

New South Wales Chapter

Independent Scholars of Association of Australia Inc.

BULLETIN

Issue No 59, November 2011

email: nsw@isaa.org.au

ISAA NSW: P.O. Box 50 Thornleigh NSW 2120

From the NSW Chapter Chair

Dear members and friends,

Recent months have seen much activity in our NSW Chapter. Following hard on the heels of our July seminar and August book review, both reported in the last edition of the Bulletin, was Judith Godden's 'work-in-progress' presentation and discussion of her research into the important history of the Women's Hospital. On 15 October several of us went to Bathurst for a seminar, hosted jointly with Joy Wallace, Associate Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Charles Sturt University. This was indeed an afternoon of riches, with four excellent papers and stimulating discussion. Detailed reports on both these events are further in the Bulletin. Thanks are recorded to the speakers, who in Bathurst comprised our members Gretchen Poiner and Wendy Michaels and Charles Sturt staff, John O'Carroll and Robin McLachlan. A special thank you to Christine Jennett for initiating and organising the Bathurst meeting in collaboration with CSU. We have been working for some time to engage our members who live away from Sydney, distant from our regular meetings. John Ramsland introduced ISAA to colleagues in Newcastle via two works in progress meetings and we have now made what we hope will be an ongoing connection with colleagues in Bathurst. Please send us your ideas for furthering our support to independent scholars in regional NSW.

This edition of the Bulletin includes some material on the annual conference, annual lecture and Annual General Meeting, held in Canberra on 3rd and 4th November – two busy but energising days. National Council's updated website is now up and running, for further information on ISAA. It has a link to the NSW Chapter.

A warm welcome to our new members. We hope you'll enjoy your association with ISAA and become involved with our activities, the next of which is our Christmas get-together on Thursday 8th December, at which the winner of our Short Article competition will be announced. Please come along if possible! And we're always looking for new speakers at meetings, new writers for the Bulletin, new committee and sub-committee members, so please get in touch if you can make a contribution.

With all good wishes for the festive season and the New Year,

Janet George, NSW Chapter Chair

Coming Events cast their shadow before

December 8, 2011 Christmas Party/Annual General Meeting

The annual gathering will be held at noon at the State Library, and all members are cordially invited to attend.

Gone but not forgotten

National Conference, Canberra, 3rd and 4th November 2011

40 members attended the Conference held at the National Library. Lively questions and discussion from the engaged audience followed eight papers on the first day, and six on the second. The 2011 Conference Proceedings will report the papers in detail.

The Bathurst Seminar, 15th October 2011

We are indebted to the *Talent Committee* for initiating this seminar and to Charles Sturt University for acting as generous hosts at a gathering of scholars from the Bathurst area and from Sydney, who enjoyed the presentation of four papers, abstracts of which follow.

The Significance of Writing: Indo-Fijian Story-Telling and Experience

John O'Carroll

Experience, the most immediate aspect of human existence, is at its most profound when shared or mediated. The living story-teller can hold forth royally in a late night kava circle, and this may *seem* more alive than a scene of written representation. After all, the story-teller in the play is a mere representation *inside* a story, itself *inside* writing (in the straightforward sense of words written down). Yet for experience to be given sense, for the story to be grasped afresh, the rendering into art is needed and valued. When this happens, we find over and over again, a recurring triangle: experience, writing, story-telling. Even so, for all the reassurance literary achievement affords, however, this paper has at its core a question that troubles all who reflect on the arts, especially the writing arts.

I begin with the writing of history in Indo-Fijian literature, and its various attempts to revivify it. Then, I take up the ubiquitous form of personal narrative, the personal history, the memoir. Here the dialogic structure inserts itself into writing genres in unexpected ways, even into theoretical analysis. Finally, the triangulation of writing, story-telling, and experience is something that I propose in general terms. Instead of taking up the literatures that most Australians learnt at school or university, I take up a literature that is engaged differently with its world, one that has challenged me more than any other. In framing my essay with a general purview, I wish to suggest just how essential the work of many of these writers from Fiji is to the very question of the significance of art itself.

