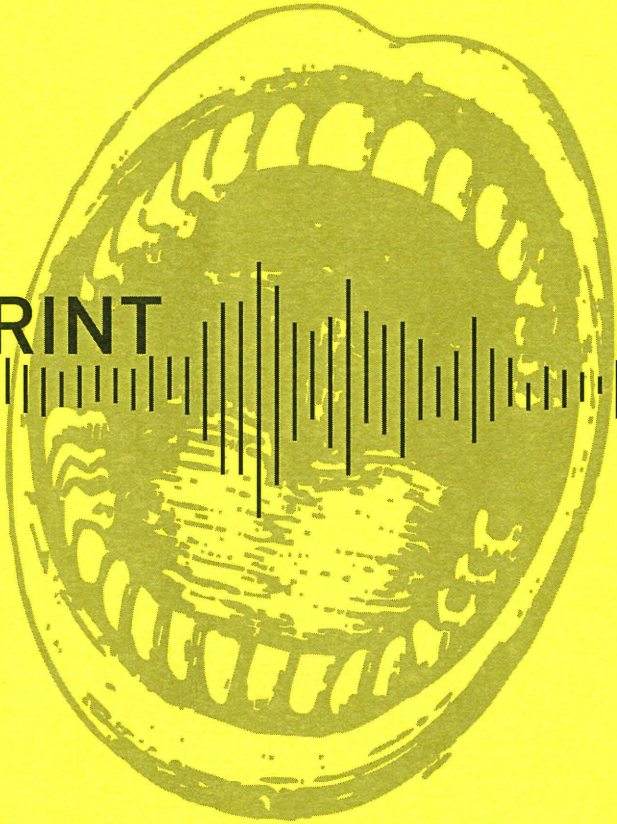


**Newsletter** of the New South Wales Branch  
of the Oral History Association of Australia



# VOICEPRINT

38

April 2008

# VOICEPRINT

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## Editorial



*In this edition we have included in full the citations for the Life Memberships awarded at the September OHAA conference. Very special congratulation to our own **Rosie Block!** Congratulations also to the other very worthy recipients from other States. Congratulations too, to Michael Clarke on being awarded the Hazel de Berg Award! Michael's acceptance speech told us much about his life so we have included it for your interest.*

*Thank you to all those members and supporters from the wider community, who have contributed to this edition of Voiceprint.*

*The OHAA wants to engage with members' work and publicise oral history projects. We would like to hear from you for the next edition of Voiceprint – just a short piece about your projects. It is always interesting to know what others in the profession are doing and perhaps to be able to connect with those sharing similar interests. Please do not wait to be asked or persuaded, we would be delighted if you would volunteer to contribute. Lots of contributions by mid July please – then your Editors will not have a panic attack over where the words are to come from!*

*Thank you, to Enzo Accadia from Coffs Harbour and Noelene Pullen, Baulkham Hills for articles about bringing their local oral history projects into the current digital age. Our committee member Margaret Park has once again supported us with her article about Harry Oldfield's experiences growing up in the Canberra area. Are others involved in similar projects – we would love to hear from you.*

*We know members are very keen to learn how to use new recording equipment that is now available and a morning has been arranged for June 21 – note the enclosed flyer.*

*Enjoy this edition of Voiceprint – think about, and write, something for the next issue. Look forward to meeting members at forthcoming oral history functions.*

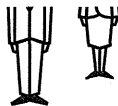
**Joyce Cribb**

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# Membership



## **New Members – September 2007 to January 2008**

It is always a pleasure to welcome new members – and particularly those who joined through the recent national OHAA conference in Brisbane in September. You all add such value to our endeavours and we hope to be useful to you too! Welcome!

Wendy Carlson	Heritage Consultant
Pamela Jones	Self-employed
Lenette Drury	Nurse
Gordon Bain	Artist
Fidelia Pontarolo	Executive Assistant
Emma Dortins	Interested in Oral History
Michelle Hudson	Librarian
Adele Wessell	Interested in Oral History
Christine Guster	National Film & Sound Archive
Rein Van de Ruit	Social Worker
Angela Bell	Retired Journalist
Christine Sanderson	Social Worker
J. Louise Alexander	Student
Maitland Regional Art Gallery	
This is my Story Pty Limited	

**Rosie Block, President OHAA NSW**



## The Hazel de Berg Award for Excellence in Oral History, 2007 Awarded to Michael Clarke

---

Michael Clarke commenced the Public Works Department's oral history program in 1991; he chaired the committee until retiring as Chief Engineer in 1992, and remained a member until 2000.

In 1994 he became manager of the Sydney Engineering Heritage Committee's Oral History Program. Amongst other things he employed an experienced administrative assistant, personally conducted some interviews, recruited and trained volunteer interviewers, and prepared objectives, policies, procedures and standard documentation for the Program. Summary biographies were later initiated to aid preparation of obituaries and entries in the Australian Dictionary of Biography.

He obtained a heritage assistance grant of \$9500 in 1996 to expedite progress, and he arranged for the master tapes, logs, biographies and related documents to be progressively donated to the State Library of NSW - they presently amount to 194 interviews. Since the Engineering Heritage Committee became a member of the Oral History Association of Australia in 1996, Michael has been its representative.

Michael freely provided all his procedures and guidelines to assist the Roads & Traffic Authority in establishing its successful oral history program, and also to Engineering Heritage Australia, when as Chair, he

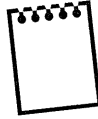


**Michael Clarke & Dianna Rich  
at the presentation**

established the National Engineering Oral History Program in 2001.

To stimulate oral history within the engineering profession Michael presented papers to engineering heritage conferences in 1996 and 2003.

Michael encouraged and advised the Monaro engineering group in its recording of the experiences of a group of 15 of the Snowy Mountains Authority's engineers as part of its 50th anniversary celebrations. He was also consultant to the BMC-Leyland Australia Heritage Group on an oral history program about former employees of the company and the Zetland works. The tapes of both projects have been included in the engineers collection lodged with the State Library of NSW.



Michael conceived the OHAA publication *A Guide to Commissioning Oral History Projects*, which with his 'Voiceprint' article *Tendering for Oral History*, is a valuable and useful reference. He also prepared the proposal and procedures for the establishment of the Hazel de Berg Award.

Michael's volunteer efforts have contributed significantly to the conduct of oral history within the engineering profession and have provided guidance for both oral historians and those wishing to engage their services.

**Rosemary Block, National President**

## Acceptance Speech from Michael Clarke

---

This award has a deeper meaning for me than it might appear, and so I would like to take a few minutes to tell you about it.

It is the closing of a circle. My knowledge of Hazel de Berg came over many years, and then when I started preparing a history of my family about 8 years ago, I recognised that it was Hazel who did an oral history interview with my father in 1977, when he was 79 and in a nursing home.

The tapes and the transcript of that have been invaluable in writing down the story. And so through Hazel we have an account of my parent's life. In 1923 six weeks after they married, they sailed as missionaries to Western Samoa; Mum being 23 and Dad 25.

The story augments the 430 letters that I have transcribed, mainly my mother's, and the combined material tells of the medical help they gave the Samoans and the ground-breaking advances in health practice they introduced; their friendship with the pioneer documentary film makers Robert and Francis Flaherty who were making *Moana* at the time; of staying in Robert Louis Stevenson's old home *Vailima*, which had become Government House, where Mum convalesced after the birth of her eldest child — one of Dad's proudest boasts was that he read Stevenson's Vailima Letters in the same room in which he wrote them; and of their return home because of mother's deteriorating health after the birth of her second child. During that voyage they were hopelessly seasick in a most violent storm. Margaret Mead recalled this in her biography *Blackberry Winter* where she says:

*... passengers went down like ninepins, deathly ill ... including a miserable, undernourished missionary couple from Western Samoa, who had a two year old child and a tiny baby. A woman of doubtful reputation, who had brightly dyed hair, shared the care of the baby with her assorted men friends. I took charge of the two year old, who spoke no English.*

That two year old (my elder brother) is now 83.

## Nuts and Bolts (cont...)

Back in Australia they served at Narrandera and Morpeth in the height of the depression. In Narrandera they were friends with Father Hartigan aka John O'Brien of *Round the Boree Log* fame, and at Morpeth the church was so poor they could not pay the stipend, so the family (now four children), lived substantially on handouts and vegetables provided by the farmers.

They both served in the war and at one point my father, my mother and my elder brother were all overseas at the one time – Dad in Merauke, Dutch New Guinea on a chaplaincy visit out of Townsville; Mum in Noumea, New Caledonia as House Mother at an American service women's hostel; and Ian with the AIF in northern New Guinea.

In essence, through Hazel we have my father's story of growing up in an English country village, serving in France in World War 1, missionary life in the early 1920s, life as a minister during the depression, chaplaincy during the war and a clergyman's life afterwards.

