

# Friends

NEWS | SPRING 2023



## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

I hope spring has sprung at your place.

The distribution method of the quarterly newsletter is changing: this issue is the last to be printed and posted to you. In future, we will email you a link to access the newsletter on the Friends page of the NLA website. The format will look the same and you can print the newsletter at home if you wish. Or you may wish to save issues to your PC/laptop. All issues will remain on the website. Software on the web display can provide a 'read aloud' capability.

Why has this decision been made? Your responses to the recent survey indicated that the newsletter is important and provides enjoyable reading about the Library and its collections. Electronic distribution will remove additional paper from your letterbox, simplify the Friends administrative procedures and remove the cost of printing and postage. These costs are the highest operational expense for the Friends each year.

Several outstanding events are coming up. In September, in conjunction with the Australian Garden History Society, we will welcome Dr Julian Raxworthy for a lecture based on his book *Overgrown: Practices between Landscape Architecture & Gardening*. Julian is Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Canberra. Our White Gloves event this year, in October, is themed 'Food and Drinks' and will feature items from the Library's collections. Our guest speaker will be renowned chef Janet Jeffs.

Thank you to members who have responded to our membership drive. Personal approaches are a wonderful way to enlist new members. I am sure the bonus bag of Friends merchandise will be enjoyed by both enlists and new members.

Please save the date of the Friends AGM—30 November. The 2024 Friends Committee will be elected at the meeting (nominations close 30 October). Consider nominating and become more involved with the Friends and supporting our National Library.

**Margaret Nichols** | Chair

## JAMES NORTHFIELD: CELEBRATED POSTER ARTIST

Publicity campaigns to promote Australia to the world as a premier tourist destination are nothing new. Australian States began to establish tourist bureaux from early in the twentieth century. In 1929 the Commonwealth Government formally entered the field when it formed the Australian National Travel Association (ANTA), later renamed the Australian National Publicity Association (ANPA). This lasted until 2001.

A key plank in the Association's marketing strategy was the commissioning of striking and beautiful posters of Australian scenes aimed at enticing overseas tourists. James Northfield (1887–1973) was prominent amongst the artists commissioned to design these posters. Around 1951, for example, he produced a set of six posters featuring various Australian scenes which were circulated throughout the world and were available for purchase in Australia.

The posters, heavily promoted by the Association in its *Walkabout* magazine, featured such iconic Australia tourist destinations as Sydney Harbour and the Great Barrier Reef. One of the six, 'Canberra, Australian Capital Territory', depicted the provisional Parliament House and several surrounding suburbs—view it online at [nla.obj-136443653](http://nla.obj-136443653).

This was not the first time that Northfield had produced a poster featuring the national capital. The 1930s were known as 'the Golden Age of poster design' with Northfield one of its most celebrated artists. Around 1933 he came to Canberra at the invitation of the Director of ANTA, Charles Holmes, to produce a poster depicting the city that



James Northfield, *Canberra, Federal Capital & Garden City, Australia*, [nla.gov.au/nla.obj-136809850](http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-136809850)

would be circulated ‘throughout the English speaking world’. Holmes was responding to a request from Charles Daley, civic administrator, Federal Capital Territory Branch of the Department of Home Affairs, for ways to promote Canberra as a tourist destination.

The poster, with the title ‘Canberra, Federal Capital and Garden City, Australia’, portrays the original suburb of Blandfordia 5 (now part of Griffith). Clearly in view is the Stokes Street intersection with Durville Crescent, as well as Arthur Circle and Bass Gardens. The scene is viewed from Red Hill (just south of the Red Hill restaurant carpark) looking towards Black Mountain and is framed by colonnades resembling those in the recently-erected Sydney and Melbourne Buildings in the civic centre.

The reference to Canberra as a ‘Garden City’ reflected Walter and Marion Mahony Griffins’ design for Canberra. Although construction of the young city had commenced only a few years earlier, its attractive garden city features were sufficiently developed to ground Northfield’s iconic poster.

