

Magazine for members  
Summer 2009/10

# SL



STATE LIBRARY™  
NEW SOUTH WALES



*Countdown to  
Mitchell centenary*

*Frenzy for  
French fashion*

*Lillian Roxon's story*

*Colonial courtship*

# “Message

Regina Sutton



It's hard not to feel the buzz around the Library lately (and I'm not just referring to the construction work)! The energy in the air heralds big things ahead. A major new exhibition, a dynamic website, inspiring events – so much is planned for the centenary of the Mitchell Library in 2010.

Read about some of the highlights in this issue of *SL*. Plus, there's French fashion, colonial exploration and the New York rock scene – unexpected stories from our vaults.

You may have noticed the magazine's new look. We begin our next 100 years with an updated image and logo for the Library. Our new logo is based on the 'interrobang', a curious punctuation mark used to show questioning and surprise: a question asked (?) and an answer given (!). The symbol is so apt for the Library – a place where answers are found in books, original documents, online resources and from our staff.

We're continuing at an extraordinary pace to improve access to our collections. Take a look at the Library's 2009 Annual Report, on our website soon, to see the huge amount we've achieved in the past year. We've created 30,000 digital images from manuscripts and artworks, and 182,500 electronic catalogue records.

You'll see more and more rare material brought online, with an enhanced digitisation strategy led by our new Digitisation and Imaging Manager, Rory McLeod, who joins us from the British Library. Already Rory and his team are looking for exciting ways to increase access to the most in-demand items, as well as safe ways to preserve digital content over time.

Whether you visit us online or at Macquarie Street, you'll experience our collections in surprising ways. See the stunning centenary alphabet on display near the State Reference Library, and revealed letter-by-letter on the dedicated 2010 website.

And find out why the Library has handmade bird whistles, a cow horn and Dame Nellie Melba's Cartier hairpin case, when you visit the *Stranger than Fiction* display.

As part of renewing our relationship with Foundation supporters, we'll be providing better value to members. *SL* magazine is now available exclusively to Friends, Members and Volunteers. A range of added benefits will be delivered next year.

We look forward to celebrating our centenary in 2010 with you!

**REGINA SUTTON**  
NSW State Librarian & Chief Executive



# C ontents

Summer 2009/10

## SL

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ON SUNDAYS.

### FRONT COVER

FROM THE LIBRARY'S PRET-A-PORTER FASHION PARADE. AFTERNOON DRESS BY EMMELINE MANASSÉ, RUE ST HONORE, PARIS, C. 1948, DARNELL COLLECTION, SYDNEY, MODEL ANNETTE TWEMLOW, PHOTO BY LOUISE WHELAN

### BACK COVER

BIRD WHISTLES, 1960S, HENRY GRACE, TIN AND BRASS, R408-17

### OPPOSITE

PHOTO BY DIEU TAN

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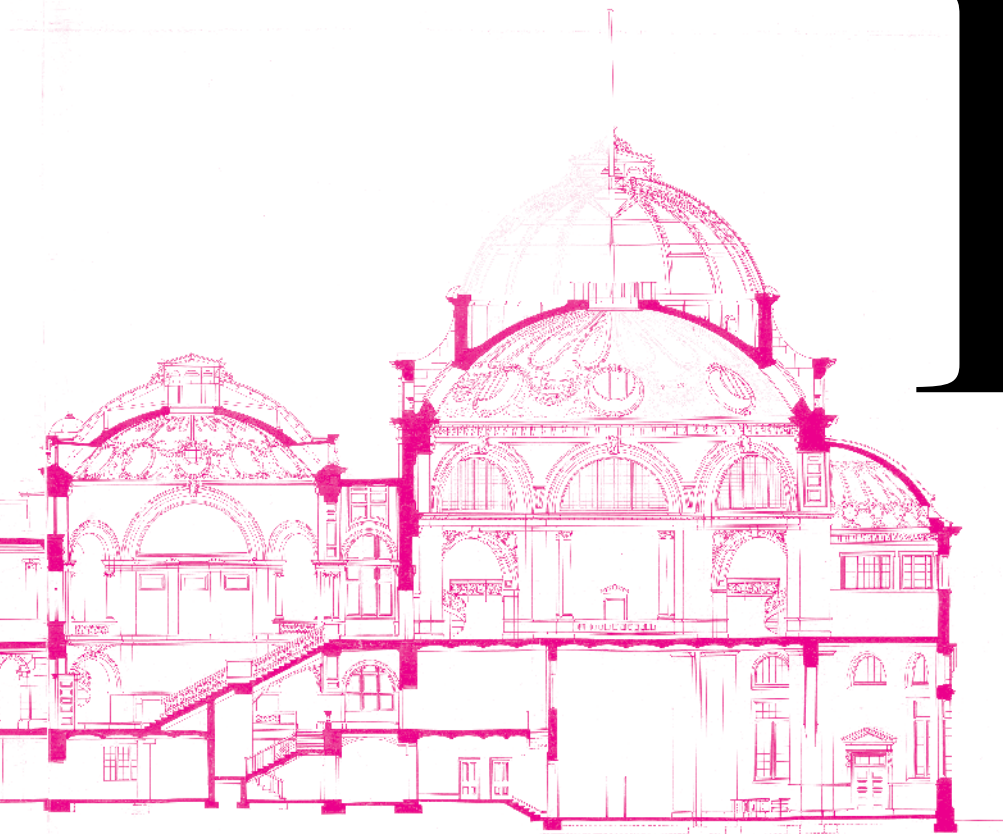
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SECTION THRO' CENTRAL READING ROOM AND ENTRANCE HALL

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CELEBRATING 100 YEARS  
OF THE MITCHELL LIBRARY  
IN 2010

LORD CHELMSFORD, GOVERNOR OF NSW,  
MITCHELL LIBRARY OPENING, 8 MARCH 1910



A collage of historical and cultural items including a fountain pen, a revolver, a coin, a book, and a building facade.

# CELEBRATING

*ONE* hundred years  
of the Mitchell Library

In 2010 we're celebrating the centenary of the Mitchell Library. On 9 March for 100 days a major exhibition will display 100 of our most intriguing items. *ONE hundred* is a rollcall of the famous and the notorious from Australia's past, the quiet achievers and the noisy larrikins, the conventional and the rebellious, the remembered and the forgotten — all have a fascinating story to tell.

## Bringing the collection OUT

Throughout 2010 we're bringing the Mitchell collection out of the vaults. The Mitchell Library began with the personal collection of David Scott Mitchell, who bequeathed over 40,000 works and a large endowment to the people of NSW. The Library has been adding to it ever since. In our centenary year there are lots of surprises in store, with behind-the-scenes tours, regional displays and a virtual time capsule.



## Our new alphabet

We've created an alphabet that brings out the broad and eclectic collections of the State Library in an unexpected way. With the original concept by Frost Design, each letter is made up of elements from maps, manuscripts, ephemera, relics and even Library architecture. The alphabet, and the many stories it tells, will extend well beyond the Mitchell centenary year.

