



Circa

The Journal of
Professional
Historians
Issue seven, 2020



Professional
Historians
Australia



Circa: The Journal of Professional Historians
Issue seven, 2020
Professional Historians Australia

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ISSN 1837-784X

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Cover images:

Top: Ivan Vasiliev in an extract from *Spartacus* during a gala celebrating the reopening of the Bolshoi Theatre, 28 October 2011. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/13260/photos/10521>

Bottom: Hoff's students Treasure Conlon, Barbara Tribe and Eileen McGrath working on the Eastern Front relief for the Anzac Memorial, Hoff's studio, 1932.

Photograph courtesy McGrath family

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to *Circa: The Journal of Professional Historians Issue 7, 2020*. Because of the limited number of articles received during the last 18 months, this issue is being released in digital form only. This has been necessitated by the increasing costs of producing and mailing hard copies of the journal to all PHA members. However, a final decision has not yet been made, as members have expressed a preference for printed paper copies of *Circa*. Professional Historians Australia is currently trialling alternating digital and hard copy publications.

While digital journals seemingly lack the gravitas of print editions, efforts to maintain the quality of the papers have not dropped. Articles submitted to *Circa*, like those submitted to academic journals, go through a double blind referee system in which the names of the authors and the two referees who assess the papers remain anonymous. For *Circa*, papers are assessed for narrative structure, accuracy and the ability to present a coherent argument. The referee process is not applied to articles submitted for the Practices section because this of section is intended to present 'how to' style papers that are aimed at sharing professional experiences. Instead, these articles are edited to improve structure and clarity by a member of the editorial board. This approach is in keeping with the main goal of *Circa*, which is to publish work that reflects the many styles, themes and formats embraced by professional historians, to establish a dialogue between professional historians and to promote the profession to a wider audience.

Despite the smaller number of articles in this issue, they display the diverse range of skills needed to practice as a professional historian. In 'Out of the Darkness', Helen Penrose explores the ethical implications of writing an honest history of a school when one of its teachers has been successfully prosecuted for child sexual abuse. In 'A Woman's Place', Deborah Beck leads the reader on a pictorial voyage of discovery as she explains the gender politics behind the construction the New South Wales Hyde Park Anzac Memorial. Bianka Vidonja Balanzategui uses the regional examples of sugar planters' and small farmers' agricultural associations in far north Queensland to delve into the roles localised social and commercial interests played in the formation of these associations and the shaping of Queensland's sugar industry. Christine de Matos reflects on whether modern dance can be a form of public history and teases out the layered history behind modern

interpretations of the ballet *Spartacus*. Finally, Emma Russell and Carissa Goudy outline the challenges they faced when researching and writing short biographies for an online catalogue with over 300 entries.

Circa would not exist without these contributors, who are commended for their willingness to share their experiences as professional historians. My gratitude goes to members on the Editorial Board -- Carmel Black, Neville Buch, Emma Russell, Richard Trembath and Ian Wills -- for their support in the production of this issue. Also thanks goes to retiring Board members Francesca Beddie, Sophie Church, Brain Dickey and Amanda McLeod with a special thank you to Sophie, former editor of *Circa*, for her ongoing support and advice.

Happy reading.

Christine Cheater
Editor
April 2020

Call for Papers

Circa: The Journal of Professional Historians, Issue 8

Contributions are invited in the following categories:

- Explorations: Issues we face as professional historians
- Discoveries: Discovering and telling a story
- Reflections: Thinking about history, its impact on us and our role in understanding it
- Practices: Practical advice and guidance for professional historians
- Reviews: Reviews of books, exhibitions, websites

Submission is open to PHA members throughout Australia. All articles (except reviews) will be peer reviewed. All submissions must conform to the requirements detailed in the guidelines for contributors, available at www.historians.org.au

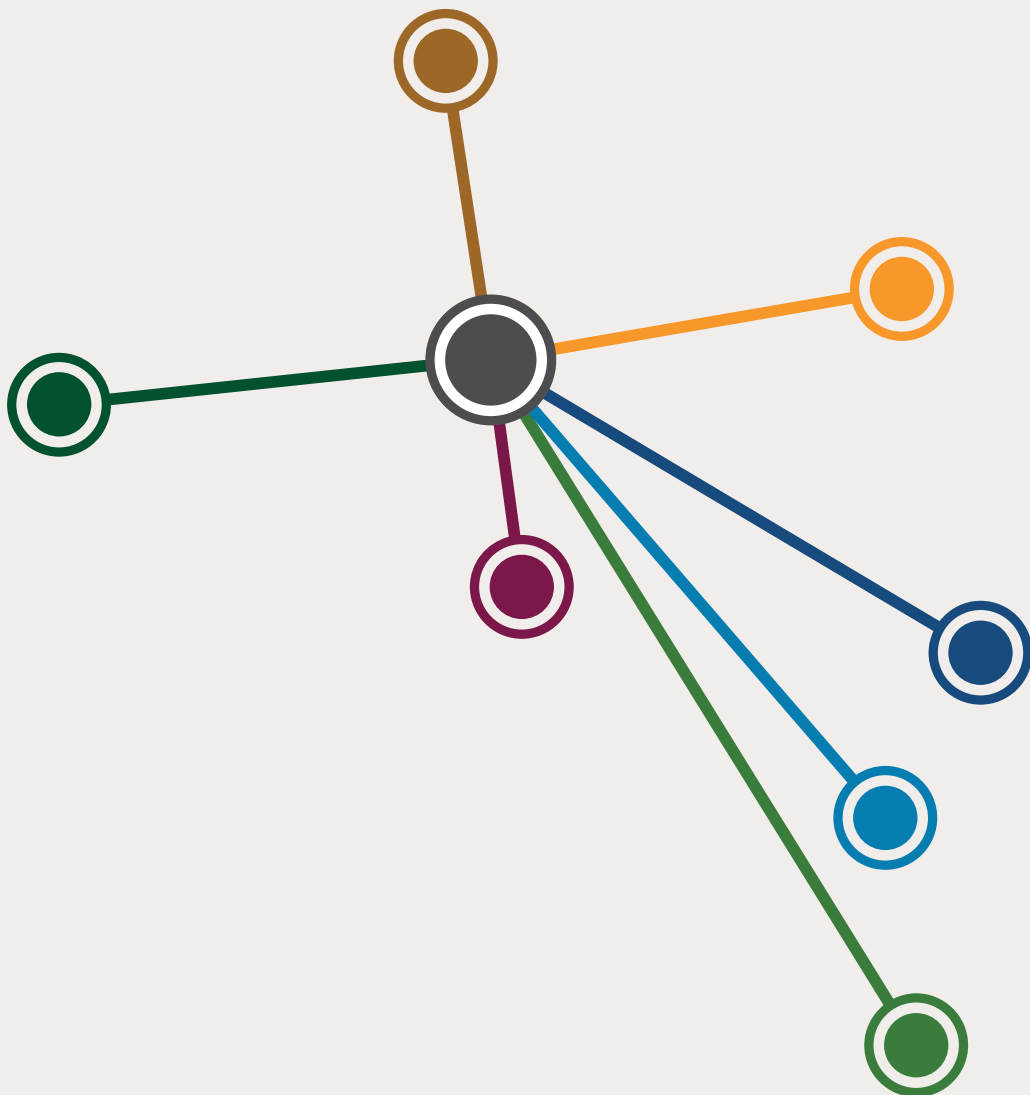
Submissions may be sent at any time.

Direct submissions and correspondence to the Editor.
Email: circa@historians.org.au

Part one

Explorations

Issues we face as professional historians



OUT OF THE DARKNESS, INTO THE LIGHT: Recording child sexual abuse narratives

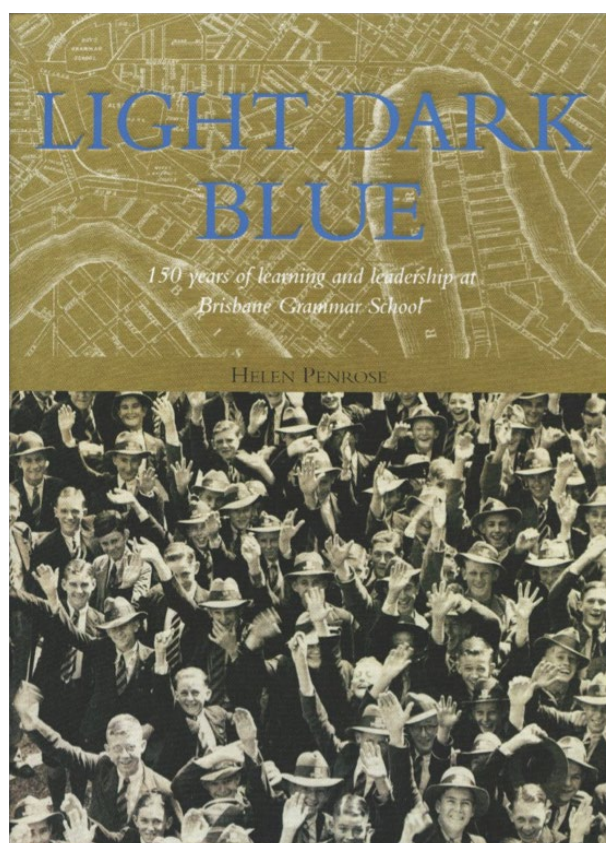
Helen Penrose

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has issued professional historians with a challenge for the way we write commissioned histories of major institutions. At the 2016 Professional Historians Association (PHA) conference in Melbourne, I spoke of my proposed methodology to tackle the recording of child sexual abuse in commissioned histories. Since then, a major example of this work has been completed for Brisbane Grammar School and was published in March 2019. This paper, contrived as a sequel, drew directly on the Brisbane Grammar School project, and was delivered at the 2018 PHA national conference in Sydney. For publication as an article, the paper has been edited and amended, and a reflective conclusion added.

Background

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse was a watershed in Australian society. It must be seen as a watershed for professional historians, too. It has issued us with a challenge for the way we write commissioned histories of major institutions. Usually marking a significant historical event, such as the centenary or sesquicentenary of the founding of an organisation, the commissioned histories we write for these occasions have a responsibility to record exceptionally difficult truths. Earlier publications have rarely recorded these, usually to satisfy clients' requirements. At the PHA national conference in Melbourne in 2016 I spoke of this and of my proposed methodology to tackle the recording of child sexual abuse in commissioned histories.¹

The royal commission was then underway. It concluded in December 2017 and handed down its report early in 2018.² This period coincided with my work on the sesquicentenary history of Brisbane Grammar School. The book was published in March 2019.³ It includes one chapter on child sexual abuse at the school, perpetrated during the 1970s and 1980s by tried and convicted school counsellor Kevin Lynch. The chapter is the greatest challenge I have faced in my 25 years' working in this field. Perhaps the completed work could become a case study for other historians to consider and adapt? Many of us are already addressing this topic in our commissioned history work, or will need to do so in the future. My approach demanded sensitivity, diplomacy, many hours of listening, and tears. This paper records the path I took, in close consultation with the school, to write the chapter.



Front cover: *Light Dark Blue: 150 years of learning and leadership at Brisbane Grammar School*

Understanding the scope

Even before the project commenced, the Brisbane Grammar School Board's chairman told me that the school wanted a chapter in the book to cover child sexual abuse. Examples I could find in other school

histories indicated approaches that ranged from complete silence, to a few paragraphs, to a page or two at most. I was aware from the outset that this book would possibly break new ground. Had there been no royal commission, these events would still have been covered in the sesquicentenary history of the school. It was a matter of public record.

The historical abuse at Brisbane Grammar School had been revealed from 2000, when a victim committed suicide after a stand-off with police. It was extensively covered in the press. As survivors came forward, the school simultaneously addressed their experiences and introduced contemporary child protection policies. The events had become an ingrained part of the school community's collective memory. To ignore them in a major history of Brisbane's oldest secondary boys' school would have been perilous and would have shattered the survivors. The fact that I did not need to argue for the topic's inclusion in the history was as remarkable as it was refreshing. It was also bold and brave of the school Board.

The royal commission hearing

Beginning work on the project in May 2015, I started research on Brisbane and Queensland in the 1860s. Then, early in November 2015, Brisbane Grammar School appeared for four days at a hearing of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The school shared this hearing, Case Study 34, with St Paul's School, where the perpetrator obtained a job immediately after leaving Brisbane Grammar School in 1988, and where he continued his trajectory of abuse until his suicide in 1997. During the four days when Brisbane Grammar School survivors and representatives appeared at the hearing, I listened to every word live-streamed on the royal commission's website, and took notes. I included my reactions and impressions, because listening to the statements read by seven survivors and three parents was confronting and emotionally draining. Three teachers and the Board's chairman also gave evidence.

My notes included the following remarks:

'A harrowing four days for the victims, and everyone associated with the school.'

'Some testimony pointed to a tough culture at BGS [Brisbane Grammar School] in the 1980s in which boys with problems were expected to get on with things.'

'The only winners are those children who, in the future, may be protected by the exposure of such events.'

My notes also included the remark made by the

school's chairman at the end of his testimony and after an emotional apology on behalf of the school. He declared his instructions to the author that this chapter must be recorded in Brisbane Grammar School's 150th anniversary history.⁴ It was likely, then, that this particular chapter would be more carefully scrutinised than any other.

Through its website, the royal commission provided to the public an unprecedented cache of documentation about the abuse. Transcripts of each day's evidence, and all of the supporting documents, were made available for each case study.⁵ More than 1100 documents formed part of the evidence for Case Study 34. Around half related to Brisbane Grammar School.



The royal commission's final report, 2018 (17 volumes). Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au

Oral history

During 2016, oral history interviewing was scheduled for the Brisbane Grammar School history project. Most people interviewed for the project were not associated with the school when the abuse occurred. Those who were, answered two important questions: 'How have long-serving staff from the 1980s onwards been able to reconcile the BGS [Brisbane Grammar School] as they experienced and created and understood it with what is now known about Kevin Lynch?' and 'Is it openly discussed?'

Because the perpetrator reported only to the headmaster, other staff assumed there was proper oversight and that records were kept, so they got on with their own jobs. One interviewee stated:

We weren't as well versed in student wellbeing as we are now. We weren't as well versed in the tell-tale signs. It's easy to judge the place harshly by the standards of 2016, but the times didn't lend themselves, sadly, to the identification of Lynch or of victims.⁶

Other interviewees recalled the confronting and disruptive period in November 2015 when the school



Royal commission hearing – Case Study 34, November 2015. Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au

was often in the headlines during the royal commission's hearing. This indicated to me the need to consider and describe in the chapter the impact of the royal commission process on the contemporary school community. My paragraph about this topic in the published chapter drew generally on several interviews:

Reporters, photographers and news crews camped outside the school, and it became the topic of many items in print, online and television media. The fairness or otherwise of some of these reports was widely discussed in the school community at the time. Some parents, students and teachers felt the school's treatment in social media was especially harsh. Contemporary students expressed the view that they remained proud to wear the light dark blue. Old boys from earlier eras were, in general, proud of the openness with which the school handled the revelations of the abuse in 2000 and the royal commission process. Of course, many old boys are also deeply shocked, disappointed and angry that some of their friends have experienced this abuse.⁷

Including one or two survivors in the oral history program was carefully considered and eventually rejected by senior decision-makers at the school. The intent to add survivors' voices was outweighed by the possibility of the unnecessary re-traumatisation

this might have inflicted. The very large number of survivors – at least 130 – also posed some difficulty. How could we choose only one or two? Instead, I was able to draw generically on the testimony provided by survivors at the royal commission, and on other information given by the school about how the school counsellor contrived to commit this abuse.⁸

Other research

Official school records, such as Board minutes and papers, provided the framework of information for events between 2000 and 2017. Contextual reading led me to *Spotlight*, a book published by investigative journalists at the *Boston Globe* in 2002, about abuse prevalent in the Roman Catholic Church in Boston, United States of America.⁹ The book premiered as a film in 2015. *Spotlight* demonstrated the courage of the journalists in investigating and reporting on the abuse, and underlined once again the enormously confronting nature of the complex topic.

An October 2016 session at Melbourne's Wheeler Centre, titled 'A matter of trust: writing sexual abuse', enabled me to listen to other writers' approaches to the topic. Joanne McCarthy, a journalist at the *Newcastle Herald* who in 2006 reported on the cover up of sexual abuse in the Hunter Valley region, won a gold Walkley Award in 2013 for her work, and campaigned for the royal commission. Manny Waks, the other speaker at the session, published a memoir in 2016 that uncovered child sexual abuse at the Yeshivah Centre in Melbourne.¹⁰

Royal commission research published in 2015

acknowledged the complexities that surround people's failures to see or act effectively on suspicions of abuse, which with hindsight seem inexcusable: 'Benign and grooming behaviours can have some of the very same goals, and go to the very heart of what the institution is trying to achieve, such as cultivating trusting adult-child relationships'.¹¹ This source provided important insights from experts in the field. Extensive media reports of Case Study 34 during November 2015 also formed part of my reading list, as did case studies of other schools studied at the royal commission. These included Knox Grammar School in Sydney, Geelong Grammar School and The Hutchins School in Hobart.

The final report of the royal commission on the case study into The Hutchins School seemed especially relevant. The publication of a history of that school coincided with the first year of the five-year royal commission in 2013. The school, where abuse was perpetrated by four teachers and the headmaster, was a subject of a case study late in 2014. The final report of the royal commission drew attention to the history book, and found that 'the school failed to provide an honest and transparent account' of the events surrounding the headmaster's departure from the school, which were known at the time of publication. The history 'clouded the facts with euphemisms and innuendo ... It cannot be described as a public acknowledgement of the issues'.¹² These comments further sharpened my resolve to write an honest and transparent account of the abuse at Brisbane Grammar School.

Structure

Prepared in October 2016, my proposed manuscript outline placed the chapter on child sexual abuse in the second half of the book. It concluded a series of chapters on the 1970s and 1980s. An alternative structure discussed with the history committee was to weave the events throughout several chapters to cover the abuse in the 1970s and 1980s, its discovery in 2000, the school's response, and then the royal commission in 2015. One problem with this chronological approach was my brief to write thematically or by subject. Drawing the material together in one chapter therefore seemed obvious. The second problem, if the one-chapter approach was not taken, was that the continual reminder of the events, if spread through other chapters, would have completely sullied the memory and record of the reforming headmaster who presided for 25 years over key educational changes at Brisbane Grammar School and who was among the vanguard of educational reform in Queensland in the early 1970s. It was on his watch that the abuse occurred during the 1970s and 1980s. In October 2017, I moved the chapter to become the second last in the book. It seemed a better choice. Placed close to most

of the history of the school in the 2010s – the decade of the royal commission – it was not the final chapter of the book, which would have been miserable.

