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## President's 2004/05 Annual Report

It is with pleasure that I present my report on the activities and achievements of the Federation of Australian Historical Societies (Inc.) for the year 2004/2005.

Apart from the Annual General Meeting for 2003/2004, which was held in Perth on 12 September 2004 at the Royal Western Australian Historical Society's headquarters, Nedlands, the Committee held three teleconferences during the year (November, February and June). The business agendas of each of these meetings were formidable but, as a result, considerable advances have been made in addressing and progressing the objectives of the Federation's *Triennial Operational Plan for the years 2004/05, 2005/06, 2006/07*. In between meetings, the Committee conducted much business via email.

### **Finance and administration**

The Committee experienced some troubling times during the first six months of 2005 over financial uncertainty arising from the very late call for applications by the Department of Environment and Heritage under its Grants for Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisations Program. The Federation has always depended on and utilised to full advantage, this federal grant for our operations. It is, however, pleasing to report that the Federation satisfied the revised GVEHO Program criteria and was successful in obtaining triennial funding of \$18,000 per annum. This will allow us to focus more on future planning although it was disappointing that the annual grant is less than the previous grant.

The Federation has received a satisfactory report on its 2004/05 accounts from its auditors, Pender Holdings Pty Ltd.

One of the objectives of the Operational Plan was to review the Federation's administrative systems. The Administrative Officer, Mr Gerard Hogan, and I conducted this review in Canberra last September and our report and recommendations were adopted at the November 2004 teleconference.

Disclaimer: This newsletter is produced using funds provided by the Department of the Environment and Heritage. The Department is not responsible for the accuracy of material contained herein or any views expressed.

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The Federation's archive of records is in the process of being listed and deposited in the National Library of Australia Archives. The Federation is grateful to the NALAA for accepting these documents and for ensuring that researchers can access them.

### **Minister for Environment & Heritage**

Unfortunately, Senator Ian Campbell MP, the Minister for Environment and Heritage was unable to keep a meeting appointment in April with the Hon. Secretary, Ms Lennie McCall and me in Perth. This meeting was arranged to discuss a number of issues, particularly the late call for GVEHO applications. He did, however, afford us the opportunity of meeting with his Heritage Adviser, Ms Libby MacKinnon. Through her, we were able to promote the FAHS's aims and bring our concerns to the attention of the Minister's Office.

### **Fellowship Awards**

A FAHS Fellowship was awarded to the distinguished Northern Territory historian, Professor David Carment, at the AGM last September. I presented Professor Carment's Fellowship Award to him at the Historical Society of the Northern Territory's AGM in May of this year.

### **New Merit Award**

At its February teleconference, the Committee, upon a recommendation from Associate Professor, Don Garden (Vic.) and I, agreed to award up to five FAHS Merit Awards per annum. These awards will be separate from Fellowships. They will be awarded to members of historical societies who are judged to have made a contribution to the historical society movement which has implications or benefit across more than one State or Territory; or who have made a contribution to the historical society movement at the federal level but who do not qualify for a Fellowship. None have yet been awarded.

### **Raising the profile of the FAHS**

Those members of the Federation who were in Perth for the AGM held in September 2004, attended the State History Conference of the Affiliated Societies of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society at Toodyay. The then President, Dr Ruth Kerr (Q'land) addressed conference delegates about the work of the

Federation and, in turn, each of its member State and Territory delegates spoke briefly about the activities of their respective societies.

During the year individual delegates promoted the FAHS in a variety of ways. They addressed meetings of local societies and networked with members of government agencies and other organisations. Dr Kerr, in particular, has promoted the Federation's activities at many meetings of the Historical Societies she has visited throughout Australia. In meeting with other historical societies, we believe it is important to encourage them to seek the support of the Federation when they are advocating for history and heritage or when they are endeavouring to obtain grants for history and heritage projects.

Newsletter Editors, Dr Alison Alexander (Tas) and Associate Professor Don Garden (Vic.), produced two issues of the *FAHS Newsletter* during 2004/05 with assistance from Mr Hogan. Each issue was distributed to approximately 950 historical societies nationwide by post or email. The Federation plans to produce quarterly issues of the Newsletter in future.

The periodical inclusion of brief notes on FAHS activities in member organisations' newsletters was introduced during the year. This was done with the object of bolstering the interest of a wider audience of historical society members in the Federation than can be achieved through the distribution of the *FAHS Newsletter*.

Three issues of the Federation's *E-bulletin* have been produced in the reporting year and distributed electronically to other cultural groups by Dr Kerr. This is an important communication that is designed to grow our professional networks and, hopefully, increase the interest of community historical society members, who have access to the Internet, in national and international history and heritage issues and developments. This form of communication is now working well.