## Countdown

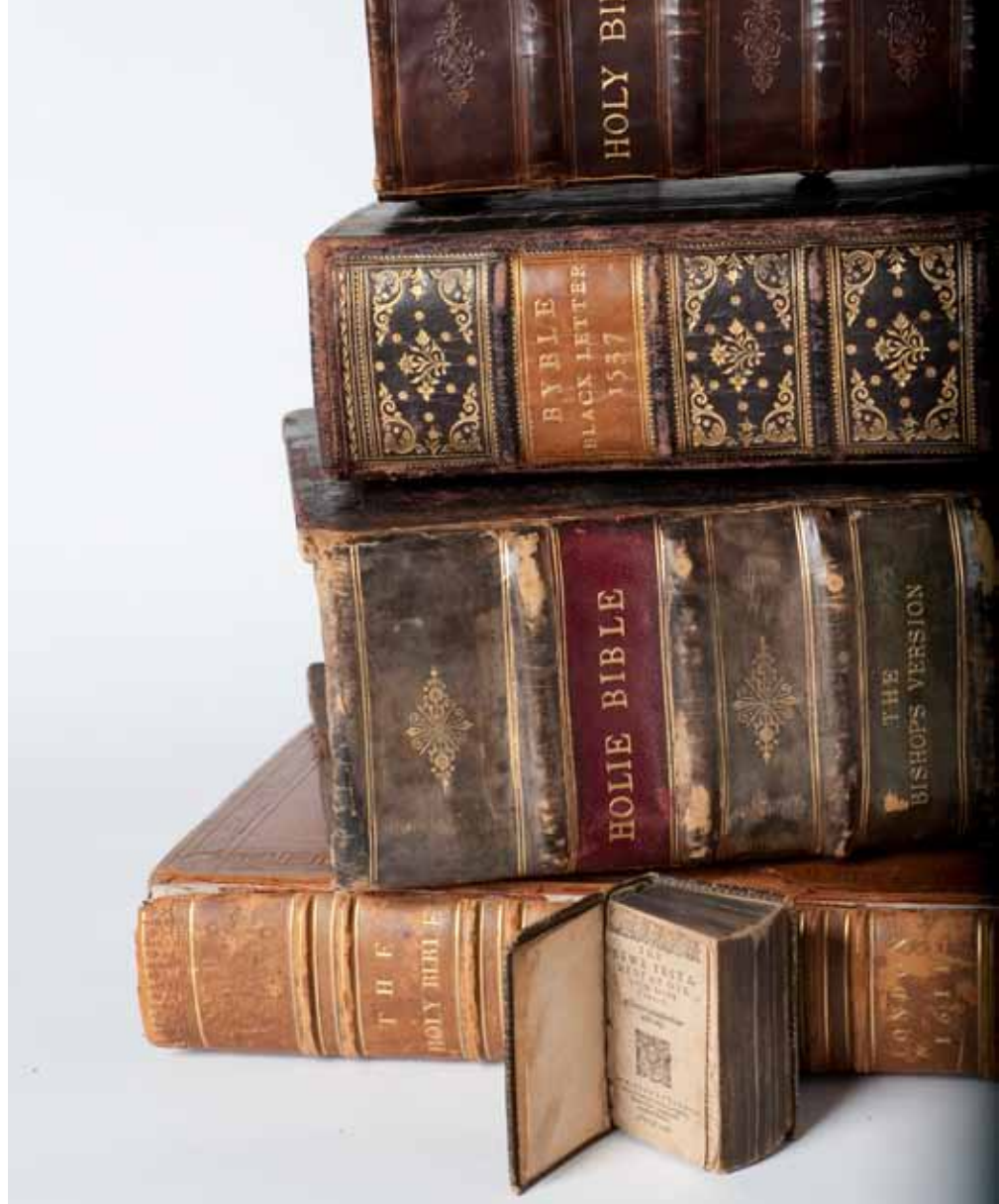
Follow the countdown to the *ONE hundred* exhibition opening on our centenary micro-site. Check out the release of our alphabet — a couple of letters per week — and the full program of events and activities celebrating the Mitchell Library centenary. [www.onehundred.sl.nsw.gov.au](http://www.onehundred.sl.nsw.gov.au)





## Open for business

In preparation for our centenary celebrations in 2010, we're undertaking essential building work. The Mitchell Library reading room remains open, but the external doors will be closed during this time. Please enter through the Macquarie Street wing. The improvements will leave us with a refurbished gallery space, more visitor-friendly public areas and a new air-conditioning system. The Galleries will reopen on 9 March 2010 for the *ONE hundred* exhibition.



## eRecords for remarkable Bibles

You can now search online for thousands of titles in the State Library collections that could previously be found only through the card catalogue. A collection of rare Bibles is among the 180,000 items that have new eRecords.

The Bible that gave us such popular phrases as 'to pour out one's heart', 'pride goes before a fall' and 'to fall flat on his face' – the King James or Authorised Version of 1611 – is represented in several editions. There are oversized and miniature Bibles, including a tiny New Testament from 1598 that's one of the earliest examples of miniature book production.

The family who donated the Bibles to the Library in 1926, the Richardsons, believed they were related to bible publisher and martyr John Rogers. Rogers was burnt at the stake in 1555 for printing a Bible in English. The fascinating history of Bible publishing in England reflects social, political and religious upheavals from the 16th century to today.

IMAGE: SELECTION FROM THE RICHARDSON BIBLE COLLECTION



# NEWS



## First Fleet journals recognised by UNESCO

Our unrivalled collection of First Fleet journals was recently added to the UNESCO Australia Memory of the World Register. The Library holds nine of the 11 First Fleet journals known to exist, providing first-hand accounts of the voyage to Australia and early settlement from 1787 to the 1790s. The Memory of the World program aims to safeguard and raise awareness of the documentary heritage of humanity. The First Fleet journals are available to read on our website.

IMAGE: BOTANY BAY (DETAIL), 1788, CHARLES GORE, WATERCOLOUR, DG V1A/8



## Future of libraries

How will the global financial crisis, climate change and an ageing population change and shape NSW public libraries in the future? What will be the effect of technologies such as e-books and web 2.0? Research by the State Library and NSW public libraries has looked at future scenarios that could affect public libraries over the next 20 years, and ways we can respond to change. A report, *The Bookends Scenarios: Alternative Futures for the Public Library Network in NSW in 2030*, was recently prepared by Neville Freeman Agency and will be available on our website.



## New research partnership: History of climate change

A research team from the University of Melbourne has partnered with the State Library of NSW and other key libraries to develop a climate history for south-eastern Australia. Surprisingly, climate records such as temperature and rainfall measurements have only been kept officially in Australia for about 100 years. If it hadn't been for early European explorers and settlers, we would have few accounts of weather patterns pre-dating the 1900s. The landmark project, led by Dr Joelle Gergis and Professor David Karoly, will comb the Library's archives to capture Australia's climatic past and help determine the extent of human-caused climate change.

IMAGE: FENCING AT BREWARRINA (DETAIL), 2002, DARREN CLARK, PXA 1069



## 22 December 1888

*The Bulletin* publishes the first short story by Henry Lawson, aged 21, entitled 'His Father's Mate'.

IMAGE: PEN WITH STAND  
OWNED BY HENRY LAWSON  
C. 1900, R 64



## 1 January 1810

Lachlan Macquarie becomes Governor of NSW. In his own words, Macquarie 'found the colony barely emerging from infantile imbecility' and left it 'enjoying a state of private comfort and public prosperity'.

IMAGE: LACHLAN MACQUARIE, C. 1819  
WATERCOLOUR ON IVORY MINIATURE  
MIN 236



## 24 December 1789

The convict ship *Guardian* strikes ice en route to save the starving colony of NSW. The dramatic wreck made international headlines and resulted in conditional pardons for 14 of the surviving convicts.

IMAGE: *THE PERILOUS SITUATION OF 'THE GUARDIAN' FRIGATE ...* POSSIBLY BY ROBERT DIGHTON, C. 1790, PEN, INK AND WATERCOLOUR, ML 1112 (B)

## 17 January 1877

May Gibbs, children's book illustrator and creator of *Snuggle Pot and Cuddle Pie*, is born at Cowell, South Australia.

CAPTION: 'DANCING', 1918  
ILLUSTRATION BY MAY GIBBS FOR  
*SNUGGLE POT AND CUDDLE PIE*  
PXD 304/V.2/153



*on this*

# DAY



*2 February 1966*

Protests take place in Sydney during the intake of conscripts for the Vietnam War.

IMAGE: VIETNAM WAR PROTESTER  
1966, ON 173



*23 February 1931*

Internationally renowned opera singer Dame Nellie Melba dies in Sydney. Melba was made a Dame Commander of the British Empire in 1918 for services to World War I.