Drafting and redrafting

The many stages of writing this chapter were the most complicated parts of the project, as it required keeping track of emerging new material. During the week in which I began drafting the chapter in February 2017, the royal commission published its final report into Case Study 34.¹³ It was a key source. The ten people on the school history committee read the first draft of the chapter in July 2017. The school's solicitor read it, too. I distributed the chapter in the context of the complete draft manuscript, because I regarded the historical context as essential to a proper understanding of this part of the school's story. New information about the perpetrator received by the royal commission in mid-2017 was published as a supplementary report to Case Study 34 in August 2017. I immediately reviewed this document, rewrote some sections of the chapter and distributed the revised chapter to the school history committee.

A senior, long-serving staff member who had taught at Brisbane Grammar School since 1982 also agreed to review the chapter. He offered a valuable perspective, too, as an old boy of the school who had been a student in the 1970s. He believed I had treated the material honestly and that the chapter was logical and easy to read, despite its harrowing nature.¹⁴ The majority of the history committee agreed.

External readers

In October 2017, the headmaster, the Board chairman, the history committee chairman and I agreed to invite one important external reader to review the draft chapter. The solicitor who acted for many of the survivors did this willingly, and his feedback confirmed the approach was as sound as it could be. Nothing 'leaps out at me that might be considered overtly offensive' and the events are 'articulated with a measured balance of sensitivity and hard fact', he wrote.¹⁵ His involvement in the preparation of the chapter came as close as we dared to asking for feedback from the survivors themselves. By this time, an external copyeditor, who was also an accredited professional historian, had read the entire manuscript and agreed with the solicitor's sentiments. Members of the former headmaster's family formed a group of external readers, too. I had promised that they would see this chapter, as well as several others, before completion of the project. My accompanying letter to them reminded them of my promise to find the right balance in the book to ensure the former headmaster's legacy was justly recorded.¹⁶ The family agreed that this had been achieved.

Writing the chapter therefore represented a great deal of collaboration. This should, of course, be a hallmark of all good commissioned history projects. Difficult topics, such as child sexual abuse, bullying and crime, require additional patience, extra writing time and, possibly, a wider than usual circle of readers.

Style

Despite the emotive topic, the writing of this chapter demanded an objective and precise recording style. I was extremely aware that my response to hearing the evidence of the royal commission could not be reflected in the chapter, yet I wanted to write it in a compassionate manner. An example of this style is the opening paragraph:

Brisbane Grammar School has faced the challenge of child sexual abuse perpetrated by Kevin Lynch (staff 1973–88). More than 130 men have so far come forward since 2000 to bravely reveal the abuse they suffered while he was the school counsellor.¹⁷

All statements were meticulously footnoted. I minimised the use of subjective statements drawn from oral history, and where they were used, I placed most references to the people providing the testimony in the footnotes.

In considering the nature of the school in the 1970s and 1980s, I was confronted by precisely the school's characteristics and identity that I knew had traditionally been celebrated and loved by many students and teachers alike. It was by that time a large boys' boarding school where most were sports-mad, when premier-ships rained on the teams in many sports, where rugby in particular had long held king-making status, and in which a culture of hard work in pursuit of the highest standards of academic excellence made involvement with the school a consuming and competitive experience. By 1976, 170 boys lived in the boarding house, and senior boarders ruled the roost. Certain coaches were revered, and often these were the best teachers. In the 1970s, Brisbane Grammar School was one of Queensland's leaders in the replacement of external assessment with internal forms. It also led the state in the introduction of Asian languages in schools. In the same decade, the school established an outdoor education campus, introduced classroom music and computer science, and allowed music and drama to slowly gain a foothold in the activities that boys chose to pursue outside the classroom. All of this information is included in the history, but mostly in other chapters.¹⁸

Publication

The final step in the methodology for this chapter was the publication and, specifically, the design of

the chapter. My proposal that it should be 'plain label' compared to the rest of the book, which is filled with hundreds of illustrations and marginal quotes,



The only image used to illustrate the chapter on historical child sexual abuse in *Light Dark Blue: 150 years of learning and leadership at Brisbane Grammar School*, p. 408

was accepted by the history committee. It seemed somehow more respectful to omit illustrations. The single exception was the selection of one image for the chapter opening, in keeping with the rest of the book's layout. We chose a simple image that depicts part of the school's front entrance. The chapter is one of 24. It is ten pages long and represents only three per cent of the text of the book. Feedback since its publication indicates that readers have been satisfied with my handling of the 'difficult parts'.

Reflection

After I delivered this paper at the 2018 PHA conference, I experienced immediate physical and emotional symptoms. I felt exhausted, somewhat teary, and needed to sit down. Before I returned to my seat, one questioner asked me to consider how I had addressed my own mental health during the preparation of this chapter, and afterwards. To a certain extent, this had been done through discussions with certain members of the school history committee, but it certainly had not been done in any considered way. We must all be

mindful of the detrimental effect that reading or writing about confronting historical topics could cause for us.

I am proud of *Light Dark Blue* and its inclusion of a chapter about child sexual abuse, and I hope it will provide a good example of how professional historians can tackle the topic. More than anything else, I hope, too, that it adds in a small way to the survivors' healing process.

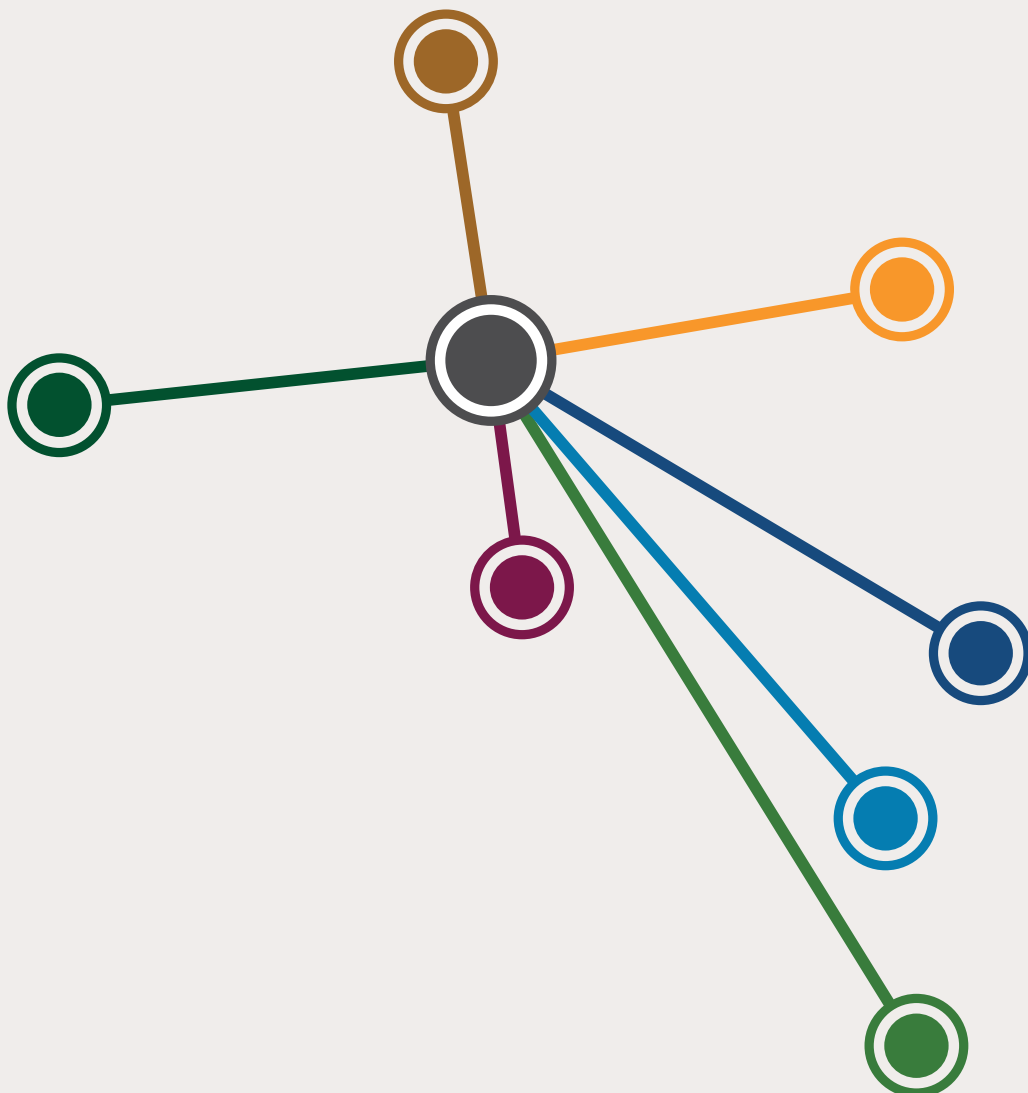
Notes

- ¹ Helen Penrose, 'A contemporary collision: school history meets child sexual abuse', paper presented at Professional Historians Association Working History Conference, 19 August 2016.
- ² *Final report, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*, 17 volumes, Commonwealth of Australia, 2017.
- ³ Helen Penrose, *Light Dark Blue: 150 years of learning and leadership at Brisbane Grammar School*, Brisbane Grammar School, Brisbane, 2019.
- ⁴ Transcript, 'Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Public hearing – Case Study 34', 6 November 2015, pp. 110–111, accessed via www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au, 7 February 2015.
- ⁵ Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au
- ⁶ Helen Penrose, *Light Dark Blue*, p. 412.
- ⁷ *ibid.*, p. 417.
- ⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 411–412.
- ⁹ Matt Carroll, *Betrayal: the crisis in the Catholic Church, the findings of the investigation that inspired Spotlight*, Profile Books, London, 2016.
- ¹⁰ Manny Waks, *Who gave you permission? The memoir of a child sexual-abuse survivor who fought back*, Scribe, Melbourne, 2016.
- ¹¹ Eileen Munro and Sheila Fish, *Hear no evil, see no evil: understanding failure to identify and report child sexual abuse in institutional contexts: a report for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*, Sydney, 2015, pp. 12, 37–38.
- ¹² Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 'Report of case study no. 20: the response of The Hutchins School and the Anglican Diocese of Tasmania to allegations of child sexual abuse', November 2015, p. 67, accessed via www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au, 14 February 2017.
- ¹³ Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 'Report of case study no. 34: the response of Brisbane Grammar School and St Paul's School to allegations of child sexual abuse', accessed via www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au, February 2017.
- ¹⁴ Email to author, 13 September 2017.
- ¹⁵ Email to author, 26 November 2017.
- ¹⁶ Letter from the author to the headmaster's family, 9 November 2017.
- ¹⁷ Helen Penrose, *Light Dark Blue*, p. 410.
- ¹⁸ *ibid.* See especially chapters 13, 14, 15, 16 and 18.

Part two

Discoveries

Discovering and telling a story



A WOMAN'S PLACE: WOMEN AND THE ANZAC MEMORIAL

Deborah Beck

The Anzac Memorial in Hyde Park, Sydney became a focal point during the commemoration of the centenary of the end of the Great War in November 2018. Hundreds visited the Memorial to see the new museum and Hall of Service, officially opened by the Duke of Sussex on 20 October 2018. It is unlikely that the many visitors were aware of the unusually large number of women depicted in the original sculptures, or realised that many of these works were actually made by female sculptors. The role of women in shaping the Anzac Memorial has not been fully recognised. This article aims to draw attention to their significant contribution.



Detail of *Sacrifice*, by Rayner Hoff. Photograph Deborah Beck, 2016

Since it was first completed in 1934, the Hyde Park Anzac Memorial has remained a largely male domain in concept, despite the efforts of the original architect Bruce Dellit and sculptor Rayner Hoff to include women in the sculpture on the Memorial. Determined to pay tribute to the support and sacrifice of women in wartime, their efforts partly addressed the concerns of those who fought so hard to be recognised. Although 1400 memorials were erected in Australia after the Great War, very few are memorials to the women who served.¹ The narrative of the Anzac Memorial is typical of the missed opportunities that arose after the Great War to build places to remember women as well as men. In two cases in Sydney, female sculptors were chosen to design major memorials, but their works were never completed. The majority of funds raised to build the Anzac Memorial came from women's efforts, yet they were hardly recognised for this. Although much of the sculpture was physically made by women, their names were never mentioned. Finally, another chance was missed when two enormous figural groups depicting women on the exterior of the Memorial were never made. This is a story of near misses, and a story of omission, which will hopefully give a voice to the women who played a vital role in the early stages of the building of the Anzac Memorial in Sydney.

A war memorial for Sydney was suggested during the Great War, and a public meeting to appeal for funds was held in the Domain on 25 April 1916, the first anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli. This appeal called for a place of rest and recreation for all returned soldiers, sailors and nurses.² Funds raised during the war reached £60,000. Much of this was due to the efforts of women. In particular, a formidable and determined woman, Dr Mary Booth, who was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1918 for her work on patriotic causes during World War I. In 1921, she formed the Anzac Fellowship of Women to promote the comradeship of women who had been engaged in wartime work and to foster the spirit of Anzac. This was the only civilian organisation to be granted the right to use the name 'Anzac', an indication of the high esteem then Prime Minister Billy Hughes held for Booth. Also in 1921, a group of women inaugurated a subscription appeal to raise funds for a women's war memorial in Sydney. This group approached the Anzac Memorial Trustees in 1933 to ask that a separate memorial for women be incorporated in the Anzac Memorial, but this did not eventuate.³

Only two state capitals in Australia have major memorials to the Great War in the name of the state's women. Although funded by women, these memorials in Adelaide and Brisbane both pay tribute to the men who died, with little recognition of women. In South



Dr Mary Booth (centre), *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 January 1928, Fairfax Corporation. National Library of Australia, PIC/15611/9785

Australia the Women's War Memorial includes 'The Cross of Sacrifice', listing the men who fell, and 'The Stone of Remembrance' placed at opposite ends of a memory garden. It was unveiled in 1922 and is in Adelaide's Pennington Gardens. The Queensland Women's War Memorial, designed and carved by Daphne Mayo between 1929 and 1932, is in Anzac Square, Brisbane. Amongst the masculine procession of warriors, only one woman is portrayed.⁴



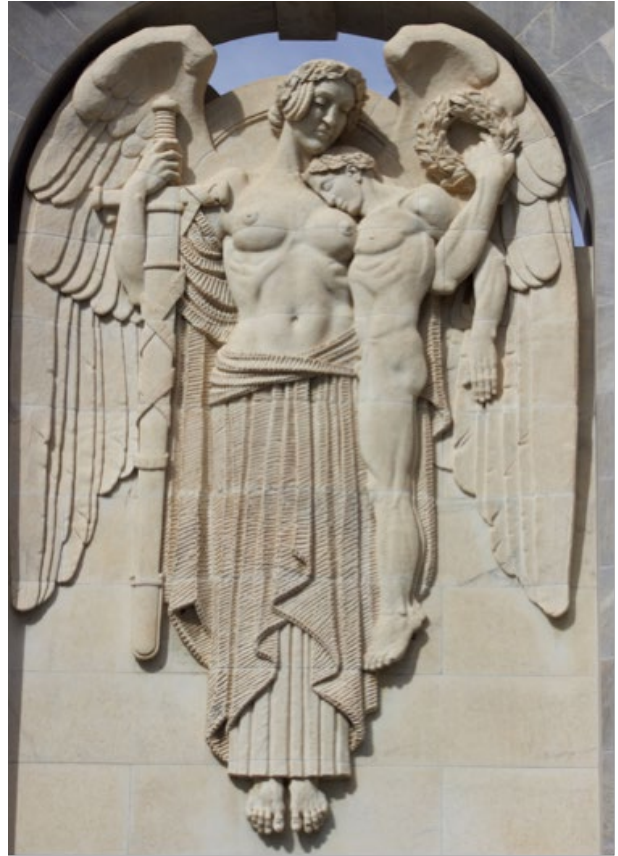
Daphne Mayo carving the Queensland Women's War Memorial, Brisbane, 1932. Daphne Mayo Papers. Fryer Library, The University of Queensland



Rayner Hoff in Royal Engineers uniform, Amiens, 1917.
Photograph courtesy Henstock family

Members of women's clubs had planned a memorial for Sydney that would bear images of women in a monument designed by a female sculptor, Theodora (Theo) Cowan. Her design for a Sydney cenotaph recalled the Pietà form by placing a dying Anzac in the posture of the dead Christ. The soldier lay in the arms of a woman representing death, accompanied by a boy signifying love, an angel to represent immortality, and a hooded woman symbolising destiny. Unfortunately, the funds needed for this design were never raised. Cowan's proposal had dropped out of consideration by 1924, when sculptor Sir Bertram Mackennal was commissioned to make a cenotaph with male sentinels, which still stands in Martin Place.⁵

When sufficient funds were finally raised for the Anzac Memorial in Sydney, there was much discussion over the form and location of the proposed memorial. A design competition opened in July 1929 and attracted 117 entries. The young architect Bruce Dellit won first prize. His design incorporated a prominent use of sculpture, and his first choice as the sculptor for the Memorial was Brisbane-based Daphne Mayo, who apart from Theo Cowan was regarded as Australia's leading woman sculptor. Mayo seriously considered this prestigious commission, but was already working on two large public commissions in Brisbane, including the Queensland Women's War Memorial, and could not meet Dellit's deadlines.⁶



Female angel by Rayner Hoff, National War Memorial, Adelaide, c. 1928. Photograph Celia Craig

Dellit's second choice was British sculptor Rayner Hoff. He had arrived in Australia in 1923 to take up a teaching position and studio at East Sydney Technical College, later known as the National Art School. Hoff had served in the British Army for over three years. When he went to war with his two brothers in 1916, he left behind his mother, his two sisters and his fiancé, Annis Briggs. The horrors of the trench warfare he saw in France stayed with him all his life, as did his understanding of the suffering that women endured in wartime.

