Spring 2020

SL

STATE LIBRARY®
NEW SOUTH WALES

Message

As I write this at the end of July, pessimism remains the flavour of the day. Even bad things come to an end, and by the you time read this I hope that the pandemic may be waning. We've had a number of starts and steps back since I last wrote to you. Today's big question: to mask or not to mask.

The other day I was involved yet again in one of those online meetings. The agenda was much as it's been for the past five months: masks, contact tracing, sanitiser stocks, deep cleaning and 'distancing'. ('Social distancing' was replaced in March by 'physical distancing' when it was feared that people who were already lonely and isolated at home might balk at official instructions to cut themselves off even further.) Then a colleague said something striking: 'Can we talk about something other than the plague?'

Well, I'd be delighted to. *SL* magazine is a good place to start. For many years this journal — which is at heart a publication intended for the Library's Friends — has developed a reputation as one of the country's finest institutional journals. Once you get past my introduction and get reading, you will see that this is one of the best issues yet.

We've decided, in fact, that *SL* is too good to remain a membership perk with a small circulation. The space created by the pandemic is giving us the chance to redesign and expand it. All being well, the next time you receive it, *SL* should be even more engaging and varied than it is now. And unlike many publications these days, it will continue to appear in print.

Nothing to be pessimistic about here.

DR JOHN VALLANCE FAHA
State Librarian

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EDITOR
Cathy Perkins
cathy.perkins@sl.nsw.gov.au

DESIGN & PRODUCTION
Rosie Handley

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STATE LIBRARY OF NSW
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000
Phone (02) 9273 1414
Fax (02) 9273 1255
enquiries.library@sl.nsw.gov.au
www.sl.nsw.gov.au

COVER
Lee-Ann Olwage, *Black Drag Magic – Portrait of a Drag Artist and Activist*, Portraits, Singles, Second Prize, World Press Photo Exhibition 2020

NSW GOVERNMENT

Photo of the year

A young man, illuminated by mobile phones, recites protest poetry while demonstrators chant slogans calling for civilian rule, during a blackout in Khartoum, Sudan. This photograph, 'Straight Voice' by Yasuyoshi Chiba for Agence France-Presse, was awarded World Press Photo of the Year and General News, Singles, First Prize.

World Press Photo Exhibition 2020 **is free in the Library's galleries until 18 October 2020.**

NEWS

Library lifeline

Millions of people have turned to libraries to get them through the current health crisis, with more than 25,000 new members signing up online since the March lockdown — and onsite as libraries gradually reopened from 1 June.

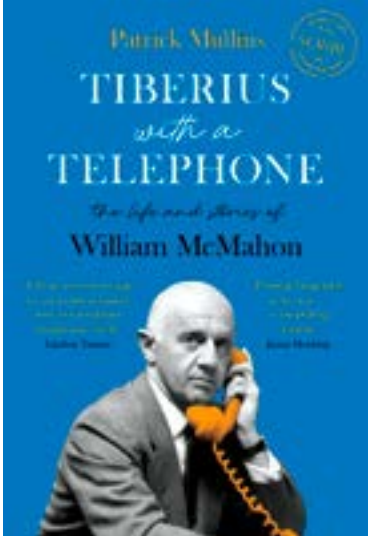
Collectively, the State Library and NSW public libraries enjoyed over 3.6 million website visits from 23 March to 23 July and almost 1.7 million electronic loans or ebooks downloaded. What's more, many people connected with their libraries for the first time while in isolation.

The State Library's ebook platform Indyreads has been made available through 80% of NSW public libraries, with more libraries joining every month.

With libraries reopening from June, offering limited services in line with Covid-19 restrictions, loans for physical books and other printed material have never been stronger. More than five million items have been borrowed across the state in just two months — 20% more than usual.

State Librarian John Vallance is thrilled but not surprised by these numbers. He said: 'Through this pandemic libraries have risen to the challenge to engage and stimulate their communities.'

John Lai enjoys biscuits and accessing the Library from home, photo by Joy Lai



Surprising achievement

Although former Australian prime minister William McMahon was 'not the obvious candidate' for a 250,000 word biography, Patrick Mullins' 'substantial and surprising achievement' *Tiberius with a Telephone: The Life and Stories of William McMahon* has won the country's major prize for life writing, the National Biography Award, supported by the Nelson Meers Foundation. Judges said the book 'not only tells much of its subject but of the nature of biographical writing itself'. Jessica White's *Hearing Maud* received the Michael Crouch Award for a first published biography by an Australian writer.

sl.nsw.gov.au/awards/national-biography-award

The town band

'Even for lovers of Australian art, Herbert Badham is not nearly as well-known as his contemporaries such as Roland Wakelin, Margaret Preston or Grace Cossington Smith,' says Dixson Librarian Louise Anemaat. 'And the Library is keen to change that.' We recently purchased another of the artist's evocative paintings, *The Town Band*, an oil on canvas from 1951. Badham brings a modernist palette and bold brushstrokes to scenes of everyday life. *The Town Band* depicts the resident Eastern Command Band performing outside Paddington's Victoria Barracks. It is now on display in our galleries.

sl.nsw.gov.au/blogs/evocative-scenes-everyday-life

The Town Band is installed in the galleries, photo by Gene Ramirez

World upside down

A punchbowl made of silver is an unusual piece of tableware to commission for a three-year voyage in search of the elusive Great Southern Land. Yet this bizarre artefact, recently acquired by the Library, was part of the long list of provisions Joseph Banks gathered in 1772 for James Cook's second voyage to the Southern Oceans. The punchbowl has been engraved with a map of the world turned 'upside down', with the target of the expedition — the 'empty' Southern Hemisphere — largely on its lid. Banks eventually withdrew from the expedition, and according to Mitchell Librarian Richard Neville, 'The lavish provisions he made for this voyage are curiously emblematic of European colonising ambitions at the end of the eighteenth century.'

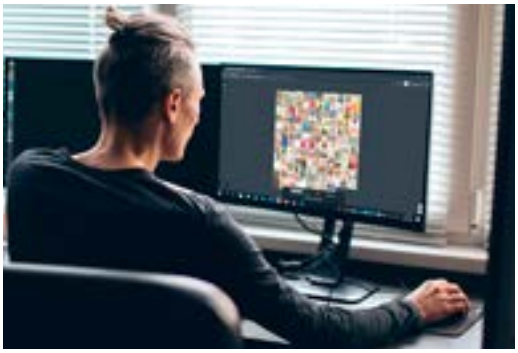
sl.nsw.gov.au/blogs/world-turned-upside-down

Richard Neville with the Banks punchbowl, photo by Joy Lai

Digital mosaic

You can now explore more than 1.2 million digitised photographs, manuscripts, paintings and drawings from the Library's collections in one go, with the recently launched experimental website Aereo. You start with a bird's-eye view of a vast mosaic of images before zooming down a wonderful rabbit hole of serendipitous discovery. Aereo was devised by New York–based designer and developer Mauricio Giraldo, who won the State Library's 2019 DX Lab Fellowship.

dxlab.sl.nsw.gov.au/aereo



Interrobang

The following is one of approximately 350 questions answered each month by the Library's 'Ask a Librarian' service.

? I understand that the historic Bowman Flag is held in the State Library's collection. Is there any information about who designed it?

! The Bowman Flag is the first known appearance of a kangaroo and emu supporting a shield and is believed to have inspired the design for the Australian coat of arms. It was flown in April 1806 at the family farm of John Bowman at Richmond, north west of Sydney, to celebrate British victory in the Battle of Trafalgar.

The flag was presented by Bowman's great-grandchildren to Richmond Superior Public School in 1905, and was donated to the Library in 1916.

According to Bowman's descendants, the flag was made on silk from the wedding dress of John's wife, Honor Bowman. It is unclear whether it was sewn by Honor or her then nine-year-old daughter Mary. While there has been speculation about who was responsible for the design, it seems likely that it was painted by a professional sign painter, possibly with assistance from the Bowman family.

The traditional floral symbols of England, Ireland and Scotland — the rose, shamrock and thistle — are seen on the shield held by the kangaroo and emu. A scroll above the shield bears the word 'Unity' and below is the motto 'England expects every man will do his duty'. Horatio Nelson signalled this message from HMS *Victory* at the beginning of the Battle of Trafalgar.

www.sl.nsw.gov.au/ask

Take 5 CATS

Compiled by Margot Riley,
Curator, Research & Discovery

Bobbie

An Australian soldier shares a farewell embrace in Sydney during World War II as Bobbie the cat looks on. One of photographer Sam Hood's most enduring images, Bobbie the cat was among the first photos shared on social media via the Library's Flickr account in 2008. Since then he's attracted over 555,350 views, 6000 favs and 800 comments from cat fanciers all over the world.

PXE 789/4/73

Celestina

A black cat called Celestina always sat on the rocks at the water's edge, beneath the house rented by journalist Elizabeth Riddell and her husband at Parsley Bay, Vaucluse. Artist Dahl Collings, a friend of the couple, painted Elizabeth and Celestina on the balcony in 1946, with a Port Jackson pilot boat in the distance behind them.

ML 1138

Felis Australis

This sinuous and slightly sinister cat became the hallmark of Scottish-born black-and-white artist David Henry Souter. The cat made its first appearance in a *Bulletin* cartoon in July 1892, when Souter is thought to have created it to disguise an inkblot on one of his drawings. From 1906, the Souter cat also featured on Royal Doulton's popular Kateroo chinaware series.

PXA 566/13

Vaska

Keen to raise funds to address animal cruelty and neglect, Marjorie Proctor-Brodsky hoped to sell photo storybooks for which this album, c 1959–60, was a prototype. A founding member of the NSW Cat Protection Society and lifetime supporter of the RSPCA, Brodsky shared her home with nine felines including rescue cat Vaska, featured here in barrister's robes modelled on those of Marjorie's husband, George.

PXE 1677/1

Calico

Sydney-based artist, teacher and taste maker Thea Proctor kept creating and exhibiting drawings until late in her life. Maintaining her sure and subtle draughtsmanship required practice for which Proctor's tortoiseshell cat Calico, shown here c 1965, was a favourite subject.

DG 62/4/16 (below) and DG 62/4/18

IN THE PICTURE

PHOTOJOURNALISTS BRAVE WAR AND CRISIS TO TELL THEIR STORIES IN THE ANNUAL WORLD PRESS PHOTO EXHIBITION.

WORDS Hannah James

A single photo can change the course of history. *Napalm Girl*, the iconic image by Nick Ut of a little girl running naked and screaming from her bombed-out village, won World Press Photo of the Year in 1973. It was so powerful in shifting public opinion against the Vietnam War that some commentators say it helped end the conflict.

The events of the past year have shown that Australians aren't as insulated from such news-making world affairs as we may once have thought. With hotter temperatures contributing to our catastrophic summer of bushfires, which was swiftly followed by a global pandemic, even the Lucky Country will bear the scars of 2020 for years to come. That reality lends new weight to this year's World Press Photo Exhibition, on display at the Library from 15 August to 18 October.

The exhibition was launched in 1955 when a group of Dutch photographers organised an international competition to attract bigger audiences for their work. It's now a not-for-profit foundation that celebrates the world's best photojournalism. The World Press Photo's signature event has been held at the Library for 20 years — its only Australian location this year — and is part of the Library's commitment to shine a light on contemporary issues.

This year's contest honours three Australian photographers, and inevitably the bushfires are the subject for two of them. Matthew Abbott's image for the *New York Times* of a kangaroo attempting to escape the flames, silhouetted against the ruins of a burning house near Lake Conjola, NSW, formed part of a portfolio that scooped the second prize in the Spot News (Stories) category. Another of Abbott's

Sean Davey, *Bushfire Evacuation Center*, for Agence France-Presse, Contemporary Issues, Singles, Second Prize

OPPOSITE: Matthew Abbott, *Australia's Bushfire Crisis*, Panos Pictures for *The New York Time*s, Spot News, Stories, Second Prize

unforgettable images shows an abandoned car, shining rivers of liquid aluminium running from its melted wheels (the caption notes that aluminium melts at 660.3°C). Sean Davey won second prize in the Contemporary Issues (Singles) category for his picture of children playing under eerie orange skies at a bushfire evacuation centre in Bega. In a strange foreshadowing of Covid-19, one wears a mask against the smoke.

Also ever-present — in the history of the exhibition as in the history of the world — is war.

Though the pandemic has recently displaced climate crisis in the headlines, global heating has long been one of the exhibition's subjects. Esther Horvath photographed polar bears pawing curiously at markers placed by scientists investigating the rapid retreat of Arctic sea ice. Melting Siberian permafrost reveals vast and growing canyons that threaten the lifestyle and culture of the local Indigenous people in a portfolio story by Katie Orlinsky. Evaporating lakes destroy the livelihoods of those who live along their shores in both Iran and Uganda.

Climate solutions are also in evidence: in a set of photos for *National Geographic* magazine, Luca Locatelli highlights innovations in the circular economy including a plant in Denmark that burns rubbish, producing enough energy to power 60,000 homes (its sloping, green roof also provides a running track and picnic area in summer and a ski slope in winter).

Also ever-present — in the history of the exhibition as in the history of the world — is war. Nikita Teryoshin's chilling image of a neatly suited businessman at an arms fair holding two anti-tank grenade launchers shows that for many, war is just another lucrative international industry that continues despite all the other crises that make news.

But it's the human cost of war, not the financial, that always touches the heart most deeply. Australian photographer Adam Ferguson's prize-winning portfolio of liberated prisoners of the Islamic State, published in the *New York Times Magazine*, depicts in starkly lit black-and-white the psychological trauma of the former captives.

The World Press Photo Exhibition is a salient reminder that the events that make history are always happening around us. And perhaps one of these photos will end up changing how that history is written.

Hannah James is a writer and editor based in Sydney.

