Hello Friends and welcome to our first What’s the News? for 2006. As you will see, it has been a very busy few months since our last newsletter so it is definitely time for an update.

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DONATIONS: WE NEED YOUR HELP

A strong and independent National Film and Sound Archive is a vital part of Australia’s cultural heritage. It holds our visual and recorded sound history.

The Friends of the NFSA, patrons and members, are well respected in the international film and sound community. They volunteer their time and expertise to support the Archive.

Since 1999, the Friends has been instrumental in achieving:

- Reinstatement of the proper name—The National Film and Sound Archive (previously ScreenSound Australia);
- An effective voice for constituency concerns and accountability
- Protection of the Archive’s essential role and functions
- Qualified leadership with the appointment of Dr Paolo Cherchi Usai as Director of the Archive in 2005. Paolo was previously Senior Curator of the Motion Picture Department at George Eastman House; and
- A higher profile for the Archive and its activities,

with the overall objective of the Archive having independent statutory status, equal in stature to other national cultural organisations such as the National Museum of Australia, the National Gallery of Australia and the National Library among others.

While membership remains free, and therefore available to all, some money is necessary to enable the Friends to continue its advocacy work. By making a small donation you will be supporting the protection and development of Australia’s cultural heritage.

Donations will contribute to:

- Basic necessities like postage and paper;
- A small stipend for administrative assistance to the Friends and the Committee by the Secretary;
- Informing the public through our newsletters and events;
- Bank fees and website hosting costs; and
- Membership fees to maintain our links with Australian and international Friends organisations

Our target is to raise $5000 by 30 June. Please send your donations by cheque or postal order to: Friends of the National Film and Sound Archive Inc. PO Box 1005 Civic Square ACT 2608. Donors will be acknowledged in What's the News? unless you request otherwise.
**AFC'S KIM DALTON RESIGNS**
On 12 January 2006, the Chief Executive of the AFC, Kim Dalton, announced his resignation in order to take up the currently vacant post of Head of Television at the ABC. The announcement came as a surprise, since his AFC contract had recently been renewed. The resignation took effect on 24 February. The Friends wishes him well in this challenging new role.

Media coverage of his ABC appointment has been extensive and positive, with commentators generally regarding him as well qualified for the position and, in particular, well-equipped for the task he will face in re-invigorating Australian drama on the ABC. In commenting on his achievements over six years at the helm of the AFC, however, few made reference to the AFC's controversial takeover of the NFSA, and not all of these seemed well informed.

For a digest of quotes, see the Friends website at [www.archivefriends.org.au](http://www.archivefriends.org.au). Canberra Times Arts Editor, Helen Musa, has been a close observer of the NFSA and its staff, and her assessment of 14 January is particularly commended to readers' attention.

**CHRIS FITCHETT NOW ACTING AFC CEO**
Following Kim Dalton's departure, the AFC's Head of Film Development, Chris Fitchett, has been appointed as Acting CEO, effective 27 February. He is based at AFC headquarters in William St., Woolloomooloo. The Friends welcomes Chris to the post, and looks forward to developing a collaborative relationship.

**MEETING WITH PETER GARRETT, SHADOW MINISTER FOR THE ARTS**
A Friends representative, Andrew Pike, met during February with Peter Garrett, the Shadow Minister for the Arts, to discuss the Friends' position on the future of the Archive.

The meeting was primarily confidential, but Mr Garrett said that he supported the concept of independent status for the Archive, and intended that this would remain part of the Labor Party policy platform.

He also shared the Friends' concern about the lack of transparency in the AFC’s management of the Archive’s finances, as expressed in the AFC’s annual report.

The Friends hopes to have a close and fruitful association with Mr Garrett on archival matters, especially given his special interest in the preservation of Australian sound recordings and music.