IMAGE: NELLIE MELBA (DETAIL)  
1903, PHOTO BY TALMA & CO  
P1/MELBA, NELLIE (BM)

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**CORRECTION**

In 'On this day' *SL* August 2009 (p. 21), a picture of Governor Phillip's farm was incorrectly captioned as belonging to James Ruse.



F E A T U R E

# FRENZY

*for  
French Fashion*

WORDS Margot Riley





In July 1948 Sydney audiences were treated to the first complete collection of Christian Dior's revolutionary 'New Look' fashions shown outside Paris. Through photographs, personal papers and magazines, curator Margot Riley has uncovered surprising insights into the events that led to this defining moment. It's the story behind this year's sell-out Pret-a-porter Fashion Parade, presented by the Library at the Sofitel Sydney Wentworth.

From wine and wool to food and fashion, the French have always had a thing or two to teach Australians about the art of combining business and pleasure. Having supplied the French fashion industry with wool for nearly a century, Australia became an eager participant in the global market for French style after World War II.

Anxious to cut out the British middle men, French textile companies had been buying wool directly from Australia since the 1850s. When the wool trade took off during the second half of the century, France became Australia's largest customer after Britain. By 1900, Australia was leading the world in the production of fine merino wool and many French wool-buying firms had representatives stationed here permanently.

It is hard to overestimate the influence of the wool-buyers and their coterie on Australian attitudes to French culture at this time. Bringing with them a taste for Parisian luxuries and the sophistication of European city life, the elegant subset of Sydney society (known as *le tout-Sydney*) ensured that a French fixation thrived.

This was an era in which an elegant woman might change outfits four times a day — for travelling, lunching and visiting, going to the races, cocktails, dinner and balls. But only the very wealthy could



LEFT: MADAME CHAMBRELENT MODELS THE SIGNATURE 'BAR' SUIT FROM CHRISTIAN DIOR'S FIRST 'NEW LOOK' COLLECTION, *AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S WEEKLY*, 9 AUGUST 1947

BELOW: 'STYLE SYMPOSIUM FROM PARIS', *AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S WEEKLY*, 21 SEPTEMBER 1946

OPPOSITE: BACK STAGE, DEPARTMENT STORE FASHION PARADE, MARK FOY'S, SYDNEY, MARCH 1947, PIX ARCHIVE, ACP



experience first-hand the rarefied ambience of Parisian *haute couture* (high fashion) houses. For the small number of Australians who travelled regularly and could afford it, haute couture could be purchased directly from these exclusive establishments, provided one had the right introductions, and the time to undertake several fittings and wait a month for the garments to be completed.

Back home, several couture salons had opened in Sydney during the interwar period. Bearing French names, and cashing in on the prestige of Paris fashion and all things French, these businesses modelled their operations on French workrooms. Local couturiers like Madam Rochas, Paulette Pellier, Germaine Rocher, and milliner Henriette Lamotte, numbered among their clientele the wives and daughters of successful business men, female members of important Australian families and leading Sydney socialites.

Australian women could also buy French fashion through the better department stores such as Sydney's Mark Foys and David Jones. The latter was particularly noted for its French salon, where shoppers could select from an array of ready-made gowns.

By the end of World War II, people were ready to indulge themselves after years of wartime austerity. The troops came home to their families and women longed for romance and feminine clothes, but little was happening in the Australian garment industry. Due to a lack of materials and labour, there was a shortage of apparel in the stores. In an attempt to stimulate the local rag trade and revitalise production, several leading businessmen teamed up to bring an exhibition of French haute couture fashion to Australia.

Department store owners Norman Myer (Myer, Melbourne and Adelaide) and Charles Lloyd Jones (David Jones, Sydney) were keen to whet the fashion-starved appetites of their customers and encourage consumer spending. Frank Packer, owner of the *Australian Women's Weekly*, was anxious to woo the David Jones advertising account over to his publications.

In early 1946, Mary Hordern, fashion editor of the *Weekly* and Packer's sister-in-law, was sent to Paris to choose the collection of French fashions to be paraded around the country. A powerful local authority on fashion, Hordern was an attractive woman with a statuesque figure well-suited to wearing the clothes she wrote about. It was her idea to recruit four Parisian mannequins to show Australian audiences how these clothes should be worn.

Hordern inspected some 5000 garments over a three-month period, selecting 120 ensembles that represented the essence of French fashion yet were suited to Australian life. Each outfit was fully accessorised, and ranged from simple clothes for spectator sports and the beach to evening gowns.



LEFT: 'THE AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S WEEKLY PARIS FASHION PARADE', COVER, AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S WEEKLY, 21 SEPTEMBER 1946  
 OPPOSITE: FRENCH FASHION PARADE, PRINCE'S RESTAURANT, SYDNEY, 1956, PHOTOGRAPH BY JACK HICKSON, APA 01445



Successive issues of the *Weekly* reported every aspect of Horden's experience in Paris, declaring that 'Fabrics — even prewar fabrics — have never been lovelier'. All the 'woolens were woven from Australian wool', and readers were reminded that the French appreciated the quality of our fine fleece over the embellishments added by their designers.

Under the supervision of Caroline Chambrelent, Directress of the House of Worth, the French mannequins made the gruelling six-day flight from Paris by flying boat. Arriving in August to begin their tour, the women quickly became the toast of the town.

Staged with all the glamour of a Rue de la Paix salon, the French fashion parades opened in the Grand Ballroom of David Jones' Elizabeth Street store on 16 September 1946. Sydney women flocked to the twice-daily showings just as eager to catch a glimpse of the stunning mannequins as the garments themselves, which few could have afforded and were not for sale anyway.

The tour continued on to Myer in Melbourne and Adelaide, and Finney Isles in Brisbane. The

parades became famous, boosting the *Weekly's* sales (circulation 700,000 in 1946) and encouraging the magazine to stage three more French fashion extravaganzas in 1947, 1948 and 1949.

While the parades brought thousands of customers into the department stores, Mary Horden's failure to secure local manufacturing licences was perceived, by David Jones in particular, as a lost merchandising opportunity.

In 1947 David Jones launched its 'Paris Fashion for All' policy, with the intention of securing licences to reproduce Australian adaptations of French model garments in their Surry Hills workrooms.

It was also the year Christian Dior launched his first collection in Paris. Dubbed the 'New Look', it put French fashion on the front page of newspapers all over the world, rendering existing styles *démodé* overnight. To a wartime generation, Dior's fashions embodied the rediscovery of happiness, with his extravagant use of fabric, sweeping skirts and nipped-in waists perfectly timed to satisfy a world starved of luxury, beauty and glamour. Soon after the 'New Look' debuted in February, David Jones secured a franchise with the House of Dior.

At the 1947 Spring Paris openings, Australia was the biggest buyer, with David Jones becoming the first Australian retailer to purchase a complete haute couture collection. Sixty model garments, by various designers, were airmailed out to Sydney with a complete range of accessories so David Jones' customers would see the *tout ensemble* as paraded in Paris.

For the gala opening, on 18 July, 800 people packed the Bois de Rose salon, specially created on the fourth floor of David Jones' Elizabeth Street store, where the French garments were shown, side-by-side, with their Australian adaptations.

The benefit of David Jones' 'Paris Fashion for All' parades was threefold: for the first time the average Australian consumer had access to current season French fashion and French designs adapted to the Australian climate and lifestyle; Australian mannequins gained valuable career experience in parading high fashion garments; and Australian workers were trained in Parisian haute couture methods of cutting, construction and finishing.

In the space of a year, Christian Dior re-established Paris as the heart of fashion innovation, and his follow-up collection for spring 1948 was the most anticipated and watched spectacle of the fashion world.

On the local scene, David Jones staged a further coup over its rivals by securing 'the first Dior-only collection to be shown outside Paris', for its spring 1948 parades. 'New Look' garments from this historic collection would be shown in Australia before being seen anywhere else in the world, with local adaptations available for sale.