***World Press Photo Exhibition 2020* is free in the Library's galleries until 18 October 2020, presented in partnership with the Judith Neilson Institute for Journalism and Ideas and generously supported by Canon Australia.**

Left: Matthew Abbott, *Australia's Bushfire Crisis*, Panos Pictures for *The New York Times*, Spot News, Stories, Second Prize

Right: Nikita Teryoshin, *Nothing Personal — the Back Office of War*, World Press Photo of the Year Nominee

OPPOSITE: Frédéric Noy, *Lake Victoria Dying*, Panos Pictures, Environment, Singles, Third Prize

Katie Orlinsky, *The Carbon Threat*, for *National Geographic*, Environment, Stories, Third Prize

TOTEMS

WORDS Heidi Norman

How can a dialogue between Indigenous ancestors and descendants forge connections to country for all Australians?

The worst drought in Australia's history brought our largest river system to the brink of collapse. Millions of fish died and the towns that rely on its low-quality water supply — many with Aboriginal communities in the majority — were devastated.

On the New South Wales south coast, bushfires ravaged vast landscapes and townships. People lost their loved ones and livelihood.

Scenes of fear-struck residents seeking refuge on the land's edge made for distressing viewing from hundreds of kilometres away. In the city our bodies felt slow and heavy under months of smoke-filled skies and on the beaches ash particles blackened the water's edge and charred tree trunks bumped their way to shore.

The fire's aftermath continued to reveal itself: the dead carcasses of kangaroos and wallabies strung up on the wire fences they would normally so deftly navigate, their burnt bodies littering bitumen roads, and koalas the forest floors.

Over that summer, I kept coming back to earlier events on the Gomeroi grasslands country of north western New South Wales. The 'killing times' in the mid 1800s saw widespread massacres of Gomeroi people. In the 1838 Myall Creek massacre, bodies were piled together and burnt to conceal the crime. Earlier that same year, at Slaughterhouse Creek on the Gwydir river, 15 armed stockmen launched a dawn attack on a sleeping Aboriginal clan. They killed about 300 men, women and children. When I watched those news stories about the fires, my mind flicked between the images of dead kangaroos and koalas and my relations of some five or six generations back.

I wasn't alone in feeling the present haunted by the past. The drought and bushfires sparked conversations about how we approach land management and what we can learn from the many thousands of years of occupation before intensive industry and extraction rendered such destruction.

While Indigenous fire management has captured the public imagination, perhaps something more transformative is needed. Here I gather examples of the impact the climate crisis is having on Aboriginal lives, and some innovative responses.

In mid 2019, I visited the far western New South Wales town of Wilcannia on the Darling River. First colonised by merino and once known as the 'Queen of the desert', it was a boom town for a few generations of settlers. The local Keewong mob talk about 'before sheep' and 'after sheep'. But those images of jostling paddle steamers laden with wool bales heading for South Australia and the global market contrasted starkly with the bone dry, withering cavern before me.

For Barkandji people the river, or barka, is *mother*. This river, the equivalent of several stories deep, has supported their people for thousands of generations, the last five or so alongside Europeans. But no longer. Everything is dead. Freshwater mussels the size of your outstretched hand have withered in their shell, weeds cover parts of the riverbed, and fragments of glass from the colonial heyday flash under the belting sun.

At the top end of the river system, Aboriginal communities despair at the state of the river and its impact on their health, recreation and *future* on their country. The drought and climate change are part of colonisation's ongoing threat to their survival on country.

In 2018 and 2019 Barkandji people held three rallies that briefly blocked the Barrier Highway that travels through Wilcannia to Adelaide. By mid-2019 they were despairing as they watched the water getting lower and lower. But their campaign and concern for the river goes back decades (if not to 1850).

The mass fish kills in late January 2019 downstream at Menindee Lakes had brought the horror to a national audience. Seeing cod fish, the 'old men of the river', cradled in the arms of grieving farmers reverberated with a concerned public. For Barkandji people this underscored their powerlessness in the debate over their river.

Barkandji man and Wilcannia Local Aboriginal Land Council member Kevin Cattermole explains the effect of the barka's health on Aboriginal lives: 'everybody's got nowhere to go, they've got nothing to do ... now it's just dead. It's lifeless.'

Michael Kennedy, Chair of Wilcannia LALC, also details the non-human impact: 'everything's dying with it ... The fish, the mussels the yabbies; the bird life isn't here anymore like it used to be. You hear a few birds chirping now but that's nothing compared to what it used to be.'

Beyond the physical devastation is the impact on Aboriginal stories of place, Cattermole says: 'It'll die out. It'll die. There will be no stories for the kids. All they'll be hearing is how the white people destroyed our culture, our way of life, our self-being. There will be nothing for them. They won't be able to pass stories on because they won't have nothing to tell about the river. What are we gonna leave our kids? They're not gonna see what we saw.'

OPPOSITE: An Aboriginal flag planted on the dry riverbed of the Darling River at Wilcannia, 2019, photo by John Janson-Moore

Barkindji elder Badger Bates, a leading spokesperson for the barka, also raised concern for the future of his people. During an interview he pointed to his niece in the audience and shared his fear at the loss of her totem, the bony bream. It was the end of generations of swimming, jumping from the bridge, kids cooeeeing, and a regular diet of hand caught cod and yella-belly at the weir. Rain has brought some respite, but for how long is uncertain.

Their survival on country, and all of our survival on this ancient land, calls for a radical reconceptualisation of country and how we manage its resources.

Potawatomi man Kyle Whyte, a professor of philosophy at Michigan State University, argues that Indigenous peoples are confronting climate change having already passed through environmental and climate crises induced by colonial violence. He describes the productive dialogue between descendants and ancestors as they walk alongside each other in the present.

Across New South Wales are endless examples of connection and reconnection by Aboriginal people and their communities across past and present generations. The idea finds some resonance in Noel Pearson's 'Declaration for Australia', where he joins the 'three stories that make Australia': the ancient Indigenous heritage which is its foundation, the British institutions built upon it, and the 'adorning gift' of multicultural migration. It also finds expression in the Uluru Statement from the Heart's call for all Australians to 'walk with us'.

An example can be seen in the recent 'handover' of the Blacktown Native Institute site negotiated by the Darug people of western Sydney. On Richmond Road in Blacktown the Native Institute or 'Institution' operated as a school for Aboriginal children from 1823 to 1833. For many years the site languished behind a cyclone fence without signage, until almost 200 years later when descendants of the schoolchildren identifying as Darug held a tremendous ceremony to celebrate its return. The handover of the site has allowed them to walk in their ancestors' footsteps and restore dignity to their world.

A similar process has been underway in the south western corner of New South Wales, where traditional owners and scientists have collaborated in an effort to bring back the yunghadu or malleefowl. This approach

to species regeneration and habitat restoration saw traditional owners host visitors to country to celebrate the yunghadu with an overnight dance and song reminiscent of a corroboree ceremony. The aim is to forge a close relationship with and respect for the yunghadu's country to create an environment for the bird to return.

Murrawarri man Fred Hooper made a similar argument in relation to his country, which covers north western New South Wales and south west Queensland. He led research to support the adoption of 'cultural flows' as a water allocation priority in the Murray-Darling river system as a means of restoring the Murrawarri society and economy on the upper Darling and its spiritual, cultural, environmental values.

The local Gooraman swamp — a significant creation site highlighted in Hooper's research — needs water not just to support thousands of birds, but also for the mundaguddah, or rainbow serpent, that journeys across Murrawarri land linking a series of waterholes. Extreme droughts and water extraction have risked connections between landscapes and the ability to talk to ancestors.

Continuing the spirit in which Aboriginal people approached the climate crisis for many years, I suggest the gifting to all Australian children, subject to local Aboriginal protocol and decisions, of a 'totem' at birth. Such a gift might serve to deepen connection to country and transform relations with environment and our ancient past and present. The giving of totems — like the now familiar practice of welcome to or acknowledgement of country, which adapts the longstanding practice of seeking permission to move into another's country — could help children maintain a sense of their place in relation to one another and to the animal and plant world and with the deep past.

If the totem of the bony bream highlights its loss as a risk to the lives of all river people, might other totems also inspire us to smell, taste and feel country, to know the pleasure of being in country, and to take responsibility for country in the past and present?

Professor Heidi Norman is a Gomeroi woman and a leading researcher in Australian Aboriginal political history at the University of Technology Sydney.

Centre: Yunghadu ceremony, photo by Mal Ridges

Below: Yunghadu (malleefowl), photo by Craig Allen

OPPOSITE: Darug handover ceremony of Blacktown Native Institute site, 2018, photo by Jennifer Newman

PROBATE

WORDS Tony Birch

Stan didn't look good at all. I could see him in the garden, through a window. Hunched forward, sucking on a cigarette, mistaking it for a sign of life. He was also mumbling to himself; another lifelong habit of his. I signed the visitor's books, spoke to the manager and stood watching him. The thought of turning around and leaving the nursing home without speaking to him was hard to shake. Stan had always been one for nostalgia. Right now, I thought, he was most likely reminiscing, remembering his days as a street runner, junior scammer and budding career criminal. He also loved to recall ventures of his life as a robber. The big hauls he'd pulled, the petrified bank tellers he'd terrorised, and the value of a side-by-side double-barrel shotgun as opposed to an over and under. If memory is selective, Stan's had always been tellingly so. He neglected the tales of his treatment of women and family, and the occasional whisper in a detective's ear to ensure he held onto the keys to the city.

I knocked on the glass sliding door. Stan twitched nervously, possibly thinking an old adversary had come to pay him an unwelcome visit. I opened the door and stepped into the garden. He looked particularly frail. Sunken cheeks and an uncontrollable shake in one hand. He'd obviously dropped weight. The jagged scar on his right cheek had changed colour. Blood pink, it looked like a recent war wound, rather than a 30-year-old battle scar. If Stan lifted his shirt his torso would display a life of violence, including a near death experience.

'You came?' he said, without looking at me. 'Wasn't sure you'd turn up.'

'The message said it was urgent, Stan. I thought you must be on your way out.'

'Really?' He seemed genuinely puzzled. 'All I said was to ask if you could come. There was no urgency.'

Stan had always been a man of few words, which was an asset, as I'd never enjoyed talking to him. I didn't see any need for a cosy chat now.

'So, what do you want? You must have asked me here for something.'

'I'm dying,' he said. 'Soon.'

The word registered, but carried no impact with me. 'I guess it is urgent then. What have you got?'

'Doesn't matter what it is,' he said. 'It's the end. That's why I asked you here.'

He spoke with no more interest in his death than I had. Stan wouldn't fear death, I was certain of that. What puzzled me was I had no idea why he'd feel a need to ask that I attend the nursing home. I hadn't seen him in many years and we didn't exchange Christmas cards. Stan had never been one to travel lightly. Whatever the reason I was standing in the garden with him, it would come with baggage.

'You wanna sit?' he said.

Being physically close to Stan had always been an exercise in discomfort. 'I'm good,' I said.

'The last visit by the doc here, he said maybe a month or two, probably less.'

He paused. I wondered if he was waiting for a comment from me. Or a show of sympathy, which would have been so out of character, I couldn't imagine it.

OPPOSITE: Illustration by Rosie Handley

'The very next day some young bugger of a lawyer come by. Public Advocate Office or something. Says I need to get my affairs in order. Starting with a discussion about a funeral.'

If Stan was about to ask me to preside over his coffin, he had to be senile. He knew how I felt about him, and that nothing would change with his looming demise. 'Funeral?' I asked.

'Well, not as such,' he said. 'There'd be no one there to cry over me, would there?. Maybe one or two to spit on the coffin, at best. No, I'm having no funeral. I said the university could have me, you know, cut me up. The lawyer fella said that's not on. They have an oversupply.' He coughed furiously and his battered face turned purple. 'So, I need you to help.'

I had no intention of looking after Stan's affairs. 'Why me?'

'Because there's no one else,' he roared, briefly introducing the fearful menace of old. 'All you need do is be certain that the lunatics that run this place know how follow my instructions. That's all you need to do.'

'And what are they, your instructions?' I said.

'After I'm dead, I've nominated a funeral company and paid everything up front. They pick me up, no coffin, nothing, they burn me, give the ashes to you and you get rid of them however you want.'

I didn't want to take on such a responsibility for Stan, dead or alive. 'Can't they, the funeral home get rid of you, your ashes? You don't need me for this, Stan.'

'I tried that.' Stan appeared as frustrated as I was. 'They don't like that. It gets complicated. They won't dispose of me without tracking down living relatives, they said. It's messy. The fella said I could be stuck sitting on a shelf for years. I don't want that.' He looked at me and his eyes almost softened. 'It's not much. All you need do is pick the ashes up. Throw them in a bin as soon as you leave the joint, if you like. Or flush me down the toilet. I don't care what you do.'

I sensed that maybe he did care. 'If you're not bothered either way, Stan, why don't you just sit on that shelf? You might have company for a change.'

He hesitated before answering, and when he did, he spoke in a whisper. 'Because I don't want them thinking no one, not a soul wanted me.'

Shit, I thought. Even the homicidal Stanley Rook could be beaten down by sentimentality.

'Will you do it?' he asked.

While I wasn't keen to carry out his orders, there seemed no harm in telling him I'd agree to his wishes. If I changed my mind, Stan would never know and there'd be no harm done.

'Sure. I'll do it. So, what would you prefer, the bin or the toilet bowl?'

'I don't care. Whatever is easiest for you. I reckon you'd like to piss on my remains. Do that if you like.'

'There'd be a few others interested in that,' I smiled. 'Maybe I could arrange a wake and we'll all piss on you.'

'Whatever you want,' he said. 'It will be your party, not mine.'

A nursing sister appeared at the doorway. 'You will need to come in soon, Mr Rook. The wind has picked up. We don't want you catching a cold.'

'I've got throat cancer,' he barked at her. 'What do I care if I end up with a cold. Leave me alone, woman.'

