

# FAHS Newsletter

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## From the President

Promoting history and heritage is an important function of the FAHS. One of the ways it does this, is to bring related issues raised by member organisations and other historical societies across the nation to the attention of relevant forums, particularly at the federal level. At its last teleconference, 27 February 2006, the Committee resolved to establish a process which aims to make it easier for historical societies to bring their concerns/proposals to the attention of the Federation. This process addresses the Federation's Operational Plan objective, relating to facilitating historical societies' access to the Federation, by securing agreement at the national level. To this end, the Committee has adopted a policy whereby, each year, it will formally initiate approaches to its constituent societies for an indication of their concerns/proposals regarding history and heritage matters. Under this policy the Committee is obliged to give due consideration to every issue/proposal raised and, if it is in accordance with the Federation's aims and objectives, to do all it can to have the concern/proposal considered in one or more appropriate forums. The Federation will ensure that the initiating organisation is informed of the outcome and, at the same time, will indicate whether it will undertake any follow-up action. Since it is envisaged that the proposed procedure will involve some action by each of the Federation's member organisations it cannot be implemented until their agreement is obtained.

By taking this step, the Federation encourages historical societies across Australia to become partners with us in promoting history and heritage. In the long-run, this could assist in galvanising the national network of historical societies into a much stronger force as well as serving to make the FAHS a more important voice for history and heritage at the national level.

*Helen Henderson*

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.

## Reports from some of the States and Territories

### **Royal Australian Historical Society**

Since the FAHS delegates met in Hobart on 30 October 2005, the Royal Australian Historical Society has held its annual conference with its affiliated societies. This three-day event in the country town of Bathurst attracted 130 local historians and centred on the theme of boundaries, real and of the mind.

The period around the year's end is, of course, relatively empty of lectures, but the Society in tandem with the Australian Society for the History of Engineering and Technology, tried to join in the Einstein celebrations on 29 November. The speaker became unavailable and Ian Jack talked instead on the new, dramatic archaeological excavations on the rolling-mills site at Fitzroy Ironworks in Mittagong.

On each Australia Day, it is the custom of the RAHS to open its premises to the folk who mill around Macquarie Street, which is closed to vehicle traffic but sports an extensive display of vintage cars. The Society offers tours of the 1870s public rooms and historical lectures at half-hourly intervals attracting an interesting cross-section of the population which might not otherwise visit an historical society.

Although many years ago the RAHS redistributed part of its museum collections to the Powerhouse Museum and some of its graphic and documentary material to the Mitchell Library, the Society continues to have important holdings. These include glass negatives, photographic images, manuscripts, paintings (including significant colonial watercolours), furniture (including an 1820s square piano with an impeccable Australian pedigree) and artefacts ranging from the collar of Governor Macquarie's dog to the spade used to turn the first sod of Sydney Harbour Bridge.

The Society has reaffirmed its policy not to become an advocacy group for heritage matters. It maintains its place in the heritage scene by responding to the Productivity Commission and by nominating a panel of historians from whom a member of the New South Wales Heritage Council is selected by the relevant minister. I have just stepped down from the Heritage Council after my statutory maximum term of six years and I am pleased to inform the Federation and its constituency that Dr Rosemary Annable,

one of its Fellows and a former President of the RAHS, has just been named as my successor.

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

The Society was awarded a grant of \$7,000 from Lotterywest for a project with Affiliated Societies to produce a video on Workplace Safety in local museums.

The 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Society, founded in 1926, will be celebrated with a series of events and lectures planned in 2006.

The Society was represented at a meeting to discuss proposed tourism development at Long Island, Houtman Abrolhos with a role to ensure that adequate management systems be put in place to protect the Island's historical, archaeological and environmental values. President and Council representatives also met with the Metropolitan Cemeteries Board members at Karrakatta to view headstones and discuss its Renewal Policy.

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

The months following the FAHS AGM in October 2006 have been a time for CDHS members to reflect on both the past and the future. In that short space of time, we have lost two members who played a significant role in the history of the Society. The first was Loma Rudduck 1914-2005. Loma was a co-founder of CDHS and remained active in the Society right up until her death. The second was Lyall Gillespie (see obituary in this newsletter.) On the other hand, the Society has begun to work towards the centenary of the foundation of Canberra in 1913.