The Play's the Thing

Wendy Michaels

'Whose Child' prompts the Guardianship of Infants Act 1934. The 1924 Emélie Polini custody case precipitated a decade long campaign, lead by Millicent Preston-Stanley, to amend the NSW legislation that had permitted Justice Harvey to rule against the mother's claim for custody. The final act was the 1932 performance of Preston-Stanley's own play, 'Whose Child' at the Criterion Theatre, Sydney. In this paper I examine her prompt script in the light of Hamlet's 'Mousetrap Play': just as Claudius was moved by the on-stage action, so

the Minister for Justice was also prompted to declare, between Acts 3 and 4, that he would 'give instructions that a Bill, embodying the reforms so eloquently pleaded for in the play, should be drafted immediately'. The Guardianship of Infants Act was eventually passed in 1934.

Thinking about Gardens and Place

Gretchen Poiner

Personal pleasure and satisfaction may register as the obvious reasons for creating gardens and cultural landscapes. But there are many others which, beyond an aesthetic impulse, are symbolic. They may for example, explicitly or implicitly, carry messages relating to social class relationships, belief systems or an affirmation of cultural identity.

Insofar as gardens and cultural landscapes have to do with perceptions of identity, and have subjective meaning they carry with them the development a sense of place - true for both individuals or collectives. The history of gardening in Australia is rich with symbolism and in its unfolding is imbricated with the development of national identity.

Australians in the Klondike Gold Rush

Robin McLachlan

The Klondike Gold Rush (1897–1899) in the remote northwest of Canada attracted several hundred Australians, mostly young men. Although a tiny minority, they established themselves as a recognizable community, highly regarded by others for their prospecting and mining skills. Reflecting their own history of goldfields militancy, Australians were as well at the forefront in the battle against Canadian government corruption and incompetence. Drawing on observations and anecdotes found in dozens of letters and firsthand accounts, it will be shown how these Australians came to see themselves as being quite different to the Canadians, Americans and Britons encountered on the field. The paper will explore some of the reasons for this difference as revealed by the experiences and perceptions of the Klondike Australians. Few found any wealth, but the Klondike experience provided these Australians on the eve of Federation with a heightened sense of national identity and a confident pride in the nation then being formed – and achieved without a “Baptism of Fire”.

Work in Progress, 21 September 2011

The *Programme Committee* makes a valuable contribution to the life of ISAA by organizing this event from time to time. On 21st September 2011 at a meeting at the home of John and Margaret McDonald, Dr Judith Godden led a discussion about her research into the history of the Crown Street Womens Hospital. 17 members attended.

In her introduction, Dr Godden said that she was grateful for the opportunity to talk about the progress of her study because it gave her feedback that other scholars can get in the workplace. This is of course, the purpose of ISAA – to provide a community to scholars who are working alone. The photo below shows some of the audience only.

Funded first by an individual, she was later commissioned by the Department of Health to produce a history. Rather than produce a research paper which could be later transformed into a book, she decided to consolidate the process and go straight to the writing of a book.

The hospital was opened in 1893 and closed in 1983 in the face of protests and demonstrations. There were no fewer than 70 stuffed archive boxes of files in one source, more in the Mitchell Library, more than a thousand unsorted photographs, and of course, a wealth of oral history. There is a plethora of themes – the hospital's guiding principles

during the long period, staff personalities, clinical advances, philanthropic support, social racial and class issues, financial management, political influences. Organizing the material sufficiently to write the book is a major challenge.

The author and the audience enjoyed a lively exchange of ideas and the author professed herself pleased with the session.



Recent publications

Jennett, C. 2011 'Internal Colonialism in Australia' in G. Minnerup & P. Solberg (eds) *First World Nations: Internal Colonialism and Indigenous Self-Determination in Northern Europe and Australia*, Sussex Academic Press, Eastbourne.

New member

Name: PETRINA K SLAYTOR
Membership type: Full
Postal address: 64 Carlotta Street, Greenwich NSW 2065
Tel H: 02 9436 2332
Email: p.m.slaytor@gmail.com
Website:
Occupation: Retired
Interests/expertise: Politics, literature, social justice
Professional qualifications: BA, Dip Soc Wk

The 2011 Essay/Short Article Competition

Reluctantly the Judging Panel unanimously came to the view that there would be no award made in the Essay competition for 2011.

In assessing entries it became apparent that there is ambiguity in the way in which this competition has been promoted. Of particular concern is the possibility of confusing the genres of essay and short article.

The Judging Panel thanks the 2011 entrants for their submissions. It is currently engaged in the process of reviewing the nature of the competition and the terms and conditions of entry for 2012.

