



**Australian
National
University**

BIOGRAPHY FOOTNOTES

The Newsletter of the National Centre of Biography

Issue 14, June 2015
ISSN 1838-6377



photo by Natalie Azzopardi

ANU Chancellor, Professor Gareth Evans AO, congratulates Chris Cunneen on being awarded an ADB Medal, 27 March 2015

see page 13 for the citation

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK



Welcome to Issue 14 of *Biography Footnotes*

Two and a half years ago the ANU's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ian Young, launched the online version of volume 18 of the *ADB*, which included people who died between 1981 and 1990, with surnames beginning L-Z. Back then the entries were published online and in hardcopy at the same time. Recognising the overwhelming importance of the internet as a venue for accessing information – the *ADB* online site receives over 70 million hits a year – we have decided to change tact when publishing *ADB* entries. From now on they will be published online first, in yearly batches. After five years' worth of entries have been posted online a hardcopy volume of the articles will be published. This will greatly reduce the time between when entries are edited and when they can be accessed by the public. Entries for subjects who died in 1991 were added to the *ADB*'s online site in December last year.

It is interesting to note how often the *ADB* is held up as the standard for biographical recognition in Australian historiography. In his biography of Louis and Hilda Esson, Peter Fitzpatrick suggested that the neglect of Dr Hilda Esson could be measured by her non-inclusion in the *ADB*. Her three friends, Katharine Pritchard, Nettie Higgins and Christian Jollie-Smith all have entries. Hilda only appears, in passing, as a wife in the entries of Louis Esson and John Dale.

Historian Penny Russell has similarly used inclusion in the *ADB* as a criteria for historical significance. Referring to her study

of the Thompson family, a middle-class Congregationalist family who migrated to Sydney from London in 1834, Russell notes that although none of the family are in the *ADB* 'they were never far away'. The *ADB* is 'peppered' with their friends, business associates, teachers, schoolfellows, employers, fellow Congregationalists and relatives by marriage. (Penny Russell, 'Travelling steerage: class, commerce, religion and family in colonial Sydney', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 38:4, (2014) p. 384)

Jennifer Carter and Roger Cross also cite the *ADB* in the preface to their biography of Georgina King. After castigating the *Dictionary* for initially relegating Georgina to two sentences in the entry of her influential brother, Sir George Eccles King, they criticise her subsequent entry in the *Supplement* volume for describing her ideas on geology as 'grand, romantic, and wrong'.

ADB entries get praised, criticised and, above all, used. We welcome this continuing engagement with Australian historiography which dates from the publication of volume one in 1966. Publishing entries directly online makes them more accessible, more immediately.

Melanie Nolan

Director, National Centre of Biography

Biography Footnotes is published online and as a pdf for the National Centre of Biography, ANU
Editor: Christine Fernon
T: 02 6125 4146
E: ncb@anu.edu.au
W: www.anu.edu.au/rsss/rpost

Congratulations

to *ADB* author, Alison Alexander, who won the 2014 National Biography Award for her book, *The Ambitions of Jane Franklin, Victorian Lady Adventurer*. *ADB* general editor, Melanie Nolan, was one of the judges of the Award. Melanie will chair the judges panel for the 2015 award.

Congratulations also to Joan Beaumont on jointly winning the 2014 Prime Minister's Prize for History for her book, *Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War*. Although we can't claim Joan as an *ADB* author she does have a strong connection with the *Dictionary*. Her first job after graduating from university was with Melbourne University Publishing (now Press) where she says she learnt a lot about writing concisely, and with flair, after assisting with the production of *ADB* volumes.

A Whitlam Story

Many people who met Gough Whitlam have gone away with a wonderful story to tell. *ADB* Editorial Board member and former deputy general editor, Chris Cunneen, is no exception.

Chris recalls being introduced to Gough by Denis Murphy, former chair of the *ADB*'s Queensland Working Party, in the Fellows Garden at the ANU in 1979 as 'the expert on Governors-General'. (Chris's book *Kings' Men, Australia's Governors-General from Hopetoun to Isaacs* was published in 1983.) Gough shook Chris's hand warmly saying, 'Cunneen, I should have met you sooner!'

Gough Whitlam was a longtime supporter of the *ADB* and an enthusiastic reader of each new volume. He was also one of the *Dictionary*'s legendary reporters of corrigenda – his specialty being obscure European royalty and titles.

He wrote two *ADB* entries: on solicitor-general Sir George Knowles (1882-1947), and labour politician Bert Lazzarini (1884-1952), who held the seat of Werriwa prior to Whitlam.

Gough's father, crown solicitor Fred

Whitlam, and his father-in-law, judge Wilfred Dovey, have *ADB* entries. They will no doubt be joined in the future by entries on Gough himself, his equally remarkable (and still living) sister, former PLC headmistress, Freda Whitlam, and his wife, Margaret Whitlam, who died in 2012. Whitlam's obituaries, condolence motions and maiden speech can be found on our websites.

The *ADB* entry on Whitlam's nemesis, Sir John Kerr, will soon be available online, as will the entries for Tirath Khemlani who contributed to the downfall of the Whitlam government in 1975, and Gordon Bryant who was a Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in the Whitlam government. All three men died in 1991.

First Australian to Die in WWI

Former *ADB* General Editor, John Ritchie, used to warn editorial staff against including claims in *ADB* entries that someone was the first to do some action or other as it is easy to say but notoriously hard to prove. He was right, as we recently found out! In the last two issues of *Biography Footnotes* we have included profiles of what we thought were the first Australian soldiers to die in World War I. In December 2013 we claimed that William Williams was the first Australian to die in battle, closely followed by Brian Pockley, who both died on 11 September 1914 during the Battle of Bita Paka in Papua New Guinea. We then learnt that they were actually only the first Australians serving in an Australian unit to die (there is even some debate about that). We then said, last year, that Malcolm Chisholm, who served in a British regiment, was the first Australian to die – on 26 August 1914 during the Battle of Mons in Belgium.

A chance finding by researcher, Toni Munday, while searching Trove has found an even earlier death. Victorian-born, Lieutenant Leslie Richmond, who served with the Gordon Highlanders, a Scottish regiment, <http://oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/richmond-leslie-18261/text29853> died on 23 August 1914 also

during the Battle of Mons.

Leslie was the son of James Richmond, who has an *ADB* entry, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/richmond-james-854>

and established a famous sheep stud at Wanganella in Victoria. Tragically, Leslie's only son, whom he never met, was killed in action in World War II.



Checklist of Graduates of Australian Universities 1856-1900

Richard Harrison has released the first publication of his ambitious *Historical Data on Australian Elities* project. Available free from his website at <http://www.hdae.org/publications.html>, *A Checklist of Graduates of Australian Universities 1856-1900* is available either as a pdf or a spreadsheet.

The checklist includes 3686 people who were awarded degrees from Australian universities prior to 1901, and lists every degree they received, including those received overseas (men received 5089 degrees and women 417). Links are included to those with entries in the *ADB*, *Obituaries Australia* and the *ADB*'s two-volume *Biographical Register* published in 1985.

What the Stats are Saying

The *NCB*'s biographical websites collectively attracted 90 million hits in 2014.

Ned Kelly continued his reign as the *ADB*'s most popular entry. The 'usual suspects' – Henry Parkes, James Cook, Peter Lalor, Mary Mackillop, Caroline Chisholm, Edmund Barton, Lachlan Macquarie, Banjo Paterson and Arthur Phillip – were the next most popular entries.

Despite the intense coverage given to the ANZAC celebrations in April, Ned Kelly retained his top position during that month too. John Simpson Kirkpatrick (the man with the donkey)

came in at number two. War heroes, General John Monash and Albert Jacka, also made an appearance in the top ten as did Alice Ross-King, an army nurse who was awarded a Military Medal for showing 'great coolness and devotion to duty' when her hospital was bombed during the Somme offensive in France in 1917.

Excluding traffic that comes directly from google and those who bookmark the *ADB*, 25% of the traffic which came to the *ADB* in 2014 was from Wikipedia, 9% came from the *australia.gov* website, and 8% was from Trove.

Using Lives

The NCB's Biography Workshop is meeting again this year to discuss with biographers common issues they face such as sorting truth from fiction and how far authors should intrude on their subjects' personal lives.

The workshops are held at the ANU at noon on the last Thursday of the month.

So far this year the group has met with Sophie Scott-Brown, Estelle Blackburn, Sheila Fitzpatrick and Alison Alexander.

Guest speakers lined up for the rest of the year include Andrew Tink, Philip Ayres, Angela Woollacott, Paul Pickering and Helen Trinca. For further information see <http://ncb.anu.edu.au/biography-reading-group-2013>

Women Australia

Thanks to the work of volunteer, Erica Ryan, we have been able to add the biographical records from *Who's Who of Victorian Women*, published in 1930, into our Women Australia website. The *Who's Who* is a particularly valuable book as the entries not only record the organisations the women were involved with but were usually accompanied by professionally-shot photographs. Many of the women were also the wives and mothers of individuals in the *ADB* so Erica was able to make numerous links to existing *ADB* articles.

Erica is now entering the biographical records from the *Bank of New South Wales Roll of Honour*, published in

1921, into our People Australia website.

Betty Churcher

Former National Gallery of Australia director, Betty Churcher, died in March this year. We have added her obituary to Obituaries Australia. <http://oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/churcher-elizabeth-ann-betty-19774>

Thanks to Trove we have been able to delve back into her life to add some 'Additional Resources' to her obituary

record. This research has uncovered what is perhaps her first published work of art, a delightful pencil sketch of a puppy, which won her, at the age of ten, 5/- from the Brisbane *Courier-Mail* newspaper. Four years later she won the newspaper's Children's Art Competition with another competent painting which can be accessed online (the link is available from her OA record). In 1953 the *Courier-Mail* stepped into her life again when they launched a fund to raise funds to enable her to take up a scholarship to study at the Royal College of Art in the UK.