Hoff had completed his first war memorial in England when he was still a student at London's Royal College of Art. Airman Francis Mond, aged 22, was on a photographic mission over France when he and his Canadian observer were shot down in May 1918. The memorial was commissioned in 1921 by Mond's distraught parents. It remains the only Rayner Hoff sculpture available for public viewing in the United Kingdom, located in a small parish church in Storrington, West Sussex. The fine bronze relief set in limestone depicts a mourning woman holding a dead youth in her arms, also in the manner of a Pietà, with the word 'Sacrifice' inscribed below her.⁷ It is a poignant link to Hoff's major work on the Anzac Memorial in Australia twelve years later, in which



Treasure Conlon and Eileen McGrath in Hoff's studio, National Art School, 1932. Photograph courtesy McGrath family

the central bronze sculpture is also named *Sacrifice*. In Australia, Hoff's first major commission was for the National War Memorial in Adelaide in 1927. He chose to portray the spirit of womanhood carrying the weight of male sacrifice to war. The massive, five-metre-high winged figure of a female angel displays similar qualities of strength, endurance and courage as can be seen in the depiction of the male angel on the reverse side of the memorial.⁸

Architect Bruce Dellit approached Rayner Hoff about Sydney's Anzac Memorial in October 1930, and they quickly established a congenial relationship. Although Dellit had chosen the positions of the sculptures in his original design, he was open to Hoff's suggestions to change them, and they worked closely together for the

next four years. Hoff's private studio at the National Art School was the ideal site for the construction of the external sculptures, although it had to be massively enlarged to cope with the commission. The majority of Hoff's sculpture students were women, and his confidence in them was proved when he gave them the daunting task of helping to create the 37 sculptures for the Memorial. With a substantial stipend provided to complete the work, Hoff was able to pay his students during the economic depression and employ additional staff to work on the sculptures. The female students he employed for three years included Eileen McGrath, Elizabeth (Treasure) Conlon and Barbara Tribe. Others were paid on a short-term basis to help with drawing and sculpting.⁹

Hoff was well aware of the important role played by women in fundraising for the memorial and in the war effort, and chose to acknowledge this by depicting 18 women in the Memorial sculptures. Nearly 3000 Australian women had enlisted during the Great War, and Hoff predominately depicted them as nurses working in the field. He also chose to portray one of the four largest standing figures on the exterior as a Matron, representing the Australian Army Nursing Service. Inside the Memorial, his depictions of women as grieving family members stress the tragedy of battle and highlight the impact of war on women. Through his own family, Hoff had firsthand knowledge of the women who stayed at home, managed the household, raised the children and often volunteered and raised funds for the war effort in the absence of men.



Treasure Conlon working on Anzac Memorial sculptures in Hoff's studio, c. 1931. Photograph courtesy McGrath family



Matron on exterior of Anzac Memorial.
 Photograph Deborah Beck, 2016

The centrepiece for the Anzac War Memorial, *Sacrifice*, is a bronze sculpture of the body of a naked soldier lying on a shield and sword supported by his mother, sister, wife and child, with his wife's outstretched hand bearing the weight of his head. The women are grouped in a caryatid column, and overall the sculpture references both classical and more modern art deco styles. *Sacrifice* appears to be the only sculpture in any Australian war memorial to represent the impact of the war on the families of the dead and it continues to be a forceful reminder of the tragedy and social impact of war.

When asked about his depiction of women in his sculpture *Sacrifice*, Hoff said:

I have tried to epitomise in this design the essence of war sacrifice. A great burden of pain, horror and annihilation was laid on the youthful manhood of this nation. The quiet, continuous influence of women throughout the war was



Sacrifice in Rayner Hoff's studio in plaster in 1932, before it was cast in bronze. Photograph courtesy McGrath family

less obvious and received no honour, praise or decoration. Thousands of women although not directly engaged in war activities, lost all that was dearest to them, sons they have borne and reared, husbands, fathers of their children, friends and lovers. There is no acknowledgement of them in casualty lists of wounded, maimed and killed. They endured all man's sacrifice quietly. In this spirit I have shown them, carrying their load, the loss of their menfolk – the sacrifice of themselves.¹⁰

Of the 18 women Hoff had originally planned for the Memorial sculptures, only 14 were ever completed. When Dellit and Hoff proposed two huge bronze figure groups on the exterior, each portraying a naked woman above a pyramid of lifeless bodies, their vision was deemed too controversial. In Hoff's plans, three significant bronze groups formed a triptych on the Memorial. The group on the east side, *Crucifixion of Civilisation*, depicted a woman bound to the sword of Mars as if crucified, symbolising the beginning of the Great War in 1914. The central bronze, *Sacrifice*, symbolised loss during the war, and the final work on the western side, *Victory after Sacrifice*, was to be the figure of Britannia holding a sword behind a young woman with her arms raised in victory, to symbolise the end of the war in 1918.



Maquette for *Crucifixion of Civilisation* by Rayner Hoff. Photography courtesy Henstock family



Detail of dead nurse, *Victory after Sacrifice* maquette, 1932

Hoff and his assistants made the one-third scale maquettes for the two exterior groups in readiness for scaling them up for casting. But when these were shown in public in 1932, arguments began about their suitability. The final bronze sculptures were to be 4.27 metres high and placed on stone platforms built in front of the amber glass of the eastern and western windows of the Memorial. Articles were penned by representatives of the Catholic Church, expressing outrage at the images of naked women displayed as if on a crucifix. Although the Memorial Trustees at first defended the works, they eventually backed down, citing the cost of casting in bronze as the reason for the removal of two groups in the triptych from the final design.¹¹ They were never made to the size intended, and Hoff's plaster models were eventually destroyed in 1958. Yet a sculpture of a naked dead soldier being held aloft by semi-clad women was deemed acceptable, and one

part of the planned triptych, *Sacrifice*, was installed in 1934. The decision to abandon the other two bronze groups meant that one of the most moving figures planned for the Memorial, a woman killed at the front, was not included. In the maquette for *Victory after Sacrifice*, a dead nurse would have been seen lying amongst the shattered bodies of the soldiers.

The other female figures that were completed on the Memorial, in addition to those in *Sacrifice*, include three on the exterior – the Matron, a seated nurse, and a nurse tending a wounded soldier. This third nurse is included on one of the ten-metre-long bronze reliefs illustrating the campaigns in Gallipoli and Palestine. Rayner Hoff drew the sketches for these reliefs, which were drawn onto huge clay panels in his studio before being cast in plaster and sent to England for casting in bronze. Treasure Conlon, Barbara Tribe and Eileen McGrath can be seen working on the exquisite detail of these panels in a photograph taken in Hoff's studio in 1932. These women became close friends during their three years of backbreaking work on the Memorial sculptures, and kept in touch with each other for the rest of their lives.

The majority of women depicted in the Memorial are in a plaster bas-relief sculpture in the Hall of Memory on the interior. Installed high up on the wall near the dome, eight women form one of the panels depicting the *March of the Dead*.¹² The relief features a lone uniformed Matron from the Army Medical Corps sitting among fallen comrades, while behind them march the souls of the departed. During recent renovations, scaffolding was erected to restore some of the fabric of the building, and detailed photographs were taken of the panels for the first time. Hoff appears to have created portraits of some of his



Hoff's students Treasure Conlon, Barbara Tribe and Eileen McGrath working on the Eastern Front relief for the Anzac Memorial, Hoff's studio, 1932. Photograph courtesy McGrath family



Female nurse, detail of Eastern Front bas relief, Anzac Memorial

female students in these very individual studies. Their hairstyles and profiles correspond closely with those of Mavis Mallison, Victoria Cowdroy and other students in contemporary photographs.

As part of the Anzac Centenary national program commemorating the 100th anniversary of the First World War, the Department of Veterans' Affairs decided to extend the Anzac Memorial. Had attitudes to depictions of women in war changed since the 1930s? It seemed not, as in the plan for the extension of the Anzac Memorial, the two sculptures *Crucifixion of Civilisation* and *Victory after Sacrifice* were overlooked again. Although the original maquettes had been destroyed, it would be possible to reconstruct them from photographs, as was proved in 2017 when the sculpture department at the National Art School made a plaster recreation of the maquette of *Crucifixion of Civilisation*. Working from only five known photographs of the original maquette, the sculptors made the work in clay, then cast it in plaster, using a similar method employed by Hoff and his students in 1932. Now that this copy of the original maquette has been made, it would certainly be possible to scale it up and reproduce it in bronze. The two missing works would be an imposing addition to the Memorial if they were made to the intended scale. Despite partial completion of Dellit's original plan for the Memorial, including the

new cascading waterfall, there are currently no plans to install the bronze groups, and the building remains incomplete. Surely serious consideration should now be given to Dellit and Hoff's original vision for this significant site.



Detail of relief on the interior dome of the Anzac Memorial. The women are part of the *March of the Dead* depicted in the Hall of Memory. Photograph courtesy Rob Tuckwell

However, it is gratifying to realise that another female sculptor was engaged to work on the Anzac Memorial. In 2015 the Department of Veterans' Affairs decided to commission an artist to make a new work for the central space, the Hall of Service, in the extension of the Memorial. They chose Fiona Hall, who had in fact completed her early training at the same art school where Rayner Hoff had taught for 14 years, the National Art School. Although, like Hoff's collaboration with Dellit, Hall worked very closely with architect Richard Johnson, her work is vastly different in concept to the original Hoff sculptures. While the 1930s design for the Memorial uses the human form more than any other war memorial in Australia, in Hall's work there are no physical depictions of people who served.



Fiona Hall and Richard Johnson, Anzac Memorial, 2016.
Anzac Memorial Collection

The new multi-million-dollar extension has increased the footprint of the Memorial and added 1500 square metres to the site, but it has not compromised the original design on ground level. Most of the extension is underground, and Memorial visitors can enter the new Hall of Service via a walkway through a symbolic water cascade. The cascading water feature, south of the Memorial, was part of Dellit's original 1930 design, but, like the two bronze groups, was not constructed at the time. The Hall of Service functions as a greeting



Architect's rendering of the Hall of Service, 2016

and orientation space for the public, and flows into large exhibition galleries and education facilities. Hoff's sculpture *Sacrifice* is visible from within the new Hall of Service. Visitors can walk up the staircase from the hall to the ground floor of the Anzac Memorial and the Hall of Silence. This creates a pleasing visual and physical link to the Memorial.

In 2016 Fiona Hall described her approach to the commission:

My proposed design for the Hall of Service is based upon material relating directly to service offered, across New South Wales. It utilises the walls and floors, but leaves the interior of the Hall free of any 3-dimensional intervention. The absence of a 3-dimensional artwork in this space is intended to maintain and emphasise the spatial equilibrium and symmetry of the square Hall and its oculus. In design and content, it creates an informative and meditative place, at the threshold of the Hall of Silence and beyond.¹³

There are three components in the new artwork. The first is a series of eight hand-blown glass urns, each illustrated and hand-etched by Fiona Hall with an image of a different plant species associated with Australia's First World War service. These beautiful objects are displayed in showcases set into the entrance and exit of the Hall of Service. The walls of the Hall of Service are lined with over 1700 plaques displaying all the places in New South Wales that First World War enlistees gave as their home address. A sample of local soil sits alongside each place name. The collection of the soil involved a remarkable response from members of the public, who volunteered to participate in the soil collection.¹⁴ The third element of the artwork is embedded in the floor of the Hall of Service. It features



Fiona Hall's glass urn with etching of a waratah, Anzac Memorial, 2018. Photograph courtesy Jessica Maurer

a ring of samples of earth collected from 100 sites of significance to New South Wales' military service around the world.¹⁵

In many ways, this subtle work complements the more emotive figurative sculpture by Rayner Hoff. Hall has been sensitive to the significance of the original sculptures and has interpreted her brief for a new work in a thoughtful and inclusive manner. It was fascinating to see how the public reacted to this work when the new space opened in November 2018. People spent a long time reading the place names, finding their own towns, and pointing them out to their children and families.

As well as Hall's installation, Hoff's work is included in the exhibition areas in the form of 3D printed images of the twenty external sculptures on the Memorial. These reproductions are two-thirds of the size of the actual works, so have quite a presence in the gallery space. Smaller versions of the two external bronze reliefs can be viewed at eye level. Knowing that most of the work on these reliefs was sculpted by Hoff's three female students, they are a wonderful tribute to the talent of these women.

Without doubt, women have played an important part in Sydney's Anzac Memorial. Although the women involved in the fundraising, the early designs and the making of the sculpture have largely been forgotten, Rayner Hoff managed to bring attention to the role of women during the war. He provoked controversy and debate over his representation of women – not men



Fiona Hall's glass urn showing Sydney blue gum in a showcase, Hall of Service, 2019. Photograph Deborah Beck



Details of wall plaques and soil samples by Fiona Hall. Photograph Deborah Beck



Detail of earth embedded in the floor, by Fiona Hall. Photograph Deborah Beck



The Hall of Service, 2018. Photograph Deborah Beck

– on the Memorial, and the sculptures that adorn the building today are an eloquent testament to women’s war service. It remains to be seen if the Memorial will ever be finally completed with the addition of Hoff’s two missing works on the exterior.

Notes

¹ Further reference regarding these memorials can be found in Bruce Scates and Raelene Frances, ‘Honouring the dead’, *Women and the Great War*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1997, pp. 114-122.

² Virginia Spate, ‘If these Dead Stones could Speak: Rayner Hoff’s Sculptures and the Anzac Memorial’, in Deborah Edwards, *This Vital Flesh: The Sculpture of Rayner Hoff and his School*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 1999, pp. 53-54.

³ Letter from Mesdames Walsh and Callaway, Minutes of the Anzac Memorial Trust, 4 December 1933, p. 4, Returned and Services League of Australia New South Wales Branch archive, ANZAC House, Sydney.

⁴ See Judith McKay, ‘A women’s tribute to war’, *Fryer Folios*, vol. 9, no. 1, August 2014, pp. 7-9.

⁵ Ken Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, Melbourne University Press, Victoria, 1998, p. 298.

⁶ Daphne Mayo letter to the Secretary, Anzac War Memorial

Committee, 29 October 1930, Daphne Mayo Papers, Fryer Library, University of Queensland.

⁷ See Holly Trusted, ‘Lost and Found, Francis Mond and his mother Angela’, paper delivered at Motherhood, Loss and the First World War Conference, Senate House, London, 5-6 September 2018.

⁸ Donald Richardson, ‘The National War Memorial, Adelaide’ in *Creating Remembrance: The Art and Design of Australian War Memorials*, Common Ground Publishing LLC, Illinois, USA, 2015, pp. 222-237.

⁹ See Deborah Beck, *Rayner Hoff: The Life of a Sculptor*, New South Publishing, Sydney, 2017, pp. 203-235.

¹⁰ Rayner Hoff, ‘Memorial to Sacrifice’, *Women’s Budget*, 15 November 1933. Originally published in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 July 1932.

¹¹ ‘Anzac Memorial Ceremony: Objection to sculpture of nude woman on cross’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 September 1932.

¹² Sydney Elliott Napier, *The Book of the Anzac Memorial, New South Wales*, Beacon Press, Sydney, 1934, p. 50.

¹³ Fiona Hall, Submission for Anzac Centenary Project Art Commission, January 2016, p. 3.

¹⁴ The Trustees of the Anzac Memorial Building, Anzac Memorial Annual Report 2016-17, pp. 20-21, <https://www.anzacmemorial.nsw.gov.au/annual-reports>

¹⁵ See ‘The Anzac Memorial Centenary Project’ in *The Anzac Memorial: Endurance, Courage and Sacrifice*, The Trustees of the Anzac Memorial, Sydney, 2018, pp. 78-131.

PLANTER INERTIA:

The decline of the plantation in the Herbert River Valley

Bianka Vidonja Balanzategui

Agricultural associations were a worldwide phenomenon in the nineteenth century. They were formed by large and small farmers alike to improve agricultural skills, encourage innovation, and provide access to rural extension. Some also acted as political lobbying groups. In tropical sugar-growing areas, however, where plantation agriculture was a pervasive phenomenon, such associations were the preserve of the planter elite. These associations could be powerful agents for the preservation of planters' social, political and economic dominance, and the plantation system of production. Though the plantation system prevailed on the Herbert River in tropical north Queensland from 1872 until 1908, the planters there failed to unite effectively. This article will explore those planters' efforts to form associations and examine why their efforts failed when planters elsewhere successfully united and thrived.

The Herbert River Valley in tropical north Queensland was opened to pastoralism and plantation agriculture after explorer George Elphinstone Dalrymple reported favourably on its economic potential.¹ The vanguard of European settlers arrived in 1868 and began clearing the traditional lands of the Bandyin, Njawaygi and Warrgamay peoples for plantation agriculture.² The Herbert settlement, with its administrative centre at Cardwell, was then at the extreme limit of European settlement on the north eastern coast of Australia. Following the planters were small selectors who were also undaunted by the remoteness of the Herbert. Favourable land legislation in 1876 precipitated a speculative land rush in the tropical north by absentee planters, but also allowed small selectors to take up land.³ Small crop production on the Herbert was fraught with insurmountable difficulties. Hence, the small selectors looked to sugar cultivation and a central mill, which would assume the responsibility for the harvested crop's perishability, market destination and transport. As landowners, and through the agency of an association of their own, they contributed to the demise of plantation agriculture on the Herbert. This article will explore why the planters on the Herbert failed to unite effectively when planters elsewhere in the sugar-growing world united and resisted the small farmer mode of production and the development of farm based central milling.

At its furthest extent, sugar cultivation was carried out in Australia from northern New South Wales to Cooktown in far north Queensland, in the Northern Territory and in Western Australia. Sugar cultivation on the Herbert from 1872 until 1908 resembled sugar cultivation in other tropical areas where sugar was

grown on large plantations worked by indentured labourers or former enslaved labour.⁴ As elsewhere, plantation agriculture was enabled in tropical north Queensland because the government passed special legislation to free up land for plantation agriculture and mobilised capital, initiative and labour (in the form of Melanesian indentured labourers). However, unlike in other regions, Australian planters were unusual in failing to form viable, enduring associations of their own, as illustrated by the planters on the Herbert. There, small selectors formed the Herbert River Farmers' Association (HRFA) in 1882. It was a unique phenomenon in the sugar-growing world at that time because it represented small independent sugar farmers' interests. Economic historian Adrian Graves affirmed the key role of the small farmer associations. He argued that they contributed to the demise of plantation production and the development of farm-based central milling in Australia.⁵ A survey of other sugar industry areas in the late nineteenth century confirms that Australian small sugarcane farmers, through the agency of their agricultural associations, won a class battle with planters that small farmers elsewhere – whether they were European, former slave or indentured labourer – did not. They achieved this by lobbying as a united body. The planters, meanwhile, attempted to combine and failed. The question is, why?

Historians Clive Moore, Peter Griggs and Ralph Shlomowitz have all suggested reasons for the demise of the sugar plantation system in Queensland. Moore emphasised competition from other sugar industries that were adopting the latest developments in milling technology and scientific analysis.⁷ Griggs

stressed the drastic fall in sugar price after 1884.⁸ Shlomowitz proposed that labour issues were the strongest impetus.⁹ In other sugar-growing areas of the world, where similar forces challenged planters, they formed powerful associations and the plantation mode of production largely prevailed. In contrast, the Queensland sugar planters did not combine to form a cohesive association movement. On the Herbert, the planters neither cooperated effectively with planters in the other Queensland sugar-growing districts, nor formed a viable association of their own. Moore hinted that the Australian planters' failure to form effective associations like those of the small farmers may have contributed to their demise. However, scholars have not explored regional examples of planters' and small farmers' agricultural associations in order to implicate the strengths or weaknesses of those associations as determining factors taking the Queensland sugar industry from plantation to small farming.¹⁰

Pressure on the Herbert planters began in 1875 and 1876 with rust disease, which decimated whole crops.¹¹ Compounding those difficulties was the 1876 land legislation enabling small selectors to take up land on favourable conditions, which destabilised the planters' monopoly. In contrast to other sugar-growing regions of the world, Australian colonial governments

supported the creation of a yeoman class of European farmers for social and political reasons.¹² In the tropical north, the government's intent was that the land-ownership of small agriculturalists would stimulate agricultural production and promote settlement for the defence of what was regarded as a tropical outpost. On the Herbert, there were small settlers who aspired to the yeoman ideal of landownership and who had determined that sugar farming offered them the best chance of making a living. The Queensland colonial government further assisted yeomen farmers in the sugar belt by legislating for farmer-owned cooperative mills and for protection of the domestic market from cheap, overseas imports.¹³ Though the Herbert's small farmers rejected the proposal of a cooperative mill, they used their association to negotiate with the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR) to take their crops. The fact that it was one of the most powerful companies in Australia and dominated sugar growing, milling and refining adds to the significance of that approach.¹⁴ That CSR was the dominant miller on the Herbert would also prove counterproductive to any attempts by planters there to form an association.