'I see you're still polite with the ladies,' I said.

He looked down at the hands he'd done so much damage with. 'How's your mother?' he asked. 'Is she still alive?'

I didn't want to get in a conversation with Stan about my mother. 'She's good,' I said.

'Did she ever re-marry?'

'Hey, Stan, drop it. She wouldn't want me talking to you about her. She doesn't even know I'm here.'

'Will you tell her?' he asked.

'That I visited you? No.'

'I mean, will you tell her after I'm gone, that I've died?'

I thought for just a moment that I should let him off the hook, but I couldn't do it. 'Of course, I'll tell her. She might be old, Stan, but she's entitled to some joy in her life.'

Stan actually laughed. 'I like that. She's entitled to a laugh. I was a bastard of a husband and a father.'

I wasn't about to disagree with him and said nothing. He slowly got to his feet. 'Look at you,' he said.

'What's that mean?'

He placed a hand on my shoulder. I froze. 'When you were a kid, you were soft. Too soft. I was ashamed of you. Do you know that?'

'Oh, I know it. I still have the scars to show for your shame.' My voice rose. 'Would you like to see them, Stan?

He patted my shoulder several times. 'Take it easy. I was going to say, you've changed. You have presence, son. In the old days, running with me, you'd have made a decent robber. You'd need training, of course. You'd put the fear into people.'

One of Stan's brothers, Des, almost as menacing as him, had come snooping around our place one day when Stan was away doing three years. Mum said that Stan would have sent Des to check up on her, to make sure she didn't have a man around the house. Des had lifted my chin and said, 'You're the spitting image of your father.' My mother looked at Des with disgust and I dropped my head in shame.

Fear was all that Stan knew. And he was good at it. One of the best. But Stan was a one-trick pony. He possessed no other skill in life, which was why he was now sitting in a garden, in a nursing home, soon to die alone.

'You better go,' he said. 'We have dinner here at five and then it's off to our rooms. It's worse in here than the being in the nick. I did H Division in the old days. It had nothing on this joint. Get going.'

I looked at Stan for the final time. 'I'll see you then.'

'No, you won't. Never again.'

Three weeks later, Stan was dead. I was walking near the sea when my phone rang. The nursing sister asked if I'd like to visit the Home and spend time with my father's body before he was collected by the funeral home responsible for the cremation.

'I'm sure that you would enjoy some contemplative time and perhaps prayer with your father,' she offered.

'No, I don't need to do that. Thank you,' I said. 'I'm done with contemplation.'

I put the phone away and continued my walk. I stopped for a moment, closed my eyes and listened to the waves rolling in and sliding out; a feat of predictability and calmness I could enjoy for the first time in my life.

Two weeks later a parcel arrived in the mail, the size of half a house brick. It weighed more than I would have expected. I unwrapped the parcel. Inside was a sealed box, secured with gaffer tape. A label on the box read, 'Stanley James Rook — Remains'. An accompanying letter explained that the ashes of my father were now mine, and that if I wished to dispose of them I needed to do so responsibly, adding that some municipalities do not permit the disposal of human remains within their administrative jurisdiction. I sat the box on the kitchen bench and left it there for the afternoon and into the evening while I cooked my dinner. I went to bed that night without touching the box again. In the morning, it was where I'd left it. I'd irrationally thought that it might simply vanish, relieving me of responsibility.

Illustration by Rosie Handley

I had let my mother know that Stan was dead, in a phone call. She said very little and expressed neither joy or sadness. For several weeks, I moved my father around the house. On the mantel on the lounge, in a cupboard drawer, on the balcony next to a potted fern. When my mother came for lunch about a month later, Stan's ashes were sitting on a bookshelf. She noticed the box as soon as she came into the house. She picked up and shook it.

'He rattles,' she said and put him back down. 'What are you going to do? Get an urn, I suppose?'

That wasn't my intention. 'No, mum. I'm going to get rid of them. I just haven't got around to doing it.'

'Get rid of them?' She was visibly shocked at the idea.

'Yeah. I talked about it with him. He said he didn't care what happened after he was dead.'

'You spoke to him? Your father?'

I told her about the visit to the nursing home in the weeks before his death. If she was angry at all, it didn't show. 'You can't do that,' she said.

'I can't what?'

'Get rid of your father's ashes. Dispose of him.'

'Why can't I?

'Because he's your father. Blood. It would be wrong to do so.'

I picked up the box and offered it to her. 'You can have him, if you like.'

'It's not for me to have him. But you need to. Like I said. Blood. You get rid of him now, there'll be a day when you regret it.'

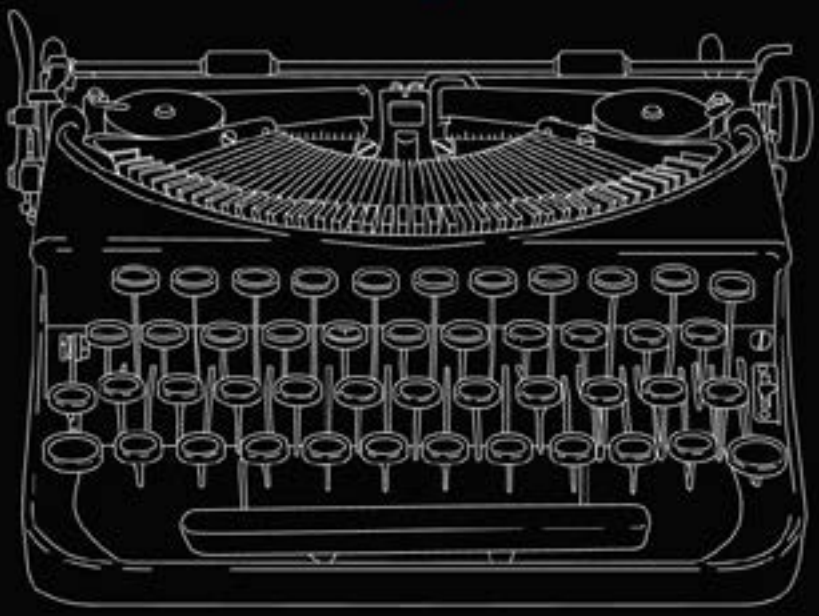
'I don't think so, mum.'

'Think what you like. I'm your mother and I know.'

She left soon after lunch, mildly unhappy with me. I sat on the couch and looked across the room at Stan, annoyed that he'd come back into our lives, even in death. I vowed that the next morning I would get rid of him. When my mother visited next, she headed straight for the bookshelf, picked up the box and shook it. She seemed pleased to again hear the rattle of Stan's remains. We sat, quietly eating lunch. She bit into a ham and pickle sandwich on wholemeal bread. Her favourite. I looked across the room and spotted the opened packet of kitty-litter sitting on the bottom shelf of the bookcase.

Dr Tony Birch is a well known author, academic and activist. His most recent novel, *The White Girl*, won the Indigenous Writers' Prize of the 2020 NSW Premier's Literary Awards and was shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Literary Award.

The Diary Files



THE LIBRARY'S ONLINE DIARY PRESERVES EVERYDAY EXPERIENCES OF AUSTRALIANS DURING THE PANDEMIC.

WORDS Richard Neville

It's weird to know I've been living through a major part of modern history, and I've been coping through memes and Tiktok videos.
— Sophie, 23, Cairns, 4 May 2020

A multitude of clichés has been spawned by Covid-19 as we try to capture its impact on our cultural, economic and social worlds. We recognise its unequal impact across society, we realise that essential workers are true heroes, and we reclassify bedrooms and kitchen tables as workspaces.

'The dining table has become my desk: laptop stand, keyboard, mouse ...' writes Julia Mitchelmore of Centennial Park, 'Adaptation is the theme of our lives now spent in this too-expensive, bathroom-through-the-bedroom, 25m-squared apartment which we chose for its proximity to the offices we no longer attend.'

For the Library, Covid-19 presents the important challenge of recording the experiences of Australians across the span of the pandemic. While social media, newspapers, websites, ephemera and blogs all document its impact, what is often missed are the personal stories of people living on the frontline.

During the 2019 centenary commemorations for the Spanish flu, it was noted how few private records had survived. While the similarities with how the current pandemic has been managed are striking — social distancing, lockdowns, masks, the closure of public facilities including the State Library — little has survived to document experiences of individuals.

'But I intend to find a way to preserve [my writing] project in some form,' writes Mike Betts of Albury, 'so that future generations of my family can see what I experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020. I just wish my grandparents had done the same during the Spanish flu in 1919.'

On 4 May 2020 the Library launched The Diary Files, an online diary developed by our DX Lab to which all Australians are invited to contribute. The site provides a template, with a 300-word limit, and lets people add as many entries as they like. So far there more than 1000.

Like the photographs tagged through the Library's Instagram project #NSWathome, contributions to The Diary Files are intended to be preserved permanently.

For many people, the beginning of the lockdown was a period of severe anxiety, with catastrophic job losses and industry collapses compounded by the uncertainty of the progress of the pandemic.

'The fear of getting Covid-19 was very real and in the first few weeks,' writes Stella of Ashfield. 'Upon waking in the morning I would try to remind myself that I am not in fact in a nightmare but this is real life. Forced isolation, no freedom, no planning for the future, dreams on hold and as of 8 May, no job. I was laid off the day before Easter Friday. I felt shattered as it gave me purpose and also had colleagues I loved working with.'

But Stella found a silver lining in her isolation:

> Life in the slow lane is so rewarding. No one overtaking you, no plans, no dramas ... my worst fear was to be trapped in my 50 square metre, cold, dungeony shoebox apartment in the Inner West. Now I fear going back to the usual. Afterall, I have realised I was trapped inside with my favourite people in the world, and I have really enjoyed being with them.

Debbie of Mt Druitt also records the positives:

> The longer 'this virus' goes on, the more I am tired of it and wish it would end ... I'm especially thankful for family and friends and that I live in Australia — we are so fortunate. I'm especially thankful for time to stop, be still, enjoy new things but also enjoy more of what I already had but didn't fully appreciate.

For some, like Ashfield's Sandeep Kushmar Mishra, Covid-19 has been particularly tough. 'When I came to Australia in 2017 with dream to earn my fortune and to change my 30 years history of misery, misfortune and failure,' he writes, 'I was more hopeful than ever before ... I haven't seen [my family] for almost 3 years ... I am working in food industry where almost 200 hundred people work without any social distancing ... when I GO TO JOB IT FEEL LIKE I'M GOING ON A BATTLEFIELD AND MIGHT NOT RETURN BACK.'

Schoolchildren have been some of the most assiduous diarists, often encouraged by their teachers. Kaitlyn, in year 11, described these 'interesting times' as a 'living a history lesson'.

Meanwhile, reviews of distance learning have been mixed. 'Online learning was so hard,' writes 12-year-old Paris. 'My school didn't end up doing Zoom calls, and my parents were working full time so I had no one to assist me. I was receiving 35 emails a day ... having new things posted on Compass 24/7 ... and things on Google classroom posted and expected to be handed in by the next day were so hard.'

Some turned, inevitably, to social media, like Bella, also 12, who writes that her 'screen time hasn't been so high ever before. I had a little routine going on when I didn't have online school, TikTok then Netflix next to Instagram, now to facetiming friends for a while and then the cycle would just keep going.'

I have learnt many things from this experience,' writes Sophie, who is 13. 'One of them is to not to take things for granted ... Because out of nowhere a virus might appear.'

For a 15-year-old student incarcerated at Cobham Youth Justice Centre in western Sydney, Zoom was a challenge. Not only did he feel his family was too old to use it, he didn't think it would help his case when he couldn't go to court because of Covid-19. 'I think I have a better chance

of getting out when I am in front of the Judge,' he writes on The Diary Files. But he sees contributing to the site as a huge achievement: 'I never been able to read or write it only took me 2 month to read and write ... I learnt how to read and write in lock up and now I love to write.'

Teachers both welcomed and worried about the eventual return to the classroom. 'The atmosphere in the staffroom is tense,' writes Monica of Croydon. 'People dance around each other awkwardly to keep distance ... and recoil from one another when they both reach for the fridge door at the same time. "No, you go ahead – make yourself a coffee first." Oh God, they've picked up the milk bottle. How am I going to sanitise it without offending them? Maybe I'll just have a black coffee, or none at all.'

For an anonymous writer, in early May, there was anxiety about returning to a job as a school careers counsellor, working with frightened children when they were frightened themselves. There was also personal frustration: 'My partner and I are now planning our wedding for a third time, after being affected by both the bushfires and Covid-19 ...'

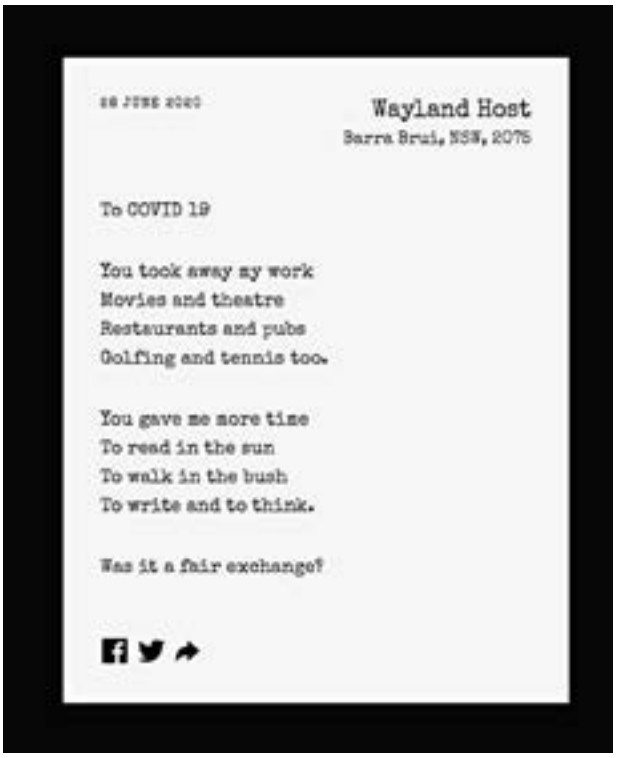
While The Diary Files offer a fascinating snapshot of pandemic life, it's not definitive. Many voices are missing, and we're trying to fill the gaps with other means of collecting such as recording oral histories and harvesting social media.