Dior collaborated with David Jones because he knew that very few Australians had the chance to visit Paris. He acknowledged Australia's enthusiasm for his extravagant designs, which had attracted criticism in Europe. Perhaps local audiences saw his generous use of materials as a much-needed stimulus to Australian wool and cotton producers. 'Living in the sunshine of a comparatively new country, unscathed by war,' Dior told the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'the Australians have a cleaner brighter outlook and are more receptive to new ideas than the tired people of Europe.'

The couturier despatched 10 packing crates to Australia containing the original model garments selected by David Jones' fashion buyer Alice Condon, along with Dior-designed hats and accessories. Arriving on 25 June 1948, the garments from his Envol (flight) and Zig Zag lines were carefully unpacked and minutely examined in the David Jones' workrooms. A range of adaptations was then designed and manufactured, faithfully reproducing the superb workmanship of Paris haute couture.

On opening night in late July, the social set was far outnumbered by members of the Sydney fashion trade, armed with paper and pencils to sketch the styles and coiffures. Alongside the 50 Dior originals and 34 Australian adaptations, David Jones' 1948 spring/summer collection included designs from the houses of Paquin, Carven, Gres, Lelong, Piguet and Jacques Fath, as well as 25 garments specially designed by Pierre Balmain for the Australian market. The ensembles were paraded by 12 Australian mannequins matched to the exact measurements and colouring of Dior's house models for whom the original gowns had been created. The tiny 19-inch waist of model Narelle Findlay, in particular, caused quite a stir.

As well as capturing the imagination of the Australian buying public, the frenzy for French fashion stimulated local designers and manufacturers to such an extent that 1950 saw the inauguration of the Australian Fashion Fair. Madame Chambrelent (now Mrs Kenneth Cole and a resident) was given the task of organising this first Australian-only fashion exhibition, concluding in the *Weekly*: 'In the 4 years since I first visited Australia I have been greatly impressed with the rapid development of the fashions [by local designers] and feel sure that Australia should soon become one of the world's youngest fashion leaders.'

OPPOSITE: THIS RUNWAY LOOK FROM THE LIBRARY'S PRET-A-PORTE FASHION PARADE PAYS TRIBUTE TO MADAME CHAMBRELENT, WHO WORE A ROYAL BLUE WOOL SUIT ON ARRIVAL IN SYDNEY IN 1946, DARNELL COLLECTION, SYDNEY, MODEL CLARE WEGRYZN





F E A T U R E



# INTO THE INTERIOR

WORDS Olwen Pryke



**THE LIBRARY HAS DIGITISED THE  
JOURNAL OF YOUNG EXPLORER JOHN PRICE,  
WHICH CHRONICLES TWO LITTLE-KNOWN  
ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE MYSTERIES  
OF A FOREIGN LAND.**

ABOVE: *MENURA SUPERBA*,  
FROM AN ACCOUNT OF THE  
ENGLISH COLONY IN NEW  
SOUTH WALES, 1798-1802,  
DAVID COLLINS, Q79/61

OPPOSITE: VIEW ON THE  
WORROGOOMBOO RIVER,  
NSW (DETAIL), C. 1822-23,  
JOSEPH LYCETT, DGD 1/10





Not only did this strange antipodean place represent a complete unknown for the first European settlers, the interior added a further layer of mystery. The unmapped landscape served as a significant deterrent to would-be absconders — a natural prison wall for the penal colony — but it also represented the possibility of finding land and water to supply the precarious settlement. It elicited both fear and hope.

The mysteries of the interior also prompted wonderful tales. For years, rumours of an Arcadia just beyond the mountains had circulated in the colony, capturing the imagination of those desperate for food and freedom.

Daring individuals recognised a seductive means of escape. A group of Irish convicts took to the bush in November 1791, believing they could walk to China. Twenty-one set out, but before the close of the month most had been found, naked and starving. Several had perished.

Governor Hunter warned the convict population not to be misled by idle stories. He proposed an expedition to dispel the rumours and ‘prevent that loss of life which must certainly attend every attempt to discover this fancied paradise’.

A party was formed and the date of departure set for January 1798. Accompanying four convicts and their guards were John Wilson and the young John Price, a servant to Governor Hunter who had arrived in the colony as a 16-year-old. Price enjoyed the bush and was eager to see more of the hinterland.

Wilson’s reasons for accompanying the expedition were more complicated. A seafarer convicted of stealing nine yards of cloth, he had arrived with the First Fleet in 1788. When his seven-year sentence expired — or even before that, according to some accounts — Wilson chose to live with the neighbouring Indigenous peoples. He was given the name Bun-bo-e, picked up some local dialect, and had become a skilled bushman.

In May 1797, Governor Hunter issued a general order that named Wilson and other absconders. They were required to submit themselves to peace officers or be outlawed. Wilson made his way to Parramatta, arriving dressed only in a kangaroo hide apron, with his skin scarified. According to David Collins, the colony’s first judge-advocate, Wilson claimed to have journeyed ‘upward of 100 miles in every direction around the settlement’. His familiarity with the surroundings would prove invaluable for the expedition.

The party set out the following January. Faced with the prospect of climbing through the rugged bushland near Picton, the convicts quickly grew tired. Most returned to Sydney, accompanied by their guards. Price, Wilson and another man, possibly one of the convicts named Roe, continued on. Wilson’s knowledge of the land allowed the party to head in a south-westerly direction, journeying through an area later known as the Southern Highlands.

We know a great deal about the expedition because of an unusual circumstance: although he was the governor’s servant, John Price was literate. Because Price ‘grew up in that country and became pleased with travelling through the woods’, Governor Hunter later wrote to Sir Joseph Banks, ‘he solicited permission to go upon the excursion then intended, and as he could write, he was instructed to enter in a paper, the observations which their journey might suggest. He is an intelligent lad.’

Price’s journal supplies the first written recording of the lyrebird and the koala, and the first mainland account of the wombat, all observed on 26 January 1798, 10 years after the First Fleet arrived in Port Jackson. The party also shot a lyrebird, carrying it with them and presenting the specimen to Governor Hunter on their return.



Eventually the expedition reached the junction of the Wingecarribee and Wollondilly rivers, far south of Parramatta. Turning home, hungry and exhausted, the men cut up their clothing and used the cloth to protect their feet. Price was convinced that 'we must all have perished with hunger, which certainly would have been the case had it not been for the indefatigable zeal of Wilson to supply us with as much as would support life'.

A second expedition to the south-west was later conducted by Wilson, Price and a man named Collins in early March of the same year. This time the men reached Mount Towrang, near present day Goulburn. The two expeditions revealed the rich tablelands that later provided valuable grazing for sheep and cattle.

Some historians now regard the second expedition as one of the most significant explorative journeys of 18th century Australia. Reaching within sight of the Goulburn Plains, it pre-dated by 15 years the famous crossing of the Blue Mountains by Gregory Blaxland, William Lawson and William Charles Wentworth.