In *James Northfield and the Art of Selling Australia* (2006), Michelle Hetherington writes that his travel posters were a perfect example of the ‘higher heroic realism’ identified by Julian Ashton as one of two major Australian art trends between the two world wars, the other being ‘a lesser, cosmopolitan and decorative trend’.

In an article on the *Brave New Words* website (27 May 2014), the linguistic anthropologist Piers Kelly wrote that Northfield’s poster ‘captures the early utopian vision for Canberra’ but in ‘a style that is more directly associated with European pre-war art and propaganda’. He considered that it exhibited traces ‘of Metropolis, German Expressionism and Italian Futurism except the vision that is being sold is of a civilised pastoral metropolis, as opposed to a dynamic techno-utopia’. He added, ‘this is still how Canberra is represented today: a “bush capital” marked out by imposing civil institutions’.

Isaac James Northfield was born near Inverleigh, Victoria, and commenced his working career as a lithographer. He set up his own studio in Melbourne in 1922 and was soon receiving commissions from ANTA and for many iconic products including clothing, beer, food, cars and cycles. He designed recruitment posters in the Second World War and for the 1956 Olympic Games among his many commissions and was chief director of studies at Melbourne’s Art Training Institute in the 1950s.

Later in his career, Northfield focused on oil painting, his works again reflecting his mastery of colour, light and atmosphere. Sadly, his death in 1973 went unnoticed in the national press, despite so many of his artistic achievements being recognisable in the public domain.

Northfield left a large body of work, many examples of which are held by the National Library. His work featured in the Library’s 1999 exhibition *Follow the Sun: Australian Travel Posters 1930s–1950s* and 2016–17 exhibition *The Sell*.

Copyright in Northfield’s works is held by the James Northfield Heritage Art Trust, the royalties from which fund an annual scholarship in lithography at the Australia Print Workshop in Melbourne.

**Gary Kent** | Friends Committee Deputy Chair

## OPERA IN AUSTRALIA: A SNAPSHOT

Among the designated international days that recognise cultures, the natural world, the arts and more is World Opera Day, 25 October. Launched in 2019 in Europe and America, it raises awareness of the social impact of opera in society. The date celebrates the birthdays of Georges Bizet and Johann Strauss II.

In Australia, opera has long been part of the arts. Our first opera was on 16 July 1796, a performance of *The Poor Soldier* by William Shield. It was staged in a theatre in The Rocks, opened by pardoned convict Robert Sidaway.

More opera followed, enjoyed across the social spectrum, but it was not until 1861 when Irish-born W.S. Lyster arrived in Melbourne from America that the ‘golden age of Australian opera’ began. In its first seven years, Lyster’s company performed 42 major operas! He opened with *Lucia di Lammermoor* and for the next 20 years was the colonies’ leading impresario. He toured to the colonial capitals and country Victoria. In 1877, he produced Wagnerian opera in Melbourne for the first time, opening with *Lohengrin*. Wagner, in reply to a letter from a Melbourne citizen telling him of the event, wrote ‘however remote your part of the world may be, continue to be so well-disposed towards Your most grateful servant, Richard Wagner’.

The J.C. Williamson company came to the fore late in the nineteenth century and then, in 1912, English impresario Thomas Quinlan brought his company to Australia. He committed to returning in 1913 to stage *Der Ring des Nibelunge*, Wagner’s full *Ring Cycle*, to mark the centenary of the composer’s birth if ‘1,000 [advance] subscribers could be found’. They were and the *Ring* as a whole was staged in Australia for the first time. It would be 85 years before the full cycle would again be staged—in Adelaide in 1998. And in 2004, the State Opera of South Australia staged the first ‘ground up’ production in Australia.

