

Your view



on museums, art and heritage

Summer 2015

Contents

When the disposable becomes a
documentary record
Margaret Goode

Sunday's art: the garden at Heide
Belinda Moxon

Burrnju Aboriginal Art Gallery
Diane Reynoldson

Introducing Linda Huddleston

The more things change... 21st century
digitisation
Marcus Freeman

Interview: inside curation with Kerry Neale
Kathryn Reynoldson

Sights and sounds of a nation
Lindy Ross

Sandon Town Museum
Richard Reynoldson

Perspective on volunteering
Patrick Robertson

Interview: endangered heritage
Kathryn Reynoldson

©Your view: on museums, art and heritage 2015
PO Box 221, Civic Square ACT 2608
www.yourviewartandheritage.com.au
Editor: Kathryn Reynoldson
Designer: Kathryn Reynoldson
Publisher: UC Publishing Pty Ltd
University Dr, Bruce, ACT 2617
(02) 6201 5111
www.ucpublishing.edu.au
Printed by: Presentation Print
[insert ISSN here]

Cover: Barry Humphries in *Alice in Wonderland* pamphlet,
1956, National Library of Australia, PROMPT Collection

When the disposable becomes a documentary record

Margaret Goode

The National Library of Australia collects a range of Australian ephemera; material that, when published, was expected only to have short-term usefulness or popularity, such as handbills, posters, how to vote cards, trade catalogues and programmes for theatre and music performances. The latter form the Australian performing arts programmes and ephemera (PROMPT) Collection.

I have been working with a group of National Library volunteers on rehousing and listing sets of material relating to specific actors, entrepreneurs or theatre venues within the PROMPT Collection; this makes it easier for the public to access material through the Library's reading rooms. In the process we have discovered that these programmes have far exceeded their short-term usefulness and, having been collected and held, some for well over a hundred years, now provide a useful window on many aspects of ordinary social life.

We've had a lot of unexpected fun. We have laughed our way through boxes of Barry Humphries programmes, which are works of art in every sense, and found that he was a good artist and cartoonist, in addition to his many other talents. We have learnt about a string of successful Aussie theatrical entrepreneurs, some operating in Sydney and Melbourne and others taking off to make their way in London.

We saw that in 1941 paper restrictions in England affected the kind of programmes that could be printed, and grew nostalgic when we found old theatres that have disappeared from our streets. The Tivoli for example, at 329 Castlereagh St, which began life as the Adelphi, was refurbished and renamed as the Grand Opera House in 1916 and again renamed as the Tivoli in 1932. The Tivoli was a popular vaudeville house where Roy Rene regularly starred. Patronage declined after the introduction of TV in 1956, however, and the theatre closed

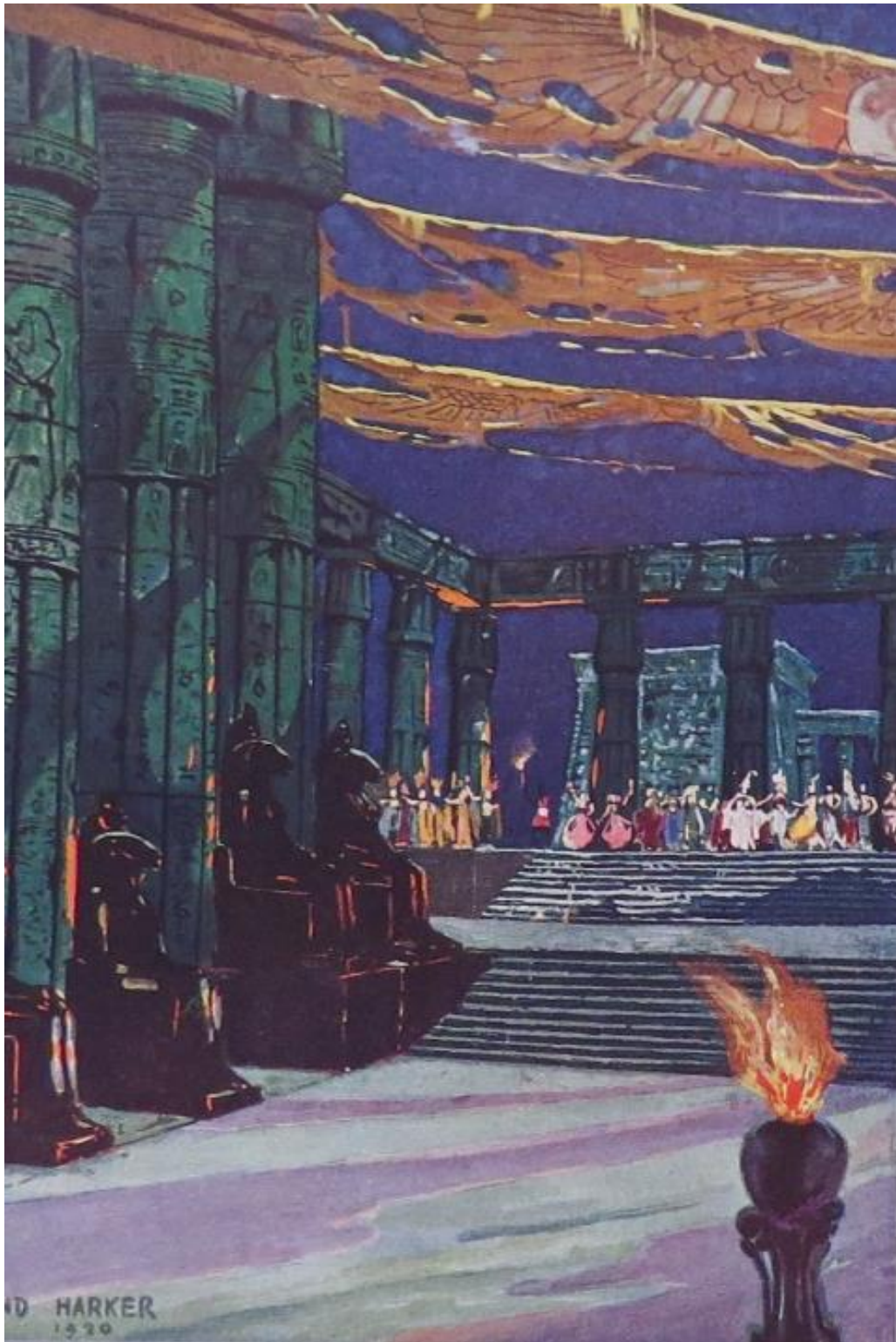
in 1966. The building was demolished in 1969 and the site is now occupied by Central Square Tower.

The Criterion, which operated from 1886 to 1935 was built opposite the spot known as 'poverty point', a place where homeless and poor people congregated, on the corner of Park and Pitt Streets where the Criterion Hotel now stands.

The Royal Theatre opened in 1827 in King Street behind the Royal Hotel. It burned to the ground in 1840. The name was dormant for 35 years and then in 1875 a new theatre was built in Castlereagh Street on the corner of Rowe Street, adjacent to the Australia Hotel. This theatre was demolished in 1971 to build the MLC Centre, which incorporates another Royal Theatre.

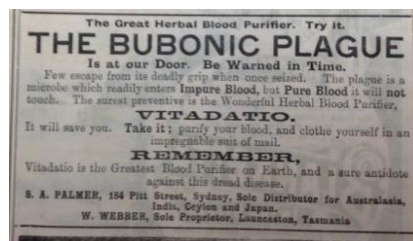


Tivoli Theatre at night, Castlereagh Street, Sydney, 1933,
National Library of Australia nla.pic-vn6267129



The gates of Cairo, Mecca, New York, 1920, National Library of Australia, PROMPT Collection

In addition to the curious and interesting there is also beauty. This 1920 programme is from a performance at the Century Theatre in New York of *Mecca*— a show devised by Oscar Asche, one of the many Aussie theatre entrepreneurs and artists the PROMPT Collection documents.



We have also found unexpected snippets of information in old advertisements. One may not think of looking in theatre programmes to find the price of cars in 1928, but there it was: £899 for a *Packard Six* or *Eight* and £199–£250 for various models of the *Whippet*. Only gangsters could afford the *Packard*!

