

*Newsletter of the Professional Historians' Association (NSW)*

*No. 240 January–February 2010*

# PHANFARE



Rhys Williams, *Death of a fan dancer*, c.1942.  
Detail of watercolour, PX\*D 68/5 f.453. State Library of New South Wales.  
Number 79 in the *One Hundred* exhibition at the Mitchell Library.

PHA NSW



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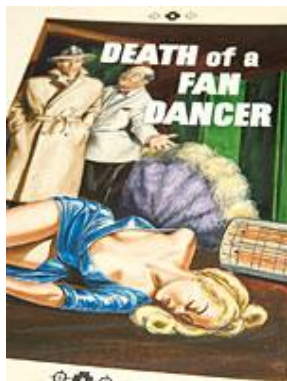
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### President's Report

This year your committee has decided to concentrate on raising the profile of professional historians. This is a major project. We are beginning by writing to all metropolitan councils (Mayor, General Manager, Local Studies librarian and Town Planner) to make them aware of what professional historians could do for their council and the range of skills they can offer. We explain that PHA (NSW) members are trained and experienced in interpreting local history for a range of media including: books, websites, exhibitions, walks,

talks, tours, films, audio interviews and other formats. We are suggesting different types of projects which could involve a historian. We also offer to advertise projects to our members through our email network (PHAES). We will repeat this operation with rural councils too, making a total of 140 councils. Let's hope it has an impact putting our profession in the minds of at least 560 relevant people and will mean that historians are selected for projects, which to date have not involved our input and expertise.

Ten PHA members enjoyed an excellent workshop at the Land and Property Management Authority alias the Lands Department (see report in this issue). The executive committee have organized a full professional development program for the next six months which is posted on the website [http://www.phansw.org.au/professional\\_dev.html](http://www.phansw.org.au/professional_dev.html)

The proposed closing of the National Archives offices in Darwin, Adelaide and Hobart scheduled to begin this year has been mitigated, thanks to vociferous and broad-based protest. Bernie O'Neil, President of ACPHA met with Senator Joe Ludwig to explain the implications for historians. PHA (NSW) executive wrote for a second time to stress that expertise of staff should not be lost; even if records are moved, archivists should accompany them. We have asked to be involved as users of the archives in any consultation in the plans for digitisation of records. We have pointed out that historians outside the threatened states should also be considered as stakeholders as they may need to refer to any national archive in their research. A press release on 23 February said 'The Rudd Government has listened to community concerns, and the National Archives will maintain a local presence in each state and territory'. It seems that the offices will be 'co-located in 'similar institutions'. We still need to keep up pressure for appropriate 'co-location' retention of staff expertise and consultation with historians in any digitisation projects.

I am pleased to tell you that the PHA (NSW) conference Islands of History is shaping up well. The response to Calls for Papers has been good and session topics will be emerging soon. You can enjoy a stimulating four days of visiting historic sites and listening to papers and joining discussion, and in the remaining time explore the island. So register now and join us on Norfolk Island from 18-25 July. This is part of our 25th anniversary celebrations. <http://www.phansw.org.au/documents/conference2010.html>

Further festivities will be held on our fifth annual History in July gathering on Tuesday 28th July when Dr Kirsten McKenzie, University of Sydney will be our guest speaker.

Please keep in touch if you have any ideas, interests or concerns for PHA (NSW).

[president@phansw.org.au](mailto:president@phansw.org.au)

**Virginia Macleod**

### **PHA NSW CPD Workshop : Land & Property Management Authority**

On 10 February 2010 a group of PHA NSW members attended a Continuing Professional Development Workshop at the Land and Property Management Authority (LPMA) in Sydney. We were well looked after. The afternoon workshop involved four presentations, broken up by a delicious afternoon tea, and attendees were also treated to a 'take home' pack of three historically focussed Department of Lands information booklets and a copy of the recently published *'Jewels in the Crown'-A History of the Bridge Street Plan Room and Crown Plans*, written by PHA member Terry Kass. This latter offering elicited gasps of surprise and delight.

After a brief welcome and overview, Madi Maclean, the Executive Manager of Land and Property Products and Services, and Michael van den Bos, Project Officer, outlined the history and process of digitising the main LPMA historical and archival collections. Aerial photography, a particularly useful collection which provides a visual record of NSW from 1947 to 2007, was brought in when the Central Mapping Authority became part of Land & Property Information. While challenges for LPMA staff include dealing with various obsolete preservation technologies, future plans for the archiving and digitisation program focus on having one electronically delivered integrated titling system for NSW.