**CONSTITUENTS MEET AFC**
At the invitation of Maureen Barron, Chair of the AFC, representatives of the Friends and of stakeholder group Archive Forum met in camera with her and AFC Deputy Chair, Paul Hamra, in Sydney on 6 February 2006. The meeting covered a range of issues affecting the NFSA, including several matters raised in recent Friends' newsletters. Friends' President, Andrew Pike described the meeting as both constructive and frank, and expressed the hope that such meetings between constituents and Commission members could become regular events, permitting the useful exchange of views.
Both the Friends and the Forum made clear their shared objective to achieve separate statutory status for the NFSA, and the commitment of both bodies to continue working towards that end. For a permanent entity like the NFSA, no other outcome can ever be satisfactory. At the same time, they recognised that achieving this outcome was essentially a matter for the Government and not the AFC, which is obliged to work under the current provisions of its Act. Accordingly, while the present legislative arrangements remained in place, both bodies wanted to assist the AFC and the NFSA to operate as effectively as possible within the provisions of the Act. They expressed the hope that, as the present steward of the NFSA, the AFC would not do anything to hinder its development towards separate statutory status.

NEWS FROM SENATE ESTIMATES
The NFSA figured in the hearings of the Senate Estimates Committee for Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts on 1 November 2005 and 14 February 2006. The Hansard can be accessed on line.

In the 1 November hearings, Senator Lundy used the Friends’ newsletter as the basis for questions concerning the protection of the NFSA's identity. See pages 75 to 79.  

In addition, Senator Bob Brown tabled a series of questions on notice. The questions and answers can be found on pages 5 to 15 http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/ecita_ctte/estimates/sup_0506/cita/afc.doc


THE INVISIBLE ARCHIVE
On pages 324 and 326 of the 2006 White Pages telephone directory for Canberra, you'll find all the national institutions prominently listed in large bold capitals—National Library, National Archives, National Gallery, National Museum. They are properly detailed entries, assisting public contact by offering direct lines to various sections and services.

The NFSA—even in its ScreenSound guise—used to have a similarly prominent and detailed entry. But no longer. On page 326 there's just a tiny reference which reads: ‘NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE (see Australian Film Commission)’.

Turning to page 67, you find a large bold entry for AUSTRALIAN FILM COMMISSION—in Sydney! Beneath that, a much smaller entry for NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE in Canberra, quoting a single Freecall number: 1 800 067 274.

That's it. Even in the Canberra phone directory you can't find the NFSA's local number, (02) 6248 2000—to say nothing of direct lines to sections and services. And unlike all the other institutions, the NFSA now no longer appears in the Government section of the Directory. All the other institutions do.

When the Canberra Times drew attention to this, the official explanation was that it was a ‘stuff-up’. We hope so, and look forward to its correction in next year's phone book.
But it’s not only the phone book. The NFSA is equally invisible in the latest official government directory—the *List of Australian Government Bodies and Governance Relationships*—where it used to have a separate entry like all the other institutions and individually branded entities. Now you won’t even find it in the index.

Unbelievably, the Archive’s listing in the film industry’s principle directory for personnel and services, the Encore Directory, is not under ‘Government Organisations’ (where it has always been in the past), but now appears under the heading of ‘Stock Footage Libraries’! Whoever it was at the AFC who authorised the entry for the Encore Directory, as for the Canberra phone directory, has a real problem—it’s either wilful mischief or complete lack of understanding!

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**NFSA ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**

The Friends were represented at a meeting of the NFSA Advisory Committee in Sydney on 28 February. The main agenda items dealt with product development and marketing (see NFSA merchandising and shop plans item in this issue), digital and recorded sound strategies for the Archive and the development of the Archive’s new cinema. The meeting was chaired by NFSA Director, Dr Paolo Cherchi Usai.

Although the Committee in its present form had originally been set up to comprise nominated representatives of stakeholder groups, this had led to constant turnover as groups constantly changed their representatives and there was a felt need to stabilise the committee by adopting the more conventional approach of individually-based membership. The chair undertook to document this new rationale.

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**NEW CURATOR OF THE INDIGENOUS COLLECTIONS**

The Friends welcomes Elizabeth McNiven, who in January took up her appointment to the new position of Curator of the Indigenous Collections at the National Film and Sound Archive. Liz was previously Senior Policy Officer and Indigenous Action Plan Manager with the Murray-Darling Basin Commission in the ACT. She spent seven years studying Cultural Resource Management with the AIATSIS Film Archive from 1987, in tandem with her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communication. Liz has worked with major cultural and natural resource institutions over the past ten years, including the National Gallery of Australia, the Museum of Victoria, the NSW Aboriginal Land Council and the Department of Land and Water Conservation, in addition to her Murray-Darling Basin Commission role. She is a Barunga woman from the Budjiti Nation and is enthusiastic to be returning to the cultural collecting world and to have the opportunity to help build the new Indigenous Collections Branch at the NFSA. This Branch will have close relationships with all areas of the NFSA and also with the AFC’s Film Development Indigenous Unit.