Richie Benaud

We have also added an obituary of test cricketer and longtime cricket commentator, Richie Benaud, to Obituaries Australia <http://oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/benaud-richard-richie-19871>. It is accompanied by the obituaries of many of Richie's ancestors, including his great grandfather, Captain Jean Benaud, who arrived in Sydney from France in 1833 and sailed trading vessels between Sydney and the Manning and Richmond Rivers for the Australian Steam Navigation Company.

Another of Richie's great grandfathers, Thomas Hill, was associated with the building of railways in New South Wales, including the Zig Zag railway in the Blue Mountains.

Max Korolev Leaves the NCB

It is with great sadness that we have farewelled Max Korolev who has spent the last four years digitising thousands of pages of text for the NCB.

Max was employed initially with a eResearch grant from the ANU's College of Arts and Social Sciences. His first job was to digitise selected obituaries from the *Pastoral Review* and the *ANU Reporter*. These became the first obituaries to be loaded into the NCB's website, Obituaries Australia, launched in 2010. Since then Max has been steadily digitising his way through a multitude of out-of-copyright compendiums of Australian biography, including *Australian Men of Mark*, and the wonderful State encyclopedias, published at the turn of the 20th Century, which incorporated extensive biographical sections. One of Max's major projects was digitising the 30-something volumes of the very useful, but underused, *Historical Records of Australia*.

As well as digitising books and other material for the NCB, Max has worked on a number of contracted projects, including scanning hundreds of Indigenous children's books published in the Northern Territory in the 1970s. Another major project was digitising over 3500 Tooths hotel cards held by the Noel Butlin Archives at the ANU.

Max takes great pride in his work and never found an object too big/small or cumbersome to digitise. Perhaps his most difficult project was digitising a 1.2 by 2 metres painting. He took 73 scans of individual sections of the picture and then meticulously 'stitched' them together. This not only gave a superb overall quality to the image but will enable researchers to zoom right in to examine every bushstroke in the painting. It took over two hours just to stitch the images together.

Max's last job was to digitise whole volumes of the *Pastoral Review*. These will eventually be available to the public through the National Library's Trove search facility.

We wish Max well in his future work.



A copy of the NCB's recently published map tracing Ludwig Leichhardt's *Overland Expedition in Australia from Moreton Bay to Port Essington, 1844-45*, was presented to the President of the German Parliament, Professor Norbert Lammert, at Brisbane Airport on 28 October 2014 at the launch of Qantas's new Boeing 737-800 aircraft which has been named after the famous explorer.

L-R: Matt Tesch (event organiser), Ludwig Leichhardt (Leichhardt's great great grandnephew), Professor Norbert Lammert (President of the German Parliament), David Evans (Qantas senior captain) and Nick Bull (head of Qantas customer operations).

* In related news, we are pleased to hear that the digital version of the Leichhardt map (<http://adb.anu.edu.au/entity/8843>) has been accepted as an exhibit at the 27th International Cartographic Conference to be held in Brazil in August this year.

True Biographies of Nations?

True Biographies of Nations? is an international conference on the cultural journeys of Dictionaries of National Biography. The conference will be held at the National Library of Australia during the week of 4-8 July 2016 and will consider how the traditional model of dictionaries of national biography has been transformed over the last twenty years.

In 2004, the chairman of the supervisory committee of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Keith Thomas, concluded the Leslie Stephen Special Lecture by expressing his hope that the genre of the dictionary would develop into a "database so vast as to be a true national biography". Given that 2016 is the 50th anniversary of the first volume of the *ADB*, it is timely to consider the cultural journey that dictionaries of biography have taken and assess the extent to which they are developing into "true" national biographies.

The conference will be held over two days. The first day will consist of papers and panels relating to national dictionary projects. Professor Sir David Cannadine, editor of the *ODNB*, will present the opening keynote address. The second day will examine dictionary projects across Australia.

Confirmed conference speakers include Dr Phillip Carter (*ODNB*), Professor Elizabeth Ewan (*Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*) and Professor Ira Nadel (*Dictionary of Literary Biography*). We also hope to have speakers from the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, the *American Biography Online*, the *Dictionary of Irish Biography* and the *New Zealand Dictionary of Biography*.

The conference programme and registration details will be posted on the NCB website in November this year.

ADB WORKING PARTY NEWS



ADB Tasmanian Working Party, 2014

L-R: Stefan Petrow (convenor), Beth McLeod, Michael Roe, Margaret Glover Scott and Shirley Eldershaw photo by Malcolm Allbrook

Tasmanian-born Stefan Petrow has been the convenor of the Tasmanian Working Party since 2011. He teaches Australian History at the University of Tasmania and serves on the committees of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association and the Australian and New Zealand Law and History Society, and is a member of the Joint Archives Consultative Forum. He is currently writing a book entitled *Tasmanian Anzacs: Tasmanian Soldiers and World War I*.

John Morris AO MBE is a retired physician. He has written about Launceston's medical history and was the founding chairman (and current vice-chairman) of the Clifford Craig Trust. An honorary life member of the Royal Society of Tasmania, he has been a member of the ADB's Tasmanian Working Party since 2008.

Shirley Eldershaw graduated with a Master of Arts from the University of Tasmania. Her thesis examined land exploration in Van Diemen's Land from 1824 to 1842. She worked as an archivist in the Archives Office of Tasmania for many years and has been a member of the Tasmanian Working Party since 1988.

Michael Roe has been a longtime supporter of the ADB. He joined the ADB's Tasmanian Working Party in 1960, at the beginning of his academic career at the University of Tasmania. As well as writing 33 entries, he served as convenor of the Working Party for volumes 11-18 and the Supplement volume, as a member of the Editorial Board for volumes 8-18 and as a section editor for volumes 13-18. He was awarded an ADB Medal in 2012.

Margaret Glover Scott's association with the ADB began in 1978 when she became that state's research assistant and a member of their Working Party. In 1984 she returned to work at the Archives Office of Tasmania. She has contributed articles to the ADB, the *Dictionary of Australian Artists*, the *Papers and Proceedings* of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association as well as other publications.

Beth McLeod has been a member of the Tasmanian Working Party since the mid-1970s. She was formerly a state research assistant for the ADB, and has written two ADB entries. She has been a member of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association since the 1970s and served as its treasurer from June 1997 to February 2007.

In 2014 the NCB commissioned an artwork from Queensland artist, Stephen Baxter, to use as a promotional image for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*

After searching image sites, and the web itself, for a suitable image that we could use to convey the breadth of the *ADB* we stumbled across a work by Stephen Baxter, painted in 2009, called *Australian Landscape No 17* (Windy Day in Suburbia). The bright, multi-coloured, abstract painting captures the diversity of Australia's people.

Discussions with Stephen led to the decision to create a new artwork, using *Landscape no 17* as its inspiration. To make the painting reflect a 'uniquely' Australian crowd, more Australian colours – green and gold (the national sporting colours); red, black and yellow (Aboriginal flag); blue, white and green (Torres Strait Islander flag); and blue and white (Eureka flag) were added.

Stephen has titled the new work, *Australian Crowd, 2014*.

His Australian crowd series of paintings began as a response to seeing a rock concert by Ben Harper in Brisbane in 2009. The thing that stuck in his mind wasn't the music so much as the colourful people and the perspective. He was standing on a hill so had a good overview of the crowd. 'The brightly clad people dotted down the slope and mingled together like musical notes moving on a page, grouping closer together as they flowed down the hill with the blue sky and a few clouds here and there in the background'.

Australian Crowd, 2014, says Stephen 'is a continuation of that first response to the concert with an emphasis on the urban environment, the crowd that urbanisation creates and the people that make our Australian population rich, diverse and colourful.'

Stephen Baxter's website can be found at <http://www.visualartist.info/stephenbaxter>

The Australian Crowd image has already been incorporated in a pull-up banner that is used as a backdrop at ADB events. It will also feature on ADB stationery, cards and posters.



Australian Crowd, 2014

photo by Maxim Korolev



Governor-General Sir Peter Cosgrove with the new ADB banner

photo by Natalie Azzopardi, 2014

ADB CORRIGENDA

MALCOLM ALLBROOK, the ADB's managing editor, spends several hours each week responding to corrigenda inquiries

corrigendum noun (plural corrigenda)

A thing to be corrected, typically an error in a printed book.

Corrigenda requests have been a regular feature of the operations of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* since the publication of volumes one (1966) and two (1967). Nearly fifty years later, the procedure for dealing with requests to correct ADB entries has not changed markedly; amendments will be made when supporting documentary evidence is available and will generally not respond to matters of interpretation or opinion. All corrigenda requests are taken seriously and most are relatively straightforward. The evidence for a correction is checked for validity and accuracy by ADB editorial staff, often with the assistance of Jenny Higgins, the ADB's family history researcher. Amendments are made to the online edition of the ADB. The date of the change is recorded on the article, together with the nature and extent of the changes (readers can also choose to view the unamended article); I reply to the correspondents, informing them of the change and thanking them for their efforts. Amendments may be a simple matter of updating the legacy of a subject to take account of, for example, the recent installation of a headstone to Aboriginal rights campaigner William Cooper (1861-1941; <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cooper-william-5773>), rendering redundant the claim that he is buried in an unmarked grave; or the erection of a statue at the Sydney Cricket Ground of the famous barracker 'Yabba', Stephen Gascoigne (1878-1942; <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/gascoigne-stephen-harold-6286>). Some corrigenda requests cannot proceed, being based on matters of personal opinion, or the subject of legal proceedings, such as the current Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. In such cases we advise the correspondent that we will await the outcome before considering an amendment.