The next presentation focussed on the heritage of the LPMA, especially the object collection which includes survey field books and the lottery equipment used in land ballots. Nicola Forbes, the Manager of Corporate Records Information Services, and Susan Kennedy, Heritage Officer, spoke about the work that was being done to make the records, object collections and Section 170 information available online. They also gave us a preview of a new heritage website that is due to be launched in April 2010.

The third presentation focussed on the Spatial Information eXchange (SIX) <https://six.lands.nsw.gov.au> and PIXEL. One of the benefits of SIX for end users, when the project is completed, is expected to be the more affordable cost of viewing and printing of scanned images from the Aerial Film Archive. PIXEL, which requires users to know the Parish the land to be searched is in, has a three way split screen which allows users to zoom in to three areas on the one map. While the aim is to make LPMA material more easily available off site, viewing kiosks with computer terminals will still be available to searchers at Queens Square.

Christine Yeats from State Records NSW gave the final presentation and handout, which focussed on the indexing and digitisation of the Registers of assignments and other legal instruments 1794-1824 (Old Registers 1-9.) These have been recorded onto a DVD which can be purchased for \$125 with the proceeds going towards the cost of conservation. Christine outlined the wide range of information contained in the Old Registers and the DVD's five easy search steps.

With a lot of information to absorb in a short time (and for those who were not able to be there) it is helpful to know that these LPMA information booklets provide a more detailed version of most of the presentations:

*Making what's old new again-Bridge Street Plan Room 1828-2007 and beyond,*

*The Evolution of Torrens Title-Preserving the State's Old Form Torrens Title Register,*

*Securing our Past for the Future-Preserving and digitising aerial film.*

Some information is available on their website under Historical Research:

[http://www.lands.nsw.gov.au/land\\_titles/historical\\_research](http://www.lands.nsw.gov.au/land_titles/historical_research)

Although the conservation and digitising of LPMA records and archives will take several more years, the workshop provided us with a useful view of the amount of work that is involved as well as the current and future benefits for researchers and other end users.

**Margaret Blundell**

## **REPORT -- History Council of NSW**

On 20 February 2010 the History Council of NSW membership met in the old reading room at the Mitchell Library for its Annual General Meeting. With a quorum achieved the AGM proceeded with reports for the preceding year's finances and activities tabled. The meeting marked the end of a very successful year in 2009 that had included the best attended History Week so far, the launch of a new series of talks with the City of Sydney Council called "In Conversation", and a closer relationship with Tranby Aboriginal College. All these activities have helped to strengthen the History Council as the peak body for history and broaden the appeal and audience for history-based events in Sydney and across the state. The 2009 annual report is available on the History Council website [www.historycouncilnsw.org.au](http://www.historycouncilnsw.org.au)

The AGM was followed in late February by the first meeting of the General Council in 2010 under the new two year Councillor system, meaning there were no membership elections for positions on the General Council for this year. This does not apply however to the Executive Committee which was voted on by the General Council at its first meeting. It is pleasing to report that as the PHA representative on the General Council, I was re-elected as President of the History Council, with David Carment returned as Vice President, Christine Yeats as treasurer, Michelle Cavanagh as Secretary and Tanya Evans and Tracy Sullivan as ordinary members on the Executive Committee.

The Council has begun the year pursuing its advocacy role with submissions to the City of Sydney regarding the City Historian position. Member organisations and community groups were also

appraised of the situation and encouraged to write to the Council. This follows a series of campaigns in 2009, including joint campaigns with the PHA and Royal Australian Historical Society which were effective in presenting a united front amongst the three organisations on such issues as the changes to the NSW Heritage Act and the Heritage Council.

Planning is well under way for History Week and the Annual History Lecture. In 2010, as in previous years, History Week will be celebrated in September across NSW. The theme for History Week 2010 is "Faces in the Street", which explores the theme of biography, and is promising to be as popular and diverse as the 2009 event. The Annual History Lecture will be delivered by Bridget Griffin-Foley. A teaser event will be held during the Sydney Writers' Festival with a panel session discussing biography. This free event is scheduled for Sunday 23 May 2010. Look out for it in the festival's event calendar.

**Mark Dunn, PHA representative**

## **Oral History Masterclass with Bill Bunbury, 20 February 2010**

Oral History Association of Australia (NSW) Inc.