In 1909, we could have used the sexaphone to identify the sex of our chicken eggs. Think how that could improve matchmaking in your chicken coop.

Or if we'd been living in Sydney in 1901, a timely dose of Vitadatio could have saved us from the coming bubonic plague.

In a 1916 programme, we found what must have been one of the earliest commercial uses of the term 'Anzac'. 1921 was the year the Australian Government took out a patent in order to prevent its further commercial use.

So, old theatre programmes kept beyond their originally expected use-by date can tell us much about not only the theatre and its performers at any given time, but also about fashion and taste, quack treatments, and the desirable consumables of that time. Find out more about the printed ephemera collection on the National Library website.

Sunday's art: the garden at Heide

Belinda Moxon



The Rose Garden Pavilion

I set out for Heide on an unusually warm day in early spring, driving along the Eastern Freeway that leads me away from the familiar streets of the inner north. The road slices through basalt rock exposing striations of dusky pink and yellow. Above the embankment, I see the olive tones of a bushy fringe, and beyond, the roofs of unfamiliar suburbs flash by. A warm wind whips my cheek through wound-down windows.

It's only a short drive to the north-eastern suburb of Bulleen, but as I pass through Heide's gates, I immediately enter another world. Though the throb of traffic on the nearby highway never quite ceases, I am almost entirely shrouded by green. In spite of its proximity to the encroaching bustle of the city, Heide remains a world unto itself.

The Heide Museum of Modern Art comprises three galleries set amidst fifteen acres of lush parkland on the banks of the

Yarra River. The museum celebrates the ground breaking achievements of the Heide Circle alongside exhibitions featuring Australian contemporary and emerging artists.

Yet Heide is not merely a museum. The geographical site itself is hallowed ground in the story of Australian modernism. When newlyweds John and Sunday Reed bought the property in 1934 they named their new home 'Heide' after the nearby township of Heidelberg and the Heidelberg School of artists. Soon after, they opened their home to like-minded creative individuals including Sidney Nolan, Albert Tucker, Joy Hester, John Perceval and Danila Vassilieff. The Reeds nurtured this circle of artists, writers and intellectuals who made Heide a place dedicated to the creation, promotion and debate of modern art and literature.



Kitchen Garden

Entering Heide's gates, the weight of this history is immediate yet intimate. As Sunday's good friend and frequent visitor to Heide Jean Langely has commented, Sunday did not merely love her garden, she was part of it. Sunday's generous achievement is that her garden makes the visitor feel part of it too.

The physical landscape was never merely a backdrop to artistic endeavour at Heide, rather the gardens were an essential part of everyday life for the entire circle. For the Reeds, tending the garden structured the rhythms of everyday life until their deaths, nine days apart, in 1981.

Today, the landscape itself vibrates with history. It is a special place, palpably imbued with a sense of significance. Decades of the Reeds' passion and hard work have clearly shaped the landscape. It echoes with their presence. Yet it also whispers of a history that extends long before the presence of the Reeds. Prior to

European occupation of this land, the Wurundjeri people had been caring and living sustainably here for thousands of years. Though material evidence of their presence is scant, it is felt most vividly in the much-beloved scar tree, a magnificent river red gum estimated to be 400 to 500 years old. This rare tree shows the evidence of a deep cutting of bark from its trunk for a canoe, shield or coolamon, marking this place's long pre-European history as a meeting place for aboriginal people. Sunday and John's ashes are scattered beneath it.

From the beginning, John and Sunday's aim was to create a self-sustaining lifestyle with home-grown produce, dairy cows and chickens. Their aesthetic vision for Heide's garden was a central part of this dream. Through their hard work, the almost treeless rundown dairy farm was transformed into an informal park-forest where tree branches were

encouraged to sweep the ground, shrubs were allowed to grow unruly and blooms were naturalised amidst the grass.

Heide I is the original farmhouse where Sunday and John lived from 1934 to 1967 and again in 1980. The weatherboard cottage is shielded from the busy road by a leafy hedge and a front garden filled with fruit trees. Although it now houses a gallery, from its exterior, the Reed's first home at Heide retains its domestic appearance, freshly painted pale lilac amidst pink camellias and deep purple Christmas roses. Despite our unseasonably warm weather, the fruit trees in the front yard remain bare, but on previous summer visits I have slyly enjoyed a juicy plum from the orchard in the shade of the Wild Garden.

When the Reeds purchased the property in 1934, they invited artist Neil Douglas to help them create the garden. As a tribute, they gave him his own section, which became known as the Wild Garden. It lives up to its name. This area on the southern side of the cottage is a paradise of tangled vines, overgrown shrubs and secret nooks.

Reluctantly, I leave the pleasures of the Wild Garden behind, and head towards Heide II, the Reed's second home on the property, nestled into the hill behind its predecessor.

In 1964 the Reeds commissioned David McGlashan to design the new house as a live-in gallery. The modernist building in the International Style was designed with the express intention of its later conversion to a public gallery dedicated to modern art. The building was created with an acute awareness of local geography. Nestled organically into the hillside, it is part of the landscape, and walls of glass draw the garden in. Today, Heide II presents exhibitions of Australian contemporary art alongside the subsequently constructed Heide III that showcases emerging Australian artists.

Continuing my tour of the gardens, I head towards Sunday's famed kitchen garden that cloaks the foot of the gentle

slope. As a young woman, Sunday had harboured ambitions of beginning her own career as a painter. Yet she considered herself insufficiently talented to pursue this dream, instead she channelled her considerable artistic gifts into her garden. The enclosed kitchen garden overflowing with plantings of culinary and ornamental species showcases her superb instincts for creating a harmonious interplay of colour, texture and form.

Nearing the boundary of the property at the foot of the embankment, I am close to the murky Yarra. I edge down its steep spongy bank and watch its gentle progress as it ripples around fallen branches that stand upright midstream. This is where the Heide circle picnicked and swam in their halcyon days. On this quiet afternoon, I suspect they would find it unchanged.

The last of the other visitors have left, and it's time for me to go home too. I could easily spend hours longer here, but there will be more afternoons at Heide. I walk across a former paddock fringed by majestic gums and begin my ascent back to the top of Heide's green hill. I turn a moment. The sun has sunk below the powerlines, and sculptor Neil Taylor's corrugated iron cattle are silhouetted against the landscape. In the fading light, they might almost be the Reeds' old steers, Cappuccino and Espresso.

Some 30 years after the deaths of John and Sunday, their years of labour remain the foundation of Heide's garden as a living museum. As I follow the path over the brow of the hill, I feel sure that the spirit of their beloved garden will remain alive a good while yet.



Neil Taylor, *Theoretical Matter*, 1999-2000

Photography Chet Makani

Burrunjū Aboriginal Art Gallery

Diane Reynoldson

It'd been so long since I'd been to this modernist, painted timber building on the shore of Lake Burleigh Griffin that I still had in my mind that it was a museum. Almost 50 years ago the Council for Aboriginal Affairs (CAA) lobbied for a venue to store Aboriginal artefacts, records and languages that had been collected by anthropologists since English colonial occupation. Today there is the fabulous Australian Museum to stage displays for all Australians and tourists and the extensive AIATSIS building to house records, provide services and to return to country the artefacts of Indigenous communities.

The lakeside building that now houses the Burrunjū Aboriginal Art Gallery is partially clad with colourful sections of vertical corrugated iron and nearby signs invite visitors to explore the beauty and interest of Aboriginal land by taking bush-path walks. Inside, most of the art and craft is for sale and workshops and cultural performances are given for visitors and school groups.

I paid my respects at the front desk and passed the gift shop into the extensive three part display area. The mixture of objects and styles has a stunning effect. There are among the paintings: cushions, bags, t-shirts, baskets, straw hats, carvings, glass enamellings, soft sculptures and didgeridoos. The paintings seem to have no order by subject or artist—where to look first?