The following lectures have been held since the Federation's AGM at the end of October 2005. November 8 was the Annual Members' night with a number of members presenting details of their own research. These included our youngest member, nine year old Seth Cooper, who spoke on the history of the *'History of the Mayo family'* Other speakers were Alan Roberts *'An Anglo-Irish Family History'*, John Bates *'Galong'* and Doris Kordes *'Kenmore Hospital (Goulburn) and the historical links with Canberra.'* The speaker for our annual Christmas dinner, held on December 8 was Richard Refshauge who spoke on a history of legal practice in the ACT. Our first meeting for 2006 was held on February 14 and the speaker

was Marie Coleman whose topic was “*Growing up in the Molonglo*”. The Society’s annual Canberra Day Oration was held at the National Library of Australia on March 12. The speaker this year was Dr Ken Taylor whose oration was entitled “*Utopian Visions, Civics and Town Planning – Canberra: City in the Landscape*” In spite of other Canberra Day attractions, the event proved to be a great success with an audience of well over 100 people. Work is still continuing on the creation of a database of the Society’s collection and Society members still receive bi-monthly newsletters.

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

Members attended the special Proclamation Day of Queensland at Newstead House. Her Excellency the Governor of Queensland, Quentin Bryce AC and Mr Bryce visited the Commissariat Store on 30 November 2005 and were very complimentary. Since then, the Society was asked to present a historical display at Government House on the Australia Day Open Day and members of the Society have been invited to Government House to attend a Waitangi Day reception in February.

The following lectures have been held since the Federation’s AGM at the end of October 2005: November 9 - “*Infant deaths in early 20<sup>th</sup> century maternal nursing homes*” Lee Butterworth; November 17 - “*George Harris-Highs and Lows and financial woes*”, Mervyn Royle; February 8 - “*Victory in the Licensing Court: the issue of the licence for Cooroy’s second hotel in 1910*”, Ruth Kerr; February 16: - “*Ernie Hood of Gatton, farmer, irrigator, timber miller, Shire chairman – his story*”, Jean Stewart.

The last *Journal* for 2005 has been published containing Clive Moore’s “*Australian Motivation and Timing for the 2003 Intervention in the Solomon Islands Crisis*”; Jasmine A. Sommer’s “*Katharina Benfer, Early German Settler at Mount Cotton*”; Jean Stewart’s “*Christina Corrie*”; Stephen Sheaffe’s review of “*Shared Vision: Recollections of the life and achievements of an inaugural Queensland Churchill Fellow*” by Dr Brian Wilson. The first monthly *Bulletin* for 2006 has been issued. Copies have been received for distribution to members of the *Queensland review*, the proceedings and papers delivered at a Conference hosted by the Society to celebrate the Centenary of Women’s Suffrage in

Queensland. These copies were produced with support from the Office of Women.

Nominations have been called for the John Douglas Kerr Award for research and writing – closing date 31 March.

QR National/Interail Locomotive L271 was named in honour of “John Douglas Kerr, Historian” on 16 November at a ceremony at Centennial Coal’s Newstan Colliery in New South Wales in the presence of Ruth Kerr, the Federation’s Immediate Past President.

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

Monthly lectures this year will be on aspects of sport in the Territory. First lecture to be given by Matthew Stephen who will talk on the role of sport and recreation in the Territory before 1911.

We are looking at having short, Saturday morning visits/talks of about 2 hours starting April with a visit to Fannie Bay Gaol with Dr Mickey Dewar. Other suggestions are Lameroo Baths, Litchfield historical collection at Taminmin High, Palmerston historical collection with Cathy De La Rue

Departure: We are saddened by the departure for Sydney of Dr David Carment, though he will be visiting Darwin 3 or 4 times each year. David has, in many respects, been the backbone of our organization and we are busy taking steps to make sure things continue without him smoothly. No doubt Sydney will be ‘picking him up’. There will be a farewell luncheon on Saturday 25th February. No decisions have been made as to where we will ‘tour’ to on our weekend away in July - though some of us are pushing for W.A. Kimberley again.

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

Over the ‘quiet’ period November 2005 to January 2006, there has been considerable activity. The Society’s headquarters’ roof has been extensively renovated and completed by the landlord. It is hoped this will reduce the dangers of flooding and water damage which have plagued the Society’s occupation of the Drill Hall building. It has also been the time for a very comprehensive stock-take of the library collection and the completion of cataloguing. A new part-time development officer (Brendan Watkins) has been appointed charged with raising income, generating membership numbers and doing some media work. The Society continues to grapple with the problem of establishing permanent resources which would

enable expansion of activities. For example, its newsletter, *History News* is now published 6 times per year instead of 10. Introduced as a successful cost-saving measure in 2005, it has also proved to be a considerable cause of complaint from members.