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**FUTURE OF SOUND**

As many Friends, especially in Canberra, are aware, rumours had been circulating since mid-2005 that the AFC was negotiating with the National Library to divest itself of the NFSA’s sound functions and transfer them to the library.

Informed sources gave credence to these rumours. Practical and financial issues apart, such a move would strike at the heart of the concept of the NFSA, and the matter was of profound concern to the Archive’s staff and constituency. This was especially so in the light of commitments previously made by the Government
and the AFC to support this specific aspect of the NFSA, and stakeholder groups, including the Friends, made strong representations to the AFC and the Minister on the matter.

Finally the AFC released the following statement on 23 November 2005 setting out its official position: ‘There is no substance to the rumours that the AFC is divesting itself of the sound collection. To the extent that there is any suggestion of this, it is being generated by external stakeholders. The Commission has made a commitment to maintain the sound collection, and a long term strategy for the development of the sound collection is currently being formulated.’

The Friends takes this announcement to mean that this matter has been put to rest. It notes in passing that the AFC’s announcement makes no mention of the NFSA but only of the AFC’s sound collection.

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WORLD’S FIRST ‘FEATURE’ FILM TO BE DIGITALLY RESTORED

In late February, the National Film and Sound Archive announced that it will digitally restore the Australian film classic, The Story of the Kelly Gang—the earliest feature film ever made—to mark the centenary of its world premiere on 26 December 1906. State-of-the-art technologies for moving image restoration will be applied to bring the surviving footage of the film to a condition as close as possible to the original. The digital version will then be presented by the NFSA later this year, in conjunction with the film’s centenary celebrations.

“The Story of the Kelly Gang is more than an icon of Australian cinema and history. It is also the first evidence of the growth of feature-length film as a form of mass entertainment,” said Paolo Cherchi Usai, Director of the NFSA. “Thanks to the major advances in digital preservation achieved in the past few years, audiences will be able to experience this treasure in a way that would have been unimaginable only a decade ago.”

The original running time of The Story of the Kelly Gang was almost one hour, making it by far the longest motion picture of its time. Over the years, the National Film and Sound Archive retrieved and saved from destruction a series of fragments from different sections of the work, corresponding to approximately ten minutes of projection. Each frame of the extant nitrate print will be digitally scanned at a high resolution to create a new 35mm preservation negative of better quality than the existing material.

“Digital is not the answer for the long-term conservation of the traditional cinematic experience,” said Cherchi Usai. “However, it is a powerful tool for public access, and for restoring damaged parts of a film in a way that would not be possible with analog techniques. A responsible use of digital technology can contribute to the protection and dissemination of our audiovisual heritage, and the National Film and Sound Archive wants to be at the forefront of this important process.”

In addition to the actual restoration of the surviving fragments, NFSA curators will create an additional ‘study’ version of the film, incorporating production stills and narrative intertitles from original theatre programs. “This version will not replace the newly restored footage,” said Meg Labrum, Chief Curator at the NFSA. “Instead, it will help understanding the plot of the film in its entirety, explaining which parts have been found and which ones are still missing.” This study version will be made available on DVD together with the restoration of the original footage. (From 27 February 2006 AFC media release)

http://www.nfsa.afc.gov.au/media_releases.nsf/97eb3728765ec840ca25710e0002049a/bd13bff3a2923cdc
a257123000294da?OpenDocument
ARCHIVE DIRECTOR’S ANU TALK
NFSA Director, Dr Paulo Cherchi Usai presented a seminar entitled K Sera, Sera; or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Content at the Australian National University on March 7. This is how the publicity material described his topic:

A ghost is haunting visual culture: the ghost of ‘content’, the new catchword for culture as a commodity. According to this ideology, image makers no longer create ‘works’—they ‘deliver content’ in response to the imperatives of a society driven by an exponentially increasing demand for the consumption of moving images. Digital is the weapon and the driving force of this strategy, promoted through the allegedly democratic values of quick access and infinite reproducibility. This trend has now come to a critical point where a ‘content’-oriented industry is about to reshape the very notion of human vision. As people may soon be looking at new creations especially made for equipment such as a video iPod, it is time to ask ourselves how we are going to reproduce or explain their experience two hundred years from now, when iPods will be as archaic as a zoetrope is nowadays. This may also provide us with a chance to divest ourselves of the prejudice that the ‘content’ mantra is all that matters in the digital world.

Feedback on the seminar was excellent, one attendee noting that it delved into archival fundamentals that question the use and meaning of buzzwords like ‘content’, ‘access’ and ‘user’. Paolo proposed replacing these with a new trilogy, ‘work’, ‘context’ and ‘experience’.

The Friends will encourage Paolo to repeat the presentation for a general audience later this year.

SEAPAVAA CONFERENCE AT NFSA FROM 13 TO 17 NOVEMBER
The NFSA and the New Zealand Film Archive will jointly host the annual conference of the South East Asia-Pacific AudioVisual Archive Association (SEAPAVAA) in Canberra this November. The theme of the symposium is THE VISIBLE ARCHIVE: ACCESS, ADVOCACY AND ACCOUNTABILITY, and the venues are the NFSA headquarters in Acton and the Shine Dome, which stands immediately opposite. The symposium and most other conference activities will be open to the public.

Like the NFSA and the National Archives of Australia, the Friends is a member of SEAPAVAA, which this year will celebrate its 10th anniversary. SEAPAVAA grew directly out of an ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) training seminar hosted by the NFSA in 1995 and has had a profound effect on the international visibility and development of audiovisual archiving across the region. In this celebration year, it is symbolically returning to its roots.

Speakers and delegates to the conference will come from across South East Asia, Oceania and further afield. It promises to be a memorable week. The Friends is represented on the Conference Organising Committee, which has now begun its work in earnest. More news soon! SEAPAVAA’s website is www.seapavaa.org

PIANO ROLLS BACK WITH NFSA
In 1999, the NFSA donated its large collection of piano rolls to Music Roll Australia (MRA), a non-profit body set up in 1983 to preserve Australia's piano roll heritage and ultimately to develop a working museum to sustain piano roll production. MRA worked closely with the privately owned Mastertouch Piano Roll Company, established in 1919, whose plant is located in the Sydney suburb of Petersham. Mastertouch ceased operations in June 2005 and its assets are in the process of liquidation. In consequence, MRA has also decided to wind up and dispose of its assets.

In accordance with the terms of the 1999 agreement between MRA and the NFSA, the piano roll collection has been donated back to the NFSA. It was recently uplifted from Sydney and is now stored in the Archive's Mitchell repository. The collection comprises over 6000 piano rolls, most of it the output of the Australian Mastertouch and Broadway companies over nearly 90 years. However, it also includes a strong representation of major American and European labels with recordings by such celebrated artists as Percy Grainger, Scott Joplin and Paderewski.

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MAJOR PROJECT TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO AUSTRALIA’S MOVING IMAGE AND RECORDED SOUND CULTURE
The NFSA Director has announced a new long-term project, in which important collections of film and recorded sound held all over the country are to be listed and made available by the National Film and Sound Archive in a new National Registry of Moving Image and Recorded Sound Collections.

“The initiative is a first for this country,” he said. “It aims to locate and record all holdings of moving image and recorded sound materials of cultural interest. We believe the Registry will prove to be an invaluable reference resource.”

Because of the scale of the project, the NFSA will gather information on a state-by-state or territory basis, starting with the ACT. More than 250 institutions and individuals in the ACT will be approached in the first instance with a request to provide details about collections they may hold and want to see included in the Registry.

“We will be talking to archives, libraries, government agencies, distribution and production companies, but also to the media, educational institutions, research centres, historical societies, film societies, fan clubs, corporations, government bodies, commercial holdings such as stock shot libraries, private collectors, arts centres, sports clubs, local councils and many more. This is an initiative for anyone with an interest in Australia’s moving image and recorded sound culture and the range of collections we believe are held across the country.”