A number of the first planters were defeated by rust, lack of experience (and knowledge) of tropical agriculture, a reliance on capital either borrowed or



Tennis party at Gairloch Plantation House in 1875, showing the lifestyle to which planters aspired. State Library of Queensland, 10269

advanced by family, outdated mill machinery, and insufficient familiarity with the technology of sugar milling. Paradoxically, as well as promoting yeoman farming, the 1876 land legislation also allowed for the first wave of failed planters to be replaced by companies who could build large, sophisticated mills using money borrowed on mortgage at high interest rates. Those enterprises operated with unsustainable debt levels, an inefficient use of labour, and speculative holdings of thousands of acres of unused land. They were poorly managed by inexperienced managers appointed by absentee landlords, courtesy of nepotism.¹⁵ The latter had no common vision for the Herbert, apart from shoring up their own economic and social positions. When the world sugar price tumbled due to massive dumping of European beet sugar on the British and American markets in 1884, foreclosures resulted. In the same year, the first of the Pacific Island Labourers Amendment Acts were passed, foreshadowing the eventual elimination of indentured labour. The legislation caused such alarm that a credit squeeze resulted, causing a protracted period of depression in the sugar industry.¹⁶ Then the worldwide economic depression of 1891 struck. In Queensland, the effects were felt through reduced export income for sugar and a reduced flow of credit, which was critical for those carrying high levels of debt. On the Herbert, CSR was the only planter that was in a position to weather the price collapse and effect the appropriate economic efficiencies.

Planters who survived the foreclosures were forced to consider ways to adapt, especially when government legislated for the use of Melanesian labour to cease, and the repatriation of remaining labourers.¹⁷ One adaptation was leasing, rejected by the Herbert's small growers who had little faith in the speculative planters. Planters were willing to take cane from tenant farmers but resisted the challenge to their hegemony that accepting cane from independent suppliers represented. Continuing to deny the idea that the plantation system was in dire jeopardy, planters persisted in investigating alternative sources of cheap labour.

The agricultural association offered a means to investigate alternatives. On the Herbert, the planters made ad hoc efforts to confront the issues threatening their livelihoods. They either looked to CSR, with its powerful connections and influence, to make representation on their behalf or made several attempts to form a planters' association to address crises as they arose. All those attempts were unsuccessful. In contrast, in Mackay in central tropical Queensland – labelled the 'Aristocratic corner of Queensland' – the planters wielded influence through the Mackay Planters' Association (MPA). It was formed in 1875 and was a force to be reckoned with.¹⁸ The planters

lobbied through the association, making good use of their personal connections in England and the British Houses of Parliament. The Mackay planters saw that they could be even more effective if they formed an association that would represent the planters of the entire tropical region. In March 1878, the MPA forwarded a report of its meeting proceedings to the sugar districts, requesting them to form similar associations and become honorary members of the MPA.¹⁹ On the Herbert, nothing came of that request.

The Herbert's planters were only galvanised to take united action in times of crisis, but lost momentum once the crisis passed. Political scientist Robert H Salisbury suggested that if a group found itself disadvantaged, it would form formal associations to maximise bargaining power and strengthen relationships within the group in order to regain social or economic advantage.²⁰ However, once conditions of crisis were favourably restored, group momentum was often lost. These drivers can be seen to be at work wherever agricultural associations appeared. Two major crises galvanised the Herbert planters. The first was when the Ministerialist government under Thomas McIllwraith was replaced in 1883 by a Liberal government under the leadership of Samuel Griffith. The former favoured the importation of coloured labour, while the latter opposed it. The other crisis was peculiar to the Herbert: the locust plague of 1883 to 1884.²¹ In 1884, another invitation was sent to northern planters to form a Queensland planters' association, in order 'to exert influence on all matters affecting their interest'.²² The Herbert River planters responded but it was the locust plague crisis that precipitated an inaugural meeting in 1884, after which a 'Herbert River branch' of the Planters' Association was formed.²³ Those attending the meeting were planters, estate owners and managers.²⁴ Small farmers were excluded, the planters giving the idea 'that the affair was private'.²⁵ Globally, planters regarded themselves as a superior class, so it is not surprising that small farmers were excluded. The business of consequent meetings confirms that a preoccupying issue of the new Planters' Association was locusts, with reason, given that they had brought the largest mill, CSR's Victoria Mill, to a standstill.

Though the lack of organisation of planters across the districts in 1884 confirms that planters were largely 'supine', looming crises would spur them into action.²⁶ The threatened consequences of the Pacific Island Labourers Amendment Act of 1884, combined with the drop in the world sugar price, stirred them from their stupor to direct all their energies to an impending labour crisis. Historian Janice Wegner suggested that they did so because it was the one issue that they thought they could control.²⁷ Certainly, the Mackay Planters' and Farmers' Association (MPFA), formerly



Samuel Griffith on an electioneering tour to the Herbert in 1883. He is pictured with farmers, planters and businessmen.
Hinchinbrook Shire Library Photograph Collection

the MPA, which persistently enjoined the Herbert planters to form an association or affiliate with them or at least support them in petitions, was particularly active in that regard.

The planters' determination to secure legislation that favoured coloured or cheap labour saw them turn to the Separation movement as a platform to further that cause.²⁸ On 25 January 1886, the Herbert River Planters' Association wrote a letter to *The Times* newspaper in London. This letter repudiated the idea that Queensland sugar growers were participating in and promoting an exploitative labour traffic, and justified the northern Separation Movement. The letter was signed by 'The Planters' and Farmers' Associations of North Queensland for the Herbert River Planters' Association together with the Herbert River Farmers' Association and the Mackay Planters' and Farmers'.²⁹ The strong articulation in the letter of a difference in interests between southern and northern planters in regard to labour needs is indicative of the impediments faced by those who sought to form a planter body that represented all sugar districts.

On the Herbert, CSR thwarted attempts by other planters in the district to petition as a united group. In early July 1886, the owners of the Ripple Creek Plantation on the Herbert circulated a petition that covered a number of issues, including bonuses, labour, and competition from European beet sugar.³⁰ CSR's General Manager Edward W Knox refused to sign and argued that any attempt to obtain an export bounty would be fruitless.³¹ In 1887, a deputation met with the Queensland Chief Secretary to request a

reciprocal arrangement with Victoria that would favour the importation of Queensland sugar by that colony. Planters (including those from the Herbert representing the 'Herbert River Association') attended the meeting as association delegates, but CSR distanced itself from those groups by sending its own representative, James L Knox.³² CSR management consistently only participated in, or encouraged, proposals that suited its business plan. Always secretive, its aloof manner did more to hinder than aid planters' endeavours to present a unified front.

Associations were not only formed in times of crisis. Sociologists Carl C Taylor and Jeffrey M Paige identified external agency or visionary individuals as instigating factors.³³ On the Herbert, such visionary individuals were brothers Arthur and Frank Neame, whose Macknade Mill first crushed in 1873. After spending some years in England, they returned to the Herbert River Valley in 1887 to take back their Macknade Plantation, which they had sold to Edward Fanning, Thomas NanKivell and Sons in 1883. The latter company had overextended itself on the Herbert, conducting three plantations and several estates on which family members were reputed to live lavish, extravagant life-styles.³⁴ Unlike this speculative company, the Neames had an emotional attachment to the Valley and intended to live out their lives there.³⁵ It is not surprising then that on their return they should rekindle the idea of a planters' association. The Neame brothers formulated a plan to present to the government a united planter petition regarding the labour problems. Frank Neame wrote to Edward Knox

in late 1888 about the possibility of holding a Planters' Conference in Townsville, but Knox was not keen, preferring for the planters to first present their views as evidence to a royal commission. He felt the findings of a commission, should they be in accord with the views of the witnesses, would carry more weight than those tabled at a planters' conference.³⁶ Knox's view must have prevailed because the planned meeting was deferred upon the appointment of a royal commission.³⁷

On 29 April 1889, the inaugural meeting of the Queensland Planters' Association was held in Townsville, attended by planters from Mackay northwards.³⁸ Once again, CSR sent its own representative to represent all the CSR mills.³⁹ At the meeting, it was unanimously decided to form a central association 'to conserve and promote the interests of tropical agriculturalists throughout the colony'. A board of advice was formed with Frank Neame as president.⁴⁰ Like all other attempts to form a planters' association, small farmers were not invited to participate. This was despite the fact that by that stage the MPA had become the MPFA, with the inclusion of small farmers (though it continued to be dominated by the planters).⁴¹ That Neame would represent the Queensland Planters' Association in a public forum is understandable as he was, first and foremost, a planter. But he was also the president of the HRFA and that association was no longer the only small sugar farmers' association in the Queensland sugar districts. As seen with the letter to *The Times*, planters and farmers had combined forces before. That Neame did not see fit to make it a planters' and farmers' movement was consistent with the planters' arrogance but counterproductive, as a united front of planters and farmers would have been numerically powerful and have had greater lobbying potential. Wegner commented that the farmers 'had little to do with the 1890 Planters' Association'.⁴² It would seem that they were not invited to be involved. That the planters ignored the small farmers and their vocal and active associations would be to the detriment of industry-wide unity and would limit the effectiveness of industry lobbying at a critical juncture.

By 1884, it was already becoming evident that sugar cultivation in Australia would be conducted by small farmers. In that year the HRFA secured supply contracts for its members with CSR's Victoria Mill. The arrangement proved successful. In 1885 Mackay farmers petitioned and convinced the Legislative Assembly to vote in favour of central mills. However, those mills struggled to commit to processing only cane grown by white labour. This may have jaundiced the planters against central milling. Those attending the 1889 Townsville Planters' conference discussed the central mill system and while supporting it in principal, they decided that it was too early to settle on that system. Ignoring the obvious signs that plantation

days were numbered, the Planters' Association suggested that indentured labour should be extended, and planters should explore alternative plantation crops.⁴³

The successful incursion of small farmers, the formation of small farmers' associations, and government support for central mills were overwhelming evidence that a sugar industry in tropical north Queensland would progress, worked by small farmers supplying to central mills. Perversely, when faced with crisis, the planters across the sugar districts closed ranks as a class to identify solutions that would preserve the status quo. The 1889 planters' meeting, at which plans were made to form a planters' association, illustrate that. Nevertheless, CSR management was reticent about participating in or encouraging the suggestions made by fellow planters, preferring to negotiate directly with government. In 1892, for instance, Edward Knox met personally with Samuel Griffith, despite the fact that planters and farmers were making group representations.⁴⁴ CSR's self-interest continued to work against planter unity on the Herbert.

Using the regional example of the Herbert River district in tropical north Queensland, this article has reflected on the nature of the planters' behaviour in forming or resisting associations, and has suggested reasons for their failure to unite and effectively address the issues that would ultimately lead to their demise. What emerges is that the Herbert planters' efforts to form either a local or an industry-wide planters' association were half-hearted because their privileged social and financial positions made them complacent. Many were personally acquainted with legislators, and their industry was highly valued for the product it provided and for its strategic location in the tropical north. Another reason why the Herbert planters failed to form a viable association was the absentee nature of ownership in the speculative period. A further potent reason for the failure of the Herbert River planters to present a united front was that the most powerful of their number was CSR. Most significant, however, was the growing body of independent small farmers. One contemporaneous writer opined that planters as a class were 'well able without combination to protect themselves against ... adverse influences'.⁴⁵ While this may have been true for sugar industries in other parts of the world, the planters in those areas did not have to contend with a landowning, white, small farmer class. When the planters on the Herbert attempted to unite, they did it as a class. Consequently, they were pitted against the small farmers, who astutely used their association to align themselves with CSR, which was most likely to weather all the crises. Ultimately, the failure to combine successfully, either as a class or with the small farmers, was the planters' undoing.

Notes

¹ Herbert River Valley, henceforth referred to as 'the Herbert'.

² Queensland Government, 'Sugar and Coffee Regulations 1864'.

³ Queensland Government, 'Crown Lands Alienation Act 1876'.

⁴ 1872, when the first plantation mill crushed on the Herbert, and 1908, when the last plantation mill on the Herbert ceased to operate.

⁵ Adrian A Graves, 'The Abolition of the Queensland Labour Trade: Politics or Profits' in EL Wheelwright and KD Buckley (eds), *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism*, vol.4, Australia and New Zealand Book Company Pty. Ltd., Brookvale, 1980, p. 48.

⁶ Bianka Vidonja Balanzategui, 'Small sugar farmer agency in the tropics 1872—1914 and the anomalous Herbert River Farmers' Association', PhD thesis, James Cook University, 2019.

⁷ Clive Moore, 'Queensland Sugar Industry from 1860 to 1900', in *Lectures on North Queensland History*, James Cook University, Townsville, 1974, p. 46; and Clive Moore, 'The Transformation of the Mackay Sugar Industry, 1883-1900', BA Hons thesis, James Cook University, 1974, p. 156.

⁸ Peter Griggs, 'The origins and early development of the small cane farming system in Queensland, 1870-1915', *Journal of Historical Geography*, vol. 23, no.1, January 1997, p. 57.

⁹ Ralph Shlomowitz, 'The Search for Institutional Equilibrium in Queensland's Sugar Industry 1884-1913', *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. 19, no. 2, January 1979, pp. 91-123; Ralph Shlomowitz, 'Melanesian Labor and the Development of the Queensland Sugar Industry, 1863-1906', *Research in Economic History*, vol. 7, 1982b, pp. 327-361.

¹⁰ Moore, 'The Transformation of the Mackay Sugar Industry, 1883-1900', p. 69. See also Bill Kerr, *Stand Together: The Story of Cane Grower Representation at Mackay*, Mackay Canegrowers Limited, Mackay, 2009.

¹¹ Peter Griggs, 'Rust Disease Outbreaks and Their Impact on the Queensland Sugar Industry, 1870-1880', *Agricultural History*, vol. 69, no. 3, Summer 1995, pp. 413-437.

¹² Griggs, 'The origins and early development of the small cane farming system in Queensland', p. 57.

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ Peter Griggs, 'The Decline of Competition: The emergence of a duopoly in the Australian sugar refinery sector, 1841-1915', *Australian Geographer*, vol. 32, no. 3, November 2001, pp. 359-376.

¹⁵ Roy Connolly, *John Drysdale and the Burdekin*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1964, pp. 31-33; and Susanna De Vries, *Blue Ribbons Bitter Bread: The Life of Joice Nankivell Loch*, Hale and Iremonger Pty Ltd, Alexandria, 2000, p. 13.

¹⁶ Janice Wegner, 'Hinchinbrook: The Hinchinbrook Shire Council 1879-1979', MA thesis, James Cook University, 1984, p. 123; and Queensland Parliament, 'Pacific Island Labourers' Amendment Act 1884'.

¹⁷ Beginning with Queensland Parliament, 'The Pacific Island Labourers Act of 1880 Amendment Act of 1884'.

¹⁸ Clive Moore, 'Whips and Rum Swizzles', in *Lectures on North Queensland History*, Second Series, James Cook University, Townsville, 1975, p. 122.

¹⁹ Mackay Planters' Association 1st Minute Book, Special Meeting, 29 March 1878, James Cook University Special Collections.

²⁰ Robert H Salisbury, 'An Exchange Theory of Interest Groups', *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, vol. 13, no.1, February 1969, p. 5.

²¹ Robert L Shepherd, 'The Macknade Sale: The Herbert River Story', *Herbert River Express*, 25 January 1992, p. 11.

²² 'In Northern Queensland', *Argus*, 15 March 1884, p. 4.

²³ JA Boyd diary, 13 March 1884, 'Robert Mitchell Boyd (1849-1912)', Connor Family History Resource, <https://connorhistory.com.files.wordpress.com/2017/12/boyd-robert-mitchell-boyd-1849-1912-references.pdf>

²⁴ 'The Recidiviste Question', *Brisbane Courier*, 2 July 1884, p. 6; 'Planters' Troubles on the Herbert', *The Queenslander*, 12 July 1884, p. 68.

²⁵ 'Planters' Troubles on the Herbert'.

²⁶ *Brisbane Courier*, 19 July 1884, p. 5; 'Sugar Industry', *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, 18 October 1884, p. 91; Will Sugar-Planters Wake Up?', *Queensland Figaro*, 19 July 1884, p. 8 and 'Planters' Troubles on the Herbert'.

²⁷ Wegner, 'Hinchinbrook', p. 125.

²⁸ 'Northern Queensland and the Labour Traffic', *The Times*, 25 January 1886, responding to an article published in *The Times*, 18 June 1885; 'Political Banquet', *Queensland Figaro and Punch*, 14 April 1888, p. 15; and Moore, 'The Transformation of the Mackay Sugar Industry', p. 18.

²⁹ 'Northern Queensland and the Labour Traffic'.

³⁰ *Morning Bulletin*, 6 July 1886 and correspondence from R M Boyd to Editor, Queensland, 10 July 1886, quoted in JA Boyd diary.

³¹ Letter from EW Knox to RM Boyd, 8 July 1886, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives (NBA), 142/1048.

³² *Weekly Times*, 20 August 1887, p. 14; 'The Sugar Industry. Reciprocity with Victoria', *The Week*, 20 August 1887, p. 23; Theophilus P Pugh, Pugh's *Almanac and Directory*, Thorne and Greenwell, Brisbane, 1887, pp. 77, 429.

³³ Jeffrey M Paige, *Agrarian Revolution: Social Movements and Export Agriculture in the Underdeveloped World*, The Free Press, New York, 1975, p. 46; and Carl C Taylor, 'Farmers' Organizations', in *Encyclopedia of the social sciences*, Edwin Robert Anderson Seligman et al. (ed.), Macmillan, New York, 1937, p. 129.

³⁴ De Vries, *Blue Ribbons Bitter Bread*, Chapters 1 and 2; Arthur Neame, *The Diary of Arthur Neame, 1870-1897*, Sydney May (ed.), Terry Lyons, Aitkenvale, 2003, p. 108.

