

**Welcome** to the eleventh instalment of the *Historians' SIG Newsletter*.

If you have any news, coming events, book reviews, short papers, or any other information you would like to share with us please e-mail [cmanning@history.sa.gov.au](mailto:cmanning@history.sa.gov.au)

**The deadline for contributions to the next newsletter is Friday 28 October.**

## Name Our Newsletter!

It has been suggested that this publication needs a name. Current nominations include *The Historians Bulletin*, *Collectanea*, or *Omnium Gatherum*.

If you have an idea for a name send it to the above e-mail address by contribution deadline. Next edition we will list all suggestions for a reader vote.

## Tales of the City

### The Catherine Mary Gilbert Essay Prize

The History Trust of South Australia is keen to stimulate further research and writing about the history of Adelaide and to this end offers an annual prize of \$1,000 for the best article or essay. The work can encompass any aspect of the history of the city. Eligibility is entirely open – everyone, from professional journalists to tertiary students, from professors of history to photographers and creative writers, is invited to apply. We seek well

researched, well written essays that will help to advance our understanding of the city. A publication of the best entries over several years may be produced. Submissions will be judged by a panel appointed by the History Trust.



Authors are limited to one entry of between 3,000 and 5,000 words. All sources of information must be appropriately acknowledged. A style-guide is available from the History Trust. Four copies of the entry must be lodged with the History Trust of South Australia, GPO Box 1836, Adelaide 5001 by 4.30pm on 31 March 2006. The winner of the prize will be announced during SA History Week, the last week in May 2006. For copies of the style guide consult the History Trust's web site on [www.history.sa.gov.au](http://www.history.sa.gov.au), or telephone Joylyne Teh on 8203.9888.

The prize is funded by Adjunct-Professor Susan Magarey of the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences at Adelaide University in memory of her mother, born Catherine Mary Gilbert, a descendant of the Gilberts of Pewsey Vale. As a young woman, Mary Gilbert wrote about Adelaide people for the *Sunday Mail*.



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## Regional Heritage

*Julie Laing*

Can a quaint cottage, a place that in 1874-5 reinvigorated and re-inspired sick bush poet Henry Kendall, become a museum that reinvigorates and re-inspires the cultural life of the city of Gosford?

Regional museums in Australia are often small historic (read in great need of repair) stone buildings filled to the dusty rafters with artefacts donated by grandparents of the community. They are manned by volunteers trying to keep the stories of those grandparents alive. Labelling is by manual typewriter on cards that have yellowed. They are stories that are crying for attention but for many only manage to look sad and cobwebby. However, there is peace and reflection there, if only because such places are so unappreciated by leisure seekers.

In the global world communities are increasingly looking back to their regions for slow food instead of fast food. City people are making lifestyle changes, down-shifting or sea-changing. It is time to re-examine how we can make the regional museum, the repository of local history, more generally appreciated.

Is there funding available to give back the colour and wonder that museums need to attract all members of a community? Children especially need to learn tools to access the cultural capital that is waiting quietly to be discovered. Colour and clarity in presentation is important for this. If there is funding available where does one begin? Is it more important to streamline exhibits and get good graphic design or catalogue the collections? Should the emphasis be

on good storage and management of the exhibits?

If anybody has any ideas, or suggestions of reading, on how to invigorate such a place or get funding please tell me because I am a graduate of museum school and inspired and that's a great place to start. Contact:

[Julie\\_Laing@agd.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Julie_Laing@agd.nsw.gov.au)

## Celebrating Documentary Heritage

*Roslyn Russell*

Pop groups and cheering fans, live coverage on national television, banners all over town and signs on buses and taxis, banks of flowers, dramatic multimedia presentations, visiting artists from overseas – sounds like an Olympic heroes homecoming or a film awards night. But in the Korean city of Cheongju on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> September all these were enlisted to promote the award of a prize for preserving documentary heritage – the inaugural UNESCO Jikji Prize awarded to the National Library of the Czech Republic, organised by Cheongju City and the Korean National Commission for UNESCO.



*A pop group performs at the awards ceremony for the UNESCO Jikji Prize.*

cont.

## Celebrating Documentary Heritage *cont.*

On the days before the awards ceremony fifteen delegates from a number of UNESCO member states (including three Australians) participated in an international seminar to discuss the way documentary heritage is cared for in our respective countries, and the operation of the UNESCO *Memory of the World* Programme there.



*Student volunteer So Jin (Jennifer) and Roslyn Russell at the international seminar of Memory of the World's Nations.*

From Australia, Ray Edmondson, former Deputy Director of the National Film and Sound Archive, described the historical and institutional bases of documentary heritage custodianship in this country; while Roslyn Russell outlined the work of the Australian *Memory of the World* Committee and the formation and development of the Australian MOW Register and website. It was a wonderful opportunity created by our Korean hosts for us to network with colleagues from around the world, and to appreciate the very different conditions under which documentary heritage is cared for.