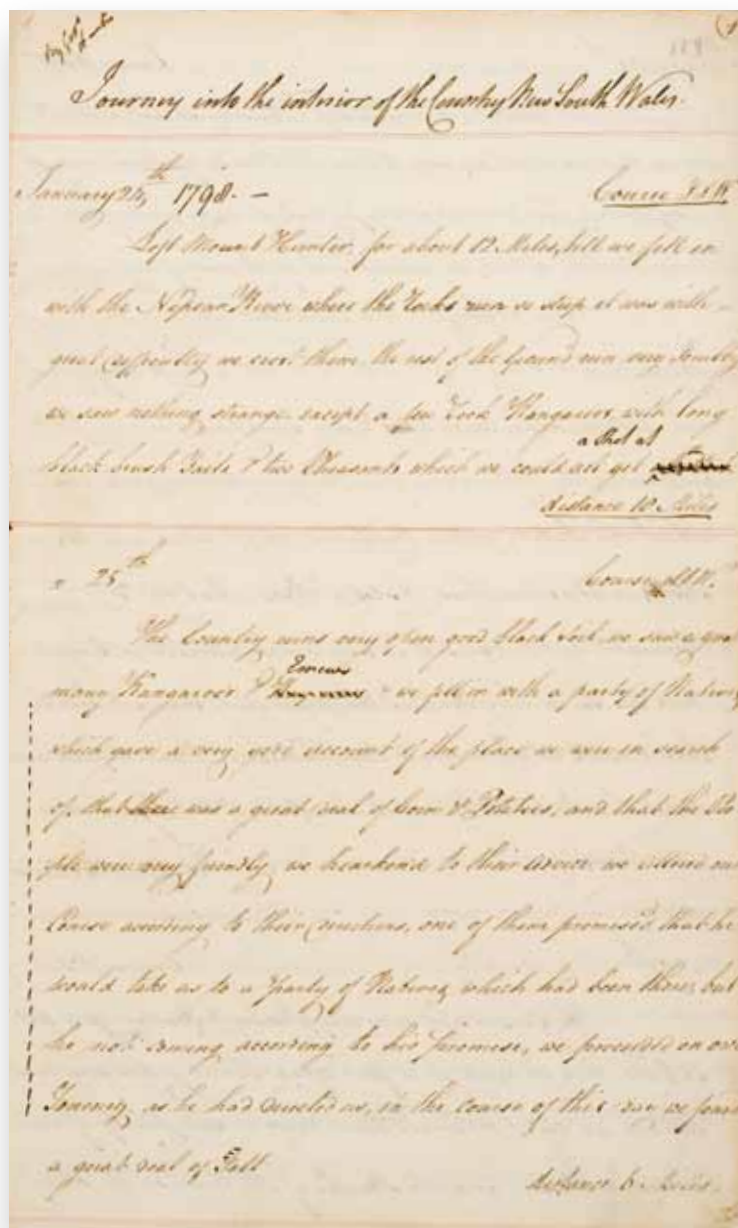
Why is it not better known? Some conjecture that Governor Hunter would have been reluctant to proclaim the discovery of an easy route to pleasant pasture lands across the mountains, especially when the expedition's purpose was to dispel myths about a paradise beyond the settlement's boundaries.

Wilson returned to the bush not long after the second expedition, and in August 1800 a report reached the colony that he had been fatally speared. Within weeks of Wilson's death, Governor Hunter sailed for England, accompanied by his servant Price. A fair copy of Price's journal, covering both expeditions, was presented to Sir Joseph Banks after their return. This journal – part of the Banks papers held at the State Library – has been digitised and is available online.

The journal of John Price has been added to our website at [http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/discover\\_collections/history\\_nation/exploration/index.html](http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/discover_collections/history_nation/exploration/index.html)

We thank the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation for making this possible.

JOURNEY INTO THE INTERIOR OF THE COUNTRY NEW SOUTH WALES, JOHN PRICE, 1798, BANKS COLLECTION: SECTION 7, GOVERNORS OF NEW SOUTH WALES, SERIES 38.21 P 23, P 2-3 / 23



# M O T H E R O F R O C K



*Lillian Roxon's story*



On her way to New York in 1959, the young Australian journalist Lillian Roxon, who'd grown up as an inquisitive teenager in the town of Brisbane awash with American servicemen, stopped in Hawaii to interview Elvis Presley's manager, Colonel Tom Parker. This would mark the beginning of Lillian's passion for rock'n'roll. Ten years later, she was the queen of New York's coolest club, Max's Kansas City, and would write the first ever rock encyclopedia.

TOP: LILLIAN ROXON WITH A FRIEND FROM THE SYDNEY PUSH, 1950S, LILLIAN ROXON PAPERS, 1945-72, MLMSS 3086/3

ABOVE: LILLIAN ROXON, 1950S, LILLIAN ROXON PAPERS, 1945-72, MLMSS 3086/3

OPPOSITE: LILLIAN ROXON LAUNCHING THE ROCK ENCYCLOPEDIA, 1969, LILLIAN ROXON PAPERS, 1960-74, MLMSS 3086 ADD-ON 898



A new documentary, *Mother of Rock: The Life & Times of Lillian Roxon*, marks 40 years since Lillian published the *Rock Encyclopedia* and became a New York celebrity. The film shines a light into the decadent world of Max's, and Roxon's place in documenting the emerging rock revolution. As well as its impressive cast list — featuring interviews with Iggy Pop, Alice Cooper and Germaine Greer, leading rock writers and photographers, and many of Roxon's closest personal friends including author David Malouf — the film uses diaries, letters and photographs from the Lillian Roxon papers in the Mitchell Library to uncover the early aspirations, and the humour and charm, of its subject. The papers were donated by her family and by film producer Margaret Fink, a close friend from Roxon's Sydney Push days in the 1950s.

Roxon came from a Jewish family who had fled Mussolini's Italy for the suburban safety of Brisbane, Australia. The diaries she kept as a teenager show her early entrancement with Hollywood glamour as an escape from family obligations. In the mid 1940s she often saw several double-features a week, writing on 17 July 1945:

Got into trouble this morning. Have to go to dressmaker. Didn't go. Saw 'Fallen Angel' and 'Meet me on Broadway' (Dana Andrews was super.)

She arrived at Sydney University in 1949 and immediately aligned herself with the anti-authoritarian, anarchist Push movement. She embarked on a career as a journalist for the tabloid *Weekend*, edited by a young Donald Horne, writing fresh and inventive pieces that would distinguish her as a forerunner of the New Journalism.

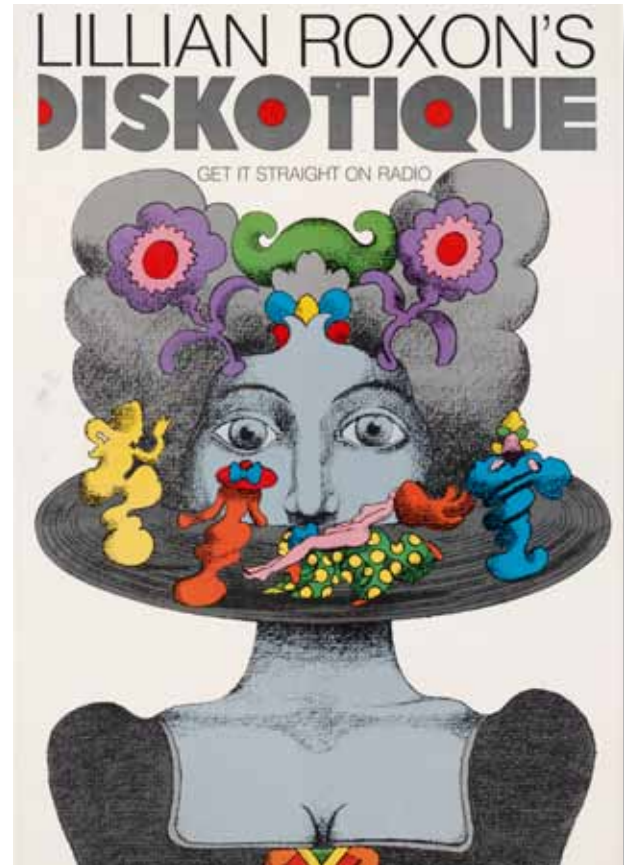


Sydney-based author Robert Milliken's 2002 biography, *Lillian Roxon: Mother of Rock*, shows what it meant for an ambitious young woman in 1950s Sydney to make it as a journalist. Milliken used the Mitchell Library in researching his book, which inspired the documentary, and donated his own research papers and extensive interview transcripts to the Library. The book is due for reissue in 2010.

In 1959 Roxon left Australia for New York where she became increasingly fascinated with the burgeoning cultural phenomenon of popular music. In the mid 1960s, together with close friend Linda Eastman (later McCartney), she covered the British invasion of the US with stories on the Rolling Stones and the Beatles. Rock publicist and manager Danny Fields befriended her after a press conference where he was impressed by the audacity and intelligence of the questions she threw at Beatles' manager Brian Epstein.