Australia has had a national opera company since 1956. The (now) Opera Australia’s extensive repertoire is performed in the Sydney Opera House and in other cities, towns and country locations. And the *Ring Cycle*? Opera Australia’s first performance was in Melbourne in 2013, 200 years after Wagner’s birth. Since the *Ring* was first performed in Bayreuth in 1876, there have been just four productions of the full *Ring* in Australia. Enthusiasts are fortunate this year—Melbourne Opera performed the *Ring* in Bendigo in March–April and Opera Australia has a new production, badged the ‘Pacific Ring’ looking to move away from the European aesthetics usually associated with Wagner, in Brisbane in December.

Search the Library’s catalogue to learn more on Australia’s opera history.

**Kerry Blackburn** | Friends Committee member, Newsletter editor

## TWO IMPORTANT DATES

**Monday 30 October 2023:** nominations close for election to the 2024 Friends Committee.

**Thursday 30 November 2023:** the Annual General Meeting to hear of our year’s activities and achievements and to elect the 2024 Friends Committee.

Check the Friends Weekly News or contact the Friends office at [friends@nla.gov.au](mailto:friends@nla.gov.au) or phone 02 6262 1698 for details.



## ROSEMARY DOBSON: A PORTRAIT AND A ROSE-COLOURED DRESS

The National Library holds a rich collection of material on acclaimed poet Rosemary Dobson AO—personal papers, books and essays by her and about her, portraits, photographs and audio recordings from her six-decade career and her life, 1920–1992.

Among the collection are two items that together tell a fascinating story. In the late 1940s, working in the editorial department of Angus & Robertson, Sydney, Dobson and her mother went looking for a special dress to wear to the company's annual ball. In her words:

In a small street in the city we almost fell into a shop window displaying one dress only. It was of rose-coloured taffeta, the bodice formed by overlapping petals. Wonderful ... [W]e felt we must have it.

Dobson and others were attired as befitted the occasion but artist Percy Lindsay, the oldest of the Lindsay brothers, was memorable for wearing white tennis shoes!

Dobson's poetry was being published in the *Bulletin*, leading to an enduring friendship with its literary editor Douglas Stewart and his wife, artist Margaret Coen. Through them, Dobson was persuaded to sit for Norman Lindsay as one of his Australian writers subjects. In his Bridge Street studio, during a lunch hour from Angus & Robertson, she sat for a drawing which has remained in her family.

A portrait in oils was then suggested and, encouraged by Coen and bringing in the silk taffeta evening dress, Lindsay painted the 1950 portrait with Dobson wearing the striking gown.

Lindsay gave the portrait to Dobson and it later hung in Dobson and her husband Alec Bolton's house for many years. How did the Library acquire the work? Dobson 'realised that none of my family really cared for it, my youngest son attributing my expression to the annoyance of someone who had just missed a bus' and expressed pleasure that it was bought by the Library in 1989.

And how did the dress join the portrait in the collection? Dobson generously donated the dress to the Library in 2004. However, first, she had taken it to a 'dependable dry cleaners' and the deep rose colour 'accentuated to the more definite red it now is'. She attributed the shade of red in Lindsay's portrait as due to his 'dramatic flair' and specifically requested that the colour of the dress be described as 'rose' in the Library's catalogue.

Intrigue surrounds another oil painting of Dobson by Lindsay. Dobson recalled that she was asked to sit again, this time in a pale dress, black lace gloves and a red hat—clothes not of her choice. The portrait was gifted to her and left in Lindsay's studio but could not be found after his death. Oddly, another Lindsay portrait of Dobson appeared online at a Smith & Singer auction in 2004 from the Estate of Mr Harry McPhee of Sydney but in this Dobson wears a lace trimmed black dress and no hat or gloves! Are there two other portraits and, if so, where are they now?

Nevertheless, the Library is indeed fortunate to have in its collection the Norman Lindsay portrait and the inspiration, Dobson's beautiful rose-coloured dress.