Mr Nigel Ridgway (SA), with input from Mr David Lewis (NSW), has done considerable work in drafting a national impact strategy document for consideration by the Federation. The aim of the impact strategy is to further raise the profile of the FAHS among historical societies and other organisations in Australia

who are also concerned with promoting history and heritage.

Guidelines for the use of the Federation's corporate identity, including its logo, were developed by Mr Hogan and adopted as policy by the Committee in February 2005.

A brochure setting out the structure, aims and activities of the FAHS has been developed for wide distribution. Drafts were prepared by Ms Yvonne Forrest (NT) with assistance from Mr Hogan and members of the Committee. This publication will become available at the end of October 2005.

### **Promotion of the Federation's Objectives**

The Federation has continued to be represented on the Regional Cultural Alliance. The RCA has not gained any funding and because of this does not yet have a formal governance structure. In the main, its aims are maintained and advanced through contact by email and teleconferences but Dr Kerr attended a meeting of the Alliance in Canberra on 7 March 2005. Its role in preventing duplication and opening communication lines has been successful.

The National Cultural Heritage Forum did not meet during 2004/2005. The Secretary to the Forum, Ms Kristal Buckley, kept members updated on issues and the proposed Heritage Care Program is being kept alive in this way. Members of the Forum have communicated by email and teleconference.

Dr Kerr participated in two teleconferences (funded by the Powerhouse Museum) with NCHF delegates and representatives of the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material, Australian Libraries and Information Association and the Committee of Australian Museum Directors to discuss providing support for rebuilding cultural heritage resources including private documents and local history material in libraries in tsunami ravaged countries.

During the latter part of the year Federation members, Professor Ian Jack (NSW), Dr Marilyn Truscott (ACT) and Dr Kerr, commenced work on a submission to the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Heritage.

Ms Esther Davies (ACT) and Dr Kerr also prepared a response to the Department of Environment and Heritage draft proposed National Environment Education Statement for Australian Schools.

### **Training and support for historical societies**

Dr Kerr represented the Federation in a teleconference on 25 November 2004, arranged by Museums Australia, to discuss a proposal for the establishment of a national collections training program. One of the outcomes was agreement that there should be consultation broadly within the RCA to achieve broad agreement on progress of the proposal.

At the request of the Australian Heritage Commission, the Federation distributed a limited number of copies to member societies of the *Commission's guide, How to Find Your Heritage Places: Migrant Places in Australia* for further distribution to those of their affiliated societies whose community have a strong migrant history.

The manuscript of the FAHS's publication *Publishing History: A Guide for Historical Societies* written by Helen Doyle and Katya Johanson has been finalised and formatted by Mr Hogan ready for printing. It will be published and distributed early in 2005/06. The authors are to be congratulated. They have followed their own advice and produced a work that is not only informative but is well organised and easy to read.

The Federation has plans to produce other guides to assist historical societies in meeting their objectives relating to conserving and promoting built and moveable heritage.

Much has been achieved by the Federation over the past few years and I look forward to the Committee maintaining its momentum in advocacy and in supporting the work of historical societies across the nation. The members of the Committee are to be congratulated on the level of their commitment to the historical society movement and to the Federation itself. I thank them all for the generous way they have given of their time and expertise to the work of the Federation and for all the support they have afforded me in this my first year as President. I am especially grateful to the members of the Executive, Vice-Presidents, Dr Alison Alexander and Mr David Lewis, Immediate Past President, Dr Ruth Kerr,

Hon. Secretary, Ms Lennie McCall, and Hon. Treasurer, Dr Bev Phelts (NT), who have assisted me so ably in ensuring the continued smooth-running of the organisation. Thanks too,

to Mr Hogan, for his services to the organisation throughout the year.

*Dr Helen Henderson*

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## Resignations and appointments

**Mr David Lewis**, a delegate from the Royal Australian Historical Society, resigned from the Committee in August of this year. Mr Lewis was a Vice-President of the Federation since 2004 and his contribution has been much valued by the Committee.

The other position of Vice-President also fell vacant due to the resignation from that office of **Dr Alison Alexander**, a Tasmanian History Research Association delegate. Dr Alexander served as Hon. Secretary during 2001/2002 and was elected Vice-President at the AGM in 2002. One of the longest serving Committee members, she has given valuable service to the Federation and it is pleasing to report that she has agreed to continue as one of the THRA delegates.

Two new Vice-Presidents were elected at the Annual General Meeting held in Hobart on 30 October 2004: **Mr Nigel Ridgway**, the History Council of South Australia's delegate, is now Senior Vice-President and **Professor Ian Jack**, a Royal Australian Historical Society delegate, is the other Vice-President.

