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Phanfare

Professional Historians Association (NSW) Inc Newsletter

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Winter Solstice Issue



Phanfare

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This issue was produced by the Hills District Group consisting of Terry Kass, Katherine Knight and Carol Liston.

President’s Report

The Royal Australian Historical Society has decided that it would be beneficial to have a PHA representative on its library committee. President Ian Jack and the rest of the executive are keen to encourage professional historians, in particular, to make more use of the excellent research facilities offered by the Royal’s user-friendly library. If anyone is interested in undertaking the far from onerous task of representing the Association on this committee, please contact me.

The publication of the most recent edition of the *Public History Review*, at the end of last year, marks the end of the PHA’s association with the Australian Centre for Public History at UTS with regard to this journal. In view of a declining subscription base, rising printing costs and reduced funding from the Ministry for the Arts,

the PHA executive had no alternative but to terminate the arrangement. It is understood that the *PHR* will continue to be published in an electronic format through UTS.

Members of the executive take every available opportunity to help raise the Association’s profile. Despite the fact that it’s no longer fashionable in this country to stand up for fair wages and conditions, we will. Our recommended scale of fees is not pitched too high for professional high quality work. Unfortunately after advising potential commissioning bodies we often find that jobs go to non-historians. We see architects attempting to assess the heritage significance of the built environment in a historical vacuum; amateurs undertaking commissioned histories and oral history projects when the brief specifically asked for a historian. Potential commissioning bodies need to be made aware that they are assured of a professional quality product if a qualified historian is commissioned. This costs money. So don’t lower your fees; demand your rights. Unity is strength.

On a more cheerful note - it’s great to see members volunteering to work for the Association. Recently when help was needed with *Phanfare* four members offered their assistance. It would be good to see more of this – especially from our more senior members some of whom seem to have ‘gone to ground’.

Pauline Curby President

“Position, position, position” results in Bella Vista

When the upper stratum of Sydney’s early colonial society chose locations for land grants their characteristic described by Carol Liston as “genetic hardwiring for defensive positions” came into play. The choice of site for the homestead was the highest land with anything up to 360 degree views. Simultaneously, it became the contemporary real estate agent’s dream of “position, position, position”, providing “la bella vista” – the beautiful view.

Gregory Blaxland’s gracious Brush Farm House at Eastwood, built in 1818, with its views across the Parramatta River valley and towards the Blue Mountains, is one example. Another is the serene Indian bungalow Horsley, built by George and Blanche Weston in the early 1830s, on a high ridge west of Fairfield. Spectacular views of the Blue Mountains can be seen to the west and views towards Sydney to the east. Further north, in the Seven Hills area, is Bella Vista – built on land first farmed in the 1790s and with extensive views to the south and west.

Baulkham Hills Council describes Bella Vista as “one of the most intact and best examples in the Cumberland Plain of the summit model of homestead sites”.¹

According to heritage architect Rod Howard, it was Blacktown Historical Society, which first drew attention to the significance of the dilapidated buildings of Bella Vista 25 years ago and urged their preservation. By then Bella Vista was owned by the Metropolitan Water, Sewerage and Drainage Board. Society members were fearful that Bella Vista would be destroyed in the same way that historic Bungarribee House at Doonside was demolished in about 1957.

Their advocacy was successful and in the late 1990’s, the property was transferred to Baulkham Hills Shire Council with a \$1 million grant from the State Government to assist the conservation process. Since then, a conservation management plan has been prepared, a conservation architect and archaeologist have been employed, the site secured and restoration work begun on some of the buildings. In 2001 the Council obtained a Commonwealth Government grant for further stabilisation and repair and local Rotary Club members have been providing practical support.

On Sunday, April 17, at the end of Heritage Week 2005, 15,000 people visited the site for Bella Vista’s first open day since work on the site began. Display panels attached to buildings and fences explained the work to date, Hawkesbury Harvest stall holders offered fresh farm produce and homemade gourmet foods, local arts groups sold their wares and the air was filled with the rollicking sounds of bush music.

According to the display panels, “The Farm was sold together with a flock of sheep to John and Elizabeth Macarthur”, in 1801, which was probably shorthand for John’s purchase and Elizabeth’s management of the property in his absence for 12 of the 20

¹ Baulkham Hills Shire Council display panel: *Why is Bella Vista Farm important?*, BHSC Publicity Officer, April 2005

years in which he owned it. Their Seven Hills Farm, as it became known, was evidently used primarily for grazing and then exchanged for land at Cow Pastures, south west of Sydney.¹

The Bella Vista land has undergone a series of divisions and amalgamations since its first allocation, and has had layers of usage which add to the significance of the site as a community and educational facility. Among the more important landholders, according to historian Alan Sharpe, were Mrs Isabella Acres who bought the property in 1838 and William Thomas Pearce who bought it four years later. Mrs Acres developed most of the outbuildings, which created “one of Sydney’s earliest farm complexes, the original stables, barns, dairies and coach house still occupy the top of the rise”² The Fitzgerald cottage is thought to date from 1800.