³⁵ Neame, *The Diary of Arthur Neame, 1870-1897*, pp. 114-115, 120.

³⁶ Letter from Frank Neame to Colonial Secretary, 29 March 1889, Queensland State Archives, SRS 5253, Letter Number 3073.

³⁷ Letter from EW Knox to CE Forster, 27 November 1888, CSR, NBA, 142/1549.

³⁸ 'Telegraphic Intelligence', *Northern Miner*, 8 March 1889, p. 3.

³⁹ Helen Irvine, 'A genealogy of calculations at an early Queensland sugar mill', *Accounting History*, vol. 17, no. 2, May 2012, pp. 193-219.

⁴⁰ 'A Sugar Planters' Conference', *Toowoomba Chronicle and Darling Downs General Advertiser*, 4 May 1889, p. 4.

⁴¹ Mackay Planters' Association 1st Minute Book, Meeting of Revision Committee of Mackay Planters' Association, 18 July 1882, James Cook University Special Collections; Objects of Association and Rules, Mackay Planters' and Farmers' Association, CSR, NBA 142/3579.

⁴² Wegner, 'Hinchinbrook', p. 165.

⁴³ 'A Sugar Planters' Conference', *Toowoomba Chronicle and Darling Downs General Advertiser*, 4 May 1889, p. 4.

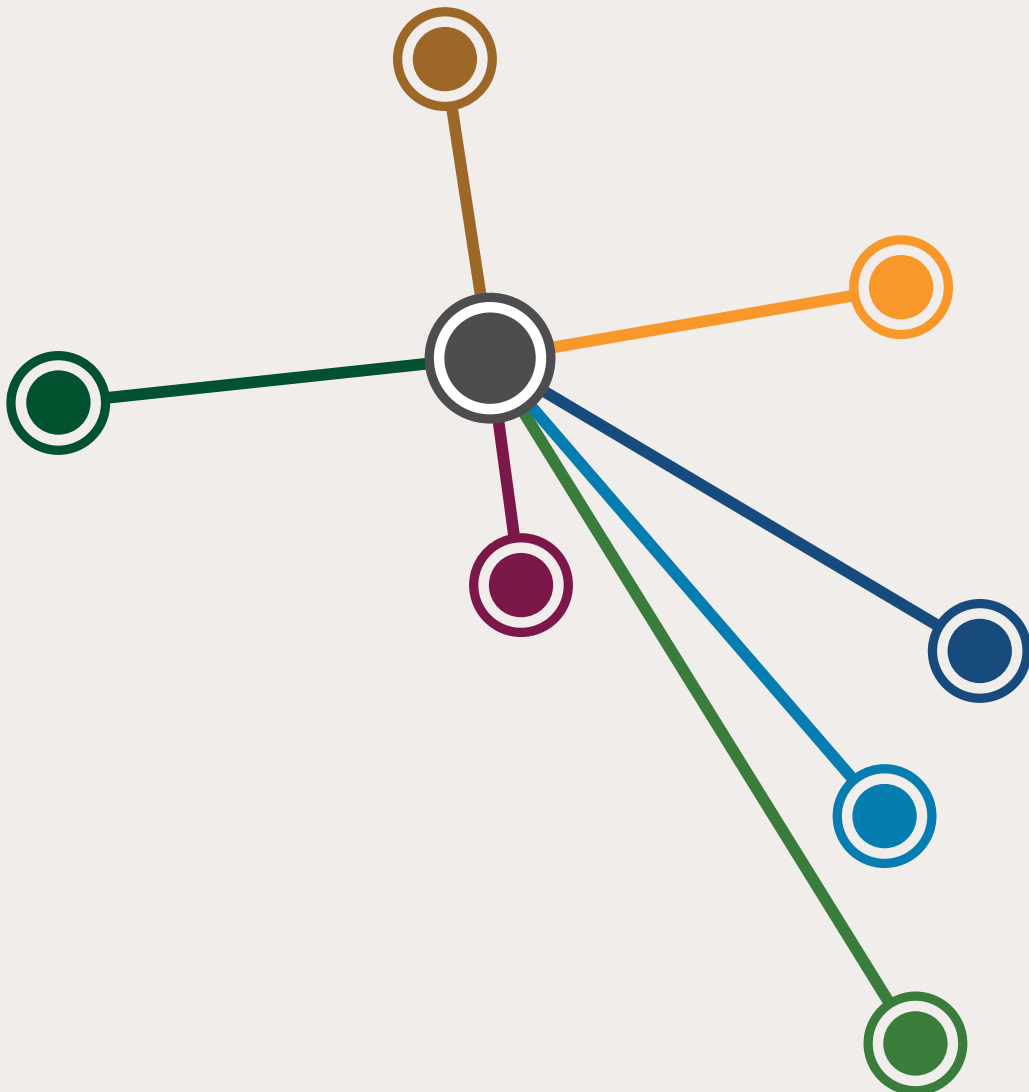
⁴⁴ Letter from EW Knox to W A Farquhar, 18 February 1892, CSR, NBA 142/1550.

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Part three

Reflections

Thinking about history,
its impact on us and our role in
understanding it



DANCE AS PERFORMATIVE PUBLIC HISTORY?

A journey through *Spartacus*

Christine de Matos

Can modern western dance be seen by historians as a public performance of the past? This article explores this question in relation to the ballet *Spartacus*, with particular reference to its Australian contexts. Despite dance being known as a conduit to share knowledge and history in non-western cultures, many historians seem reticent to acknowledge its same potential in modern performances such as ballet and contemporary dance. Yet, as with film, there seems to be much potential to engage with dance in terms of how it interprets the past, how it communicates these interpretations to an audience, and how an audience receives that knowledge and experience. Further, a performance or a piece of choreography can be a historical artefact itself, revealing to historians something of the times in which it was created. Through an examination of the visual intertextualities and cultural contexts of the ballet *Spartacus*, with particular reference to the 1990/2002 and 2019 versions in Australia, this article will reveal the potential offered to historians by studies of modern dance and its capacity to interpret and communicate social and political issues – even without the words we are usually so dependent upon.

History, particularly the academic variety, is mostly conveyed via the written word, but representations of the past are far more heterogeneous.¹ Whether local architecture or an exhibition of artefacts, contemporary artworks or an art film, the public consumes its history in a multitude of forms. Yet historians have diverse attitudes towards non-published representations of the past, from support to critique to outright rejection. One British historian who supported community-driven interpretations of the past was Raphael Samuel. In his introduction to Samuel's book *Theatres of Memory*, Bill Schwartz speaks of the author's 'determination to champion the epistemological value of particular vernacular forms' in their capacity to 'bring the past into the present'.² Samuel's main concerns were with the likes of domestic spaces, local museums, heritage, television and historical re-enactment. But, I ask, is there also a place here to consider modern forms of dance?

Dance has long been a storyteller, a kinetic corporeal form for communicating important cultural knowledge, to make the past known to the present generation. White western historians recognise this powerful form of communication more readily in other cultures – The Dreaming of Australia's First Nations people being but one example. But can historians also acknowledge such communicative power in today's westernised culture, through such forms as ballet and contemporary dance? These may be rather less

vernacular than Samuel's examples, but it is worth asking whether there is an epistemological value to contemporary dance and ballet's choreographies of the past, to dancing the past into the present. Even more pertinent is the following question: is it possible for historians to engage with dance as a historical or interpretive 'text'? One, that is, without the words that we are so dependent upon. Below, I tease out the possibilities through a brief examination of the visual intertextualities and individual cultural environments of the ballet *Spartacus*, particularly with reference to its Australian contexts.

Spartacus has a history

In late 2018, The Australian Ballet performed its latest incarnation of *Spartacus* in Melbourne and Sydney, based on a real historical figure from the Third Servile War (73–71 BCE) that has long worn the tunic of mythology and legend. Many people would be familiar with the Kirk Douglas--Stanley Kubrick--Dalton Trumbo eponymous film of 1960, one that has long been the subject of historical interrogation. 'Visual media,' states Allen M Ward, 'more than any other modern medium shape the public's perception of the past'.³ Scholars, including Robert A Rosenstone,⁴ have carved out a space for film as a legitimate research artefact for historians. This is both in film's ability to engage a viewer with the past while entertaining them, in spite of historical inaccuracies and

anachronisms, and a film's capacity to tell us something of the time in which it was made, precisely because of those inaccuracies and anachronisms.

The film *Spartacus* is a classic demonstration of that last point. It is based on the 1951 novel by Howard Fast, an American communist who wrote the book during the McCarthy era. Dalton Trumbo, the writer brought in to work on the film, was on Hollywood's infamous blacklist. When actor and producer Kirk Douglas made the decision to openly credit him as the writer, Trumbo became famously associated with the ending of that blacklist. It is this *contemporary* historical context that is key to understanding the decisions taken in both the novel and film to play with the past. Whereas historians more contemporary to *Spartacus* the person referred to him as a 'Thracian of nomadic stock' (Plutarch)⁵ who served as a Roman soldier before becoming a prisoner and 'sold for a gladiator' (Appian),⁶ Fast and Douglas have *Spartacus* born into slavery and working in the mines prior to being transformed into a gladiator at Capua. This makes the story of *Spartacus* more relevant to, and an inspiration for, the time in which the film was made: it is concurrently more working class (the virtual slavery of workers vis-à-vis the capitalists/Romans) and more American (the Civil Rights movement dealing with the legacies of generations of slavery). Past and present are entangled in a singular cause, ready to be analysed and interpreted by historians of film.

What is the capacity of modern dance and ballet to enable a similar connection between past and present? Dance, too, has its historical contexts, and the first choreographed ballet performance of the story of *Spartacus*, *Spartak*, was created in the Soviet Union in 1956. Considering the association of *Spartacus* and his uprising with the working class and revolution, this is perhaps unsurprising. Both Marx and Lenin were admirers of the ancient 'proletarian' revolutionary,⁷ and the precursor to the post-World War I German communist party, the KPD – led by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht – was named the *Spartacus League*. The composer of *Spartak* was the Soviet Union's Aram Khachaturian, whose music is the foundation of all modern productions of the *Spartacus* story, including those of The Australian Ballet.⁸ Khachaturian, too, was blacklisted for a short time in the late 1940s, ostensibly for creating music that was too obscure for people to understand and appreciate. But he was quickly rehabilitated by the Soviet regime. Khachaturian not only saw *Spartacus* as a symbol of the oppression of the working class, but of the peoples affected by western colonialism, which was then taking its last breaths even while being increasingly entangled with the Cold War in places like Korea, Malaya and Viet Nam.

The first choreographer of *Spartak*, Leonid Yakobson, also provides us with a quite interesting



Ivan Vasiliev in an extract from *Spartacus* during a gala celebrating the reopening of the Bolshoi Theatre, 28 October 2011. By Kremlin.ru, CC BY 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=19154211>

contextual tale. Yakobson was a Soviet Jew, who often lost favour in Joseph Stalin's anti-Semitic Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). It was only after Stalin's death that Yakobson was invited to choreograph Khachaturian's *Spartak* for the Kirov Ballet. But he was no mere follower of communist ideals; as a choreographer, Yakobson was highly influenced by developments in 20th century modern dance, à la Martha Graham and Isadora Duncan. This form of dance was frowned upon in the USSR at the time, but Yakobson's dancers performed without toe shoes or tutus, and with tunics, sandals and facial expression.⁹ In other words, he choreographed a dance about revolution and dissent, using a dance form and costuming that in turn expressed his dissent towards the Soviet regime: a rebellion within and through a story of rebellion. Yakobson was no stranger to controversy, and as one writer has expressed it, 'during the most brutal decades of Stalinist repression, Yakobson spun out a toe shoe revolution'.¹⁰ However, his corporeal interpretation of *Spartacus* had a short and difficult life. It was a later version with a return to the full classical form, choreographed by Yury Grigorovich in 1968, that came to dominate both the repertoire at Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre and the public's imagination.¹¹

Thus, both the 1956 version of *Spartak* the dance and the 1960 *Spartacus* film were created and performed within the context of their own contemporary Cold War political dynamics. This demonstrates the potential of dance to not so much act as a vehicle for telling history, but to utilise a version of the past to make a comment on the present. What of the Australian contexts for its interpretations of the Spartacus story? In 1978, The Australian Ballet premiered its first *Spartacus*, choreographed by the Hungarian László Seregi for the Hungarian State Ballet in 1968 – 12 years after the crushing of the Hungarian Revolution by Soviet tanks and, like the film, based on Fast's novel.¹² In Australia, Gary Norman danced the role of Spartacus. In his corset-like leather-vest and frayed red briefs, he appeared strong, filthy, and just a little unhinged, somewhat anticipating the film version of John Rambo.

More visual traces exist for the 1990 tour of Seregi's *Spartacus*, this time with Stephen Heathcote in the lead role. In posters advertising the ballet, Heathcote – similar to Norman – appears muscular, with body hair, (slightly less) dirty and, considering the leather body-strapping and splayed pose, quite eroticised.¹³ Heathcote reprised the role in the 2002 tour of the ballet. One significant change in the 2002 version was that the 'African' gladiator Oenomaus was played by Indigenous dancer Albert David, from Bangarra Dance Theatre. This demonstrated a small nick in the dominant whiteness of ballet in Australia, and a welcome if belated retreat from the blackface and wigs used in the 1990s season.¹⁴ This last point in itself documents an important social and political change in Australia.

A *Spartacus* for today

Unlike previous performances of *Spartacus* by The Australian Ballet, the 2018 revival was not Seregi's but a reimagining of Spartacus by Lucan Jervies. The choreographer vocally conveyed his aims for this new version, relying much less on the Fast novel. Jervies conducted his own research to inform his interpretation, in the same way a historical novelist or maker of a historical film might. For instance, he travelled to Florence, Venice and Rome, and saw an exhibition that visually compared ancient Rome and modern slavery. Jervies read widely, including the ancient historians, and visited Roman artefacts and a bust of Roman general and politician Crassus¹⁵ at the Louvre in Paris.¹⁶ He also studied previous versions of the ballet (having performed a walk-on role as a Roman soldier in the 2002 Australian version).

There are many differences between the Seregi and Jervies versions, starting with the staging. The 1990s rendition would not look out of place in a scene from one of the 1980s films *Mad Max 2* and *Mad Max*

Beyond Thunderdome, with a distinct post-apocalyptic, dystopian feel.¹⁷ Most notably, and like *Mad Max*, the dirtiness was palpable and quite visible on the white tights worn by the female slaves, including Spartacus's wife (in history with unknown name, in fiction with many, including Flavia, Varinia and Sura). The large cast of slaves appeared abject and dehumanised, yet were given a defiant hope by the leading man's energy and athleticism.

Contrast this with the stark *cleanliness* of the 2018 version.¹⁸ Jervies used a minimalist and sanitised set, with hardly a dirty stocking or, aside from early scenes, a ragged tunic to be found. The sterility extended to dancers' bodies: unlike Heathcote's iconic legs and chest in *that* United States poster, Kevin Jackson's Spartacus preferred a good body wax. The clean and well-cut briefs of the male gladiators seem to nod towards 1950s swimming trunks for muscle men and, perhaps, the briefs worn by Douglas in the film. Jervies did not want any stereotypical Roman costumes, and these appear variously influenced by current, Roman, Grecian and even Egyptian dress, while Crassus's costume is redolent of Shakespeare's Oberon.

The stage had a disciplined aesthetic, channelling the duality of the fascistic emulation of ancient Rome and its embrace of the modernist turn, and creating an illusion of solidity for both the architecture and the regime. Jervies and his co-creators, especially Jerome Kaplan, took inspiration from totalitarian regimes past and present.¹⁹ The first act boasted a huge monument in the shape of a hand, reminiscent of the remains of the Colossus of Constantine (a statue of the Roman emperor Constantine the Great, whose rule began over 370 years *after* the end of the slave uprising). The monument simultaneously represented the Roman state and every totalitarian one since. Spartacus's act of iconoclasm in pushing over the hand, followed by assuming an iconic masculine pose of strength that could easily be imagined as a Soviet propaganda poster of a worker overthrowing capitalism, recalled anything from the toppling of the statue of King George III in the American Revolution, to that of Stalin in 1956 Hungary, to that of Saddam Hussein after the invasion of Iraq. The opening scenario consisted of youths dressed in white, dancing with red flags, conjuring up a range of images from Hitler Youth to a Kim Jong-un military and dance spectacular. The set for the gladiator training school in Capua boasted a wall of which former East Germany and today's Trump would approve. Other contemporary inspiration for Jervies et al. came from the resurgence of populist right-wing politics in Brazil, Turkey, the United States and Europe, including the Hungarian home of Seregi, the previous choreographer.

This seems a rather noisy pastiche of histories, so was it all just a cacophony or can such a historical ensemble convey a coherent message from past

to present? Jervies' *Spartacus* was not anchored to any particular historical moment, not even that of its protagonist, and this in some ways made it more difficult to connect with or react to. But the pastiche does work in other ways: the more recent historical and contemporary allusions implicitly and simultaneously charged viewers with complicity in contemporary oppression *and* anointed them the potential architects of its doom, making the otherwise coldness of the staging uncomfortably intimate. The fallen hand, toppled by the gladiators, pointed provocatively and directly at the audience. The fascist minimalism of the set also reminded them that oppression is not always a grand spectacle like a gladiator battle or a giant hand, but more Foucauldian in the subtle but no less potent expression of power through everyday actions and denials.

The choreographer expected us – the audience – to make a choice once we left the theatre. Jervies made no secret of wanting to direct the audience's thoughts towards modern slavery and human trafficking in all its forms, and we could easily add to those the treatment of Indigenous Australians and asylum seekers. We as viewers and consumers were asked to 'Join the Rebellion', even in the form of purchasing an iPhone case with that embossed phrase and in the requisite colour of revolution (the rebellion is for sale, but there was no indication whether or not the cover was made by slave or otherwise abusive labour).²⁰ Jervies, it seems, wanted to enter our consciousness. How successful he was in doing this would take a complex act of research to find out. It was rather serendipitous, however, that just as the Sydney season was ending, the Australian parliament was passing its Modern Slavery Act 2018, though I cannot be certain how many ballet-goers necessarily noticed.²¹

Spartacus and its gendered contexts

The other standout point of comparison between the two Australian Ballet versions of *Spartacus* was the representation of gender, particularly masculinities. The 1990s *Spartacus* was a testosterone-fuelled adventure about revenge and the desperate search for freedom from oppression, one in which the slave women were also active agents of change and conduits of anger. One article described the popularity of Seregi's version in Australia as due to the 'beefcake factor', à la that persistent image of Heathcote.²² Around the time of the 2002 tour, the Australian ballet industry was attempting to masculinise its image in order to attract a higher number of male viewers. It did this through the 'celebration of sweaty, muscular manhood' that was *Spartacus*, alongside *Ballet B/okes*, a collection of pieces that showcased the role of male dancers. Comparing ballet dancers to sports stars, their aim was to make ballet as Australian and

masculine as 'football, meat pies [and] kangaroos'.²⁴

It is perhaps not coincidental that this all occurred in a context that has been described as the media-driven 'crisis of masculinity' of the 1990s, something that continues, it can be argued, into the present day. The Rambo-style cinematic representation of rugged masculinity in the Reagan era collided with that of the 'new man'.²⁵ Seregi's rendition of *Spartacus* would likely feel quite comfortable in the 1980s, but Jervies' was more aligned to that which emerged in the 1990s: the 'metrosexual' or the 'sensitive new age guy'.²⁶ The new *Spartacus* had great strength and power, yet performed less aggressively than in earlier versions. This was a *Spartacus* made of graceful lines and beautiful shapes, more so than the pure athletic energy of the Seregi version. Whether or not it was Jervies' intention, the decision not to use weapons in the fight scenes – also a departure from previous versions – adds to the less macho feel. The crucifixion scene was more realistic in its violence in the Seregi version, and more stylised and abstract, but no less powerful, in the Jervies. In the latter version, the relatively hairless muscular bodies, and the neutral colours of the costume and ballet flats, presented a contemporary, well-groomed yet ascetic male aesthetic, contrasting with the hypermasculinity of other *Spartacuses*.