The Committee also welcomes the following new delegates: **Dr Dianne Snowden**, Tasmanian History Research Association and **Dr Anne-Maree Whitaker**, Royal Australian Historical Society.

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## Reports from the States and Territories

### **Royal Australian Historical Society**

In conjunction with State Records New South Wales, the RAHS arranged for Terry Kass, a prominent consultant historian, to run a symposium at Kingswood repository on 13 August unveiling the uncommon importance of the Primary Application packets. These packets contain most of the evidence produced to convert old title landholdings to Torrens title in New South Wales after 1863.

The main function rooms of the RAHS's 1870s premises in Macquarie Street, Sydney hosted a major exhibition displaying the book bindings created by the New South Wales Government Printing Office over 150 years before its lamented demise in 1989. The exhibition was opened by Professor Ian Jack on 18 August. On 30 August its curator, bookbinder Margaret Scott, gave a talk on the exhibition and the history of the Government Printing Office. Margaret is well known for her valuable conservation work in the RAHS library. The exhibition closed on 4 September 2005.

On 30 June Ian Jack launched Max Waugh's biography of Governor Bourke at History House in the presence of the Governor, Professor Bashir, the vice-consul of the Republic of Ireland and members of the Bourke family. The biography is entitled *Forgotten Hero* and it is true that Bourke has been a rather neglected figure since a former President, Hazel King, published her *Richard Bourke* in 1971.

### **Royal Western Australian Historical Society**

The RWAHS has been represented on this consortium by its Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council. After two years of community consultation a submission to Lotterywest coordinated by the President of The Friends of Battye Library Inc, Associate Professor Pamela Statham Drew has been successful. In June this year, a Lotterywest grant was awarded to rescue and make accessible the most at-risk and in-demand historic print, photographic and film records in the JS Battye Library of West Australian History.

The consortium will manage the \$3million grant for the benefit of the entire community and acknowledges that without Lotterywest's vital support the people of Western Australia would have lost unique and priceless historical records. The website was launched by Hon Dr Gallop MLA, Premier, in the Battye Library in September.

A successful Lotterywest grant for specifically designed exhibition showcases, display drawers, workbench, costume models and artwork frames has been greatly welcomed this year. Preparation to display a greater selection of moveable heritage from the collection in attractive, well lit and spacious new cases is underway. Artefacts selected by the various members of the committee, for display, include fans, jewellery, costume, accessories, antique dolls, coins and medals, embroidery will be on display early in the new year.

Members donated funds to the Adopt-a-rare book project which enabled the Library committee to conserve six important books. The transfer of the book collection's manual records to the automated catalogue was completed.

#### **Canberra & Districts Historical Society**

A challenge has been our ongoing financial plight. Reported by our then president, Esther Davies, in her annual report last year, the Council has not found a ready way to make money to defray our ongoing over-expenditure with our precious trust fund reserves being called on to pay for everyday costs. This financial difficulty stems in part from the end of recurrent heritage grants that we received in the past; these ended some years ago and we have not made up their shortfall. In March 2004, we introduced research fees for requests by non-members, now bringing in a very small income.

The Society's 13<sup>th</sup> annual "Shamrock in the Bush" (4-7 August), was once more held at St Clement's Monastery, Galong and attracted a very large number of participants with an attendance of over eighty people. As always, there was a variety of excellent lectures including scholarly and thought provoking presentations by Professor Peter Reid on *Murder, Ignorance and Reconciliation in the Northern Territory of Australia 1934-200*, and Professor James Haire on *Ulster Protestants: Blackmouths and Dissenters – and insight into the Protestant community in Irelands*. Social

Worker Sue Pittman who spoke on the 1998 bombing on Omagh provided an insight into more recent events in Northern Ireland. Different perspectives on Irish history were also provided by author and poet Lizz Murphy and artists Lycia Trouton and Brian Kennedy.

A highlight was our annual Canberra Day Oration, presented by Sandy Hollway. His positive view of Canberra, as a world city that doesn't have to emulate London, Paris, Sydney or Melbourne, is a message for Canberra's future, building on its proud past.

These are aspects of Canberra's story that the Society is pursuing with both federal and territory bodies to ensure a series of centenary celebrations in orations and publications building up to Canberra's 'birthday', the naming centenary in 2013. Pat Clarke has been energetic on this front. The Government announced last week that it will be consulting with community organisations to prepare events up to and during 2013. CDHS will be included in that planning.

#### **Royal Historical Society of Queensland**

A major highlight of the year was the successful launch of the John Douglas Kerr Medal for Distinction in the Research and Writing of History. This is a joint venture with the Professional Historians Association of Queensland. The inaugural winner was Dr Ray Evans.

