

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Friends

As I write, the COVID-19 situation continues to affect our lives. We particularly wish that our Friends across Australia maintain good health and that their economic circumstances will not be significantly affected.

It has been pleasing to see the Library re-open, albeit with restrictions in line with public health directions. While we have been unable to host Friends activities in the building, our online initiatives have been very well received.

The three Curious Collections Zoom events have brought some of the Library's treasures into Friends' homes through stories told by curators and volunteers.

The three-month trial of a Friends online book club has generated great interest. We were privileged in June to host Tom Keneally to explore his latest work, *The Dickens Boy*—an account of the early life of 'Plorn' Dickens, the youngest son of Charles Dickens, and his time in the Wilcannia area of New South Wales in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Cassandra Pybus was equally engaging in the second online book club when discussing her compelling story of Truganini in *Truganini: Journey through the Apocalypse*. Our most recent author, Kate Grenville, provided fascinating insights into her work *A Room Made of Leaves*, which gives the remarkable Elizabeth Macarthur 'the voice she could never have had'. If you missed any of these events, you can buy the books through the Library Bookshop, online or on site.

The Friends Committee is exploring options for more online events; we will keep you posted.

As you are aware, a key objective of the Friends is to support the Library in its work. I'm pleased to advise that the Friends will again provide funding of \$10,000 each for the 2021 Creative Arts Fellowship and Staff Travelling Fellowship. Thank you for your continuing membership and patronage of Friends' events, which allow funds to be disbursed to these worthy activities.

Howard Murray | Chair

Australian Dreams



Harold Cazneaux, *Going Home, Doohat Lane, North Sydney, 1910* (detail), nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn6808586.

The idea for *Australian Dreams: Picturing Our Built World*, an exhibition of images of the built environment, came from an unlikely place: the work of wilderness photographer Peter Dombrovskis. Three years ago, the National Library of Australia did an exhibition—*Dombrovskis: Journeys into the Wild*—based on its Dombrovskis archive of 3,000 transparencies. Of the 80 works on display, only one showed any signs of human intervention—a faint hint of the city of Hobart in the distance, from the top of Mount Wellington. In the rest of the photos there wasn't a house, shop, school, church or bridge in sight. They were beautiful, reflective images that highlighted the importance of the natural environment and why it was worth saving. It celebrated the parts of Australia's environment that remained 'untouched'.

As I looked at Dombrovskis' images of forests, mountains and lakes, I began to think about the 'other' outdoors, the 'built' outdoors. What would an exhibition about the built environment, about architecture, look like? How have our artists engaged with cityscapes, the main streets of country towns, homesteads, churches, shearing sheds, post offices, skyscrapers and the humble suburban home?

After searching through the National Library's Collections I found plenty of amazing images of the built environment by Australia's greatest painters, printmakers and photographers. More than enough to make what I thought could be a beautiful and thought-provoking exhibition. Drawing exclusively from the collections of the National Library, *Australian Dreams: Picturing Our Built World* features paintings, drawings, prints, and photographs by Augustus Earle, Conrad Martens, S.T. Gill, Eugene von Guérard, Lionel Lindsay, Harold Cazneau, Olive Cotton, Mark Strizic, David Moore, Max Dupain, Jeff Carter, Ruth Maddison, Wolfgang Sievers and John Gollings.

The artists in *Australian Dreams* have documented, interpreted and celebrated a variety of buildings, from the inner-city terrace and the humble bush cottage to the Sydney Opera House and Melbourne's Flinders Street Station. Sometimes beautiful, sometimes ordinary, these buildings are the backdrops to our lives. They reflect our sense of identity, our hopes and dreams, rendered in bricks and mortar.

Matt Jones | Curator

TROVE: SHARING NEW FEATURES AND NEW COLLECTIONS

As well as highlighting new additions to the National Library of Australia's collections, the updated Trove provides a window into some of the incredible collections held by other organisations.