Exhibitions in the gallery space have been much more limited than previously but there has been more display of items from the RHSV collection. There was also a well-mounted exhibition dealing with some aspects of Multicultural Melbourne. This arose as a small part from a grant received from the Multicultural Commission.

The last of the 2005 monthly lectures occurred on 8 November when Andrew Brown-May, chief editor of the *Encyclopaedia of Melbourne* discussed this enormous work published in late 2005 and the culmination of around ten years of compilation and involving more than 400 different authors.

Over the years the RHSV has conducted several outstanding tours by bus in parts of Victoria. This year's excursion was along the Murray and diverted into New South Wales and benefited from contact with local historical groups and the excellence of on-board guidance from Susan Priestley and Weston Bate, the prime organizers.

The latest issue of *Victorian Historical Journal* was published in November and focused on Placenames in Victoria. It was produced with sponsorship from the Surveyor-General's office.

## **Family history Week Past – Present - Future 30 July to 6 August 2006**

In conjunction with the 'Save the Census' campaign the Australian Federation of Family History Organisations has initiated a national Family History Week in Australia.

Any event that raises awareness of history, family or local, can be added to the event list. Family reunions, seminars, talks, open days, history walks, book launches. The group encourage people to say 'Yes' to have their personal information saved on the census which will be taken Tuesday 8 August 2006.

For more information visit  
[www.familyhistoryweek.org.au](http://www.familyhistoryweek.org.au)

## **Obituary for Lyall Gillespie OAM Fellow of the Federation of Australian Historical Societies 23 July 1919 – 24 January 2006**

Lyall Gillespie, noted local historian of the Canberra district, was an enthusiastic writer and researcher with an encyclopaedic knowledge of local history. He had no fewer than 40,000 hand written reference cards and a set of impeccable family connections to all of Canberra's pioneer families. He wrote scores of articles for the Canberra Times and was a noted contributor for the journal and newsletter of the Canberra and District Historical Society. He also published eight books on Canberra history including, *Ginninderra, Forerunner to Canberra, Schools of the Canberra Region* and *Aborigines of the Canberra Region*. One of his most notable publications was the first volume of a three volume history of Canberra, *Canberra 1820-1913*, now widely regarded as a valuable resource for all local researchers.

Lyall attended Telopea Park School in the 1930s, riding his bike all the way from Hall. On leaving school, he joined the Public Service where he had a long and satisfying career, culminating in his appointment as Canberra's City Manager 1978 to 1982. He was also concurrently the ACT's Controller of Prices and Fuels Controller – a position of considerable power in the city. During the Second World War, he served in the Canberra Militia and then in the RAAF as a radio and radar technician in north Western Australia.

Lyall joined the Canberra & District Historical Society in 1968, was a Councillor from 1969 to 1986, Vice-President from 1972 to 1973 and 1976 to 1977 and President 1977 to 1979 and 1981 to 1982. In subsequent years, he remained an active participant in the Society, including running excursions in the early 1990s, until declining health limited his activities. One of the last Society events he attended was the launch of the Society's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary publication *Canberra History 1953-2003* in December 2003.

In 1999, the Federation of Australian Historical Societies elected Lyall a Fellow in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the work of the Canberra and District Historical Society and

to the recording of the history of the region of the Australian Capital Territory.

His services were recognised by the award of an OAM in 1998.

Lyall is survived by his wife Norma and their family

## **Federation records**

The National Library of Australia Archives is now holding all the Federation's records from the founding of the organisation in 1977 until

2001. These records are on open access at the Archives in Canberra.

It is the Federation's policy to retain the records for the most recent four completed years before depositing them in the Archives. Those wishing to access these recent files will need to apply in writing to the Federation's Public Officer, Mr Gerard Hogan. His contact details are:  
GPO Box 1440, Canberra ACT 2601  
Ph: 02 6251 1696; Fax: 02 6251 1696  
Email: [ascribe@cyberone.com.au](mailto:ascribe@cyberone.com.au)

## **National Library of Australia Community Heritage Grants**

Now is the time to save Australia's cultural heritage. Grants of up to \$10 000 are available to support preservation projects undertaken by community organisations such as local historical societies, regional museums, public libraries and Indigenous and migrant community groups, which hold cultural heritage collections of national significance. Materials may be significant because of their historic, aesthetic, research or social and spiritual values.