The mayor, Clr Sonya Phillips with members of the Hills District Historical Society at the Bella Vista homestead on April 27, 2005

The Pearce family operated the farm until the mid 20th century. They developed a successful business from fruit growing and at its peak, employed 100 casual workers. As profitability waned in the early 1900s, they reintroduced sheep in addition to pig keeping and established a dairy. These new and expanded activities required further buildings.

The two storey Bella Vista homestead was probably not completed until about 1865 – the year of William Pearce’s death. Although badly damaged by termites, time and vandals, who also removed many of the cedar fittings, the house has now been

¹ Sharpe, Alan; *Pictorial History Blacktown District*, Kingsclear Books, 2000, p.117

² Sharpe, A; *op.cit.*, p.117

stabilised and secured like most of the other buildings. The intact surviving farm complex occupies 20 hectares of land and includes pastures, remnant woodlands, a main homestead, kitchen block, farm buildings, garden and a Bunya Pine lined driveway.

Additional reasons given by the council for the property's importance include:

- “The farm and its proximity to Old Windsor Road provide evidence of an extensive network of cattle routes connecting the Upper Hunter Valley with Sydney and Parramatta via the Great North Road”
- “For its association with citrus fruit growing, the local orchardists, including the Pearces, played an important role in the development of commercial citrus fruit growing in NSW”
- “For exhibiting a wide range of vernacular and colonial building techniques”¹

The Conservation Management Plan for the site was prepared in 2000 and builds on a number of studies conducted in the mid 1980s and early 1990s. The consultant team comprised Heritage Design Services of the Department of Public Works and Services and Otto Cserhalmi & Partners Pty Ltd.



Visitors enjoying the farm precinct with a worker's cottage and Bunya Pines in the background

¹ Baulkham Hills Shire Council; *ibid*

Bella Vista Farm's address is now Elizabeth Macarthur Drive, Bella Vista – off Norwest Boulevard. Enquiries (02) 9483 0555 or www.baulkhamhills.nsw.gov.au
For enquiries about the fresh produce and homemade gourmet foods of the Hawkesbury Harvest Farm Gate Trail and associated services phone (02) 4560 4660 or www.hawkesburyharvest.com.au

Photos supplied by Baulkham Hills Shire Council.

Katherine Knight

HISTORY ADVISORY PANEL – NEW SOUTH WALES HERITAGE OFFICE

Meeting held at Heritage Office, Parramatta at 2.00 pm, 26 May 2005

The following matters were discussed at the meeting:

1. Local Government Amalgamations. Maps of new Local Government Areas are available on the website of the Department of Local Government.
2. Use of Professional Historians on Community Based Heritage Studies. Report on meeting held with heritage advisers. Involvement of Professional Historians to remain on the Brief.
3. Criterion A of Heritage Assessment Guidelines “Historic Significance”. Discussion of possible amendments to the draft based on difficulties experienced by Sue Rosen in applying them on a large scale project.
4. Criterion D of Heritage Assessment Guidelines “Social significance”. The preparation of a method of assessing this criterion was further discussed.
5. Heraldry. Discussion of key projects.
6. Discussion of draft Attorney-General's Department guidelines for coats of arms in courthouses.
7. “Macro-appraisal” by National Archives discussed and members were asked to examine this and follow through in their roles in their respective organisations.

Terry Kass

Wax or Polish?

Recent enquiries about restoration of timber furniture elicited some clear responses from cabinet makers and antique restorers. They all effectively said: “Never use silicon products to polish furniture. The damage done is long term. The silicon gets into the timber and will cause any other material used in later restoration to get small bubbles and tiny craters.” One furniture maker said he had heard that the manufacturers of ‘Mr Sheen’ may be preparing a non-silicon polish.

John MacKinnon of J N MacKinnon Antique Restorations at North Rocks is a master craftsman who has been in the business for many years. He says the very best surface is created with good quality beeswax like ‘Liberon’, available from Stimson’s at Balmain or specialty departments of some David Jones stores. He advises against the use of oils and liquid furniture polishes. They run into cracks and joints.

If old grime has accumulated on timber, the surface can be cleaned and revived by rubbing with ‘super fine’ or ‘extra fine’ steel wool (also available from Stimson’s) dipped in a mixture of 1/3 vinegar, 1/3 turps and 1/3 linseed oil, John says. If furniture is in fairly good condition, you can even wash it with warm water and soap, provided you can dry it quickly afterwards. But whatever you do, care is required.

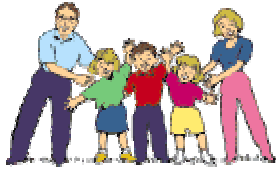
Once the surface is clean and dry, beeswax can be applied using a soft cotton cloth like an old singlet. Beeswax then only needs an occasional wipe over for the next six to 12 months, when it should be applied again.

Katherine Knight

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

All members are reminded to send in their renewals with the relevant payments.

The Renewal Form is attached to this PHANFARE.



What's On

by Christine de Matos

May/June 2005

Exhibitions

'Cape Town: Halfway to Sydney, 1788-1870'. 14 May – 7 August 2005. **Venue:** Museum of Sydney.