The Huddleston family are well represented and I recognised the concentric circle compositions, x-ray animals and flowing plants with their pleasing lines and colours. I gazed around from one to another, recognizing a refreshing love of nature, and as I saw the drama of fish, crocodile, pelican, ibis and egret striking up their dialogue of claims on food and environment, I was drawn into the

possible message of the artists. I thought Linda Huddleston's swirling circles could be magnetic magma but was able to talk to the artist herself and discover that they are, in fact, historical family stories whose intergenerational experiences do symbolically create a field of influence.

For all else I was left to my own devices. In Imiyari Adamson's *Seven Sisters* a common style of dots became, to my eye, maps and landscapes, bush tucker or even aspects of personality. Dots forming circles and grids on a background of dust colour ochres in Tom Butler's *Hunting Season* are possibly tracks and waterholes, but in the black space-like background of *Men's Meeting Place* by Dale Elliot, they might be depicting connections of belonging and knowledge eternal in the earth and cosmos.

The highly sensate dot composition by Lyndy Delian called *Listen to the Wind* gave me an impression of form holding in the midst of change. Geo-energy in *Fire Beneath the Sea* by Gambirra, I felt, was represented as female, while Lyndy Delian might well be depicting a political metaphor with her series of *Trapped Eels*. As an artist her work spans styles and mediums and her painting *Women's Body Paint* is a stunning minimalist work of horizontal and vertical lines that contrasts with her complex but also geometric painting *Journey Lines*. The other artist I noticed, also a Lyn, Lyn Talbot, works sensuously in soft sculptures and glass enamelling as well as paint. *Bush Medicine* is an artwork showing the female figure as a psychic healer and gatherer of herbs.

As I left the gallery and stepped into the bush surroundings I felt I had more of a sense of belonging. I wanted to carry a vision of connected lines and dot landscapes, communities and family to replace isolation and anxiety. Later, I hoped, the sky would appear to me as grids of light danced upon by at least seven sisters.

Introducing Linda Huddleston



Women's business

Women of all ages meet to talk around the fire, surrounded by the cyclical and interconnected stories of their lives. This dot technique is that of Linda's grandmother's people—the Ngardi.



Linda Huddleston was born in Katoomba NSW. Her father's people are from the Ngardi language group in the Roper River region of East Arnhem Land. Her mother is of the Talbragar people from Dubbo, who also have cultural ties with the Wiradjuri tribe of NSW.

As well as being an artist, Linda is currently the Burrunjui Art Gallery's arts and cultural program coordinator. She is also a strong voice in the community helping to eradicate domestic violence.

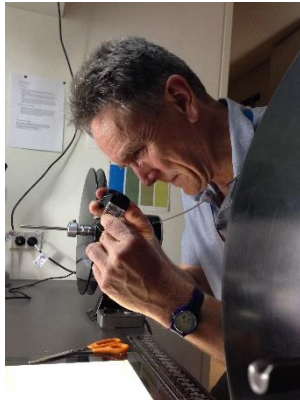


My father's story

Linda's father was part of the stolen generation; he was separated from his father and taken with his mother to live at Milleewa Half Caste Home when he was five years old. Five years later the family was reunited. Nevertheless, Linda's father strongly believed in reconciliation, which is another theme of Linda's work.

The more things change... 21st century digitisation

Marcus Freeman



Here at the AIATSIS¹ Moving Image Section there is a huge challenge to digitize frail film and video material. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has identified 2025 as a reference date by which video material needs to be digitized for archive purposes; film being of similar concern but with differing decay processes. With over 4,000 titles and over 6 million feet of film currently in storage with AIATSIS, we have our work cut out.

On current estimates, in excess of 150 terabytes of data will be created annually. As with other cultural institutions, the creation, management and maintenance of these huge quantities of data present a significant challenge. Add this to the growing amount of 'born digital' content being created and the 21st century digital tsunami is well and truly gathering pace—surf's up everyone.

As the old proverb goes: the more things change the more they stay the same. The recorded material may be on tape or on film but it is still at heart recorded storytelling. For moving image technicians the issues of aesthetic quality and technical reliability also remain but from an operational perspective, the recent generation of equipment and associated processes are amazingly efficient and powerful. To be able to move or copy large

files of high quality audio and video content in a matter of minutes would have been unimaginable when these items were created.

The challenge is to archive all this material accurately, quickly and efficiently with due regard to cultural sensitivities and protocols. Some items may be restricted due to the originating group's specifications on appropriate access, for example recordings of men's or women's ceremonial or sacred business. There could also be an expression of concern for an appropriate viewing age. Recently I have transferred a Walpiri fire ceremony which required playing the original 16 mm film and encoding through a special computer to create a digital copy for archive. As this material is restricted, I limited access to my immediate working area until the process was complete and no images appear on any screens. The final digital file is given a specific identifier as an alert to its restricted status. With this in mind, cataloging needs to not only accurately name and reflect the content of the material for searching purposes but must also effectively record the wishes of stakeholders where access protocols may apply. A very useful guide to cultural awareness and appropriate process can be found by accessing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Information, Learning and Reference Network (ATSILIRN) website.

In the near future many of the images and items I am now working on will begin to be readily accessible as viewing copies on many different screen devices. What was once challenging to view and duplicate will soon be easily seen and copied. It is astonishing to consider that old film and video material, often physically fragile and technically obsolete, will soon be copied into digital formats and given a complete new lease of life. By transferring this precious material from last century's equipment for storage and contemporary viewing, I often feel like I am building a bridge in time. This is as close to time travel as I can get.

¹Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Islander Studies

Interview: inside curation with Kerry Neale

Interviewer: Kathryn Reynoldson



War Memorial photography, Kerry Alchin

Dr Kerry Neale is a curator of the Military Heraldry and Technology Collection at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. Kerry researches, catalogues and provides access to a vast collection of relics which date from the colonial period up until Australia's most recent wars and peacekeeping activities.

PART ONE: The War Memorial

KATHRYN: There must be a lot of donations that come to the War Memorial, does it happen all the time?

KERRY: Yep, we have donations coming in all the time and I think with the centenary there has been an increased awareness of the memorial and what we do. People start examining their own family history and, in some cases, have gone looking and found that hidden box that was just down the back of the garage. It's not until they start doing their research that they realise the significance of that torn shirt or that pennant that may have actually flown at a quite significant battle or perhaps in a prisoner of war camp. So really we're still uncovering a lot of stories, it's certainly not something that lives in the distant past. To me it's still very current in a lot of people's lives.

KATHRYN: That word, 'significance'. When does somebody's personal possession become significant enough to be collected and displayed in a social collection?

KERRY: It's a really good question because we are always asking ourselves: *what will this object be able to tell people? How is it significant?* Partly, we want to tell the story of the ordinary, everyday experience of war. It doesn't have to be the big battles and the big moments to make something significant.

KATHRYN: So you look for variety, for different perspectives?

KERRY: Yes, I think diversity is something that we do look for because obviously people respond to situations in a whole myriad of ways and I would never like to say that the experience of the First World War soldier was *this* and make a generalisation about everybody.

KATHRYN: What is an example of a donation that you've had to say no to?

KERRY: Okay, part of our collection development plan is around the framework of the Australian experience of war and that has arisen as something that we'll need to reconsider as an institution—in terms of members of other countries that we were allied with as well as those who may have fought in other theatres of war, under other defence forces, but then migrated to Australia. Those experiences are now Australian experiences of war.

So we do occasionally have to decline an offer. For example, recently I had a mess tin that had been passed down through three sets of hands. The original owner was British and he may have served close to an Australian Battalion but we couldn't make that connection. We have other examples of mess tins, one has been engraved by an Australian who says where he went, what years and things like that. So

you're always weighing up, as well, what we already have in the collection. We do also want to make sure that what we take in we can take responsibility for and that involves conservation, preservation work and storage. Obviously exhibitions and the displays in the galleries are limited compared to the collection that we have. It's probably, and the percentage is loose, but maybe 10–15% of what we have is on display at any one time. So you always have to consider the resources that are going to be required when we take something in. And, if everything is starting to look the same and have much the same story, then again you have to question: *okay, do we need another pair of combat boots from Vietnam? Is it possible to tell the story of any particular individual better or worse with that pair or another pair?* So you're always weighing up those kinds of considerations.