Here are some places to start exploring:

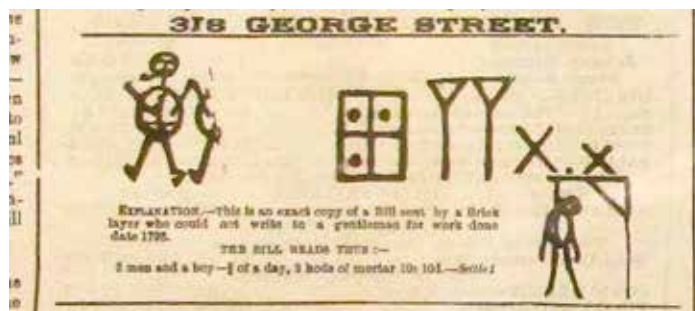
- Read about how we digitised the papers of Sir John Monash: trove.nla.gov.au/blog/2020/06/11/it-begins-opening-box.
- Search themed collections from organisations that contribute to Trove, including James Cook University's collection celebrating its 50-year anniversary (trove.nla.gov.au/collection/jcu/50treasures) and State Library Victoria's collection about the development of education in colonial Victoria (trove.nla.gov.au/collection/slv/colonial-education).
- Find out more about the updated version of Trove at trove.nla.gov.au/blog/2020/06/04/giving-trove-room-grow.

Stay up to date with new material available on Trove at trove.nla.gov.au/blog/2020/05/19/hot-press or by subscribing to the Trove Treasures News: trove.nla.gov.au/treasures-enews.

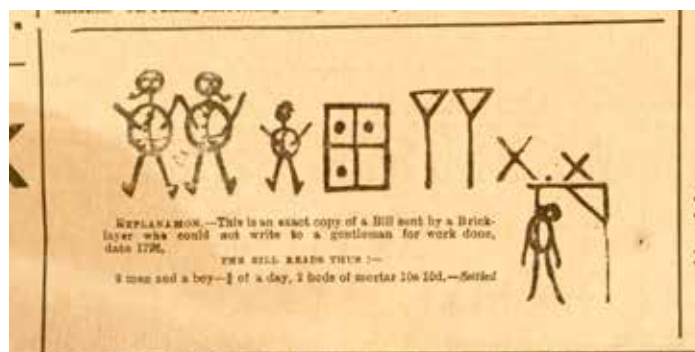
TROVE

Fake or Facsimile

Volunteers working on theatre ephemera in the PROMPT Collection have found many interesting tangents to their core task of listing shows and cast lists. One example from a theatre broadside, *The Programme* of 27 April 1893, claimed the pictogram below was an exact copy of a 1798 bill sent by an illiterate bricklayer to a gentleman, asking payment for work done.



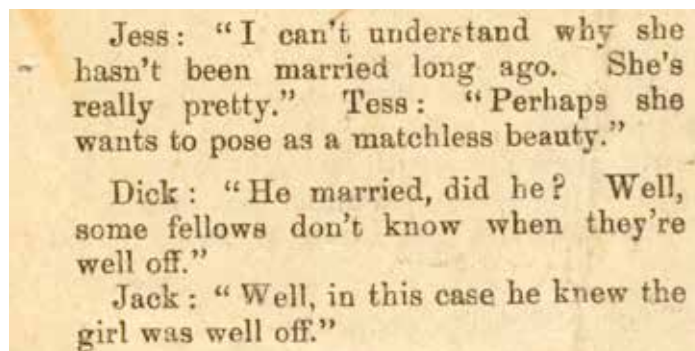
In looking further, we uncovered another reproduced bill in an earlier volume of *The Programme*, this time for 10 November 1892. This also purported to be an exact copy of a 1798 bill.



Are these exact copies of bills that really existed in 1798 or any other year?

Both bills are for 10s 10d. One is for one man and a boy for three-quarters of a day; the other for two men and one boy for three-quarters of a day. Both depict two hods of mortar. Does this mean one man worked for nothing in the second bill?

What other gems are we finding in our work on the PROMPT Collection? Looking beyond cast lists and the extensive advertising in the theatre broadsides, we find that almost every broadside, be it *The Programme* or other titles, devotes several column inches to humour and extremely corny jokes.



The Programme in Sharpe Collection: *Programs of Concerts, Musicals, Theatre and Vaudeville*, between 1887 and 1911, nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn1870140.

A quick survey of the jokes and amusing tales in some 50 broadsides in the National Library collection indicates that the common themes are poverty, illiteracy, the well-off encountering the poor and the indubitable truth that women are second-class citizens.

In this context, it seems possible that the plight of an illiterate bricklayer who has not been paid, but demands payment, might have been regarded by the theatre-going public of 1890s as very droll.

If you have seen any pictograms like these bills in the 1890s newspapers or broadsides, post a note on our Friends Facebook page with the story.