'Eye 4 Photography'. Until 29 May 2005. **Venue:** State Library of NSW

'Convicts: Life at the Barracks'. Until May 2005. **Venue:** Hyde Park Barracks Museum.

'Scrimshaw: The Art of the Whaler'. Until July 2005. **Venue:** Australian National Maritime Museum

'Jailed: Penitentiary to Private Prison 1840-2000'. Until 10 October 2005. **Venue:** Justice and Police Museum.

May Events

7& 8 Event. *'Out of the Woodwork: The Festival of Traditional Woodwork and Rare Trades'*. HHT. **Venue:** Rouse Hill Estate **Time:** 10am-5pm **Enquiries:** ph: (02) 8239 2288.

7& 8 Event. *'VE Commemorative Weekend'*. **Venue:** Australian War Memorial. **Enquiries:** web: <http://www.awm.gov.au>

10 Tour. *'Tour of Camperdown Cemetery, Newtown'*. SAG. **Meeting venue:** front entrance of St Stephen's in Church St. Newtown **Time:** 10am-12noon **Cost:** \$20, mems \$15 **Bookings essential:** ph: (02) 9247 3953; fax: (02) 9241 4872; email: info@sag.org.au

13 Tour. *'Elizabeth Bay House by Night'*. HHT. **Venue:** Elizabeth Bay House **Time:** 7-8.30pm **Cost:** \$20, conc/mem \$15 **Bookings essential:** ph: (02) 8239 2211.

14 Event. *'The Mint Anniversary Open Day'*. HHT. **Venue:** The Mint **Time:** 10am-5pm **Cost:** free **Enquiries:** ph: (02) 8239 2288.

15 &

29 Walk. *'Living Inner City-the Green Bans Legacy: Woolloomooloo and Victoria Street, Kings Cross'*. With Roslyn McDonald. HHT. **Meeting point:** tba **Time:** 2-3.30pm **Cost:** \$20, conc/mem \$15 **Bookings essential:** ph: (02) 8239 2211.

17 Workshop. *'Let's have a cup of tea'*. Explores 'tea' from a range of different historical and cultural perspectives. RAHS. **Venue:** History House Auditorium **Time:** 10am-3pm **Cost:** \$16.50 **Bookings essential:** ph: (02) 9247 8001; email: history@rahs.org.au

20 Conference. *'City People: Change and Diversity in Sydney's Population'*.

- Faculty of the Built Environment, University of New South Wales & Museum of Sydney. **Venue:** Museum of Sydney **Time:** 10.30am-5.30pm **Cost:** \$120, conc/mem \$95 **Bookings essential:** ph: (02) 8239 2211.
- 25 **Lecture.** *'2005 Ferguson Memorial Lecture: Truth and Fiction: The Bequest of David Scott Mitchell'*. Presented by Elizabeth Ellis. **Venue:** Ferguson Hall, St Stephen's Uniting Church, Macquarie Street, Sydney **Time:** 5.30 for 6pm **Cost:** \$5 **Bookings essential:** ph: (02) 9247 8001; email: history@rahs.org.au
- 28 **Tour.** *'The Great North Road'*. HHT. **Time:** 10am-4.30pm **Cost:** \$55, conc/mem \$50 **Bookings essential:** ph: (02) 8239 2211.
- 28 **Walking Tour.** *'Digging up the Neighbourhood'*. Archaeological sites in The Rocks and Millers Point. HHT. **Venue:** Susannah Place Museum **Time:** 10am-12 **Cost:** \$20, mem/conc \$15, family \$40 **Bookings essential:** ph: (02) 8239 2211.
- 28 **Tour.** *'Hyde Park Barracks'*. RAHS. **Venue:** Outside Barracks **Time:** 10.45 for 11am **Cost:** \$7, pens \$3 **Bookings essential:** ph: (02) 9247 8001; email: history@rahs.org.au
- 30 **Talk.** *'Critical Days: Gian Galeazzo Maria Sforza, Illness and The Body Politic in Renaissance Milan (1480-1492)'*. Presentations in the History of Medicine. **Venue:** Macquarie Room, Royal Australasian College of Physicians **Time:** 6 for 6.30pm **Cost:** \$5 **Enquiries:** Alyson Dalby ph: (02) 9256 5413; email: racplib@racp.edu.au

