



ISAA

National Newsletter

Independent Scholars Association of Australia Inc

The Boab tree is self-sustaining; it draws on its own resources

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MEMBERSHIP

\$80—Full members
\$50—Concessional
\$140—Household
\$75—Concessional Household

Acting President's Report

Welcome to the March 2026 Newsletter.

Why an Acting President?

ISAA members will be aware of achievements of Hilary Yerbury and Council members in 2025:

The backlog of publications has been tackled and plans are in place to continue this process.

- We have fresh ideas for promoting ISAA.
- We have been able to transfer our account with the NAB, despite them putting many difficulties in our way.
- The NSW Branch has remained strong and active and the Canberra Branch is building up strength.

Hilary Yerbury's term as Council member came to an end at the 2025 AGM and this unfortunately meant as a result she was unable to be re-elected as President for 2026. However we could not find a new candidate for President and we were at a risk of having to wind-up ISAA so in these circumstances I volunteered to take on an acting role.

I did this reluctantly for two reasons:

1. After taking a variety of key positions over twenty years I feel it is time for a new generation to take over to bring us fresh energy and ideas.
2. At the same time I am only slowly recovering from major surgery. However, this has been possible as a result a significant change that has taken behind the scenes. Our administration officer resigned in mid 2025 and Hilary has taken on, on a voluntary basis, the role of Administration Officer, including setting up the ISAA Computer in her own home.

2026 ISAA National Conference – a new time and a new location

Around 30 years ago the first ISAA National Conference was held in the National Library of Australia and the following year the second conference was held in Sydney. However from then onwards we only met in Canberra, despite the Sydney Branch having significantly more members.

Acting President's Report (cont.)

We are going to experiment this year by holding our Conference at Darling Square Library, Haymarket on Friday 13 November and a half day on Saturday 14 November . The change of date is because our regular dates often overlap with Northern Hemisphere Conferences.

2026 Conference Theme

Members are welcome to contribute a paper on any topic that arises out of, or is related to, Independent Scholarship. Whatever your interest might be we should be able to find a way to make a significant contribution to the Conference. There will be from a Call for Papers and a Date within a couple of weeks, but I would love to hear your thoughts.

Ian Keese
ISAA National President



Darling Square Library, Sydney (Image City of Sydney)

Vale Dr Patricia Clarke OAM FAHA



Dr Patricia Clarke OAM FAHA (1926-2026) who has died aged 99, was one of Australia's most respected historians of journalism and a tireless advocate for the recognition of women in the nation's past. A long-standing member of the Independent Scholars Association of Australia since its formation, she combined scholarly rigour with a journalist's instinct for storytelling, producing a body of work that reshaped understanding of both media history and women's contributions to public life.

Patricia began her career in journalism at a time when opportunities for women were sharply limited. In the early 1950s she broke new ground as the first and only woman on the Melbourne staff of the Australian News and Information Bureau. She later moved to the press gallery at Parliament House during the 1960s, where she reported in a predominantly male environment and developed a lifelong interest in the workings of the media. These formative experiences informed her later scholarship, which combined meticulous research with lived insight.

Over subsequent decades, Patricia established herself as a leading authority on Australian media history. She wrote more than a dozen books and numerous articles, with a particular focus on recovering the stories of women whose contributions had been overlooked or forgotten. Her commitment to this work was both intellectual and deeply personal: she believed that historical narratives were incomplete without the voices of women, and she pursued their recovery with determination and clarity.

Her association with the National Library of Australia was especially significant and enduring. From 1980 she was the Library's longest-serving Petherick Reader, reflecting her lifelong dedication to archival research. She was awarded a Harold White Fellowship in 1993 and served on the Library's Fellowship Advisory Committee from 1996 to 2016. Patricia also published extensively with the Library, including *With Love and Fury: Selected Letters of Judith Wright* (2006), *Great Expectations* (2020) and *Bold Types* (2022). The latter, published when she was 95, celebrated pioneering women journalists and was adapted into a podcast series that brought these stories to a wider audience.

In recognition of her contribution to Australian history, Patricia was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2001 and elected an honorary fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities in 2005. She later received the Friends of the National Library of Australia Medal in 2016, acknowledging her profound impact on the Library's scholarly community.