The book, *Brisbane's Historic North Bank 1825-2005*, by Janet Hogan, Carolyn Nolan and Ian Hadwen, has been well received and is selling very well. It was supported by Conrad International Hotel for its first launch, and the Lord Mayor and H.E. The Governor attended the launch in the Commissariat Store.

Together with the *Journal*, the Society is publishing the papers from the conference on Denis Murphy's career in 2004 and the Women's Suffrage conference. Grants have been received from University of Queensland and the Queensland Government, Office of Women.

#### **Tasmanian Historical Research Association**

Apart from continuing to publish it *Papers and Proceedings*, with four issues of about 80 pages per year, THRA has reprinted Sir William Denison's *Varieties of Vice-Regal Life*. This is a

most interesting and useful collection of writings by the Lieutenant-Governor Sir William Denison and Lady Denison in the 1840s. The Association is also about to publish a collection of letters about early Tasmania by WP Dowling. Also imminent, due to a generous donation by benefactor Lindsay Whitham, is an index to volumes 41-50 of *Papers and Proceedings*, which will complement the first two volumes of indexes covering vols 1-40, and bring our Index almost up to date.

Lecture topics for 2004/05 ranged from a terrific start for the year, artist Max Angus speaking in our annual 'A Tasmanian Life', to lectures on mining, female convicts, Tasmania's engineering heritage, lighthouses, music and early libraries. Our annual Eldershaw Lecture was presented by Alan Atkinson, who spoke on the topic 'Tasmania and Australia'.

#### **Historical Society of the Northern Territory**

Books published during the year by HSNT members on Northern Territory history include *The Evolution of Darwin 1869-1911* by Cathy de la Rue; *USA Darwin-* the story by Yvonne Forrest; David Clement's *Australia's northern capital: a short history of Darwin* and Marge Duminski *Southport Northern Territory 1869-2002*. Julie Wells, Mickey Dewar and Suzanne Parry edited *Modern frontier: aspects of the 1950s in Australia's Northern Territory*.

Awards to HSNT members given during the year included a PhD to Christine Gordon for her thesis *The Catholic Church and status of Aboriginal women, Port Keats 1935-1958*. FAHS treasurer and HSNT Committee and FAHS delegate Bev Phelts, was awarded a PhD for *Water and economic development of the NT, 1824-2002* and former HSNT member Eve Gibson, (now living in Tasmania) received a PhD for *Beyond the boundary: a history of land use and planning in Fannie Bay 1869-2000*.

Kay Goon, a HSNT Committee Member, was given a National Trust award for outstanding voluntary work, particularly during Government House open days. Janie Mason was awarded a *Tribute to Northern Territory Women* for her work in nursing education and on becoming the first female Chair of the NT trades and Labour Council. Janie has also developed the Nursing Museum at Charles Darwin University.

#### **Royal Historical Society of Victoria**

The History Victoria Support Group was created under the new RHSV constitution to provide links between RHSV and member societies throughout the state. The convenor of the group is elected and is a vice-president of RHSV. Joan Hunt, one of the Society's vice-presidents, plays a vital role in this link and the arrangements appear to be working well with periodic regional meetings in various parts of the state. Each meeting has a particular focus on some aspect of the history movement and designed to meet the concern of local historical societies.

The RHSV has been responsible for a travelling exhibition celebrating 150 years of Victorian railways. This has been a great success after opening on 12 September 2004 at Station Pier, Port Melbourne and subsequently stopping at Geelong, Ararat, Bendigo, Mildura, Wangaratta, Traralgon, and Seymour, as well as in Parliament House, Melbourne. At each regional visit there was involvement of local organisations, usually with strong links to local historical societies as well as councils. Each local exhibition incorporated some local material to supplement the common panels. A book is currently being produced.

Unfortunately, as one of the cost-saving measures, *History News: Victorian Historical Journal* now has 6 issues per year instead of 10. It is hoped that it will be possible to reinstate 10 issues for 2006. The Victorian Historical Journal is published twice yearly. The next issue due out in early November deals with Victorian place-names. In 2006, one issue is planned to deal with 150 years of responsible government in Victoria.

#### **History Council of South Australia**

Emeritus Professor Jill Roe was our guest speaker in September, Her topic, "I danced for the Queen -Exuberance and Otherwise in Regional history since the 1950's", was well received by a large audience.

At our AGM, on 25 October, Alison Mackinnon was re-elected President and Bernie O'Neil Vice President. The Treasurer for the coming year is Beth Robertson and Annette Mills is Secretary. Following a survey of our members, a report on insurance issues was presented to the meeting. A website is being developed with domain name [historycouncilsa.org.au](http://historycouncilsa.org.au).