The OHAA regularly presents a number of seminars throughout the year and there is usually time for Q&A. Yet practitioners of oral history are always keen to improve their interviewing skills (and increasingly their technical skills) and eager to harvest the expertise of people who have been practicing oral history for some time.

The idea of a masterclass was canvassed at one of the dinners held during the National Conference of the OHAA in Tasmania last September when inevitably issues about expertise, research and interview practice were part of the table discussion – and Bill was part of that discussion.

Bill Bunbury's presentation of an Oral History Masterclass for the NSW Branch of the Oral History Association of Australia (OHAA) was held at the State Library on 20 February, 2010.

Bill Bunbury, a long-time practitioner of oral history, was President of the Western Australian branch of the OHAA in the 1980s, won the inaugural NSW Premier's History Prize (Audio/Visual) in 1997 and, as a broadcaster for more than forty years, his voice will be familiar to ABC Radio National listeners.

There was a tremendous response to this event; nearly sixty people squeezed into the masterclass which ran from 10.30 until 3 pm (with time for lunch on the State Library's rooftop terrace). Whilst the term "masterclass" can suggest elitism and has the potential to exclude anyone who might be timorous about their own experience (as some of the enquiries beforehand indicated), once the session was under way it was clear from the audience's close attention that Bill's gentle style and modesty reassured anyone who was just beginning a project. Bill dispelled any further concerns of that sort by reinforcing the idea of the interviewer being the "master's apprentice".

Bill reminded us that telling stories is a visual as well as aural medium. He reiterated the importance of remembering the sensory aspect of hearing a story and eliciting those aspects of recollection during interviews. Claiming ignorance, he suggested, is beneficial in some interviews as it

encourages interviewees to explain an issue more extensively for someone with little background on a particular topic.

He also referred to supportive techniques to draw on during an interview where body language and seating arrangements were crucial. Bill makes a mental note of the external surroundings and physical environment in which an interviewee lives and draws on these cues during a life story interview. In these interviews (and depending on age and memory) Bill said interviewees could have the capacity to reach back through their own childhood memories to their grandparents' memories and times. He reminded us that the simple question, "What would you like to say to your children?", could be fruitful for life story interviews.

Bill reported that he rarely takes notes to his interviews. Instead he carefully researches, prepares and memorises details of his interviewee's experiences.

He emphasised the narrative, the meaning and significance of tone of the interview and the perceptions of the interviewee and their experience and perception *is* reality.

This was an informal, relaxed day of Q&A and learning about the techniques and experiences one man has brought to a lifetime of oral history practice.

## **Roslyn Burge**

### **Visions of Sydney**

With 2010 being the bicentennial year of the arrival of Governor Macquarie and his wife Elizabeth in Sydney, a number of events have been organised across Sydney and NSW by the Macquarie 2010 Bicentennial committee and other organisations. The History Council of NSW in conjunction with the Historic Houses Trust has developed a program of lectures reflecting on Macquarie's impact on the colonial town and his legacy in modern Sydney. The series was launched in February with Associate Professor Grace Karskens giving a very entertaining and informative lecture on Lachlan and Elizabeth Macquarie, the power couple of colonial Sydney. Grace spoke to a full house and shed new light on the Macquarie period and in particular, Elizabeth Macquarie's role. Elizabeth has often been overlooked in the focus on Lachlan, but Professor Karskens argues, without her by his side, Lachlan Macquarie may not have achieved many of the developments for which he is remembered.

The second lecture in the series was held on 24 March with Professor Peter Read and Professor Larissa Behrendt speaking on the impact of Macquarie on Aboriginal Sydney and the continuing legacy of that time for the Aboriginal population of contemporary Sydney. One of the advantages of this series of lectures is that it allows for the historical view compared to a contemporary standpoint. Both speakers highlighted the complexities of the issue and the links through Sydney's history of some of Macquarie's decisions to the current situation. This was nicely illustrated with Professor Read examining the impact of the Blacktown Institute and Bungarree's Farm at Middle Head. Both these sites, while raising plenty of questions in themselves, have in recent years allowed descendents to rediscover their Indigenous heritage.

Professor Behrendt then examined some of the issues that the Sydney Aboriginal population of today faces. The urban Indigenous population of Sydney is the largest in Australia, with the biggest

concentration being in Sydney's western suburbs. Many of the issues faced by rural populations, that get so much media attention – issues such as education, employment and health -- are also serious issues for the Sydney Indigenous communities. Their struggle to deal with these same issues gets very little attention or support. This is a sobering reminder of the long-term impact of colonial policies towards Indigenous Australians.