June Events

- 1 **Lecture.** *'Shipwrecks and Maritime Archaeology'*. Presented by Nigel Erskine. RAHS. **Venue:** History House Auditorium **Time:** 1pm **Cost:** \$7, mems \$5 **Bookings essential:** ph: (02) 9247 8001; email: history@rahs.org.au
- 1 **Talk.** *'A History of Antarctica'*. Presented by Stephen Martin. Library Society. **Venue:** Metcalfe Auditorium, State Library NSW **Time:** 5.30 for 6-8.30pm **Bookings:** ph: (02) 9273 1770; fax: (02) 9273 1248; email: bookings@sl.nsw.gov.au
- 12 **Talk.** *'Ukrainians in Australia'*. Presented by Dr Sonia Mycak and Mr Andrew Bilinsky. RAHS. **Venue:** Reception Rooms, History House **Time:** 12noon-2.30pm **Cost:** \$24, mems \$20 **Bookings essential:** ph: (02) 9247 8001; email: history@rahs.org.au
- 15 &
- 24 **Talk.** *'Murder Most Foul'*. Tales from the courts, Police Gazettes other records. State Records NSW. **Venue:** 15th – SRC, 24th – WSRC **Time:** 10.30am-12.30pm **Cost:** free **Bookings essential:** ph: (02) 8247 8613; email: accinfo2@records.nsw.gov.au; web: <http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/>
- 21 **Tour.** *'Tour of the Mint Building and the Caroline Simpson library'*. SAG. **Meeting venue:** Courtyard in front of The Mint **Time:** 10-11.30am **Cost:** \$15, mems \$12 **Bookings essential:** ph: (02) 9247 3953; fax: (02) 9241 4872; email: info@sag.org.au
- 25 **Workshop.** *'NSW Divorce Records - What you might find if they didn't live happily ever after . . .'*. SAG. **Venue:** Seminar Room, Rumsey Hall, 24 Kent St **Time:** 10am-1pm **Cost:** \$22, mems \$18 **Bookings essential:** ph: (02) 9247 3953; fax: (02) 9241 4872; email: info@sag.org.au

- 28 **Talks.** *'Work in Progress! A joint RAHS and Australian Society for the History of Engineering and Technology activity'*. Talks on the current research projects of members, followed by discussion. **Venue:** History House **Time:** 5.30 for 6pm **Cost:** \$25, RAHS & ASHET mems \$20 **Bookings essential:** ph: (02) 9247 8001; email: history@rahs.org.au
- 30-
2 **July Conference.** *'The Past is Before Us: 9th National Labour History Conference'*. University of Sydney. **Enquiries:** Greg Patmore email: lh2005@econ.usyd.edu.au
- 30-
2 **July Conference.** *'Chinese Studies Association of Australia Ninth Biennial Conference'*. Golden Dragon Museum in Bendigo, Victoria. **Enquiries:** web: <http://www.anu.edu.au/asianstudies/chinakoreacen/csaa/#CONFERENCE>

Upcoming Conferences

'Japan – Negotiating the 21st Century: Japanese Studies Association of Australia Conference'. 3-6 July 2005, University of Adelaide. **Enquiries:** email: jsaa2005@adelaide.edu.au; web: <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/jsaa/>

'2005 National Conference of the Australian Historical Association'. 3-9 July 2005, Sydney. Held in conjunction with the International Congress of Historical Sciences. **Enquiries:** A/P Rae Frances email: r.frances@unsw.edu.au

'20th International Congress of Historical Sciences'. 3-9 July 2005, University of NSW Sydney. **Enquiries:** email: cish2005@incompass.com.au; web: <http://www.cishsydney2005.org>

'Animals & Society Inaugural Conference of the Animals and Society (Australia) Study Group'. 12-15 July 2005, University of Western Australia. **Enquiries:** web: http://www.anthropology.arts.uwa.edu.au/home/envirosoc/animals/animals_and_society

'The Politics of Recognition: Identity, Respect and Justice'. 30-31 July 2005, Deakin University (Toorak campus). **Enquiries:** web: <http://www.deakin.edu.au/arts/icg/Recognition/index.php>

'Beyond Professionalisation: Towards a History of Practice', 3rd International Conference on the History of Nursing and Midwifery, 25-27 August 2005, University of Melbourne. **Enquiries:** Deborah Fleming Deborah@unimelb.edu.au or Judith Godden jgodden@nursing.usyd.edu.au

'The Japanese Occupation: The Lessons of the Past 60 Years After'. 5-6 September 2005, Singapore. **Enquiries:** Kevin Blackburn, email: kpblack@nie.edu.sg; Karl Hack, email: kahack@nie.edu.sg; ph: (65) 6790 3414; fax: (65) 6896 9135.

'The Third International Conference on the Book'. 11-13 September 2005, Oxford Brookes

University, UK. **Enquiries:** web: <http://www.Book-Conference.com>

'XVIth International Conference of the Association for History and Computing'. 14-17 September 2005, Amsterdam. **Enquiries:** email: michelle.van.den.berk@niwi.knaw.nl; web: <http://www.ahc2005.org>

'On the Right Path? Reform and Reaction in Australia'. 26-27 September 2005, Berlin. **Enquiries:** Graham Willett, email: gwillett@philologie.fu-berlin

'2005 Women in Asia Conference'. 26-28 September 2005, University of Technology, Sydney. **Enquiries:** Catherine Walczak, catherine.walczak@uts.edu.au; web: <http://www.hss.uts.edu.au/wia/>

'REFRESH! First International Conference on the Histories of Media Art, Science and Technology'. 28 September-3 October 2005, Banff New Media Institute, Canada. **Enquiries:** email: MediaArtHistories@culture.hu-berlin.de

'Indigenous Literatures of Australasia and the Pacific'. 27-29 October 2005, Houston, Texas. **Enquiries:** Miriam Schacht, email: mschacht@mail.utexas.edu

