



ISAA National Newsletter

Independent Scholars Association of Australia Inc.

*The Boab tree is self-sustaining; it draws on its own resources.
Upside down, it flourishes against the grain.*

**No. 46
DECEMBER 2014**

ISSN 1838-319X

Print Post Approved: 100011 17

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ISAA Publications 2015

March *ISAA Newsletter*
June *ISAA Review*
August *ISAA Newsletter*
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MEMBERSHIP

\$95 – Full Members
\$60 – Concessional Members
\$120 – Household Membership
\$80 – Concessional Household
3-year membership rates are available for all categories.



Since the August *Newsletter* we have had a successful annual conference on *The Lucky Country: Fifty Years On* and the Annual General Meeting where I was elected President for a second year, Christine Yeats (NSW) was elected Secretary, Wal Collins (ACT) was elected Treasurer and Ingrid Moses (ACT) was elected an ordinary member of Council, all for three years. David Headon continues as Vice President, Janet George as Immediate Past President, Sue Steggall, Marilyn Dodkin and Liz Morrison continue as ordinary members of Council and we have a vacancy for an ordinary member. Shirley Pipitone was re-appointed Public Officer.

We have completed the procedures for our affiliation with the National Coalition of Independent Scholars (NCIS). The new recruitment brochure has been circulated electronically to members and the Recruitment Committee is beginning to follow up on some of its other recommendations to Council. We have been steadily accumulating new members, four since our last meeting September although some of our long-term members are saying farewell.

Our focus for the next year will need to be on improving our financial position by attracting more members, continuing to develop our website and encouraging members to use it, and planning for and celebrating ISAA's 20th Anniversary. As we do these things our aim should be to raise ISAA's profile as an organisation that provides a community of scholars who discuss ideas and issues of importance, and who support each other in our research and writing. **Christine Jennett President, ISAA** ♦

2014 ISAA National Conference



*Dr Julia Horne &
Dr Ann Moyal AM*



Dr Christine Yeats



ISAA President, Dr Christine Jennett



Conference dinner



Susan Priestley



*Emer. Prof Ian
Lowe*

ISAA Chapter Reports

We welcome news from all ISAA members, whether collectively as a group or as individuals.

ACT Chapter

Lunchtime meetings

The ACT Chapter resumed lunchtime meetings in 2013 when it became clear we had more offers of addresses than slots in the calendar to present them. The lunchtime stream provides informal presentations such as works-in-progress and discussion of ideas on issues of broad interest. Ian Cowan hopes the lunchtime meetings will be about questions, not answers. 'I do not wish to learn something in a way that reminds me of a school lesson,' Ian said. 'I go to find out not only about how other people think, but how other people think about what I think'. In a word: Argument, disagreement, excitement.

In a discussion on 'Morality in a Godless World' Doug Cocks focused attention on the implications and consequences of this cultural shift. At the September meeting Sylvia Marchant spoke on 'The Great Exhibition of 1851: a turning point in history and society', held at the Crystal Palace – 'the marvel of its age'.

In 'Commissions of Audit: Aid or Hindrance to Government?' Roger Wettenhall looked at the processes that produce the Commissions of Audit – often in the news in recent times. At the last meeting for the year (November) John Greenwell discussed 'Recent United States Supreme Court decisions and the final transformation of American democracy into a plutocracy'. **Alan Roberts, Convenor, lunchtime meetings**◆

Evening meetings

The evening stream consisted of relatively formal presentations of completed research. In August James Fox spoke on 'Indonesia: Where to now?' about issues critical for Indonesia's long-term development.

At the September meeting John Mulvaney spoke about life past and present on the Cobourg Peninsula, north-east of Darwin, ranging from millennia of Aboriginal life to 19th-century British settlements. Douglas Newton gave November's talk: 'The choice for war in 1914'. Many people imagine that Britain did all she could to avert war, and that politicians chose war at the last moment as a 'dire necessity'. The tale scarcely matches the evidence.

On 1 December we held the AGM and social gathering, at the home of Keith Powell. **Patricia Clarke, ACT Committee:** clarke.patricia@netspeed.com.au ◆

NSW Chapter

In September the Chapter held a very successful Evening Conversation between Cheryl Kernot and Tony Windsor on the role of the independent MP. Democrats held the balance of power for most of Kernot's nine years as party leader. Their emphasis on principle, process and national interest was vital at a time when good policy outcomes were drowned out in a cacophony of personal interests. In his 22-year political career as an Independent Tony Windsor learnt to deal with the machinations and limitations of political power. He quoted the saying: 'The world is created/run by those who turn up'. If you don't like the direction the world is running, turn up, object, turn it a better way.