And now to the oral history collection of The Institution of Engineers; in it we have the voices and stories of many eminent engineers and important figures in the development of our Nation. They include:

The late Arthur Bishop whose steering mechanisms are now used on most vehicles throughout the world;

The late Bill Bradfield, the great man's son and an eminent airport engineer in his own right;

The late Emeritus Professor Jack Cowan, Foundation Professor of Architectural Science at Sydney University and a remarkable academic;

Corbet Gore, of whom it has been said, 'For sheer skill, coupled with an ability to manage people and for getting the Opera House shells built, he deserves all the credit'.

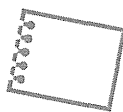
Alex Wargon, the engineer designer of Sydney Tower and initiator of the Sydney Harbour Tunnel; and

The late Neville Whiffen, a distinguished Chemical Engineer who, amongst other things, was given the US Medal of Freedom for his work on the impact of the tropics on military equipment, and who was rapporteur at the United Nations Conference for the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy.

Those are just a few; and as you have heard, many of them have since died. It is always too late to start oral history, but it is never too early!

There are also interviews with 15 eminent engineers that worked on the Snowy Scheme and the interviews that record the history of the BMC-Leyland car





manufacturing plant in Sydney. These sorts of collections are invaluable to our history, to understanding where we have come from and our place in the world, and to recording the stories of the people to whom we owe so much.

I'm sure you will agree that acting as a Boswell to these latter day Johnsons – the giants of our age, and recording their lives and achievements, is at the same time, a most uplifting, humbling and rewarding experience. Of course the work is never finished.

This award is for all who devote themselves to that most important task; and to Hazel de Berg we give thanks for showing us the way!

Finally I must thank and make special mention of Sarah Szacsvey who has been such a dedicated, efficient, energetic and intelligent assistant in the management of the Engineering Oral History Program; without her help we wouldn't have been able to achieve nearly as much.

**Michael Clarke, 28 September 2007**

## OHAA Life Membership Awards

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*At the OHAA Biennial Conference 2007, seven Life Memberships were awarded. Congratulations to our new Life Members.*

## Citation for Honorary Life Membership of the Oral History Association of Australia for Rosemary Block

---

For the last decade and beyond, Rosemary Block has been the President of the OHAA. With enthusiasm, imagination, wit and determination she has provided the leadership that has seen the Association and oral history more broadly take on new challenges, grow and diversify. And, importantly, her dedication and achievements have come from a deeply felt belief in the value of oral history, in the importance of engaging people with the past, and from her amazingly rich and varied experience in working with cultural institutions and their supporters.

Born in Pretoria, South Africa, Rosemary completed a university education, qualified as a high school teacher, began teaching and then left that profession to become immersed in the pleasures and discoveries of the antiquarian book world. She became a partner in Thorold's, Africana and rare book dealers and, for fifteen years, the business benefited from her delight in the pages from the past and from her visionary business acumen.

In 1978 Rosemary, with husband Julian and their family, migrated to Australia. Her Australian work life, not surprisingly, began with antiquarian booksellers, Berkelouws and Tim and Anne McCormick in Sydney. Her love of books led her to support the

## Nuts and Bolts (cont...)



**Life Members from left to right: Margaret Hamilton, Francis Good, Lesley Jenkins, Sue Pechey & Rosemary Block – photo by Suzanne Mulligan)**

State Library of New South Wales and, from 1983 to 1990, she was the founding director of The Library Society, the friends' group at the State Library.

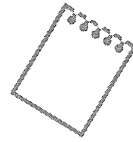
Rosemary then decided to get formal qualifications to match her deep experience in the world of books and libraries.

In 1990 she was awarded a Graduate Diploma in Archives Administration from the University of New South Wales and, indicative of her abilities, she was the recipient of the inaugural Melvin Weinstock Award.

It was during this period that Rosemary also acquired her love of, and work for, the world of oral history. The past was not just captured in print. It was to be

heard, experienced and archived in sound. Margaret Hamilton remembers 'Rosie has been an avid archivist and I first met her at an early ASA (Australian Society of Archivists) meeting in Sydney.' Janis Wilton recalls, 'My first contact with Rosie was when she set out to identify and document oral history collections and projects. Exuberant, friendly and engaged phone calls around the state produced a first directory of New South Wales oral history work and obviously assisted the case for the creation of a formal oral history position at the State Library.'

In 1991, Rosemary took up her post as the inaugural Curator of Oral History at the State Library of New South Wales. It is a position that she continues to occupy and from which she has managed to promote



and further the collection of oral history in the state. Under Rosemary's keen and sensitive ear, the collections at the State Library have grown. You can now visit the collection and listen to memories shared about, for example, the building of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the experiences of members of the Communist Party of Australia, the work of a variety of people engaged in maritime industries, the migrant experiences of Australians from non-English-speaking backgrounds, and a variety of corporate industries. And, as a regular contributor to the OHAA Journal, Rosemary has written about many of these collections, the issues they raise, the insights they bring.

Rosemary has also been actively engaged in providing workshops for community groups across the state. She has travelled to Bega, Broken Hill, Morpeth, Eden, Muswellbrook and many, many other towns and localities wanting to capture the sounds of their pasts. Her workshops resonate and inspire, and regional workshops have been mirrored by the regular workshops held at the State Library where invited oral history practitioners join her to share their experiences and expertise.

Rosemary's work at the State Library has been complemented and enhanced by her dedication to, and work for, the OHAA at both state and national levels. She has been President of the NSW branch since 1993. She also took on the Presidency of

the OHAA in 1993 to 1997 and again, from 1999 to 2007. The tradition of the national executive rotating around the states had broken down, and when the Tasmanian branch was unable to take its turn Jill Cassidy recalls that, 'Rosie immediately stood up and said that she would be happy to resume the role for another two years — and then continued to do so at each BGM thereafter ... As President, she has presided over a very smooth running of the association and kept her eye on everything, and she has always been willing to help out if the states needed assistance'. And, as Lesley Alves warmly observes, 'Rosie has always been generous in providing advice and support on matters relating to oral history when asked'.

Above and beyond her efficient and thoughtful oversight of the organisational and financial management of the national body, Rosemary's work for OHAA has included organising the eighth biennial OHAA conference in 1993 at the State Library in Sydney and then, in 2006, co-convened the 14th International Oral History conference in Sydney — the first time that it had been situated in the southern hemisphere. The financial, intellectual, social, and emotional success of the conference was largely due to Rosemary's wizardry, good humour and ability to keep all on track.

Rosemary also played a significant role in seeing the establishment of the Hazel de Berg Award for Excellence in Oral History.

## Nuts and Bolts (cont...)

Recognition of Rosemary's skills and standing in the oral history world have included her engagement as an interviewer for Stephen Spielberg's Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation; her role as an adjunct lecturer in the School of Information, Library and Archive Studies at the University of New South Wales for an elective course on oral history; and her appointment as an external examiner for masters and doctoral theses.

Through all this, Rosemary has managed to present a paper at every oral history conference she has attended. And for Beth Robertson it is Rosemary's voice that epitomises her gift to the OHAA. 'Her unmistakeable accent and her vocabulary, that is at once erudite and endearing, have never failed to cheer and charm me over the years. "Dear heart," she says, "I truly do not wish to nag ..." as she persuades us to match her commitment to the cause.'

It is fitting that, as Rosemary steps down from her fruitful and greatly appreciated role as President of the OHAA, the Association should bestow on her an Honorary Life Membership. Rosemary's contribution to OHAA — and to oral history more broadly — has been and, we are sure will continue to be, outstanding.

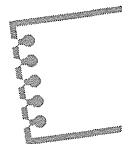
**Jill Cassidy (Vice President, OHAA),  
Lesley Alves, June Edwards,  
Berenice Evans, Francis Good,  
Margaret Hamilton, Helen Klaebe,  
Jan McCahon Marshall, Janis Wilton,  
Judy Wing (OHAA National  
Committee Members, 2007)**

## Citation for Honorary Life Membership of the Oral History Association of Australia for Francis Good

Francis Good's name has been synonymous with oral history in the Northern Territory for over 20 years. In that time he managed the Territory Government's oral history program and represented the interests of the Territory's oral history practitioners in the Oral History Association of Australia (OHAA).

Francis retired as Manager of the Oral History Unit in the Northern Territory Archives Service (NTAS) in October 2006. He had joined the Archives in 1985 from a background in radio and managing research projects. He introduced high standards in audio technology and sound recording and a professional approach to preservation and access services. He commissioned interviews for the Archives but also travelled widely both within the Territory and interstate to record life histories with Territorians. He assisted the work of local and visiting researchers as well as training and supporting community-based work among Aboriginal people.

Francis also saw the need for bigger projects and the common theme of surviving disaster soon emerged. The Territory had rebuilt its capital after the devastation of Cyclone Tracy in 1974. In 1987 the NTAS began a long-running



project to record experiences of the cyclone and its aftermath. In anticipation of veterans returning to the Territory in 1992 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the first Japanese bombing raids on Darwin, Francis prepared for an intensive, week-long program of interviews. Within months of the disastrous Katherine floods in 1998 Francis began a project of interviews to record the stories of disaster response by emergency services and public servants as well as the experiences of personal loss.