**Kerry Blackburn** | Friends Committee member, Newsletter editor



Top: Norman Lindsay, *Portrait of Rosemary Dobson*, 1950, [nla.gov.au/nla.obj-135568597](http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-135568597). Image courtesy Norman Lindsay Estate. Copyright A., C. and H. Glad

Above: H. Evans & Co, *Rosemary Dobson's Rose Coloured Dress*, 1940s, [nla.gov.au/nla.obj-149762883](http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-149762883)



## IN YOUR OWN TIME: ON-DEMAND LEARNING PROGRAMS

Not just for students or academics, learning is a pursuit that knows no limits of age or interest. The Library's Lifelong Learning Program is a free online resource for learners of any age who want to discover more about the Library and what we do, our collections, or take that next step on their research journey.

The Learning Program takes two forms: a Webinar or a Discovery Video. Webinars, presented live via Zoom, are hour-long sessions. Presented by subject matter experts, they cover specific research skills, resources or areas of the collection in depth. The live audience, via the Q&A function in Zoom, can ask questions of the presenters about the topic throughout the session.

Discovery Videos are a shorter 'Did you know?' look at the Library, our collections and work. Discovery Videos give the audience a 'what and why' of treasures and resources offered by the Library and share the 'how and where' to find out more.

Regardless of format, all Learning Program videos produced by the Library find their way to the Library's website and YouTube channel. Discovery Videos are released straight to YouTube while webinars are added after the live Q&A sessions. These playlists are a treasure trove of learning resources that can be accessed on-demand, for free. You don't even need to have a YouTube account!

Explore topics such as:

- Building art of the National Library of Australia
- Chinese–Australian family history
- Tracing the history of your house
- Early manuscript and rare book treasures
- Newspapers for family history research

To access the back catalogue of learning videos, visit the Library's Webinar Recordings and Learning Videos page—you can find this page on [nla.gov.au](http://nla.gov.au) by searching 'webinar' or via 'Learning' in the 'Using the Library' drop down menu. You can also visit [www.youtube.com/NationalLibraryofAustralia/playlists](http://www.youtube.com/NationalLibraryofAustralia/playlists) and find the 'Learning Webinars' playlist along with past events, Fellowship presentations, conversations with curators and more!

To learn more about upcoming webinars and how to register for the live sessions visit the Library's What's On page, social media and the Friends newsletter—of course.

**Aaron Minehan** | Program Manager, Education

## FRAMED! PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION WINNERS

Earlier this year the Friends hosted a smart phone photography workshop, facilitated by PhotoAccess and held in association with the Canberra & Region Heritage Festival.

Participants learned about some tricks and features found in those cameras we all carry around, and how to use them to take everyday photos to the next level. They were encouraged to be mindful about structure, composition and lighting, rather than relying on fancy filters. The workshop was immensely informative and entertaining, while being accessible to people with varying photographic and technical skills.

The practical component of the workshop was our *Friendly* photo competition—with the broad theme 'the National Library building'. Entrants were asked to stretch their creativity and submit an image of the external or internal public areas of the Library. Four entries were shortlisted and displayed in the Friends Lounge during May.



It was difficult to narrow down the shortlist to a winner and runner up, however, the winning image was snapped by Helen Stevens. 'In this work the photographer captures the beauty of Canberra in autumn, whilst highlighting the scale and design of the Library's building. The soft focus brings a painterly quality to the image,' said Dr Grace Blakeley-Carroll of the Library's curatorial

team, who kindly stepped in as our guest judge. Robert Shanks' image was selected by Grace as the runner up. 'With an intriguing composition, the photographer captures both the distinctive design elements in the Main Reading Room and the functional role it plays as a space for our readers, in one image.'



Congratulations to Helen and Robert and thank you to everyone who attended and entered the competition. In the words of our expert hosts from PhotoAccess, 'we are all artists'.

**Lauren Conron** | Friends Executive Officer

Top: winning entry – image by Helen Stevens

Above: runner up – image by Robert Shanks



## FOOD AND DRINKS WITH FRIENDS

A highlight of the Friends calendar is the annual White Gloves event. This year, we draw on the Library's eclectic collection of all things food-related. And we're delighted that our guest speaker will be passionate chef, farmer and mentor Janet Jeffs. Bookings open soon to join us on Thursday, 26 October.