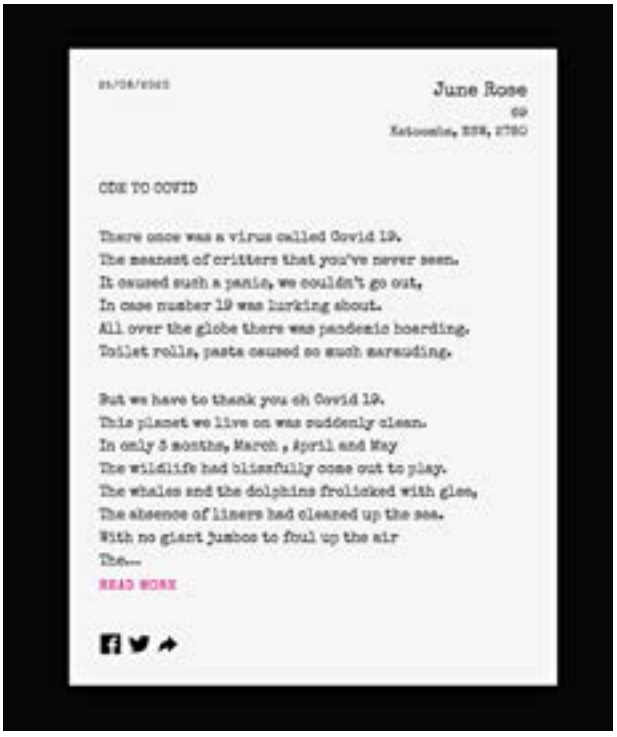
The contributing writers from across Australia connect with each other through common experiences and attitudes. Ambivalence about the pandemic is pervasive: many feel guilty for thriving, for enjoying the sudden reduction in pace of contemporary life, the feeling that the treadmill had slowed. Others miss the connections and intimacy.

'The first three weeks of this were great. Plenty of time to write and think about my place in the world,' writes 23 year-old James. But, ultimately, he concludes like many Diary Files contributors, 'I'm ready to go back to the way it was. I've learnt a lot about myself. And I've learnt the outside world is a source of energy for even the most introverted of us.'

Richard Neville, Mitchell Librarian & Director, Engagement

dxlab.sl.nsw.gov.au/diary-files





Reflecting on KAMAY

WORDS & PHOTOS Joy Lai

Capturing the contested landscape for our exhibition *Eight Days in Kamay* was eye-opening for a Library photographer.

'Hey are you OK to schedule a couple of days' shoot at Kamay National Park next week?', asked Jennifer, our creative producer. 'We're working on an exhibition telling the story of Cook's landing.'

'Yep, sure,' was my unblinking reply. I'd heard that the 250th anniversary of Cook's arrival in Botany Bay (Kamay) was coming up, but only later did I find out that this exhibition was to be a very different re-telling of the 250-year-old 'discovery'. Refreshingly, it would shine a light from the Gweagal perspective, exploring how the landing of the *Endeavour*'s crew in 1770 changed the fate of Aboriginal people forever.

A week after Jennifer's request we set out well before dawn. I was determined to be in position at the right time to capture an immersive panorama. The view from Cape Solander Lookout at first light would serve as the nine-metre gateway to our exhibition, *Eight Days in Kamay*.

Like many Sydneysiders, I'd never visited Kamay National Park in Kurnell before. The approach to the park took us through Sydney's southern suburbia, tracing the bones of an old tramline, past superstores and

Majestic views from Cape Solander

OPPOSITE: Beautiful decay, bracken fern, Kamay National Park

industrial parks, an alley of car yards and kebab kiosks. Cook was heralded on our route by the names of streets, landmarks, and two high schools. Meanwhile, I pondered the ever-present legacy of his crew's eight-day expedition versus the everyday visibility of a 65,000-year-old culture.

Our early start was rewarded with an iconic summer sunrise, clear shards of light, white cockatoos swooping, circling, feathers glinting against blue skies. Waves crashed many metres below, vast tumbles of rock appearing to have been recently placed by an artist's hand.

My panorama, successfully captured, was unable to do this vista justice. No amount of camera technology could capture its entirety, but I hoped it would encourage others to visit and experience the majesty first-hand.

Left: Sea urchins are good eating according to Uncle Shayne

Right: Sarsaparilla leaf grows abundant and wild, Kamay National Park

As the sun continued its speedy ascent, I set about photographing details that would form each section of the exhibition. My brain whirred in overdrive, juggling the grandiose and the granular detail. The hypnotic pulse of water sparkling. Shell fragments on the surface of an ancient midden. Lace-edged leaves creeping along a sandstone fracture. Light raking across an expansive cliff face. Ominous shadows of infinite depth. Waves pounding. Universal. Timeless.

I thought about my little home in Sydney and how attuned I've become to the fleeting light of seasons. I reflected on the original keepers of this vast place, in tune with each nuance of their environment, and how their complex knowledge systems went unrecognised when Cook claimed this shoreline.

I imagined the *Endeavour* growing on the horizon with its ghostly sails of billowing pantaloons, while Gweagal people (a clan of the Dharawal nation) along the coast signalled its arrival in coded smoke. The cockatoos (nabi) would've witnessed this, too.

'We discovered them before they even set foot on the land!' Uncle Shayne exclaimed later that day. 'Aboriginal people knew they were on their way, they were waiting for them, they were prepared ... people say they discovered us when it was the other way round.'

Dr Shayne Williams, senior Gweagal clan knowledge holder and educator, didn't fit my typical view of an 'Uncle'. Tea loving, Adidas wearing, his serious face broke into an easy smile. We learned what life was like on Country before the settlers' impact and well before the incongruous obelisk bearing Cook's name was planted on the shore of Kamay.

Before Cook, the soil was fertile and many fish filled the waters, including stingray (daringyan). The newcomers even called this place 'Stingray Bay' before its enduring name of Botany Bay was inked onto colonial maps.

We learned about banksia (kuritjah) pods, which Uncle Shayne called 'Barbeque beads — forget Bunnings!' He also showed us sarsaparilla (warraburra) leaves. When steeped in warm water, they became a soothing tea for both white and Aboriginal folk. Known as a cure-all treatment, warraburra relieved coughs, colds, flu, stomach cramps and other ailments.

Clusters of cabbage tree palms (dharawal) remain at Kamay today. They were planted purposefully by Gweagal ancestors, serving as food, medicine, shelter and building material. They're the spiritual totem for all clan groups who belong to and speak Dharawal. They also play an important role in transcendence: a bridge for Aboriginal spirits, a highway to the afterlife.

We spent many hours, over several days, at Kamay National Park. The abundance of natural beauty combined with the ever-present drone of industry remains a constant tension, an obvious result of that pivotal day in 1770. I came to appreciate the contrasts and remain fascinated with its complexity.

Kamay is a place for new ways of seeing, and for seeing new ways. Inspired by Uncle Shayne, and cheered on by the cockatoos, I hope that my images will help us explore new perspectives together.

Joy Lai, Imaging Specialist, Digitisation & Imaging

***Eight Days in Kamay*, a free exhibition online and in the Library's galleries until 28 February**

First light, looking to the air vents at Potter Point sewage outlet (detail)

Elise Edmonds and Sabrina Organo recording *The Gatherings Order* podcast, Quarantine Station cemetery, North Head, photo by Joy Lai

The gatherings ORDER

WORDS Elise Edmonds

A new podcast series explores the last great influenza pandemic in 1919.

It's a Thursday morning in late March 2020 and Sydney is shutting down. On a grey, muggy day, I'm slowly descending a steep road at the historic Quarantine Station with my colleague Sabrina Organo.

Tucked away just inside North Head, the station has a spectacular view of coastal Sydney — from the CBD towers in the south, to the dense bushland of Middle Head and unfolding suburbia. Ferries are still sailing to and from the city, though they're mostly empty. Many workers have begun to work from home, while others have lost their jobs. We're all trying to adapt to self-isolation.

Sabrina and I are still in that early rush of adrenalin and adjustment. On our last day at the Library, we stuffed several backpacks full of sound-recording equipment and mics in case we wouldn't be able to step outside our homes. Our intention is to document our self-isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic, and to research and record a podcast series about the last great influenza pandemic that hit Australia in early 1919.

As we walk down the road towards Quarantine Beach (keeping the requisite distance apart), it feels great to be outdoors in the fresh air, to breathe in the eucalypts and to hear water lapping on the sand — a haven of calm and remoteness, despite being so close to metropolitan Sydney.

It's just a day after the NSW government issued two public health orders: the COVID-19 Self-Isolation Order, requiring that a person diagnosed with the disease must self-isolate; and the COVID-19 Gatherings Order, directing the closure of all places of public gathering including 'food courts, spas, beauty salons, massage parlours, tattoo parlours, betting agencies, sex services premises, strip clubs, outdoor play areas, public swimming pools, caravan parks, libraries, museums, galleries, community facilities, hairdressers, gyms', and the extraordinary curtailing of wedding and funeral attendance. The title struck us as peculiarly dystopian: The Gatherings Order. It seemed like a good name for a podcast.

We discuss how we feel about the closures as we walk through the bush to look at some engravings on the sandstone rocks that overhang the beaches and inlets.

The Quarantine Station is a good place to begin a conversation about disease, pandemics, self-isolation and super-spreaders. It was here in 1835 that the first quarantined ship, the *Canton*, was moored after a smallpox outbreak on board.

An account in the Library's collection, written by 16-year-old John Dawson, tells of travelling with family members to Australia on the *Canton*. His little sisters contracted smallpox and the immigrant family spent their first days in the country camping at North Head, quarantined away from the town.

While he was there, John engraved his name into the soft sandstone rock: '[J]. Dawson landed here to perform Quarantine'. The first European to leave his markings at this spot, he unwittingly started a tradition. Wave after wave of quarantined passengers and crew have inscribed their names — or elaboratively carved and painted their ship's and crew's names — into the rocks all over North Head.

Delving into the history of quarantine and disease outbreaks over the past century, we can't help but compare those histories to the present chaos unfolding in the news. As infections are being reported aboard the *Ruby Princess* and *Diamond Princess*, we are researching the cross-border transmission of contagious diseases in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, often via ships.

The 1918–19 'Spanish flu', or pneumonic influenza, was the last great global pandemic, and the social responses to that virus resemble contemporary responses to Covid-19. Just over a century after the influenza pandemic arrived in Sydney in January 1919, Australia's first Covid-19 patients were identified, in late January 2020. Both viruses attack the respiratory system, with symptoms including fever, coughing, and shortness of breath. Both are highly contagious, the only way to contain them being isolation and quarantine. No vaccine was found to protect against the 1918–19 virus.

The 2020 NSW government's orders mirrored the ones issued in late January 1919. When the Library closed in 1919 for some 10 weeks, it's unlikely that many staff were able to work from home. But in 2020, we have all adapted and have been delivering a variety of services online.

Working remotely, Sabrina and I plan, research and write podcast scripts, seek out experts and interview them using online platforms. Sabrina records, edits and produces the episodes, and I narrate them.

Our subject experts are generous and in demand, fielding many media interviews about the nature of pandemics. Among them are former Library fellow Dr Peter Hobbins — who shared fascinating medical history insights in our previous series, *The Burial Files* — and Dr Kirsty Short, senior lecturer at the University of Queensland, an expert in infection, immunity and pandemic preparedness.

Other experts help us understand how scientists, politicians, the economy and NSW society responded to the influenza pandemic. We examine how Aboriginal communities in NSW were particularly hard hit by the 1919 influenza pandemic, and are delighted to have Professor John Maynard from the University of Newcastle provide the broader context for Aboriginal people living in NSW during those early decades of the twentieth century.

In between, we reflect on our day-to-day experiences in lockdown, and how our community and our state are dealing with restrictions and a transformed way of living. We ask how our responses to Covid-19 compare to those of our 1919 forebears? Have we learnt anything new in how to respond to pandemics?

The Library's collections reveal much about the 1918–19 influenza pandemic, beginning with the first Australians to suffer from the virus in mid-1918, and those who treated them. Vivid descriptions of the symptoms can be found in World War I diaries, along with the soldiers' colloquial name for it: 'the dog's disease'. This is how Australian nurse

'J Dawson' engraving, North Head, courtesy Dr Peter Hobbins

OPPOSITE: Annie Egan's grave, Quarantine Station cemetery, photo by Joy Lai

Anne Donnell, who treated Australian patients in an English hospital, described it:

> It's a terrible flu. The worst I have come in contact with. It starts with an ordinary cold — and if neglected some turn into a general aching with severe pains in the small of the back and at the back of the head — also great tenderness over the balls of the eyes ... Then almost without warning an acute Pneumonia sets in — which makes it hard to combat. We lost one of the dearest boys that way & so suddenly, Sargent Bradford from Murray Bridge.

Diary quotes, voiced by actors in remote recording studios, are woven through the episodes. Despite the distance, our actors love interpreting these voices from a century ago and are quick to recognise the many parallels between today and 1919, such as the spread of Covid-19 on ships and the frustrations with quarantine.

Recording podcasts in an empty library is eerie, but easy. The traffic on Macquarie Street is almost non-existent and there are no extraneous noises inside the Library. Empty rooms are readily found, and stack areas are almost entirely devoid of staff. Yet when the Library slowly begins to reopen, we are there to document new procedures and the 'new normal' in the reading rooms.

As the number of cases begin to rise again in July and Melburnians go into stage 4 lockdown, Australia has still managed to keep the death rate low, compared to many other countries. The influenza pandemic of 1918–19 took around 15,000 lives across the country.