At the September work-in-progress meeting Christine Yeats discussed the challenges of researching the Romani people in Australia – a group that has produced little in the way of written records. In November Sue Rosen spoke about her latest book on Australia's oldest house – Experiment Farm Cottage – and the controversy surrounding her theory about the dating of it. See ISAA website for the full report:

<http://www.isaa.org.au/articles/>

The NSW Chapter held its Christmas get-together on 11 December – a chance to meet new friends and renew acquaintance with old ones. **Christine Jennett: Chair NSW Chapter:** cjennett@ozemail.com.au ◆

State Groups

South Australia

We look forward to hearing from Adelaide ISAA members in 2015. ◆

Victoria

At our August meeting Val Yule spoke on her book *Inside Children's minds – stories they tell*, reading some of the stories and showing illustrations she collected from children. The differences between the stories told by fortunate children and those who are disadvantaged reveal the impact on the imagination of stresses: in economic circumstances, war, family breakdown, physical and mental disabilities, and learning difficulties.

In September Alida Sewell spoke about her research into John Calvin's understanding of medicine and physiology. This included a discussion of the strong influence on Calvin of the work of the Greek physician Galen (130-200 CE). Both presentations led to wide discussion sometimes moving far beyond the papers themselves. In 2015 we hope to celebrate ISAA's 20th anniversary by bringing together some of those people who were instrumental in setting up a Victorian Group.

Calendar

Thu 10 Dec: Christmas get-together and planning meeting.

Ian Keese: iankeese@zeta.org.au Ph: (03) 9855 8332 ◆

New Members

Welcome to the following new members who have joined since publication of the August Newsletter.

- Emeritus Prof David Carment • Dr Duncan MacPherson
- Geoff Quayle • Carol Roberts • Assoc Prof Joy Wallace ◆

National Council

Affiliation with NCIS:

In conjunction with its 25th anniversary, the National Coalition of Independent Scholars (NCIS) is presenting *Traditions & Transitions: Independent Scholars and the Digital Landscape*, scheduled for 18-21 June 2015, Yale University, New Haven. This, the 16th NCIS conference, aims to celebrate independent scholarship and explore and critique digital humanities praxis and tools for research, publishing, and sharing scholarship. See ISAA website for more information: www.isaa.org.au/news/

Affirmation of Importance of Research

The Council of the ISAA affirms the fundamental importance of research for the Australian society, and globally. The Australian Government needs to support and

fund basic and applied research in all disciplines. See ISAA website for full statement: www.isaa.org.au/

Christine Jennett, ISAA President ♦

Financial News

This, my first year as Treasurer has been a very interesting one. My immediate task was to familiarise myself with the Association as a whole and in particular with its financial affairs. In so doing I have established the accounts within a commercial accounting software package (Quicken) that has simplified the bookkeeping and financial reporting processes.

The previous financial year had resulted in a significant deficit and this quite naturally raised concern within Council regarding our ability to fund normal activities during the 2013-2014 financial year. Measures taken during the year to ensure adequate cash flow and simplify accounting arrangements included closing the term deposit, leaving the GST system, increasing annual subscriptions, using email wherever possible and restructuring our administrative support.

These and other changes have resulted in a return to surplus for 2013-2014. Council approved a budget for the 2014-2015 financial year targeting a surplus of \$1,000.

Treasurer, Wal Collins ♦

Members' Activities

Initiatives

• **Auriel Weigold** was approached by the Head of Communications, Prime Minister's Department, to contribute to the speech Tony Abbott gave at the Joint Sitting of Parliament on 18 November for Mr Modi, the Indian Prime Minister.

Presentations

- **Vivian Arnold** presented *Job Pilgrim*, an original dramatised oratorio based on the book of Job, set in the present day, Q Theatre, Queanbeyan.
- **Diane Bell**, 'Science matters: Where are the young women?' a talk for the National Foundation for Australian Women, November, National Press Club.
- **Alan Mawer**, guest speaker at the National Trust of Australian (ACT) AGM, on the teenage bushranger Jack Doolan of Castlemaine.
- **John Ramsland**, "'An elegy of mud, blood and darkness". The Price of Valour for Lieutenant Joseph Maxwell', Tumut Library, September, sponsored by the History Council of NSW, History Week, 2014.
- **Babette Smith** gave a talk on her new book, *The Luck of the Irish*, at the National Archives of Australia, September.