Fancy a boiled leg of mutton with caper sauce for dinner? Compote of prunes and junket for dessert? These meals could be enjoyed at Petty's Hotel, Sydney, in 1935, and are just two offerings from the smorgasbord of Australian and international menus included in the Darryl Thompson Menu Collection.

While antique shopping in the mid-1970s, Thompson purchased a postcard-sized souvenir menu from a commemorative dinner held in Glenelg in 1898. He was inspired to delve into the archives at the State Library of South Australia in search of more details about the caterer noted on the menu. A chef and cookery teacher, Thompson went on to collect an astonishing array of material over the next 40 years, to illustrate the development of commercial dining and hospitality over the decades. The collection comprises 2,611 items dating from 1850 to 2014; and includes menus from domestic and overseas ships and airlines, official Government functions, special events, weddings, hotels and suburban takeaway shops.

Menus with handwritten wine-tasting notes are found in the Len Evans Wines dinner menus of the 1970s and 1980s, replete with faint splashes of wine and food on the paper. At a 1976 dinner, the 1954 McWilliams Richard Hermitage scored highly for colour, nose and palate. That particular vintage accompanied the cheese course, while various Rieslings were paired with natural oysters and fresh asparagus hollandaise.

Long lists of toasts are included in almost every special occasion menu, association annual dinner or function held in honour of an anniversary or a distinguished guest. At a 1938 luncheon to commemorate the sesquicentenary of the establishment of Parramatta, guests toasted His Majesty the King, the Mayor, the Pioneers, Agricultural Societies, the Wool Industry and the Meat Industry. The 1966 program from the President's Ball for the United States President and Mrs Lyndon B. Johnson, held at New York's Waldorf-Astoria Grand Ballroom, displays the official seal of the President on the cover, and inside lists details of the various musical performances.

Elaborately illustrated and bound menus are a feature in Thompson's Collection, with an abundance of gold braiding, ribbons and tassels. The menu cover from an 1897 banquet at Sydney Town Hall to celebrate the Federal Convention is rich in colour and in remarkably good condition. In a simpler design style, the 1960s aesthetics of the menu at Brennan's, New Orleans, features a proudly crowing, brightly striped rooster. There, the suggested 'eye-opener' to start your traditional Louisiana breakfast was a glass of absinthe—for only \$1.75! A bottle of Bollinger to wash down your breast of guinea hen chasseur would set you back \$22.

Menu footnotes can of course provide essential additional information to patrons. Many establishments in tourist hot spots will feature a map of the local area; one from the San Francisco



Bay Area being so highly detailed it is almost a *Where's Wally?* puzzle. Some menus kindly request guests who are expecting phone calls to 'please notify the telephonist at the tobacco kiosk', while another reassured potential diners that the premises is 'thoroughly fire-proof'. A menu footnote from the Battery Point Brasserie in Hobart, circa 1980s, is particularly evocative of the time: 'We accept cash, cheques, husbands, wives, lovers, Rolexes, BMW's or your word but, we regret, not credit cards.'

While much of the South Australian material in the Darryl Thompson Collection was donated to the State Library of South Australia, the National Library holds over 90 boxes of ephemera, along with Thompson's 2015 publication *Traces: Where Adelaide Ate Out*, an extensive record of Adelaide's hospitality industry between 1836 and 1960.

A small selection of menus will be among a broad range of food-related items on display in this year's White Gloves viewing event 'Food and Drinks with Friends'. We've selected photographs, books, posters, serving-ware, paintings and textiles, sure to induce some nostalgia and elicit a few surprises. Because food has such a special way of connecting us all, across cultures and generations.

Please join us on 26 October.

Lauren Conron | Friends Executive Officer

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Names can say so much. Birth names alone will hint at ancestry, religion and trade. Place names can be layered with meaning; we learn from Kate Auty's angry history *O'Leary of the Underworld* (2023) of places called Blackfellows' Bones and Chinaman's Garden.

