



# **Australian Society for the Study of Labour History**

18<sup>th</sup> Biennial ASSLH Conference

The Australian National University, Canberra

Thursday 23 to Saturday 25 November 2023

‘(Re)Sources: Historical Inquiry and Labour History Archives’

**Conference Program**

# About the Conference

## Convenor

Chris Monnox

## Organising Committee

Joshua Black, Frank Bongiorno, Carol Corless, Bob Crawshaw, Kathryn Dan, Rae Frances, Julie Kimber, Nigel Thompson

## Conference Themes

The ASSLH (ACT) welcomes historians, activists and professionals in the GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) sector to present papers on sources and archives, how they use them, the challenges they face, and the possibilities they see. This conference will reflect a wide range of experience and practice with specific archives, as well as timely reflections on the field of labour history more broadly.

## Sponsors

The organising committee wishes to thank the generous sponsors who have made this conference possible: the ANU Australian Studies Institute, the ANU Research School of Social Sciences, and the ACT Division of the National Tertiary Education Union.



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## Keynote Speakers

**Professor Bruce Scates** FASSA is based in the School of History at the Australian National University. He is the author/lead author of several books on war and memory, including *Return to Gallipoli; A Place to Remember; Anzac Journeys; The Last Battle* and *World War One: A History in 100 Stories*. All these works involve a ‘disruptive’ reading of military archives, through the lens of labour and cultural history, whilst his first book, *A New Australia*, returned to the Utopian visions of the early labour movement. Bruce is the Chair of the Friends of the Noel Butlin Archives Centre and served for several years on the Advisory Council of the National Archives of Australia. He chaired the Military and Cultural History panel advising the Anzac Centenary Board. His submissions to government led to the digitisation of WW1 repatriation records, demonstrating the enduring cost of war to families and communities.



### **Failing Memory: Archival Truths, Historical Reckonings and Carnavalesque Commemoration**

The Anzac mythology occupies a central place in Australia’s political and cultural landscape but its meanings are historically contingent and have been fiercely debated since 1915. For some, Anzac serves the purpose of a foundation narrative, ritualising remembrance and embodying consensual values. For others, (including those of us who deplore the denial of Australia’s frontier wars) it involves a deeply flawed and highly selective memory of war. This paper will examine the vast archive generated by the Anzac Centenary as Australia embarked on the longest, most expensive, and arguably most complex Great War Centenary of any nation. Carnavalesque commemoration involved unprecedented investment from the state, but was also driven by popular initiatives and the submissions made to government – across a vast social and political spectrum- tell us much about the making of historical sensibility and the way remembrance can often involve wilful act of forgetting. The paper will suggest there was no one single narrative that emerged from the Centenary of 1914-18 and the new digital archives it created. Rather ‘bottom up’ remembrance also offered space for dissident voices as social agencies as diverse as feminist networks, doctors against war, and pacifist groups launched a radical critique very much in keeping with the labour movement’s internationalist and anti-war tradition. How can labour historians recover that voice from an archive that often served to valorise and perpetuate the Anzac mythology? And can the mass accessibility of military records open new opportunities for social historians to work disruptively with archives and reveal the ongoing cost of war?

## Keynote Speakers



**Emeritus Professor Susan McKemmish** has been immersed in recordkeeping and archiving for almost five decades, first as an archivist working for the National Archives of Australia and the Public Record Office of Victoria, and then as an academic. Joining Monash in 1990, her research has focused on records continuum theory and modeling, and the role of recordkeeping in society. McKemmish has increasingly focused on community-centred, participatory research, rights in records, and developing inclusive, reflexive research design and practice. Her current projects include *Lifelong Rights in Childhood Recordkeeping*

*in the out-of-home-Care sector*, and *Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Living Indigenous Archives on Country*.

### **Institutional and Collecting Archives: Perpetuating the Knowledge Structures of Colonialism**

Australia has been “indelibly shaped” by colonization and its legacies, which persist into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, perpetuating power inequities as well as political and economic exploitation of the powerless or marginalised. Organisation-centric recordkeeping, archival institutions and collecting archives are a legacy of colonization and the persistence of the knowledge structures of colonialism into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. My paper explores the instrumental role of recordkeeping and archiving in colonisation and the ongoing colonial project with reference to the classist, hetero-patriarchal, sexist and racist colonial constructs of child welfare, the neglected and criminal child, and Indigeneity which persist to this day. The majority of children in Care are working class, as are their foster families, and Indigenous children are overrepresented, being 11 times more likely to be in Care. Based on the findings of the *Lifelong Rights in Childhood Recordkeeping in the out-of-home-Care sector* project, the paper focuses on rights-based, child- and people-centred recordkeeping and archiving. It envisages the transformative part they might play in actualizing child rights and Indigenous human rights, and shifting power balances for children in Care and Care leavers. Rights-based recordkeeping repositions the subjects of records as co-creators and therefore active recordkeeping agents with ongoing rights in all aspects of their management, e.g. deciding who has access to their records, participating in decisions about what to make and keep (and destroy). The paper canvases the possibility that people-centred, rights-based, participatory recordkeeping in the present could result in archival records for the future that are inclusive of the voices of those who have been silenced in the past by Western traditions of organizational recordkeeping, and institutional and collecting archives practice.