The next event in this series is a one day symposium to be held at the Museum of Sydney on Thursday 20 May. The symposium will look at the planning of Sydney including Macquarie's vision, the 1909 Royal Commission, the County of Cumberland Plan and the 2030 vision as put forward by the City of Sydney with speakers including Shirley Fitzgerald, Grace Karskens, Paul Ashton and Rob freestone. More details and ticket information are available on the History Council's website [www.historycouncilnsw.org.au](http://www.historycouncilnsw.org.au)

**Mark Dunn**

## **Book Notes**

### **Our Island Home - A history of Peat Island**

By Laila Ellmoos (Aging, Disability and Home Care, Sydney, 2010)



Islands are conspicuous right now: *Islands of Memory* was the title of the national conference of the Oral History Association of Australia last September and the forthcoming PHA conference on Norfolk Island is titled *Islands of History*.

*Our Island Home – a history of Peat Island*, in the Hawkesbury River, is the title of PHA member Laila Ellmoos's book, commissioned by Aging, Disability and Home Care, Department of Home Services NSW and launched by the Minister for Disability Services, Paul Lynch, on Peat Island in March.

*Left: Laila Ellmoos speaking at the launch of her book.*

*Photography by: Jamie North (Pardalote.com)*

The month before Laila presented a paper at the Australasian Social Welfare History Workshop 2010 at the University of New South Wales on this subject: titled *Island of Peter Pan or island of the damned? Writing a site-specific history of people with disabilities*. Her paper explored shifts in social and political attitudes and legislation associated with the care of people with disabilities and the increasing visibility of their residential institutions in the second half of the twentieth century.

This is not a review, rather it heralds a published history of a community of people who lived on Peat Island and the nearby Milson Island. Laila recounts the medical treatment and care of people with an intellectual disability who lived here for 99 years, until the Centre closed in 2010. Her history of a changing community, the landscape and its structures, is richly illustrated with wonderful portraits



of residents taken at a surprisingly intimate range by William Newell, oral history interviews recorded by Sue Andersen, and images of the Islands taken throughout the twentieth century.

The decision by Aging, Disability and Home Care to commission a historian to write this history, particularly with its intended audience the very community itself, is a sterling decision. Let's hope the publication will be widely distributed to the public.

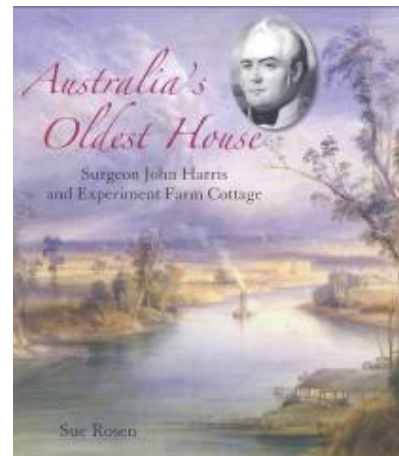
**Roslyn Burge**

## **Australia's Oldest House, Surgeon John Harris and Experiment Farm Cottage**

By Sue Rosen (Halstead Press, Ultimo, 2010)

Sue Rosen's latest publication *Australia's Oldest House, Surgeon John Harris and Experiment Farm Cottage* was launched on St Patrick's Day, at The Mint, by the former Prime Minister, Mr Paul Keating.

Sue has written more than a biography of John Harris and his house, Experiment Farm Cottage at Parramatta. Indeed, describing the independence of each chapter, she suggests they might be read as a series of essays. Sue's book will doubtless be reviewed elsewhere, this is a review of the launch.



She referred to the much earlier date of construction of Experiment Farm, in the 1790s, decades earlier than the 1830s decided by the National Trust. The late Caroline Simpson would have been pleased. Caroline Simpson was very much a presence at the launch and Sue acknowledged that working with the late Mrs Simpson was a *continual journey of revelation*. Revelling in that freedom, Sue declared it was rare in the state and probably across the nation that she could take control of the research, determine its priorities and follow where the records lead.

Sue addressed some of the concerns Mrs Simpson had for the Cottage, her feeling that there had been inadequate research undertaken by the National Trust and her annoyance at the absence of a historian from the research process. Mrs Simpson felt the National Trust's estimate of the date of construction of the 1830s made no sense in light of Surgeon John Harris's experience – his contribution to architecture, exploration and farming in NSW and early society in NSW with its *sense of energy, innovation and determination to establish a life here that was unobtainable in England*.