Cultural institutions have long deployed names with deliberation. The state libraries incorporated named core physical or organisational components honouring their foundation collectors or key leaders/sponsors—think Mitchell and Dixson (NSW), Battye (WA), Oxley (Qld), La Trobe (Vic) Mortlock (SA) and Allport (Tas). Universities too; thus Baillieu and Grainger (University of Melbourne), Fisher and Chau Chak Wing (Sydney University) and Fryer and RD Milns (University of Queensland). At the Australian War Memorial there is a CEW Bean building.

It need hardly be added that such institutions also effect acknowledgement through naming their major supporters (eg Gandel Hall and James Fairfax Theatre at the NGA) or those worthy of special commemoration (eg Reg Saunders Courtyard, AWM). A number of institutions adopt bilingual signage in public areas. The National Archives of Australia displays the Ngambri–Ngunnawal word 'murrulangalang' (meaning caves or rock shelters that hold cultural knowledge) on its National Office building in Canberra.

When in the early 1970s I began my post graduate training as a new National Library recruit, the Library had only opened three years earlier. I have distinct memories of the Ferguson Room, a sumptuously appointed space and fitting acknowledgement of Sir John Ferguson and his vast collections of Australiana and Pacificana gifted and sold to the library. A fundamental part of its identity and history.

Today dozens of names are acknowledged by the Library. Supporters are appreciatively listed in public areas and publications, and associated in lectures, scholarships, grants, fellowships, gallery supporters and development initiatives, and of course there is the Hazel de Berg Circle. Hidden away almost like an in-joke are physical acknowledgments of ex staff, some deceased, who lend their names to particular storage stacks (eg Powell, Helson, Fanning). Equally little known is the late Sing-wu (Sidney) Wang, the Library's legendary Asian Studies



Keast Burke, *John Ferguson* (detail), c. 1960s, [nla.gov.au/nla.obj-145873726](https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-145873726)



scholar librarian who in 2003 had a plaque in an Asian Collections Reading Room dedicated to his service in his presence by Kevin Rudd. But most Friends will know their lounge on the second floor references the former dealer, collector and benefactor Rex Nan Kivell and perhaps have worked in the Petherick Reading room at the far end of the Special Collections Reading Room. It commemorates the collector and bibliographer E.A. Petherick.

And Ferguson? In his day, rightly respected as a giant in the world of Australiana collecting and a meticulous, indefatigable and scholarly bibliographer. The 1968 room was moved in 2000 it is said for practical reasons, downgraded to a meeting room with a small display of treasures. For a decade now, barely heard of or acknowledged, he has a plaque in a general-purpose staff facilities room on the first floor available for public hire—a denouement and trajectory repeatedly and puzzlingly overshadowed by Nan Kivell in staffing promotion and celebration. Sir John's cultural heritage pre-eminence was once well understood, a ranking documented in James Ferguson's 2011 biography and a monograph only made possible by his generous subvention. The Ferguson family has since provided further patronage and papers.

The Library's own collection appraisal, still on its website, was that 'The Ferguson Collection is the largest and most diverse collection ever acquired by the Library'. As Graeme Powell eloquently argued in the Library's centenary history *Remarkable Occurrences* (2001), Ferguson was a nationalist and backed the National Library for five decades. It began building a national collection of Australiana when many of the key titles and documents were already held by others and Ferguson, based in Sydney and a strong supporter of the Mitchell Library, could easily have indulged parochial loyalties, but didn't. When he died in 1969, the *La Trobe Library Journal* said 'Australia has lost unquestionably her greatest bibliographer'. Who today will know why that was such high praise when his name is simply on a room for hire?