KATHRYN: I imagine sometimes it's a blurry line and sometimes it's a much easier call to make.

KERRY: Sometimes an object will have more family and, I guess in some ways, sentimental value over its social significance. That's quite often when we will tell a family that there is no rush. We still take in objects from the First World War and we'll never draw a line under the sand and say, *no more*. So if there's hesitation because the grandkids might be really interested in this one day, and we can offer advice on how best to care for it in those 'in between years', then we're quite happy to have that happen as well and say, *come back to us when you're ready*.

KATHRYN: When families have come in with donations, has there been anything really surprising that you've been really excited about?

KERRY: Oh, plenty of things. There are things in the collection that—well recently I did a bit of work on *the Changi Book* that's

just been published. So a colleague and I went through our collection of objects from Changi and—you know, these are men are possibly at the lowest point in their lives struggling to survive—we have an example of a dried squid in the collection. Apparently that's what they were catching and eating. But amazingly, no matter how hard up they were, one man has kept this to bring home as maybe an example of just how strange and different his experiences were from what he was used to back home in Australia.

KATHRYN: That's great!

KERRY: I find it remarkable what people hold onto during the war. You find all sorts of souvenirs and trinkets and things, like identity disks that have been personalised with a little message, or we had one come in with a photograph that was actually built into the back. We're not sure if they were a mother or a wife but, obviously, whoever it was meant the world to that person. It's those little personal mementos that get me every time. The most surprising objects, and the ones that bring a smile to my face, are the cheeky little things that men and women have collected over the years. We've got underwear that's been sewn from the parachute silk of a downed soldier, made as a keepsake, or to give to a girlfriend back home. You know, these wonderful little stories of how people engaged with each other and how they found a sense of humour to have a bit of a joke about what is really a pretty awful predicament.

KATHRYN: You can really get a sense of the personalities of individuals from objects like that... I've noticed you haven't spoken about the weapons, there must be different people with different interests. Yours doesn't really lie with the weapons?

KERRY: Not first and foremost, no. There are a few pieces and their story draws me to them but I'm not mechanically minded in

that way. Where I can fully appreciate them for the piece of technology that they are.

I've come to have an appreciation of swords and the craftsmanship that goes into crafting a sword, which is something that I'd never expected.

Actually, one of the most interesting pieces of technology that I've worked with are the improvised explosive devices that we've collected and had brought back from Afghanistan.

KATHRYN: What diffused? Or exploded?

KERRY: We have parts that have been exploded. They've been recovered by a task force and have come back as examples of what the men and women are facing over there. Part of my job was working out how we catalogue this new type of technology. It's really not clearly defined, they're improvised, so you're talking about things that are made from discarded C-cell batteries, an old LG radio receiver and a coke bottle with wires in it as a pull device. I did start looking at things in my environment differently, like somebody might be able to look at your camelbak [water bottle] and think: *that could be a casing for the improvised device that I need to take into a market place*. And it really did... not affect me in a negative way, but I did start seeing things in a new light. This isn't as clear cut as the mortars and artillery of other wars, when you knew what a weapon looked like. These are as inane as the mobile phone sitting on the table. So yeah, that really gets you thinking.

KATHRYN: You can really see the best and the worst in people. It sounds like a never ending journey really.

KERRY: It is, it is. And it's something that I consider, as naff as it may sound, I consider this a real privilege. That people trust the Memorial as an institution but also each of us as curators and historians and they are willing to share what could be one of the most distressing parts of their lives or

one of the most heartbreaking parts of their family's history with us. And I don't think you can get that in many other jobs.

PART 2: William

KATHRYN: Now, I know your PhD thesis topic and I wanted to ask if you were involved with a World War I exhibition I went to earlier this year at the Melbourne Museum. There was a section of the exhibition that left a big impression on me, it included a number of men who had survived some terrible facial injuries. I remember one man particularly because he looked remarkably better after surgery, he was quite handsome —

KERRY: Yes. *Love and Sorrow*.

KATHRYN: That's the one. Did you work on that project?

KERRY: Actually, part of my honours thesis was looking at the return of these disfigured veterans. I was looking at medical files thinking that it would just be a small introduction to this longer post-war story and then I came across William Kearsey and saw those beautiful photographs, as well as the ones of his harrowing disfigurement. There was something in his eyes, I thought *you have this gentleness and this inner strength*. I had no idea what his life was like after the war but I had that initial response. I put a call out in newspapers and on websites and things like that for relatives and descendants to contact me. Of all people his niece got in contact with me and she immediately started telling me, *Uncle Bill did this and Uncle Bill was really wonderful and Uncle Bill...* I had say, *sorry Beryl, do you mind if we just stop for a moment and I'll just take some details down so I know who I'm talking about?* And she said, *oh sorry of course, it's William Kearsey*. And I nearly dropped the phone because it had only been about a week before that I was holding the plaster cast of his face and I

was looking through those photos, which she had never seen. So I told her about them and described them to her. Later I sent her copies—I made sure she had somebody with her when she looked at them—and she confirmed, *that is uncle Bill, I can see it in his face. That's the man I grew up knowing and loving.*

KATHRYN: So she didn't know that he had that surgery?

KERRY: She knew that he had something happen to him and that his face would occasionally ache when it was too cold, so she knew something of his story but didn't realise the extent of what he'd been through. Beryl then put me in contact with William's great grandnephew, who told me that William had married very late in life, he'd married when he was 59, to a woman who was about 20 years younger and they had adopted a young boy. I even found out he'd come from Inverell, which is where I grew up.

KATHRYN: Oh really?

KERRY: Yeah, there were all these little connections and I thought, *I need to track this man down.* I tried for a long time, you know, every avenue that I could but it seemed that it just wasn't going to come to pass. I really started talking seriously with Deb [curator of *Love and Sorrow*, Deborah Tout-Smith] about the exhibition and that I thought that William needed a family member to tell his story. Peter Dennen, the great grandnephew, was willing to be that person but he admitted he didn't really know William the way Beryl did and, unfortunately, at that point Beryl had passed away.

So, I just kept trying. I contacted the local RSL club up in Inverell and a few others like the Rotary Club and Lions Club and things like that and lo and behold, a few months later I get contacted by Peter Kearsey who just went: *you've been studying my dad for how long now? And*

why? And I tried to explain that initial connection I'd had with his photos and how I learned that this man, this incredibly strong and gentle man, brought out 26 disadvantaged boys from the UK.

KATHRYN: 26!

KERRY: As part of a big brother program, young boys without a family back home that could support them. They came out and they trained up as jackaroos and then moved on. William and his wife, Verden, brought out 25 and the last one was Peter. Peter was practically an orphan, he didn't have family to go back to and they just became a family. It was like I had known, just... innately, and it all just sort of fell into place.

KATHRYN: That's incredible.

KERRY: So, I had the opportunity to highlight William as one of the stories in this exhibition, which was supposed to be Victorian based. I think, six out of the eight are all local Victorian stories. To me, that has been the biggest—to say that it's the most gratifying experience, it's not about me. It was just knowing that William's experience was going to be acknowledged and known by other people and *through him* the stories of the other men who did struggle a lot more. I do find William incredibly inspirational and maybe that's an easier way for people to step into that world of what it would have been like for disfigured veterans. Thesis to the side, that goes onto a dusty shelf, William's story is out there.

KATHRYN: So how did you go about putting that story into a displayable context?

KERRY: There was some hesitation, on the part of the museum and on my part as well, as to how you want people to experience that very visual topic. I know in some museums overseas there have been exhibitions that look at disfigurement but

separate them from the other war wounded. I can respect and understand that but I didn't want to hide it away; I wanted to integrate that experience into the overall story of those returning home. We decided that it would be a part that people didn't *have to* go through but were still invited to. We didn't want to close things off, so we used a sort of open-slatted wall where you could still see what was inside and then make that judgement as to whether you include that —

KATHRYN: In your experience.

KERRY: Yeah, and I think part of it was just making sure that the initial shock of the images, once you put them into context, was taken away. Some of the horror or the uncomfortable interaction that you have looking at a disfigured face... it's very different to the loss of a limb in my opinion because it's all about identity.