Readership patterns of the ADB have evolved significantly since the nineteen volumes (including the 2005 supplementary volume) were placed online, although it is difficult to make precise sense of reports of 90 million hits on the NCB websites last year. From the steady stream of email correspondence with readers, which averages about 45 to 50 contacts a month, many users are amateur researchers who come to the pages of the ADB through an interest in their own family histories, by searching Google, or following links from another cultural institution such as the Australian War Memorial or Trove, or through family history subscription sites such as Ancestry.com. Most of the corrigenda requests, perhaps 5 to 10 each month, entail relatively minor changes to biographical details: dates of birth, marriage or death, names of parents and spouses, place of burial, the names of ships and dates of arrival in Australia. The depth of research is often impressive, the correspondents clearly equipped by their familiarity with computer technology to take advantage of the increased access to family history material afforded by the internet. Their contributions signify the

way family history research has developed in an environment that was not available to the authors of the original articles. Family historical material is now, in many instances, available instantaneously, and has provided a fertile resource for the growing numbers of people engaged in genealogical research. Birth, marriage and death registers from each of the states can be searched, and records often ordered online. Service records may be immediately available from the Australian War Memorial or the Australian Archives. Subscribers to Ancestry and other genealogical sites such as findmypast have immediate access to electoral rolls and census records.

Corrigenda requests sometimes demand a good deal of investigation. Such was the case in an exchange of

correspondence regarding the origins of Sir Charles Nicholson (1808-1903; <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/nicholson-sir-charles-2508>), whose ADB biography was written by the late Dr David S. Macmillan, and published in volume 2 (1967). Nicholson, statesman, landowner, businessman, connoisseur, scholar, physician, and Australia's first baronet, was one of the most prominent and successful nineteenth-century residents of Sydney. After leaving England in 1833, he flourished in his new environment, practising as a physician, buying land and stock, and investing in shipping, railways and power enterprises. A member and speaker of the Legislative Council, Nicholson combined his business and political interests with his dedication to the cultural and scholarly life of the colony, and with William Wentworth, was instrumental in establishing the University of Sydney, where he served on the senate, as vice-provost (1851-54), and chancellor (1854-62). Described in the ADB as 'Australia's first great collector', following his death in London his large collection of Egyptian, Greek and Roman antiquities, and paintings, was bequeathed to the university, which established the Nicholson Museum in his memory.

To Dr Michael Turner, a senior curator at the museum, Nicholson's life presented some intriguing anomalies, particularly for the period before he came to Australia as a twenty-five-year-old. The 'authorised' version of his early years, one promulgated by Nicholson himself, was that he had been



Sir Charles Nicholson, State Library of New South Wales

ADB CORRIGENDA (cont'd)

born in Cockermouth, Cumberland, the only son of Charles Nicholson, merchant, and Barbara Ascough, daughter of a 'wealthy London merchant'. After the death of his mother when he was five, Nicholson was brought up by 'a maiden aunt' and was educated by private tutors, before going to the University of Edinburgh, where he graduated with distinction in medicine in 1833. Soon afterwards, he sailed for Sydney with his aunt, Miss Ascough, and his cousin James Ascough, to join his uncle, Captain James Ascough, a wealthy trader and shipowner, who had extensive landed property on the Hawkesbury River and the upper Hunter. Nicholson's inheritance of most of his uncle's fortune was the source of his considerable wealth.

Researching an exhibition to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Nicholson's birth, Turner was struck by the dearth of information about his subject's early years. It was a gap that had also been noted by Nicholson's wife, Sarah, who wrote shortly after her husband's death that he had 'always been reticent about anything connected with himself or his family'. After three years of research, Turner came across the 'fascinating truth' when he located (with the assistance of an English descendant of Nicholson) an important baptismal record, which he described in an article for *Sydney University Museum News* (Issue 20: February 2010; http://sydney.edu.au/museums/publications/muse/past-issues/2010_february_news.pdf). Nicholson had been born, not in Cumberland, but at the tiny hamlet of Ibrundale, not far from Whitby in Yorkshire. Rather than being the son of Charles Nicholson, merchant, his father was unknown. His mother was, as the *ADB* article stated, Barbara Ascough, but the daughter of a labourer, not of a wealthy London merchant. He was born out of wedlock, and christened Isaac Ascough. His mother did indeed die when he was five, and care of the youngster became the responsibility of an aunt, Mary Clink (née Ascough), and an uncle, William Ascough. After completing school at York, by the time he went to the University of Edinburgh he was known as Charles Nicholson. The origins of his adopted name remain mysterious, although Turner speculates that Barbara Ascough had been in service in Whitby, where a chandlery merchant named William Nicholson lived. He (William) had a nephew named Charles, a naval lieutenant whose ship was in Whitby early in 1808, approximately nine months before Isaac Ascough's birth. 'Was Charles Nicholson staying with his uncle?' Turner asked, 'did he bed the maid? Did the elder uncle for some reason feel a sense of obligation?' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, March 27, 2010) Such a connection would help to explain both the origins of the Nicholson name, and how this young man who had been born into poverty was able to afford a university education, which in turn launched his career in a new colony.

The biographies of the *ADB* include other instances of shifting identities and murky origins, but rarely do they relate to one as prominent as Nicholson, nor can the evidence for a change of identity always be established. A recent corrigendum request came from a descendant of James Cowley Fisher (1832-1913), farmer and missionary, whose biography was authored by the late Professor James Griffin, and published in volume 4 (1972; <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/fisher-james-cowley-morgan-3520>). Known for a part of his life as the 'Nunawading

Messiah', according to the *ADB*'s account, Fisher had been born in Bristol, and was the son of Robert Fisher, magistrate, and his wife Sarah (née Cowley). At the age of fourteen, he ran away to sea, and by 1852 had found his way to the Victorian goldfields, eventually settling at Nunawading. Within a decade he was the leader of the New Church of the Firstborn, teaching his hundred or so followers about 'the imminence of the millennium, the restoration of Israel and the ingathering of the dispersed ten tribes by the spirit of God.' Renowned as a faith healer with 'strong electrobiological power', Fisher became well-known in Victoria after he was accused by some of his followers of falsely obtaining money by representing himself as the messiah, and for practising polygamy. The lawsuit failed, but he and his followers, dubbed the 'Fisherites', created a 'harvest' for the press, which reported that 'on moonlight nights' Fisher would lead his disciples through the countryside 'banging tins to exorcise the devil'. After the hubbub of the lawsuit had died down, many of his followers moved to Western Australia where they bought land at Wickepin. Fisher joined them in 1904, building a church, preaching regularly and marrying again, before dying in 1913.

Drawing on recent research, according to Fisher's descendant his origins were very different from the account in the *ADB*, which had been based on his own reconstructed account (Metcalf and Featherstone, *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, 2007; <http://www98.griffith.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/handle/10072/13812/39617.pdf;jsessionid=8F207A6F637E2E132684E0948C58FE85?sequence=1>). He had, in fact, been named James Cowley, and was born at Nailsworth, Gloucestershire, son of Robert Cowley and Sarah (née Morgan). The family migrated to South Australia in 1840, and ten years later, at the age of nineteen, James married Louisa Phillips, a widow. Soon afterwards, he was convicted of uttering false cheques and was sentenced to be transported to Van Diemen's Land for ten years. Absconding in 1852, he escaped to Melbourne on the *Esperanza*, where he changed his identity by adopting the name Fisher (the name of his paternal grandmother), later adding the forename Morgan, his mother's birth name. Although still married to Louisa, in 1853, he wedded Caroline Chamberlain and, after her death in 1855, married a third time to Emma Pickis Kefford, whose mother, also Emma, was the leader of the sect which Fisher later took over.

Birth and baptismal records support the possibility that Fisher was not who he later claimed to be. There is no record of the



James Cowley Fisher

ADB CORRIGENDA (cont'd)

birth of a James Cowley Fisher in Bristol in 1832, while James Cowley is known to have been born that year at Nailsworth. After the family emigrated to Adelaide, a court record shows that James ran afoul of the law in 1852, and was transported. His convict record shows that he was assigned to a free settler, John Swan, a merchant, of Newtown, Hobart, and that he absconded on 6 October 1852 (Metcalf and Featherstone, 2007: 118). Thereafter Cowley disappears from the record, while the man styled Fisher, a person with no comparable documentary background, comes into existence in Victoria. A tale of changed identity seems entirely plausible, designed to conceal a criminal past and perhaps a previous marriage which the subject now desired to forget as inimical to his new life as a reputable farmer, and later a religious leader. Yet we may never be able to prove conclusively that Cowley and Fisher were the same man. There are many possibilities that could explain the disappearance of the man named Cowley, and birth and baptismal records are not so comprehensive as to entirely dismiss the possibility that 'Fisher' was in fact who he claimed to be. There is plenty of room for error even in official documents; marriage certificates rely on an informant and in Fisher's successive marriages, he filled that role, and so had the means as well as possibly the motivation, to reconstruct his past. Biography can only go so far in unravelling life stories; inner and secret lives, the infinite capacity of humans to plot and cast their life stories, are sometimes beyond its reach.

Corrigenda requests such as that relating to Fisher are a reminder that the endeavour of historical research continues, and that the biographies in the *ADB* may not be the final word on a life. Indeed the impact of a life may have far-reaching consequences and stretch far beyond a person's life span, even if their biographies were written many years after death. In the case of Eric Edgar Cooke (1931-1964), the mass murderer who terrorised the people of Perth in 1963, legal proceedings took many years to finally clear up the extent and impact of his crimes (volume 13, 1993; <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cooke-eric-edgar-9817>). In January this year, Estelle Blackburn, a Walkley award winning journalist, referred me to her award-winning book *Broken Lives* (2002), which documented her painstaking research on John Button and James Beamish, both serving life sentences for murders that occurred at the same time as Cooke's rampage. Hugh Collins, the author of the Cooke entry, had noted the convictions of Button and Beamish and foreshadowed the possibility that the men might eventually be exonerated; both had protested their innocence in their original trials and in a series of unsuccessful appeals since. Blackburn's book presented new and compelling evidence that backed up the men's stories, and found that they had wrongly shouldered the blame for murders which had been committed by Cooke. In this case, I was able to contact Collins about the need to update Cooke's *ADB* entry and he was happy to agree to the changes and to add Blackburn's book to the list of references.