The Jikji is the oldest surviving book in the world printed using movable metal type in Cheongju City in 1377, 78 years before the Gutenberg 42-line Bible was produced. A stunning Museum of Early Printing in Cheongju City celebrates this innovation and links this historic event with Korea's drive for innovation into the future.

The Jikji is inscribed on the UNESCO *Memory of the World* Register.

The awards ceremony itself was a media event, with a pop band and a dramatic entrance by the winners. The Prize is US\$30,000, but the staging of the whole event must have run into the millions. Once the winning librarians had been presented with a cheque and a scroll, a troupe of Czech musicians and folk dancers entertained the audience.

We international delegates were the recipients of wonderful hospitality and generosity from our Korean hosts, and were looked after by student volunteers from Cheongju University. These students took responsibility for collecting us from Incheon Airport, driving us the three hours to Cheongju City, collecting us from our hotel each day, taking us shopping, and delivering us back to the airport and on to the plane. As an exercise in capacity building (and helping them with their English) it was first rate. Some of them even took responsibility for teaching us to use Korean-style steel chopsticks.

The final day of our stay was spent on a tour into the countryside to the spectacular Haeinsa Temple, where we were privileged to be able to see at close range 80,000 carved woodblocks used to print the Tripitaka Koreana, the Buddhist scriptures.



*Roofs of the Haeinsa Temple, Korea.*

# Sovereign Hill and the Ballarat School History Forum

Tim Sullivan

## **The Future of the Past**

During 2000, the Commonwealth conducted an inquiry into the state of History teaching in Australian schools and universities. The inquiry's report, *The Future of the Past*, found things that were worrying for all who care about History and who value its significance in educating our young people to understand Australia's history.

The *Future of the Past* made recommendations for action to improve the teaching of History at a national level, but the recommendations seemed adaptable for taking local action within our own History and education community.

The Sovereign Hill Museums Association decided to do something to support History teachers in our region.

One of the Inquiry's most telling findings was the sense of isolation experienced by History teachers in schools and providing them with opportunities to engage their own curiosity and research as historians.

Isolation meant restricted access to research opportunities (ideas as well as financial or other resource support); restricted opportunities to discuss ideas and approaches with a peer group or mentors; restricted access to professional development programs in History education.

## **Sovereign Hill's Response**

In response, a group of Sovereign Hill historians, educators and program specialists met to develop a response. We initially proposed a concept for a forum which would raise the profile of History in local schools, and provide professional development opportunities for local teachers to develop and maintain their craft as historians. We felt

that the resources individuals need (such as interest-based research projects; access to specialised libraries, archives and artefact collections, information technology; guest speakers; peer support) might be more easily accessible through local partner museums or universities. In effect, to create a 'community of practice' with fellow historians.

But ensuing brainstorming sessions with local History teachers established that their professional and personal identities were built on being *teachers* of History first, historians second. What worked best for them was support for students to extend the work they did in their classrooms, especially in connecting the classroom work with real-world issues or projects that promote new understandings of local history.

Participants identified three main issues which they would like to see addressed and where museums could provide support:

- 1. Isolation**
- 2. Raising History's profile: the role of teachers and schools**
- 3. Students**

The needs of students are paramount. Even the keenest History student will lose enthusiasm unless their fervour and interests are nurtured.

Teachers expressed particular concern that students who are inspired to study History in later years are discouraged within schools because of pressure of other more apparently 'vocationally' directed subjects, as well as by losing contact with good teachers.

The meetings at Sovereign Hill led to the suggestion of strategies to address these issues:

### **For teachers:**

- Provide professional development opportunities for History teachers in the Ballarat area.

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- Develop a local network of history teachers, particularly for new teachers in the discipline—specialist and non-specialist.

#### **For students:**

- Provide opportunities for students to develop and extend their study of history by:
  - providing access to the best history minds available
  - developing heritage projects in which students can be engaged from beginning to end
  - initiate debates, lectures and other forums where students (and teachers) can meet and participate in history-related activities.
  - seek ways to demonstrate to students the vocational outcomes of studying history.
  - reach out to and strengthen the historical and cultural infrastructure in Ballarat, so that history students can work on history related projects within their community.
  - provide opportunities to engage in projects with partners in industry, tertiary education and cultural institutions

The product of this consultation process was the Ballarat School History Forum.

#### **What is the Forum?**

A voluntary network where Sovereign Hill's museums (and, we hope, in time, other cultural institutions), local History teachers and students support each other to promote the development and enjoyment of History in schools.