Fields and Roxon became the 'king and queen bee' of Max's Kansas City, where they had their own table in the backroom staked out by Andy Warhol and his Superstars. By 1970 Max's was the hippest place to be in New York — patrons included John and Yoko, the Rolling Stones, the Doors, Janis Joplin and Hendrix, the young Patti Smith, and the new sounds of Alice Cooper and the New York Dolls. As the trailblazer for a new breed of writers on rock culture, Roxon wielded real power. But she and Fields were also embraced as friends. Roxon energetically supported the new wave in music, championing bands and artists she saw as fresh and interesting, and mentoring the emergent generation of rock managers, journalists and photographers. She mixed freely with both the art crowd and the rock crowd in the backroom, striking friendships with Warhol, David Bowie, Mick Jagger, Lou Reed and Iggy Pop. The fact that she was Australian was a novelty, and encouraged people to open up to her.

Evidence of Roxon's persistent love for the Australian vernacular can be seen in a selection of her letters recently acquired by the Library. Written to Aviva Layton, a Push friend who moved to Canada and married esteemed Canadian poet Irving Layton,



the letters include such lines as 'the boss announced his wife was preggers which is beaut news as their two current kids are lovely'. The correspondence spans the entire period of Roxon's time in New York and is as interesting for its highly personal insights into the writer's struggle with deadlines, her health, and the pace of New York life, as for the details of Roxon's encounters with performers such as Leonard Cohen ('Leonard came to my office the other day ... and Suzanne was with him'). Roxon was an admirable correspondent, even though she tells Layton, 'Let's face it. I'm just not a writer. I'm a talker.'

Roxon was also a great champion of Australians who visited New York. Anyone who contacted her through Sydney Push or journalism connections was enthusiastically introduced to the influential crowd at Max's. According to Milliken, the Max's stars 'obeyed her instructions to be nice, witty and outrageous' while she 'hyped her visitors as Australia's leading orthodontist/designer/town planner, so they would not go home disappointed'.



But when Germaine Greer came to stay in 1968 the sparks flew. Both were brilliant young emigres whose intellectual foundation had been shaped by the Push, both were popularising feminism in the media, and both were enamoured with rock and roll culture. The visit ended in tears. In 1970, Greer dedicated *The Female Eunuch* to five women identified by their first names. Roxon was not impressed with her dedication at the top of the list, which mentioned the ‘colony of New York roaches’ that shared her flat.

Roxon’s star had already risen with the release in 1969 of the *Rock Encyclopedia*, a 613-page hardback with more than 500 entries from Acid Rock to the *Zombies*. *Rolling Stone* magazine declared, ‘It took Lillian ... to recognize that rock & roll was not a passing fancy but the seedbed for a revolution in lifestyles as well as art ... as such, it deserved to be properly chronicled.’ She was the unchallenged queen of the New York rock scene, and was soon hosting her own radio spot, *Lillian Roxon’s Discotheque*, syndicated across 250 stations in the US, and writing columns for the *New York Sunday News* and a plethora of mainstream and independent magazines.

While researching and writing the *Rock Encyclopedia*, Roxon held down a demanding job as a New York correspondent for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, covering Richard Nixon’s presidential campaign of 1968. With this punishing workload, she developed asthma. Despite ‘knowing everyone’ as Donald Lyons, one of her New York writer colleagues put it, life in her small Manhattan flat could be lonely. Periodically she regretted not having settled into a marriage with children. The legacy of her all-consuming commitment to rock and roll was deteriorating health, mismanaged with heavy doses of cortisone which caused her weight to balloon. In August 1973, Roxon saw Iggy Pop and the Stooges play at Max’s. Rock and roll is not dead, she declared, it’s moving in a new direction, and Iggy Pop, David Bowie and the New York Dolls are the harbingers of it. Within days of writing these prophetic words she was dead. The soupy smog enveloping the city she loved had brought on a severe asthma attack that killed her. She was 41.

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**MOTHER OF ROCK: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF LILLIAN ROXON SCREENS ON SBS IN 2010**

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**MOTHER OF ROCK: THE LILLIAN ROXON STORY, BY ROBERT MILLIKEN, WILL BE PUBLISHED BY BLACK INC IN 2010**

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**THANKS TO PAUL CLARKE, ROBERT DE YOUNG AND ROBERT MILLIKEN FOR CONTRIBUTING TO THIS ARTICLE**



ABOVE: A SELECTION OF LILLIAN ROXON'S DIARIES, LILLIAN ROXON PAPERS, 1945-72, ML MSS 3086/1

LEFT: LETTER FROM LILLIAN ROXON TO AVIVA LAYTON (DETAIL), C. 1968, MLMSS 7869

OPPOSITE: POSTER ADVERTISING LILLIAN ROXON'S RADIO PROGRAM, C. 1970, © MILTON GLASER, LILLIAN ROXON PAPERS, 1966-69, REPRODUCED COURTESY OF MILTON GLASER

# new acquisitions

## A second exposure

Photographer Joseph Mallard scoured the suburbs of Redfern, Erskineville and Newtown in 1995 looking for images showing the gentrification of his inner city working class environment. His documentary photographs were exhibited at the Australian Centre for Photography as part of *Australian Perspectives 1999*.

When I met Joseph a decade later, he thought about selling his historic series, but I suggested returning to the sites of the earlier photographs and taking a second exposure.

The assignment was finished in a few months and both photographer and curator were surprised by the before-and-after shots. Some changes were complete transformations, bearing little resemblance to the original view. One startling example was the old Crago Mills wheat silos at Newtown, which were converted to 68 residential units and townhouses, complete with a car stacker. Others, such as the Overseas Passenger Terminal at Circular Quay, needed more careful examination to identify changes.

In each case, comparison of Joseph Mallard's paired images reveals the march of time. We may not be able to stop changes to our environment, but we can record them.

—  
**ALAN DAVIES**  
Curator of Photographs



/01



/02



/03



/04

URBAN DEVELOPMENT  
IN SYDNEY, 1995–2000,  
JOSEPH MALLARD

- 01 CRAGO MILLS,  
NEWTOWN, 1995
- 02 OVERSEAS PASSENGER  
TERMINAL, WEST  
CIRCULAR QUAY, 1995
- 03 OVERSEAS PASSENGER  
TERMINAL, WEST  
CIRCULAR QUAY, 2009
- 04 SILOS APARTMENT  
[CRAGO MILLS]  
CONVERSION AND  
ENMORE ROAD SHOPS,  
NEWTOWN, 2009



LEFT: *ST ANDREWS ABOVE THE TRAFFIC*, 1928  
GRACE COSSINGTON SMITH  
PENCIL, PEN AND INK  
DRAWING, SSV/93,  
COURTESY OF THE  
ESTATE OF GRACE  
COSSINGTON SMITH

## Above the traffic

The Library has a long tradition of collecting artworks and photographs that show the genesis and ongoing development of the city of Sydney. A recently purchased drawing by Grace Cossington Smith (1892–1984), titled *St Andrew's above the Traffic* and dated 1928, shows the area around St Andrew's Cathedral during the construction of Town Hall underground railway station.

At a time when there was still prejudice against women artists, and in particular those depicting unfeminine subjects such as building sites, Grace Cossington Smith's sketch focuses on construction work as an everyday activity.

Her drawing provides a perspective that is not replicated in any known photographs of the site at this time. Work on the underground railway station, now one of Sydney's busiest, had begun in 1926. The underground opened as a four platform station in 1932. (The remaining two platforms did not open until 1979.)

Cossington Smith lived almost her entire life in Sydney. Her work elicited little enthusiasm during most of her lifetime, with real recognition not coming until the last decade of her life. Today she is considered one of Australia's leading, and earliest, modernists.

Known for her intimate domestic scenes, Cossington Smith's work also shows the city of Sydney, its people, crowds and public places including, famously, Sydney Harbour Bridge under construction. She often made quick sketches on location but relied on memory or, in this case, photography to record the detail of what she was depicting.

*St Andrew's above the Traffic* records the constantly changing face of Sydney by a highly accomplished Sydney-based artist.