Beyond her publications and honours, Patricia was remembered for her intellectual generosity and her unwavering commitment to truth. Her writing often evoked the texture of earlier newsroom life – crowded offices, clattering typewriters and the constraints faced by women journalists – while never losing sight of the broader historical significance of those experiences.

Dr Patricia Clarke's legacy lies in the stories she preserved and the voices she restored to the historical record. She is survived by family, friends and a wide community of scholars and readers who benefited from her work. Her contribution to Australian history will endure, and she will be greatly missed.

(Reference: <https://www.library.gov.au/news-media/vale-dr-patricia-clarke>)

Vale Dr Liz Morrison



Dr Elizabeth (Liz) Morrison (1936–2026) was a distinguished Australian historian of print culture whose scholarship made a significant contribution to the study of 19th-century Australian literature and the press. A long-term member of the Independent Scholars Association of Australia, she was widely respected for her meticulous research and her commitment to recovering and interpreting early colonial texts.

With a professional background in librarianship, Dr Morrison brought strong bibliographic skills to her academic work. She is particularly noted for identifying original novels by Ada Cambridge serialised in *The Age*, which she subsequently edited for republication in the Colonial Texts Series in 1988 and 2004. This work played an important role in making significant works of Australian colonial fiction accessible to modern readers and scholars.

Dr Morrison completed her PhD at Monash University in 1991. Her thesis formed the basis of her major monograph, *Engines of Influence: Newspapers of Country Victoria, 1840–1890*, published in 2005. This study remains an important contribution to the understanding of the role of regional newspapers in shaping public discourse and community life in colonial Victoria.

Her academic career included roles as a lecturer in librarianship and as a research fellow in Australian studies. She later moved to Canberra, where she worked as a project officer for the Academy Editions of Australian Literature. During this period she formed a close personal and intellectual partnership with Professor John Mulvaney, Honorary Secretary of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. They married and remained together until his death in 2016.

Dr Morrison continued to contribute actively to the scholarly community in later life. She was involved in the development of *A Companion to the Australian Media*, offering both contributions and expert advice. She also played a key role in stewarding the Mulvaney Fellowship for the Academy of the Humanities, supporting future generations of researchers.

Her later publications included a biography of David Syme, published in 2014, and her final book, *A Man of No Mean Talent: Donald Cameron and Australian Colonial Newspaper Fiction*, released in 2023. These works reflect her sustained interest in the intersections of journalism, literature and cultural history in Australia.

In her final years, Dr Morrison relocated from Canberra to Melbourne. She died peacefully in her sleep in 2026, a few months short of her 90th birthday.

Dr Elizabeth Morrison is survived by her children and grandchildren. She leaves behind a substantial body of scholarly work and is remembered with respect by colleagues, students and the wider historical community.

(On behalf of ISAA the Editor extends our thanks to Professor Bridget Griffin-Foley FAHA (Macquarie University) for permission to use the content and image from her Facebook post of 8 March 2026.)

Vale Dr Keith Suter AM FRSN



Keith Suter AM, FRSN (1948-1925) was a longstanding member of the Independent Scholars Association of Australia, a frequent speaker at ISAA meetings and conferences over many of his most active years, constantly challenging us. We recognised him as a prominent Australian consultant on strategic planning and a futurist: a professional who systematically studied, forecast, and explored potential future developments, trends, and possibilities. Keith had a good sense of the arcs of history and was able to extract facts and quotes to illustrate his speaking points and make our independent scholars think.

I first met Dr Keith Suter in the 1960s when my son was a student in a College at the University of Sydney and Keith was part of the community supporting students. He was quite private and not many of the student body knew him, but University of Sydney scholars would have, many of them historians e.g. Rev Stuart Uday and Rev David Gill. It was a time when many 'wars of liberation' were being fought in Africa (guerrilla wars) with very poor literacy among the belligerents about the rules of war, the Geneva Conventions, or protections for civilians. Keith was concerned that the international community had done too little to develop the laws of armed conflict, and the lack of interest by groups like International Societies of Red Cross and the United Nations.

When I returned from nine years in Papua New Guinea I joined the Boards of the Uniting Church, in particular the Board involved in the Pacific. Keith joined us when assisting to rebuild homes in Fiji Islands after a major cyclone. He was very vocal about the nuclear arms race and nuclear testing programs in the Pacific, in particular France's decision to keep using Mururoa Atoll despite the objections of Australia and New Zealand. As well as at ISAA and international Church meetings, Keith spoke at many of the first conferences of the Australian Chapter of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, addressing the social, environmental, and medical consequences of failure to disarm.