Both Sue and Mr Keating referred to the extraordinary contributions Caroline Simpson and James Fairfax have made to understanding the physical evidence of Experiment Farm Cottage and supporting extensive research over decades. The book is dedicated to Caroline Simpson and her *determined support over many years of Australian history*.

Indeed Sue referred to the long gestation of the publication, with Caroline Simpson supporting the intense research and investigation into, and writing about, the history of the Cottage. Sue believes Experiment Farm Cottage, as the earliest surviving European structure, is a unique historic artefact

which compels a rethink not only of the house and early colonial architecture but also society: life in the young colony was not entirely bleak and the standard of living (for some) was far from wretched.

Sue bemoaned the dearth of historians engaged in conservation practice – in policy formation, research and the absence of awareness in the general public about this critical gap. She said it is vital that there is greater involvement of historians in multidisciplinary teams in conservation and that:

*... those who have the power to influence policy and heritage practice demand studies that reflect the gamut of experience necessary for conservation and the full involvement of historians in the process- from research to the formulation of policy- the standard of the game desperately needs to be lifted.*

Mr Keating launched not only Sue's book, but also a barrage of missiles round town. At the Historic Houses Trust for its management practices at Elizabeth Bay House (*a house so good it defeats the concept of the dumbing down of it by Historic Houses*). At the National Trust, with whose staff he has locked swords through the pages of the recent press over Goat Island and Barangaroo earlier in that week.

There can't be too many book launches where the main speaker reads from the Burra Charter, as Mr Keating did to highlight the absence of rigour at the National Trust in its dating and maintaining of Experiment Farm Cottage.

*This History War matters ... he said in relation to Experiment Farm Cottage and the ... identification of a building that was potentially the oldest surviving European structure in Australia. Speaking bluntly about the National Trust Mr Keating said the ...caprice, the laziness, the intellectual sloppiness is not to be tolerated –and so I've said the Trust would go better getting into its poorly maintained, dilapidated, remnant, sadly presented properties ... which they are.*

There was a faintly audible "boo" from the back rows but it was exciting to see these topics aired and the public call for greater participation by historians and funding of their positions in conservation and heritage practice. It was a very positive evening with a great deal of support shown among the throngs chatting in the Mint courtyard afterwards for the sentiments expressed by both Sue and Mr Keating.

**Roslyn Burge**

## **Exhibitions around town**

Over the last few weeks a couple of fantastic exhibitions have opened in Sydney that should not be missed. Two in particular go a long way towards highlighting the unique aspects of Sydney's past and together they show case some of what makes Sydney such a vibrant and colourful city.

### ***Up the Cross: Rennie Ellis and Wes Stacey***

Exhibition - Museum of Sydney: 20 February-8 August 2010

The Museum of Sydney is one of Sydney's great museums. Its permanent collection is enough to get you coming back to explore but the large areas of gallery space that allow for changing exhibitions

means that this museum can keep exploring what Sydney means and what makes it the city it has become.

The exhibition *Up the Cross* presents Rennie Ellis' and Wes Stacey's photos of Kings Cross and Darlinghurst all taken in a six month period between 1970 and 1971. Together they capture one of Sydney's favourite, famous and infamous suburbs at a curious moment in time: the so-called summer of love. With the Vietnam War in full swing and the hippie counter culture at its height, Kings Cross became a cross roads for the world. While the old bohemian culture of the Cross began to fade, new groups bustled for attention and Ellis' camera was there to capture it. American soldiers come out of the clubs, strippers and pimps walk the streets, Roslyn Norton the Kings Cross witch glares out of the gloom, old timers walk past Hare Krishna devotees, bikies menace, hipsters strut and artists cover the walls of the Yellow House with an outpouring of technicolour expression.

Ellis and Stacey captured all of this in beautiful black and white and magic colour, producing image after image of fantastic moments in the Cross. Anyone familiar with this part of Sydney will be instantly captivated by the photographs. Compared to the Cross today, these photos make it look almost innocent, with just a hint of naughtiness there. But what a place it was.

## ***One Hundred***

Exhibition – Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW: 9 March-16 June 2010

Up the road from the Museum of Sydney in the galleries of the Mitchell Library another extraordinary exhibition has been opened in the last month. *One Hundred* celebrates the 100 years since the Mitchell Library was opened to house the bequest of David Scott Mitchell, and is the centrepiece for the centenary celebrations at the library in 2010.