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**LOUISE ANEMAAT**  
Head of Pictures



Written from the heart, Blanche Mitchell's diary preserves the lost world of Australia's colonial gentry. Mitchell Library reader Craig Wilcox finds a new angle to this intimate diary.

# colonial/courtship

WORDS Craig Wilcox



I sat down recently to write a history of the relationship between colonial Australians and the British army. It wasn't defence policy or imperial relations that interested me, but how an earlier Australia felt about the army and related to it. One guide to that forgotten or at best misremembered relationship turned out to be a Sydney teenager called Blanche Mitchell.

Blanche was the youngest daughter of Sir Thomas Mitchell, the NSW Surveyor General. He died when Blanche was twelve, three years before she began keeping a diary. She grew up in a querulous household that feared sliding down the social scale, but her frankness, sense of fun and enormous sympathy shine through every page she wrote.

Historians have often drawn on Blanche's articulate and charming words. But as I began reading her diary, I was surprised to find something no historian had made much of. For six weeks, Blanche's main concern was to record the courtship between her sister Alice and a British army officer on garrison duty in Australia.

Blanche found Lieutenant Phillip Dauncey of the 77th Regiment in her house one day in March 1858, the young Englishman having paid 'a great deal of attention to Alice the evening before'. The attention continued, especially at weekly concerts given by the regimental band in the Domain.

The courtship might have withered after the 77th Regiment was marked to sail off to war. Instead the news roused Dauncey to win Alice. He found an ally in her mother, who inquired into his background and learned he came from 'an old English family and expected to come into £5,000 a year'.

When Dauncey knocked at the door one afternoon 'and asked for Mamma, and then took her into the dining room, saying he had something to say to her', she consented to a proposal. Alice accepted, but seemed strangely insouciant afterward. 'Very wrong', puzzled Blanche, who thought 'she ought to have retired to her room and thanked God for giving her a husband'.

Now war called. Dauncey visited one last time, then the family roused itself to watch the regiment march through the city to Circular Quay, its band appropriately playing 'The Girl I Left Behind Me'.

A year later Dauncey returned to marry Alice. Blanche found him 'talkative about self and family, which two things are always predominant in his mind'. For once she was in an unforgiving mood. The lieutenant was about to take her beloved sister away forever.

Blanche's record of the courtship of Phillip Dauncey and Alice Mitchell is more than a charming read. It taught me how close relations were between the colonial gentry and British officers, even in the wake of the Eureka Stockade affair, and how marriage to the right kind of redcoat was sometimes ardently sought.

Blanche Mitchell's diary can be read on the State Library website or in the book *Blanche: An Australian Diary*, edited by Edna Hickson.

**CRAIG WILCOX'S LATEST BOOK  
IS RED COAT DREAMING**

BELOW: BLANCHE MITCHELL'S DIARY, 27-28 MARCH 1858, MLMSS 1611, F. 78-79

OPPOSITE: PORTRAIT THOUGHT TO BE OF BLANCHE MITCHELL (DETAIL), UNKNOWN ARTIST, C. 1860S, PASTEL ON PAPER, ML 823



partners

*Discover Collections* is an online initiative that dynamically transforms the way the Library provides access to our collections. Through the generosity and support of many benefactors, we now have over 23 engaging and informative stories.

[www.sl.nsw.gov.au/discover\\_collections](http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/discover_collections)

# building a strong Foundation



## Holtermann project: Where are we now?

Our Holtermann Collection Digitisation Project is well underway. After a successful fundraising initiative to digitise the internationally significant Holtermann photographic collection, you can now follow the unfolding story on our online blog. The blog provides updates on the project's progress in digitising the incredible 3500 glass plate negatives documenting the 1870s gold rush era in NSW and Victoria. Conversations on the challenges, preservation techniques, and the rich content in the images are open to everyone.

The Foundation acknowledges the generosity and foresight of our sponsors and supporters, without whom this important digitisation program would not have been possible. Only through this wonderful support are we able to provide a window to Australia's heritage for current and future generations.

[blog.sl.nsw.gov.au/holtermann](http://blog.sl.nsw.gov.au/holtermann)

IMAGE: HILL END, C. 1872, HOLTERMANN COLLECTION

## Digitising the Dixon maps

On 9 September the Foundation held an event to raise funds towards digitising the significant Sir William Dixon Map Collection of 1100 historic and rare sheet maps. This will enable online access to the maps, which display the fine art of cartography and provide a visual record of our history.

To date the Foundation has raised over \$70,000 to purchase a state-of-the-art photographic system designed to capture the fine detail in maps. We expect the system to be installed by the end of 2009.



## Library Circle event

At the Library Circle morning tea on 23 September, Elise Edmonds and Emma Gray of *Discover Collections* presented some of the objects which will feature in the upcoming display *Stranger than Fiction*, part of the 2010 Mitchell Library centenary celebrations.

Most people think of the Library's collections as mainly paper-based, but we also have hundreds of items such as coins, medals, textiles, silverware, glassware, jewellery, toys, tins and weaponry tools.

The display showcases some of these items, including Nellie Melba's Cartier hairpin case, Patrick White's typewriter, a convict's button and a clod of earth taken from the pitch at the Sydney Cricket Ground during the Bodyline series.



Library Circle members were shown a silver ear trumpet used by bohemian artist and author Ethel Anderson; several unique bird whistles, handmade by native bird enthusiast Henry Grace (see back page); First World War artist George Washington Lambert's ID bracelet in the shape of an artist's palette; and a gift box presented to Australian troops at Christmas 1915 with two oil paintings on the inside surfaces by soldier and artist Jack Sommers.

*Stranger than Fiction* is now open in the Macquarie cases on the Lower Ground Floor.

IMAGE: PATRICK WHITE'S TYPEWRITER

## Generous bequest

The Foundation wishes to acknowledge the passing of Dorothy Maber, a supporter of the Library as a Custodian donor for over 10 years. Dorothy, who died earlier this year, generously named the Library as a beneficiary in her will. Her donation will be used to assist with the preservation of the collection.

If you are passionate about supporting the State Library, you can help us to acquire, preserve and digitise Australia's cultural heritage by making a donation to the Foundation, or leaving a planned gift or bequest.

Phone: (02) 9273 1593  
[foundation@sl.nsw.gov.au](mailto:foundation@sl.nsw.gov.au)



## Architect's donation

The Library has taken receipt of a rare, limited edition copy of *Old Colonial Architecture of New South Wales and Tasmania*, published in 1924 and signed by the author, William Hardy Wilson, one of the leading lights of Australian architecture in the 20th century. The book was donated by the estate of the late Sydney architect James Newell Gordon.

Foundation Executive Director Susan Hunt accepted the donation on behalf of the Library from Jamie Gordon, son of the late James Newell Gordon, and Jeremy Glass from de Groot's Wills & Estates lawyers.

IMAGE: SUSAN HUNT, JAMIE GORDON AND JEREMY GLASS

## Volunteers transcribe World War I diaries

A dedicated team of 32 State Library volunteers is currently transcribing a collection of over 300 World War I diaries held by the Mitchell Library. 'The diaries provide an insight into the lives of servicemen of all ranks,' explains volunteer Peter Mayo, 'not only while in action, but in the long periods behind the lines, in camp, in hospital and on leave.' The volunteers take great pride in supporting this project, and feel privileged to read and transcribe these accounts — sometimes very personal — of soldiers' lives during the Great War.

IMAGE: VOLUNTEERS PETER MAYO, DAVID LAMBERT AND ALISON O'SULLIVAN



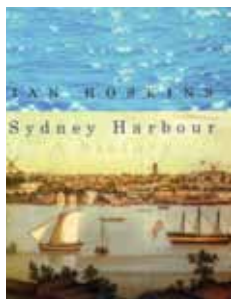
friends

Our Friends enjoy a special relationship with the Library. Benefits include previews of upcoming exhibitions, behind-the-scenes tours and exclusive access to new acquisitions.