Similarly, Michelle Rayner, author of the volume 16 article on Catherine Ann Warnes (1949-1969; <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/warnes-catherine-anne-11968>), was delighted

when I contacted her to discuss the claims of a correspondent who wanted to 'set the record straight' on the circumstances of Warnes' death. Known by her stage name Cathy Wayne,



This is the last known photograph of Catherine Warnes, taken about an hour before her death

Warnes was a singer and entertainer whose star shone brightly but briefly during the 1960s. In 1969, she was on her second tour of South Vietnam as the lead singer in an Australian pop group, 'Sweethearts on Parade'. At Da Nang on the 20 July, performing for non-commissioned officers of the United States Marine Corps, she was killed when a bullet, fired from outside the building, passed through an open window and hit her in the chest, becoming one of the three

Australian women who died in the Vietnam war. A suspect was soon found, and a marine, Sergeant J. W. Killen was convicted of her unpremeditated murder, allegedly while attempting to shoot his commanding officer who had been in the audience. These details were duly recorded in the *ADB* entry, but had not taken account of subsequent research by my correspondent, Don Morrison, who, like Warnes, had toured Vietnam as an entertainer and had known the subject. Killen, who had protested his innocence, was repatriated to the United States where he was granted a retrial and within two years was exonerated. In his book (J. D. Owen, *Murder on Stage*), Morrison researched Warnes's life and death, and interviewed Killen at length. The actual murderer has never been charged, although Morrison claimed that 'there was one individual who very likely did commit the crime' (pers. comm.).

There is sometimes a thin line between resolving a corrigendum, and requests for a revision. I frequently receive complaints about the inadequacy of the accounts of some of the Aboriginal subjects in the early volumes of the *ADB*, such as Bennelong (c.1764–1813; <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bennelong-1769>) and Arabanoo (d. 1789; <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/arabanoo-1711>), both authored by Eleanor Dark; and Yagan (d.1833; <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/yagan-2826>), by Alexandra Hasluck. More often correspondents complain about an underlying 'terra nullius' perspective which fails to recognise traditional ownership and defence of homelands, as well as terminology which, almost fifty years later, is outmoded. The proposed Indigenous Dictionary of Biography project, for which we will shortly be applying for funds, will aim to address these matters, as well as dealing with 'missing' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subjects.

82 biographies of people who died in 1991 were added to the *ADB* website last December.

They cover a diverse range of people including a governor-general, actors, religious leaders, community activists, artists, sportspeople, pastoralists, lawyers, businesspeople, philanthropists, and an Albert medal winner.

Stanley Gibbs (1909-1991) was just 18 in 1927 when he went to the rescue of his 15-year-old friend, Mervyn Allum, who had been attacked by a shark at Port Hacking in New South Wales. Although Gibbs managed to wrest Mervyn from the shark's jaws, the younger boy had lost so much blood that he died shortly after. Gibbs was subsequently awarded the Albert medal, the highest decoration given for an act of bravery 'not in the face of the enemy', by the Duke of York during his tour of Australia later that year. After the Albert Medal was discontinued in 1971, the Duke's daughter, Queen Elizabeth II, presented him with a George Cross in 1972.



Stanley Gibbs with his Albert Medal, 1927
Australian War Memorial

Many of the names added to the *ADB* website will be recognisable to readers. Was it really 23 years ago that cardiac surgeon, Victor Chang (1936-1991), was tragically killed in a failed extortion attempt? Chang arrived in Australia from Hong Kong in 1951 at the age of 15. After study, both in Australia and abroad, he was appointed cardiothoracic surgeon at St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, in 1972, where he later headed the National Heart Transplant Program. His unit had performed 266 heart and twenty-two heart-lung transplants at the time of his death.

Victorians will remember race caller, Bert Bryant (1927-1991) and used car dealer Dennis Gowing (known as Kevin Dennis) (1930-1991). Born in New South Wales, Bryant began calling horse races at the age of 14. After moving to Melbourne in 1948 he called races for radio station 3UZ for more than 30 years. He had a vast following. At its peak 2.5 million listeners tuned in across forty-eight radio stations.

As well as appearing in his own TV commercials in Melbourne in 1963, Dennis Gowing sponsored, and often appeared in, a Saturday morning television show called 'Kevin Dennis Auditions' which became 'Kevin Dennis New Faces' and was broadcast on Sunday evenings on Channel 9. He also featured in other sponsored television programmes, including 'Tell the Truth' and the 'Kevin Dennis Sports Parade'. After making his name selling cars he moved into the restaurant and hotel business.

Jean Sinclair (1940-1991), faithful assistant to former Prime Minister Bob Hawke, has an entry. The pair's association began in 1973 after Jean responded to a newspaper advertisement for a personal assistant for Hawke, who was then the president of the ACTU. She quickly 'reduced the chaotic office of the ACTU to order' and, when Hawke entered federal parliament in 1980, she became his senior political staffer. Their working relationship ended only with her death in 1991 from cancer.

Frank 'Paddy' Pallin (1900-1991) managed to translate his love of the outdoors into a thriving business venture. After losing his job during the Depression, Pallin decided to open an outdoor equipment business, specialising in lightweight gear. By 1934 the business was generating modest profits and he started a mail-order arm and began selling his merchandise through other shops. Paddy Pallin remains a family enterprise and has stores throughout Australia.

Sumner Locke Elliott (1917-1991) is probably best known for his novels *Careful He Might Hear You* (which was produced as a film in 1983) and *Water Under the Bridge* (which became a TV mini-series in 1980). The novels were based on his early life, which was marked by the death of his mother one day after his birth. They explore the tug-of-war between his aunts over who would be his guardian after he was virtually abandoned by his father.

Actor Sheila Florance (1916-1991) will be remembered by many for her role as Lizzie Birdsworth in the long-running TV series, *Prisoner*, for which she won a Sammy (1981) and two Logie (1981, 1983) awards. The role made her a world-wide cult figure. Sheila continued to act until a few months before her death. Her last role was as a dying woman (shot while she, herself, was dying from cancer) in Paul Cox's *A Woman's Tale*.

Hector Crawford (1913-1991) is best known as a television producer but his first love was music. A choirboy at St Paul's Cathedral in Melbourne until his voice broke, he later formed the Melbourne Conservatorium Symphony Orchestra, and produced music programs. In 1945 he expanded into producing radio drama. He made the transition to television in 1956, and in the 1970s was Australia's largest independent television production company, training and employing generations of actors, writers, technicians and producers.

Concert pianist Eileen Joyce (1909-1950) grew up in the gold mining town of Boulder in Western Australia, where she was taught piano by the nuns at her local Catholic school. Money raised by the local community enabled her to study in Perth. She later studied abroad where she achieved great success, toured extensively, performed in movies and on soundtracks, owned numerous properties in England (and had Winston Churchill as a neighbour) and generally enjoyed star status.

The full list of entries of people who died in 1991 and have been added to the *ADB*'s website can be found at <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biographies/pubDate/?from=2014-12-09>

ADB EDITORIAL BOARD



ADB Editorial Board, 2015

photo by Brian Wimborne

L-R: Darryl Bennet, David Dunstan, Pat Buckridge, Shino Konishi, Peter Howell, Malcolm Allbrook (ADB managing editor), Stefan Petrow, Nick Brown, Patrick Cornish, Stephen Kinnane, Tom Griffiths (chair), Stephen Garton, Melanie Nolan (ADB general editor), Beverley Kingston, Jill Roe and Chris Cunneen

The ADB's annual Editorial Board meeting was held on 27 March in the McDonald Room of the Menzies Library. Two new board members, Dr Shino Konishi and Stephen Kinnane, were welcomed. The morning session discussed matters of strategy, especially resources. During the lunch break the ANU's Chancellor, Professor Gareth Evans, presented Dr Chris Cunneen with an ADB medal. Many of those closest associated with Chris in his ADB work in the last four decades were able to join us for this lovely ceremony. In the afternoon we discussed matters of minutiae of the editorial process.

This meeting, the 69th Editorial Board meeting since 1959, encapsulated the challenges facing the ADB in the 21st century. The art is a fine one of both sustaining the traditions of the longest and largest research project in the social sciences and humanities in Australia while continuing to be innovative. Innovation attracts new funding yet tradition and sticking to the discipline of the dictionary remains important to our recurrent government funding and to those who have sustained the ADB for over a half a century.

I am delighted to report that the main outcome of the 2015 Editorial Board meeting was a commitment to work on revisions, as well as to continue our current program. Chris Cunneen and the NSW Working Party is leading a revisions project centred on births, deaths and marriage certificates of subjects in volumes 1 and 2 published in 1966 and 1967. Other working parties have established sub-committees to work on this too. Four-fifths of our corrigenda enquiries are about subjects in the first two volumes. We also agreed to work towards an Indigenous Dictionary of Biography. Even taking the 2005 missing persons volume into account (which Chris also led), Aboriginal people comprise only 1.76% of entries up to 1880. So our challenge is not just to update our entries in light of recent research but to attend to missing persons.

Melanie Nolan



Dr Shino Konishi and Steve Kinnane have been appointed to the ADB Editorial Board for a period of five years.

Dr Shino Konishi, BA (Hons & University Medal) Sydney, PhD Sydney, is a Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Western Australia. In 1998 she received the inaugural New South Wales Ministry for the Arts Indigenous History Fellowship. She has been a research fellow at the National Museum of Australia's Centre for Historical Research and a lecturer at the Koori Centre, University of Sydney. In 2008-2013 she was a Fellow and Deputy Director of the Australian Centre for Indigenous History in the School of History, ANU. She identifies with the Yawuru people of Broome, Western Australia.

Steve Kinnane, BA (Hons) Sustainability, Murdoch University, is Senior Researcher for the Nulungu Research Institute at the University of Notre Dame Australia, Broome. He has been an active researcher and writer for more than 20 years and lectures and works on community cultural heritage and development projects. Steve is a Marda Marda man from Mirrowoong country in the East Kimberley.