## Back to Birdum NT 2005 - The Never-Never Line Celebrating 76 years since the first train arrived in Birdum Organised by The Friends of the North Australian Railway

Nigel Ridgway (History Council of South Australia) and Bev Phelts (Historical Society of the Northern Territory) committee members of the FAHS met in Darwin and travelled to Birdum, 500 kilometres south of Darwin. Birdum is situated about nine kilometres from Larrimah (on the Stuart Highway) via a bush track or the railway line which is back in operation due to the great work of Friends of the North Australian Railway.

In 1925, the Darwin - Pine Creek railway line was extended to Daly Waters and in 1928 to Birdum. The first train arrived at Birdum on 5 September 1929. A small community developed at the Birdum railhead which by 1930 consisted of O'Shea's Birdum Hotel, a dam, Schober's Store, a Shell Petrol Dump, Kirby's Motor Repair Business and Main's Boarding House. By 1934, the population was around 25 and there were six houses, hotel and various railway infrastructure. In 1939, it was regarded a busy little town as most people drove to Birdum, left their vehicles and caught the train to Darwin. The line was fondly known as the Line to Nowhere.

During the War period Birdum was a focal point for the Army. Much evidence of this can still be seen with the nearby Army hospital and the BIPOD (a storage centre for goods trucked to and from Mt Isa and Alice Springs. There was a large American military contingent in the area and it has been remarked that "(the American involvement in the north Australian air war) was directed from The Porch Of The Birdum Hotel".<sup>1</sup>

From 1942 onwards, buildings were gradually relocated to Larrimah. The last to go was the Birdum Hotel (now Larrimah Hotel) in 1952. This event marked the demise of the town. The line to Birdum was abandoned by 1956 and it was officially closed in 1976.

Further information can be found in the *The Never-Never Line* by J.Y. Harvey, *The Line that led to Nowhere* by I.R. Stevenson and *Birdum: An Historic and Archaeological Review* by Peter and Sheila Forrest.

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Our fabulous trip commenced from the historic Larrimah Hotel where we all met on Friday (2nd) night. We were treated to a lovely BBQ dinner by the Hotel publicans. Presentations followed and each person introduced themselves - our respective historical societies and the FAHS were mentioned. On Saturday morning we drove in to Birdum stopping to look at several WW1 sites along the way. Between 30-40 people consisting of locals, "up the track" to Darwin and some interstaters had converged on Birdum.

The Friends of the North Australian Railway headed by dynamo, Trevor Horman had previously cleared a substantial area of scrub near the Birdum railhead to enable camping. A flushing toilet and a large bough shelter had also been erected. An engineering feat however, was the restoration of the fettlers trolley and railway line from Birdum to Larrimah. We took great advantage of this by riding the trolley to and from the Larrimah Hotel purchasing cold beer.

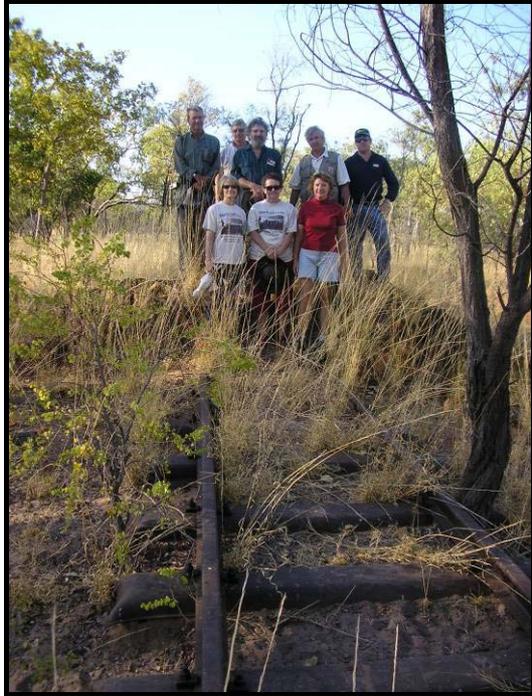
Trevor led a tour of the Birdum ruins which took in building remnants, the airstrip and railway installations. A generator was brought in to enable a musical performance by duo Megan and John from Daly Waters and Peter Bate of the NT Folk Club. There was also a Who-Dunnit skit - Who murdered William Jacobsen in 1936 at Main Boarding House?

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<sup>1</sup> *Birdum: An Historic and Archaeological Review*, Peter and Sheila Forrest, The Larrimah Progress Association: Darwin, 1999, p. 13.

There was ample time and interest on the activities of our respective history societies and the FAHS. Even some new memberships were forthcoming.

Regretfully, it all ended on Sunday and we all went our respective ways. I look forward to the 77th celebrations !