This *Spartacus* was also a gentle and attentive lover. All renditions of the tale of *Spartacus* highlight the love he had for his wife, and this one is no different. Yet it is. Ballet excels in conveying a great love, and Kevin Jackson and Robyn Hendrick's (Flavia) final pas de deux is emotionally engaging and simply stunning. This was a caring man who reluctantly entered battle through force of circumstance, and more than stepped up to the task required of him, but one is left never doubting that he would rather be loving than fighting. By making the relationship between *Spartacus* and Flavia central to the performance and to the marketing campaign, rather than a historical action drama, Jervies depicted a classically beautiful but tragic love story.

In other ways, Jervies' *Spartacus* was not so different to that of others in its idealised representations of the selfless masculine hero. Fast's version paints *Spartacus* as the perfect communist man, one who was virtuous and caring towards his comrades, including his wife, and a wise and humble leader who drew great admiration.²⁷ The Kirk Douglas film renders *Spartacus* as a precursor to Jesus Christ: the film's opening narration speaks of the coming of Christianity to 'overthrow the pagan tyranny of Rome'. In one later scene, after the promised ships to take them away to freedom have not arrived, *Spartacus* gives his version of a 'Sermon on the Mount' to inspire his followers to continue.²⁸ In the final scenes, he is crucified – the bane of historians who know that *Spartacus's* body was never actually found, at least according to the

available ancient records.²⁹ Perhaps the focus on religion helped mask the communist inspiration for the narrative. In his version of *Spartacus*, Jervies turned instead to the more recent historical model of Gandhi to represent 'a peaceful kind of power', even though Gandhi abhorred the use of all violence.³⁰ The ancient histories are far more reticent about Spartacus as a person, focussing instead on the details of the battles and his military achievements. Appian writes about Spartacus preventing his followers from acquiring gold and silver,³¹ while Plutarch describes Spartacus's intelligence and culture. But mostly, this desire to paint Spartacus as the virtuous good guy, as the underdog fighting against a much larger enemy force (something that fits quite well with 20th century Australian military history and legend), is very much a modern twist to the historical narrative.

The theme of love extended beyond Flavia and to the other gladiators. Whether in wrestling training together, or as a gesture of solidarity, arms on each other's shoulders, before the owner of the gladiator school Batiatus,³² or in battles against the Romans, these were men who would, in the words of CEW Bean, 'at all times and at any cost stand by his mate'.³³ When Spartacus was forced to kill his best mate, Hermes, in a gladiatorial contest, he was almost inconsolable.³⁴ This particular scene in the Jervies ballet was a most interesting departure from other productions, both in dance and film. In these other versions, it is the African gladiator Oenomaus whom Spartacus battles, and rather than killing Spartacus, at the last moment he attempts to climb into the viewing podium to kill the viewers who have ordered the battle – none other than Crassus and friends.³⁵ While it is difficult to know why Jervies substantially changed the narrative, it is perhaps only the killing of a close friend – most heinously at his own hands; the ultimate crime against mateship – along with the taking of his wife as a slave by Crassus, that could send this gentler Spartacus on a path of violence. Despite no obvious utterances by Jervies, it is interesting that this production synchronised with the centenary of the armistice that ended World War I on 11 November 2018. The armistice marked the end of a war in which many young men had found themselves on the cliffs of the Dardanelles in Turkey, or in trenches on the Western Front, where they were compelled to kill other young men and watch their friends die, not unlike this Spartacus.

The above demonstrates changing notions of desired masculinity over time and within particular political and social contexts. Jervies not only rejected the historical, rugged masculinity of previous versions of the Spartacus story, but also made a political statement about contemporary notions of 'toxic masculinity'.³⁶ His Spartacus was physically strong

and willing to fight for what was right, but was also caring, respectful and tender. However, just as this Spartacus represented a rejection of alpha masculinity, the female slaves were also much more, well, *feminine* than in previous versions. Yes, they were strong and did their part in attacking the Romans alongside the men, but in the choreography, costuming, and in their flowing, blue, nymph-like attire, the gendered differentiation between the slaves was far more palpable than in the Seregi ballet.³⁷ It appears that in order to rescue the residues of masculine strength in the 'new Spartacus', so as not too make him *too* sensitive, the women also needed to be made softer.

Conclusion

The Australian Ballet's most recent *Spartacus* may not be history as historians expect it to be, but it can be interrogated for its uses of the past in the present. Changing notions of dominant masculinity, political contexts and social issues can all be teased out in anything from the choreography to costuming. As Winkler said of the film, '*Spartacus* is not a lesson in Roman history, but it is a lesson in how Americans conceive of history and themselves'.³⁸ In his book dedication, Fast informs readers that he wrote the novel 'so that those who read it, my children and others, may take strength for our own troubled future and that they may struggle against oppression and wrong'.³⁹ Similar to Fast's version, Jervies' *Spartacus* was timeless in its evocation of inhumanity, oppression and totalitarianism, and timely in its hopeful aspirations to invoke social change in Australia today. Rather than providing a new understanding of the past, or bringing the past into the present, this version of *Spartacus* drew on multiple histories for inspiration to illuminate the political present. The production left its audience to ponder how much, at society's core, had really changed. Each era, it seems, still needs its very own, rebranded Spartacus.

This article has taken a short journey through just one dance performed by different companies, with different choreographers, in different times and different places. While each production is a public, performative retelling of a real historical event, it cannot be divorced from the times that helped to shape it. Historians may not be creating the dance, but they surely have a role in interpreting its meanings and contexts, and in understanding how such public performances of historical events and persons influence those who view them. The challenge is how to do this – performances are, of course, ephemeral. But we can do what we always do and are experts at: working from traces and fragments in the form of online reviews, YouTube excerpts, programs and memories. The potential, I believe, is rich, whether via analysing choreographer intent, audience reception of

the (re)telling of the past, teasing out contemporary contexts, or even interpreting the corporeal language as expressed through the dancer's body. But before these studies can move forward, dance first needs to be acknowledged as being, at least sometimes, a very public form of history.

Notes

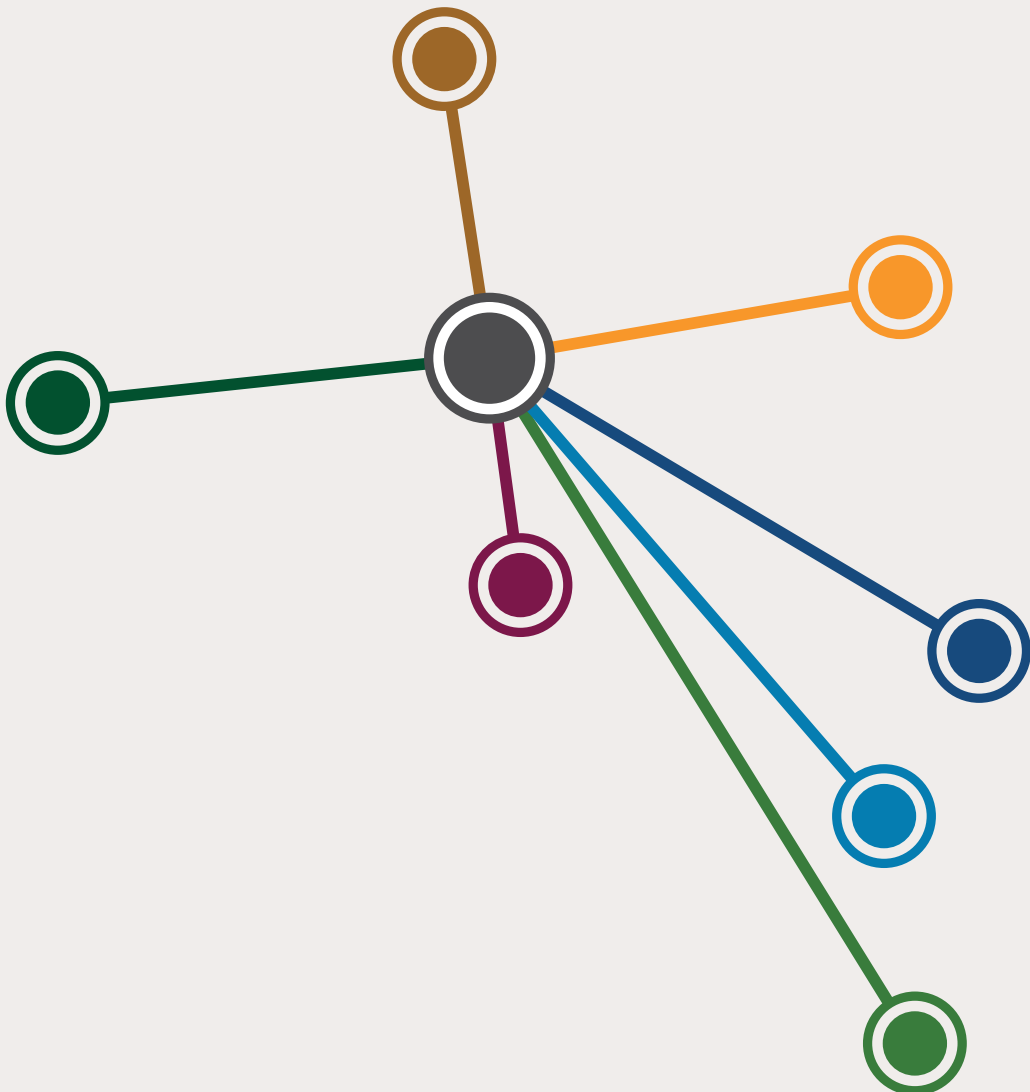
- 1 This article is an expanded version of the PHA (NSW & ACT) blog, 'Spartacus – bodies moving through the past', 4 March 2019, <https://www.phansw.org.au/spartacus-bodies-moving-through-the-past/> Thanks to the referees for their helpful suggestions.
- 2 Bill Schwartz, 'Foreword', in Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*, Verso, London, 2012, p. xii.
- 3 Allen M Ward, 'Spartacus: History and Historionics', in Martin M Winkler (ed.), *Spartacus: Film and History*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, 2007, p. 88.
- 4 For instance, see his *History on Film/Film on History*, Routledge, New York, 2012.
- 5 Plutarch, in Winkler (ed.), *Spartacus*, p. 234.
- 6 Appian, *The Civil Wars*, in Winkler (ed.), *Spartacus*, p. 238.
- 7 Harlow Robinson, 'The Caucasian Connection: National Identity in the Ballets of Aram Khachaturian', *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 35, no. 3, 2007, p. 436.
- 8 Khachaturian, an Armenian brought up in Georgia, completed the musical score for *Spartak* in 1954.
- 9 While from more recent productions, visit the Yacobson Ballet Theatre website to get an idea of the costuming for *Spartak*: <http://www.yacobsonballet.ru/en/afisha/spartacus> A short clip from one production is available at: Lydia Culp, 'Resisting Arrest: Soviet Ballet as Protest from 1955-1980', 23 April 2018, <http://cducomb.colgate.domains/globaltheater/europe/resisting-arrest-soviet-ballet-as-protest-from-1955-1980/>
- 10 Janice Ross, 'The Ballet Genius Who Took on the Soviets', *Daily Beast*, 2 May 2015, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-ballet-genius-who-took-on-the-soviets?ref=scroll>
- 11 The Bolshoi Ballet performed its latest version of this Spartacus recently in Brisbane Australia. See 'Bolshoi Ballet – Spartacus', Queensland Performing Arts Centre, https://www.qpac.com.au/event/bolshoi_ballet_spartacus_19/
- 12 Seregi went to Melbourne to guide the Australian production.
- 13 See Rose Mulready, 'Ballet Men: Steven Heathcote', *The Australian Ballet*, 21 December 2019, <https://australianballet.com.au/behind-ballet/ballet-men-steven-heathcote>
- 14 Elizabeth Ashley, 'The Australian Ballet's "Spartacus" reimagined: A conversation with choreographer Lucas Jervies', *Dance Informa*, 9 November 2018, <https://dancemagazine.com.au/2018/11/the-australian-ballets-spartacus-reimagined-a-conversation-with-choreographer-lucas-jervies/> See also *The Australian Ballet, Spartacus*, ABC DVD, 1993.
- 15 Crassus is the Roman general and politician credited with defeating Spartacus.
- 16 Kate Scott, 'Spartacus Redux', *The Australian Ballet*, 5 December 2017, <https://australianballet.com.au/behind-ballet/spartacus-redux>
- 17 See *The Australian Ballet, Spartacus*, ABC DVD, 1993.
- 18 Note that the version I saw performed was at the Sydney Opera House on 17 November 2018. An internet search will reveal many images of the set and the advertising campaign.
- 19 Stephen A Russell, 'Blood on the dance floor as Spartacus gives ballet a political update', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 September 2018, <https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/dance/blood-on-the-dance-floor-as-spartacus-gives-ballet-a-political-update-20180816-p4zxvq.html>
- 20 Find one at The Australian Ballet Shop, <https://australianballet.com.au/shop/accessories/spartacus-iphone-case/11>
- 21 Paul Redmond, 'At last, Australia has a Modern Slavery Act. Here's what you'll need to know', *The Conversation*, 3 December 2018, <https://theconversation.com/at-last-australia-has-a-modern-slavery-act-heres-what-youll-need-to-know-107885>; Parliament of Australia, 'Modern Slavery Bill 2018', https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Bills_Legislation/Bills_Search_Results/Result?bld=r6148
- 22 Valerie Lawson, 'The Australian Ballet's 2018 tent pole: Spartacus reinvented for the 21st century', *dancelines.com.au*, 27 September 2017, <http://dancelines.com.au/spartacus-reinvented-21st-century-tent-pole-australian-ballets-2018-season/>
- 23 'Putting a blokey spin on ballet', *The Age*, 14 June 2002, <https://www.theage.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/putting-a-blokey-spin-on-ballet-20020614-gduas5.html>
- 24 *ibid.*
- 25 Brenton J Malin, 'Policing the crisis of masculinity: Media and masculinity at the dawn of the new century', in Cynthia Carter, Linda Steiner & Lisa McLaughlin (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Media and Gender*, Routledge, Abingdon & New York, 2013, p. 611.
- 26 This is a partly humorous quote from Jervies in Ashley, *Dance Informa*.
- 27 Howard Fast, *Spartacus*, Panther Books, London, 1970.
- 28 For example, see Francisco Javier Tovar Paz, 'Spartacus and the stoic ideal of death', in Winkler (ed.), *Spartacus*, p. 190.
- 29 Stanley Kubrick, *Spartacus*, Universal, 1960. Of course, many of Spartacus's followers were crucified along the Appian Way between Capua and Rome. See Plutarch: 'Finally, after his companions had taken to flight, he [Spartacus] stood alone, surrounded by a multitude of foes, and was still defending himself when he was cut down', quoted in Winkler (ed.), *Spartacus*, p. 238; Appian, *The Civil Wars*: 'The body of Spartacus was not found', quoted in Winkler (ed.), *Spartacus*, p. 241; and Livy, *Periochae*: 'Then he [Crassus] fought a decisive battle with Spartacus. 60,000 men and Spartacus himself were killed', quoted in Winkler (ed.), *Spartacus*, p. 243.
- 30 Scott, 'Spartacus Redux'.
- 31 Appian, *The Civil Wars*, in Winkler (ed.), *Spartacus*, p. 239.
- 32 See Martin Portus, 'Spartacus Ballet Review (Sydney OperaHouse)', *Daily Review*, 11 November 2018, <https://dailyreview.com.au/spartacus-ballet-review/79165/>

- ³³ CEW Bean, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Volume I – The Story of ANZAC from the outbreak of war to the end of the first phase of the Gallipoli Campaign, May 4, 1915*, 11th edition, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1941, p. 6. Also available online via Australian War Memorial, <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C1416845>
- ³⁴ See Stephanie Glickman, 'Spartacus is a triumph of emotion and pure physicality', *Herald Sun*, 19 September 2018, <https://www.heraldsun.com.au/entertainment/arts/spartacus-is-a-triumph-of-emotion-and-pure-physicality/news-story/d6a3db91c90dc801e14ba62b33e2e97f?nk=2613fd0f99a12783f2f952c622d8cf80-1544509056>
- ³⁵ Oenomaus is instead killed, and it is this role that, among others, was the subject of blackface in the 1990s Australian production.
- ³⁶ Ashley, *Dance Informa*.
- ³⁷ See Canberra Critics Circle, 'Spartacus - The Australian Ballet', 13 November 2018, <http://ccc-canberracriticscircle.blogspot.com/2018/11/spartacus-australian-ballet.html>; Lee Christofis, 'Spartacus (The Australian Ballet)', *Australian Book Review*, 20 September 2018, <https://www.australianbookreview.com.au/abr-arts/5099-spartacus-the-australian-ballet>
- ³⁸ Martin M Winkler, 'The Holy Cause of Freedom: American Ideals in *Spartacus*', in Winkler (ed.), *Spartacus*, p. 165.
- ³⁹ Fast, p. 5.

Part four

Practices

Practical advice and guidance
for professional historians



THE BOROONDARA MAYORAL PORTRAITS PROJECT:

A case study in doing online history

Emma Russell and Carissa Goudey

The Boroondara Mayoral Portraits Project began with a collection of nearly 300 portraits and ended with an online catalogue of biographies. This online transition brought with it some interesting challenges and considerations, as did the nature of doing this work as consulting historians. In this article we discuss some of the challenges that may be faced in similar historical database or cataloging projects. Using our work with the City of Boroondara on the Mayoral Portraits Project as an example, we offer our thoughts on resolving or working around these challenges.