ADB Medals are awarded for long and distinguished service to the Australian Dictionary of Biography. Longtime ADB supporter, Chris Cunneen, became the 22nd medal recipient at a ceremony held at the ANU on 27 March 2017. The following is his medal citation:

In 1974 the Australian Dictionary of Biography's (ADB) general editor Bede Nairn examined Christopher Cunneen's PhD on the role of the Governor-General in Australia (ANU, 1973). On its strength, dealing with biography, fame and reputation, Nairn promptly recruited Chris to his staff. In this way, the ADB



L-R: Chris Cunneen, Marion Consandine and Bede Nairn, 1983, ANU Archives, ANUA226-689

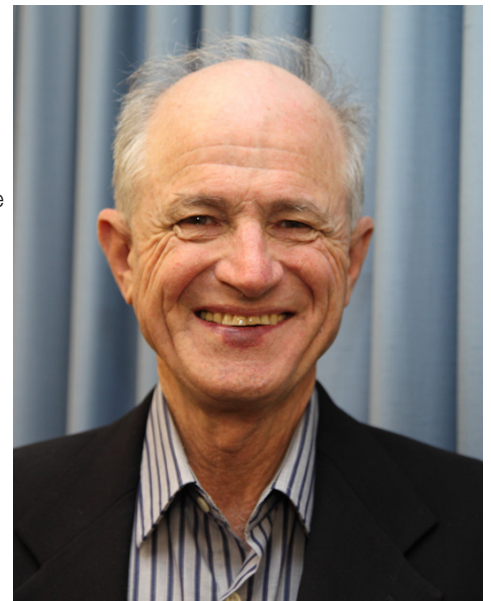
secured the services of Chris for four decades (to date) as a salaried, and then, a voluntary worker. Under the editorship of Nairn and Geoff Serle, Chris came to perform most of the managerial tasks, the 'day-to-day management ... of the project, allocation of duties to the research staff, liaison with working parties outside the ANU and supervision of the office of the project'. He also oversaw the research assistants in the states and in Britain. At the same time he wrote entries, conducted research, and assisted the general editor in editing all entries and preparing the manuscript for publication. In the performance of all his duties, he set the highest standards of dedication and scholarship. In addition, he was a kindly and considerate supervisor who enjoyed the deep respect and affection of the staff.

Chris's role evolved over the years with his becoming the ADB's deputy general editor (1982-96). On leave in late 1986, he embarked on a comparative dictionary tour visiting not only our American, Canadian, British and Austrian equivalents, but also the fledgling Irish, Malaysian and New Zealand enterprises. He had published *King's Men: Australia's Governors-General from Hoptoun to Isaacs* in 1983 but his 'sticking to the editorial grind' meant he had little time to write work of his own. Only in retirement was he to have time to complete *William John McKell: Boilermaker, Premier, Governor-General* (2000). Chris became a loyal deputy when John Ritchie was appointed general editor in 1987. He retired from the ADB in December 1996 and moved to Sydney.

Chris's loyalty, dedication, patience, tact and diplomacy exercised on behalf of the ADB did not end there. His

contribution to the ADB flourished after 1996. Chris had been a member of the ADB's NSW Working Party since 1975 and his contribution there continued seamlessly. Jill Roe recruited him to be an Honorary Research Fellow at Macquarie University. In this congenial company and in 'retirement', he led the team that produced the supplementary volume of missing persons. There was a great need for such a volume but no resources amid budget cuts. In 2000 Stephen Garton, Jill Roe and Beverley Kingston submitted an application to the ARC as the chief investigators with Chris as the production manager. He was soon the editor, following the ADB system and form, and working closely with 'headquarters' on the project. Indeed, when published, it was easily interleaved into the ADB Online. At Macquarie he became the face of the ADB in NSW, fielding queries and complaints from the many authors whom he had come to know personally. The NSW Working Party could not function without his devoted record-keeping and unofficial secretarial work. Chris joined the ADB Editorial Board in June 2011, embodying institutional memory as the ADB culture transformed towards a digital future. In 2014 he embarked on a revision project of volumes one and two. Most of the corrigenda enquiries that the ADB has received have been for those first two volumes, which were published in 1966 and 1967, at a time when it was operationally difficult and too expensive to obtain birth, death and marriage certificates, and other biographical sources were scarce. Chris's decision to undertake this huge voluntary task reflects extraordinary and unsurpassed devotion to the ADB.

To date he has written 78 ADB articles, putting him in the top ten of our Authors' Roll of Honour, and he has made an editorial contribution to countless others and continues to do so. Chris was an exemplary member of the ADB's salaried staff and he has been virtually an unpaid staff member for the past 18 years. He is one of our longest-serving and greatest voluntary workers.

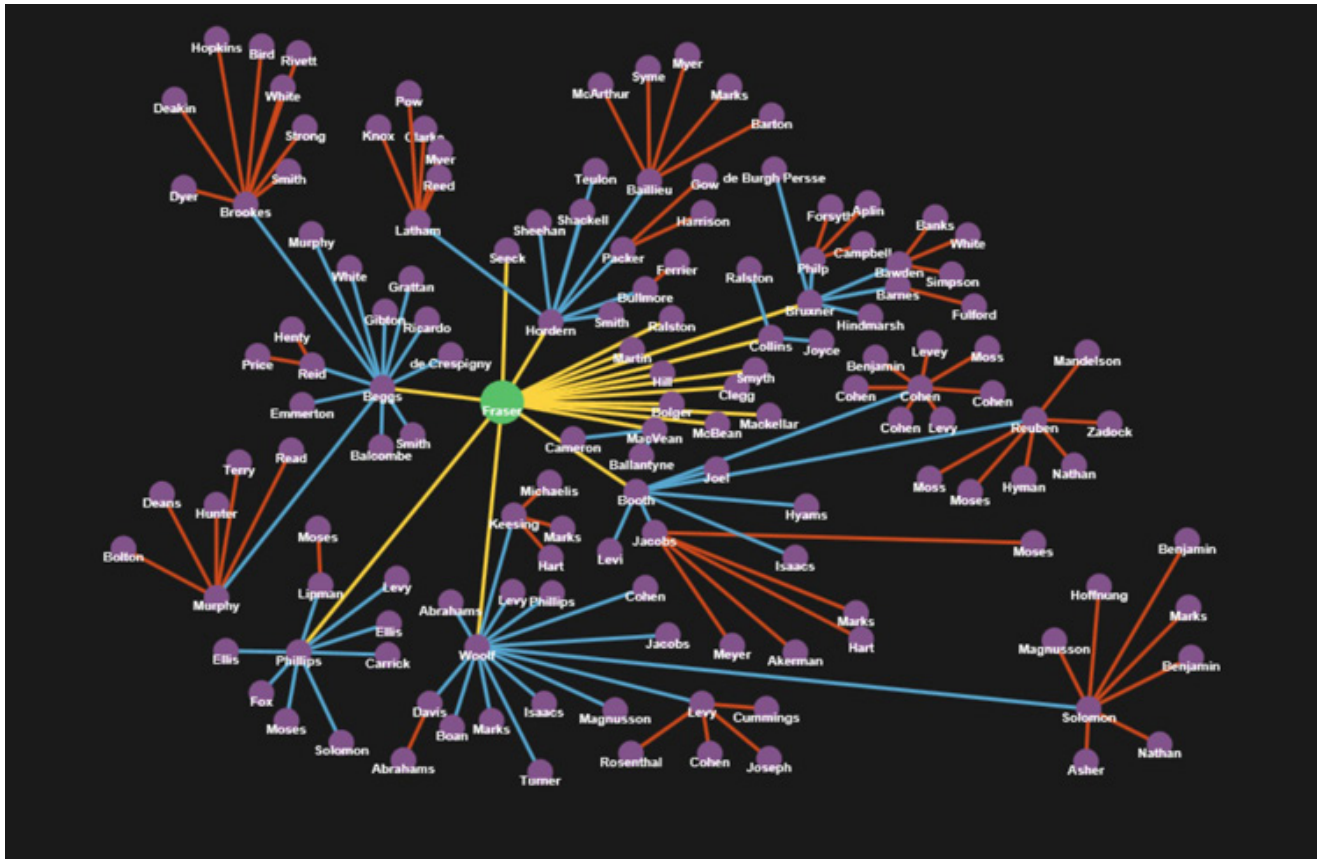


Chris Cunneen, 2012 photo by Brian Wimborne

AN AUSTRALIAN FAMILY

Malcolm Fraser, Prime Minister of Australia from 1975 to 1983, first learnt that he had Jewish ancestry when he was an adult. He discovered more about this part of his heritage when Margaret Simons was helping him to research and write his book, *Malcolm Fraser: The Political Memoirs* in 2012. We discovered even more when we added Fraser's obituary to Obituaries Australia this year.

by Christine Fernon



This graph shows families in the NCB's biographical websites that are related to the Fraser family. The yellow lines indicate one degree of separation, blue lines show two degrees of separation and orange lines three degrees.

Malcolm Fraser identified strongly with his Scottish ancestry. The line began, in Australia, when his entrepreneurial grandfather, Simon Fraser, arrived in Victoria in 1853. After a couple of years on the Bendigo goldfields Simon became a successful railways contractor, bought pastoral properties in New South Wales and in Queensland, became a member of the Victorian, and then the federal parliaments, and was knighted in 1918.

Sir Simon's youngest son, John Neville Fraser – Malcolm's father – inherited the family's 11,000-hectare sheep property, Nyang, near Moulamein in New South Wales in 1919. He sold Nyang and bought the more productive property, Nareen, in Victoria, in 1943. Although Malcolm entered federal parliament as a young man in 1955, and lived the life of a busy politician until 1983, he inherited his ancestors' love of the land and retained Nareen as a working property until 1997.

Malcolm knew few details about his mother, Una Arnold Woolf's ancestors. It was not until he was an adult that he learnt of her Jewish heritage. Perhaps unaware of her own ancestry, Una does not appear to have told Malcolm much about her forebears. It seems that her father, Louis Woolf, was estranged from his mother and stepfather. Using Trove and other sources to track down obituaries and documents we have been able to start piecing together her family's story.