Douglas and I counted Keith as a valued friend of our family and know that he will be sadly missed by his friends and colleagues in ISAA, Australia and around the world.

Acknowledgement: This obituary was provided by ISAA Past President Professor Shirley Randell AO and ISAA Member Dr Douglas Randell. The photograph is from 'Vale Dr Keith Suter AO FRSN' on the website of the Royal Society of New South Wales (<https://www.royalsoc.org.au/vale-dr-keith-suter-am-frsn/>).

News from ISAA NSW

The ISAA NSW Committee last met on Thursday 5 February 2026 at 4 pm by Zoom

Christine Jennett provided an update on the next NSW Bulletin

Christine also reported on the planning for the 'The Biographer's Dilemma' Workshop, which will be held later in the year. The Committee agreed to establish a sub-committee to organise the Workshop. Members: Christine Jennett, Alice Paul and Judith Bonzol. It's first meeting will be held on 13 March.

Reading Groups

- Biography Reading Group: Convenor: Alice Paul. Meeting dates: 26 February, 30 April, 25 June, 27 August, 29 October.
- Public Affairs Reading Group: Convenor: Christine Jennett. Meeting dates: 25 March, 27 May, 29 July, 30 September, 25 November.

Report on the Work-in-Progress 27 February 2026 from Christine Jennett



Topic: 'Cosy Mystery meets Eco-Lit'

Speaker: Dr Susan Steggall

The first event for ISAA NSW for 2026 was Dr Susan Steggall's Work in Progress talk held on 27 February, titled '*Cosy Mystery meets Eco-Lit*', where she presented her ideas on introducing climate change into fiction. Susan discussed her manuscript, '*A Network of Spiders*', in which she introduces Cosy Mystery features (typically amateur sleuths, off-stage violence, minimal profanity and puzzle-solving) and those of Eco-lit (for example, environmental crises, biodiversity loss and habitat destruction) blended towards a satisfying conclusion.

The meeting was enjoyed by those who attended and followed by lunch at Cate Trim. Sadly, the library will no longer be able to provide us with a complimentary venue so after many decades we are looking for a new venue for in person meetings.

The ISAA NSW AGM will be held on 7 May.

The next meeting of the ISAA NSW Committee will be held on Thursday 2 April 4 pm via Zoom.

Christine Yeats
Chair ISAA NSW

News from ISAA ACT

ACT members are invited to meet author, and new ISAA member, Michael Piggott to discuss his most recent book (due to be launched at the end of May) *The Australians in German New Guinea, 1914-1921: Writing a military history when apparently nothing happened.*

Michael is a military historian based in Canberra with several books to his credit, and particular interest in Papua New Guinea. Please contact the undersigned if interested; the projected talk would be some time in June, and follow the pattern of previous meetings using the Canberra Museum and Gallery cafe as venue, unless numbers don't allow.

I will circulate details of the book launch, to be held at National Archives of Australia presided by Michael McKernan, as I receive them.



Photograph: <https://www.canberra.edu.au/uc-alumni-profiles/alumni-profiles/profile/michael-piggott>

Michael Piggott, B.Ec. (Hons) Monash, G.Dip. Librarianship CCAE, B.Litt. (Merit) ANU, Master of Archives Administration UNSW, ASAAP (Australian Society of Archivists Accredited Professional), is a retired archivist based in Canberra, Australia. (ORCID)

*Stephen Horn
Past ISAA Treasurer*

ISAA Conference 13-14 November 2026



Call for Papers Independent Scholars Association of Australia ISAA Conference 13-14 November 2026

The biennial ISAA Conference will be held this year in **Sydney** from **Friday 13 to Saturday 14 November 2026**. We expect the conference will be held in hybrid mode, with in-person papers, our preferred mode, and Zoom for those unable to attend in person. Decisions on this will be made in June.

The venue will be the **Ideas Space at Darling Square Library**, not far from Darling Harbour and the Chinese Garden of Friendship. This central location means it is easily accessible either by foot from Town Hall or Central stations, or by Light Rail from Central. There are also diverse food options nearby.