Introduction

Over the past couple of decades, the internet has had an enormous impact on the way that historians conduct and disseminate research. With the development of online databases and web-based library catalogues, locating and evaluating sources has become much more efficient. In some cases, such as the Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB) and the Australian Women's Register, the databases and catalogues themselves have become spaces where historians can share their research and verify their source material.

However, working with the internet brings with it a vast amount of false information and challenges, including claims about history which are not supported by viable evidence, stumbling blocks when faced with a particular source that is yet to be digitised, the complexity of working with social media, or writing for a catalogue or database rather than in a narrative-based format. Working with a biographical database as a consulting historian has other challenges. These include the restricted access to particularly fragile records, inability to access sources in far-off locations, and the limitations of your end product; an overly concise rendition of a person's life that you just know does not do their character or their career justice. In addition, there is nearly always the very small window in which to produce your work, leading to an inevitable desire to go 'above and beyond' what is possible within your client's budget.

The City of Boroondara

Although the City of Boroondara was only formed in 1994 as a result of statewide municipal amalgamations, its geographical limits encompass the former cities

of Camberwell, Hawthorn and Kew.¹ Each of these cities enjoyed over a century of political independence from one another, having dissolved their joint local government – the Boroondara District Roads Board – in 1860. The diversion of the municipalities resulted in the evolution of three distinct boroughs (later towns and then cities), each with its own character and local concerns. It also resulted in the production of three 'sub-collections' of mayoral portraits, all dispersed throughout their respective municipalities, with councils adopting different methods of acquiring the portraits over the decades.²



Mayoral chain of office, City of Camberwell.
Boroondara Libraries, LHCPH 32

The Project

The Boroondara Mayoral Portraits Project began in 2016 as a collection management exercise, aimed at consolidating approximately 300 photographic portraits taken of the city's former mayors.³ The first phase of the project, undertaken by curator Ann Carew, involved the creation of an inventory list of these portraits. Conservation and preservation advice was provided, as were recommendations regarding digitisation of the photographs. By the time of our involvement in February 2019, the majority of the portraits had been digitised and uploaded to Boroondara Libraries' online catalogue or to Kew Historical Society's Victorian Collections website, with the exception of a few missing portraits.⁴ The inventory developed in Stage One of the project – outlining each mayor's name, terms in office and the location of their original portrait – was our guide in Stage Two for proceeding with biographical research. The digitised portraits and corresponding biographies were uploaded to Boroondara Libraries' online catalogue as a resource for library users and local history and family history researchers. They are searchable by name or can be found by typing in the search term 'Boroondara Mayoral Project'. Our own involvement focused on researching and writing individual biographies for each of the mayors.

Working on the project

Overcoming scale

How do you even start researching 300 people? We will admit the concept was a little daunting to begin with, but a systematic approach established very early on proved to be the answer. Our advice to other historians undertaking a similar task follows: --

Devise a project schedule: break your work down to the hour, identify your sources and repositories well ahead of time, and look for ways to be efficient about sourcing information (although this does not always work, as we discuss below). Start by organising your subjects into time periods or districts, or whatever the defining feature of your particular project, and write about those that are easier to access information about. This will enable you to tick more people off the list at the beginning and feel confident that the task is achievable. Develop a strict process for naming and filing, recording the editing process on a spreadsheet, and delivering biographies to your colleague(s) and to the client for review. Include a column in your spreadsheet for comments, questions or random thoughts – it is impossible to remember everything that springs to mind when researching that many people.

Navigating inaccessible sources

Researching people who are still 'alive and kicking' can be challenging. Given that we were working

with, in some cases, the life stories of individuals still working for the City of Boroondara and elsewhere, we wanted to conduct a roundtable discussion with all mayors since 1994. This date was a convenient cut-off point that included everyone who served the City of Boroondara as it is structured today. Meeting with all the mayors since 1994 would also give us a range of perspectives, including all political leanings, both genders, and a depth of experience from the last decades of the 20th century to contemporary times. Political sensitivities made this idea unworkable (this is local government after all). With the roundtable deemed unviable, we designed a survey for email and postal distribution. However, this too did not eventuate as not all the recipients' contact details were available. It would have been possible to seek out some former mayors individually, however there were time and budget limitations that made individual meetings or interviews extremely costly and it was all too easy to imagine concerns of favouritism. In so many cases, we had to look back to the project schedule and remind ourselves that each biography was 'equal', at least in the sense that we had worked with what was available in print and online and endeavoured to cover personal, work and extra activities where we could for each mayor, even if some biographies ended up being longer or more detailed than others.

Restricting our research to print and online material resulted in some usual historical research problems. Some records were interstate and undigitised, or required us to navigate conditions of access, or some information was just not available. Where possible, we noted where additional sources could be located for future local, family or civic history researchers. Presentation of our research in the form of a library catalogue with 'fields' provided an opportunity for an 'other information' field to record these additional sources.

The importance of contextual research

What information do you need to know before you can write about someone? Contextual research is obviously important in understanding the life and work of your subject, and this might include the social context of their lives, whether they have been written about elsewhere, the significance of the associations and organisations they belonged to, and any contributions made by them in their professional (not civic) lives. For example, while a significant player in Kew, a protagonist for Kew's separation from the Boroondara District Roads Board and the first chairman (before mayors were instituted) of the new municipality of Kew in 1860, George Wharton was also a significant architect who designed Collingwood's Grace Darling Hotel (1854) and South Melbourne's Chinese Temple (1866). Like many of Boroondara's mayors (as we were to discover), Wharton was also a Justice of the

Peace. He was closely involved and finely tuned to the needs and requirements of his community. Contextual research had the added benefit of helping to counteract the lack of information about some of the mayors, giving us clues to their interests, explanations for their activities, and opportunities to understand how they came to be involved in local government.

Working with the internet

Using social media for biographical research

The rise of social media over the past decade has brought about a whole range of opportunities for researchers, including historians. In recent years, some museums have experimented with using social media such as Facebook for communicating with potential contributors of oral and written testimony and sourcing exhibition material. In creating the 2013 to 2014 exhibition *Head Full of Flames: Punk in the Nation's Capital 1977-1992*, the Canberra Museum and Gallery (CMAG) did just this, tapping into a resource that not only made exhibition research much quicker, but also provided a platform for contributors to respond easily.⁵

In biographical research, social media can also be a valuable means of learning about an individual's passions, achievements and life story. For a handful of our mayoral biographies, LinkedIn – rather than Facebook – seemed to be a viable and more appropriate alternative to our proposed roundtable discussion and survey. With a focus on describing career progression and professional achievements, LinkedIn allowed us to account for some of the more recent mayors' work history, as told in their own words. However, we just could not shake the uneasy feeling that there was something surreptitious about this kind of research. Stalkerish, even. At the same time, when people offer their entire work history on a platform like LinkedIn, does that suggest they are *expecting* someone will read and use that information?

At the heart of this ethical conundrum is the question of permission. Our roundtable discussion and survey would have relied primarily on contributors giving their permission first, then responding to our questions, and having the opportunity to redact or amend anything we used in our work. In the case of using social media for research, permission is effectively granted to the platform when an account is created through the acceptance of terms and conditions, which typically include a clause about third parties and researchers. However, it should be stressed that few users actually read these terms and conditions.⁶ A recent study (c. 2014) by the University of Aberdeen explored the various ethical dilemmas faced by researchers when using social media, and produced a set of guidelines as a means of navigating these murky waters.

The guide urges researchers to:

- a) properly investigate the terms and conditions of the social media platform being used
- b) consider whether the use and release of information would pose a threat to that individual's privacy and safety.⁷

As historians, we would add that if you are able to, it is good to make sure that subjects who are living know about your work and have the opportunity to speak for themselves.

Writing for online catalogues or databases

There are a seemingly infinite number of articles and publications on 'How to write for the internet', all offering similar advice on minimising word limits and avoiding long pages of text. Such guidelines can apply to blog posts as well as online catalogues and databases. In the latter instance, how you present your research (the narrative, citations, hyperlinks and all) can depend a lot on the information management system you are working with, as well as your client's style guide.

For the Mayoral Portraits Project, we were provided with a Microsoft Word template that requested the following information:

- whether the mayoral portrait was catalogued at Boroondara Libraries
- name of the photographer
- name of mayor photographed
- photograph's dimensions
- mayor's terms in office
- biography
- name of researcher
- sources
- specific subject headings required
- photograph's location
- other information.


In most cases, filling the fields was simply a matter of 'yes' or 'no' and other brevities.

Meanwhile, we had relatively free rein over the 'biography' field, so each biography could be as brief or as detailed as the sources would permit. As our research progressed, it became clear that some of the more elusive mayors could only be written about in fewer than 100 words; others, like the tumultuous Bert Hocking, have entire books written about them and even an entry in the ADB. To avoid our own narratives from becoming unwieldy – and to avoid repetition with the ADB – we adopted a general rule of containing each biography to the length of a computer screen and breaking each story into 'bite-size' chunks of information. This approach is advocated by institutions like the Museum of Western Australia, which also advises to make the text 'scannable' by the eye.

We also endeavoured to direct readers towards sites such as the ADB and other resources available at Boroondara Libraries by incorporating hyperlinks in the 'other information' field.

In theory, this was a sound approach. Online biographical registers and dictionaries – the ADB and Australian Women's Register included – are designed to display biographical entries front and centre, with accompanying supporting information (sources,

themes, relationships) on the periphery. Library catalogues, as we discovered, can be an entirely different animal. Although our biographies appeared as neat little pieces in the Microsoft Word template, this did not always translate to what was presented on the library catalogue, where the biographies appear almost incidental amongst the various catalogue fields and description of the mayoral portraits.

<p>Main Title: [Sonia Jill O'Brien] [picture] / [biographical research by HistoryAtWork]</p> <p>Author: HistoryAtWork (Firm)</p> <p>Collation: 1 photograph : b&w ; 26 x 19 cm.</p> <p>Series Title: Boroondara Mayoral Project</p> <p>Notes: Negative no. 87 ; contact print no. 87. The City of Boroondara has created a project to ensure the longevity and accessibility of their Mayoral photographs. Phase One of this project saw the building of an inventory listing of approximately 260 photographs of former Mayors of City of Kew, Hawthorn and Camberwell. These former municipalities became the City of Boroondara during amalgamation. The succeeding Mayors of the City of Boroondara are also included in the project. Phase Two of the project presents the photographs and historical information in a digital format that is accessible to the broader community and also tells the story of these Mayors and their municipalities. Digital version of O'Brien's mayoral portrait is available in this edition of the Kew Historical Society newsletter: http://kewhistoricalsociety.org.au/khs/wp-content/uploads/KHS-Newsletter-2016-4.pdf</p> <p>Citations: References: 'O'Brien, Sonia Jill' at Australian Women's Register, 19 June 2019, 3:38pm http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/AWE3938b.htm References: Bourke, Valerie, 'Vale – Jill O'Brien', Kew Historical Society newsletter, No.117, December 2016, p. 3.</p> <p>Biography/History: Sonia Jill O'Brien, Mayor of Kew 1983/1984. Jill O'Brien (d. 2016) was a qualified nurse and former Mayor of Kew. O'Brien was born in Bendigo and went on to become a founding member of the Family Planning Association of Victoria during the 1960s. An advocate for reproductive rights and women's health, O'Brien later served as a member of the Department of Health's Ethics Committee in the 1990s. O'Brien entered Kew Council in 1980, and the same year was elected president of the Kew Historical Society. As a councillor, O'Brien was most active in environmental and heritage conservation, including the restoration of Villa Alba. She was an active member of the Yarra Bend Park Trust, the Studley Park Conservation Society and the Powerline Action Group, as well as Kew Council's representative on the Merri Yarra Municipal Protection Committee. In 1988 O'Brien contested in a by-election for the seat of Kew in the Legislative Assembly.</p> <p>Language: English</p> <p>Subject: O'Brien, Sonia Jill Mayors -- Victoria -- Kew City council members -- Victoria -- Kew Nurses -- Victoria -- Kew -- Biography Conservation of natural resources -- Victoria -- Kew -- Biography</p> <p>Average Rating: No reviews available as yet Add your review</p> <p>BRN: 85758</p> <p>Bookmark Link: https://boroondara.spydus.com/cgi-bin/spydus.exe/ENQ/OPAC/BIBENQ?BRN=85758</p>	<p>Click thumbnail to view full image</p>  <p>Photographs have copyright. To copy, ask at the Info. Desk</p>
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Boroondara Libraries catalogue entry for Sonia Jill O'Brien.

A final (obvious) consideration is to publish material once it is proofread and complete. The Museum of Western Australia's online writing guide advises that users will become frustrated when faced with typos and 'more to come' messages. Over the course of this project, we streamlined a process in which biographies were researched and drafted by one historian, then passed to the next for proofreading and editing, and finally uploaded to the catalogue by a library staff member. While it was mostly efficient, this process left almost no wiggle room for incidental research – those little gems you happen to find while researching something entirely different. Although re-uploading the edited biographies was not exhaustive for the cataloguer, we were very aware that she had other priorities beyond our project.

How do you 'conclude' a project like this?

On a project of this scale, there were so many subjects that we would have liked to explore further. There were the mayors who had little written about them and the pivotal roles of their wives as mayoresses. There was the potential to explore the simple notion of 'community players' who often appeared to have little leadership experience beyond their active involvement on the committees of various sports groups, contrasted with others who were dedicated and highly influential political players, and often sought out election to other local governments or to state government. One thing we learned was that councillors and mayors are indeed a mixed bag. Opportunities abound for oral history with past mayors or their descendants. This would of course offer another wide window onto this civic history enterprise that is otherwise constrained into bite-sized pieces in the form of individual biographies with little connection to one another, apart from the umbrella catalogue search field of 'Boroondara Mayoral Project'.

At the outset of our involvement in this project, we knew that we would be gathering a mass of new knowledge one way or another. How could we not when we had to come to terms with the lives and work of nearly 300 people over 163 years? We were learning not just about these people but about the development of local government, the evolution of much of middle-ring eastern Melbourne, and the nuances of community-level social, cultural, economic, urban and political adaptations. As with so many consulting jobs, the project's brief, and its associated time and budget, was constraining. As a means of wrapping up the project, it was a simple gesture to produce a guide for researching civic history. And it was nearly as simple to develop a civic history overview that would help to bring all the biographies together, even if it could not extend to fully exploring the subjects we found most tantalising. Both were developed to assist library staff

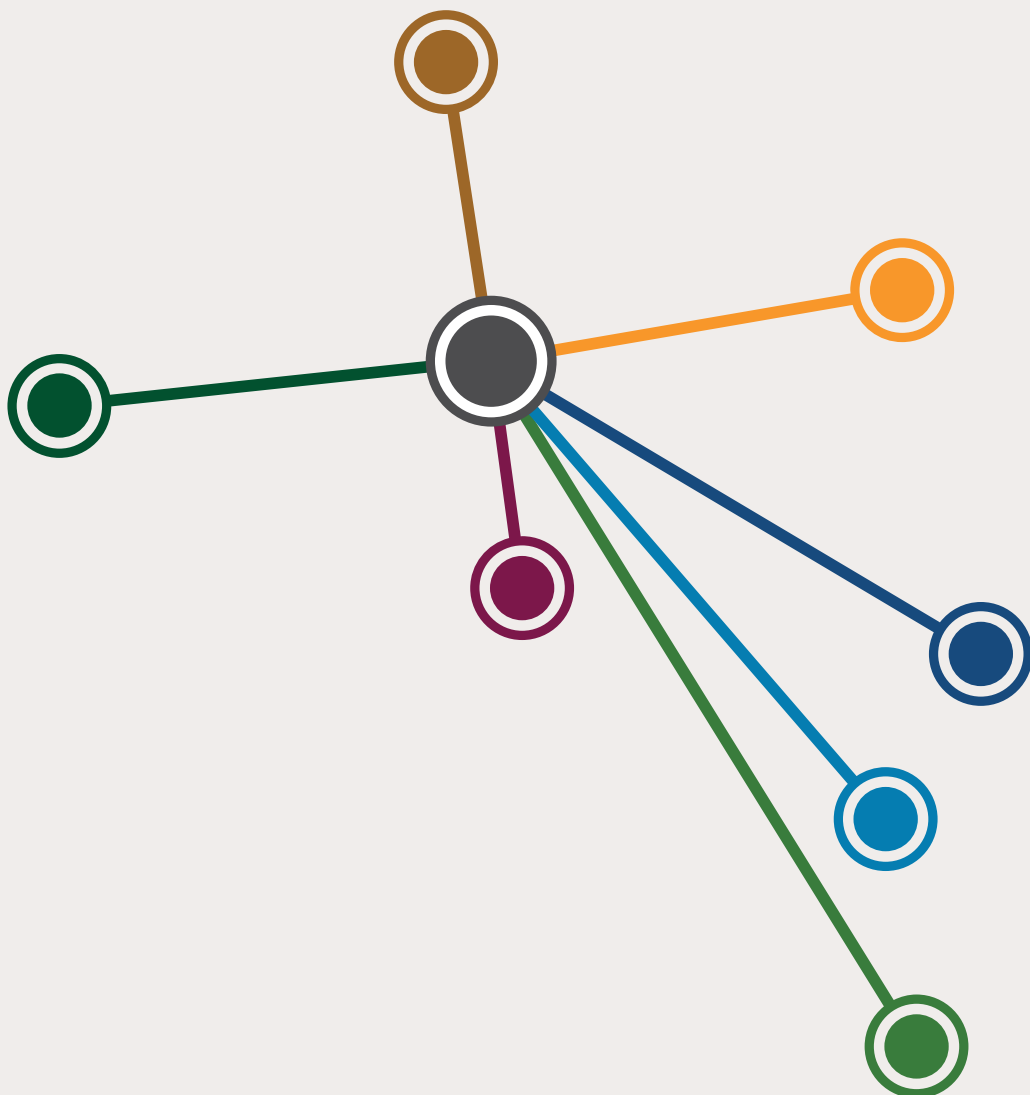
with civic history research and queries; and one day will accompany similar resources on the City of Boroondara's Local History website. These additional project outcomes helped to satisfy the need to 'conclude' these biographies and maximise the opportunities the research presented us. Hopefully, others will be tempted or will find opportunities to develop some of the biographies further, or be inspired to delve into the hundreds of possible research tangents they offer.