It begins in Australia with the Jewish convict Samuel Solomon (<http://oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/solomon-samuel-19706>) (Malcolm's great great great grandfather), a 51-year-old umbrella maker and salesman from London, who arrived in Sydney in 1833 aboard the *Mangles*. He had been transported for life for stealing a bracket clock and other household goods. Described as 163 cm (5ft 4 ins) tall, he could read and write, had a sallow complexion, dark chestnut eyes, black hair, and greying whiskers which joined under his chin. His loyal wife,

AN AUSTRALIAN FAMILY (cont'd)

Rebecca, and eight children (a ninth migrated later and a tenth was born in Sydney) joined him in the colony two years later.

Solomon was assigned as a convict to Archibald Innes at Port Macquarie. (Fellow Jewish convict, Henry Simeon Cohen, whose descendants were to marry into the Solomon family, was also assigned to Innes around the same time.) Following his pardon Solomon became a store keeper and publican at Bunyan, near Cooma in New South Wales. By the time he died, in 1856, his children had all married and many were prominent citizens of their communities, in particular of Sydney, Tamworth, Maitland and the Monaro. One son, Charles Solomon became the first mayor of Cooma in 1880. Two other children married into the Keesing family to which the author Nancy Keesing belonged.

Another daughter, Julia, married Lewis Levy, a leading Jewish merchant and politician, who has an entry in the *ADB*. Levy was a partner, with his cousins Samuel and David Cohen, in the mercantile firm, David Cohen & Co, which had branches in Sydney, Newcastle, Tamworth, and Maitland. Many of Levy's 14 children further consolidated the business relationship by joining the firm or marrying into the Cohen family. One of Levy's grandson's married Gwendoline Marks, a granddaughter of Caspar Marks, a Jewish merchant from Hungary. Media personality, Ita Buttrose, is also a descendant of Caspar Marks.

Samuel Solomon's daughter, Emma (Malcolm's great grandmother), married Henry Robert Reuben, a Jewish publican who later became a cordial and soft drink manufacturer. Details about their ten children are elusive. We have not yet discovered how their daughter, Esther (Malcolm's great grandmother), who was living in Mudgee, New South Wales, came to meet Louis Woolf, a Jewish publican living in Bendigo, Victoria, when they married in 1859. Louis had arrived in Victoria, from England, via South Africa, with his parents and siblings in the mid-1850s. The Woolf men worked as publicans and storekeepers on the Bendigo goldfields. In the the early 1860s Louis and Esther, along with many of Louis siblings and their young families, moved to the lucrative Dunedin goldfields in New Zealand to start businesses as brewers and storekeepers. Tragedy followed. Louis died of consumption four months before the birth of his third child (Malcolm's grandfather). His wife, Esther, returned to Sydney with her children; the remaining Woolf family members settled in New Zealand. Louis's niece, Grace Joel, became an artist and has an entry in the *New Zealand Dictionary of Biography*; Grace's sister became a concert pianist; Julius Vogel, a cousin of Grace's father, who had moved to Dunedin around the same time as the Woolfs, became the country's first Jewish premier (prime minister).

Louis Woolf's sister, Hannah, had not followed the family to New Zealand as she had married the successful tobacco merchant, Isaac Jacobs, in Melbourne in 1860. The future Lady Deborah (Daisy) Isaacs, the wife of Australia's first Australian-born, Governor General, Isaac Isaacs, was one of their offspring. The family also became somewhat famous when four of Daisy's brothers married four Jacobs' sisters (of the South Australian brewing family).

Back in Sydney the newly widowed Esther Woolf married her former husband's cousin, Edward Elias Phillips, and became part of the large and talented Phillips family, many of whom are in the *ADB*, including artist, Emanuel Phillips Fox; British suffragist and politician, Marion Phillips; her lawyer brother Morris Mondle Phillips; lawyer, Sir Philip David Phillips; and Dr Constance Ellis, the first woman to graduate with a medical degree from the University of Melbourne.

By the 1900s Samuel and Rebecca Solomon's numerous descendants were an integral part of the Jewish community in Sydney and Melbourne. According to researcher Margaret Simons, however, Esther's son, Louis Arnold Woolf (Malcolm's grandfather), did not get along with his stepfather, Edward Phillips, and became estranged from his family. An accountant, Louis suffered financially during the 1890s depression. The fact that, in 1895, he also married out of his faith, in a Presbyterian Church, to Amy Booth, an aunt of the merchant Sir Samuel Hordern, may have also caused some tension in his family. For whatever reason, shortly after his marriage he and Amy moved to Western Australia to begin a new life, far away from their families.

Louis Woolf was an ardent federalist and had campaigned with Edmund Barton in the early days of the push for federation. In 1903 he stood unsuccessfully as a Senate candidate for Western Australia in the first federal election. He and his wife had two daughters; Enid married Malcolm McKellar, a pastoralist living in New South Wales. He was the brother of Dorothea McKellar, author of the famous poem, *My Country* (which begins with those immortal lines 'I Love a Sunburnt Country'). In mid-life Enid took up painting and entered works in the Archibald prize for portraiture. Louis's younger daughter, Una, also married a pastoralist, John Neville Fraser, Malcolm's father.

Malcolm Fraser had two very strong cultural threads in his life. One – his Scottish, pastoral heritage – he was very much aware of and embraced. He knew very little about the other – his Jewish, mercantile heritage. Many commentators have speculated that his Jewish background may have influenced his strong support of multiculturalism. At this stage it is impossible to know.



caricature of Louis Woolf, published in the *Sunday Times* (Perth), 6/9/1903

WRITING AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Address by Ann Moyal to a meeting of the Independent Scholars Association of Australia at the High Court of Australia, 19 March 2015

In the abstract of my talk I ask ‘Why Write Autobiography’? and allude to the long classical tradition in the genre of the male odyssey of achievement, power and politics from which women’s autobiography has been slow to rise. But since the end of the 1980s and Jill Ker Conway’s *Road from Coorain*, my own first autobiography *Breakfast with Beaverbrook* also provided a prelude to a spate of personal lifetime narratives – Anne Summers, Wendy McCarthy and Susan Ryan – touching gender and history, followed by a changing landscape of memoir and autobiography in the present century. So today I will look at two approaches to autobiographical work that emerged from my different landscapes of interest and age.

Ker Conway’s well-received memoir *The Road from Coorain* of 1989 was essentially a reflection of her childhood and education in Australia before, dissatisfied, she flipped the dust from her feet and retreated to America. My motive was different. My impetus to writing my first memoir in the early 1990s, while I took a pause from professional work on the history of science and technology, arose directly from my resistance to the fact that women appeared in contemporary Australian male memoirs exclusively as mistresses or wives. As I had enjoyed an intellectual life, there seemed a good reason to present a new perspective.

I had had a historian’s life and, in my mid sixties, I saw my career in the light of ‘encounters with history’. My prime early encounter with history was with the charismatic and powerful Lord Beaverbrook who, at the age of 75, while still dominant press lord of the *Daily Express*, had purchased some of the key political papers of Great Britain, notably the Lloyd George Papers, the Curzon Papers, and the Bonar Law Papers and, to the great annoyance of academic historians – who thought that as a newspaperman Lord Beaverbrook would rewrite history – planned to keep them in his sole possession and become a historian.

It was my good fortune to become his personal research assistant. This brought great glamour, excitement and world travel to my work and led to the publication, in 1956, of the book *Men and Power* which placed Lord Beaverbrook as a historian on the international stage. Beaverbrook, himself, was a participant in history. As a Canadian millionaire who moved to Britain and rapidly became a Member of the House of Commons, he had been at the centre of manoeuvres to bring down Asquith as Prime Minister in 1916 and to install Lloyd George in the Prime Minister’s seat. His interest lay in writing of the two critical last years of WWI and the battle for power between the Generals and the Politicians. It was history of a gripping political kind fortified by Beaverbrook’s acute memory of those events and the Papers. It became ‘OUR WAR’

As this experience forms the core of my first book, let me read a description from the book of how we worked.

‘By normal research approaches, we worked in reverse. It was, in fact, Beaverbrook’s remarkable memory of these



Ann Moyal, 2015

photo by Natalie Azzopardi

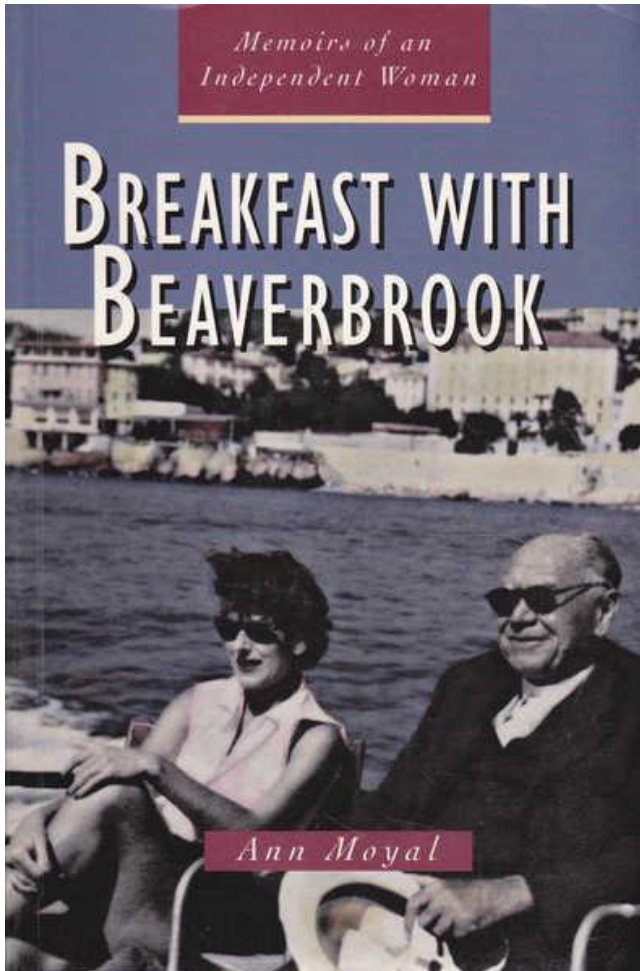
now distant events that provided the method and structure by which we worked. In conversation, walking, or standing at his high upright desk, he would recreate for me the outline and atmosphere of a political incident and illuminate with stories and anecdotes the personalities involved. A born raconteur, with a flair for a pungent phrase, his staccato style was contagiously easy to acquire. My mind taut with concentration, I would hurry off to grasp my typewriter before the spoken version lost its freshness and bite.

