

# **Australian Society of Archivists Inc**

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**Reference, Access and Public Programs**

**Special Interest Group**

***Newsletter***

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## **Message from the Convenor**

Welcome to the second RAPPSIG newsletter for 2010. In this issue we have some news and updates from members including the National Archives, State Records NSW and the ASA (NSW Branch) as well an announcement about a new venture from USA, UK and Australian Genealogy Companies.

### **Reference and Access in the Digital Age**

On 12 May the ASA (NSW Branch) and RAPPSIG held a joint seminar as part of Information Awareness Month (IAM). This year the theme for IAM was 'Across the Generations'. The seminar titled *Reference and Access in the Digital Age* looked at issues looking at the impact of digitisation and other digital initiatives on archival reference and access in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The presenters explored opportunities and challenges facing archives institutions, big and small, in the digital age.

A selection of the seminar presentations can be viewed at: <http://www.slideshare.net/srnsw>.

The wrap-up session provided an opportunity for those attending to take part in a general discussion about some of the issues raised during the day. The summary of the discussions may be found on the *Archives Outside* blog at: <http://archivesoutside.records.nsw.gov.au/>.

### **RAPPSIG Day 2010**

Unbelievably, it is now time to start planning the 2010 RAPPSIG day. The ASA Conference organisers have set aside a full day on Wednesday 13 October 2010 for the RAPPSIG seminar. The program will run from 9.00 to 4.00 with appropriate breaks for morning tea and lunch.

The theme of the conference is *Future Proof: Resilient Archives 2020 and Beyond*. So, building on this, and using the feedback from the 2009 respondents' questionnaire, the program will include further exploration of the issues affecting 'small archives'; change management and online archival access. The following speakers Jenny Pearce, Anne McLean, Denis Connor and Sue Ryan have already confirmed their availability.

The draft program will be available on the ASA site in late July.

Christine Yeats  
Convenor

## News from SIG members

### National Archives of Australia (Anne McLean and Denis Connor)

#### Exhibition on Prime Minister Stanley Bruce

The National Archives exhibition *Stanley Melbourne Bruce: Prime Minister and Statesman* was launched in the Archives' National Building in Canberra on 10 December 2009.

Stanley Bruce, Australia's eighth prime minister, led the Nationalist-Country Party coalition government between 1923 and 1929. He later served as Australia's High Commissioner in London from 1933 to 1945, and as Chancellor of the Australian National University between 1951 and 1961. This exhibition, which features Bruce's long career of public service, draws on the Bruce collection held by the National Archives.

The exhibition was launched by Justin Murphy, producer of the ABC TV program *The Collectors*, and Dr John Connor, author of the Archives' Prime Ministers' Research Guide on Stanley Bruce. The exhibition will be open until 30 May 2010.

#### Cabinet Records for 1979

On 8 December 2009, over forty of Australia's leading print and electronic media journalists attended the Archives' media briefing for the release of the 1979 Cabinet records. Professor Patrick Weller AO, from the Centre for Governance and Public Policy, Griffith University (Brisbane) was the guest speaker at the briefing. A prolific researcher, writer and commentator on Australian government and politics since the 1970s, Professor Weller's works include *Malcolm Fraser, PM: A study in Prime Ministerial Power in Australia* (1986) and *Cabinet Government in Australia, 1901–2006* (2007). National Archives historian, Dr Jim Stokes, provided an overview of the year 1979, giving context to the issues discussed in Cabinet. Key issues in 1979, the middle year of Malcolm Fraser's second term as Prime Minister, included the resettlement in Australia of refugees from Indo-China, industrial relations and increasing concern over the level of youth unemployment.

Digital copies of the publicly released 1979 Cabinet records and contextual information became available on the Archives website from 1 January 2010. This included the papers and podcasts presented by Professor Weller and Dr Stokes.

#### National Archives State Offices.

On 23 February 2010, Senator Joe Ludwig, the Special Minister of State and minister with responsibility for the National Archives, gave a guarantee that the National Archives will maintain face-to-face services in each state and territory by co-locating with other local institutions. He also advised that offices in Darwin, Adelaide and Hobart that had earlier been flagged for closure would remain open until permanent co-location solutions had been reached. Updated information on co-location of offices will be available on the National Archives website ([www.naa.gov.au](http://www.naa.gov.au) – select the *About us* tab and then *Office co-locations*)

#### Shake Your Family Tree

Shake Your Family Tree Day, the Archives' national open day was held in all offices on Tuesday 23 February 2010. A full program of events which included seminars, workshops, tours and information sessions proved popular with visitors on the day.

#### Publication launch – *Keeping Family Treasures*

The Archives used Shake Your Family Tree Day to launch its newest publication *Keeping Family Treasures* by Elizabeth Masters and Ian Batterham, a preservation guide for the handling and storage of family keepsakes. The book, which contains advice on the care of

items such as letters, bound volumes, photographs, film and objects, is available from the National Archives for \$24.95.