Notes

- ¹ Suburbs in Melbourne's inner-east.
- ² Ann Carew, 'Town Hall Gallery: City of Boroondara Mayoral Portraits Project' (report), 2016, p. 2.
- ³ The project is hereafter referred to as 'the Mayoral Portraits'.
- ⁴ Kew Historical Society has been the custodian of the former City of Kew's mayoral portraits, while portraits from the former cities of Camberwell and Hawthorn are held by Boroondara Libraries.
- ⁵ Emma Williams, 'Taking the "next step" with web 2.0: Social media as a research tool for museums', *Museums Australia Magazine*, vol. 22, no. 4, Winter 2014, pp. 16-19.
- ⁶ Dr Leanne Townsend and Professor Claire Wallace, 'Social Media Research: A Guide to Ethics', The University of Aberdeen, undated, p. 5, https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_487729_en.pdf
- ⁷ Townsend and Wallace, 'Social Media Research', pp. 9-10.
- ⁸ The Museum of Western Australia, 'Style Guide Online Writing', http://museum.wa.gov.au/wam-style-guide/wa-museum-style-guide-section-online-writing#_Toc250972423
- ⁹ *ibid.*

Part five

Reviews



PETER SPEARITT

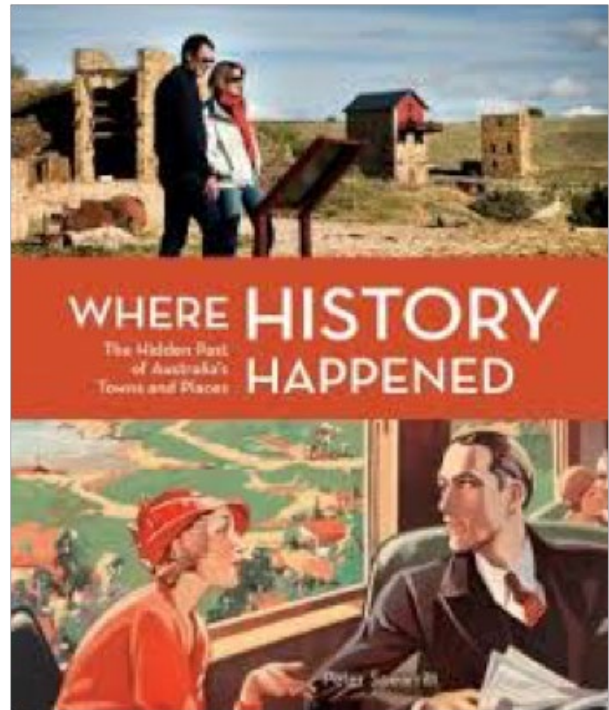
*Where History Happened:
The Hidden Past of Australia's
Towns and Places*

NLA Publishing, Canberra, 2018

I learned very little about local Aboriginal history while growing up in Dubbo during the 1980s. Aside from a visit in primary school to the Terramungamine axe grinding grooves on the Macquarie River to the north of town and the occasional lesson about 'traditional' Aboriginal hunting and gathering (there was no mention of land management techniques), I was taught nothing about the experiences of local Aboriginal people, neither contemporary nor historic. It was not until I returned to town over 15 years later as a native title historian that I began to learn the hidden histories of the Tubba-Gah Wiradjuri, who had occupied the district in central-west New South Wales for thousands of years. As research progressed, my eyes were opened to the life of Tommy Taylor, who was born in the 1820s at the beginning of colonial occupation. He resisted the authorities and escaped from the police several times. It turned out that even the streets near where I lived were named after Aboriginal families. Ex-convict George Smith (aka 'Dusty Bob') had at least five children with Mattie Warrie (daughter of senior Tubba-Gah man Billung Warrie). Dusty Bob left his extensive property holdings to his Aboriginal children (you can read his original will at the local library), and although the land was lost in later court disputes, their names were recorded in the names of streets that were subsequently mapped out.

It is in the spirit of bringing hidden histories to light that Peter Spearitt has written *Where History Happened: The Hidden Past of Australia's Towns and Places*, published by the National Library of Australia. Based on his own extensive travelling (Spearitt has visited all the places he writes about) and historical research, the book is a guide to 29 places throughout Australia, arranged by state and territory. From Old Parliament House in Canberra to Rottnest Island in Western Australia, the book uncovers stories that are missed by most glossy tourist brochures. Like the appearance of Wiradjuri elder Jimmy Clements at the opening of the federal parliament in 1927 (pp. 26-28) and the use of Rottnest Island in the 19th century as a prison for Aboriginal offenders (pp. 218-225).

Spearitt is not afraid to explore the dark side of



history. His chapter on Myall Creek captures the horrific 1838 massacre on Henry Dangar's property in northern New South Wales that saw the demise of 30 Wirrayaraay people at the hands of convict labourers (pp. 60-65). Seven of the perpetrators were later convicted and executed at a time when Europeans were rarely brought to justice for killing Aboriginal people. A ray of light is shone by Spearitt's account of the 2008 unveiling of a memorial to the massacre by a group of local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. A gathering is now held annually on the date of the killings to remember the fallen and build a sense of reconciliation.

The shadows of our more recent past are explored as well, including the devastating impact of woodchip mills on Tasmanian forests (see the chapter on saving the Franklin River, pp. 148-153), and the damage done to the Great Barrier Reef when the coal carrier Shen Neng 1 ran aground after leaving the port of Gladstone (p. 107). But it would be incorrect to state that the book focuses solely on the negative. Spearitt is right to remind the reader and traveller that all is not right with the past (or the way it is remembered in the present), but he is adept at inviting us to explore places that retain a sense of serenity, historic interest and charm, such as Seppelt Wines in South Australia (p. 136). To this end, some chapters include a helpful list of places to visit, plus their addresses (small maps here may have helped).

Where History Happened is beautifully designed and illustrated with contemporary and historic photographs from the National Library of Australia collection. The colours of the cover capture the eye and I was

particularly taken with the reproductions of tourist brochures and posters that feature throughout. Peter Spearitt has written a book that whets the appetite of the tourist and historian alike to learn more about the diverse histories of Australia, but to keep in mind the darkness that lies within. It is one of the reasons

why hidden histories should be brought to light. Even though my old hometown of Dubbo misses out, there are enough tales to encourage us all to search out the forgotten and unappreciated places and stories next time we travel.

Michael Bennett

PETER MONTEATH

Captured Lives: Australia's Wartime Internment Camps

NLA Publishing, Canberra, 2018

If you are looking for a convenient place to store enemy civilians and prisoners of war, then Australia – huge and miles away from anywhere – looks like a pretty good choice. Peter Monteath is a historian with considerable experience in researching the stories of internees and prisoners of war (POWs). In *Captured Lives*, he has done a splendid job in examining how men, women and children from German, Japanese, Italian and other backgrounds fared in Australian camps during the two world wars.

The National Library of Australia is to be commended for its series of publications, based on its extensive records, but not confined to its holdings. This lovely looking book on the travails and troubles of those whom Australia chose to intern as enemy aliens is beautifully produced, including many telling illustrations. The detailed references and recommended reading encourage one to chase up matters in further detail. In my case, I am particularly interested in wartime links between Australia and New Caledonia, so I should have known that the latter sent significant numbers of its Japanese residents to Australia during the Second World War.

Monteath's book has several significant virtues. Firstly, it is thoroughly readable, finding the right balance between an accessible style and deep scholarship. Oh, that all historians would remember that the obligation to communicate to their audience is paramount. Secondly, it is comprehensive, covering both wars and all of Australia. Thirdly, it draws attention to the politics of the situation, how internment policies were interpreted, and how different individuals and



CAPTURED LIVES

AUSTRALIA'S WARTIME INTERNMENT CAMPS



PETER MONTEATH

groups reacted to their lives suddenly being confined to the narrow parameters of an isolated camp.

Australia's wartime internees have been studied before and some stories have become familiar to segments of the community: the rabid anti-German sentiments of the Great War, the Dunera Boys, the Italian farming prisoners of war, and, of course, the Cowra breakout and its tragic consequences. Yet I suspect that many Australians are unfamiliar with, or uninterested in, the internees' experiences of war. When teaching at the University of Melbourne I was surprised at how some senior historians felt that the Italians had it easy on the farms, the Japanese got what was coming to them, and the Germans were unspeakable.

Reading *Captured Lives* should dispel such casual sentiments. As Monteath says, 'the scale of horrors' was much greater in the internees' home countries (p.

237). Yet, one wonders how the Australian government could coop up Jews who had fled Nazi rule *with* diehard Nazis. This happened at Tatura, for example, and it says a lot about a blind and obdurate bureaucracy. Even more blatant an example of lumping everybody together was the possible murder of Francesco Fantin, an Italian anarchist who died at Loveday camp in 1942 at the hands of a fascist from his own country (pp. 171-173). Australia was not alone in this witless policy; the British adopted the same procedure on the Isle of Man.

The author states that there was 'more than an element of arbitrariness' in his selection of individuals whose particular stories he highlighted (p. 240). He should not be nervous about his choices. They are excellent, and indicative of the wide range of experiences and different personal circumstances.

They can be poignant; they can be moving. Occasionally, they can be tragic, as with Cowra. Here, the vignette about Zero pilot Hajime Toyoshima, who committed suicide after the breakout, shows how notions of imperialism and military honour distort the lives of the young (p. 211).

This work is necessarily an overview, but Monteath is adept at bringing out general themes and overarching issues. While aware that there were success stories – internees who felt that their time had been well spent – the author concludes that for many the experience was protracted, boring, and painful. Not least for those who were refugees rather than enemy aliens. Some things never change.

Richard Trembath

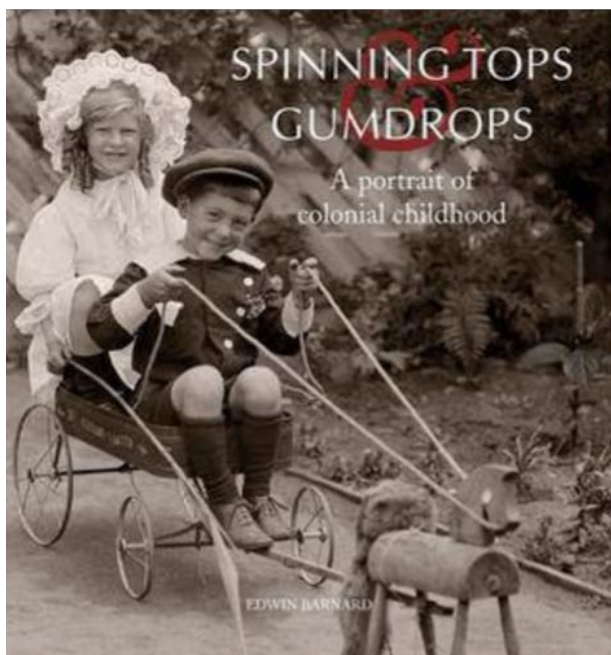
EDWIN BARNARD

Spinning Tops and Gumdrops: A portrait of colonial childhood

NLA Publishing, Canberra, 2018

When I lectured on the history of childhood, one of my favourite sources for explaining changing attitudes towards raising children and the experiences of childhood was a depression-era photograph of a brother and sister standing in front of a fence lined with dead rabbits. The girl is holding a plate and a handwritten 'For sale' sign. The boy is wearing a pudding steamer basin for a helmet and is carrying a Lee Enfield rifle that is taller than he is. Both have bare feet. Initial reactions from students when presented with this photograph usually included the question, 'Is that a real rifle?'

Illustrations and photographs like this have been essential resources for researching the history of childhood. This is especially true when researching children who grew up in ordinary families. Documentary sources that deal directly with the everyday lives of children are scarce. Written records are mainly concerned with children living in institutions, while information on more ordinary childhood experiences is drawn from oral histories, autobiographies and reminiscences, all filtered through the eyes of adults.



For these reasons, *Spinning Tops and Gumdrops* is a valuable resource for gaining an impression of what children's lives were like in 19th century Australia.

With over 200 photographs and illustrations, the book's subtitle, *A portrait of colonial childhood*, says it all. The images are loosely grouped in six chapters. 'A Country Childhood' and 'Our Playground in the Street' feature images of family houses and living conditions; 'Work, Floggings and Physicking' covers education; 'We all had to do Something' looks at child labour; 'Rites of Passage' deals with infancy, courting and death; and 'Waifs, Urchins and Larrikins' looks at street children. The text for each chapter provides an overview of the social conditions and government

policies that influenced children's lives, along with quotes from memoirs and stories that comment on these conditions. The individual histories behind most of the photographs and illustrations are provided in the captions, which are detailed and informative.

The photographs convey the impact a family's wealth had on children's living conditions, as well as contrasting the different experiences of children living in rural areas with those living in the suburbs. Images of middle-class girls in white dresses and frilly bonnets contrast sharply with the aprons and dark outfits of girls labouring in a shoe factory. The dirt and rubble littering the streets where children played in the Rocks in Sydney make the fields where boys picked fruit look almost idyllic. Also on display are the different expectations of how boys and girls should be treated. A striking example of this can be found in the juxtaposition of three classroom photos of girls learning the intricacies of needlecraft, boys mastering woodworking and boys working on science experiments (pp. 102-104).

Even though the book purports to be about colonial children, it relegates non-Anglo Irish and Indigenous children to the sidelines. Barnard claims that while Indigenous people have a rich oral tradition, 'How, when and where those oral traditions are communicated is a matter for Indigenous writers and storytellers...' and therefore 'have no place in this book' (p. 8). However, on close examination Indigenous children can be seen in a large number of the group photographs of street children, school classes and farm workers. The photograph used to illustrate children living in isolated conditions depicts an Indigenous family, their background unacknowledged (p. 43). Apart from the introduction to the book, Aboriginal children are only mentioned once, in a comment on the multicultural nature of some rural schools (p. 97). Similarly, boys of Asian descent can be seen in group photographs, with no recognition of their ethnicity, apart from the

photograph of a three-year-old boy whose Singhalese father had been admitted to a lunatic asylum, leaving the child with no means of support (p. 177).

Other problems with the book arise from the decision to arrange the chapters thematically, which disguises the fact that the majority of the images date from the last third of the 19th century. This decision robs the text of its narrative structure and creates the impression that the treatment of children was fairly uniform throughout the 19th century. This was not the case. There is no mention of the child convicts transported to the colonies; scant attention given to the condition of children living on the goldfields and the problems caused by absconding fathers; and no mention of the unaccompanied child migrants authorities began shipping to the colonies in the 1890s. Dealing with these groups of children led to the gradual evolution of state welfare institutions, not the sudden recognition of the problems caused by working-class poverty, as implied in the chapter 'Waifs, Urchins and Larrikins'.

Despite these flaws, *Spinning Tops and Gumdrops* does fulfil its aim, which is to 'convey something of the flavour of a 19th century childhood' (p. 8). Like an earlier NLA publication, *The Endless Playground* (edited by Paul Cliff, 2000), which uses diaries and memoirs to trace the changing lives of Australian children over two centuries, *Spinning Tops and Gumdrops* provides an overall impression of how children were viewed and treated in colonial Australia. Together these books provide a basic introduction to the history of childhood in Australia. They are valuable resources for historians looking for background information on childhood and for those needing to delve further, *Spinning Tops and Gumdrops* is well referenced, with extensive details on where to locate the images published in the book.

Christine Cheater

Contributors

Bianka Vidonja Balanzategui is an independent scholar and historical consultant. Her first book, *Gentlemen of the Flashing Blade*, was first published by James Cook University (JCU) in 1990, and republished by Booralong Press in 2015. Bianka's academic research focuses on migration, the sugar industry and local history, particularly in the Herbert River Valley in tropical north Queensland, where she lives. Having previously graduated from JCU with a Bachelor of Education, Bachelor of Arts (Hons) and a Master of Arts, Bianka has successfully completed a PhD in history on 'Small sugar farmer agency in the tropics 1872—1914 and the anomalous Herbert River Farmers' Association'. Her consultancy work has included researching and writing storyboards for installations and historical walks. Bianka's work has provided inspiration and content for an ABC documentary, a play, a Queensland travelling photographic exhibition and an art installation in San Sebastian, Spain.

Deborah Beck is a historian, writer and artist who currently works as Archivist and Collections Manager at the National Art School in Sydney. She is the author of three books, including *Hope in Hell: a history of Darlinghurst Gaol and the National Art School* and *Set in Stone: the Cell Block Theatre*, which won a NSW Premier's History Award in 2012. Deborah's most recent book is *Rayner Hoff: the life of a sculptor*, published in March 2017.

Michael Bennett is the Senior Historian at Native Title Services Corporation (formerly NSW Native Title Services) in Redfern where he has worked since 2002. NTSCORP is the federally funded native title service provider for NSW and ACT and is staffed by community facilitators, solicitors and researchers who assist claimants in lodging applications and progressing them to an outcome. He conducts historical research and writes connection reports for native title claims throughout New South Wales. His interest in trackers came from hearing stories about Alec Riley when growing up in Dubbo in the 1980s.

Christine Cheater has been a member of the PHA since the 1990s, as well as lecturing in colonial history at the University of New South Wales and Newcastle University, where she introduced and ran a number of courses on the history of childhood. Christine has published papers on the impact of Australian adoption policies on Indigenous communities, non-European conceptions of childhood, the exploitation of Australian Aboriginal girls, African child soldiers and children's rights.

Christine de Matos is a long-time member of PHA (NSW & ACT). She compiled the 'What's on in History' section for the Phanfare newsletter for many years, and created the very first PHA (NSW) website with former President Tony Prescott in the 1990s. Christine continues to volunteer in a small role related to the current website, and works as an academic at The University of Notre Dame Australia in Sydney. Her primary research interest relates to Australia's role in the Allied occupation of Japan (1946-1952), in particular using gender, race and class to elucidate the power dynamics of the occupier-occupied relationship. Christine has previously been a Japan Foundation Fellow (2004) and in 1999 was awarded the J G Crawford Prize from the Australian-Japan Research Centre at the Australian National University. Christine has published widely on Australia and the Allied occupation, including her book *Imposing Peace and Prosperity: Australia, Social Justice and Labour Reform in Occupied Japan 1945-1949* (2008). Her most recent publication is *Japan as the Occupier and the Occupied*, coedited with Mark E Caprio of Rikkyo University (Tokyo), published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2015. Her other research interests include comparative studies on military occupation, history and fiction and, her latest obsession, the potential of dance to interpret and convey the past.

Carissa Goudey is a freelance historian with the Melbourne-based team HistoryAtWork, and graduate of Deakin University's Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies program. Since 2014, she has combined her love for cultural collections and historical research across a range of jobs in museums, libraries and archives and, more recently, as a consultant. She is currently employed with Victoria University in a dedicated team of historians, working towards the upcoming launch of the Aboriginal History Archive.

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Emma Russell founded HistoryAtWork in 1997 after receiving her Master of Arts (Public History) from Monash University. Her aspirations for meaningful, scholarly and enriching community history have been realised through many written, oral and digital histories, life stories and collection work. Emma has authored several commissioned histories and her work with community cultural heritage led to a two-term appointment to the Heritage Council of Victoria. She has received commendations for her interpretive, oral and digital histories.

Richard Trembath taught history at several Victorian universities. He has published several books, the most recent of which was *Defending Country* with Noah Riseman in 2016. Richard is currently working on the history of complementary and alternative medicines in Australia - from a disapproving perspective.