Some of those victims lie amid wildflowers, grass trees and banksias in the third quarantine cemetery at the crest of a hill at North Head. We enter the open gate and see Annie Egan's grave just inside, a large marble cross marking her place of rest. Sister Egan had been assigned to her first nursing post at the Quarantine Station after completing her training. Tragically, like many of her fellow medical professionals, she contracted the virus and died at North Head in December 1918 at the age of 27. At her burial, wreaths of wildflowers were placed on her grave and full military honours performed. Inscribed on her headstone: 'Her life was sacrificed to duty.'

Elise Edmonds, Senior Curator, Research & Discovery

The new podcast series, *The Gatherings Order*, is available from 5 September.

***Pandemic!* — a display of collection items from the influenza pandemic and new acquisitions documenting the impact of Covid-19 — is on Lower Ground 1 from 5 September 2020 as part of NSW History Week.**

IN DIFFICULT TIMES, AUSTRALIAN EXPATRIATE ARTIST GEORGE LAMBERT CHALLENGED HIMSELF TO PAINT A DISTORTED REFLECTION.

The Convex Mirror, c 1916,
by George Lambert, ML 1292

A fully rounded MASTERPIECE

WORDS Robert Holden

Although only 39 centimetres in diameter, George Lambert's painting *The Convex Mirror* asserts its place among the 300 artworks in the Library's *Paintings from the Collection* exhibition.

Given to the Library in 2012 as part of a bequest from the collector Helen Selle, there is no greater example of a mirror's inspiration in creating an Australian masterpiece. And the story behind its creation is itself a mirror of the emotional life of its painter, of the Lambert family and of their friends in Edwardian England.

The painting depicts a peephole view into an English country sitting room, captured in the reflection of a convex mirror. Such mirrors, uniquely, expand everything in the immediate foreground and then recede sharply into vertiginous space to produce an arresting, even mesmerising, effect.

The room in the painting was in Belwethers, the country home of Lambert's friends Arthur and Orovida Halford. As his wife, Amy, wrote in an account of 30 years of her family's often expatriate life, one of her fondest memories was of time spent with the Halfords and their extended family at Belwethers in Surrey.

Amy recalled an intimate friendship that began in 1901 after the newly-wed Lamberts arrived in London from Australia. As frequent guests at Belwethers, they met Mary, one of the three Halford daughters, and her husband, Sir Edmund Davis. Their immediate rapport with this pair of millionaire art collectors led to Lambert accepting their offer of an art studio at their London property Lansdowne House.

Orovida Halford died in December 1914, soon after the outbreak of the First World War, and the Davises inherited her country home. Six months later, the Lamberts' youngest son Constant, who was enrolled at a boarding school in Surrey, contracted a life-threatening illness. While they nursed him back to health, they stayed at Belwethers and were supported by their friends Mary and Edmund.

As a tribute to the Davises' sympathy and hospitality, Lambert painted *The Convex Mirror* some time in 1916. The established portrait artist took on the unusual and challenging form as a distraction from the ongoing conflict and from his son's near fatal illness.

Half the composition is taken up by the huge overhead beams that dominate the doll-sized figures below. Because the mirror distorts these beams out of alignment, it disturbs the solidity of the room itself and gives the painting an unsettling atmosphere. This effect, known as 'anamorphic distortion', seems to mirror Lambert's private anguish and his response to global turmoil.

Five people are being served tea by a maid. Edmund Davis stands at the window, while his wife, Mary, still in mourning black for her mother, is seated. Amy Lambert stands near the table, and Mary's sister Amy Halford sits closer to the foreground. The Lilliputian stature of these figures is dwarfed by the scale of the artist. His *trompe l'oeil* so effectively disrupts the boundary between our reality and the space occupied by the group at tea that his beckoning hand and eye contact with the viewer seem to usher us into the composition itself.

With his splayed fingers imitating the fan of the ceiling beams, Lambert seems as much the conjurer as the artist. It's as though he has summoned the others into being and is not merely a guest but the creator of this harmonious domestic scene.

In 1917 Lambert became an official war artist, and since that time his reputation has rested on heroic Anzac scenes and iconic Australian landscapes. But *The Convex Mirror* reminds us that earlier in this career he had more 'frivolous' interests. Lambert was immersed in London's high society as a portrait artist and a designer of costumes, posters and sketches for Chelsea Arts Club balls and other events. This phase of his career culminated in 1911 when he was the 'Master of Episodes' — overseeing the design of tableaux (episodes) depicting periods in Australian history — for a pageant at London's Imperial Institute to welcome Australian dignitaries to the coronation of Edward VII.

But what happened to *The Convex Mirror* after 1916? The painting was exhibited through the International Society of Sculptors, Painters & Gravers in London in early 1918 — a society that had become something of a mecca for Australian artists. It was then included in the society's 23rd Summer Exhibition (as *The Cottage*) in May 1918, where it was purchased by Sir Edmund Davis for £100 (almost £5000 today). In the same year, Davis bought the imposing Chilham Castle in Kent, where the painting hung among his renowned collection.

The following year, in March 1919, Davis lent the painting to the 7th exhibition held by the Society of Twenty-Five Painters. It was acclaimed as 'clever' and 'exquisite' in *Studio* magazine, while the *Observer*'s art critic declared that it achieved 'the precious minuteness of touch and perfect registration of values that one associates with the art of Vermeer of Delft'.

It was not until a decade later that any significant mention of the painting occurred when Lambert's death in 1930 occasioned numerous tributes.

Photograph of the Belwethers living room, featuring a convex mirror, *English Country Life* magazine, 19 July 1919

OPPOSITE: Viewing George Lambert's *The Convex Mirror*, 1916, in *Paintings from the Collection*, photo by Joy Lai

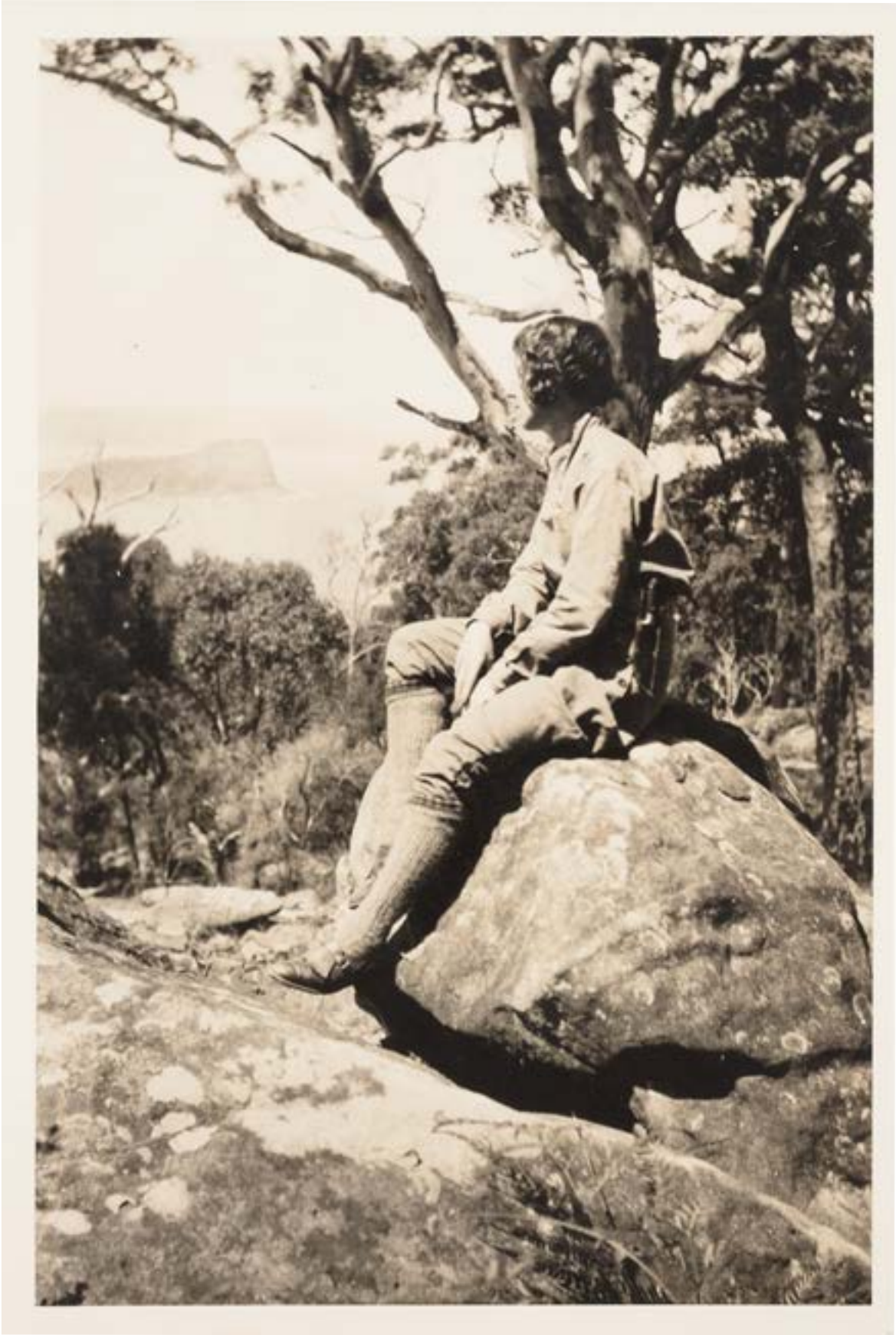
Few were more appreciative than Thea Proctor, who singled out *The Convex Mirror* in her heartfelt tribute.

In January 1933 Sir Edmund Davis again lent the painting to an exhibition — the Royal Academy's Winter Exhibition commemorating the work of 14 of its recently deceased members. Altogether, almost 900 distinguished works were on loan from private collections. Yet even among work by Victorian and Edwardian luminaries, Lambert's small painting stood out: the *Times*' art critic called it 'a miracle of accurate observation'. When the *Illustrated London News* devoted a full-page to selected works from the hundreds on display, this painting was among the reproductions.

Lambert's painting was displayed at the home of its Sydney owner, Helen Selle, for many years before it was bequeathed to the Library.

Painted during a fraught time in twentieth century history and in the artist's own life, *The Convex Mirror* can now be appreciated not only for its fine draughtsmanship but also for its wit, exuberance and theatricality. In Thea Proctor's words, it is 'a small thing' painted 'in a large manner'.

Robert Holden is the author of 38 books, the latest of which is his award-winning biography of May Gibbs, *More Than a Fairytale*. He was the Library's 2009 CH Currey Fellow.



Ella McFadyen gazing out at Lion Island in Broken Bay from Ku-ring-gai Chase at 'Warm Rock', 1930s, McFadyen papers, PXA1165/Box 7/521

WORDS Emily Gallagher

SINGING *with the wind*

Sydney writer and naturalist Ella McFadyen combined a love of nature, folklore and poetry.

With a bob-styled haircut, drill riding suit, knitted knee-hose and a hunting knife strapped firmly to her waist, Ella McFadyen cut a striking figure. A lifelong naturalist and energetic bushwalker, her outfit was well-worn. This was a woman who invited leaf-tailed geckos into her tent at night and could pin down a snake with her foot, before swiftly severing its head.

Softly spoken and sturdy in appearance, Ella was known for her firm convictions and lofty ideals. 'Ella McFadyen sings with the wind as she moves along', observed writer Zora Cross. The children's book reviewer Eve Pownall described her writing as 'zestful' with a 'talk-as-you go-manner' where the 'improbable seems the only possible thing'.

Ella's relationship with nature began during her childhood in Sydney. The second eldest of six, she grew up on a small property in Five Dock. Just beyond a paddock full of buttercups stood the local public school, but Ella's mother chose instead to home school her children. Troubled by 'ghosts inside the house', Ella often buried herself in books and poetry or escaped outdoors. She wandered out into the paddocks and gardens around the family home with her 'jolly little' camera or visited the museum to sketch birds.

Sometime after Ella turned 15, the McFadyens moved to Noonan's Point on Brisbane Water. It was there, despite the vocal disapproval of her mother, that Ella began to publish her verse. Within a few years she had emerged on the Sydney literary scene as a prolific and versatile writer, her name appearing alongside those of Zora Cross, Dorothea Mackellar, Nina Murdoch and other young talent. 'Her career will be worth watching,' wrote a reviewer of her first collection of verse, *Outland Born*, in 1911.

Publishing under her own name as well as an assortment of pen-names, Ella wrote art and craft articles, travelogues, children's stories, local history, literary criticism, essays, poetry and songs. Later she would emerge as a fierce manuscript reviewer for the publisher Angus & Robertson.

Some of Ella's poems had an echo of Kipling and the 'Old Country'. Others blended the traditions of the bush poets with those of English and Scottish balladists. She wrote with careful attention to melody, and her early poems were admired for their technical skill, imaginative imagery and use of Australian placenames. Recognising the lyric quality of Ella's verse, the Sydney critic and editor Bertram Stevens encouraged her to write romance. She did for a time, but soon returned to children's stories and nature writing.

From red octopuses to frogs, water beetles to fungi, no living thing was too small or strange for Ella. Much of her nature writing was infused with homely images. She sat under the 'the kindly Inn of the Banksia tree', basked in the 'Woy Woy lights', kept the company of 'Friend Crow, the black pirate of the bird world', and once had a marriage proposal from a mopoke owl. It was not uncommon for fairies and other fantastic creatures to appear in her verse. Like her brother Clifford, she was a keen collector of folklore and local history.

Together with her poetic sensibilities, Ella's hawk-like attention to detail enabled her to turn the most casual observations into captivating storytelling. This talent also contributed to her

'Daybreak, Numinbah Valley from the MacPherson Range', 1930s, PXA 1156/Box 3/404–5

She wrote with careful attention to melody, and her early poems were admired for their technical skill, imaginative imagery and use of Australian placenames.

success as a children's page editor for the *Sydney Mail* from 1920 to 1938. In this role, under the pen-name 'Cinderella', she combined her love of nature, folklore and poetry.

