

National Centre of Biography News

November 2025

The NCB News is the monthly newsletter of the National Centre of Biography. Got biographical news to share? Send us an email at ncb@anu.edu.au.



The Australian Crowd, by Stephen Baxter (2014)

Following in her footsteps

Many biographers are fond of adventures that allow them to follow in their subject's footsteps.

That's exactly what I did this spring when I went overseas to complete research in the UK for my joint biography of Australian feminist Bessie Rischbieth and her sister Olive Evans.

Alongside uncovering valuable material in the archives, I was able to retrace some parts of Bessie's own journeys overseas. I found the buildings in which she lived in wartime London, visited her spiritual retreat in Glastonbury and even recreated an image from her photo collection in front of the Parthenon in Athens (see left).

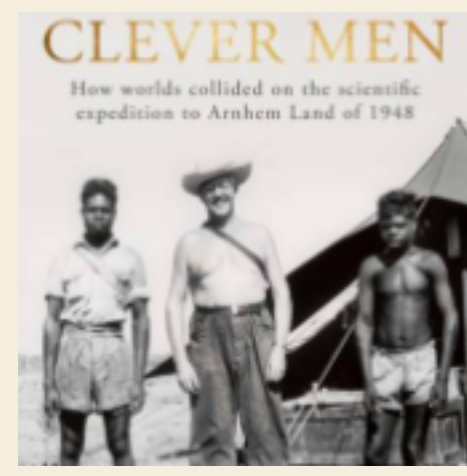
Thank you to the Hazel Rowley Literary Fellowship (2025) for supporting these research travels.

Dr Michelle Staff, NCB online & outreach manager



At the Parthenon: Bessie Rischbieth 1929 and Michelle 2025.

News & notices



Congratulations!

The NCB extends our warmest congratulations to our colleague in the School of History, Prof. Martin Thomas, whose new book *Clever Men: How worlds collided on the scientific expedition to Arnhem Land of 1948* (Allen & Unwin) has been awarded the 2025 [Mark and Evette Moran Nib Literary Award](#). Well done!



Outstanding Canberrans

The NCB's Dr Stephen Wilks attended a ceremony on 3 November to celebrate five additions to the Australian Capital Territory Honour Walk. Stephen is a member of the advisory committee that recommended additions for consideration by Chief Minister Andrew Barr M.L.A. Learn about these additions in the full [press release](#).



Reaching future historians

Last week historians from across the ANU joined forces to bring an afternoon of lectures and workshops to senior secondary students in the ACT. The NCB's Dr Michelle Staff collaborated with the History Teachers' Association, as well as with the ANU's School of History and Centre for Classical Studies, to produce the event. Read more about it on the [SoH website](#).



Hazel Rowley Literary Fellowship

The Hazel Rowley Literary Fellowship, valued at \$20,000, supports Australian writers working on biography projects. This is the final time it will be offered. Applications close at 5pm on 16 November. [More details](#).



Biography workshop

The final Biography Workshop for the year is fast approaching. Dr Theodore Ell (SLL) will be speaking about his work as a memoirist and as a biographer of Australian poet Les Murray. Thursday 27 November, 11am-12.30pm. Watch our [website](#) for more details.

Read, listen, learn



Sidney Nolan & the convict past

PhD student Matthew Cunneen has written a [review](#) of Canberra Museum and Gallery's recent exhibition on Sidney Nolan's *For the Term of His Natural Life* series for *Australian Historical Studies*.



Biography in the digital age

In this [piece](#) for the ABC, Juliet Rieden explores the peculiarities of writing biography in our increasingly online world, including the dilemmas of AI and the demise of the art of letter-writing.



New podcast episodes

Recent episodes of *Biographers in Conversation* feature authors talking about their work on Leonardo da Vinci and everyday courageous women. Visit the [website](#) to listen to each interview, hosted by NCB visitor Dr Gabriella Kelly-Davies.



This is an AUSSIE

The iconic AUSSIE posters by artist Peter Drew have been popping up again in recent weeks, as reported in [this piece](#) by the *Guardian*. In a case of serendipitous timing, we've recently published an *ADB* entry on one of the subjects from his series: Chinese Australian businesswoman Gladys Sym Choon. Read her entry on the [ADB website](#).

ADB feature entry

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

This month our pick is the entry on Baiali and Bindal woman Muriel Conomie Stanley (1918-1979), who was an obstetric nurse and welfare worker in NSW and Queensland in the mid-20th century.

Read her story in the piece co-authored by Odette Best, Abigail Slinger and Tracey Bunda on our [website](#) now.



Sister Muriel Stanley, 1945, SLQ

Contact
ncb@anu.edu.au
history.cass.anu.edu.au/centres/ncb



The Australian National University,
Canberra
TEQSA Provider ID: PRV12002 (Australian University)
CRICOS Provider : 00120C
ABN : 52 234 063 906