### **The End of the Never Never Line**

Back from left: John Turner, Trevor Horman, Peter Bate, Richard Luxton, Nigel Ridgway (HCSA)  
Front from left: Judy Richardson, Helen Bate, Bev Phelts (HSNT)



### **The restored fettler's trolley**

From left: John Turner & Nigel Ridgway (HCSA)  
Mick Kent, Jared Archibald

## **Staff Changes**

**Mr Gerard Hogan**, who has been the Federation's part-time Administrative Officer since 1999, has resigned from that position. However, he will remain on the staff as our Public Officer. He will maintain our office presence in Canberra; a requirement of the ACT Incorporations Act, and will assist, as he has done in previous years, with the Federation's advocacy activities in Canberra. Prior to commencing his contract with the Federation he was a Senior Audit Manager (Performance Audit) with the Australian National Audit Office. In carrying out his duties as our Administrative Officer, his public service experience was put to effective use both in advocacy and administration. Over the years Mr Hogan has given valuable service to the

Federation and he has supported the Committee in its endeavours at many levels.

Miss Kellie Bennett has been appointed as the Federation's part-time Administrative Officer. Miss Bennett recently resigned as the Executive Officer of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society to take up a part-time position with the Cockburn Shire Council. Miss Bennett brings to the position a range of skills and a considerable knowledge of the historical society movement which will ensure that the administration of the Federation will proceed smoothly.

Ms Bennett's email address is: [fahs@westnet.com.au](mailto:fahs@westnet.com.au)

*The following article provided by the National Archives of Australia on the topic of researching Greek Australians provides valuable information for local historical societies wishing to address the role played by different ethnic groups in their local communities.*

## Groundbreaking Greeks by Enid Woodley

### *Tracing Greek Australians in the National Archives of Australia*

From the pearling industry to political life, as war heroes and wrestling heavyweights, Greek Australians have made significant contributions to Australian society and culture, and many of their lives and achievements are highlighted in records held in the National Archives.

#### ***Early starters***

Generally credited as being the first Greek to migrate to South Australia in 1842, Georgios Tramountanas showed true pioneering spirit when he moved to the sparsely-populated Eyre Peninsula in the late 1850s. According to documents held in the Adelaide office of the National Archives, in 1878, after more than 20 years spent farming near Elliston, George applied to become a naturalised settler in the Province of South Australia – but as George North, not Georgios Tramountanas. This seemingly unrelated choice of surname shows how difficult it can be to track Greek family history because of the tendency of both officials and migrants to anglicise names – ‘Tramountanas’ roughly translates as a Greek northerly wind. While George North stayed put in South Australia, others moved around. After arriving in Sydney in 1905, 15-year-old Grigorios Kasimatis (later known as Gregory Casimaty) tried his luck in Queensland and New South Wales before settling in Tasmania. Gregory established the Britannia Café in Elizabeth Street, Hobart in the early 1900s and followed this with many other successful business ventures. Known for his charity and benevolence – including providing Christmas dinner for 200 unemployed single men in the Depression years – Gregory Casimaty was recommended for inclusion in the Queen’s Birthday Honours list by his local member of Parliament, Adrian Gibson, in 1964.

As an established member of the Hobart community, Gregory Casimaty applied for a number of friends and relatives in Greece to migrate to Australia, one of whom was George Gabriel Haros.

#### ***Trading on talents***

George Haros arrived in Australia in the 1930s and applied his inventiveness to producing an efficient way of heating water for tea and coffee in cafés like the Britannia.

While George Haros is probably best known for the invention and subsequent establishment of the Haros Boiler Company in 1939, he didn’t restrict his inventiveness to the catering industry. In 1942, the Army Inventions Directorate in Melbourne was informed that he designed a new anti-aircraft shell using two shell cases, the inner one of which was magnetised.

Another George – George Lucas Adamopoulos – also used his scientific skills to good effect and, together with Sydney merchant Gregory Dimitri Michal, patented certain chemical solutions and processes for use in the manufacture of mineral water.

#### ***Building up business***

Like George Adamopoulos, Peter Michelides chose to build on his previous experience. After arriving in Perth in the early 1900s, he established a business manufacturing cigarettes at 248 Murray Street, in the central business district of the city.

His business flourished over the following 40 years and included the setting up of a factory. Over time, the packaging of Peter Michelides’ products changed, which can be viewed in a register of many fascinating labels put together and approved by the Customs and Excise Branch.

By 1940 the Commonwealth Investigation Service (CIS) – precursors to the Federal Police and the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation – had started a dossier on Mr Michelides after receiving reports that he had been ‘full of admiration for Fascist Italy’ on his return from an overseas trip in 1939. This dossier includes later correspondence about Peter Michelides’ 1954 appointment as the Western Australian Greek Consul, by which time the CIS changed its tune:

... he is a man of substance, a person of excellent repute and in these circumstances no objection is raised by this service to his appointment.