“Our plan is to first publish the Registry as a printed catalogue, with options for electronic publishing also being considered in the longer term. If the ACT pilot is as successful as we expect, it will be rolled out nationally in stages throughout 2006, with the aim of going to press in late 2007,” Cherchi Usai said.

For further information on the project, visit the website at www.nfsa.afc.gov.au/avregistry or contact the initiative’s Project Officer, Marilyn Dooley, by email avregistry@afc.gov.au (From 8 December 2005 AFC media release).

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INTERVIEW WITH GRAHAM SHIRLEY, CURATOR OF DOCUMENTS AND ARTEFACTS
Graham Shirley was appointed to the newly created Documents and Artefacts curatorial position at the NFSA in November 2005, and took up the post in mid-January 2006. In a career spanning three decades, he has worked as a filmmaker, scriptwriter, researcher and historian. He is co-author of *Australian Cinema: The First 80 Years* and the writer/director of numerous documentaries including *Road to Tokyo* (2005), *White Bay Power Station* (2003) and *Prisoners of Propaganda* (1987).

Here is a section of the interview conducted by Dan Edwards. To read the rest of the interview, visit the link provided below.

**In November last year you were appointed as the Archive's Senior Curator, Documents and Artefacts. Can you tell me a bit about this position and how it fits into the NFSA's new curatorial framework?** The position embraces a wide brief: stills, posters, film scripts, costumes, cinema technology, oral history, as well as the NFSA Library and the Centre for Scholarship and Archival Research (CSAR). In fact it's probably the broadest brief of any of the curators. But the documentation and artefacts collections have always suffered a little bit in comparison with the moving image and recorded sound sections, in that they haven't been as completely catalogued as those other areas. So to me the exciting part of the job is discovering what's in the collection.

For instance, we recently had our first ever CSAR intern, a woman called Ellie Bennett, who went through the collection of a now-deceased filmmaker called Mel Nichols. Mel had been quite active in Australian documentary production in the 1930s and 40s, and made some fascinating films both in Australia and South East Asia. Some years ago his family had donated a suitcase of memorabilia to the Archive, and we were able to have this intern go through the suitcase as part of her study at ANU. We found quite a few fascinating images of Mel and his activities in the 1930s on both dramas and documentaries, which has helped provide us with a further insight into this man who has otherwise been largely represented to us through the films he left behind.

I recently travelled to Sydney to negotiate with Yoram Gross-EMTV about donating to the NFSA quite a large collection of Yoram Gross' animation equipment, and animation cells and backgrounds. We had quite a few of Yoram's films, but we have now acquired a lot of the documentation which helps put those films into context. We also acquired a few more of his films.

I've also travelled to the Southern Highlands to the home of Tony Sattler and Noeline Brown, who were great friends of Graham Kennedy, and they have donated some real gems of memorabilia, especially one of his gold Logies—apparently he gave away the others! There's also a superb photo album which GTV-9 gave Kennedy at the end of his time on *In Melbourne Tonight*, which includes hundreds of quite unique photos of day-to-day production and transmission activities, and Graham's work in commercials and other aspects of his life, including his farm and social life. They're gems which all help provide context.

There's another area I should mention that's within my curatorial position, and that's the NFSA Library. That has been a rather neglected place over the years. We've now got a full-time librarian in Jan Thurling and she's taking gigantic steps to bring that library up to date and make it more meaningful to members of the public and the staff. (Interview excerpt taken from the AFC website)


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**NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE SHOP AND MERCHANDISING ACTIVITY**
The National Film and Sound Archive Shop is taking a new direction as part of the overall strategy for the Access and Outreach activities.

The new shop will sell merchandise that will appeal to sound and screen culture enthusiasts, as well as general visitors drawn to the NFSA as a Canberra cultural attraction.

The new range of merchandise will include: new NFSA product based on the national collection and developed under the curatorial leadership of the NFSA; selected high profile book titles, DVD cinema material, CDs, notebooks and notepads, soap, perfume and cosmetics, coffee mugs, t-shirts, classic film and sound posters and selected optical toys. Selected back catalogue NFSA products will also be carried such as *Jedda* on DVD, most of the Chauvel features that we have on VHS, *The Melba Tape* and *Running in the Shadows* on CD.