The Forum will be owned by the members to share ideas and promote innovation and adventure in History education. Anyone can be a member—it's free.

#### **What are the Forum's goals?**

1. To provide a community of support for Ballarat school History teachers in promoting the development of History in their schools.
2. To support and encourage History students with enthusiasm and potential to achieve their goals in studying History.
3. To bring the people, objects and knowledge of local cultural institutions to school History teachers and students to promote learning about the History and heritage of our own community—our people, our places.
4. To create opportunities for collaborations and partnerships between schools and teachers in History projects.
5. To have fun, to support creativity, to support exploration of the many forms of historical expression.

#### **What's Sovereign Hill's role?**

Sovereign Hill wants to be a partner in the Forum. We hope other cultural institutions and organisations in Ballarat will join in the effort. We can offer:

- a 'contract' with students and teachers to display work on local and community history projects in the Gold Museum or other appropriate venues in Sovereign Hill as part of our public program and research archives
- access to our collections of heritage material
- support from our museum professionals in preparing an exhibition of their work or in conducting research
- support and advocacy in celebrating excellence in school History education
- linkages to other cultural institutions
- invitations to Forum members to Sovereign Hill and Gold Museum seminars, symposiums, talks and lectures etc.
- meeting spaces for Forum members promote collaboration on projects

## Projects

To get the ball rolling, we developed a list of small exhibition projects that aligned with our public program in the Gold Museum. The projects were typically local history projects where we could bring collections support and lots of opinions and expertise to help students who took them on.

### The Ambassador

But the greatest impact has been achieved through the 'appointment' of an ambassador to promote the Forum, and to work with local teachers in planning projects and access to the museums. Doug Bradby is a retired History teacher who taught in local schools for many years, and was one of the first local teachers to be involved in the Forum.

Time is a critical factor for teachers juggling their teaching loads, after school activities, and their own personal lives. Having someone who can help with liaison and promote opportunities between the classroom and the museum has been vital.

### Our First Project: Beer and Skittles

The Forum's first project was with students from Sebastopol Secondary College. The students chose to present an exhibition on goldfields entertainment and called it *Beer and Skittles*. The theme initially encompassed a broad range of topics. The final selection was based on working with the students to identify the availability of artefacts and materials to support a topic. Students worked with their classroom teacher, Doug Bradby and the Museum staff, Roger Trudgeon and Luke Flanagan, in writing and designing panels, presenting artefacts, conservation practices, and conducting research. Although not all of the students were involved in each stage of the process, we were fortunate that at least one representative was able to participate in every stage of the process, from concept development to exhibition installation, and the celebratory launch in July.



Doug Bradby (left) and Luke Flanagan (right) with Sebastopol Secondary College students Karri-Anna Fell, Stacey Schultz and Jared Morel at the opening of the History Forum project 'Beer and Skittles'

Senior Historian, Jan Croggon, observed that:

*It was quite inspiring to attend the opening of the Beer and Skittles exhibition... The Gold Museum was jumping with enthusiastic students – and some discussions which I had with those students were particularly refreshing.*

### What Next?

Our first success has been encouraging. We have another commitment for the near future for another project with exhibition potential. We hope also to get the other cultural institutions in Ballarat engaged—the Fine Art Gallery, the Eureka Centre, Her Majesty's Theatre and the Botanical Gardens—to provide students with even richer materials and media for projects.

Our Education team at Sovereign Hill has been reworking our education programs to align with the new Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) which will progressively become the new curriculum framework over the next couple of years. So our next step with the Forum is a professional development session with local History teachers to explain how we have approached teaching History using the VELS framework and discuss strategies with teachers for applying them in classrooms.

For an extended version of this article please contact Tim Sullivan:  
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## Why we are losing volunteers!

Lance S.P.Harris

Since our Nation's Bicentennial in 1988, Federal, State and Local governments have become aware of country museums and the enormous amount of work put in by volunteers. In Queensland local governments in partnership with Queensland Museum's - Museum Resource Centre, have appointed regional Museum Development Officers who can guide and train country museum volunteer staff towards a greater professionalism in the handling of their collections. The benefit has been that greater numbers of the local community and tourists spend more time visiting local museums and examining their own history. Displays are far more attractive because volunteer workers are proud of the proper education they receive in recording artefacts; correct storage; improved methods of conservation; improved methods of display and most importantly the collection and recording of provenance. But in spite of this new found expertise and pride by the museum volunteers, we are losing workers. I am one of the many who believe that the cause of many people failing to continue their work is emotional conflict. Not their own, but the heart breaking reaction of the visitors who view an emotive display which they relate to personally, and then verbally attack the museum guide who is not trained to handle confrontation. And it flows on right through the entire museum's chain of workers from the person on the reception desk to the executive officer. I have heard many stories, but I will only tell those in which I have been involved personally.