Activities supported include:

- Preservation assessments and surveys of collections
- Specialised preservation and collection management training for staff and volunteers
- Purchase of archival quality storage materials
- Physical treatment of documents and artefacts, including boxing, binding, and restoration
- Environmental control and storage particularly in tropical areas
- Copying of material once originals have been preserved

For application forms phone the National Library (02) 6262 1147, email [chg@nla.gov.au](mailto:chg@nla.gov.au) or download a copy from the National Library of Australia's website [www.nla.gov.au/chg](http://www.nla.gov.au/chg). Applications close 9 June.

## **Back to Birdum 2006 – The Never Never Line Celebrating 77 Years Since the First Train Arrived in Birdum**

Due to popular demand, the Back to Birdum weekend will be repeated on 1-3 September 2006. The trip is organised by Friends of the North Australian Railway and promises to be another great weekend of campfire entertainment. The fabulous event will commence from the Larrimah Hotel on Friday 1st and continue Saturday & Sunday at Birdum.

In 1928, the Darwin - Pine Creek railway line was extended to Birdum, and the first train arrived at Birdum on 5 September 1929. A small community developed at the Birdum railhead which by 1930 consisted of a hotel, stores, a mechanical garage, boarding house, railway infrastructure and numerous houses. In 1939, It was regarded a busy little town as most people drove to Birdum, left their vehicles and caught the train to Darwin.

During the War period it 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 contingency 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".

The line was never extended further than Birdum and it became known as the Line that went to nowhere.

If you are interested in joining in the Birdum celebrations, contact Trevor Horman by email: [t.Horman@bigpond.com](mailto:t.Horman@bigpond.com) or telephone 0889 245093wk.

# **The Dutch in Australia, 1606–2006**

**by Nonja Peters**

In 2006 Australia will celebrate 400 years of Dutch contact. The mariners, merchants and passengers on ships belonging to the Dutch East Indies Company (*Verenigde Oost Indische Compagnie*) were the first recorded Europeans to set foot on Australian soil.

Their arrival in Australia happened mainly by chance at a time when the instruments used to determine longitude were still in their infancy. It was not uncommon for ships that left Cape Town in South Africa for the East Indies to travel too far east before turning north-east to Batavia (present-day Jakarta), the capital of the Netherlands East Indies (now Indonesia). Many of these ships came to grief on the Western Australian coast. Some survivors were rescued but many were not. Aboriginal oral history has it that the fortunate ones cohabited with Aborigines. Dutch East Indies Company ships stopped visiting Western Australian shores in 1796 after the collapse of the company.

Over a century later, only 600 Dutch-born people were living in Australia. It was not until 1942–45 that Dutch numbers increased significantly when Dutch military personnel arrived in Australia to help with the defence and evacuation of Dutch residents of the Netherlands East Indies.

On 19 January 1942, the Netherlands East Indies and Australian governments reached an agreement that all financial responsibilities for Dutch women and children evacuated to Australia would fall on the Netherlands East Indies Administration. After this, evacuations started in earnest.

Many evacuees fled to Broome, on the north coast of Western Australia, because it was one of the closest points to Java on the Australian mainland and could take both land-based aircraft and flying boats. During this period as many as 57 aircraft arrived in Broome on any one day and 7 000 to 8 000 passengers passed through the base in a fortnight.

Broome was not, however, a safe haven. On 3 March 1942, nine Japanese Zero fighter planes attacked a squadron of 15 flying boats waiting to refuel in Roebuck Bay. Fourteen of these boats were crammed with Dutch women and children who had fled Java the night before and were en

route to other destinations. Many of these evacuees were injured or killed in the attack. Those who died are buried in Karrakatta Cemetery in Perth, Western Australia.

During the war the Netherlands East Indies Government became the only foreign government-in-exile on Australian soil. Towards the end of the war, however, the relationship between the Australian and Netherlands East Indies governments shifted from amicable to antagonistic when Australian waterside workers' unions and the Communist Party of Australia supported the Indonesian Nationalist Movement by boycotting Dutch shipping in 1944–45.

In the years following World War II, the Australian Government began to actively recruit European-born migrants to reverse population stagnation, overcome crucial labour shortages and maintain the war-boosted economy. Between 1951 and 1970, about 160 000 Dutch nationals migrated to Australia. Many ships, including the *Groote Beer*, *Johan van Oldenbarnevelt*, *Nelly*, *Sibajak*, *Skaubryn* and *Waterman*, and some KLM Airlines flights, were specially chartered to carry migrants from the Netherlands.