Publications

- **Diana Chessell**, *Adelaide's Dissenting Headmaster: John Lorenzo Young and his Premier Private School*, Wakefield.
- **Jan Cooper**, 'Suspect Women in the Western Division of New South Wales', *J of the Royal Australian Historical Society of NSW*, vol.100, part 2, December 2014.
- **Kenneth Good**, *Trust in the Capacities of the People, Distrust in Elites*, Lexington Books.
- **Kerryn Higgs**, *Collision Course: Endless Growth on a Finite Planet*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- **Elizabeth Morrison**, *David Syme: Man of the Age*, Monash University Publishing, Victoria.

• **John Poynter**, *The Audacious Adventures of Dr Louis Lawrence Smith 1830-1910*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne.

• **John Ramsland**, 'Punish or Discipline? The Slow Colonial Birth of Women's Prison in New South Wales', Paul Ashton & Jacqueline Z Wilson (eds), *Silent System. Forgotten Australians and the Institutionalisation of Women and Children*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2014, pp 29-42.

—'So fertile a mind: Arthur Wheen's Letters from the Front', *Digger. Magazine of the Families and Friends of the First AIF*, no.48, September 2014, pp 46-48.

• **Martin Thomas** ed, *Expedition into Empire: Exploratory Journeys and the Making of the Modern World*, Routledge.

• **Auriel Weigold**, 'Malcolm Fraser, India and CHOGM - high moments in the bilateral relationship', *J Indian Ocean Region*, vol.10, no.2, December 2014, pp 237-245:

www.unimelb.edu.au/culturalcollections/research/archives.html

• **Ian Willis**, *Ministering Angels, The Camden District Red Cross, 1914-1945*, Camden Historical Society Inc.

• **Valerie Yule** ed, *Inside Children's Minds*, Bookpal, Qld. ♦

2014 ISAA Conference Report

In striking contrast to Donald Horne's famous words that 'Australia was a lucky country run mainly by second-rate people' the 2014 ISAA National Conference was nothing but first rate. Two days of stimulating papers generated discussion and debate long after the presentations were over.

The conference began with an update from Margy Burn on the latest developments at the National Library and the latest additions to TROVE. The keynote address by Dr Julia Horne titled 'Reading Donald Horne' was a moving and insightful tribute to her father. Dr Horne stayed on for the conference, contributing to post-paper discussions with questions and feedback. In his paper 'Making Our Own Luck' Nick Cater discussed his observations on Horne's book and on Australian politics and history over the past 50 years.

In the *Science and the Lucky County* session, Professor Sue Stocklemayer AM, highlighted the need for improvements in science communication in Australia. Emeritus Professor Ian Lowe made the point that 50 years on Australia was still following the USA, with little understanding of Asia.

What has luck got to do with it? offered complementary perspectives. Pat Anderson AO spoke passionately about the need for better access to education for Aboriginal people 'so that the next generation will be able to participate in the life of the nation'. For Professor Emerita Diane Bell, racism was a uniting theme in Donald Horne's book, capturing Australia in a moment in time.

The joint presentation on Judith Wright's contribution to Australian culture by Assoc Prof Joy Wallace and Dr John O'Carroll opened the *Australian Culture* session. Dr David Headon's humorous but serious insight into the current political scene, highlighting the change in Australia after the events of September 11, bookended Nick Cater's earlier paper. Nick Horne, the final speaker for the day, reflected on Donald Horne: writer, man and father.

The Annual Lecture 'Menzies, the Beatles and the Oz Trial: What can 2014 learn from 1964?' was presented by Andrew Leigh MP. In discussing what has been achieved, since 1964 Leigh considered in particular equal pay and the participation of women in the workforce. However he noted

that we have left behind ‘the relative economic egalitarianism’ of 1964, local social networks and the ‘civic glue’ provided by the union movement.

The second day began with the *Multicultural Australia* session. Sybil Jack looked at Celtic contribution to Australian culture, observing that it had been overlooked by Horne and others. Rev Dr John Moses discussed historiography, the history of Atherton in far north Queensland and German aims in WW I.