A high proportion of non-Indigenous people who have lived and worked in the Territory leave the Territory to retire or work elsewhere. The transience of the population not only complicated the management of the NTAS oral history program but also thwarted the establishment of a local branch of the OHAA. Instead, Territorians are attached to the South Australian Branch, and in 1988 Francis began contributing 'News from the Northern Territory' as a regular feature in the Branch newsletter *Word of Mouth*.

Francis has also been an integral part of the OHAA National Committee since 1991. One of Francis's strengths is his exacting eye for detail. He has brought this to the Association's Editorial Committee since 1994, the annual *OHAA Journal* since becoming Editor in 2004, and more recently as Webmaster of the Association's website. In 2006 he introduced the option

of peer review to *Journal* contributors; a development that could greatly enhance the standing of the publication. Francis has been a regular contributor to the Association's biennial conferences, speaking about NTAS's projects, collection management and developments in technology while rugged up against the springtime chill of the country's southern reaches.

In 1997 Francis brought the OHAA to the Northern Territory for the first time as co-convenor of the resoundingly successful *Crossing Borders* conference in Alice Springs. Several years in the planning, *Crossing Borders* drew over 250 registrations, twice as many as any previous biennial conference. Many Aboriginal people participated, thanks in no small part to Francis's standing in communities across the Territory.

It is with great pleasure that the South Australian Branch committee nominates Francis Good for life membership of the Oral History Association of Australia.

**June Edwards; President,  
South Australian Branch OHAA**

## Nuts and Bolts (cont...)

### Citation for Honorary Life Membership of the Oral History Association of Australia for Patricia Grimoldby

It gives me great pleasure to recommend Pat Grimoldby for Honorary Membership. Pat attended the first National Conference and Annual General Meeting held at the old Nedland's Teachers College 18-19 August 1979 and was an inaugural member of the Association.

Pat, as an anthropologist, did not immediately apply the knowledge gained from Oral History within the branch and it was not until 1998 that she nominated to be accepted on the committee and held that position until 2003. She has been a member of the Association for twenty three years.

Although Pat has never become an office bearer of the committee, she has been a tireless worker and prepared to undertake countless tasks. She stood in to take the minutes on numerous occasions when the secretary was not available. She has willingly and often spontaneously undertaken book reviews and is the most meticulous proof reader possible. Pat retired after a severe health problem at the end of 2004 but even in retirement is still assisting the newsletter editor, when requested, mainly with proof reading. Pat truly deserves this recognition by the Association.

**Western Australian Branch OHAA**

### Citation for Honorary Life Membership of the Oral History Association of Australia for Marolyn Hamilton

Marolyn Hamilton became a foundation member of the Oral History Association while she was living in Jarrahdale some 100 kilometres south of Perth. Once a week she would travel to Jean Teasdale's house in Perth to do typing for Jean and the Association. She attended Jean's University of Western Australia Extension Course for Oral History Interviewing Technique, which was a six week course one day per week.

Marolyn's husband died in 1982 and Marolyn moved to Perth to live in 1983. She held many positions for the WA Branch including Secretary 1992-1994, Newsletter editor 1994-1996, Membership Secretary 1996-1998 and Acting Secretary in 1998. She was Treasurer and treasurer membership secretary from 1998 until February 2001 and continued as a committee member until 2004. She was involved with the 1979 and 2002/3 National Conferences.

When Marolyn retired from the Committee in 2004 she continued to help by collecting and delivering Play Back for distribution. She is still contacted by members of the public for advice and in her efficient quiet way she attends to these requests without any fuss. We still have the pleasure of her company at General Meetings, Annual General Meetings and State Conferences.

**Western Australian Branch OHAA**





## Citation for Honorary Life Membership of the Oral History Association of Australia for Margaret Hamilton

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It gives the WA Branch Committee much pleasure to propose that Margaret Hamilton be accepted as an Honorary Member.

Margaret has been a mentor for many members of the Oral History Association both within Western Australia and in other states and territories of Australia. She became a member in the early days of the Association. She has served on the WA Branch Committee as Treasurer, Editor of Play Back and she became Branch President in 1998 until 2002.

She is very willing to share her knowledge regarding researching, recording and transcribing oral history interviews. She has been a committee member of the W.A. Branch and has successfully taken on the role of secretary, editor, president and conference convener. Margaret is always first to volunteer to write book reviews, organize functions and give physical and intellectual assistance at conferences and meetings. She is very good at finding interesting speakers and getting them to agree to talk at our conferences and general meetings. She took up the reins as trainer for Advanced Workshops and has now been able to pass this knowledge onto new members of the Committee.

She was a star in the video publication 'Capturing the past: an oral history workshop', which was launched in 1998. It was planned to be used by schools where oral history was being used. Margaret's contribution to the National Committee has been widely recognized, and she remains on the National Committee, assisting the State President from her well of corporate memory. In 2006 she agreed to represent Australia on the International Oral History Association committee which she is enjoying very much and looking forward to traveling to Mexico in 2008 to attend the International Conference.

### **Western Australian Branch OHAA**

## Citation for Honorary Life Membership of the Oral History Association of Australia for Sue Pechey

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Sue Pechey came to oral history by accident, an accident of marriage. In 1973 she married into a Yugoslavian family and started to learn their language, mostly from her husband and mother-in-law, Jozica. With the language came the family history and after a year or so, having arrived at some sort of fluency Sue wanted to put Jozica's stories down on paper, but found the task impossible. Speaking limited Slovene was one thing, but writing in Slovene, one of the most heavily inflected European languages, was out of the

## Nuts and Bolts (cont...)

question. Translating straight into English would have seriously interrupted the flow of Jozica's stories. So Sue started taping and then translating. The family teased her unmercifully, along the lines of 'Why are you talking to Mama? She exaggerates everything, you know.' But Sue was hooked.

Arriving back in Australia in the early 1980s, Sue picked up some of her former connections, including Marjorie Roe, then audio-visual librarian at University of Queensland, who lent her a cassette recorder and suggested people she might interview. Sue started by using the questionnaire developed by the bicentennial project, then being run by Louise Douglas. 'I had discovered oral history and felt comfortable with it immediately. I had sat through history classes in the early 60s, where Greenwood's notion of history was always a matter of Kings and captains of war and industry, and often wondered where all the real people were – now I had found access to their places in the warp and weft of history.'

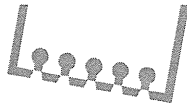
In the following thirty years Sue held many positions in the Queensland Branch committee, ran workshops all over the state, contributed to Branch publications, developed teaching materials and presented a paper at the American Oral History Conference. On the grounds that the best interviewing is often achieved

when interviewers are working amongst their own peer group, Sue's main interest now lies in skilling enthusiastic members of the community to undertake their own projects.

As a free lance practitioner, Sue has come in contact with an inspiring peer group including Marjorie Roe, Roberta Bonnin, Geoffrey Bolton, Niles Elvery, Lesley Jenkins and Suzanne Mulligan.

One of Sue's major works was an oral history of unemployment, done for the National Library and the Department of Education & Training in the mid-80s. This was an Australia-wide project, with Sue's team looking at unemployment in the southeast Queensland country towns of Gympie, Warwick and Crow's Nest. Sue was the team leader for four interviewers, four transcribers, and an office manager. The project involved a lot of travelling, and training of interviewers. Sue has often thought that a follow-up on a percentage of informants would be interesting.

Other highlights include interviews done in Augathella about 10 years ago when she lived in the town for about 10 days; a workshop run in April 2007 and then being present for the launch of one project that was helped on its way by that workshop – Don Watson's windmill project beside the Cobb & Co Museum in Toowoomba; working with nurses who had lived in at 'the Diam', at Princess Alexandra Hospital in Annerley conducting a workshop to help people learn how to do the interviews,



monitoring the transcript and then editing it into a coherent form and publishing the book.

In conferring Life Membership on Sue Pechey, we acknowledge her outstanding contribution to oral history through teaching best practice and mentoring many projects. We also recognise her efforts to try and gain greater recognition for the value of oral history in Queensland.

#### **Queensland Branch OHAA**

### Citation for Honorary Life Membership of the Oral History Association of Australia for Lesley Jenkins

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Lesley Jenkins is a consultant historian specialising in oral history. She completed a Bachelor of Arts majoring in history and radio at the University of Technology in Sydney. She has been working in NSW and Queensland on history, oral history and community publications and projects for 15 years. In 1997 she completed a Graduate Diploma in Arts (Applied History) at the University of Queensland. Lesley has also worked as a journalist, as a correspondent for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and in the museum sector as a curator and consultant oral historian. She has written and presented many papers for state, national and international oral history conferences.

In 1992 Lesley began an oral history project with members of the Italian community in Lismore. Nowhere else in New South Wales at that time was there any documentation of the growth and interaction of a non-English speaking community, let alone one where the final published work was fully translated. The elegant and informative book, *The power of the land/il potere della terra: a social history of Italian settlement in Lismore*, kept the faith both with her interviewees and with those who supported the project. Her work set a benchmark for successful oral history conducted in close consultation with a community.