Margaret Goode | Friends Committee member, Library volunteer

Pandemics 100 Years Apart

The acronym 'PPE' is part of our everyday language in this COVID-19 world. While donning personal protective equipment is usual practice in many occupations—metal work, science, the military, firefighting, healthcare and more—PPE and enhanced hygiene practices have become the norm today for frontline staff most at risk in the pandemic and in our everyday lives.

COVID-19 is the current global threat but just over 100 years ago, the world was reeling from the effects of 'Spanish flu'. The influenza pandemic of 1918–1920 is reported to have killed more people than the First World War: more than 50 million deaths compared with 18 million war deaths. In Australia, an estimated 15,000 died from 'Spanish flu'.

The story of 'Spanish flu' is well chronicled in the National Library's collection. Search the catalogue and Trove for books, articles, pictures, newspaper headlines and audio memories.

You'll find many eerie comparisons with today's pandemic—headlines like 'Influenza: Possible Apex of Epidemic' (*The Armidale Chronicle*, 23 April 1919) in an article giving readers a blow-by-blow account of cases and deaths on local, national and international levels, including government measures to deal with them. Restrictions imposed by the government were described by one politician as 'quite futile' and 'likely to create a panicky feeling'.

Preventative action and treatments were often as controversial as some contemporary suggestions. 'Inhalant chambers' or 'inhalatoriums'—where a spray of sulphate of zinc was used, sometimes with an added spray of eucalyptus—to protect workers from the virus were introduced by some companies and in some regions. The solution, once breathed in, was thought to 'disinfect the workers' throats and air passages'. Sounds familiar!

In Victoria, the Kodak Company installed an inhalatorium chamber that allowed for 20 employees at a time to breathe in sulphate of zinc in solution through oval holes. The New South Wales Government is reported, in the *Armidale Chronicle*, on medical advice, 'not to insist upon the inhalatorium treatment as a condition precedent to the issue of a permit to travel on the railways; and to discontinue supplying inhalatoriums for use on station platforms'.



John Davidson and Christina Norrie Wearing Face Masks during the Spanish Flu Pandemic, Killara, New South Wales, February 1919, nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn8315633.

The Lithgow Mercury (9 May 1919) reported that medical experts considered the pandemic to be 'of unexampled severity' and 'previous attack did not afford much protection'. This mirrors contemporary research findings around elusive immunity. On the issue of PPE, this article suggests, much like today's media, that 'It was difficult to say how far the use of face masks could be urged as a general measure'. We see the use of face masks across the world today, often incorrectly worn. However, in the Lithgow article, Army medical officer Captain Thomas Carnwath DSO struck an optimistic note: 'If people had learned to use umbrellas he did not see why they should not also learn to use face masks.'

Health authorities 100 years ago recommended essentially the same practical measures of social distancing, effective hand hygiene and covering of mouths and noses when coughing, sneezing or at risk as their counterparts today, but we are better informed by science and advice from credible sources such as Australian health experts and the World Health Organisation (which has a staggering 103 online courses related to COVID-19 across 34 languages and 13 topics).

Colleen Kinnane | Friends Committee member, Library volunteer

Strength and Beauty: The Wolfgang Sievers Collection

As Australia developed as an industrial nation and embraced new modernism in the second half of the twentieth century, photographer Wolfgang Sievers (1913–2007) created an extraordinary record of the times. The Sievers Collection is the largest photographic collection held by the National Library: some 19,000 prints and 52,000 negatives and transparencies.

As he documented industry and architecture, Sievers saw the beauty in industrial forms and, in his words, 'the dignity of man as a worker'. He captured the relationships of man with machine and machine with landscape in his bold compositions, sharp focus and new perspectives on familiar sights.

More than 10,000 of Sievers' images are available online on the Library's website and a few can be seen in the *Australian Dreams* exhibition and, in coming months, in the Treasures Gallery.

Sievers emigrated to Australia in 1938, aged 25. His father was a distinguished art historian in Berlin (dismissed when he refused to serve under Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels) and his (late) mother (of Jewish ancestry) a writer and educator. Wolfgang was forced to leave his university archaeology studies when he was declared non-Aryan, and so he turned to photography. After being imprisoned briefly in 1936 by the Gestapo, he studied, then lectured, at the Contempora School for Modern Applied Arts in Berlin, successor to the Bauhaus.

After being called up for military service, and fearing persecution under Nazi racial laws, Sievers left for Australia. At the outbreak of the Second World War, he was classified as an enemy alien, but was later allowed to enlist in the Australian Army. He became an Australian citizen in 1944, the first German to be naturalised during the war.

