklist of Graduates of Australian Universities 1856-1900* (published 2015), which included just under 4000 graduates.

The principal source for the data is the university calendars, most of which are now online. An important supplementary source was Sydney's database of alumni, *Alumni Sidneiensis* <https://alumniarchives.sydney.edu.au/as/>

Although the cut-off date for graduation is 1945, the impact of the graduates on the life of the nation continued for many years thereafter. Graduates who became prominent long after 1945 include Gough Whitlam (BA, Syd, 1938) and Sir John Kerr (LLB, Syd, 1936), and the latter's successor as governor-general, Sir Zelman Cowen (BA Hons, Melb, 1939). Many High Court justices will be in the database, such as Sir Harry Gibbs (BA, Qld, 1937; justice 1970-81 and chief justice 1981-87) and Lionel Murphy (BSc, Syd, 1945; justice 1975-86). Among the distinguished historians to be included are Manning Clark and A. G. L. Shaw (both BA Hons, Melb, 1938).

In its initial form, the database will include only the full name, gender, degrees, and conferral dates for each graduate, but additional data will be added in stages over a number of years. Links to relevant *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and *People Australia* webpages are a high priority, while graduates' entry into selected professions will also be noted in due course. I aim to include basic biographical data for as many graduates as possible.



Richard Harrison, 2019

In two of the largest disciplines — Arts and Science — female graduates comprised a significant proportion of the total. For instance, in 1945 at Melbourne, 49 per cent of BAs and 36 per cent of BSc degrees were awarded to female graduates. For the whole period and all institutions covered, Music degrees were heavily dominated by female students, while in contrast (not surprisingly) almost all Engineering degrees were awarded to male students.

The database will be hosted on my website, [Historical Data on Australian Elites](http://www.hdae.org), at [www.hdae.org](http://www.hdae.org). The target date for publication is August 2019. If you have any enquiries I can be reached at [rh@rharrison.com](mailto:rh@rharrison.com).

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## Launch of *Our Mob Served* at the Australian War Memorial

We congratulate two ADB associates, Dr Allison Cadzow and Dr Mary Anne Jebb, on the publication of their edited collection *Our Mob Served: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories of war and defending Australia* (Aboriginal Studies Press, 2019). Launched by the prominent Indigenous historian, Dr Jackie Huggins, at the Australian War Memorial in March, the book presents the moving and little-known histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander war time and defence service personnel, told through vivid oral accounts and family images. The book is a product of the ARC Linkage project 'Serving our Country' which was led by Professor Mick Dodson, formerly head of the ANU's National Centre for Indigenous Studies, on which ADB research editor Dr Sam Furphy was an investigator. Mary Anne was also an investigator, and Allison filled the role of research associate on the four year project, during which 180 Indigenous men and women recorded their stories of service.



launch of *Our Mob Served*. L-R Allison Cadzow, Craig Greene (National Centre for Indigenous Studies, ANU), Mary Anne Jebb





# WANTED

## More women for the ADB

Fewer than one in twenty of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography's* entries for the colonial period are of women.

You can help us add another 1500 women by nominating those you think should be in the ADB.

To learn more about the colonial women in the ADB project and to download the nomination form go to: [history.cass.anu.edu.au/centres/ncb/colonial-women-adb](http://history.cass.anu.edu.au/centres/ncb/colonial-women-adb)

If you would like to donate to the ADB Endowment Fund to help sponsor this project, please see [adb.anu.edu.au/adb-endowment-fund/](http://adb.anu.edu.au/adb-endowment-fund/)