A program based on Lesley's project and broadcast by the ABC in 1994 emphasised that there had been no mention of the Italian community in the recently published official history of that region. Later a play on the same topic was presented at the Adelaide Festival. Lesley also set up a permanent display at the New Italy Museum at Woodburn, again including interviewees from her Lismore project.

Lesley has published three books, numerous booklets and contributed content to many social history and arts based web sites. She has been actively involved in the Oral History Association of Australia since 1992 when she joined the NSW branch. She then transferred to Queensland when she moved there in 1994. She has held the roles of secretary and president of the Queensland branch of the Association and was instrumental in having the branch

## Nuts and Bolts (cont...)

incorporated. She has represented the association at intergovernmental meetings seeking greater acknowledgement of the role of the Branch and seeking greater support from the Queensland Government and the State Library.

Lesley's skill in oral history, particularly in the area of community history, is held in high regard. She shared her valuable experience in her excellent handbook, *Talking Together: A Guide to Community Oral History Projects*, Queensland 1999, which has sold well since its publication. She has conducted many oral history workshops which have raised funds for the Branch and educated many on oral history best practice.

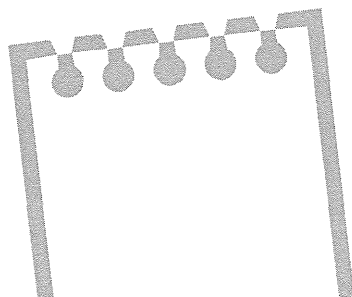
In 2002 Lesley successfully applied for funding for the Queensland State Conference and played a major role in its organisation. This very successful conference ensured the financial viability of the Branch. In 2004 she was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to further her knowledge of oral history and its applications, travelling around the world to learn the latest in oral history practice.

At the 2003 OHAA National Conference Lesley held a training workshop for independent oral history contractors. As a result of this she set up an on-line independent Consultants' Discussion List which attracts lively debate. Lesley has always pushed for 'best practice' in equipment and training in undertaking

oral history. When a member of the National Committee, Lesley made a valuable contribution including updating the Consultants Fees brochure and having it placed on the OHAA web site. She also initiated a valuable on-line service for independent oral historians where issue of common interest can be discussed. She formed the Special Interest group for independent oral historians begun at the international conference in Sydney in 2006.

In conferring Life Membership on Lesley Jenkins we acknowledge the long list of activities in which she has been involved or has initiated. This bears testimony to her being a conscientious, talented oral historian whose feeling for history and for the community results in fine collaboration with publishers, museums, exhibitions and heritage work.

### **Queensland Branch OHAA**



## RN's quiet achiever brought the past to life: A CERTAIN SCRIBE – *by Errol Simper*

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*(This article is copied courtesy of Play Back, Newsletter of the Western Australian Branch of OHAA. Play Back published with permission from News Ltd. The article was originally published in The Australian, 22 March 2007)*

Bill Bunbury is one of the most impressive radio historians you'd ever want to hear. Whether it's been Cyclone Tracy's venomous 1974 strike on Darwin, the 1966 granting of equal wages to Aboriginal stockmen or Australia's Vietnam War involvement, Bunbury has consistently woven Australia's short history into series after series of compelling documentaries. Most of his Hindsight (Sundays, 2pm, Radio National) presentations have added up to more than mere radio programs. They've laid a sophisticated, educative texture on to Australia's media landscape. Most who've heard the gently spoken, diligent Bunbury during his 22 years with the ABC's social history unit would probably agree the standard of his research and presentation has invariably eddied between the very good and the excellent.

It's a cliché to say all good things must come to an end. Aldous Huxley put it another way: 'Time Must Have a Stop'. However you put it, Bunbury's scholarly odyssey through Australia's past is down to its last few strides. His former collaborator, Jane Connors – now RN's manager – flew the Perth-based Bunbury to Sydney for an official March 15 (2007) farewell. It was preparatory to Bunbury leaving the ABC at the end of the month, after a total 37 years' service.

The bad thing is that Bunbury will leave a gap. The good things are that there'll continue to be a Hindsight – where Bunbury will be replaced by another well-regarded broadcaster, Tom Morton – and there's nothing sinister about Bunbury's departure. It hasn't been one of those unedifying backroom ABC assassinations. Bunbury, 66, told the scribe the other day: "I wanted to go while I was still doing good work. I think I've quit while I was, hopefully, still winning races. I think maybe some journalists retire too early. Perhaps some go on working too long. You try to pick the right time."

Bunbury's primary interest was oral history and he regarded his job as constructing a vehicle "through which people could tell their own dramas". He says he tried to perfect "the art of the self-sustaining narrative". Much of that narrative was remarkable. Over the years he's persuaded elderly Aborigines to draw on handed-down family and tribal memories to recall events from 19th century Aboriginal life.

## Nuts and Bolts (cont...)

He's found miners, soldiers, migrants, adventurers, engineers, wanderers, identities and Depression victims to provide poignant snapshots in time from early Townsville to the exploratory travels and travails of John McDouall Stuart, he of the Northern Territory's Stuart Highway. It's been a journey back through time which has won Bunbury numerous awards, not least a New York Radio Festival gold medal for Timber for Gold (about gold mining in Kalgoorlie) and a UN Australia Peace Prize for The War Rages On (about Australians in Vietnam).

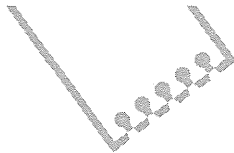
One radio narrative Bunbury hasn't broadcast, at least so far as the scribe is aware, is his own. It's a story of unlikely chance and serendipitous friendship. Bunbury was born in the picturesque Somerset (England) town of Glastonbury. Should you surmise history-rich Glastonbury (the burial place, according to legend, of King Arthur and Guinevere) to be some distance from Australian oral history, well, perhaps you're wrong. Bunbury's father, Jim, had been born in the West Australian town of Busselton, about 220km southwest of Perth. Jim had been sent, for family reasons, to England at the age of 11. He settled in Somerset and married an Englishwoman. But, like Tony Blair, he spoke often of his Australian youth.

So, aged 23, Bill Bunbury decided to have a look at his father's homeland. He worked on a WA cousin's farm before teaching primary school English in Guildford, a Perth suburb. One day an ABC television crew, led by Roger Penny - who died last year - turned up at the school to research a film about pastoral care. Bunbury tried to assist and became friendly with Penny. Largely through his Penny link he decided to forgo teaching to join the ABC's education unit. That was in May 1969. Sixteen years later the author, historian, raconteur and well-known ABC radio and television presenter, Tim Bowden, established an ABC social history unit and invited Bunbury to work for it.

In truth, Bunbury was already predisposed to accept Bowden's offer. While with the education unit he'd put together a film about a post-World War I migrant WA farmer, George Brenton, and had been all but bewildered by the volume of enthusiastic viewer response. History clearly had a potential audience out there and it'd afforded Bunbury a premature peak into his ideal media niche. Thus, encouraged and assisted by Kirsten Garrett (then a programmer laying the framework for what became RN) and Ros Cheney (then in charge of radio features), Bunbury began with a Hindsight predecessor entitled Talking History.

Bunbury hasn't, of course, done it on his own. He's grateful to many, not least to Connors (his longest serving executive





producer), to Bowden (and to Bowden's wife, Ros, another former Bunbury executive producer), and to more recent Hindsight executive producers such as the incumbent, Claudia Taranto, and Michelle Rayner. He's grateful, too, to RN: "It gives you the time you need to make good programs. We're lucky to have it."

The scribe happened to watch that documentary, *A History of the Paparazzi*, shown on ABC TV on March 8. He couldn't escape the unfortunate but recurrent thought that it was a pity some of the photographers involved couldn't have found something better to do. It's not a genre of media reflection that comes readily to mind when you're listening to Hindsight or its sister social history unit programs, *Verbatim* and *Street Stories*. If the paparazzi are at one end of the media spectrum, then RN is at the other. As Bunbury says, we're lucky to have it. We were fortunate, too, with Bunbury's contribution.



## Biennial OHAA Conference Brisbane, September 2007

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*The Queensland Committee have prepared the following report on the conference. Ed.*

We are now in the happy position to give some wrap-up information about the September 2007 Biennial OHAA Conference. We had a team of six people who worked hard for about fifteen months to get it off the ground; and then we were indeed blessed with 60 presenters of papers and workshops (some from as far away as Finland, Guam and New Zealand), all of whom were of exceptional quality; and then we had about 129 visitors, 95 for the whole conference and 34 who came for a single day – we thank you all.

We've had several messages of congratulations, one saying that it was the best conference the sender has ever been to – most gratifying at the end of what can only be described as a trying year. We failed to attract any grant money from the two bodies we approached (Arts Queensland and the Gaming Community Benefit Fund) – perhaps because I can't write funding applications, or maybe 'they' don't want to fund oral history conferences (take your pick) – I find funding applications just the pits and was constantly reminded

of a late 1960s poster looking forward to the day when childcare was well funded; and the air force had to hold a lamington drive to fund its bomber update.