'Translation Colloquium'. 20 November 2005, National Museum of Australia, Canberra. **Enquiries:** web: <http://arts.anu.edu.au/nih/TranslationWeb/>

Call for Papers

'A Conference on the History of Australian Television'. Early December 2005, University of Technology Sydney and the Powerhouse Museum. Abstracts due by **early May 2005** **Enquiries:** ph: Nick Herd, 0417669913 or Paula Hamilton, (02) 9514 1947; email: nickherd@bigpond.com or paula.hamilton@uts.edu.au

'The Catholic Impact on Australia'. 3 September 2005, Pennant Hills, Sydney. 300 word abstract due by **30 May 2005**. **Enquiries:** John Luttrell fms, email: jluttrell@brokenbay.catholic.org.au

'Dancing with Memory: Oral History and its Audiences: XIVth International Oral History Conference'. 12-16 July 2006, Sydney. Proposals due **30 May 2005**. **Enquiries:** email: IOHA@uts.edu.au; web: <http://www.ioha.fgv.br/>

'Dealing with the Other : Australia's faces and interfaces'. 9-10 December 2005, University of Paris IV-Sorbonne. One page proposal due by **1 June 2005**. **Enquiries:** Pierre Lagayette, email: pierre.lagayette@wanadoo.fr or Alexandra Sauvage, email: alexandrasauvage@yahoo.com

To contribute to What's On, send details of your event to c.de-matos@uws.edu.au by 20th of the month.

Reflections on *Shadows and Dreams at The Female Orphan School*

Among Heritage Week events in April was *Shadows and Dreams at the Female Orphan School*, on the Parramatta campus of the University of Western Sydney. Advance publicity said

What shadows lie within?

... a string trio stitching childhood dreams into sound

... the whispers of an orphaned child to her rag doll

Join this intimate, music-art mystery tour through a treasured Heritage building

The work had been 18 months in gestation – a collaborative creation by composer Corrina Bonshek, visual artist Jane Davidson, writer Gretchen Miller, electroacoustic composer Emma Stacker and lighting exponent Luiz Pampolha. Audience members were greeted by “Matron Betts” at the entrance to the school and, moments later, by a performance of an instrumental and vocal work *The dream-memory of my mother’s voice*. From there, Matron Betts escorted the audience slowly through rooms and up stairways setting the scene at each location with a statement of a child’s name and age and an extract from a 19th century document about the child’s behaviour or history.

Along the way, vignettes in shadowy spaces evoked suggestions of little girls and older students in their daily tasks of sewing, domestic duties and schooling for their future station in life as servants and housekeepers. Softly lit translucent fabrics that trembled with the movement of air, suspended embroideries of children’s drawings, music that suggested disturbed sleep and restless dreams were among highly imaginative and at times dramatic suggestions of mourning, loss, rebellion, joy and hope.

In many ways, it was a beautiful and sometimes moving production, but as it came to an end, I found myself in a state of mild exasperation. This was the second original work, associated with UWS, I had seen created around the imagined feelings of children in the Female Orphan School. The first was *Whispers of Walls* in 1996.¹ Both seemed to assume the children to be victims and to interpret their experience from a 21st century middle-class perspective – a world of psychological theories, choices and alternative opportunities.

Where was the sense of context in which the whole colony was operating at the time of these events? Where was the acceptance that though circumstances might have been tough, for many girls it was providing opportunities for regular meals, shelter and preparation for future employment they could not have had otherwise?

Thirty five years ago, I worked as an occupational therapist on the same campus, when it was a psychiatric hospital with wards of long-term, chronically ill or mentally retarded patients. It was a tough and sometimes grim environment, much as its Female Orphan School predecessor would almost certainly have been, and there was

¹ *Artswest*, Vol 13, No 4, April 1996; A glimpse of whispers, Artswest Foundation, p.6

plenty of room for improvement. But there was also a resilience, routines that gave structure to the days and a restrained sense of optimism.

It might make a good story to romanticise separation, loss and yearning – and the quotations selected were undoubtedly authentic – but it is equally possible to create a vivid story using optimistic themes drawn from rigorous historical research. An outstanding example is Eleanor Dark's *Timeless Land* trilogy, published between 1940 and 1953. I have read these books only in the last six months and been amazed by the thoroughness of the history research on which they were based. In fact, there were some interesting parallels to be drawn between the first book of the trilogy – *Timeless Land* – and Inga Clendinnen's 2003 history *Dancing with Strangers*. Both authors had clearly researched the same documents and arrived at comparable interpretations.

While the central characters in Eleanor Dark's trilogy are fictional, the contrast with the romanticised “true” personalities of *Shadows and Dreams* is pronounced. Eleanor Dark uses a combination of excerpts from historic records, sensitive observation, imagination and exceptional writing talent to create a series of entirely credible characters. Most relevant to this reflection is her account of the convict woman Ellen Prentice and her neglected surly little son Johnny who grows to adulthood in a strange cultural melange of European and Aboriginal experience. She also offers a colourful glimpse of the teeming life seen from the first female orphan school on the corner of George and Bridge Streets, Sydney, in 1811 and then says “. . . the Governor was already pondering the removal of the institution to some site at Parramatta, which should command a view less damaging to their morals.”¹

There is authenticity about every aspect of Eleanor Dark's characterisations of the Prentices – physical suffering, isolation, humiliation and ignorance – but there is also a dogged determination to survive and a fierce care of the mother for her son. The drama lies in their struggle to overcome the difficulties – the whole story, after all, of early Sydney – not in their status as victims.