In *Australia’s History*, Susan Priestley took attendees ‘up the Darling in 1912’ through the letters of Thomas Armitage Hewitt. John Hood’s paper on the Newtown Eviction riots brought us forward to 1931. In the final session of the conference, *Luck in Australian Education*, Ian Keese concluded that in absolute terms there has been a decline in education in Australia. Stephen Darwin, discussed contemporary – and bleak – developments and trends in tertiary education and their likely impact on students and teaching staff of the future. **Christine Yeats**

Ann Moyal comments that it was an excellent conference, the result of much hard work on the President’s part, and a particularly stimulating experience for the audience. ♦

Ian Cowan: *Que sera sera*

Summary of a talk given to ACT Chapter of ISAA

Nowadays, news ‘unfolds’. Events emerge. Problems are issues. Situations are scenarios. It is as though the script of the future is already written. All we do is turn the pages or, rather, have the pages turned for us. Is the terminology merely a transient meme, briefly infecting the minds of journalists and politicians, soon to give way to some other fad? Or does it represent a widespread and long-term (I hesitate to use the term permanent) perception of the future? In brief, does it indicate the acceptance of determinism? I believe it does.

Our ability to predict the future depends on the extent to which the future is determinate. And that ability has increased dramatically. We can prognosticate about health, weather, climate and meteors although human behaviour remains baffling. Sam Harris points out that what makes it baffling is not due to any fundamental indeterminacy; it is its complexity that eludes our predictive ability.

Hard determinism is by no means a recent concept. Two centuries ago Pierre-Simon Laplace suggested that someone who knew the precise location and momentum of every atom in the universe could determine their past and future values for any period of time. That hypothetical ‘someone’ became known as Laplace’s Demon. Leo Tolstoy certainly and Charles Darwin, I think, were determinists. But both of them recognised the problem introduced by complexity. It is legitimate to ask whether, if the determinants of the future are so complex that they will always defy human attempts at prediction, there is any point in distinguishing between determinism and chance. Such a question is central to the topic of free will. Darwin, as a young man, thought of this (First notebook on Man, Mind and Materialism), doubting the existence of free will, ‘as we fancy there is such a thing as chance. Chance governs the descent of a farthing, free will determines our throwing it up: equally true the two statements’. Darwin believed freewill and chance are synonymous. It took almost a century for one of the two cultures to catch up with the other.

‘The future is not what it used to be,’ wrote Laura Riding and Robert Graves in 1937 in an article titled ‘From a Private Correspondence on Reality’ (*Epilogue III*, Spring 1937, pp107-130). They would not have been *au fait* with discussions of quantum indeterminacy that were going on in the same decade. And the introduction of pure chance into a deterministic world does little to rescue the human psyche from a perception of a bleak universe.

Was it predetermined at the instant of the Big Bang that this planet, this precise planet, this earth would exist with all its complexity as it exists today, occupying this precise position in the cosmos? Surely not! And if not, is our existence, inextricably bound up with this earth, purely a matter of chance? No more significant than the toss of a coin? Is that the alternative? No wonder some of us cling to a God who moves in mysterious ways. ♦

Update on changes at State Records of South Australia (SRSA)

For those with research interests in South Australia, in particular research involving that state’s archives, significant changes have taken place recently. The Leigh Street Research Centre that opened in 2004 and shared with the Adelaide office of the National Archives of Australia since 2011 has closed. In its place a single Research Centre for State Library, State Archives and National Archives researchers opened in August 2014 at State Library of SA. The SRSA website advises that researchers ‘may view original records held by State Records, view records on microfilm and check hard copy special list indexes at the Research Centre and Reference Officers are also available to assist’. Records can be ordered for viewing at the North Terrace Research Centre. Where the records are oversized, too heavy or fragile researchers may be asked to make an appointment to view the records at the Gepps Cross facility. (<http://www.archives.sa.gov.au/>)

Described as a co-location, the new Research Centre is designed to create a one-stop shop for researchers and historians who are able to access material from three collections, a move that is welcomed by archivists. The ongoing concern within the archival community however is the need to ensure that the role played by the backroom staff in managing state archives remains a separate, accountable and transparent activity.

The concern within the archival community as to the future arrangements in South Australia appear to be well founded. A 5-week review was commissioned in August 2014 to look at the possible integration of State Records of SA with the State Library of SA, initially with no external stakeholder consultation included. Thanks to lobbying on the part of the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) external input from invited bodies including the ASA has been sought.

ASA has launched a public campaign – with the slogan *Keep State Records South Australia independent: Collaboration, Co-location NOT Convergence!* – against what it fears is a move to have State Records merged with the State Library of SA. Mergers of libraries and archives are a confusion of two professional areas of expertise and there is good reason why they are separate. There is no date yet for the inquiry’s findings to be released. **Christine Yeats ♦**