The committee consisted of Suzanne Mulligan, the Queensland branch secretary, who really bore the brunt of the hard work – she is efficient, prompt and never loses her cool. Lena Volkova literally ran from one room to the other at times during the conference, making sure all the equipment worked well and Maxine Kendall kept her beady eyes on the finance. Jean Tremayne was present throughout the conference doing all the little things (like book sales, raffle tickets and other useful but unforeseen tasks).

Helen Klæbe put the program together and this drew the one serious criticism I have so far heard by having to create a third session on Saturday to fit everyone in – we thought a 4-day program would be enough time to have two competing sessions only, but were wrong. It is not unusual for conference to have three, or even more, competing attractions, and the only way to avoid this is to reject offers of papers or workshops. Since some of the potential presenters were not known to us, we didn't feel able to do this, and I cannot think of a paper we could have rejected to avoid three sessions.



Many of the committee missed hearing a lot of the conference and I look forward to reading the papers, either in the 2008 Journal or through emailing Suzanne Mulligan requesting copies of available papers. Some presentations will also be available on DVD and Suzanne will advise you about that when finalised.

*(The Queensland Committee has asked for feedback which could help with planning for the 2009 Conference. Their committee would greatly appreciate it if you could spare a few minutes to complete a feedback form. Contact the Secretary Suzanne Mulligan [mulligan@gil.com.au](mailto:mulligan@gil.com.au) if you have some thoughts – ideas to share. Ed)*

Throughout the year leading up to the conference, we felt the chilly wind of potential debt as there are so very many imponderables – we engaged a company to handle registration, but in retrospect feel that a competent spreadsheet would have served our purpose much less expensively. The venue was a huge plus, and we cannot praise Riverglenn too highly – their help in preparing us for the event was wonderful and their staff working throughout the conference were impeccable – friendly, professional and of a high standard – very good value indeed and I hope Brisbane visitors remember them if they are planning a similar event.

In the end we have covered all debts, repaid the national body for the \$2000 seeding funds and have a small profit, still not quite sure what that amount is, but the branch is resting its collective head easy – pity

about all the time I wasted writing those!!! funding applications!

We have a bundle of material to send on to Tasmania, who will host the next Conference, in 2009. I do think individual state branches could do more to help this biennial event along – particularly in the way of publicity in their own communities – perhaps we should try to build much closer ties with the ABC and SBS; we have so much in common with many of their programs that with a little encouragement at the national level, they could be much more amenable to helping us advertise this major event. We found contact with them like pulling teeth. During the one interview I managed to get on the local radio station the young interviewer expressed astonishment that a core profession of interviewers even existed – and ... ‘You’re paid for what you do?’

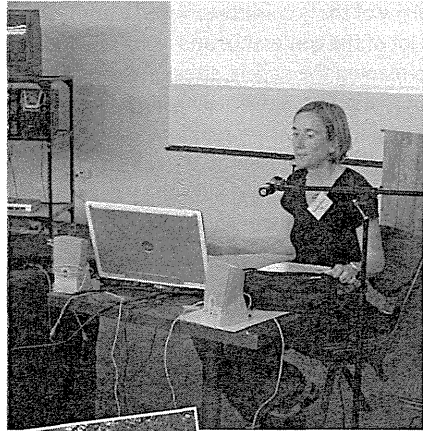
So thank you all for participating – for spending precious dollars, for travelling long distances, for speaking out, and for your friendly professional support.

The Conference needs to thank several firms who supported our Conference, among them Riverglenn Conference Centre, John Garnsworthy, Redland Shire Council, AW Faber Castell Pty Ltd (Brisbane office), Bic Australia (Brisbane office), The Pen Shoppe Pty Ltd, Brisbane, and Playback Theatre, Brisbane.

## Reports (cont...)

This is the second time I have been involved in organising the OHAA Biennial Conference and the last time I will speak as the Queensland Branch President. It has been a difficult but rewarding ride, the last 25 years or so, and I do so hope for much more institutional support for oral history in this State. But I have learned much, shared some wonderful memories with almost complete strangers, formed a few friendships and come in contact with some wonderful professional colleagues. Thank you.

**Sue Pechey**  
**Queensland Branch President**



Photos from top to bottom:  
Suzanne Gibson's audio workshop;  
A group of delegates on the Stradbroke Island excursion the day before the conference began;  
Bonny Barry MP officially opens conference with Sue Pechey Queensland President of OHAA  
*Photos by Suzanne Mulligan*

## Seminar: Oral History. 3 November 2007

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Not everybody could attend the international oral history conference in Sydney 2006 so we thought we might invite some of the presenters to participate in our regular seminars. We commenced this endeavour with Glynis Jones of the Powerhouse Museum. Her topic was *'Dressing from the Inside. Alternative and Subcultural Style in the Museum Collection'*.

Glynis, conservatively dressed herself, showed us amazing illustrations of 'alternative dressing'. She showed and described some of the interviews she conducted. It was an enthralling experience and a great insight into the museum and its collecting in this area. The full text of her Sydney conference paper can be found on the Sydney conference CD available from OHAA, NSW.

Christine Yeats of State Records then joined us straight from another meeting to tell us of the important project, **The Australian Women's Archives Project**, of which she is a NSW committee member. There are two parts to the project. An on-line Women's Register contains biographical information about Australian women and their organisations. The second, entitled **Accessing the memories of tomorrow'** identifies suitable collections of records and the project may contribute towards the costs of indexing these records. Christine

paid tribute to the role oral history plays and will play in creating these records. She demonstrated the website to us and described some of the organisations which have been included in the register. Their website is: [www.womenaustralia.info/](http://www.womenaustralia.info/) and theirs is an impressive list of sponsors for this very important task.

Then followed by popular request our digital sound recording gurus, Frank Heimans and Peter Rubinstein who offered a further demonstration of the intricacies of using digital recording equipment.



Please note: the flyer which accompanies this edition of *Voiceprint*. This offers a special morning, a hands-on session on digital recording and documenting oral history. (And, you may bring your own equipment to work with). SATURDAY 21 JUNE 2008 at the State Library of NSW. All your questions answered – and actual practice besides!

# Bringing Back Memories: an interview with Harry Oldfield – *by Margaret Park*

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*We were all born at home, and grandmother used to come and see that we all had the necessary toes and fingers to struggle along with...*

Harry Oldfield was born on 28 June 1912 at Athllon Homestead, Tuggeranong Valley (now the Canberra suburb of Gowrie). In the early 20th century, the area featured open scrub paddocks, dotted with homesteads, grasslands, and the occasional yellow box tree. It was a time when going to the hospital almost certainly meant you were deathly ill and a place to be avoided. Home births, such as Harry describes above, were commonplace.

Harry is one of six children – 5 boys and a girl. The homestead, destroyed in the bushfire which swept through the area in January 1952, is named after them. *Athllon* is an acronym for the Oldfield children. So the next time you drive along Athllon Drive, spare a thought for an important aspect of Canberra's history – its rural legacy and that of a struggling pioneer family – and see if you can remember that:

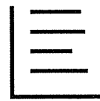
A = Alf, T = Ted, H = Harry, L = Les, L = Lyle,  
O = Oldfield and N = Nancy.

Harry's father, Henry Thomas Oldfield, worked several jobs for the government as a boundary fencer and ranger and subsequently farmed his property on the Isabella Plains. It was tough, but this was a typical 'on the land' family at the turn of the 20th century working from sunrise to sundown, attending local schools by either riding your horse or walking for miles (often without shoes) and getting on with life in a pre-Canberra/national capital landscape.

Henry Oldfield married Martha Harmon, of another local family, from Majura. Henry and Martha worked for the Cunninghams of Tuggeranong Station until they secured a lease from the Commonwealth Government and took over the property then known as the 'Wanniassa Bull Paddock', which the Oldfields later named Athllon. This property is today cited as Gowrie, Block 228, Section 12 and is located behind the Gowrie Scout Hall, but was most likely situated on the adjacent oval. The Oldfields increased their original holding to approximately 680 hectares covering the suburbs of Wanniassa, Monash and Fadden.