The broad 'theme' of this year's conference is 'Independent Scholarship'. We welcome any interpretation of this theme that aligns with ISAA's values, including the following:

- What Independent Scholarship means and what it can contribute to intellectual knowledge and cultural life.
- Individual experiences of Independent Scholarship, both the joys and the challenges.
- What Independent Scholarship contributes to your own particular discipline, creativity, or professional area.

Feel free to discuss other approaches to the topic of Independent Scholarship.

We hope this broad theme encourages as many members as possible to submit proposals to the conference.

To submit a proposal, please send the following information to Ian Keese keeseian@gmail.com by **19 May 2026**:

- Your name
- The title for your paper
- An abstract of up to 200 words to explain the approach of your paper.

We look forward to receiving your proposals.

Conference organiser: Ian Keese: keeseian@gmail.com

Conference organisation support: Christine de Matos: christine.dematos@ncis.org

Call for papers: 2026 issue of the ISAA Review



The *ISAA Review* is a key means by which we share our research interests with other members of the association and beyond. We aim to publish Volume No. 22 in the second half of 2026. As with the 2025 issue, this will also have no designated theme. We therefore encourage all ISAA members to contribute to the issue. The *Review* accepts different types of submissions, ranging from scholarly research articles to reviews, as follows:

- Research articles of 3,000 – 6,000 words. These contributions will be peer reviewed by at least two reviewers.
- Opinion pieces of 1,000 words. These are not peer-reviewed but contributions must accord with the principles of ISAA (see <https://www.isaa.org.au/about/purpose-of-isaa>) and decisions on inclusion will be made by the Editorial Board.
- Creative Corner, no word limit. Examples include short fiction and poetry. These are not peer-reviewed but contributions must accord with the principles of ISAA and decisions on inclusion will be made by the Editorial Board.
- Book Reviews of 500 – 1,000 words. Ideally, books reviewed are written, edited or contain chapters by ISAA members. These are not peer-reviewed and are included at the discretion of the Book Reviews editor and the Editorial Board.

In the first instance, please send an Expression of Interest to contribute to *ISAA Review* volume 22 to info@isaa.org.au by **15 April 2026**. In this EOI, please state the following:

- Your name
- Type of submission (research article, opinion piece, creative work, review)
- Draft title for your submission

For research articles and opinion pieces only: short (one paragraph/up to 150 word) draft abstract describing the purpose of your submission.

The **deadline for submission of final contributions is Monday 15 June 2026**, for publication in the second half of 2026.

Please consult the *Review* StyleGuide to format your contribution: <https://www.isaa.org.au/isaa-review/>.

Please send queries, EOIs and final submissions to info@isaa.org.au.

We look forward to receiving your contributions to the 2026 issue!

Expression of Interest: ISAA Review Editorial Board

Are you looking for a new challenge? Want to become more involved in the association? Why not consider becoming a member of the Editorial Board of the *ISAA Review*? The *Review* is a core publication of the association and the primary means by which we share our research interests with other members and the rest of the world. The publication is going through an exciting time of renewal and revitalisation, and you could make a valuable contribution to this process.

What are we looking for?

While the Editorial Board will be small, usually five members, we would like it where possible to represent the diversity of our membership. This includes variety in disciplinary background (humanities, sciences), geographical location (different states and territories), and experience (from seasoned editors to those seeking a new challenge).

What does a Board member do?

The Editorial Board advises the Editors on all matters related to the publication of the *Review*. For instance:

- Helping to identify peer-reviewers from amongst the membership for submitted research articles.
- Making decisions on the final publication of all contributions, including opinion pieces, creative works, and reviews.
- Advancing ideas to further improve the *Review* and its editorial processes.
- Establishing a strategic direction for the *Review* and ISAA publications.
- Assisting in minor editorial work.
- Providing any other advice requested by the Editors.

How much of your time will it take?

This may vary, for instance depending on the stage of the publication process. Most work will be required at the peer review and publication decision stages. As a guide, the Editorial Board may meet up to three times per year for one-hour meetings via Zoom or similar. Other work may be conducted via email as required.

How do you sign up?

Send your Expression of Interest to info@isaa.org.au by **Friday 17 April 2026**. In this EOI, please include why you would like to become a member of the Editorial Board and what you can contribute, and any experience you may have in editing and/or with the publishing process (not essential).

If you have any questions, send them to info@isaa.org.au. We look forward to receiving your EOIs!