The overall personality of the new product merchandise range will reflect the NFSA as a creative and engaging place that connects with people that have interests in a wide range of endeavours in our screen and sound cultural fields.

The new merchandise will also be a blend of Australian and international related material because the NFSA now gives a higher emphasis to the fact that the fundamental activities in the moving image and recorded sound arenas operate without regard to borders.

The plan over 2006 is to experiment with a wider and partially different range of products for sale. The eventual scale of the new NFSA shop is being decided upon as part of the overall strategic interior redesign of the NFSA’s public spaces. A smaller, flexible and more publicly prominent working space is one high priority. An online version of the shop with e-commerce facilities will also be redeveloped as part of the overall redevelopment of the new NFSA presence online.

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**AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF FRIENDS OF MUSEUMS UPDATE**

The Australian Federation of Friends of Museums, (AFFM) is a national, non-profit organisation representing museum supporters throughout Australia. Members include groups and individuals who support art galleries, museums, botanic gardens, libraries, zoos, archives and historic sites around the country. AFFM encourages and assists the formation of Friends associations and it supports existing groups by sharing news, providing advice and networking opportunities, presenting seminars and publishing guides to good practice. AFFM is a founding member of the World Federation of Friends of Museums and it is associated with Museums Australia and the International Council of Museums. AFFM has one hundred member groups representing nearly 200 000 individual supporters of museums in all states. The Friends of the NFSA Inc. is an AFFM member group.

AFFM regularly publishes *Friends Review*, which is sent to members as part of their subscription. *Friends Review* contains articles on running a Friends group, marketing, fund raising, features on members and their activities and news from overseas Friends groups as well as the wider world of museums. It provides a link between those who support museums and offers practical material to assist in the day to day management of a Friends group.

Highlights of the latest issue include: Donations and gifts under scrutiny by Tax Office—information on a draft ruling by the ATO on tax deductible gifts; Briefly Noted—news from members on activities, new initiatives and successes; A Guide to strategic planning—a straight forward framework on how to write a
strategic plan; Spanish Tour—details of AFFM's tour to Spain and the 12th World Federation of Friends of Museums in Seville; A template for successful events—an example of how one group goes about organising its events program; Cooperating to market the arts—how Canberra Arts Marketing is promoting culture in the region; ICOM Conference report—news from the recent International Council of Museums Conference in Seoul, South Korea; and Spotlight—the Mosman Art Gallery has its home in an imaginatively adapted former Walter Burley Griffin designed church. (Information taken from www.affm.org.au)

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ABOUT THE FRIENDS
The Friends is a group of advocates, working to further the aims of the Archive and to encourage links between the Archive, the film and sound communities and the general community. In essence, the Friends want to promote excellence in film and sound culture, including: best practice in preservation, public programs and access; promoting high level appreciation of film and sound heritage and contemporary culture; creativity in the use of our Archive; and a broad, outward looking focus that locates Australia in the South East Asia-Pacific region and globally.

To achieve our ends, we rely on Friends to contribute energy and enthusiasm, and to participate in events that will provide the resources. You can never have too many friends. Please encourage your friends and colleagues to join us. And if you feel you would like to contribute by joining our committee, don’t hesitate to contact us.

We hope you have enjoyed this newsletter and we would love to hear from you on any Friends topic. You can contact us at info@archivefriends.org or ring us on 6248 0851.

There are many ways that you can help:
Helping with the newsletter  Becoming a committee member  Word processing or database work  Writing letters  Helping to photocopy and collate documents  Signing up your family members and friends as new Friends  Helping with fundraising  Attending rallies  Working on a stall  Attending events

Please don’t hesitate to put up your hand for any of these activities by emailing us at info@archivefriends.org. All offers of assistance will be greatly appreciated.

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WITH BEST WISHES FROM YOUR COMMITTEE,
Lucy Battersby, Shelley Clarke, Marlene Collinson, Adrian Cunningham, Ray Edmondson, Andy Hayllar, Chris Harrison, Peter Hislop, Andrew Pike, Cheryl Stevenson and Simon Weaving.

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