A visit to the site opened up a flood of memories for Harry. I recorded two interviews with Harry equalling over





**Margaret interviewing Harry at the site of the Tuggeranong schoolhouse**

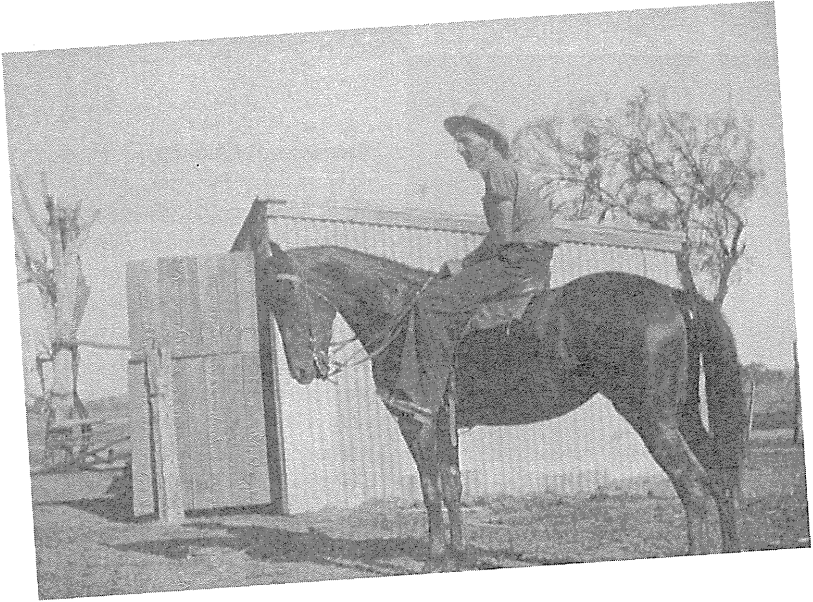
three hours of recording time. The first interview took place on 8 November 2006 at his home of over 60 years in Turner. The second interview was conducted on 24 November 2006 on the site of his former home (Athllon Homestead) and primary school – the Tuggeranong Schoolhouse – now in the suburb of Chisholm. During these interviews Harry talked about the old homestead, working on the property, growing up in a rural setting, going to school, the people and places he knew well, settling into a government house in Turner with his family, and the passing of time from the early 20th into the 21st century. These interviews were recorded for the ACT National Trust as part of the ACT Heritage Grant program. Apart from their intrinsic cultural heritage value – that of capturing a Canberran voice of the 20th century – the interviews will help form the basis of an interpretive signage to be erected on the site of the old homestead.

### **Growing up at Athllon**

At the time of the interview in November 2006, Harry was 94. While some of his later memories were clouded with age, his early long-term memory provided descriptive images of his early years living at Athllon Homestead and doing the chores around the property. Water, then as now, was a precious commodity. Carting water was one of his chores and Harry explains how they managed to transport their water supply from a nearby creek to the homestead so his family had fresh water to drink and use for washing and cooking.

*And one of the things that fascinated me was the means we had for carting water. There was this creek running quite close to home, and outdoor, quarter of a mile up, the creek was about... fifteen to sixteen feet deep, the wall of the creek. And about four feet from the floor of the creek there was an opening, about ... oh, it would be twelve [feet]... and out of this opening came a trickle of water. It was actually a little bit more than a trickle, it was sort of consistent, and it was a little bit bluey to look at, but it was cold, very cold, and it was delicious to drink... we built what you call a 'slide'. Now, this was made from two parallel limbs of a tree, and where the limbs run into a butt, the butt was cut off, then the limbs were trimmed underneath, flat – that was so it helped to glide across through the sand... Well, we fixed a forty-gallon cask on top of these two limbs, and just wired that down, and we hooked a horse onto the front portion... Well, then the horse would be up and away and we used to slide along. We*

## Articles (cont...)



Harry on his horse at Athllon

*used to stand on the back of these two legs, and we'd get up. And we had another forty-gallon cask, and we had a piece of tin shoved under where this water was coming out. We'd cut a hole in and shove the tin under, and then we'd put this barrel underneath it, and then we'd leave it there overnight, and we'd go up and this drum would be filled, and we'd take the old horse down. We had to cut a bit of the bank in to get him down – take him down. We'd bucket out of this cask into the other cask. And we had a hessian bag over the top of the cask, with a ring on top of it to stop the water from splashing out... It was a difficult to harness because that was the only way we could... the whole time I was there, it never, ever run out of water – never...*

### **The Tuggeranong Schoolhouse**

Harry, like many children of his era, walked a long distance to school and more often than not, walked barefoot. Harry spoke fondly of his school years, although he was sceptical about how much he learned at the time. However, his schooling did have an effect on Harry and it was his teacher, Mr. Francis McGee who left him with many lasting memories and words of wisdom. Mr. McGee was the longest serving teacher at Tuggeranong from 1898 to 1927. Apart from being a skilled teacher, it appears he was also a creative writer and poet. During the interview Harry related stories about Mr. McGee and his recollections revealed this piece composed by Mr. McGee about Bob the Postman. Harry's rendition didn't miss a beat!



*Six days a week on Tharwa Road,  
Our mailman you may see,  
His name? you ask; just call him 'Bob';  
It's Bob for brevity.*

*He drives along his old blue horse,  
And takes things leisurely,  
A trot, but just as good a trot,  
As much as you can see.*

*He's seldom late, yet spares his horse,  
Knows just what he can do,  
Knows that the time, the old horse does,  
Is done by very few.*

*His sulky is loaded up on high,  
With mail and bread and meat,  
And you would wonder how at all,  
The old chap finds a seat.  
But still he sticks them somewhere in,  
Like sardines in a tin.*

*Well, here's long life to Bob,  
The best mailman we ever knew,  
And may times hum and prosper,  
For himself and tough old Blue.*

When I asked Harry to describe Mr. McGee, he responded as if he saw him only yesterday –

*Well, the main thing, he used to smoke a pipe, and if you did something bad and was kept in after school, well, you always knew where to find him. You'd go around and sniff a bit and you could smell the smoke, and there Mr. McGee would be. He was a very lovely man... He was very thin – very thin*

*– and grey haired... and not very tall... very scholastic looking; and that's how he was. He was very quiet; everybody loved him except the time when he kept you in occasionally, just to show you he was boss.*

Harry's stories of attending the Tuggeranong Schoolhouse were lively and shed light on education in the first half of the 20th century. This was a time when children either walked, rode their bicycles or their horses to school and the talk of seeing such things as an airplane caused great amazement and delight, such as this recollection:

*[Mr. McGee] said to us one day, 'Boys and girls, if it's a nice day tomorrow you might have the opportunity to see the first aeroplane that flies from Sydney to Melbourne.'... Here we are almost in a direct line between Sydney and Melbourne.' So when the next day come we all come out, and we are all there, a few crows flew over and, 'Ah,' we said, 'no plane'. Anyway, a little after someone said, 'Did you hear that?' Sure enough, over it came and we seen it, and we couldn't believe it. And Mr. McGee said to us, 'When you children grow up you'll be travelling in one of those'; and we all said, 'No, never'. And he said to one of the girls, 'Myrtle,' he said, 'how would you like to be up there with him?' She said, 'Please, sir, Mr. McGee, I would rather be up there with him than up there without him.'*

*(Myrtle Edlington was the girl; she was one of Harry's neighbours, along with the Sullivans)*

## Articles (cont...)

### People and Places

The Oldfield family have extended roots in the ACT area stretching back over 160 years. Joseph Matthew Oldfield arrived in 1834 and worked as an assigned convict to James Wright of Lanyon. A bootmaker and station hand, he received his ticket of leave in 1842 and settled in the district raising a large family and beginning the Oldfield connection to the Canberra region. As a rural pioneering family it is no wonder that Harry's memories included many and varied stories about some prominent local residents and others less prominent but equally important in the local landscape.

Harry relates his memory of **Andrew Cunningham of Tuggeranong Homestead:**

*Well, I would have been no more than five or six. The one thing I can always remember – one of the first things – was when Andrew Cunningham came home from the war, they gave him a reception at the Tuggeranong Homestead, and I can distinctly remember him dancing with mum, and I thought, how lovely. He was a very ... he was too, he was a very, very special man, and he was dancing with my mum... I thought that was something beautiful. And when we went to school - he had a Minerva Car, it was, more or less, a sporting car, it was the only one around that I'd ever seen. And we used to hear him coming when we were at school*

*(and) we'd all race down the road, and we'd wave to him, and he'd 'toot' the horn, and go 'brrr-ing' away... It was exciting. And then later on – much later on in life – he had an aeroplane and he used to come down and land just across the paddock from home, he'd come and have a chat with us. He was a very, very beautiful person.*

Harry worked as a labourer around and about doing a variety of odd jobs from his early teens. He worked for a few weeks at **Hill Station for Henry Gullett** who resided there while he was writing Volume 7 of the Official History of World War I.