Scholarly Reflections

This issue includes the following Scholarly Reflections

Aedeon Cremin – Celebrating St Patrick on 17 March

Dennis Dorwick – Moving a library is more than just shifting of a great weight

Stephen Horn – First Contact in the Southern Tablelands Part 2

John James – ...the history of the Royal Portal - the west entry into Chartres Cathedral

Ian Willis – Community history and collective memory

The views and opinions expressed in the articles published in the Scholarly Reflections are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of ISAA.



<https://stockcake.com/s/literature-reflection>

Scholarly Reflections

Celebrating St Patrick on 17 March

Growing up, I felt that Patrick was a self-absorbed bore, with little wit or imagination. In this I was unconsciously following the opinion of his Irish contemporaries. They moved in a strictly hierarchical society, where birth determined one's life as chief, or smith, druid, warrior, poet, wife, etc. And here was a man of unknown background, who had once been a slave, and was now presuming to tell chiefs and their subordinates how to behave. One has to admire his courage, and this I have now learned to do.

Born into a Christian family somewhere in Roman Britain (probably Cumbria), Patrick had at age 16 been kidnapped along 'with thousand of others' by Irish pirates and forced to serve for six years as a shepherd; during which time he was sustained by a faith in which he had till then little interest. Through divine intervention, he claims, he was able to escape and eventually return to his family. His father Calpurnius was a deacon and also a 'decurion', or municipal councillor, while his grandfather Potitus was a priest. Patrick now developed a vocation, studied for the priesthood and was even given 'the rank of bishop'—though he doesn't tell us when or where. He then felt the need to return to Ireland to spread the faith among his former captors.

Patrick tell us all this in his *Confessio*, a strange and awkward document, addressed to his fellow-clergy—presumably in Britain—because a formerly close friend 'brought up again after 30 years something I had already confessed before I was a deacon'. Patrick had been 15 at the time he committed this misdemeanour (I suspect something sacrilegious rather than criminal). The *Confessio* was widely copied and survived in libraries in France, the UK and Ireland. His only other surviving work is the *Letter to the soldiers of Coroticus*, a Welsh or Scottish warlord who had attacked Patrick's flock, killing some and capturing others. The *Letter* shows that he still felt isolated: 'I declare that I Patrick—an unlearned sinner indeed—have been established a bishop in Ireland ... I live as an alien among non-Roman peoples, an exile on account of the love of God'.

What Patrick brought to Ireland and for which we shall ever be grateful, was access to the wider world of literacy. Christianity brought books, books and more books. Within a century of Patrick's death in 461 (or 493), there were monastic scriptoria over most of the island. The work of writing was so prized that in 563 St Columba/Colmcille was exiled to Iona, Scotland, for having copied a psalter compiled by his teacher, in what is said to be the first copyright case in history. The psalter attributed to Columba still exists and is a good example of the insular style of writing and decoration, which the monks of Iona and elsewhere then elaborated into masterworks such as the Book of Kells. It is called the *Cathach*, or battle book, because it could be carried into battle ... but that is another story.

The documents cited in this article are available on the Royal Irish Academy Hypertext Stack (www.ria.ie).

Aedeen Cremin
ISAA Member

Scholarly Reflections

Moving a library is more than just shifting of a great weight

As I sip my first mug of coffee (strong and black), most days I read the Letters-to-the-Editor pages of the Sydney Morning Herald. After reading them, column by column, my attention shifts to the right – Column 8. Here writers focus on the curiosities and oddments of our shared lives in the Sydney area.

As an immigrant from the USA I recall hearing how, in the past, folks from farming areas might settle near a warm stove within reach of a cracker barrel (filled with soda crackers) as their neighbours shared stories of their lives and work – laughing over family events or listening with quiet concern about another's health.

Here is today's 'cracker barrel' question – Have you ever had to move a library? Perhaps some of us helped to move the entire stock of Melbourne's *Hill of Content* bookstore (between 16,000 – 18,000 books) or even a public libraries' collection?

In any case we, my wife and I and a cat (a non-reader so far as we know) have just moved west, beyond the Blue Mountains, from Sydney to Bathurst NSW. Unusually, the city has preserved rich neighbourhoods of housing from earlier periods. Ours is one of those built in the mid-1940s, a solid double-brick house with many of the original lead-light windows.