**Michael Piggott AM** | Former NLA staffer, Retired archivist, NLA Fellow: 'Sir John Ferguson's Manuscripts—A Study of Their Provenance' (2016)

Top left: James Mortimer, *Portrait of Rex Nan Kivell* (detail), 195?, [nla.gov.au/nla.obj-136771829](https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-136771829)

Top right: David Rees, *Edward A Petherick* (detail), c.1880, [nla.gov.au/nla.obj-136425472](https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-136425472)



## PRESERVING OUR VOICES: THE ORAL HISTORY AND FOLKLORE COLLECTION

Have you listened to newsreels or cricket commentary archives from the 1950s and marvelled at how different their voices sound from those of today's newsreaders and commentators? It is not just the difference in tone and pronunciation that is important. Listening to people talk in their own words about their lives and experiences, hearing the inflections in their voices and nuances in language can provide insights and perspectives not readily appreciated through the written word.

Oral tradition is a feature of all cultures. Sharing stories and knowledge through voice has long existed in Australia among First Nations peoples. The National Library recognises through its Oral History and Folklore Collection that hearing recordings of notable Australians and people who have lived through significant events or been part of communities is a vital part of preserving our history.

The Library established this collection in the 1950s, pioneered by Hazel de Berg MBE and John Meredith. Meredith travelled throughout Australia, recording folk music and folklore from 1953 until 1994. De Berg travelled both in Australia and overseas, from the time she acquired a tape recorder in 1957 until her death in 1984, recording prominent figures and local histories—a remarkable 1,290 individuals. The de Berg Collection includes luminaries as diverse as Lord Howard Florey (a 1957 recording); Sir Robert Helpmann (1964); May Gibbs (1968); and Oodgeroo Noonuccal (1976).

From these foundations, the Library's Oral History Collection continues to grow. Today, it amounts to more than 56,000 hours of recordings from people all across the country. More than 1,000 hours of new material is being added each year. It is the largest such collection in Australia and the first in the world to make its collection accessible online. Nearly 25 per cent is now available online, and the number of transcripts is increasing.

Our nation's social, political, intellectual and economic history is captured for future generations through such oral history projects as *Bringing Them Home*, *Forgotten Australians* and *Former Child Migrants*, *Australian Generations*, *Australian Muslim Women*, and *Koala: Saving an Australian Icon*. For something different, you can hear the Rev Dr John 'Bullfrog' Smith, founder of the international God's Squad Motorcycle Club.

The Library's Director of Curatorial and Collection Research Dr Shirleene Robinson is leading more ambitious and innovative projects. Stories from local communities are an important focus and reflect that projects can be initiated from communities themselves as well as by the Library.

In 2019, the Library was approached by the Administrator of Norfolk Island to determine interest in the story of the island as a developing, thriving modern society. The Library gained the trust of the community and 95 interviews have been recorded with descendants of Pitcairn Islanders, recent arrivals, officials and others, talking about their lives and the unique culture of Norfolk Island. The interviews, completed in June, with participants aged from their 20s to 80s, provide fascinating insights into life and the environment in a small community.



The Scots in Australia oral history project also began in 2019 and was recently concluded. Some 35 Scottish immigrants have recorded stories of their impact on Australia and Australia on them—their lives, culture, politics and the environment.

The 2019-20 bushfires had a devastating effect on Australian communities, with the impact in the Cobargo region catastrophic. Lives were lost, the historic town and properties destroyed, and the pain continues. In 2022, the Badja Forest Road community approached the Library and in October a partnership with the Cobargo Bushfire Resilience Centre was formed. The Library began recording interviews with people offering to share their experiences of the bushfires and their aftermath. Their stories are confronting, for the individual and for the listener, but will ensure that the nation will hold a permanent record of these darkest times in people's lives.

Recording oral histories is a particular skill, with trained interviewers ensuring that participants are safely guided through their stories. Participants themselves decide on the access rights to their recordings. However, there is no shortage of accessible content, all of which is fully digitised, future proofed and the originals retained under controlled conditions.

Go online to enjoy and learn from the Library's wonderful and widely-used Oral History and Folklore Collection.