*Well, Sir Henry Gullett had a chappie there doing all the farm work – the two kids both had a horse each, looking after the horse and the cows and that. And he was going on holidays and he come and asked me if I'd go down and look after the show for him, and I said yeah, okay... I went overnight and I go down in the morning – they used to lock the calves in so they couldn't get at the cow to milk. I go over to milk them, so I am running all the cows up into the yard, and I thought, now, I don't know which calf belongs to which cow, but, I said, there's one way of finding out; I'll let one calf out, well, it's sure to know which one is its mum. Fair enough, I'll let the calf out and it will race to the cow. I sent the cow up, put it in the bail, and I'm milking away, and Sir Henry arrived; and he said, 'How did you know which calf belonged to which cow?' Well I said, 'I didn't know. I knew the calf would know which was her mum.' 'Well,' he said, 'I never thought of that.'*



*(laughs)... But I loved [that station] because they had these two horses, the girl had one and the boy had one, and I used to ride them round, they were beautiful animals... He was a very nice gentleman, very nice; and he got killed in a plane out here at Fairbairn.*

Dr Blackall was well known in the district and occasionally Harry had to visit the doctor in Queanbeyan. During one of these visits he demonstrates the inquisitive nature of the child:

*... at that particular time there was, to my knowledge, only two doctors in Queanbeyan, and one was our doctor – he was an Irish doctor; Dr Blackall was his name... I had a stomach ache or something, one day and my mum took me to Dr Blackall, and he said, (Harry uses an Irish accent) 'And poke out your tongue'. So I poked out my tongue... they had a little mixture ... used to mix stuff up in a bottle – there were no pills or anything – so he gave us this bottle of stuff. And when we come out I said to my mum, 'Why did the doctor look at my tongue?' I said, 'My tongue wasn't achin', it was me tummy.' And she just patted me on the head. (laughs)... The doctor had a horse and sulky, and if somebody needed him to come out – four o'clock in the morning – he'd have to go down and find his old horse and bring him up, and saddle him up, and away he'd go.*

While Harry didn't see the opening of Parliament House in May 1927, he did play his part. As a local lad with a father employed as a government ranger, he was often asked to fill in here and there and provide a variety of jobs to earn some pocket money. One such job brought him into contact with Colonel Ryrrie and perhaps made the plains in front of Parliament House pest free for a day:

*... the rabbits were in plague proportions, and they were trying to keep them inside one area. And when the Parliament was to be opened they knew there would be a lot of people travelling on that route, and they assumed that a lot would get out and open the gate and wouldn't bother closing it. So they asked some people connected with the Lands Department – asked Dad if a couple of his boys could go up there and sleep up there, and look after the gates. And that's what we did. And this night, it was – I don't know, about half past eight or nine o'clock – and I heard this car coming and I got up and opened the gate. And the car pulled up, and this bloke came over, and I found out after it was Colonel Ryrrie. And he handed me a ten shilling note, and he said, 'His Majesty asked me to present you with this', and he smiled, and I nodded to him. (laughs) That was worth a lot of money.*

The above quotes from the interview are only a snapshot of the life and work of Harry Oldfield. The words I have chosen

## Articles (cont...)

provide a glimpse into Harry's gift for storytelling. It is one of those interviews that begs to be listened to, as it not only captures memories of a distant past, which lives on in the Canberra we see today, but it also evokes a voice of that past which is a key to understanding the significance of recording someone who has journeyed through the 20th and 21st centuries.

To complete the picture, Harry recites another of Mr. McGee's poems and finishes with his thoughts on it:

*Whenever the sea breeze blows over,  
To greet me this side (of) the Divide,  
I believe I see fields of white clover,  
And sniff old Pacific's salt tide.*

*I'll never forget that, I thought it was  
something outstanding...*

Article reproduced courtesy of ACT Heritage Grant Program [x] [z] and *Heritage In Trust* – *Journal of the ACT National Trust*, Autumn 2007

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# Coffs Harbour 'Voice of Time' Oral History Digitisation Project – A digitisation project of Coffs Harbour City Library & Information Service



Photos reproduced with permission of Coffs Harbour Library

## Background

The 'Voice of Time' oral history project was produced as a Bicentennial project in Coffs Harbour between 1986-1987. \$82,000 in grants were used to complete the original project. 150 interviews were produced, totalling over 160 hours of audio. Material produced consisted of 2-track audio cassettes, interview summaries (most with photographs of the interviews) and topic indexes.

Three copies were made: master copy held by Coffs Harbour City Council; copy held by the Library, and another copy held by the Coffs Harbour Historical Museum. Unfortunately the master copy was lost, possibly in the Coffs Harbour town centre flooding in November 1996. The copies of

## Articles (cont...)

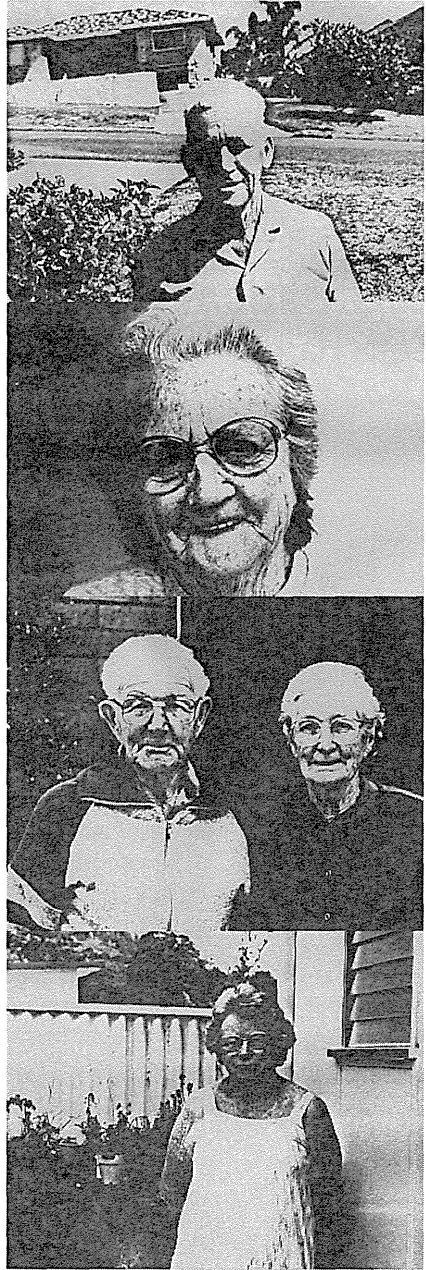
the original documents are of a reasonable quality except that all the photos are photocopies and have not reproduced very well. They have all since been scanned and added to the online database.

In establishing a Local Studies collection at the Library several years ago, it was decided to digitise the oral history collection for preservation purposes and to improve public access. Making the material accessible on the web was an early objective in regards to public access.

### Digitisation

The digitisation project began in 1999, with research conducted into current literature on the topic – in particular, what digital audio formats to use. In 1999, there wasn't a large amount of information published on the topic and there was a lack of consensus at the time on the best formats to choose. The best technical advice at the time came from the Oral History section at the National Library of Australia.

Volunteers were selected and began converting all of the interview summaries into standard Microsoft Word format. Converting the audio from analogue to digital would have to wait though, due to the costs involved – grants were sourced to fund this process. Audio digitisation began in 2001, on receiving \$1,500 in funding from the Royal Australian Historical Society.



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It was decided to convert the tapes to CD format, as this was so widely used and allowed for simple playback for anyone who had a CD player. 2 CD-format copies were to be made (one for public use within the library and the other as a master copy). The supplier was also contracted to insert tracks every few minutes to allow for quick navigation within the interview recording. Each track was also to be converted by the supplier into MP3 files and also copied onto to CD for future use on a web server for network access. The MP3 audio file format was chosen for web access due to its growing widespread popularity and because it is based on a quasi-Internet standard – MPEG (layer 3). In retrospect this turned out to be a very wise decision considering the huge use of this digital audio format nowadays!

Quotes were obtained from local sound studios to undertake the work and a supplier was selected. It was decided to use a local studio as it would make communication easier, provided for better security of original cassettes in-transit, and it supported the local community. Further funding to continue with the audio digitisation was received in Local Special Projects Grants from the Library Council of NSW; \$4,500 in 2002 and another \$4,500 in 2003. Audio digitisation was completed in 2004. This left making the material available online via the World Wide Web.

## Articles (cont...)



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### Web access

Three options for web access were originally considered:

- 1 Web-site using static web (HTML) pages.
- 2 Web-site using database-driven content (dynamic web pages).
- 3 Use existing Library Management System database (Web Catalogue) with some static web pages.

Option 3 was selected for the following reasons:

- Uses the existing Library Management System – Spydus (Civica Pty Ltd), no additional software or hardware required – immediate cost savings.
- Database-driven content based on library data structures with Web interface (public web catalogue).
- Web Catalogue interface is very effective.
- Can be reasonably customised – at a cost.
- Uses MARC record format for interview summaries, with extensive use of the note fields (5XX tags) for summary info.
- Allows for full keyword searching and the use of hypertext (web) linking of headings (eg. topic headings).
- Library staff were familiar with the system allowing for them to easily assist in data entry.

Converting the interview summaries into library catalogue records, linking them to selected MP3 audio snippets and accessioning all of the material was going to take considerable technical effort though.

The Library was successful in obtaining a Library Development Grant from the Library Council of NSW at the end of 2005 for \$10,500 to complete the project. The bulk of this funding was needed to pay part-time librarians to catalogue the interviews into our Library Management System and physically process the tapes and CDs. It also allowed for the Library's online catalogue to be customised and a special 'Oral History Database' search interface created. A portable CD player was also purchased for use within the Library.