The children's page quickly expanded beyond the paper's margins. Ten years after her first column as 'Cinderella', encouraged by a wider urban middle-class bushwalking movement as well as her Scottish Highlander ancestors' reputation as walkers, Ella led a small party of young women — Flora McLeod, Jean Bransdon and Jean Urquart — on a three-day bushwalk in the Southern Highlands.

They called themselves the Boomerang Club. Modestly dressed in tweed walking coats, strong brogues, felt hats, each with a haversack on their back, the party of four met at Moss Vale Station after midnight. There they enjoyed a meat pie, a spoonful of green peas and a pot of tea in the refreshment room before setting out at first light.

At Fitzroy Falls they invented the 'celebrated Fitzroy tart' — a heavily buttered wheatmeal biscuit topped with chopped pineapple — before making their way over Barrengarry Mountain, through Kangaroo Valley and up to Cambewarra. Along the way they lodged with local families and were aided by a mischievous young boy, two kindly Russian farmers and a mounted policeman.

The journey from Moss Vale to Nowra was the start of a new chapter for Ella — and perhaps also for Flora and the two Jeans. They would spend many days adventuring in Nattai, Ku-ring-gai Chase, the Royal National Park, Lamington National Park, the Blue Mountains and the Warrumbungles, sometimes accompanied by young male bushwalkers. Alongside more leisurely walks, the Boomerang Club attempted long-distance walking records — once travelling 56 miles from Moss Vale to Berry in a single day.

It was during her early years as a bushwalker that Ella was sent her first pair of thorny dragon lizards, named Wendy and Marco Polo Junior. Over the next few years, Ella's devotion to her little housemates, who could often be seen curled around her neck or clinging to her

skirts, led to an affiliation with the Royal Zoological Society, Taronga Zoo and Sydney naturalists such as George Longley and Thistle Harris.

Although Wendy and Marco inspired several of Ella's children's stories, especially her third children's book *Dragons of the Never Never* (1948), her nature study always maintained a scholarly dimension. Her contributions to magazines such as *Wild Life and Walkabout*, entwining poetry, Aboriginal legends and nature study, were illustrated with her own stunning photographs — in fact, the acclaimed British wildlife photographer Cherry Kearton considered Ella's lizard photographs nothing short of 'excellent'.

Aside from her juvenile correspondents and a small circle of close friends and family members, Ella was curiously removed from the Sydney literary scene. Though Mary Gilmore initially took her under her wing, Ella drifted away from the community of young writers and journalists after the Great War. She remained affiliated with several literary organisations, her address books in the Library's collection peppered with the names of notable Australian editors, artists and writers, but the children's page, and later her work as a manuscript reviewer, consumed most of her free time.

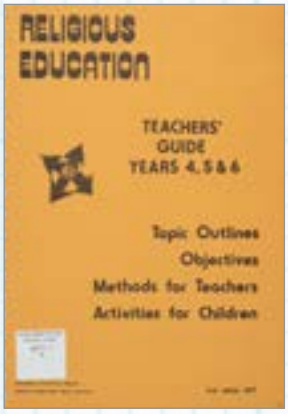
Like many women writers of the twentieth century, Ella's legacy as a poet and naturalist remains largely invisible. Few today would recognise her face or her poetry. Her most recognised contribution to Australian literature and culture is her writing for children. As 'Cinderella', and later as a camp mother for the Junior Red Cross, she encouraged many children to persist with their writing, art and nature study. Among the thousands influenced by the fairy editor were the poets Judith Wright, Gina Ballantyne, Martin Haley, Betty Casey and Llywelyn Lucas. Writer and children's literature advocate Maurice Saxby once saw Ella 'glow with animation' when surrounded by youngsters. 'Something does rub off,' he confessed.

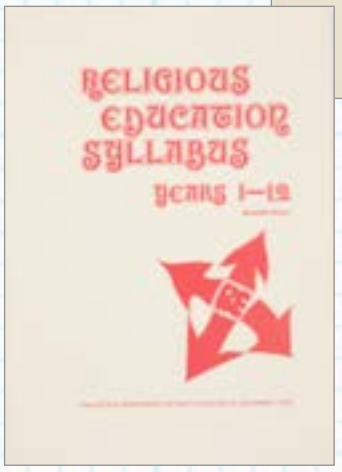
By the time of Ella's death, the Sydney of her childhood had changed dramatically. In an interview with Hazel de Berg in 1972, four years before she died at the age of 88 in a nursing home in Lane Cove, Ella imagined a heaven among the gum trees, crowded with 'little lizards and birds'. While her love of nature never led her to forsake city life — her favourite tree was a Moreton Bay Fig in Sydney's Macquarie Place — a long life of writing, talking and walking about nature had urged her to trade the Christian faith of her parents for a 'bush spiritualism'. Having gazed out at Lion Island from 'Warm Rock' and down into Numinbah Valley from the Macpherson Range, Ella McFadyen had already seen heaven on earth.

Emily Gallagher is a PhD candidate at the ANU's School of History. Her research focuses on the history of children's imaginations in Australia during the twentieth century.

LEFT: 'Kiss me, Wendy, I'm off on a big adventure', photographed by Ella McFadyen, c 1930s, PXA 1156/Box 3/1355–1407

RIGHT: 'A Typical Bivouac: A Cave Near Broken Bay', Ella McFadyen and Frederick Charles (Ben) Fuller, c 1932, PXA 1165/Box 7/464





Selection of religious education publications, South Australia, 1970s

CHALK + CHURCH

WORDS Stephen Jackson

The place of religious instruction in public schools has long been controversial.

In October 1973 Alan Ninnes took on one of the most thankless jobs in South Australia. As coordinator of the Religious Education Project Team, he was given the task of creating a new religious education curriculum for public schools.

The new courses needed to embody modern educational principles, but also satisfy the demands of the South Australian Christian churches. Other groups, including political parties, a teachers' union, parents' organisations, and a particularly active humanist organisation would all become embroiled in a public controversy over religious education in the state. Meeting the expectations of these competing groups was a tall order for Ninnes and his team.

Finding Ninnes' story was one of the most fascinating, and unexpected, parts of my fellowship research at the Library, which compares how religious education developed across the settler colonies of Canada, Australia and New Zealand in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

As it turns out, Ninnes' struggle was not unique. It's one of many examples from the 1960s and 70s of how educators in all three countries struggled to find a place for religion in the public schools of increasingly pluralist societies.

This became clear to me as I read through the Library's resources on this topic including the minutes of the Methodist Church (SA Branch), copies of the *South Australian Teachers Journal*, several important curricular documents and government reports, and the *Education Gazette of South Australia*.

Religious instruction got its start in South Australia in 1940 when, after a protracted lobbying campaign by Christian groups, a law was passed allowing a half-hour lesson each week. Students were divided up by denomination, and local clergy provided instruction. Parents could opt out their children if they chose.

Complaints about this system soon emerged. Not enough clergy were available to provide instructors for all schools, instructors rarely had any professional training as educators, and no standard curriculum existed. The system remained in place until 1968, when the Methodist Church of South Australia formally withdrew, essentially guaranteeing that the system collapsed.

In 1972 the Minister of Education, Hugh Hudson, convened a committee (known as the Steinle Committee) to discuss the future of religious education. The committee's report affirmed that religious education had a place in South Australian

schools and could be conducted 'on sound educational principles ... without attempting to lead students to accept a particular viewpoint'. In other words, you could offer students an education in religion that avoided the problem of indoctrination. Exactly how this would be done, though, the committee left up to the Religious Education Project Team.

Ninnes and his team began their work with months of study. They read with interest the justification of religious education by American educator Philip Phenix. Ninnes travelled to Tasmania, which was undergoing a similar re-evaluation (by the early 1980s every Australian state would do the same). The international dimension of the project team's work would culminate two years later when, in 1976, Ninnes travelled to the United States, Canada, and Great Britain to observe and research religious education programs.

Their central claim was that the new program was 'soundly educational' and 'an objective study' of an important dimension of human life that should be part of public education.

In the mid-1970s, as a result of this research, the Religious Education Project Team produced a series of curricular documents with a new approach to religious education for South Australian schools. The program focused on 'depth issues', topics relating to self-understanding, identity and purpose. Students would be presented with questions on some of life's most important questions, which they would have an opportunity to answer for themselves.

The new program also provided information about world religions — including Christian, non-Christian, and non-religious beliefs — encouraging 'a greater tolerance for the beliefs of others'. According to the project team, the course would not indoctrinate because 'it does not give preferential or derogatory treatment to religion in general or to any single religion'.

As the team deliberated and produced its first experimental curricula, a ferocious public controversy broke out in the South Australia. Opponents of the new curriculum, led by the organisation Keep Our State Schools Secular (KOSSS), believed it masked a preference for Christianity. KOSSS argued that 'the curriculum is biased heavily in favour of religious belief and offers no account of alternative philosophies' and suggested that religious education was simply not appropriate for young children enrolled in public schools.

By 1975 Ninnes and the team were on the defensive. Over about a year, they met with more than 150 parent and teacher groups to promote religious education and assuage concerns over their new curriculum. Their central claim was that the new program was 'soundly educational' and 'an objective study' of an important dimension of human life that should be part of public education.

KOSSS found this line of thinking totally unconvincing. In the hands of a zealous teacher, the group claimed, the new course would surely lead to some form of indoctrination. Though KOSSS was a relatively small organisation, it managed to generate a significant amount of negative publicity for the plan.

Over the next two years, the new South Australian religious education program was subjected to a rigorous review, which found no evidence that it would indoctrinate students. But the damage had already been done.

The course development was delayed during the review, and the public became wary. Though judged to be educationally sound, the new program failed to attract enough ardent supporters. It was criticised by some Christian churches, notably the Lutheran Church of South Australia. Schools were given the option of choosing whether to implement religious education, and by the end of the 1970s fewer and fewer schools were participating.

The story of the Religious Education Project Team in South Australia is a compelling episode in the long-running drama of religion in public education. Though their work fell far short of their own expectations for the new religious education

curriculum, Alan Ninnes and the team tackled pivotal questions that are still being asked today: What role should religion have in public schools? Can you teach students about religion without indoctrinating them? And if religious education is not offered, do the public schools implicitly endorse non-religious philosophies?

These vital questions have no definitive answers, but reveal a great deal about the societies that ask them.

Dr Stephen Jackson is Associate Professor of History at the University of Sioux Falls, United States, and the Library's 2019 Australian Religious History Fellow.

Cartoon from *South Australian Teachers Journal*, 23 April 1975, F371.105/2

MARIAN *and May*

A lost Sydney theatre and a forgotten American film director come together in a piece of Library ephemera.

The Library's vast ephemera collection holds everything from press clippings to political pamphlets, menus and expired pizza vouchers. Even though most of these things were intended to be used then thrown away, they have become markers of social history and culture, perhaps even more significant than some objects that were created with an eye to permanence.

In 2019, as a volunteer at the Library, I helped sort a collection of programs of the now closed Marian St Theatre. In one of the boxes, I came across a 1995 program for *Death Defying Acts* — the umbrella title for three one-act plays by US writers Elaine May, David Mamet and Woody Allen.

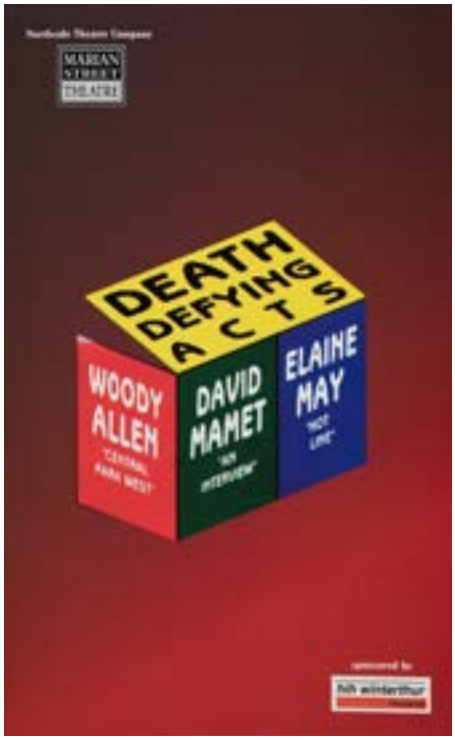
As a fan of the director, screenwriter, actor and comic Elaine May, I was thrilled by this discovery. May's characters are funny and neurotic — they are endearing and easy to relate to in their unlikableness. Her films are morosely charming; her humour a coping mechanism for the melancholy of the everyday.

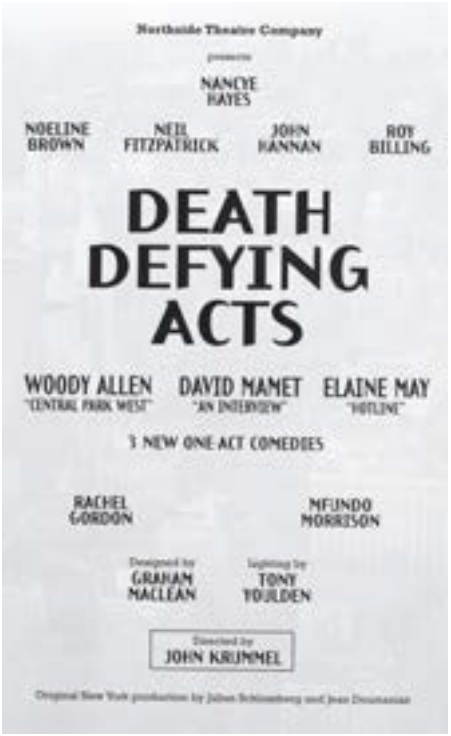
I liked the idea that May's work had been performed on stage here in Sydney. But looking at the program, with her name next to Mamet and Allen's, I also felt a sense of frustration.