Prospective migrants were enticed by passage assistance and images of wealth unheard of in the postwar Netherlands – booming industry, boundless opportunity, full employment, good working conditions, a home of one's own, whitegoods and a motor vehicle. All that was required of them was that they meet health, security and age criteria, and remain in the employment for which they were selected for a period of two years, or agree to repay their fare.

Unlike arrangements made with other governments, where migrants paid a flat rate of £10 each, the amount a Dutch migrant paid depended on their earning capacity at the time. Many Dutch migrants had to pay a significant amount of money and consequently arrived at their destination virtually destitute, with only landing money and a small packing crate of household possessions. Few had the collateral to secure bank loans to help establish themselves. Their plight was exacerbated by Australia's building material and labour shortage, which forced larger families to start their new life at one of the Department of Immigration accommodation centres.

Many Dutch women recall feeling especially overwhelmed by the transition from a well-appointed cabin aboard the *Johan van*

*Oldenbarnevelt* or the *Himalaya* to a bare cubicle in one of the accommodation centres scattered around the country. From 1945, Commonwealth-run hostels and camps were used to house newly arrived migrants. Many Dutch migrants spent time in camps at Bathurst, Scheyville and Nelson Bay.

Housing was particularly problematic for larger families. These families had to make tents or old tram carriages *gezellig*, or homely, until they could afford a deposit on a second-hand house or a block of land. After work or school and on weekends, the whole family was expected to clean old bricks or make new bricks from their meagre cement allocation. When the family had enough bricks to build a garage or the back verandah of their future home, they then had to find innovative ways to cram many bodies into the smallest of spaces.

*Aanpassen*, or 'fitting in', was a distinctive aspect of Dutch resettlement. In public, most Dutch people seemed willing to get rid of, or at least cover up, any social characteristics defined as 'ethnic' by Australians. Anglo-conformity became the hallmark of Dutch identity in Australia. These assimilation patterns made the Dutch somewhat 'invisible' and saw them labelled 'model migrants'.

Today there are close to 95 000 residents in Australia who were born in the Netherlands and a further 240 000 Australians who claim Dutch ancestry. Over the last 50 years, the Dutch have had a huge impact on the building and construction industry in Australia, and have contributed significantly to the scientific, artistic and economic development of the country they now call home.

### ***How to find records about Dutch settlement and participation in Australia***

The collection of the National Archives of Australia contains many records about Dutch settlement and participation in Australia and Australia's relationship with the Netherlands during the twentieth century. Records in the National Archives collection are available for public access once they are 30 years old. Contact details for the Archives National Reference Service are given below.

If members of your family migrated to Australia during the twentieth century, the National Archives of Australia 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 search techniques where you substitute 'c' for 'k', 'i' for 'y' and 's' for 'z'. Changes to first names were very common with Dutch migrants – eg Marijke to Mary, Sjannie to Joan, Gerardus to Jerry and Jan to John.

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 towns in the Netherlands. 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 (the location of record is noted on RecordSearch), or if it is digitised, view it online on RecordSearch. If the record is held in Canberra you can request that a digital copy be placed online once it has been assessed for public access. If you've any questions about these processes please contact the National Reference Service.

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 Dutch 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, which can be a great help in pointing you in the right direction. Fact Sheet 156, *Records relating to Dutch migration held in Sydney*, and Fact Sheet 170, *Migrant hostels in*

*New South Wales, 1946–78*, and other fact sheets and guides can be downloaded for free from the ‘Publications’ section of the Archives’ website ([www.naa.gov.au](http://www.naa.gov.au)).

### ***Need help?***

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

National Reference Service  
PO Box 7425,  
Canberra Business Centre,  
ACT Australia 2610  
Tel: 1300 886 881 Fax: 1300 886 882  
Email: [ref@naa.gov.au](mailto:ref@naa.gov.au)

### **About the author**

Dr Nonja Peters is Director of the Migration, Ethnicity, Refugees and Citizenship Research Unit, Curtin University of Technology, Western Australia. Dr Peters has published widely on issues relating to migration. Her book *Milk and Honey but No Gold: Postwar Migration to Western Australia from 1945-64* was short-listed for the WA Premier’s 2001 Literary Awards, the Queensland Premier’s 2002 Literary Award for History, and the NSW State Records John and Patricia Ward History Prize.

Dr Peters was born in the Netherlands and immigrated to Australia with her family when she was five-and-a-half years old. Her current research interest is the Dutch diaspora to Australia and around the world. Dr Peter’s research focuses on migration, identity and belonging.

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