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## **State Records NSW (Emily Hanna)**

### **Online indexes**

State Records has an ongoing program of developing online indexes to some of its more popular records, including those that are widely available as part of the Archives Resources Kit. Much of this indexing is being carried out through the Volunteer Program. In addition, externally produced indexes are available in the reading rooms and on State Records' website.

### **Online shipping lists**

State Records recently completed a pilot project to digitise the microfilm copies of the following series:

- Persons on bounty ships (Agent's Immigrant Lists), 1838-96 (NRS 5316)
- Persons on bounty ships arriving at Port Phillip, 1839-51 (NRS 5318), and
- Germans on bounty ships, 1849-52 (NRS 5320).

The aim of the project was to provide researchers with access to the records, at no charge, via our website. These series of assisted immigrant arrival records have been selected because they cover much of the nineteenth century and because of their likely appeal to family historians. The project also tested the feasibility of large scale digitisation from microfilm. Following the overall success of the pilot project it will be extended in the future.

### **Ancestry.com**

Ancestry.com is now available for our researchers to access free of charge in both reading rooms. Six computers in each location are dedicated to the Ancestry online resources. Core State archives are available for searching in Ancestry.com, including:

- Selected NSW convict records
- Unassisted passenger lists 1826-1922
- Assisted passenger lists
- Certificates of naturalization, 1849-1903
- 1828 and 1841 Census

### **Lachlan Macquarie Gallery**

Lachlan Macquarie was invested as Governor of NSW on 1 January 1810. To celebrate this anniversary the digital gallery features iconic documents together with transcriptions with some interpretation from the wealth of Macquarie related material in the State archives collection (<http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/state-archives/digital-gallery/lachlan-macquarie-visionary-and-builder/lachlan-macquarie-visionary-and-builder>). The gallery has received official endorsement from the Macquarie 2010 Committee.

### **Website: A land fit for heroes? A history of soldier settlement in NSW 1916-39**

State Records in partnership with the Department of Veteran Affairs, Monash University and the University of New England is currently involved in a major Australian Research Council Linkage Project. The project began in March 2009 and aims to research the experiences of men and women who took up land under the soldier settlement scheme in NSW after WWI. A website, hosted by State Records, is dedicated to the project. The website is a work in progress but already provides a growing number of case studies that relate to soldier settlers.

## **Archives Outside**

The *Archives Outside* blog turned one on 22 May. The initiative to create a meeting place for people who have archival collections has proven popular with web users. While the main focus is on the State Records Regional Repository Network participation is welcomed from all keepers of archives, from Archivists, Local Studies Librarians and Records Managers to members of Community Groups and Personal Collectors.

## **Flickr update**

Currently at 1,042 uploaded images with 57,193 views our popular photostream grows weekly. Subscribers to our e-newsletter *Now&Then* and readers of our *Archives Outside* blog have helped to identify dates and locations of many photographs.

## **YouTube presentations**

State Records has a number of presentations on YouTube. They include an entertaining video about the criminal underworld of Sydney in the 1840's, featuring extracts from the journal *Registry of Flash Men* by 'William Augustus Miles (aka Fabian LoSchiavo). Miles was the Superintendent then Commissioner of Sydney Police in NSW from July 1840 to July 1848. The Registry has been digitised and transcribed and is available in our digital gallery.

## **Tour of In Living Memory Exhibition**

Our exhibition of photographs from the NSW Aborigines Welfare Board - *In Living Memory* - is continuing to be extremely popular as it tours NSW. The exhibition is currently at the Western Plains Cultural Centre, Dubbo until 25 July 2010. From 10 September to 17 October the exhibition will be at Broken Hill Regional Art Gallery.

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## **Selena Williams: A Land Fit for Heroes - the place of women in the soldier settlement scheme (Melanie Grogan)**

On Wednesday 17 March 2010 the ASA (NSW Branch) meeting featured a presentation by Selena Williams, on the topic of: '*A Land Fit for Heroes*' - *the place of women in the soldier settlement scheme and how ongoing archival research over many years revealed their hidden stories.*

This event was staged as part of Women's History Month, and was a joint venture between the ASA (NSW Branch), The Australian Women's Archives Project (NSW Committee), and State Records NSW. Women's History Month was introduced in Australia in 2000 and it has been organised by the Australian Women's History Forum since 2007. Its primary aim is to raise awareness and provide information about the history of women's contribution to Australia.

Selena Williams, who has worked as an archivist at State Records NSW, has conducted research on Australian nurses who served overseas and who applied for land after WWI within the Soldier Settlement Scheme. In February 2010 Selena submitted her Master of Arts (Hons) at the University of New England (UNE), Armidale. Selena is currently working on an ARC Linkage project: *A Land Fit for Heroes? A History of Soldier Settlement 1916-1939*, with Professor Bruce Scates (Monash University), Associate Professor Melanie Oppenheimer (UNE), Jo Kildea (PHD student at Monash University) and Christine Yeats (State Records). The *Land Fit for Heroes?* project aims to uncover the stories of not just the people who served in the wars but the stories that came after, once they returned to Australia and attempted to resume their normal lives.