Sadly National Archives also has records describing the demise of Michelides Ltd, including films of its closing down sale in 1960 and the later sale of Peter Michelides' home on Mounts Bay Road.

Another Greek who built up a business from scratch was Eustratios (Stratos) Haritos.

According to his naturalisation application, Stratos arrived as a single man in Darwin on the *Mataram* in 1915 at the age of 27. By 1923 he was married with four children aged 5 and under, and was living and working at the Darwin Salt Works. Haritos did well at the salt works and, according to property records held by the National Archives, was able to buy land in and around Darwin.

His property included a block of land on the corner of Daly and Cavenagh Streets, where he built a grocery store. This building was later requisitioned by the Commonwealth Government for use as an emergency post office following the destruction of the Darwin Post Office in the bombing of Darwin in 1942. While the rest of the Haritos family were evacuated from Darwin along with other civilians, George Haritos enlisted and remained in the Northern Territory with the Army.

### ***Serving Australia***

While George Haritos was Australian-born, many Greek-born men were also quick to sign up and serve Australia in times of war. Constantine Aroney, born in Cerigo and living in Melbourne, was involved in both World Wars, first enlisting in 1915 and serving at Gallipoli, France and Belgium as a private in the 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion. In October 1939, he enlisted in the Commonwealth Military Forces and seven months later he transferred to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Imperial Forces and the Headquarters of the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Corps, serving in Palestine, North Africa, Greece, Crete and Syria.

While serving in Greece, Driver Aroney's cultural background proved extremely valuable. Following the debacle on mainland Greece, when the Allied forces were overrun by the German Army, Aroney managed to escape to Crete in an open boat, taking 23 other soldiers with him, whom he cared for with the help of Greeks on Crete – a heroic feat for which he was awarded the British Empire Medal.

Like Constantine Aroney, Frank Notaras was also born in Cerigo and served for Australia in World War II, but he really made his mark in the restaurant industry in Canberra after the war.

Franziskos, or Francois, Emmanuel Notaras travelled from Greece on the *Esperance Bay* arriving in Sydney in March 1938. After settling first in Queanbeyan, and following a stint in the Army, Frank Notaras moved to Canberra. There he became the proprietor of the Liberty Café in Franklin Street, Manuka and his business went from strength to strength.

### ***Family concerns***

The strength of many Greek businesses in Australia was often due to family involvement. The Andronicus Brothers began trading in New South Wales in the early 1900s selling coffee and chocolates, and over the years the six siblings, and later two of their sons, built up a very successful business, which certainly lived up to their 1920 trademark 'AB – Always Best'.

The 1920s also saw the Morris Brothers' Fish Café come into its own. Established by the Moraitis family at 38 Hindley Street, Adelaide, the café was run by Spyridon (Speros), Dionisio (Dennis), Nicolas, Kostas, Panayiotis (Peter) and Eustratios (Stratos), who all worked hard over the years to make it a popular spot. The changes in the partnership in the late 1930s and 1940s as some family members retired or took a different role in the business are reflected in the trading results file kept by the Deputy Prices Commissioner.

When Dennis Moraitis first arrived in Adelaide in 1929, he, like many other Greeks from the Italian-controlled Dodecanese Islands, was listed as an Italian – another pitfall to be aware of when searching for Greek family records.

That he was technically considered an Italian subject may well have contributed to Dennis Moraitis's decision to play an active role in the Greek Orthodox Community of South Australia. In a case file compiled by the Investigation Branch, Dennis was reported to be a councillor for the community in 1945 while Spyros, Nicolaos and Constantinos were listed as subscribed members.

At the same time Speros' son Stratos was also making his name, but in a different sphere – he composed a number of songs, including *Going out to Dine* (perhaps to help advertise the family business?), *The House Wife* and *Your Lovely Blue Eyes*.

After World War II, the Paspaley family began to make their mark in the pearling industry in the north of Australia. Theodosios Michael Paspalis had brought his family from Greece in 1919, and by the 1950s several of his children were leaders in the pearling industry, which Theodosios had first embraced in Port

Hedland, Western Australia. His son Nicholas branched out from the pearl-lugging side of the business and established a pearl culture farm on the Coburg Peninsula in the Northern Territory, bringing in Japanese workers and importing specialised vessels and equipment.

### ***Trail-blazing women***

Mary Dakas née Paspalis also followed in her father Theodosios's footsteps – although the path was far from easy. Following her husband's death in an accident in 1948, Mary became a successful pearl lugger operator in Broome, no doubt using her knowledge and experiences of life in a pearling family.