The question of historical interpretation reminds me of a third theatrical work associated with the UWS – the 1997 production by Theatre Nepean students of Nick Enright's play *The Female Factory*.² Students had been given careful guidance in history research and a resource document was developed for school audiences. Combined with the skilful direction of Terence Clark, an extraordinary spirit of authenticity pervaded the production with sometimes shocking results – like the impact of watching a child with infected eyes having his eyes wiped with a filthy cloth by his mother – unaware of the hygiene knowledge of today.

Theatrical power lay in projecting the realities of the day – the raucous, energetic, competitive struggle to survive – not in emphasising the pathos of women as victims.

Katherine Knight

¹ Dark, Eleanor; *Timeless Land Trilogy, Book III, No Barrier*, 1953, Arkon paperback ed.1980, p.100

² *Artswest*, Vol 14, No 9, October, 1997; *Notorious female factory*, Artswest Foundation Ltd, p.6

Followed by “ . . . vicious and rebellious” at the Male Orphan School

Highlighting the contrast between romanticised history and the real life drama that can emerge from carefully researched historic records was a brief exhibition hosted by Fairfield City Museum and Gallery – “ . . . vicious and rebellious”?: *Life at the Male Orphan School (1819 – 1850)* It ended on April 21. Fiona Starr and Rebecca Wheeler prepared an informative booklet to accompany the exhibition.

The Male Orphan School exhibition featured selected orphans, staff and assigned convicts – only those with known living descendants – and was developed in association with 30 descendants who had been researching their own family histories. The opening was made remarkable by the presence of about 25 of those descendants. Their shared characteristics were energy, enthusiasm and interest.

There may have been tragedies, but these people were living testimony to the capacity for survival among the early colonists. Informal conversation revealed discoveries of characteristics shared by previously unknown family members found through the process of genealogical research. One lady who described herself as a retired school teacher had found two other teachers in her extended family. Descendants of the longest serving master Lieutenant Richard Sadlier RN were proud of their forebear’s record of service extending from 1829 to 1850. The Male Orphan School closed in 1850 and the remaining students were transferred to the Female Orphan School at Parramatta.

Of a total of more than 800 orphans who attended the Male Orphan School, 29 were featured in the exhibition. Eight selected staff biographies included assigned convicts, free settlers, viticulturalist James Busby, who taught agriculture and vine cultivation at the school, and former masters Reverend Robert Cartwright and Lieutenant Sadlier. The names Busby, Cartwright and Sadlier are remembered in suburbs of those names in the Liverpool area.

The Female Orphan School was established in Sydney, on the corner of Bridge and George Streets, by Governor King in 1801. Two years later, King awarded a grant of 12,300 acres of land north of Liverpool for the generation of income from farming leases to sustain the Orphan School. It was only when the female orphans moved to new premises near Parramatta in 1818, that the Sydney building was put to the service of male orphans – opening on January 1, 1819. Until then, male orphans had to fend for themselves on the streets or in impoverished households.

In legal terms, a child was considered an orphan if fatherless, so many did have mothers and some even had fathers, whose circumstances, including imprisonment and serious illness, meant that they were unable to care for their children. The periods for which children stayed in these institutions varied greatly according to their family circumstances and conditions within the institutions themselves.

By 1824, the dilapidated condition of the Male Orphan School building in Sydney led to the transfer of the orphans to a site on the Orphan School land north of Liverpool, where they were to learn the skills required to build a school and develop a farm – training essential to the future of the colony’s expansion and food supply. Many of the staff were assigned convicts and conditions in the first several years were clearly very primitive.

Inadequate shelter, crowding, poor hygiene and uncertain water supply meant the rapid spread of sicknesses in the early years. Almost the only reports of conditions currently available are from authorities like Archdeacon Thomas Hobbes Scott responsible for the 1826 description “. . . I fear one half of the boys are so vicious and rebellious . . .” from which the exhibition’s title has been drawn. The opinions of boys and staff are unknown.

Boys worked on the building of dormitories and farm sheds, tended pigs, sheep and cattle, learned viticulture, and the farming of crops like barley, wheat, vegetables and cotton. Between 1826 and 1827 sandstock bricks were made on site and the two storey master’s house completed. The house is now the only building remaining of the orphan school complex and can be seen on a rise in Brown Rd, Bonnyrigg, not far from the junction with Aplin Rd.

Despite the hardships, it is recognised that the orphans in both the male and female orphan schools were better off than their contemporaries in the workhouses of England. In her address at the exhibition opening, Carol Liston observed that despite records of tragedy and hardship, there was also evidence of mothers who negotiated for a son’s admission to the orphan school, where they had opportunities for trade training and even the chance to be indentured into the lucrative work on whaling ships. This was also the era of charity only to the “deserving poor”.