Selena opened her presentation by talking about the many Australian women who served overseas as nurses, who were entitled to receive land under the soldier settlement scheme from World War 1 upon their return from active service. Under the terms of the Repatriation Act 1917, nurses from the Australian Army Nursing Service were entitled to apply for land on the same terms as returned soldiers although they were usually discouraged to do so. However, until recently women have been 'hidden' as soldier settlers. It is often hard to

determine if particular women were ever actually on the land, even if one consults the relevant records.

As part of her own research, Selena has been able to contact family members of individuals in the Settlement Scheme in order to gain access to other materials such as family records. It has been difficult to identify some of the women, as the cataloguing terms only provide the location, the file dates, and the first and second name of the applicant. Typically, many of these women later changed their name through marriage and thus 'disappeared'. Selena revealed that women had a very difficult time in the Soldier Settlement Scheme.

Many women were only given land because the plot was situated next to the land of a male relative, and thus the man could help them. They had already experienced the trauma of war, without treatment, and then embarked on very stressful and hard work for which they were unprepared and had received little training. Many ex-service people were also physically disabled and found the hard labour of farm work a daunting task.

Across the board all participants in the Scheme had to pay for the land and the rates if they were unable to repay the Government loan. If they couldn't pay their bills then they were moved off the property. Farmers had to pay a crop fee of one third of their crop, even in times of drought. For these people the rural option turned out to be just as difficult as their war life. In some areas farmers formed co-operatives in order to survive.

The records relating to soldier settlement in NSW constitute a major series generated by the Land and Property Management Authority (LPMA) – previously the NSW Department of Lands. A key outcome for the project will be improved accessibility to these records as a result of the ongoing volunteer project at State Records, being undertaken in conjunction with the *Land fit for Heroes?* initiative. Volunteers are indexing around 400 boxes of correspondence including estate files, and 660 boxes of loan records. These indexes are being progressively added to State Records' website.

Use of the NSW State archives for this project is presenting a number of challenges. Many individuals were covered by the various registers of transfer and purchase, but their names were not included in the item lists. Previously there were no indexes or finding aids for soldier settlements. These files were only identified by file numbers. The original links between the registers and the boxes of files had been lost before they reached the archive.

The *Land Fit for Heroes?* website, which has been developed as part of the project, includes several case studies of both the men and women. The site encourages the public to get involved by contributing their own photographs and stories about the subjects featured. A tenth of the names are online with biographies and links to online information. Work is underway to complete the listing of 9000 names by State Records volunteers.

The Australian Women's Archive Project is accessible at: <http://www.womenaustralia.info>. Soldier Settlement Scheme records can be found on the State Records' website under Land Records in the online indexes at: <http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/state-archives/indexes-online/indexes-online#land-records> or on the *Land Fit For Heroes* website at: <http://soldiersettlement.records.nsw.gov.au>.

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## **New genealogical venture in Australia (Shauna Hicks)**

The FamilyLink.com, Inc. WorldVitalRecords Australasian operation is to be taken over by leading UK family history website findmypast.co.uk and run in partnership with Gould Genealogy and History of Australia. The website currently known as WorldVitalRecords.com.au will be re-launched in June under the new name of findmypast.com.au. It will initially provide subscription access to mainly Australian and New Zealand content. The plan is then to fully integrate both content and features from the findmypast.co.uk website as soon as possible.

Findmypast.co.uk is already working with leading family history societies and suppliers to offer significant Australian content, with many more records in the pipeline. The company will now be working in partnership with Gould Genealogy & History, whose data will provide the backbone of the content for the new service. Alan Phillips' team at Gould Genealogy & History, and in particular, *Unlock the Past* will be instrumental in providing promotion including roadshows and customer support throughout Australia and New Zealand.

Subscribers to the existing worldvitalrecords.com.au site will be able to access the records on the new findmypast.com.au site as soon as it launches, and those customers with the world package or the Australasia plus will additionally be able to access the records on FamilyLink's WorldVitalRecords.com world site.

**Unlock the Past** [www.unlockthepast.com.au](http://www.unlockthepast.com.au)

Unlock the Past is about promoting history, genealogy and heritage in Australia and New Zealand. It is a collaborative venture involving a team of expert speakers, writers, organisations and commercial partners throughout Australia, New Zealand and overseas. The Events page on the website lists a range of events already organised for 2010 and beyond including a history and genealogy cruise next March.

### **What is Unlock the Past?**

- A major events resource - supporting existing events and initiating major events
- A publishing brand - watch for important new guide books during 2010
- A major go-to place for resources
- A significant free content site
- A cost effective marketing platform for partners - societies, libraries and commercial partners
- A leader in use of, and education in, social media
- Promoting heritage tourism... and much more. The best way to learn more about *Unlock The Past* is to explore the website.