Along with the online 'Oral History' catalogue that was created, a supporting web 'site' was also established with detailed information on the following:

- Introduction and fact-sheet
- Showcase samples
- Interviews list (list of participants – with direct links to the online catalogue)
- Topics (ie subject headings – also with direct links to the online catalogue)
- Audio access (how to)
- Disclaimer
- Copying
- Acknowledgements
- Web site: <http://library.coffsharbour.nsw.gov.au/voice-of-time>

### **Completion of the digitisation project**

The cataloguing work was completed by mid-2007 and the remaining 'odds and ends' completed in September 2007.

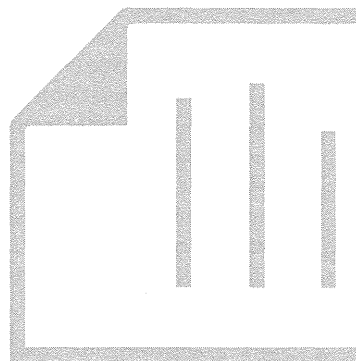
The material was made fully accessible to the community following its official launch by the Mayor of Coffs Harbour, Cr Keith Rhoades AFSM, on 20 Sep 07, during History Week.

### **Enzo Accadia, Digitisation Project Coordinator**

Library Team Leader, Electronic & Circulation Services Coffs Harbour City Library & Information Service

*[www.coffsharbour.nsw.gov.au/citylibrary](http://www.coffsharbour.nsw.gov.au/citylibrary)*

*Email: [enzo.accadia@chcc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:enzo.accadia@chcc.nsw.gov.au)*



## Hills Voices on Line

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In 2001, the International Year of the Volunteer, Baulkham Hills Shire Council initiated an oral history project entitled 'Volunteers: the Pride of our Shire'. The success of this program heralded an ongoing commitment to encapsulate the Shire's history through the stories and voices of the community.

Baulkham Hills Shire Library Service received a NSW State Library Development Grant in 2005, to capture and make accessible oral histories representing various aspects of the change and development of the Shire. As directed in Council's Cultural Plan 2005, ongoing funding of \$30,000 p.a. has been provided for Hills Voices Online until June 2010, and there are plans to record 15-20 interviews per year.

By March 2007, 30 vital oral histories had been professionally recorded. CDs are available for loan from our libraries at Baulkham Hills, Castle Hill, Carlingford and Dural. The people chosen embody a variety of life experience in the Shire and the recordings document transformations over the last 70 years, including recent development. Themes that have been identified and showcased include Changing Suburbs and Heritage Properties.

Hills Voices Online continues to evolve and is an ongoing integrated research project between Baulkham Hills Shire Council's

Cultural Development and Library Services departments. The continued growth of the project will see the gathering of further materials to highlight the Shire's heritage, exploring themes that may include the Rouse Hill Regional Centre, Aboriginal Stories, Business and Community Organisations, and Notable People. Further themes are to be explored.

The Hills Voices Online webpage: [www.baulkhamhills.nsw.gov.au/hillsvoces](http://www.baulkhamhills.nsw.gov.au/hillsvoces) has been created and uploaded to the Council website. It was launched on 15 March 2007, to coincide with The National Trust Heritage Festival, by the Mayor Councillor Tony Hay with keynote speaker Rosie Block, Curator of the Oral History Program State Library of NSW. The digitising of excerpts on our Council webpage ensures these oral histories can: –

- Be accessed worldwide
- Be searched by individual words and by phrases
- Be added to
- Last for thousands of years

The Hills Voices Online webpage is a unique product. There seems to be no other website where so much information can be simultaneously accessed. By February 2008 this unique webpage contained 3 virtual tours of Council's heritage properties Roughley House, Aberdoon House, and Balcombe Heights; over



270,000 words, 35 hours of audio, and 400 images embedded on the page in context. Text and accompanying photos can be keyword searched using individual words and phrases, thus providing a valuable information resource on the heritage of Baulkham Hills Shire that is accessible worldwide.

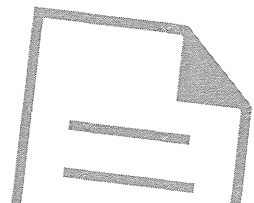
The project will continue to reflect changes and attitudes in the community, informing our future as we reflect on the past. By recording oral histories and placing excerpts on the internet, Hills Voices Online aims to raise the profile of the Shire and the self worth of its residents; indeed 'making for fuller human beings'.

**Noelene Pullen**

**Development Officer – Local Studies**

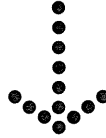
Baulkham Hills Shire Council Library Service  
email; npullen@bhsc.nsw.gov.au

**Left to right: Lynn Regan, Library Manager  
Baulkham Hills Shire Library Service,  
Mayor Tony Hay, Rosie Block Curator Oral History  
Program SLNSW, Noelene Pullen Development  
Officer-Local Studies at the launch of Hills Voices  
Online on 15 March 2007 at Castle Hill Library**





# Diary of Events



## **Australian Historical Association Biennial Conference – *Locating History*** **7-10 July 2008, Melbourne**

The past has spatial as well as temporal dimensions, and spatial metaphors shape the construction of history, whether through notions of frontier, homeland, territory, neighbourhood, land or country. The 2008 conference committee invites participants to make sense of place in history; to look for historical meaning and insight in unusual places; to situate the parameters of historical thought and practice; to critique the establishment and location of historical orthodoxies; to reflect on the context and purpose of the discipline; and to think geographically about the past

Please address enquires to [aha-info@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:aha-info@unimelb.edu.au)

<http://www.history.unimelb.edu.au/locatinghistory/index.html>

## **OHAA National Biennial Conference** **27 – 30 August 2009** **Launceston, Tasmania**

## **15th International Oral History Conference** ***Oral History – A Dialogue with our Times*** **September 23 - 26, 2008**

### **Guadalajara, Mexico**

[www.congresoioha2008.cucsh.udg.mx](http://www.congresoioha2008.cucsh.udg.mx)

Conducted by the International Oral History Association in collaboration with the University of Guadalajara and the Mexican Oral History Association (AMHO)

**Master Classes:** Several Master Classes and workshops on Oral History will be offered before the Conference by internationally renowned scholars and specialists in Oral History.

**Special Interest Groups:** Continuing the precedent set in Sydney, Special Interest Groups sessions will be scheduled so that participants can get to know one another, establish contacts and exchange resources and ideas.

### **Contacts**

If you have questions or would like advice from an IOHA Council member about a conference proposal, you may contact your regional representative as follows:

**Asia – Tomoyo Nakao**  
([tomoyopow@aol.com](mailto:tomoyopow@aol.com))

**Africa – Sean Field**  
([sean@humanities.uct.ac.za](mailto:sean@humanities.uct.ac.za))

**Europe – Rob Perks** ([rob.perks@bl.uk](mailto:rob.perks@bl.uk))

**Mexico – Ana Maria de la O Castellanos**  
([anadelao@cencar.udg.mx](mailto:anadelao@cencar.udg.mx))

**North America – Alexander Freund**  
([a.freund@uwinnipeg.ca](mailto:a.freund@uwinnipeg.ca))

**South America** – Marilda Menezes  
(marildamenezes@uol.com.br)

**Oceania** – Megan Hutching (megan.hutching@hotmail.com)

To contact the Conference organizers in Guadalajara, please email or write to:

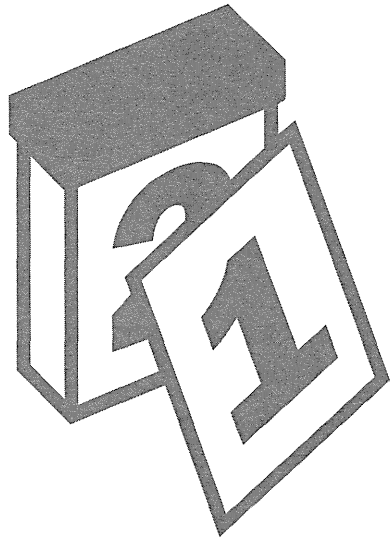
Maestra Ana María de la O Castellanos  
Email: iohacongress@csh.udg.mx  
Departamento de Historia  
Centro Universitario de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades  
Guanajuato # 1045  
Colonia Alcalde Barranquitas  
Guadalajara, Jalisco, México. C.P. 44260  
Phone Number/FAX (52) 33 38 19 33 79/74

**Committee Meeting Dates for 2008**

Members are encouraged and welcome to attend meetings held at the State Library at 5.30pm. Please meet at the Mitchell Wing vestibule at 5.25pm. (Staff will direct you if you miss the group) 22 April, 17 June, 19 August, 21 October, 18 November.

**Seminar Dates for 2008**

3 May, 27 July, 1 November.  
Special demonstration and practice with digital equipment – June 21



# Noticeboard



**Website** Oral History Association of Australia <[www.ohaa.net.au](http://www.ohaa.net.au)>

Do bookmark and visit this site from time to time to keep up to date with what is happening around Australia and especially for details and links to the International Conference.

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