KATHRYN: I think so too. It's the first impression people have of you.

KERRY: So rather than just have the medical image, to me it was important to include whole stories. I didn't want people just to focus on what was for some men the most significant part of their lives because, for a lot of them, it was just a part of their lives.

KATHRYN: That's an incredible topic to focus on.

KERRY: It came to me, I certainly didn't go looking for it. It just happened.

Sights and sounds of a nation

Lindy Ross



I guess my fascination with that marvellous art deco Canberra institution, the National Film and Sound Archive, began many years ago when, as a child, I attended the Saturday afternoon 'flicks' there! For a child in pre-television times the children's serials screened in the theatre of the (then) Institute of Anatomy were an escape into an exotic world of adventure and excitement. Black and white and mainly British, these serials would leave us 'cliff-hanging' until the next week's episode.

But the building itself, as well as the entertainment, was a magical and alluring place. From the koala gargoyles on the façade to the slightly macabre death masks of famous scientists surveying the foyer, the institute was much like today's Questacon. There was Phar Lap's heart in its big glass case—another fascinatingly gruesome display for a child to wonder at. I can also remember a wonderfully detailed illustration of the human digestive system, represented in the style of a factory production line with the hilariously 'naughty' depiction of the end of the food trail.

But as I grew up and Canberra started producing more exciting buildings and venues, the dear old Institute of Anatomy began to lose its fascination. That daring igloo-cum-spaceship of the Academy of Science appeared right next door and the activities of Questacon and the

Australian Institute of Sport provided far more exciting experiences for young minds and bodies. I left Canberra and for many years had no more contact with the building and its activities.

In that time, though, its function changed dramatically. In 1984 the building became the home of the National Film and Sound Archive and over a period of twenty years went through many name and purpose changes until finally emerging in its current format in 2008. Just before I retired and found myself with time to investigate volunteering and new interests!

I developed a keen interest in Canberra's early architecture and again this building beckoned and fascinated me. Now I knew more about architecture I knew it was part of the 'Stripped Classical', inter-war Art Deco style that was also represented in Canberra by buildings like Old Parliament House and Ainslie Public School. A little touch of ancient Greece and Rome, but elegantly modernised. That wonderful foyer a proud expression of Australian identity and pride. The lovely courtyard with its shady gardens, and the sympathetic addition of the state of the art Arc Theatre allowing large cinema audiences to enjoy the treasures of the archive.

I was actually drawn back into the building and the life of the NFSA by an item I heard on local radio, announcing a get-together of those who had been members of the ABC Argonauts Club. Pre-television, this nightly radio broadcast started in the 1940s and continued through the 50s and 60s, providing children all over Australia with wonderful entertainment and learning from a range of distinguished presenters. So, remembering my ship name and number from Jason's Fleet of Argonauts²

² The concept was based on the Greek myth of Jason and the Argonauts—Jason in his ship Argo and the fleet, which accompanied him on the search for the Golden Fleece. Hence the Argonauts Club used a system of Greek names for ships to which members (rowers) belonged. I was Automaton 29. We all strove to achieve (through points awarded for literary, artistic, musical, letters contributions) milestones such as the Dragon's Tooth, the

I went along to a mini reunion with members of the fledgling Friends and other Argonauts. Re-establishing a network of Argonauts was just one of the activities of the Friends and I decided, if possible, I would like to join and help this group of volunteers.

Perhaps more than any other national institution in Canberra the NFSA was struggling to maintain its core business of safeguarding the national collection, let alone providing a varied and interesting program of events for members of the public. In the last five years as government cutbacks hit, the archive closed its reference library, closed the bookshop and gift shop, lost its café, closed its public exhibitions, and even the wonderful Arc Cinema.

Here was an institution that should offer the greatest appeal to a wide range of the population through its collection of audio and visual records and paraphernalia, and yet it was slowly fading from sight. Unlike many of the other Friends (of galleries, museums, libraries etc.) in Canberra the NFSA Friends were an independent group with no financial or administrative links to the archive. We decided we would fight on, to try and revive public interest in the archive by offering opportunities for the public to come and enjoy some of the delights of its collection.

And so that's what we've been doing in 2015. I've enjoyed opportunities to hear members of the committee who have previously worked for the archive describe some of its vast resources, and to work with current curators and conservators who can display these items. As a result of these interactions we've seen old films and newsreels, movie posters and music scores, witnessed a modern day recording session on wax cylinders, laughed at old advertisements and even held a Hollywood Oscar as we watched the wartime film that won it.

As a Friend of the National Film and Sound Archive I know I'm lucky to have such special access to the sights and sounds of our past. As part of the Friends Committee I am hoping we can extend these exciting privileges to a much wider public.



Photography Kathryn Reynoldson

Sandon Town Museum

Richard Reynoldson

Next time you happen to be on the Trans-Canada Highway in British Columbia with a bit of time on your hands, just turn off at Revelstoke and head south along the west bank of the Columbia River.

The river runs south in a valley between rugged, heavily forested mountain ranges on either side, forming the 230 km long Arrow Lakes.

After some 50 km, a ferry resembling a small aircraft carrier takes you 5 km across the lake and you continue south on the east bank to the small town of Nakusp. From there head east through the mountains, to another lake, the Slocan, and the township of New Denver.

Continuing east, a further 15 km out of town, off the main road, you will find a small valley surrounded by mountains with a creek running through it.

Near here, prospectors in the early 1890s found rich deposits of Galena (silver-lead ore) which started a huge mining rush in the mountainous Slocan region of southern British Columbia.

Within a couple of years the town of Sandon was established here, straddling Carpenter Creek, and complete with numerous shops, hotels, bars, theatres and

houses, crowded together in the small valley. It even had electric lighting, supplied by possibly the first hydro-electric power plant in Western Canada and serviced by not just one, but two competing railways, built through the mountains to connect Sandon to the paddle steamers on Arrow Lake to the west and Kootenay Lake to the east.

Sandon quickly became the major city in the area, with a population of nearly eight thousand—largely miners and other workers supporting the numerous mines in the surrounding hills. The town was crowded and doubtless the hotels, bars and entertainment venues did a roaring trade. Industrial action by a strong local miners' union was ongoing, as pay and working conditions for miners left a lot to be desired.

Building space being scarce, the creek had been enclosed in a wooden flume and boarded over, with buildings and streets over the top. The large available forests and the lack of space in the valley meant that all buildings were of timber and packed tightly together.

Then one night in 1900, the inevitable fire broke out and despite a well-equipped firefighting infrastructure, took hold so quickly that most of the town was completely destroyed.

After the fire, rebuilding commenced



almost immediately and the town was functioning again remarkably quickly, but on a somewhat smaller scale than before the fire. At the same time the flume containing the creek (which had not burned) was planked over and converted into the main street. But by this time, silver and metal prices were declining and Sandon never regained its pre-fire size or prosperity.

Over the years, mining activity continued to decline and by the 1940s the population had shrunk and many buildings were standing empty. During the war, the town (like others in the region) became an internment camp for Canadian Japanese. After the war, mining companies used the buildings as accommodation together with the few residents and small businesses that continued to survive.

However, the design of the flume containing the creek had always presented problems and in 1955, heavy rains blocked it with logs and other debris. The resulting flood washed away the main street together with many buildings and left the town derelict. The surviving railway to New Denver was also washed out and rail service to the town ceased.

Sandon never recovered from this flood, and in subsequent years many of the buildings that remained were sold off or scavenged for lumber until only a handful were left intact.

Today there are still some mines operating in the area, but few residents, as it is easier for workers to live in nearby New Denver and commute. Sandon has been left as a virtual ghost town, a few buildings remain, but the flume and the main street are gone.

Oddly, when driving into the town, the most noticeable feature, apart from the few buildings and bits of rusting machinery lying around, is a long line of old electric trolley buses parked in a row between the road and the creek, looking completely out of place.

The buses have nothing to do with Sandon's history but were apparently brought there privately from Vancouver after the fleet was decommissioned in the 1980s. So far, the expected interest in the buses from museums and other collections has not materialised and they now appear to be a permanent feature of the landscape.