*Abraham Ortelius, Theatrum orbis terrarum, Antwerp: Radaeum Gandensem, 1575, MRB/X912/7C (16<sup>th</sup> century). Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907. State Library of New South Wales. Number 3 in the One Hundred exhibition at Mitchell Library.*

Mitchell's bequest is considered to be one of the most significant collections ever placed in public hands and formed the foundation of the rich collection of material that makes up the Mitchell Library. The exhibition showcases 100 items from the collection for 100 days. The pieces on display range right across the types of materials the library has in its collection -- and continues to collect -- including paintings, maps, ephemera, photographs, posters, pamphlets, prints, books, letters and manuscripts.

The exhibition is large enough to occupy the entire gallery space at Mitchell, running through the three main rooms, with two films being shown in the space usually reserved for the paintings gallery. The films are treasures in themselves, including a direct ABC broadcast with Mungo Macallum Snr from the Mitchell Library in 1956, which is a document in early television as much as a look at the Mitchell 50 years ago, with the other newsreel dating from the 1940s. Readers and library users shown flicking through Shakespeare's folio and other precious items are likely to give current librarians heart palpitations and make some of us historians green with envy.

Any historian working in Sydney would (or should) have used the Mitchell Library in their work and may think themselves familiar with its collection. This exhibition, however, shows so much more than any regular user would ever have the chance of seeing and hints at the wondrous treasures stored away in the stacks and vaults below waiting to be discovered.

I urge anyone with an interest in the Mitchell to make the journey to see this exhibition. The web site attached to the exhibition ([www.onehundred.sl.nsw.gov.au](http://www.onehundred.sl.nsw.gov.au)) is also worth a look with plenty of associated events attached to the 100 celebration being listed.

**Mark Dunn**

### ***EVENT: Books and Mortar: 100 Years at the Library***

The City of Sydney Library and the Mitchell Library both had their genesis in the Public Library of NSW, established in 1877. The City Library officially began in 1909 when the Council assumed responsibility for the Lending Branch of the Public Library of NSW. The Mitchell Library began following David Scott Mitchell's bequest to the Public Library of NSW, also one hundred years ago. **PHA member, Terri McCormack and Mitchell Librarian, Richard Neville** present the histories of these two centennial institutions that have provided over 100 years of inner-city library service.

A City of Sydney Library Heritage Festival 2010 event

**Thursday 15 April 2010 6pm for 6.30pm  
Surry Hills Library, level 1 function room,  
405 Crown Street, Surry Hills**

Light supper will be served.

Free for members of the City of Sydney Library and Friends of the Mitchell Library  
\$10 for non-members

Bookings encouraged to assist with catering tel. 8374 6230

*Right: Queen Victoria Building, home of the City Library in 1918 (City of Sydney Archives)*



## **NSW Writers' Centre: *Writing the Past***

On Saturday 13 March the NSW Writers' Centre held the Writing the Past Festival. This event has become a regular feature of the NSW Writers' Centre's program and is increasingly popular, particularly amongst family historians and historical fiction writers. Housed in the historic Callan Park complex, the day included seven sessions of speakers, with a key note to start followed by three sessions running concurrently in two rooms through the rest of the day. With upwards of 100 people there to participate, all the sessions were well attended and well received. Each was run as a panel with three to four speakers with sessions on Sydney history and stories, local history, writing biography, crime and historic fiction amongst others.

The panel model works well for this day, allowing different ideas and approaches to be discussed in the forum. The PHA was well represented with both speakers and attendees. Lisa Murray and Mark Dunn spoke on writing for local history and heritage, Shirley Fitzgerald discussed Sydney's history, Margo Beasley addressed oral history and life stories, Sue Rosen chaired the local history section while many other PHA members were active listeners and questioners.

All up the day was very interesting and engaging. Unlike so many other styles of writing, historical writing is contested ground from the very start, even amongst historians. There are different opinions not only about style and approach but what constitutes history in the first place. All of these debates come to the fore on the day and are vigorously discussed. It's refreshing and exciting to be involved in such a vibrant community and to see and discuss the different ways of approaching the discipline.

**Mark Dunn**

**PHA (NSW) Directory 2009-10**

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### **Publications**

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[www.phansw.org.au](http://www.phansw.org.au)

available on line

PHA (NSW) Register of consulting historians

List of financial members

PHA (NSW) Annual Reports

Professional fees

PHA (NSW) Register of Historic Places and objects

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