Of course our books came with us as well. A library is built book by book, shelf by shelf – but to move the lot, all at once, provides a challenge we don't often have to face. As I looked round at the six full-sized bookcases and three half-cases in my study I was glad we had asked our removalists to do the packing. Sadly, I'm nearly done with the unpacking so the weight is now again taken by the shelves.

The books, now disinterred but not ordered, include musicology (largely J.S. Bach, Handel, Telemann and others of 18th century Europe), general history, dictionaries and general reference books, a small collection of philosophy and ideas (I'm fascinated but often get stuck in an early chapter), religion and biblical studies, art, architecture, atlases, and of course, final volume of 2017-2018 *Pear's Cyclopædia*. There's also a constantly changing collection of poetry as well as crime fiction.

The packers did their best but I found they tended to randomise the collection. The boxes were very heavy so I just opened and shelved them, all higgledy-piggledy. My books now stare back at me accusatorially, having been moved away from their familiar neighbours with whom they could whisper over mysterious controversies unknown to us humans.

Someone may have done the research on the effects on the human brain of this dilemma. Perhaps, but the outcome thus far has been enlivening. "Ah, you old friend!" I exclaim. And ideas slowly commingle like a foam floating just beyond a small dam of twigs and leaves in spring. I'll let you know if anything comes out of this.

Dennis Dorwick – Bathurst where we have one of three full-sized and working Australian carillons and which can be heard through our open windows between 9am to 9pm.

Dennis Dorwick
ISAA NSW

Scholarly Reflections

First Contact in the Southern Tablelands Part 2

As related in a previous reflection the Taralga History Group assembles active scholars, and activists with an interest in the fate of Gundungurra clans following the establishment of a penal settlement in Sydney. We are an eclectic mob; put us in a room and we will split in twos and threes wrestling with the contested atoms of knowledge about events, places or individuals using tangential sources and cross references, but coming together in an entirely fresh category of history. While without active university ties, across the group there is sufficient authority over the different compartments and perspectives to pull together a balanced account of the resistance of the Gundungurra speaking nation, and its survival into the present.

That is a bold claim, and of course is more intention than fact. The oddity of this goal arises from settled belief that original inhabitants of the hinterland of first settlement offered no effective resistance to the takeover of their lands. Thoughtful accounts of the original inhabitants of the Burraborang valley, or Goulburn plains, declared them extinct by as early as 1850(1).

A successful claim in 1990 for a wide strip of crown land from Katoomba to Goulburn by the Gundungurra Tribal Council had been backed by anthropological evidence showing continuous attachment. So what happened? What can we work on that was not already turned over in colonial accounts, or in the documents produced for the land claim?

Much of what is currently circulating as common or official knowledge has not been treated with the seriousness that is attached to the lives and influence of pioneering families of hinterlands Bathurst, Crookwell or Goulburn, or the exploits of surveyors, bushrangers, explorers and men of influence. Yet the Southern Tablelands – County Argyle from Macquarie's time – encompasses breathtaking landscapes, rich pastures, the shadows of mining ventures, the playground of generations of Sydney extreme bush walkers, two of the most important tourist karst reserves in the state, is unmistakably still the Gundungurra universe – place names, sacred sites, paths, even intertwined settlement history.

But how do you put this large picture together? Contested it will be, but the claim is not simply revisionism, but rather a tying together of stories, whether forensic, evidentiary, mythopoetic, economic, ecological, geographic; or from oral memory passed down to present clan descendants, or fortuitously recorded in the 19th century from Gundungurra speakers at La Perouse by a pioneering anthropologist.

Fortunately, we have a model in the delineations of the neighbouring sandstone country and its original inhabitants by Grace Karskens' *People of the River* (2020), and by Gil Jones *Power of Nature* (2018). What is fascinating is that ours will not be the same story, it will not unwind in the same way – these are two adjacent, but distinct worlds whose peoples lived alongside but apart for millenia: The people of the river and the mountain people.

If you have an interest in this terrain of scholarship or would otherwise like to contribute to the project, we would welcome hearing from you. Contact Stephen Horn Mob: 0406 375 160.

(1) Footnotes:

- Wyatt in his 1920s *History of Goulburn*; more recently in the Sydney University Rover Crew guidebook *Gandangarra* (1972) yet acknowledging readily that the Southern Blue Mountains – a magnet for Sydney bushwalkers, and for most purposes wilderness - was still Gundungurra land.
- Martin Thomas, *The Many Worlds of R.H. Mathews*, Allen and Unwin 2011.