“The Male Orphan School played a vital role in the development of child welfare in the colony and represents one of the earliest attempts in the colony at welfare combined with training, due to the progressive social and educational policies of its administrators.”¹ The Male Orphan School site and the master’s house – now known as Bonnyrigg House – are listed on the Register of the National Estate. The house is the oldest building in Fairfield City and archaeological investigation of the site and further research are continuing.

Katherine Knight

¹ Starr F and Wheller R; “*...vicious and rebellious*”?: *Life at the Male Orphan School, 1819 – 1850*, Fairfield City Museum and Gallery, 2005, p.5

NAA Consultative Committee Meeting 26 April 2005

Matters discussed at the meeting included:

1. Assessment of the plan collection under the Department of Administrative Services is still under way.
2. Digitization of Post Office files has now passed through a good deal of the alphabet but due to problems in loading files on to the website they had only reached "Berrima" on the website by 26 April.
3. A new data package called "Making Australia Home" was released on 9 February 2005, similar to the World War One personal files. For a set fee of \$25, inquirers can obtain copies of the migration selection documents and associated documents for their relatives or themselves.
4. A policy about the use of digital cameras in the search room is currently being developed. A draft copy was available to the Consultative Committee.
5. World War One personnel files. All entries have now been listed making a total of 389,000 entries. The files are being progressively digitized.
6. The release of a book *Russian Anzacs in Australian History*, by Dr Elena Govor, based on a matching of NAA personnel files with descendants and areas they had come from, was noted. It has been very well received. A notable aspect that has emerged from her research is that after personnel from the British Empire and Dominions, the Russian Empire provided the largest contingent of enlistments for Australia in World War One.
7. A total of \$12,000,000 in funds has been allocated to the Sydney office of NAA for preservation work. This will enable it to devise a 5 year programme to preserve AV material.
8. The NAA is bracing itself for an onslaught of family history inquiries. The Australian rights to a highly successful TV series from Britain entitled, "Who Do You Think You Are?" have recently been bought by a TV station. Each episode looks into the genealogy of prominent persons and celebrities.

Terry Kass

ARCHIVES AWARD WINNER TURNS DETECTIVE

The Director-General of the National Archives of Australia, Ross Gibbs, today announced that the winner of the National Archives Ian Maclean Award for 2005 is historian Dr Nikki Henningham.

Dr Henningham is currently a research fellow and Executive Officer of the Australian Women's Archive Project.

Mr Gibbs said that the National Archives Ian Maclean Award was made annually to provide an individual with a paid opportunity to conduct research that would benefit the archival profession.

'Dr Henningham intends to use her award to locate the whereabouts of records relating to the experience of migrant women in Australia primarily from 1970,' Mr Gibbs said.

'To augment the existing holdings of official archival repositories, her project will entail some solid detective work to track down valuable records presently hidden away in back offices, garages or even under beds,' he said.

'Anyone who may have been involved in community programs to assist migrant women at the local, state or national level, may be able to advise Dr Henningham just where records of these community initiatives are now kept,' he said.

Dr Henningham said that by increasing awareness of the availability of records to researchers and cultural historians, a more expansive story of Australian identity can be made public.

'There are still gaps in the archival records relating to women, no matter what their ethnic background is. While women have had very active roles in public life, quite often this work has taken place through professional and private networks which are not always likely to capture the attention of official archival repositories,' Dr Henningham said.

'The records of women may also be embedded within the records of the male family members, and because existing databases of manuscripts are still not comprehensive I will need to do plenty of sifting, sorting and recording,' she said.

The Australian Women's Archive Project is a joint initiative of the National Foundation for Australian Women and the Department of History at the University of Melbourne and their website links researchers to information held in archival collections around Australia. The results of Dr Henningham's Ian Maclean project will be published on the website www.womenaustralia.info <<http://www.womenaustralia.info>> and the National Archives website at www.naa.gov.au <<http://www.naa.gov.au>>

The Ian Maclean Award is named in memory of Ian Maclean (1919-2003) who worked passionately for the Archives profession both nationally and internationally for 50 years, starting as the first Commonwealth Archives Officer in October 1944.

If you would like to know more about the Ian Maclean Award please contact Derina McLaughlin at derina.mclaughlin@naa.gov.au <<mailto:derina.mclaughlin@naa.gov.au>> or visit the National Archives of Australia website at www.naa.gov.au <http://www.naa.gov.au>.

PHA TRASHES OPPONENTS!

The PHA Trivia Quiz Team took the silver medal in the annual Australian Society of Archivists' charity trivia night on Wednesday, 18 May. We came second of the thirteen competing teams, beaten only by the intellectual heavyweights from Mitchell Library.

This year the quiz took place at Fisher Library, and raised over \$800 to help restore the archives in Banda Aceh. Quizmaster was Alan Ventress, Associate Director of State Records NSW.

Our strengths were art, literature, music, and general knowledge. Sport and science let us down, and we were only so-so on Australian history (!). The team members - Margo Beasley, Anne Smith, Ivy Edwards, and Peter Tyler each received a showbag of goodies as our reward.