Across the road from the buses sits an old steam locomotive trailing a string of cars, a substantial reminder of the two railways that once served the town. Along the banks of the creek, a few piles of broken timber are all that is left of the old flume and the main street.

Next to the line of buses is a three story timber structure, with a sign saying 'Fire Hall'. This used to be the Sandon City



Hall and offices and is now privately owned and apparently undergoing some restoration work.

A short distance further up the creek is a group of three adjoining buildings. Two of these are large two story timber structures, covered over with heavily weathered grey plywood and clear plastic and looking particularly drab and neglected. Apparently these are not original, but are a reconstruction project begun under a government grant which appears to have dried up. They have a depressing look of permanency about them.

The third is a sizeable red brick building standing at one end of the little group, which faces the creek where the flume and the old main street used to run. At the back is a rusty galvanized iron lean-to with a sign above it reading 'Sandon Historical Society Museum'.

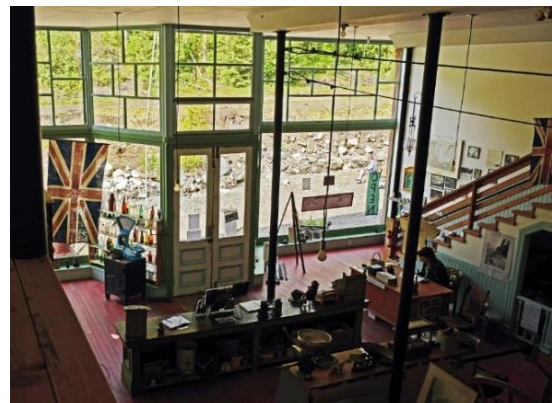
The museum entrance is actually quite impressive, consisting of a large plate glass shopfront which has been restored to excellent condition. Inside is well lit, open, clean and organised, a very noticeable contrast to the surroundings.

The museum was originally constructed as a general store after the fire in 1900 and was the only brick building ever built in Sandon. It served this purpose for many years but the store eventually closed and it was used to house internees during World War II and as a bunkhouse and then a warehouse after the war.

By 1990 it was in a bad state of disrepair and only survived because it was donated by the mining company that owned it and designated as a historical monument in 1991. The Sandon Historical Society has since done extensive restoration work and the interior of the old store has been gutted and refurbished and a mezzanine level constructed at the back.

It now houses a comprehensive collection of artefacts, photographs and information detailing the fascinating story of the meteoric rise and slow demise of Sandon, and what life was like for the people who lived and worked here. Glimpses of the expected and the unexpected abound. Hard work in the mines and hard play in the bars and the extensive red light district are well documented, as well as social and sporting activities, even skiing!

I suppose one could complain that more government money could have been forthcoming to complete more restoration work in Sandon, or that the scrap and rubbish lying around could be cleaned up a bit, or that the trolley bus collection is out of place, but perhaps turning Sandon into a slick tourist attraction would rather detract from the fascination and the sense of this whole little valley as a remnant of the past.



Photography Richard Reynoldson

Perspective on volunteering

Patrick Robertson

The NLA has more than 2000 individual manuscript collections. A collection may range from several items to over 34,000. Items include letters, photographs, posters, paintings, medals, coins, stamps, drawings, maps, music, books and more. Over the past seven years, my work of preparing detailed descriptions of the content of individual collections has related to only 30 of the total. Nevertheless, this small portion has disclosed many amusing and unexpected items and facts.

Among the oldest items are two silver Corinthian staters (coins) in the EA Crome Collection³. Corinth was one of the earliest Greek city-states to strike coins in silver, starting around the 7th century BCE⁴. Coins were distinguished by value, but also by the image on the obverse. In the case of our coins, the obverse image is Pegasus, the Flying Horse, hence they were commonly known as colts or ponies, *poloi* in Greek. As coins were not dated until the 4th century BCE, dating is achieved by reference to symbols and other indicators incused or stamped on them during manufacture. The letter K (*kappa*) is stamped under the girth of Pegasus. The spelling of Corinth originally began with the letter Q (*koppa*), but was changed to K in the 5th century BCE. The appearance of the letter K on this coin indicates the later spelling, giving an approximate manufacturing date of 400 BCE or later. In about 415 BCE, additional small legends and symbols were added to the reverse of coins. The purpose of such symbols has never been clear, scholars suggest they

may indicate the place where the coin was struck, by whose authority and by which particular engraver. On the reverse of our coin around the helmet of Athena, we have the Greek letter Λ or L (*lambda*). The *lambda* refers to Leukas Island, a Corinthian colony in the Ionian Sea, from 500 BCE to 250 BCE. Also, at the back of the helmet is a symbol in the shape of a shallow cup with seven strands of grapes. This is known as a *rhyton*⁵ or libation cup which was used to pour wine during religious rites. Above the *rhyton* are the letters ΦΠΑ (ph, n, a). Again, scholars lean towards them referring to the engraver and/or the minting authority. Finally, we have the letter 'F' (eff) which was also used for the number 6 and, as such, may refer to the year of someone's reign.



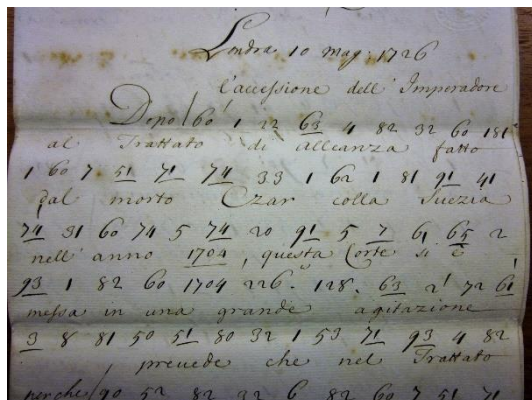
National Library of Australia, EA Crome Collection

³ Earnest Crome (1902–1987) predominantly collected aviation papers and memorabilia, aero-philatelic items, aviation objects relating to early pilots and historic flights and assorted three dimensional items more related to museum interest.

⁴ BCE =Before Common Era, a culturally neutral reference replacing BC (Before Christ).

⁵ A rhyton, or a pourer in English, is a shallow vessel with a wide mouth for scooping up wine or oil and a hole in the bottom from which the liquid was drunk or allowed to flow as for a libation. When filling the rhyton, the hole was covered by the thumb. They often were in the shape of a horn or animal's head.

We have now established that the coins were struck after the spelling of Corinth changed from a capital Q to a capital K in the 5th century BCE and before Leukas Island ceased being a Corinthian colony in 250 BCE. They are among the oldest items in the Library's collections. They weigh about nine grams each. What are they worth? We know that abundant numbers of Corinthian coins were struck, that they were used for trade with Greek colonies on Sicily and Italy where they were plentiful and that they were hoarded by the Greeks as insurance against looters. Some of these treasure troves are even being uncovered today. Although the Library's samples have not been formally valued, the evidence indicates they are not valuable in money terms. Their real value is in their beauty and their history.



National Library of Australia, The Townsend Manuscripts

In the Townsend Manuscripts of the Kashnor Collection⁶ on the Political Economy of Great Britain and Ireland (1650–1870) are 170 intercepted letters and reports written by ambassadors of European powers based in London between 1725 and 1750. These reports, which include confidential judgements about British military, economic and

political activities and ambitions, were matters of political and economic importance to the ambassadors' home countries and are now early evidence of British espionage. Once the ambassador had prepared his report in his native language, an expert in his office would convert the words into numbers based on a secret formula. Typically, the originals which the British secret agents intercepted were in such a numerical code. The British code breaker had to work out how to convert the report into its original language and then translate that into English. The final document was passed to Lord Townsend. Italian, German and Spanish examples are in the collection. This was a time of considerable tension between England and the major European powers and, in part, relates to Spanish, French and Papal support for the return of Bonnie Prince Charles to the British throne and the re-establishment of Catholicism to pre-eminence in Britain. What remains unclear is how the documents were intercepted.