## New-look publications

We are producing a new look for our *What's On* booklet and *SL* magazine in line with the Library's new branding. From December 2009, *SL* magazine will be mailed to Library Partners, Members, Friends and Volunteers. The quarterly *What's On* guide will be sent with the magazine and will also be available at the information desks.

# for our friends



## Library Shop special offer

We are offering Friends an exclusive opportunity to purchase *Sydney Harbour: A History*, a beautiful and compelling new book by Ian Hoskins at a discount price. *Sydney Harbour* explores the story of the glittering harbour from the time of the Gamaragal and Gadigal to contemporary debates about the future of the 'working harbour'.

**SPECIAL FRIENDS OFFER: \$35**  
(RETAIL \$49.95)

## Upcoming events

In 2010 the Mitchell Library celebrates its centenary. We are excited to offer you a jam-packed program of talks, tours and events to mark this significant occasion and acknowledge the Library's contribution to the cultural and intellectual life of Australia.

You can keep up with all that's planned and immerse yourself in everything 2010 by going to our special 2010 website for the special release of our own alphabet. Hear Richard Neville, Mitchell Librarian, talk about the Mitchell and its rich history. Meet Paul Brunton, who talks about his latest curatorial role for the *ONE hundred* exhibition which opens on 8 March 2010.

Don't miss the exclusive Friends event in March for *ONE hundred*, or our behind-the-scenes tours in April. We will send invitations in the new year.

[www.onehundred.sl.nsw.gov.au](http://www.onehundred.sl.nsw.gov.au)

## Joining and renewing

For existing Friends, please note that renewals will now be one month later on 31 March 2010 not 28 February. Existing Friends will get one month free! A new-look Friends benefits package, in conjunction with the centenary celebrations of the Mitchell Library, will be announced in March 2010.

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**FOR NEW FRIENDS INQUIRIES PLEASE VISIT**

[www.sl.nsw.gov.au/about/support](http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/about/support)

—  
**OR CONTACT US AT:**

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**Mitchell Wing**

**Macquarie Street**

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**Fax: (02) 9273 1270**

**Email: [foundation@sl.nsw.gov.au](mailto:foundation@sl.nsw.gov.au)**

recent highlights



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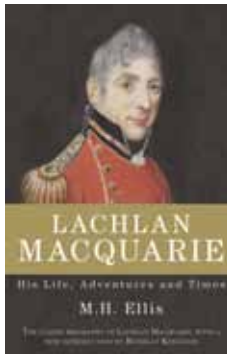
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- 01 VANIMAN PANORAMA  
SL U35 EVENT, 2 JULY 09
- 02 CAIRO JIM SCHOOL  
HOLIDAY PERFORMANCE
- 03 PRET-A-PORTER  
FRENCH FASHION  
PARADE, SOFITEL  
SYDNEY WENTWORTH,  
30 JULY 09
- 04 JULIAN MORROW  
AND MAX BARRY AT A  
SYDNEY PEN LECTURE,  
15 JULY 2009
- 05 SPEED-READING  
COMPETITION TO  
LAUNCH *THE LOST  
SYMBOL*,  
15 SEPTEMBER 09
- 06 STUDENTS FROM  
CHRIST'S HOSPITAL  
SCHOOL, UK, WITH A  
GOLD MEDAL AWARDED  
TO WILLIAM FARRER,
- A FORMER PUPIL  
OF THE SCHOOL AND  
AUSTRALIAN WHEAT  
INDUSTRY PIONEER
- 07 MAGGIE BEER AT THE  
LIBRARY TO FILM *WHO  
DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?*
- 08 JOHN HOYLE, RARE  
BOOKS DONOR, WITH  
AN ABC CREW FILMING  
*THE COLLECTORS*
- 09 SCHOOL HOLIDAY  
BOOK-MAKING  
WORKSHOP
- 10 ACTOR VINCE WREN AT  
A FOUNDATION  
EDWARD CLOSE EVENT,  
22 JULY 09
- PHOTOS BY SCOTT WAJON  
AND BRUCE YORK



# the library shop

Open 7 days  
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www.sl.nsw.gov.au/shop



## LACHLAN MACQUARIE

by M H Ellis

This landmark biography has been reissued for the bicentenary of Lachlan Macquarie's appointment as Governor of NSW. With a new introduction by historian Beverley Kingston, the book paints a vivid picture of this period of Australia's history, when a governor's word was law. M H Ellis gives a detailed account of the life of this complex and important historical figure.

**\$40**

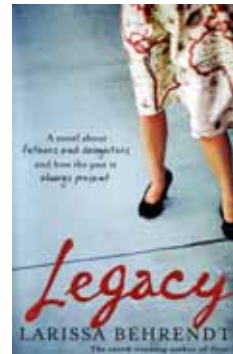


## FOOD SAFARI

by Maeve O'Meara

Maeve O'Meara has spent most of her life seeking out great food, recipes and the clever people who make simple ingredients sing. In this wonderful book she takes the reader on an adventure into 34 diverse cuisines by exploring the basic ingredients of each cuisine and making the exotic familiar. *Food Safari* offers simple recipes that anyone can cook at home.

**\$55**



## LEGACY

by Larissa Behrendt

Larissa Behrendt AO spoke at two recent State Library events with standing room only to see the popular author and law professor. Behrendt's new novel *Legacy* is the story of Simone Harlowe, an Aboriginal lawyer straddling two lives and two cultures while studying at Harvard.

**\$24.95**



## On the map

The Library's expert maps staff have chosen a range of historical maps of Sydney for sale as fine art prints. Available to order through the Library Shop or online, prices start at \$48.

See [www.sl.nsw.gov.au/shop](http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/shop)



## Interrobang bracelet

A sterling silver bracelet, featuring our bold new 'interrobang' logo, is part of an exclusive gift range to be launched to mark the Mitchell Library centenary.

# “Q&A” *Raimond Gaita*

Professor Raimond Gaita delivered the National Biography Award lecture at the Library in November on the subject of ‘Truth in biography’. He is writing a book of essays related to his award-winning memoir *Romulus, My Father*.

**IS IT POSSIBLE FOR A BIOGRAPHER TO PRESENT A TRUE DEPICTION OF HIS OR HER SUBJECT?**

I’m sure people would stop reading biography unless they thought it offered, in principle, an answer to the question, ‘Was this person (the biographical subject) really like that?’ Some people say that the question is incorrigibly naive, but I think they are mistaken.

**DID THE FILM OF *ROMULUS, MY FATHER* CHANGE HOW YOU THOUGHT ABOUT YOUR WRITING?**

Because the characters (especially Christine) were filled out in certain ways, it raised new questions about them. Also, since it aimed and, I think, succeeded in being true to the spirit of the book, it raised very interesting questions about the ideas at the heart of the book. And because I read and discussed in detail every draft of the screenplay, I learned a lot about the problems screenwriters face in adapting a book like *Romulus* to the screen.

**HOW CAN PHILOSOPHY BE APPLIED TO EVERYDAY LIFE?**

It can’t in any straightforward way. Philosophers do, of course, sit on various committees – but it is controversial whether that is, on the whole, a good thing. It depends on the state of philosophy at the time, and on the philosophers who are doing it. I have written about it in an essay, ‘The responsibility of intellectuals’, in my book *A Common Humanity* and also in the last chapter of *Good and Evil*.

**WHAT FASCINATES YOU AT THE MOMENT?**

My grandchildren. But I assume you’re asking about my work. I’m thinking a lot about the different forms of our relations to the natural world and also about the complex relations between morality, law, politics, philosophy and literature. In the next year or so, I also want to write a memoir celebrating the lives of people who have mattered to me.

**WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT LIBRARIES?**

That they honour so well their responsibility of custodianship. And, of course, like many people, I love to browse.

**A RECORDING OF THE NATIONAL BIOGRAPHY AWARD LECTURE IS AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE.**





## Stranger than fiction

Handmade bird whistles belonging to passionate bird watcher Henry Grace are part of *Stranger than Fiction*, a new display of weird and wonderful objects from the Library's collection.