### **Case number 1:**

Early in the life of our museum we grabbed at straws and displayed every conceivable item we could, so as part of a local artefacts display we showed several kitchen items from the 1900-1920 era that were the forerunners of modern day electrical goods - some were broken, but they complimented the

display. A matronly lady came in with her sister and pointing to one of the broken items began sobbing uncontrollably because she had broken the same item of her mothers and had lied to her mother and now wished she had been truthful and had cleared her recently deceased sister of the blame. Our tour guide is distressed because he did not know how to console the lady.

### **Case number 2:**

The provenance of the photographs of World War One supplied by family members can sometimes be a little vague especially when the collection is donated by a great grandchild. For example, two photographs, one of two men and the other of a single male, who were in the uniforms of the A.I.F. are given by a proud grandson. After minor conservation they are given pride of place and displayed with their names and history and also made part of our Website display. Five months later we have two very irate sisters approach us after having travelled over six hundred kilometres, they have with them the same photographs but the names printed on the frames are entirely different to those we had on the display. When we contact the original donor we learn he was not really sure but had guessed it was his relatives. But the damage is done and a volunteer has been abused.

### **Case number 3:**

Museums receive large private collections of wartime photographs most contain very explicit views of wartime atrocities. The question is - do we show all the photographs or do we censor them. Naturally the museum staff refer the collection to Veteran support groups and to our State education authorities and the advice given by all is that they should be shown but ensure there are warning signs placed for all to read. Regardless of the warnings distress is caused not only to students but to parents and visiting Japanese students of our local University as well as to War Veterans .Their distress affects museum

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staff who do not know how to console such diverse groups of visitors.

#### **Case number 4:**

A number of volunteers collect detailed histories of families who emigrated from the Mediterranean region in the early 1900's. Over the years they have made an impact on this regions development both socially and economically. Naturally the histories are patriarchal and are supported by photographic evidence. The display is advertised as a special event and visitors learn the history of friends and family that had been forgotten over the years. Unfortunately the granddaughter of one family becomes very bitter and emotional about the story of her grandfather and tries to destroy his story. When stopped, she verbally attacks the volunteer who is on guard. Apparently granddad was considered a blackguard. Another volunteer is lost.

#### **Case number 5:**

Many regional museums receive artefacts that relate to families and consist of prized family possessions which are proudly placed on public display to honour the memory of their ancestor. This donation can sometimes become the centre of a bitter dispute with younger family members demanding the return of some objects for they believed that they were to inherit that item, and in some cases the item may be very saleable .There have been cases where the new claimant has appeared at the museum demanding the items return and actually accused the volunteers with fraud or theft. It is all very well to claim legal ownership by presenting the donation forms, but such confrontations have an emotional affect on volunteers.

#### **Case number 6:**

Not all emotional moments are counter productive. On one occasion a mother and daughter tour the military museum and listen intently to their museum

guide, during a break they asked if in spite of the vast display of Army memorabilia would the museum accept an Australian Airman's collection from New Guinea and the Far East . The guide accepts their offer and requests a portrait of the Airman to be part of the display. To the horror of the museum guide the ladies immediately fall into one another's arms in tears .They explain that the father had only just passed away and the collection had been declined by their own local historical groups as well as the Australian War Memorial. Several months later they return with a huge collection, and keep their promise. We learn that they have driven over 2000 kilometres from a major country centre in a southern state to do so. Very occasionally a volunteers' day can be beautiful in spite of a moment of sadness.

#### **What can be done?**

Every museum professional and museum volunteer has a similar story of their own like those above, but it is these situations that are causing volunteers to give up their work in regional museums .It is my belief that a select few volunteers at each museum could be trained in counselling. Training is available to non-professional people for; grief counselling; telephone counselling; and the counselling of War Veterans, so one of these training courses could be adapted for museum staff. Some museums such as the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum; the Jewish Museum Berlin and the Vietnam Veterans Museum in Victoria are established with the intent of tearing down barriers and in helping the healing process. But unless there is some appropriate form of training being given to volunteers we will not only fail to help the healing but we will continue to lose museum volunteers because, they too, feel wounded by a visitors genuine distress.

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The Historians' Special Interest Group is an organisation under the auspices of Museums Australia. Membership dues are \$10.00 per year, in addition to Museums Australia membership dues. Membership inquiries should be directed to Debbie Milsom, Membership Manager, e-mail: [ma@museumsaustralia.org.au](mailto:ma@museumsaustralia.org.au)