Who was Australia's first licensed pilot? Not Ross Smith, nor Kingsford-Smith nor Bert Hinkler. The evidence is in the N Ellison Collection on Australian aviation. William Ewart Hart (1885-1943), a dentist from West Wyalong, bought a *Bristol Boxkite* in September 1911 and received his licence (Licence No. 1) three months later. Others, including Houdini, had flown in Australia before him but he was the first Australian to be licensed to fly and to fly considerable distances. In 1910 the first controlled flight in Australia by Harry Houdini at Diggers Rest, Victoria, was less than 5 km and lasted three and a half minutes. In 1911, in Victoria, Joseph Hammond flew 19 km. Later in November 1911, Hart flew 76 km from Penrith to Sydney in 55 minutes, an extraordinary distance compared with his rivals. In June 1912, he won the first official Australian air race when he defeated American AB Stone over 32 km from Botany to Parramatta Park. In 1912, Earnest Higgins, the cinematographer, flew 18 times with Hart

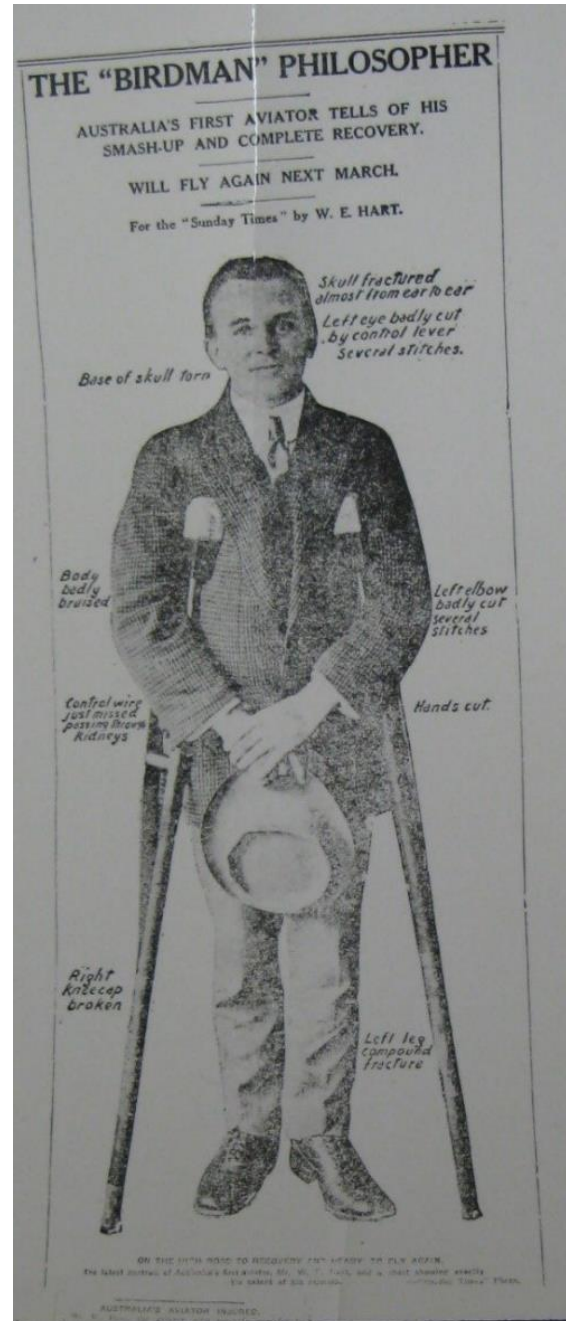
⁶ Leon Kashnor was a rare book collector and proprietor of the Museum Book Shop, London. The NLA purchased his collection of Political Economy of Great Britain and Ireland in 1953. The collection comprises nearly 13,000 books, manuscripts and pamphlets covering the period 1650–1870. The Townsend Manuscripts (1688–1753) deal primarily with the tax raisings of the British Treasury or Exchequer. As Secretary of State to the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole, Lord Townsend (1674–738) was responsible for directing foreign policy.



National Library of Australia, EA Crome Collection

and made three films of him: *Camera in the Clouds* (1912), *Among the Clouds with a Camera* (1912) and *Australia Calls* (1913). Hart also built aircraft and established the first Australian aviation training school in 1912. On 4 September 1912, he crashed in the Hawkesbury area and, due to the extent of his injuries (as displayed by the illustration from a Sydney newspaper), never flew again. He enlisted in 1916 and was an aviation instructor in Britain and Egypt in World War I. After medical discharge and rejection for service in World War II, he concentrated on dentistry where he distinguished himself by the introduction of a number of new theories into his practice. He was accorded a RAAF fly-past and salute at his funeral.

These are just a few examples that give testimony of the fascinating wealth of history and interest available to you at the National Library of Australia.



Graphic of Bill Hart's injuries by Bill Hart, The Sunday Times, Sydney, 8 December 1912, National Library of Australia, TROVE Digitised newspapers

Interview: endangered heritage

Interviewer: Kathryn Reynoldson

Victoria Pearce: snr textiles conservator

Andrew Pearce: snr objects conservator

Robyn Tait: snr book & paper conservator

Endangered Heritage, a Canberra based business run and owned by Victoria and Andrew Pearce, provides conservation services to a broad range of clients including museums, galleries, archives, libraries and the public. Their fully equipped laboratory enables the conservation of artwork, precious textiles, photographs as well as paper, wooden and metal artefacts.

PART ONE: Conservation basics

KATHRYN: How do you assess the value of objects? Whether it's worth investing into its preservation as part of a collection?

ROBYN: That's part of the significance statement that they have for the object justifying its significance.

KATHRYN: So you wouldn't say *value* you'd say *significance*.

ROBYN: If you're valuing something it means you're putting a dollar value on it.

KATHRYN: I see. Yes, that's very different.

ROBYN: It's a different thing. Obviously the dollar value of something has to be taken into consideration but if you're looking at two objects which are basically the same but one has been owned by a significant person associated with the development of the object and the other doesn't have any particular provenance, you know which one a museum will fork out for.

When you're looking at objects for a museum, not only do they need to have a historical context they also need accompanying documentation. That means diaries, letters, references, primary sources

of any sort. As well as that, the materials that make up the object must match the technology of the time. So, if you come across a painting that is purported to have been done in the 1880s and a conservator runs a UV [ultraviolet] light or an IR [infrared] light over it and titanium white pops up—a pigment created in the 1920s—you're already dealing with a problematic object. The materials that make up an object have to be consistent with the time period that you're talking about, everything has to add up.

VICTORIA: And for that reason we may actually choose to use materials that are actually *not* consistent so that our work will always be identifiable. For example, when Andrew's working on an object that, say, was adhered together with animal skin glue, he has to decide which glue to use to make the repair. If he uses acrylic it is easy to recognise, it's obviously a new addition.

KATHRYN: Right, so conservation has to be identifiable as well as reversible?

VICTORIA: Yes, we're not trying to make fakes, we're always trying to make decisions that inform, under examination, the next person. Very different to restoration. Halleluiah, I'm freezing!

KATHRYN: I didn't realize there was that differentiation, you'd need to think about the best solution for the object as well as the visibility and traceability of what you've done.

VICTORIA: And a large part of what we do is removing bad restorations and bad jobs that have damaged the original, even defaced it. Robyn gets a fair amount of stuff in the paper area that has been *tampered* with.

PART TWO: Tea added

KATHRYN: I know you said you don't have favourites but is there work that you feel really proud of?

VICTORIA: Oh yeah, but it's often unexpected. For example, Andrew's just completed a job on an ivory piece that was almost... well look, the client understood that what we were proposing may not even be possible. It was so delicate. And he's managed to pull it off. He's managed to pull it off in budget and he's managed to pull it off in time and you just think, yep, king of the lab. Let's bring it out.

KATHRYN: It must be Chinese.

VICTORIA: See if you can find where the damage is. You're actually looking right at it. So it doesn't need turning around.

KATHRYN: It must have been the fishing rod, even though I can't see it, it looks like the most delicate thing on there.

VICTORIA: Very good.

ANDREW: From there, you can see the colour change.

KATHRYN: I didn't even see that.

ANDREW: So this piece is original, this piece is original, and the section in between is brand new.