Sievers established a studio in Melbourne, focussing first on modern architecture and applying Bauhaus aesthetic principles. In the 1950s, he was engaged by the Australian government with a brief to help change Australia's image from a land of sheep and wool to that of a sophisticated industrial nation. By the 1970s, Sievers' disenchantment with post-modern architecture

led him to photograph heavy industry, with its 'clean forms and wonderful shapes'.

He often introduced special lighting and posed workers for dramatic effect. His search for perfection was legendary: hosing down Collins Street at dawn to shoot the Shell Building; taking 18 hours to set up for his best-known photograph, *Gears for Mining Industry*, 1967, at the Vickers Ruwolt factory in Abbotsford, Victoria.

A powerful influence in Australian commercial photography, Sievers' international reputation grew.

Throughout his long career, he held strongly to his principles, declining, for example, to photograph new Parliament House in Canberra, believing it lacked 'purity of design' and was marred by 'featurism'.

Sievers was an idealist, ascribing to the philosophy of art and technology merging and to the artist serving a social objective. In the early 1990s, by then disillusioned with industry, he stopped work as a professional photographer and turned to advocacy for humanitarian, anti-war and environmental causes, including working to identify Nazi war criminals who emigrated to Australia.

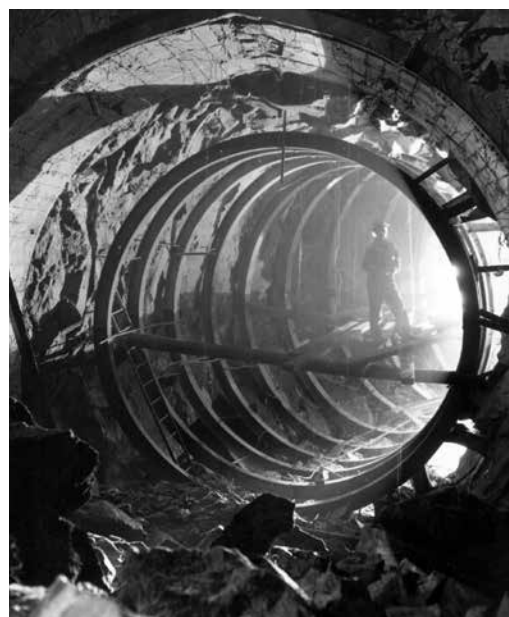
In 2006, Sievers entrusted Julian Burnside QC with more than 200 of his photographs to sell for human rights causes. With progressive releases, more than \$400,000 has been raised to date. While photographing the mining industry, Sievers was deeply moved by the plight of Indigenous peoples in Central Australia, and bequeathed them ten per cent of his estate for education and healthcare.

Sievers was made an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in 2002 for his services to photography. He died in 2007, aged 93.

The Library holds Sievers' entire photographic archive, purchased in 2002, and personal items he bequeathed to the Library. State Library Victoria holds his print collection.

Kerry Blackburn | Friends Committee Deputy Chair, Library volunteer

1. Wolfgang Sievers, *House of Tomorrow Exhibition at Exhibition Building, Melbourne, 1949*, nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn2622209.
2. *Photograph of Wolfgang Sievers on Arrival in Sydney, 1938* (detail), nla.cat-vn3386128.
3. Wolfgang Sievers, *Snowy Mountains Scheme, 1957*, nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn3415852.