**Kerry Blackburn** | Friends Committee member, Newsletter editor  
*With thanks to Dr Shirleene Robinson*

## THE MAGNIFICENCE OF OUR WORLD HERITAGE SITES

The natural and the cultural worlds: 'we are all one', the words of the late Gagudju elder Bill Neidjie quoted by Professor Peter Valentine in *World Heritage Sites of Australia*. Valentine is a member of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas and a conservation scientist.

In this updated, second edition, Valentine describes how these worlds intertwine as he takes us to the 20 Australian sites listed on the World Heritage register. Beautifully illustrated with more than 220 images, we see stunning visual reminders of the beauty, history and complexity of our landscape. Tropical and temperate rain forests, the red centre, ancient sandstone, reef systems—all part of our world heritage.

Valentine vividly describes the newest listing, Budj Bim Cultural Landscape, Victoria, where the Gunditjmarra people built an ingenious living aquaculture system, the world's oldest, and farmed eel. He devotes chapters to each site, from the first listed, Kakadu National Park, the traditional home of the Gagudju peoples, in 1981, to Budj Bim in 2019. We learn from his evocative descriptions—the ancient connections, ecology, unique values and often-challenging journey towards the listing of each site. Architectural marvels, the Sydney Opera House and Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens, are listed. We gain greater insights as Valentine describes his personal reflections on each place and pays tribute to the individuals and communities whose passion was instrumental in their listing.

In his introduction, conservationist Dr Bob Brown shares Valentine's concerns for the continuing existence of our listed sites and for other sites worthy of inclusion—among them Murujuga Cultural Landscape, Western Australia, and Tasmania's takayna/Tarkine rainforests.

This beautiful publication by NLA Publishing is impeccably researched, engaging and an entreaty to protect these precious sites for future generations.

**Kerry Blackburn** | Friends Committee member, Newsletter editor



## FRIENDS EVENTS

For more details, dates and bookings for Friends-exclusive events, see the Friends Weekly News emailed to members or search 'What's on' on the Library's website.

**September 14:** Join us for 'Overgrowing Canberra', a lecture by Dr Julian Raxworthy, Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture, University of Canberra and author of *Overgrown: Practices between Landscape Architecture & Gardening*—the event continuing our long partnership with the Australian Garden History Society

**October 26:** Our signature White Gloves event this year is themed 'Food and Drinks' with guest speaker, well known chef and author Janet Jeffs

**November:** The 2023 Friends Creative Arts Fellow, visual artist Sam Wallman, will take us into the 1970s genesis of Green Bans and Pink Bans, what he has discovered in the Library's collections, and reveal his unique illustrations from his research

**November 30:** Friends Annual General Meeting and election of 2024 Friends Committee—join us in the Library's Theatre or online via Zoom

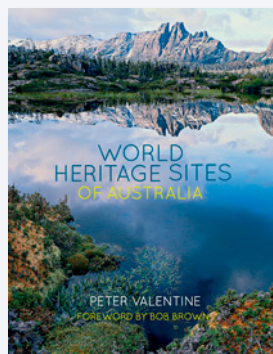
In our Summer newsletter we will have information about the first events in what promises to be an interesting 2024 program. Stay tuned!

Friends are of course welcome at events conducted by the Library. Check the Library website for details.

You can also visit at any time *Grit & Gold: Tales of a Sporting Nation*, the Treasures Gallery and Collection-in-Focus, a selection of photographs from the Joyce Evans Archive.

## NATIONAL LIBRARY BOOKSHOP SPECIAL OFFER FOR FRIENDS

Friends will receive a 20% discount on copies of *World Heritage Sites of Australia* by Peter Valentine when purchased between 1 September and 30 November 2023, online and in-store.



To claim your 20% discount on *World Heritage Sites of Australia* use the promotional code **HERITAGE** at checkout. You can also use this code to apply the usual Friends 15% discount\* to other eligible online purchases.

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William (Bill) Pederson, *Gallows Gate, All That Remains of the Grim Prison of the Convict Era on Norfolk Island, 1953*, [nla.gov.au/nla.obj-137778646](http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-137778646)