*Stephen Horn
Past ISAA Treasurer*

Scholarly Reflections

...the history of the Royal Portal - the west entry into Chartres Cathedral

I am writing the history of the Royal Portal - the west entry into Chartres Cathedral. I made five earlier attempts to write this and scrapped each one in turn, and with lots of new information have begun at the beginning. I think we all know this writer's story. Rewrite and write again.

The short version is that I have clear dates, 1137 to 1142, from the lithic evidence in the building itself. That's a start. The stone evidence is that nearly all the sculpture was carved in one gigantic and costly effort, in 1137/8. I think largely through the autumn and winter. This was fitted into the building over five years with five master masons and therefore four changes to the geometry and the design. It was not long before the locations for the pre-carved sculpture were lost and altered.

The result is the portal we so dearly love. Do we love it because it is such a mess? Now, there's a real question!

I think Eleanor of Aquitaine played a part here. It's a lovely story but without proof. I recently wrote the history of Chartre's 'sister' church of Notre-Dame in Étampes where events dovetail into Chartres, including this very wealthy lady. I cannot help myself from bringing all these stories together – as the fictional side of the investigation.

The factual side is pretty dense and quite demanding on the reader, and therefore I have been looking for a volunteer editor - without much success.

Nevertheless the details are so fascinating and tell us so much about the way great sculptural programs were integrated into construction at that time.

O yes!! I am enjoying every moment! What a lovely projects to have in my last years.



The Royal Portal, west front of Chartres cathedral, 1139-1143+ (Photograph: John James)

*John James OAM
ISAA Member*

Scholarly Reflections cont.

Community history and collective memory

Community history refers to a broad area of popular history, a field of research and writing outside the university sector in towns and cities across Australia. It is a broad area and includes genealogy, women's history, local history, oral history, social history, immigrant history, Indigenous history, labour history, environmental history and others.

Historian Alison Twells argues that community history arose from 'people's history' in the 1960s and 1970s, through the activities of local historical societies. It is 'history from below' and was inspired by EP Thomson's important work *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963). It was focused on the stories of those who were traditionally excluded from histories of nations, politics, religion, and important men and events, presented as heroes and pioneers. That is, the voices of the ordinary, the marginalised and the disenfranchised.

Written sources are at the centre of the archival world and most types of community history. Oral history is a historical tool that can delve into personal recollections, evoke emotions, and preserve voices. Oral history can provide invaluable insights into people's life stories. The interviewee has agency in oral history and is empowered to tell their story in a forum they may have been denied in other contexts through memory and testimony. According to Oral History Australia, memories are living histories. (<https://oralhistoryaustralia.org.au/guidance/what-is-oral-history/>)

Memory is constructed through biological processes, in which a person recalls an experience by combining elements of different experiences. (<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2025/12/how-memory-works-and-doesnt>)

This is influenced by social context, that is, interpersonal behaviour, and conditions at a given time and place.

Individual memories can be pooled in a group setting, creating a body of shared memories, knowledge, and information. This pool is called collective memory and can be constructed, shared, and passed on by large and small groups, such as nations, generations, families, and communities.

Unlike history, which encompasses a variety of perspectives, collective memory reflects only a group's perspective and, in turn, shapes identity through selective remembrance of the past. Collective forgetting is the parallel, often intentional, process of discarding or silencing memories that do not fit the dominant narrative, acting as a crucial tool for constructing social cohesion, national myths, and, at times, political control. (Minarova-Banjac, *Collective Memory and Forgetting*, Bond University, 2018.)

Collective memory is often categorised into communicative memory (informal, lived, intergenerational), cultural memory (formalised, fixed, symbolic), commemorative memory (ceremonies, holidays and rituals), collected memory (individual fragments of memory) and others.

Collective memory is a contested concept, often politicised around issues of inclusion and exclusion. There has been extensive research on how different social groups form their own representations of history and how these representations can influence values, ideas, and biases in a host of areas. One of these areas is school history textbooks, where they are seen 'as psychological tools that shape collective memory, social representations, and identity' rather than simply telling facts and stories about the past. (Sakki, 'Collective memory and history textbooks', *Current Opinion in Psychology*, Oct 2025.)

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