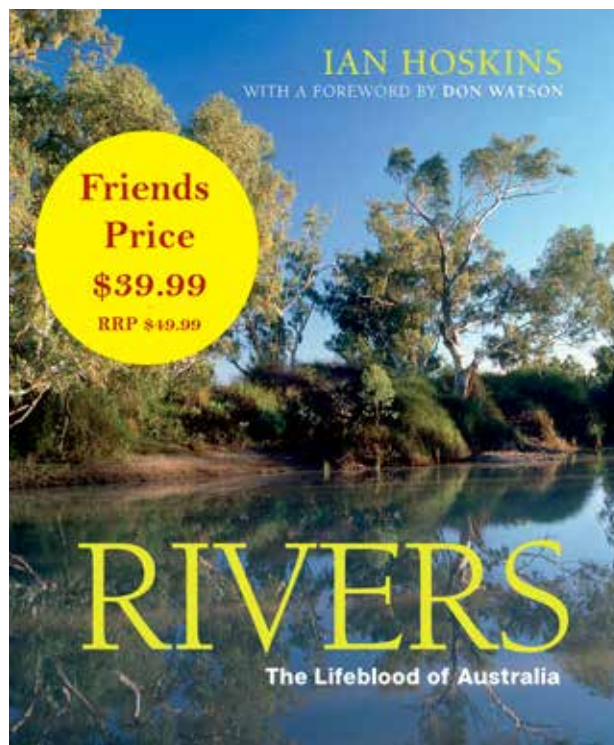
Ruminations on Rivers

When the National Library of Australia asked if I might be interested in choosing ten or so rivers and writing a book about them within 12 months, my immediate response was 'yes of course, thanks for the invitation'. My next thought was something along the lines of, 'goodness, how am I going to do that?'

Writing about landscapes really requires going and seeing them. Examining historical accounts, paintings and photographs is, of course, essential for understanding our relationships with places. But being there conveys the reality of distance, temperature, sound, smell, the flora and the fauna. One discovers detail otherwise missed. Desiccated dingo carcasses swinging the breeze in western Queensland reminded me that brutality sits side by side with the bucolic in rural Australia. The dirt track that is the Old Landsborough Highway—and which runs past Banjo Paterson's famed billabong, west of Winton—sits parallel to its rapid transit replacement as a reminder of the reality of inland travel 100, or even 50, years ago. The Yarra's many beautiful bends and bridges were a revelation to a Sydneysider used to the commonplace denigration of 'the river that flows upside down'. Seeing an Australian fur seal swimming in the Snowy River reinforced what should have been obvious from any map, that the famous river of power stations and high-country horsemen is also an estuarine waterway at its mouth.

Somehow, I managed to get to all but one of the rivers, each of which had been chosen with a view to exploring an aspect of our complex riverine relationships. It was a matter of reading, ruminating, visiting, and ruminating more while writing. It seemed clear that the Alligator rivers in Kakadu have retained a unique connection to Aboriginal people dispossessed in so many other places. Queensland's Channel Country is replete with defining outback histories, from Burke and Wills to Paterson's swagman. As an estuary, the Clarence is ever-changing and reflective of its story. The Molonglo is a river made into an ornamental lake by the planners of Canberra. The Murray exemplifies contestation first between Aboriginal people and Europeans, then colonies and states and now all users of its precious water. The Ord exemplifies our dreams of watering arid lands. The Snowy is a damaged icon and, like the Ord, Molonglo and Murray, an example of our hubristic willingness to engineer nature. The Yarra has been muse to artists, degraded drain and rediscovered treasure.

The Franklin River was 'a bridge too far' so to speak. But in the end that barely mattered. For I treated that waterway as an idea as much as an element of the landscape. In the 1980s, the Franklin was at the centre of Australia's best-known and most successful environmental campaign: that to stop a hydro-electric dam, which would have destroyed it. For many Australians it did, and still does, symbolise wilderness—landscape yet to be ruined by human utilitarianism and arrogance. However, as I discovered, for some others—particularly indigenous Australians—the notion of unpeopled wilderness, as evoked by places such as the Franklin River, is yet more evidence of the denial of the existence of Aboriginal Australia. My personal encounter was not, therefore, on a river bank as it had been with the other waterways. It was in the Special Collections room of the National Library of Australia, looking at the original colour transparency of *Rock Island Bend*, the photograph taken by Peter Dombrovskis that is credited with saving the river by communicating its beauty to millions. It was



a magic moment, as a landscape that had been transformed into an idea was made manifest in an image. I'm sure you will like the many other photos and artworks drawn mainly from the National Library collections. I hope you also enjoy reading my river ruminations as much as I did writing them down.

Ian Hoskins

2020 FRIENDS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2020 Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the National Library of Australia Inc. will be held on Thursday 26 November at 3.30pm. Nomination forms for the 2021 Friends Committee are included with this newsletter and are also available from the Friends office.

In addition to the AGM business, the meeting will include the announcement of the recipient of the 2020 Friends Medal.

Bookings are requested at stickytickets.com.au/HXF05.

Have You Ever Thought about Joining the Friends Committee?

If you would like to contribute to the running of the Friends of the National Library, consider joining the Committee! Meetings are held at 5.15pm on the third Tuesday of every second month, starting December 2020, and run for around an hour. You will be offered the chance to contribute to the Friends events program, the Friends newsletter and other initiatives run by the Friends. The Committee members are assisted by two part-time staff (Friends Executive Officer and Administrative Assistant).