KATHRYN: Wow. So, what have you used, what material? It couldn't have been ivory, so some kind of plastic or —

ANDREW: Yeah, it's a special kind of conservation grade putty. With a stainless steel core through the middle of it. Because, of course, in order to get this to fit together you need to drill a hole into here to take the pin.

KATHRYN: That's microscopic, and a big risk isn't it. Did you have a picture of how it used to look?

VICTORIA: No. So we don't want to create a fake but without doing some interpretation, the ascetic and the skill imbued in the object could not be appreciated. Although, we did know the height of the rod from where the knot is on the nylon fishing line.

KATHRYN: That's a challenge.

VICTORIA: It's an example where Andrew's put in a section. And it would have been a lot easier not to have drilled that top piece, but it would have meant leaving out some of the original. *That's not on.*

KATHRYN: So you make the best effort to keep all the original pieces.

VICTORIA: If we've got it we've gotta use it, it's part of the object. And, in fact, there's a distinctive colour difference for that reason.

KATHRYN: Ah, that's the only clue isn't it?

VICTORIA: Until you know, you wouldn't know. The colour difference isn't so marked that it stands out to you but if you're reading a report and there's a slight colour difference, you'd know what's original.

KATHRYN: It's real ivory. What's the story behind it?

VICTORIA: It's a single piece of carved ivory, the client and her husband brought back from Hong Kong 60 odd years ago, that got dropped. Years and years later the section in the middle was lost.

KATHRYN: So it's very special to them.

VICTORIA: And that's the thing with all our clients, each story is special, different from working in an institution, because it's

always personal. Actually, it's very important for us to understand the motivation and importance a client places on an object, so that we don't inadvertently cause damage. So if a teddy bear comes in and it's missing an eye, I always want know more before I put the eye back on because maybe it's always been 'one-eyed bear'. Soft toys are a really interesting example because you can do an awful lot of damage just cleaning a soft toy; the shape of the head or the expression on the face or anything can change and someone will say, *that's not my bear, what have you done to my bear?*

KATHRYN: Are bears a common item?

VICTORIA: We went through a spate of them, we got about six in about a month and a half and then we have had no more bears.

ANDREW: Bit of a run of dolls.

VICTORIA: I had a woman come in with a three dollar Mickey Mouse toy she wanted conserved. The stuffing in the toy was a polyurethane, which deteriorates quickly and will damage the object as it breaks down—it's that yellow-orange cushion foam.

ANDREW: Nasty yellow foam.

KATHRYN: That stuff. They put it in school chairs and things.

VICTORIA: Yeah, it becomes very acidic. So I explained that to conserve this I'd have to open up every seam, take out the stuffing, get archival quality stuffing and stitch up the seams again. This is going to be hours and hours of work on a three dollar mouse toy. She then told me it was her baby's, who had died of cot death. So it really doesn't matter that it's a three dollar Mickey Mouse toy because it's really not. It's as big as the whole world how important it is to get that job right. To make sure the seams go back and one arm's not

smaller than the other and that it's exactly right. It was a real privilege to be able to help her with that.

KATHRYN: And rewarding, I'm sure.

VICTORIA: We have an incredibly loyal clientele who, by the nature of the work and the questions that we ask, have divulged a lot and we're there for those very intimate things that maybe even their kids don't know because they haven't told them yet.

One woman had this hanky. And it was just an ordinary men's handkerchief that had a drawing of a geisha girl on it. She brought it in and said, *my dad's passed away and he gave me the hanky.* And I said, *did he draw this?* And she said, *no, no he was a prisoner of war in a Japanese camp. He was lined up, sitting on a wooden bench and the man sitting next to him was wiling away the time doing a drawing, on a hanky, while they waited to be executed.* When they took him away he handed the hanky to her dad. They then decided that that was enough for the day, the next day they were rescued by the allied forces.

KATHRYN: My god!

VICTORIA: And he kept the hanky. Didn't know who the bloke was, didn't know who drew it. Has a date, knows where the location was, so she wanted it conserved in the hope that she would then be able to find family. Someone out there had a dad or a brother or a son or someone who was a great drawer, who went to this prisoner of war camp and never came back. And she was absolutely determined to do the research to try and track them down.

KATHRYN: Incredible stories. What do you think is the saddest loss you've seen? Something that's just deteriorated beyond repair?

ANDREW: Some of the plastics and other industrial materials our profession is only

just beginning to understand how they deteriorate. For the ones that have already started to misbehave the research has been done. Like the polyurethane foam that Victoria was talking about before.

KATHRYN: Yep.

ANDREW: We know that cellulose nitrate and cellulose acetate, which are some of the very first plastics, also have problems as they age. And we know that the cheap PVC used in children's toys and plastic bags is a problem.

VICTORIA: We just had a Cameroon headdress come in, which was made of thousands of feathers tied onto sticks, the sticks had then been woven together. The people who had made it had used plastic bags, shopping bag strips, to tie the feathers to the timber and then weave it using bits of plastic of found materials in a very adaptive way. Tribal tradition using modern materials. Unfortunately they'd used the biodegradable plastic bags that are actually designed to break down into little dust particles. So once those feathers started to pop off, they were popping off everywhere. We call that 'inherent vice' which is difficult to work with because if I'd restitched them all, it would have been my headdress not the Cameroon one anymore.

KATHRYN: So even if you'd fixed it in the same way, you'd consider that beyond your remit?

VICTORIA: It's still not by their hand and I've hidden the evidence that it wasn't made like that the first time. I ended up having to adhere each feather to its stick so you could still see any remaining original stitch. It's really difficult when you know the whole object is literally going to fall apart because of what they chose to make it with.

KATHRYN: It must be difficult to decide how to proceed when you want to preserve

the original structure or the original intent of the object and conserve it as well.

VICTORIA: Sometimes it can be very challenging and especially for things that have what we refer to as inherent vice.

KATHRYN: So it's just going to continue to deteriorate?

VICTORIA: Well the plastic they selected to use is *designed* to break down. And you think, they've made this beautiful thing. It was beautiful. But it was not long for this world. We invited the owner in and told her that basically no matter what we did it's going to fall apart, we cannot stop it. *This is what you've got and it's going to take me 6–10 hours to stabilise it but it will only be temporary.* She actually wanted to go ahead with it anyway but there's got to be that informed consent.

With these examples the difference between restoration and conservation starts becoming quite glaring but, in terms of public education, as a profession we've been shocking. We've lived in the bowels of museums.

ANDREW: And I think that, Victoria may have already mentioned, if we've done our job well most of the time nobody knows we've done anything.

Contributors



Margaret Goode

Margaret Goode is a retired management consultant who volunteers at the National Library of Australia. She has been working with colleague volunteers rehousing and listing theatre programmes in the Australian ephemera collection.



Belinda Moxon

Belinda Moxon is an arts administrator living in Melbourne. She holds a Bachelor of Arts (Art History and Curatorship) (Hons) from the Australian National University and is currently undertaking postgraduate study in Creative Writing at the University of Melbourne.



Marcus Freeman

I grew up in broadcast television—TVNZ, ABC & SBS as public concerns and Channel 7, Optus TV and TVSN to name a few of the private companies. Now I find myself broadcasting material and content from the past to the future generations. I work as a moving image technician archiving film and video at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS).



Diane Reynoldson

Is a retired primary school teacher on a spiritual journey.



Lindy Ross

I am a retired primary school teacher and principal and am now, in this wonderful Third Age that opens up to retirees, enjoying the opportunity to follow my favourite pursuits and, indeed, develop many more! I've taken up guiding at the National Gallery of Australia, and the Australian War Memorial as well as working with the Friends of the NFSA, all opportunities which keep me involved with people and learning and great new experiences.



Richard Reynoldson

Is an aging white male who has been to Canada.



Patrick Robertson

As a volunteer at the National Library of Australia for sixteen years, my experience has varied from guiding, background research for exhibitions, verifying the draft text of volumes 3 and 4 of Donald Friend's diaries, writing blogs and articles, presentations and, currently, preparing finding aids of manuscript collections for researchers and scholars.



Kathryn Reynoldson

Is a researcher in the public service, museum lover and first time editor.