Like her brother, Mary chose to use overseas specialists – mainly from China and Hong Kong – to help with her business, and the Archives' collection includes many sponsorship files from the 1950s documenting the arrival of these workers.

Another Mary who has become one of the most recognised Greek women in Australia is Mary Kostakidis, a Special Broadcasting Service television journalist and news presenter based in Sydney. As a high-profile Greek migrant, Mary has been involved in several national immigration conferences over the 1990s. She also features in the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs' photographic collection, which is held in the National Archives.

### ***Gifted Greeks***

Also prominent in this photographic archive is George Samios, the manager of the Australian wrestling team at the Olympic Games in Mexico in 1968. George was born in Kythera, Greece in 1916 and migrated to Western Australia when he was only 14. After settling in Australia, he developed an interest in wrestling and went on to win a number of state championships in the 1930s.

When World War II broke out, George Samios enlisted in the Army and in 1942 served for a time with the Western Command Physical and Recreation Training School – presumably putting his wrestling skills to good use!

Another talented Greek, Nicholas Lianos, who performed as a singer in New South Wales under his stage name Nick Leenos in the 1920s and 1930s, also composed his own 'hit' song, *Goodbye My Love*, and was quick to register it for copyright.

### ***Making of the man***

While Nick Leenos's song farewelled a sweetheart, Dimitrios Fouras and his family could probably nevertheless identify with the song's poignant lyric 'remember me ...'.

At the age of ten, Dimitrios left his home in Manesi, Greece to come to Australia to live in Southport in Queensland. Dimitrios (Jim) and his brother Theodore lived with their uncle, Michael Theodore, a café proprietor, while they attended the local Church of England Boy's School – a school Jim was still attending when he applied to become a naturalised Australian citizen not long after his sixteenth birthday.

In 1967 Jim married his wife Maria (née Kentrotis) in Brisbane; five years later, the public servant and father of two returned to his birth country for a family visit, 23 years after he had left as a child ... and just five years before he was first elected to the Queensland Parliament.

### ***How to find records about family members***

If members of your family migrated to Australia during the twentieth century, the National Archives will probably hold their migration records, as well as records documenting their other activities, including:

- service for Australia in World War I or World War II;
- naturalisation as Australian citizens;
- working for the Australian government – perhaps in a post office or as a Customs officer – or selling land to it; or
- applying to patent their inventions, registering their trademarks or copyrighting their creative work.

To find these records, you should first do a keyword search on RecordSearch, the National Archives' online records database, which is available on the Archives' website ([www.naa.gov.au](http://www.naa.gov.au)).

Use variations of the surname of the family you wish to find records on.

Remember that names on official records may not necessarily be spelled as you expect, so try the following search techniques:

- substitute 'c' for 'k', 'i' for 'y', and so on;
- think of possible English alternatives for names, eg 'Miller' for 'Miliotis', 'Peter' for 'Panayiotis'; and

- end surnames with a different declension, eg ‘es’ or ‘as’ instead of ‘is’ (as in for ‘Paspali’, ‘Paspalis’, ‘Paspalas’ or ‘Paspaley’).

As many war service record entries on RecordSearch list place of birth, you might also like to try a keyword search using the names of Greek towns or islands. You can also do keyword searches using the names of any businesses or organisations with which your relative was involved.

Once you have identified a record in the National Archives’ collection, you can view it in the relevant reading room or, if it is digitised, online through RecordSearch. Viewing the records is free, but charges apply for ordering copies.

To help those seeking their family’s migration records, the Archives has recently introduced the *Making Australia Home* service, providing documents in a keepsake folder for \$25.00. A brochure written in Greek explaining this service and including an application form is available in the ‘Family History’ section on the Archives’ website ([www.naa.gov.au](http://www.naa.gov.au)).

The National Archives also produces fact sheets and research guides on topics such as immigration records, and these can be a great help in pointing you in the right direction. Both fact sheets and guides can be downloaded for free from the ‘Publications’ section of the Archives’ website.

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Many of the National Archives’ millions of individual records can be located by a keyword search, but some records relating to Greek-Australians cannot. If you would like more help in locating records about your family, contact the National Archives reference service in the following ways:

Post: National Reference Service

PO Box 7425

Canberra Business Centre

ACT Australia 2610

Tel: 1300 886 881 (overseas callers: 61 2 6212 3900)

Fax: 1300 886 882 (overseas callers: 61 2 6212 3999)

Email: [ref@naa.gov.au](mailto:ref@naa.gov.au)

The author, Enid Woodley is Assistant Director of Access and Communication in the Adelaide office of the National Archives of Australia. In this role she manages local services for researchers.

If you would like to have your historical society listed on the FAHS website,  
please send your details to [fahs@westnet.com.au](mailto:fahs@westnet.com.au)