We welcome nominations from members of all ages and backgrounds; previous committee experience is not a prerequisite. Simply complete and return the enclosed nomination form by 5pm on Monday 12 October 2020. If you would like further information, please contact Melanie Olde, Friends Executive Officer, on 02 6262 1551 or email friends@nla.gov.au. We look forward to hearing from you!

Melanie Olde

PUBLISHING SPOTLIGHT

Great Expectations: Emigrant Governesses in Colonial Australia

By Patricia Clarke

For educated middle-class women in nineteenth-century Britain, options were limited. *Great Expectations* is the story of a group of intrepid ladies who forged a different path—as governesses to wild colonial boys and girls on the other side of the world.

From 1861 to 1886, women participants in the Female Middle Class Emigration Society scheme made new lives in Australia, in cities and on remote stations, in well-established families or as teachers. Often fluent in multiple foreign languages, skilled artists and musicians, the women came with great expectations. Some gained employment with well-established families or found husbands; others battled extreme loneliness and wild colonial boys and girls.

Others were great observers of the Australian character. According to Gertrude Gooch, 'All Australians ride like Arabs, love luxury and money. They live very much out of doors and eat great quantities of fruit'. The women 'are certainly very indolent and untidy', which explained their offspring: 'Australian children are just like the vegetation here for neither appear to submit to much control. Pineapples, peaches and the finest fruit grow in open air without care and the children are equally wild and impetuous'.

Great Expectations tells of the colonial experiences of a particular group of emigrant women, but it also tells a broader story, of emigration, education, class prejudice and the development of Australian society.



NATIONAL LIBRARY BOOKSHOP SPECIAL OFFER FOR FRIENDS

Friends will receive a 20% discount on *Rivers: The Lifeblood of Australia* by Ian Hoskins and *Great Expectations: Emigrant Governesses in Colonial Australia* by Patricia Clarke when purchased between 1 September and 30 November 2020, online and in store.

To claim your 20% discount on *Rivers* and *Great Expectations* in the online shop, use the promotional code **FR15SPRING20** at checkout. You can also use this code to apply the usual Friends 15% discount* to other eligible online purchases.

* Discount does not apply to limited-edition prints, discounted and remaindered stock, newspapers, stamps, copy cards, magazines or vouchers.

EVENTS

Annual Joint Lecture with the Australian Garden History Society

Join us to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the Australian Garden History Society with special guest Sophie Thomson. Sophie will talk about gardening for health and wellbeing. Sophie's enduring love affair with gardening stems from a childhood spent in her family nursery, in the Adelaide Hills, and has led her to become a national figure in horticultural media.

Strictly limited to 100 guests. Subject to change without notice.

Tuesday 13 October | 6pm

nla.gov.au/whats-on or email friends@nla.gov.au

FRIENDS ONLINE EVENTS

This spring, Friends activities will continue to take place using Zoom, which is a video conferencing and webinar application. Bookings will take place online as usual, through the National Library website (nla.gov.au/whats-on), or you can email friends@nla.gov.au. Shortly before the event begins, you will receive a Zoom meeting link, which you can click to join the event at the event time. If you have any questions, please email friends@nla.gov.au.

Curious Collections

Curios, conundrums, mysteries and marvels: the National Library has over 10 million items in its collections, with treasures abounding.

In this series of talks and conversations, you'll hear from curators, volunteers and specialists, who will talk about a collection item that has piqued their interest. You'll learn about the fascinating stories behind objects, their provenance, who made them and what they can tell the world.

You'll have the opportunity to talk and ask questions throughout the session in a friendly and informal setting.

Settle in for a Friends-only chat, to learn and converse in the comfort of home with a good group of Friends.

Tuesday 8 September | 11am

Online via Zoom

Friends Book Club

Join us for a companionable book club, where the book choice is eclectic, the guests are captivating and the company is Friend-ly.

Once a month, we'll choose a book and an author with an Australian flavour and an absorbing story. You'll be able to talk directly with the guest speaker and other members, while we deconstruct the stories together.

Wednesday 28 October | 4pm

Wednesday 25 November | 4pm

Online via Zoom

Join the Friends on Facebook (@NLAFriends), as well as the National Library on Twitter (@nlagovau, @TroveAustralia and @NLABookshop) and Facebook, to get the latest news and stories.