Against this lively outline drawn from Beaverbrook, I would check his recollected account against his own diaries of engagements, consult the secondary sources, and draw together the archival material – the relevant letters, notes or memoranda which the archivist, Sheila Elton, had dug from the manuscript collection. Sheila’s work was crucial to the scheme. A trained historian, recently married to the distinguished Cambridge Tudor historian, Geoffrey Elton, Sheila was a young north-country woman with a keen professional grasp of the rich sources within her care.

Against this more complex framework, I would concoct and type up the chapter’s first draft. The draft, taking at times new directions or elaborations of Beaverbrook’s original account, in turn, stimulated him and the result resembled an exciting snowball thrust back and forth with gathering pace. Nights of little sleep for Beaverbrook would enliven his recollection and prompt further searches through the papers next day, while the work took on the spirited quality of a detective hunt’.

WRITING AUTOBIOGRAPHY (cont'd)

This description of our unusual methodology was picked up by Professor Stuart McIntyre and used in his class on Methodology for his History Honours students at Melbourne University where the students, attuned to the new age of digital research, saw it, perhaps not unexpectedly, as 'positively Edwardian'.



But there was another side to working with Beaverbrook which I came upon when looking recently into my book. Let me read it.

'By June 1955, I was beginning to show some exhaustion. I was fascinated by the venture, but longed for a little private time. "So you think working 6 days a week is too much for you?" Lord Beaverbrook enquired ominously. 'No', I replied, "but I'd like occasionally to get off in the evening before 8 p.m. My friends despair of me". "So you're not really interested in the work?" The blue eyes were harsh. 'I love it', I almost shouted, 'but sometimes (my caution flew) you are quite unreasonable'. I waited for my exit line. "Waall, you're a very curious woman. Come and dine with me!"

What was so critical about this 'encounter with history' was the uniqueness of the man. Examined against the documents of the period Lord Beaverbrook's accuracy was outstanding. His first hand knowledge of the players in those two vital years of war gave him a mastery over the documentary material that no other historian, working systematically through the records later, could hope to achieve. It was this combination that placed him in

special command of this piece of British political history, and so it remains. Importantly, It won him the acclaim of the historians of the ivory tower. As Oxford's Robert Blake (later Lord Blake) wrote: 'Lord Beaverbrook had written something that is, in the true sense of the word, unique. He brings to the particular episodes and crises in which he played a part, the accuracy and scholarship of a true historian who has really studied and understood the great collections of historical papers both in his possession and elsewhere'. Lord Beaverbrook died in 1964, and despite the amazing range of his career, he wanted to be remembered for his books. *Breakfast with Beaverbrook* presented me with an opportunity to illuminate the processes of his historical work. For his part, Beaverbrook greatly influenced me. He taught me some cardinal truths that have shaped my own style and career. In short, they were: Not to take too seriously the sources of authority or people in power, to distrust mini-men, to be brave, and to take risks.

My second important 'encounter with history' of which I write in this book occurred when, deciding to leave the glitter of the Beaverbrookian life, I returned to Australia in 1959 to help another distinguished, but very different historian, Sir Keith Hancock, establish the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. They were lively and turbulent days. Hancock himself wrote two autobiographies, *Country and Calling* (which Manning Clark once called 'the longest job application for the directorship of the Research School of Social Sciences at ANU) and *Professing History* in which he makes reference to 'an exhausting quarrel' at the ANU in respect of the *ADB* and another, adding, 'Those stories had better not be told'. But history matters, and as I was there and had preserved the correspondence between Hancock and myself across the critical years of 1960-61, when the Dictionary's relationship with the independent historian, Malcolm Ellis, was at its most complex, I wrote a chapter in my memoir on the foundations of the *ADB* which remained the major historical source on a pioneering enterprise that led to its present 19 volumes of collective historical scholarship and is now also the digitalized *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. *The ADB's Story*, an elaborate book rich in archival sources which tells the full record of this jewel in the Social Sciences' crown at the ANU, was published at the end of last year. For me those years at the Dictionary proved both significant in returning me to Australian history and, in leading me through Hancock's initiative and interest, to my pioneering the study of the history of Australian science.

The subtitle I chose for *Breakfast with Beaverbrook* 'Memoirs of an Independent Woman' made plain the blend of the professional and the personal and marked the beginning of a spate of Australian women's professional and personal narratives – with their explicitly gendered titles – Susan Ryan, *Catching the Waves* (1999), Wendy McCarthy, *Don't Fence Me In* (2000) and Anne Summers' two volumes, *Ducks on the Pond* (1999-2000) a title which she spells out stamped onto her book's cover that 'was what a shearer called out if he saw a woman approach or enter that exclusively male domain, the shearing shed'. After this trio's lively advent of women writing during the thrust of their vivid careers, came Inga Clendinnen's *Tiger's Eye* as a distinguished historian's personal life story

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of family, ill health and history, while Melbourne's Brenda Niall offers a quiet informing memoir, *Life Class: The Education of a Biographer*. Hence a new gendered autobiographical form was on the shelves. In all these works, as in my own, there is a central thrust very different from the traditional male autobiography – to claim and examine one's own agency and autonomy as a woman and unite it with one's personal life. 'The self-denigrating female narrator' reflected in the cultural mirror of an earlier century, had disappeared.

But let us remember one distinctive male figure now in the centenary of his birth year, 1915, Manning Clark, who served us with an outstanding example of a different male autobiographer with his questioning *The Puzzles of Childhood, A Quest for Grace*, and *A Historian's Apprenticeship* and his six volumes, *A History of Australia* laced with singular emotional force.

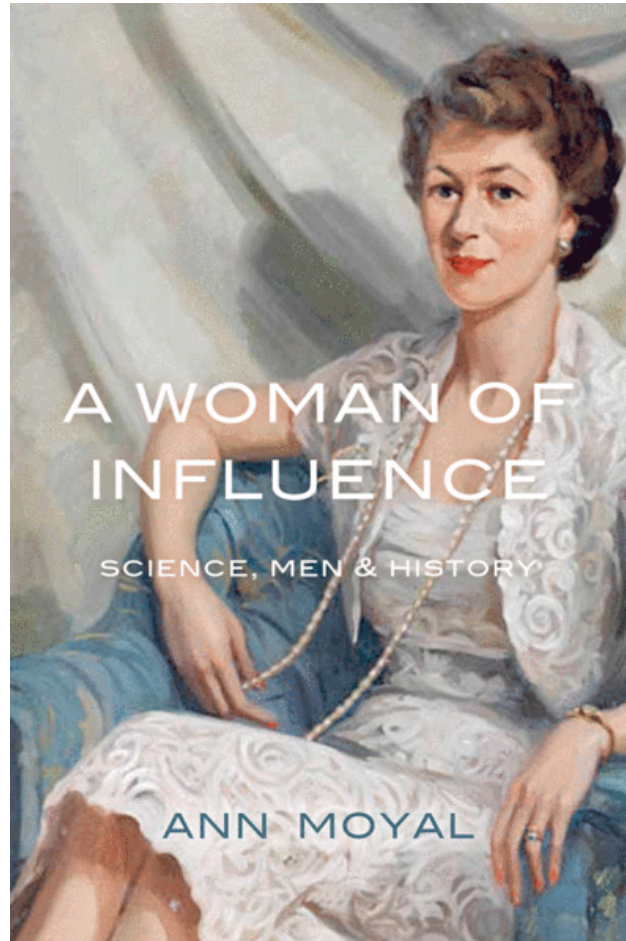
Writing autobiography as a woman in what is called the 'seventh' age, common among men after distinguished careers in Britain, is as yet a rare phenomenon for Australian women. What are the influences towards it? What are the issues that impel one to what Socrates so famously called 'the examined life'? What for a woman are its issues and outcomes?

My impulse towards my second memoir, *A Woman of Influence*, subtitled 'Science, Men & History', was largely self-indulgent. I needed something to occupy my days at the National Library. But I was given a strong mental push by an American literary writer, Carolyn Heilbrun who deplored that whenever she read an autobiography written by a woman in her fifties or beyond, it was always confined to her youth or romance. I quote her: 'She abandons age, experience, wisdom, to search the past, usually for romance, always for the beginnings of childhood'. But as Heilbrun argued, 'the story of age, of maturity before infirmity, before meaningless old age, has never been told except perhaps by Shakespeare who told everything, provided he could tell it of men'. An exaggeration, clearly, and now in part outdated as the self-revelatory works of number of older American women authors, often with a lesbian story, affirm. I like particularly the statement of a leading one of these writers, May Sarton, who wrote: 'This growing old...why in this civilization do we treat it as a disaster, valuing as we do the woman who "stays young". Why stay young when adventure lies in change and growth'. A good message and one that chimes somewhat with words I have carried with me for many years uttered by the fifteenth century anchorite, Dame Julian of Norwich, who during the Black Plague would greet those who stopped beside her window with, 'All will be well and all manner of things will be well. Go forth gladly and gaily'.

Certainly Carolyn Heilbrun's words were a significant stimulus to me. There was another inspiration in Simone de Beauvoir, who summed up in her book *The Prime of Life*, 'I wished to put myself in question before all questions are silenced', and nearer home came the telling cry of Australia's octogenarian artist Margaret Olley 'Hurry Last Days'.

So for me the purpose of writing an older age memoir was fairly clear. After writing *Breakfast with Beaverbrook* I might have expected life to have taken a quieter turn, but it hadn't.