It hit me that in the mid-1990s May's success might have been viewed as on par with these peers. But since then the success of May's prominent male filmmaking colleagues has far surpassed her own.

May rose to fame in 1961 with the comedy-sketch show *An Evening with Mike Nichols and Elaine May* before the duo both went on to become Hollywood directors. Nichols directed more than 20 films, including the Oscar-winning *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, while May directed four: *A New Leaf* (1971) in which she also starred, the dark romantic comedy *The Heartbreak Kid* (1972), *Mikey and Nicky* (1976), and finally her widely publicised box-office flop *Ishtar* (1987).

May and Woody Allen, another of her esteemed colleagues, are both Jewish-Americans born in the 1930s (May 1932, Allen 1935), both began their





careers in the 1950s, and they share a similar brand of neurotic humour. Allen has released at least 67 films — about one a year since the 1970s — some of which are critically acclaimed, while many are not.

Is Allen's output prolific or profligate? Regardless of the quality of each of his films, he has had the opportunity to continue making them, sustaining a high level of acclaim in the industry while May's career was immobilised after one flop.

Decades later, May is finally receiving the recognition she deserves. In 2013, President Obama awarded her a National Medal of Arts, and in 2016 she received a lifetime achievement award from the Writers Guild of America. In the same year, she returned to acting in Allen's miniseries *Crisis in Six Scenes*, and last year she won a Tony award for best actress for the Broadway production of Kenneth Lonergan's *The Waverly Gallery*. It has been reported that, at age 87, she will return to directing with a film called *Crackpot*.

Like May, the Marian St Theatre, which closed in 2013, has received some recent recognition. After a unanimous vote by the Ku-ring-gai Council in 2018, it is scheduled to re-open in 2021.

Whatever the reasons Elaine May stepped out of the spotlight, I can't help feeling that we have all been deprived. But stumbling upon that theatre program reminded me not to throw away hope, so I look forward to May's future projects and a new generation of talent at the Marian St Theatre.

Grace Winzar is an occasional volunteer at the State Library and is Collection Services Officer at Mosman Library.

Program for *Death Defying Acts*, 1995 production, Marian Street Theatre records 1965–2002, box 8

Mr Archimedes MOVES IN

The Library is the new home of award-winning children's author and illustrator Pamela Allen's extensive archive.

For the past four decades, Pamela Allen's picture books have captivated generations of Australians, with classic titles including *Mr Archimedes' Bath*, *Who Sank the Boat?*, *Mr McGee* and *Alexander's Outing* securing her place in the national psyche.

Allen's literary career began in New Zealand — where she was born in 1934 — after her two children started school. Having been immersed in the playcentre movement when her children were younger, she read hundreds of picture books and developed an understanding of what worked and what didn't.

She began by illustrating a series of small books written by her friend Jan Farr. The first, *Mummy Do Monsters Clean Their Teeth?*, was published in 1975 by Heinemann Education. The pair produced four books together between 1975 and 1977, and the basic elements of Allen's distinctive style can already be seen in her simple illustrations for these titles.

Allen moved to Sydney with her husband and two children in 1978. Eager for work and keen continue her career in children's book illustration, she began approaching Sydney publishing houses with a portfolio of her work.

The seed for her distinguished career was planted during a meeting at the company William Collins with children's editor Anne Bower Ingram, who suggested Allen write and illustrate her own books.

Almost overnight, Pamela Allen became a household name in Australian children's literature. Her first book, *Mr Archimedes' Bath*, published by Collins in 1980, received a NSW Premier's Literary Award and was commended by the Children's Book Council of Australia in the category of Picture Book of the Year category in 1981. She then won the Children's Book Council of Australia's Picture Book of the Year Award for *Who Sank the Boat?* (1983) and *Bertie and the Bear* (1984). She is the first illustrator to have won this award two years running and has been shortlisted for the award six times.

Allen's work has been acknowledged internationally, receiving the Honour Diploma for Illustration from the International Board on Books for Young People for her titles *Who Sank the Boat?* in 1984 and *Grandpa and Thomas* in 2006.

OPPOSITE: Selection of material from Pamela Allen archive, with additional photo far right with bougainvillea © Jill Carter-Hansen; black and white photographs by Ron Allen


BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BLAH BLAH
Now the bear was dancing.
Bertie danced after the bear

Contemporary Australian picture books had their origins in the work of May Gibbs and Dorothy Wall, who dominated the field in the first half of the twentieth century. The 1970s saw a dramatic increase in the publication and popularity of children's picture books in Australia, and children's literature authority Maurice Saxby has called the period from 1970 to 1990 the golden age of the Australian picture book. Allen was a major player during those years, writing and illustrating 12 books, including the classics *Who Sank the Boat?* and *Mr McGee*.

Her 52 books sold more than 6.5 million copies worldwide (excluding translations), and she also illustrated eight books for other authors. Sixteen of her titles have been translated into other languages, including Chinese, Japanese, Maori and Samoan, and many European languages. Thirty-six of her books are still in print today, and *Mr Archimedes' Bath* has never been out of print in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The extensive archive recently acquired by the Library contains more than 460 original illustrations, both published and unpublished, for 56 of Allen's books and more than 76 boxes of manuscript material. Titles range from *Mummy How Cold is a Witch's Nose?* produced with Jan Farr in 1976 to *The Big Fish* and *The Man with the Messy Hair*, both published in 2015.

Each set of drawings comes with a box of correspondence, licensing agreements, reviews and other documents relating to the particular book, and in most cases one or more 'dummy books'. Dummy books are an important part of Allen's creative process in producing her 32-page picture books. These collages of original pencil and photocopied drawings, with various iterations of Allen's words, record the evolution of each title.

The archive also includes Allen's correspondence with her editors, publishers and literary agents, providing a window into the Australian book publishing industry over the past 40 years. It's incredibly rare in the world of children's picture books that an archive as complete as this one is kept intact.

Allen describes the process of producing a picture book as a personal journey. She writes for the young, particularly pre-readers and early readers, and her simple text is rich with

Original artwork by Pamela Allen for *Alexander's Outing*, 1993, and *Mr Archimedes' Bath*, 1980

OPPOSITE: Original artwork by Pamela Allen for *Who Sank the Boat?*, 1982

repetition and musicality, perfect for reading aloud. Her words provide the reader with an opportunity to animate and personalise the story through theatrical performance. For Allen, the illustrations and words are symbiotic, working together to create meaning. Textual repetition is a deliberate feature of Allen's books, enhancing word recognition and understanding for her young audience.

Her stories explore universal themes, drawing ideas from life experience and teaching valuable lessons about lateral thinking and conflict resolution. Some, such as *Belinda* and *Our Daft Dog Danny*, are narrative in style; others are repetitious and onomatopoeic, using rhythm and rhyme to reinforce the action that is implicit in her illustrations — *Bertie and the Bear* and *Clippity Clop* are great examples. While some of Allen's books are whimsical, others feature more serious themes such as greed (*Herbert and Harry*), gluttony (*Brown Bread and Honey*) and feelings of abandonment (*Black Dog*).

Allen's pen, ink and watercolour drawings are often set on a clean white page, giving emphasis to the detailed image.

The Pamela Allen archive takes its place at the Library alongside the work of many other significant authors and illustrators published in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century including Dick Roughsey, Percy Tresize, Desmond Digby, Julie Vivas, Libby Hathorn, Alison Lester, Bronwyn Bancroft and Jeannie Baker, as well as the archival material of May Gibbs, Norman Lindsay, Ida Rentoul Outhwaite, Dorothy Wall and other classic figures in Australian children's literature. It records the successful professional career of one of Australia's best-loved children's author/illustrators.

Sarah Morley, Curator, Research & Discovery

A selection of Pamela Allen's work is on display in our galleries until 18 October 2020.

HEROIC QUEST

American author and fisherman Zane Grey was a celebrity visitor to the NSW south coast in the 1930s.

> I am amazed and dumbfounded at the reception given me in Australia. I find myself a favourite author, a hero fisherman, a famous celebrity, come to do well in their country. And have they responded!

So wrote American author Zane Grey in a letter to his wife, Dolly, recently acquired by the Library with nine related photographs.

Grey had arrived in Sydney on the *Mariposa* on 30 December 1935 intent on pursuing his passion for big game fishing. His entourage of seven included a camera crew and came with 166 pieces of luggage.

Born in 1872, Grey achieved international fame as the author of popular adventure novels and stories associated with the Wild West and the American frontier. A prodigious worker, he published more than 90 books, including one of the most successful Western novels of all time, *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912).

In an interview with a Sydney journalist he described his daily schedule: 'Up at 5 am, dictate or type for four hours; out fishing for the rest of the day; a nap on return, then another four hours writing.'

After several days in Sydney, Grey and his party drove down the coast to Bermagui where they pitched a dozen tents in a grove of gum trees. It was from here that he wrote to Dolly on 31 January 1936.

His camp was on a precipitous bluff overlooking the ocean, 'beautiful, ideal, except open to the public. The birds are strange, lovely, the trees gorgeous, the bush (forest) magnificent.'

He went on: 'I have from 250 to 500 visitors daily. Come to see me, for autographs & photos, to buy books, to visit the famous Zee Gee Camp. They call me Zee Gee. This little town of Bermagui has become notorious overnight. Other towns are jealous. It is a most amazing tribute.'

His enchantment with Bermagui did not, however, extend to the local fishermen whom he bluntly derided as 'punk. They think they know it all. But I am being as careful as possible. All the same I have caught all the fish so far, and they have none.'

As well as fishing and writing he also made time for radio appearances which proved extremely popular. 'My talks on radio are going ever bigger & bigger', he told Dolly with evident pride.

Halfway through the letter he made the surprising admission that although he was 'supposed to be a millionaire American sportsman' he was 'almost broke! ... Everything here awfully high, and so many expenses I didn't account for.' He complained that all they 'could chisel out of the Shell Co. for an 18 minute radio talk was $1000.' Later in the letter he remarked somewhat wistfully, 'If it wasn't for the fear about money I'd be having my greatest trip.'

Although he was a serial womaniser, Grey apparently remained devoted to Dolly, whose business acumen and skilful editing of his books had been major factors in his success. 'I never was so sick, never so sad at leaving you,' he wrote. 'I have wished you here often, just to see the people, the kids who come to see me. You'd love it. That has touched me deeply. They come from hundreds of miles away.'

On the night he wrote this letter the townspeople threw a party for him in his camp. His meagre contribution was a bottle of champagne he had been given 'because I caught the big fish'. Although he 'didn't drink', he enjoyed himself so much that he 'felt better than at any time since I've been away'.

Grey was such a well-liked figure in Bermagui that he was made patron of the Bermagui Sport Fishing Association. And the caravan park across the road from where he camped was renamed Bermagui Zane Grey Tourist Park.

From Bermagui, Grey moved north to establish another camp at Batemans Bay. He also spent several weeks fishing out of Sydney, using Watsons Bay as his base. On 5 May he left Sydney for the Great Barrier Reef where he made a feature film called *White Death* with himself in the leading role. The plot concerned

his heroic quest to catch a large shark that was terrorising the Queensland coast. It was not a success.

Grey also fished in other locations around Australia, but it seems that the south coast of New South Wales remained his favourite spot. His book *An American Angler in Australia* (1937) is devoted almost entirely to the waters off Bermagui and Batemans Bay. It was there that he and his companions caught 67 big fish, mostly swordfish, weighing nearly 10 tons. 'This seems incredible', he wrote, 'but it is true.' And he couldn't help adding: 'Two thirds of this number fell to my rod.' (The current bag limit for swordfish in NSW is one.)

Grey died in 1939, only months after a second visit to Australia. He is remembered here not only as a celebrated author but as a significant figure in establishing deep-sea sport fishing in New South Wales.

Warwick Hirst, Librarian, Collection Strategy & Development

Zane Grey on a fishing boat with sharks he has just caught, MLMSS 10398

OPPOSITE: Zane Grey with striped marlin and black marlin caught off Bermagui, 14 February 1936, photo by TC Roughley, PXE 1776

Imagines coeli meridionales, printed 1781 from blocks created in 1515, by Johannes Stabius, cartographer, Albrecht Dürer, engraver, M2 000/1515/1

Southern STARS

THE FIRST PRINTED EUROPEAN SOUTHERN STAR CHART JOINS THE LIBRARY'S CARTOGRAPHY COLLECTION.

Albrecht Dürer — arguably the most important engraver and printmaker of the Renaissance — drew his famous image of a rhinoceros in 1515. In the same year he collaborated with cartographer and mathematician Johannes Stabius and astronomer Conrad Heinfogel to produce the first printed European star charts of the northern and southern hemispheres.

The Library recently acquired a rare example of *Images coeli Meridionales*, the southern star chart, printed in 1781 from the original plate engraved by Dürer in 1515. It features the circular chart without the decorative corner inscriptions seen in some copies. There are only 10 known examples of the original printings of the 1515 chart, and the 1781 printing is equally rare.

This was the first time a star chart — having been hand-drawn for centuries — had been engraved for easier distribution via the new medium of printing. It was also the first attempt to devise a primitive coordination system to locate the stars in the sky, which can be seen around the outer edge of the circle. Dürer chose to depict the stars from the heavens rather than looking up from the earth, reversing their familiar positions.

While Dürer's role in producing these charts was as an illustrator, he was also interested in astronomy. In 1504 he purchased the Nuremberg home of astronomer Bernard Walther, which included a rooftop observatory and scientific library.

The chart features many familiar constellations drawn from Greek mythology: the half man, half horse creature Centaurus, the hunter Orion, and the sea monster Cetus. Just above *Piscis Notius*, the smaller southern fish, Dürer has inserted his famous monogram. Some constellations in the chart are now obsolete, like Argo Navis, the Greek ship of Jason and the Argonauts sailing across the Southern Hemisphere, which has been replaced by three smaller constellations.