Once again, a fun night, assisted by appropriate refreshments. Next time, we must try to enter two PHA teams.

Peter Tyler

New association stirs discussion about contemporary architecture and history

The Australian Architecture Association (AAA) was established last year under the leadership of internationally awarded architect Glenn Murcutt. The vision is “to enable the public to understand, enjoy and discuss architecture, locally and beyond”. As a non-profit organisation its aims include the promotion of contemporary architecture to as many people as possible and support of the work of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects.

The association’s program began in March this year and is modelled on a program developed in Chicago – a city famous for its built environment. The Chicago Architecture Foundation now hosts tours for more than 200,000 people annually. Like the Chicago group, AAA offers the Black program, which is a series of talks by leading international architects, and the White program, which currently offers 66 tours - cruise, bus, walk or self-drive.

It was architect Nick Leplastrier’s promise that he would tell it “as he sees it – a tale of often lost opportunities” that inspired me to book for the first harbour cruise. In a story in the Sydney Morning Herald’s Domain supplement he was quoted as saying “I’m not interested in selling Sydney. I’m interested in raising issues that are confronting us. As evidenced by the plethora of mindless, exclusive housing crowding the waterfront west of the bridge; the Government has dropped the baton on the whole thing.”¹

For the harbour cruises, AAA has chose the Aboriginal operated Deerubbin. Richard Leplastrier introduced himself as a “leftie from way back” and mentioned his privilege as a young architect to have worked with Joern Utzon on Sydney Opera House. He sketched the geological formation of Gondwana Land, then Australia and Sydney Harbour and pointed to the ridges of land defining the harbour and their fingers forming headlands tapering to the water. All these were traversed by Aboriginal people for thousands of years, he said, and their tracks on top of the ridges and along the fingers of land to the water were the first routes used by the Europeans.

Many of the roads like Harris Street, Ultimo, follow those original routes, he said. A city should build on its layers of history, acknowledging the diverse influences in its formation. Ample public spaces should be available for people to meet and socialise, just as Aborigines gathered where the tracks from the headlands descended to water. On the site of the old CSR Company, new apartments crowd to the water’s edge, excluding others and destroying any space for social contact. They are lonely places, he said.

Richard Leplastrier pointed to the later history represented in the Walsh Bay finger wharves, admiring the Sydney Theatre Company Wharf for its sympathetic

¹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, Domain supplement; City on the rise, Anne Susskind, February 24, 2005, p.7

redevelopment and continued public access to the water front. The privately developed wharves to the east, with their “gin palaces” moored in front of them have lost much of their early maritime and social character.

Fifteen thousand people gathered on the steps of the Opera House to protest against the “toaster” redevelopment of East Circular Quay, but the authorities didn’t listen, he said. His concern, now, is that voices should be raised to force the State Government to discuss 12 new towers the size of Australia Square suddenly announced for east Darling Harbour, following the planned closure of the cargo wharves there.

“We certainly have the talent, but there’s a total lack of vision at the top, politically. More often than not, that talent is not given the chance in a public realm. The younger, more radical people don’t seem to have access,” he said.¹

More than 1000 people attended the first Black program talks given by David Chipperfield in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne. The first Sydney Harbour Cruise on the White program – with Richard Lepplastrier – was so popular, a second cruise had to be scheduled to follow. The first regional White tour of Newcastle was voted a great success. Tour organisers are pleased to record an attendance of about 70% non-architects to 30% architects.

The Australian Architecture Association is eager for new members and participants in their program. Enquiries 8297 7283 or www.architecture.org.au

Katherine Knight



¹ *SMH*; op. cit.

National Archives Research Grants

Applications for grants close soon

Funded Research Opportunities at the National Archives - 25 June Deadline

The National Archives is keen to foster awareness and encourage use of its vast collection of documents, photos, posters, maps, drawings, films plays, music scores and sound recordings. To assist in that aim, each year the Archives offers two grants for archival research.

Frederick Watson Fellowship

The Frederick Watson Fellowship is offered to individuals interested in conducting scholarly research using the National Archives collection. Intended for accomplished historians, established authors, senior academics or high profile public commentators, the Fellowship includes financial assistance of up to \$15 000 to cover travel, accommodation and living expenses. The successful applicant will use archival resources to publish a book or website, present a public lecture and seminar and be available for media interviews.

Margaret George Award

The Margaret George Award is offered for the first time in 2004. The Award is for historians, journalists or accomplished researchers who have, as a minimum, completed post-graduate studies. The successful applicant will conduct research substantially utilising the National Archives collection with the aim of producing a journal article, conference papers, web page or a book. The award includes a stipend of up to \$10 000 for travel, accommodation and living expenses. It is desirable that applicants have an established record of achievement in their chosen field and the potential to excel further.

Online application forms can be downloaded at www.naa.gov.au <<http://www.naa.gov.au>> . If you have any queries I would be very happy to answer them in person. I can be reached by telephone 02 6212 3986 or at derina.mclaughlin@naa.gov.au <<mailto:derina.mclaughlin@naa.gov.au>> . Please note that applications for both awards close on 25 June 2004.

Derina McLaughlin
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26 April 2005

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