So, as I explain in my 'Introduction' to this second venture: I wanted to gather together all those components of my somewhat chequered engagement as a historian of science



and a biographer, to capture some of the key people who have influenced me; to write about friendship, and about what my publisher called those key 'life commonalities, love and loss', and the experience of vastly increasing age. My aim was to mark the intersection of a professional and a personal life. But how best to shape all this? It was difficult; it involved a lot of grappling and revision. There was the question of the appropriate 'Voice' and since my life's narrative in large part occupied my earlier book, the 'Voice' and the kind of 'narrative form' were important questions here.

Many of us work in isolation, as I do, a challenge in itself. We really need to air our ideas. I note that Brenda Niall writing her autobiographic *Life Class* at the age of 75 acknowledges her extensive use of colleagues and family for correction and recall. In the event I benefitted greatly from a very discerning publisher, Terri-Ann White, at University of Western Australia Publishing who told me that as I had led a 'passionate life', I should write passionately about it and its span. And, again with a seeing eye, she chose to make the cover from my portrait in the National Portrait Gallery as the only illustration in the book. Painted by Pamela Thalben Ball in London in 1957, I am wearing a splendid dress bought for me by Lord Beaverbrook

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to replace the simpler items I was appearing in at his dinners with the surviving circle of old participant players of 'Our War'. The past stretches out to the present. (It was interesting to learn from Sue Steggall's discerning review of my book in the *ISAA Review*, that she had viewed me rather as an 'Odysseus' in my life's journey and that the 'confident gaze of the woman on the cover is clear to see'. It was a new interpretation for me.

In the event in writing I settled for a linked collection of essays that conveyed my experiences and impressions and brought together stories of the addictive business of writing and the researches on which my historical work of scholarship turned, and the people I consorted with in them; the creative pleasure of the founding and development of an organization such as ISAA – the Independent Scholars Association – and its challenges; the times I spent fruitfully and with much pleasure at the Eleanor Dark Foundation 'Writers House' in Katoomba, bonding with younger women writers; friendship, and the long chain of clever people whom I had met in these later years. These included some key professional links with people like Robyn Williams, brilliant science communicator; the highly talented and frustrated Science Minister, Barry Jones; Manning Clark, of course, among the historians and the rare Dymphna Clark, the poet Les Murray who I have long considered as a special historian in his poems about old Australian agrarian technology and old telecommunications, and a remarkable woman, geographer and social scientist Fay Gale, the first woman Vice-Chancellor in the frontier State of Western Australia, to name a few. The subtitle refers to 'Science, Men and History', but there are many women in my story. What became clear to me as I wrote was the store I have set throughout my life on 'interconnections' and the friendships that grew. 'Only Connect' as E. M. Forster said in *Howards End*, all those years ago. In a country like Australia, and a city like Canberra, interconnecting and the networks one develops have yielded rich returns. I liked the review of my book in the *Canberra Times* by the distinguished Marie Coleman who called it 'a remarkable farewell letter to this city'. I think her perception most penetrating for I have long loved this special place and had opened my book with a paragraph about its shining beauty. Such a thoughtful review offers particular enlightenment to an autobiographer. Writing in old age, the place too of younger friendships was of special importance to me. As the British writer and publisher, Diana Athill, stresses in her autobiography written at nearly 90, called *Somewhere Towards the End*, 'Always make friends of younger people'. It is a key motto.

Writing autobiography raises the nature of causation in a life. Is it a matter of luck and destiny? Or a question of strategy in putting oneself in the way of opportunities. As life grows more complex, more full of information, more pressured, these questions of self scrutiny and evaluation are ones that will confront future autobiographers in a new way. Memory compresses so much when life is led at an increasingly hectic pace. Where have the personal diaries gone that are useful in a written reconstruction? Email is no substitute. I can't say I emerged with thoughtful philosophical answers from my 'examined life' though I certainly became aware of an array of misjudged or uncompleted ventures. Rather my text turned

into a stretching, allusive conversation with my readers where identity became entwined with other lives and where my work as a science historian in Australia played an integral part. And so I look at my research and writing on the historical saga of the fabulous Platypus and the 90 years it took the great scientific brains of Britain and Europe to determine that it was a furred animal, a living fossil, that laid eggs, and, variously, on meeting the famous expatriate author, Alan Moorehead, and spending two years among his papers in the National Library of Australia, a wholly enjoyable period, to recover his creative life. As Moorehead, himself, expressed it, 'And so a writer's books are the chapters of his life'.

In my historical work I have found that the subjects tend to have chosen me, springing from a former experience or idea, and have, in effect, become as the British biographer, Richard Holmes, puts it, 'a handshake across time'. For me the pioneering, nineteenth century geologist, the Rev W. B. Clarke, presented such a case, an undertaking which consumed a great measure of my time and scholarly commitment to publish 800 of his scientific letters and in doing so open up Australia's scientific community and international scientific relationships in a two volume work, *The Web of Science*. I describe this demanding process in my chapter 'Writing Mr Clarke'. While in this long professional intimacy, I came to think of this clever, challenged, generous, ambitious and vulnerable man as something of an extra husband, out of it came a chance meeting in Victoria (where I spent time with my partner 'M') with Clarke's charming great-grandson, John Clarke, a businessman and former pilot in Britain in WWII. We had often met socially but never discussed either his name, nor my work, but, when *The Web of Science* appeared on his coffee table, a mutual friend cried out. 'But that's Ann Moyal'; 'and I am W. B. Clarke's great-grandson', was his swift reply. We became close friends until his recent death.

Essentially the great merit of writing in old age is that one is freed from inhibition or a restrictive sense of privacy. Candour becomes the companion of a late age memoirist. One has really nothing to lose. Hence I write of the traumatic end story of my long marriage to Joe Moyal with the confronting intervention of highly acquisitive Moyal children; for it is a story that has rich social and human resonance. Greed with death in the family is a story with many faces. I confronted one restraint in respect of candour in my chapter 'A Late Love' where I refer to the central character, my partner of 10 years, only as 'M'. (I did this although he is alive no longer, in respect for his wishes and his fear that his children would not be pleased).

Readers appear to respond to an author's openness. There is a readiness on the part of both women and men to access the more intimate stories of another individual's life. And so I write of loss, my much loved sister, the story of my marriage, of diverse friendships, of the final cutting off of my partnership with 'M', of women in science, and I wave to Beaverbrook returning in recent years as a senior historian to Britain to look at his Historical Papers in the massive Lord Beaverbrook Papers at the House of Lords and assess, after my own long experience as a historian, how we worked together when I was

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young. This proved both nostalgic and illuminating. It entirely confirmed my view that this extraordinary man who had helped save Britain as Churchill's Minister for Aircraft Production during the Battle for Britain, who had led a long and contentious life as a powerful press baron, wanting at 75 to become a historian, had emerged as a unique combination of participant historian, archival proprietor and historical patron, and had become – a 20th Century 'historical "one off"'. As I left the House of Lords Archives, the Chief archivist told me that the Lloyd George Papers and the Beaverbrook Papers deposited there together some years after Lord Beaverbrook's death, were the Archives 'best sellers'. My visit (and the writing of my chapter) had an outcome that led to the publishing of an article called 'The History Man' in the journal *History Today*, which with its wide circulation brought this comparatively little known dimension of this public figure to a wide audience.

Memory, wide reading, diligence and pleasure are some of the basic processes of writing autobiography. One hopes for penetrating editorial comment and some sharp collaborative guidance. So I was startled to receive the 'editor's' opinion of my manuscript from UWAP. It read simply. 'I enjoyed the accounts of your scientific work; I was moved by your human stories. Thank you!' Someone in training I surmised! The old editorial days have passed. Yet of one thing I am confident: personal historical and literary autobiography have an important place in the public space and stand as an increasingly significant genre. As Susan Steggall sums up adroitly, 'The act of remembrance begins as a personal, private and often spontaneous activity but once shared with others, memories become collective remembering'. Or in Jill Ker Conway's words in her excellent book, *When Memory Speaks*: 'We are heard when we speak confidently out of our understanding of our own experience'.

Perhaps when it comes to late – life autobiography, we can go no further in Australia than the last work of Donald Horne, a remarkable man, a prolific author and public intellectual, an early writer of autobiography, who chose literally to end his days composing, by talking into his tape recorder. His book, *Dying: a Memoir*, published with his wife, Myfanwy, is a hallmark work as they track the dailiness of the passage and the progressive stages of his ebbing days. 'In a strange kind of way', he writes,

'we continue to build our experience' until control slips from him. To the last, he remains a contributor. It is a most affirming book.

In sum, autobiographical writing is changing significantly in this country. From the late years of the 20th Century there has been an outpouring of autobiographical writing by women and men in their thirties and forties, focussed not on reflections about the unfolding of a long life, but on urgent questions of identity and relationships to parents or to self: women resolving their relationship with mothers. Anne Summers memoir, *The Lost Mother*; men seeking resolution with a lost father; the interdependency of father and son. Germaine Greer's *Daddy We Hardly Knew You* is an earlier example; Biff Ward's recent self indulgent story of a deranged mother married to historian Russel Ward, another.

And now there is a flood of political memoir in Australia, or autobiographical slices one might call them, pieces of a politician's life – substantially male odysseys: Wayne Swan, *The Good Fight* (Six years, two prime ministers and staring down the Great Recession), Bob Carr's racy *The Journal of a Foreign Minister*; Gareth Evans, *Inside the Hawke Keating Government*. But then, conspicuously, comes a new kind of political memoir, Julia Gillard's remarkable *Julia*. Here, in my view, is an outstanding example of the blending of the professional and the personal, an account rich in candour and insights, with her personal detailed explanation of three demanding career years seen against her personal background. Most significant is her readiness to describe and emphasise the personal basis of her emotional life, her partner Tim, her family and friends, always offered together, never just her partner. It is illuminating, a new presentation of a different kind of life. Her book marks a promising trend.

[On the questions of Outcomes' in the talk's title, discussion revealed that one outcome of *A Woman of Influence* was my last minute invitation to become a member of the Prime Minister's 2014 Literary Prizes in Australian History and Non-fiction chaired by Gerard Henderson. I proved a dissenting member which attracted media cover. But this is another story.]