The southern star chart is sparsely illustrated, reflecting the lack of European knowledge of the southern skies at the time. The Southern Cross wouldn't appear in print until 1516, and can be seen in a copy of Italian explorer Andrea Corsali's letter acquired by the Library in 2018.

The Library holds significant examples of celestial charts and early works on science, navigation and astronomy, and the Dürer star chart is the opening chapter in the printed history of European knowledge of the southern stars.

Maggie Patton, Manager, Research & Discovery

CAPTAIN'S LOG

The logbooks of HMB *Endeavour* show Cook's process of revising his journal.

The *Endeavour*'s 1768—71 voyage had three main aims: to observe the Transit of Venus in Tahiti; to continue the search for a great southern land; and to undertake botanical collecting led by the young Joseph Banks.

Like all ships' captains, James Cook kept a daily logbook, recording the date, latitude and longitude, speed, wind direction, weather and a sprinkling of his personal observations. His original logbook is held by the National Library of Australia.

In addition two fair copies were written during the voyage by Cook's shipboard clerk, Richard Orton. These neat and exact versions of an original document were often made for circulation to others, or to ensure safe delivery in the days of long, uncertain sea voyages.

Although the Admiralty expected copies to be sent to England every six months or so, Cook's first opportunity came after two and a half years, in October 1770, when the *Endeavour* arrived at Batavia (now Jakarta) on the final, homeward leg of the voyage. It was from here that he dispatched what became the Library's copy.

Kept by Cook's friend and supporter Sir Philip Stephens, Secretary to the Admiralty, it passed through Stephens' family by descent and was eventually sold to collector John Corner. In 1895 Australian shipping merchant Frederick Dangar bought it from Corner's executors and presented it to the Australian Museum in Sydney. In 1935 it was transferred, along with other Cook manuscripts, to the Library where it is known as the 'Corner journal' for the man who owned it only briefly.

After the ship finally returned to Britain in July 1771, six months after the first copy of the logbook had been dispatched, the second copy was sealed and sent to the Admiralty. It is now in the National Archives, Kew.

In the 'Corner journal' we can see that Cook has looked over and corrected Orton's neat copy, which he signed as true and correct when it was completed. Words and sentences crossed out, rubbed out or rewritten in the original logbooks have been neatly incorporated in the copies.

Cook's original name for the length of the Australian east coast, 'New Wales', appears in the original log and also in the 'Corner journal' copy. But in the second copy, at Kew, this has been revised to 'New South Wales'.

Known as Kamay to the original inhabitants, the Gweagal people, Botany Bay was first called Stingray Harbour and then Stingray Bay by Cook because of the number of stingrays seen and caught there. When Banks accumulated a large collection of plants, all new to European science, Cook changed the name to Botany Bay. In the 'Corner journal', 'Stingerray' has been erased and amended to 'Botteny'.

Logbooks are an important link to early European voyages, but the events documented within their pages represent only one perspective of history. In this 250th anniversary year of the *Endeavour*'s arrival in Kamay, the Library is encouraging readers and visitors to re-examine Cook's legacy and reinterpret these documents with expertise shared by Aboriginal knowledge holders and Elders.

Louise Anemaat, Executive Director, Library & Information Services and Dixson Librarian

The State Library Foundation was delighted to contribute to the 'Corner journal' conservation project.

Conservator Cecilia Harvey treats the 'Corner journal', photo by Joy Lai

OPPOSITE: Fair copy of Cook's logbook on *Endeavour*, 1768–1771, entry for 6 May 1770, written in Richard Orton's hand, 'Corner journal', Safe 1/71

CONSERVING THE 'CORNER JOURNAL'

The Library's conservators are undertaking extensive conservation treatment to preserve the 'Corner journal'.

The biggest risk to the journal is the iron gall ink Richard Orton wrote it with. Developed as an indelible ink for writing on parchment, when iron gall ink is used on paper — as it was here — it can cause the paper to discolour, become brittle and crack.

While iron gall ink recipes vary, the two key components are iron salts and tannic acid from oak galls. Together, they cause paper to deteriorate. To preserve the journal a comprehensive conservation treatment was developed.

Each page was immersed in two baths of water to wash out harmful components in the ink and the by-products that weaken and discolour the paper. The effect of the washing can be seen in the increased flexibility and strength of the paper but causes no visible change to the writing.

After washing, the pages were immersed in a deacidification solution to add calcium, which helps slow down the ongoing deterioration. The pages were resized, which adds a layer of gelatin to increase the paper strength and water resistance and introduces proteins that chemically bind the ink's harmful components. Then they were lightly pressed and left for a week to dry.

After the wet treatment all cracks in the ink were repaired using Japanese tissue impregnated with a remoistenable gelatin adhesive to prevent them from breaking further. All 356 manuscript pages were washed and repaired by a team of seven conservators, a huge collaborative achievement.

Kate Hughes, Conservator, Collection Care

Online learning

2020 ANNUAL APPEAL

Since the outbreak of Covid-19 and the move to physical distancing, the Library has taken advantage of opportunities to keep our visitors and supporters connected.

Your Library at Home, a new area of our website, brings together our digital collections and stories, podcasts, ebooks and databases, learning resources and activities for children. More people than ever before have been using the Library's collections, with a record number of readers across New South Wales signing up online for Library cards.

The past few months have been a particularly challenging time for students, young children and their families, who moved abruptly from classroom to at-home learning. The Library's Learning Services team has adapted to this ever-changing environment, creating new online resources that are accessible anywhere at any time.

Content developed by our Learning team includes digital storytime sessions and a range of virtual excursions and curriculum-based activities.

Since April 2020 the Library has offered 55 workshops for 6362 participants. Seven online workshops with children's authors attracted a total of 2202 people, and 21 online art making workshops attracted 1687.

To fund these dynamic programs, the State Library Foundation was delighted to support online learning resources through the 2020 Annual Appeal. The crisis has affected us all in different ways, making the overwhelmingly positive response to this Appeal all the more encouraging. Our donors showed their ongoing commitment by donating more than $200,000.

Though students have now gone back to school, the extraordinary increase in demand for our online offerings has demonstrated that digital access is critical to the community. We will continue developing online resources as the need for flexible learning opportunities increases.

If you would like to contribute to the expansion of online learning resources at the Library, details of the appeal are on the Foundation's webpage.

sl.nsw.gov.au/appeal

Draw with Andrea

The weekly online drawing class 'Draw with Andrea' has been a hit with little people (4 to 8 years) looking to draw, get some arty tips and have fun. It's struck a chord with families from far and wide, many tuning in each week to build up their skills of observation and follow step-by-step instructions that help unlock some of the mysteries of drawing.

The workshops are interactive, with children and their parents discussing their work and forming an art-loving community. Presenter Andrea Sturgeon regularly receives drawings, photos and feedback from enthusiastic participants.

'I've really enjoyed establishing this connection with a wide range of families — from inner and outer suburban Sydney, to small communities in rural and regional areas,' says Andrea. 'I now recognise the names of children who take part and look forward to receiving their drawings and hearing about how it's helping these young aspiring artists to develop their skills.'

One of these artists is Isabelle, whose mum Melanie has sent photos of every artwork made during the classes, sometimes accompanied by Isabelle's animated impressions of the animals she draws. Melanie invited Isabelle's school friends to join the classes while they were in lockdown, and they shared their drawings together online.

These online workshops have enabled us to provide an exciting new service to the wider Library audience.

Thank you for the great online workshop yesterday … I thoroughly enjoyed listening to Deborah Abela's stories of her childhood and how she can get inspiration from anything to make a story. I have signed up for Tim Harris next week too. Thank you for giving students this opportunity. I am in Grade 6 in Queensland and our fantastic librarian suggested this for us.

— MONIQUE

SUPPORT THE LIBRARY

If you would like to learn more about how you can support the State Library of NSW, please contact Susan Hunt, Director, State Library of NSW Foundation, on (02) 9273 1529 or visit us online.

www.sl.nsw.gov.au/support

Recent **HIGHLIGHTS**

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01 Readers return to the Mitchell Library Reading Room with physical distancing measures in place, photo by Joy Lai

02 State Librarian Dr John Vallance speaks to the media on Monday 1 June 2020 about the Library reopening to the public following the Covid-19 shutdown, photo by Bruce York

03 Complying with NSW Health guidelines, the reading rooms, galleries and other public spaces are regularly cleaned throughout the day, photo by Joy Lai

04 Physical distancing measures in place at the State Library to keep staff and visitors safe, photo by Joy Lai

05 The health and safety of our staff, readers and visitors is always our top priority, photo by Joy Lai

06 Signage is placed throughout the Library to help readers and visitors stand 1.5 metres from each other, as per NSW Health guidelines for libraries, photo by Joy Lai

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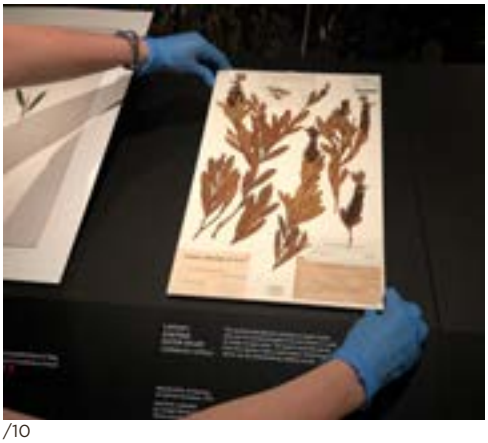

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07 Readers in the Macquarie Street building practice social distancing. Study desks, computer keyboards and mouses are cleaned between each use, photo by Joy Lai

08 Former Prime Minister Julia Gillard at the Library to launch her new book *Women and Leadership*, photo by Annie Tong

09 Installating the new exhibition *Eight Days In Kamay* in the western wing of the Mitchell building, photo by Joy Lai

10 Preserved bottlebrush from Kamay (Botany Bay) in 1770. One of the nine botanical specimens on loan from Royal Botanic Garden Sydney on display in *Eight Days In Kamay,* photo by Annie Tong

11 *True Stories of HM Ship Royal George: from 1746 to 1841* by Henry Slight was donated to the Library in 1942, photo by Annie Tong

12 *Tortoises, Terrapins and Turtles: Drawn from Life* was compiled by James de Carle Sowerby and Edward Lear, and published in 1872, photo by Annie Tong

13 Adam Johnston settles into the Special Collection area to do research for his PhD examining the Federal Government's National Disability Insurance Scheme, photo by Annie Tong

14 Lynn Cook, Tim Turner, Kipper and Under enjoy the winter edition of *SL* Magazine, photo by Joy Lai

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY ENJOY **10%** DISCOUNT

Looking for great gift ideas?

The Library Shop has a collection of unique gifts and accessories including beautiful silk scarves, artisan jewellery and funky tote bags.

There's also a great range of greeting cards, wrapping paper and books of course!

Plus, you can order beautiful fine art prints of photographs, paintings and maps from our extensive collection.

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Become a Friend: friends@sl.nsw.gov.au or ph: (02) 9273 1593

Q&A

Australian photographer **Adam Ferguson** won first prize in the World Press Photo contest for a series of portraits now on display at the Library.

YOUR PRIZE-WINNING PHOTO SERIES 'THE HAUNTED' IS SUCH A POWERFUL BODY OF WORK. HOW DID IT COME ABOUT?

The *New York Times* magazine approached me to work on this project over 10 days in Iraq. I'd already worked extensively in Iraq and covered the exodus of Yazidi — who are seen in these portraits — from ISIS in 2014. I was on board a helicopter that crashed with these refugees. So I had a connection to this story and my own trauma associated with it.

A LOT OF YOUR WORK EXPLORES CONFLICT AND MILITARY REGIMES. HOW DID THIS BECOME YOUR AREA OF INTEREST?

I discovered images of conflict in my first year of art college and they affected me — it was a fascination I couldn't shake. The idea of war and the justification for it had always felt problematic growing up in Australia with the Anzac legacy. Going to war as a photographer was my way of reconciling this understanding. I believe a diverse range of stories around conflict is essential to our historical reflection on it. Civilians in war zones often bear the cost of larger geopolitical decisions and we can't ignore that.

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU'RE HOPING TO HIGHLIGHT WITH THE IMAGES FEATURED IN THE WORLD PRESS PHOTO EXHIBITION?

I intended to create a set of portraits that conveys the immense emotional toll of the war in Iraq. It was important to make images that asked an audience to feel the psychological trauma that exists for many of the civilians who endured those recent years. Most of the families were extremely open and welcoming. The Yazidi population in particular had suffered some of the most severe persecution, and I believe they wanted to share their stories, they wanted to be heard. I consider it a responsibility to give my subjects a sense of dignity in the photographs; it's important to honour their story. I also attempted to make portraits that felt fraught and sad, because these emotions were part of their experience.

HOW HAVE YOU BEEN SPENDING YOUR TIME AT HOME DURING THE SHUTDOWN?

I've been using this time to catch up on reading, photography and art theory. Ariella Azoulay's book *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography* is keeping me busy at the moment. But I'm also making work — I spent Anzac Day in the Hill End area making pictures.

WHAT WILL YOU DO NEXT?

I'm supposed to be in the bush finishing my project on outback Australia, but I had to postpone it because of the pandemic. The work is a poem about the interior of Australia, a reflection on a place I knew as a kid. It's a contemporary portrait of the bush, and a slight subversion of Australia's outback mythology.

World Press Photo Exhibition 2020 is free in the Library's galleries from 15 August to 18 October 2020.

From top: Adam Ferguson photo by Kathy Ryan

The Haunted © Adam Ferguson, Australia, for *The New York Times Magazine*

World Press Photo

A free exhibition, onsite at the State Library of NSW, until 18 October 2020.

sl.nsw.gov.au/exhibitions/world-press-photo-exhibition-2020