## Day One: Thursday 23 November

13:00-14:00 14:00-15:00	<p><i>Labour History</i> Editorial Board</p> <p>Australian Society for the Study of Labour History Federal AGM</p> <p>Venue: <i>Auditorium</i></p>
15:00-15:30	<p><b>Film Screening: What Wendy Found by Martie and Richard Lowenstein</b></p> <p>Venue: <i>Auditorium</i></p>
15:45-16:15	<b>Registration</b>
16:15	<b>Conference Opening and Welcome to Country</b>
16:30-18:00	<p><b>Opening Keynote</b></p> <p>Venue: <i>Auditorium</i></p> <p>Chair: Carol Corless</p> <p>Bruce Scates</p> <p>Archival Truths, Historical Reckonings and Carnavalesque Commemoration</p>
18:30-20:00	<p><b>Book Launch and Opening Drinks: Alex Ettling and Iain McIntyre (eds.), <i>Knocking the Top Off: A People's History of Alcohol in Australia</i></b></p> <p>Venue: Badger and Co., Kambri, Australian National University</p> <p>Launched by: Diane Kirkby, Jeff Sparrow, and Alex Ettling</p> <p>MC: Lisa Milner</p>

## Day Two: Friday 24 November

<b>8:30- 9:15</b>	<b>Registration</b>		
<b>9.15-10.45</b>	<b>Parallel Session One</b>		
	<i>Venue:</i> Lectorial 1	<i>Venue:</i> Lectorial 2	<i>Venue:</i> Auditorium
	<b>1a Cooperatives, Societies and Companies</b>  <i>Chair:</i> Alexis Vassiley	<b>1b Evolving Labour History (Re)Sources</b>  <i>Chair:</i> Sean Scalmer	<b>1c Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century (Re)Sources</b>  <i>Chair:</i> Julie Kimber
	Alexandra Dellios Servicing Migrant Industrial Workers: The Papers of the Australian Greek Welfare Society	Frank Bongiorno How Well is Labour History Served by Trove?	John Gannon Interpreting the Lunatic Attendants Depicted in William Hogarth's Bethlem Print: An Autoethnographic Labour Historiographical Approach
	Ben Woods Australian Mutuals History A Co-operative Business?	Bobbie Oliver Peace History as Labour History	Madonna Grehan Bedside Care-workers in Australia 1790 to 1860
	Carol Corless Assembling a Community History: how "A Factory and a Family at Murarrie" was Compiled	Stephen Holt A Good Combination: Susan Ryan and Jonathan Swift	Fiona Gatt The Rate Books are Key: Class, Community and Place in Colonial-era Melbourne
<b>10.45-11.15</b>	<b>Morning Tea</b>		
<b>11.15-12.45</b>	<b>Plenary Panel: Labour History in the GLAM Sector</b>  <i>Venue:</i> Auditorium <i>Chair:</i> Rae Frances  Rachel Armstrong (presented by Sarah Lethbridge): On Display: Exposing Labour History Archives through Exhibitions  Kathryn Dan: Collecting Trends: What will Future Research Archives Hold?  Evan Smith: Consigned to the Dustbin of History? The Historian as the Accidental Activists' Archivist		
<b>12.45 –13:15</b>	<b>Lunch</b>		

13-15-14:00	<p align="center"><b>Book Launch: Hannah Forsyth, <i>Virtue Capitalists: The Rise and Fall of the Professional Class in the Anglophone World, 1870–2008</i></b></p> <p align="center"><i>Venue:</i> Auditorium <i>Launched by:</i> Diane Kirkby <i>MC:</i> Joshua Black</p>		
14:00-15:30	<b>Parallel Session Two</b>		
	<i>Venue:</i> Lectorial 1	<i>Venue:</i> Lectorial 2	<i>Venue:</i> Auditorium
	<b>2a Children, Education and Labour History</b> <i>Chair:</i> Chris Monnox	<b>2b Archives, Labour History and the Pacific</b> <i>Chair:</i> Ewan Maidment	<b>2c Visual (Re)Sources</b>  <i>Chair:</i> Verity Burgmann
	Catherine Gay Samplers and 'Settlement:' Girls' Labour and its Material Traces in Nineteenth-century Australia	Kari James Labour Records in the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau Collection	Janey Stone and Lisa Milner  The Lowdown on High Resolution: (Re)Sourcing images for a Radical Publication
	Beth Marsden 'Six Miles by Road:' School Application Maps, Travel to School and Histories of Childhood and Education	Christopher Chevalier Oral History and Pacific Labour History: Past, Present and Future	Joshua Black  The Recession's on Telly! Television Media and the Making of Australia's Recessionary Culture, 1990– 1994
	Emily Gallagher From German Porcelain to the Unbreakable Doll: The History of a Toy Industry in Australia, 1880–1945	Nicholas Hoare The Queensland Labour Trade, Pacific History, and a Return to the Archives	Ron Lambert  The Timber Workers Archives: Local Photo Collections and Meanings
15:30–16:00	<b>Afternoon Tea</b>		
16:00–17:45	<b>Parallel Session Three</b>		
	<i>Venue:</i> Lectorial 1	<i>Venue:</i> Lectorial 2	<i>Venue:</i> Auditorium
	<b>3a Labour History and Biography</b>  <i>Chair:</i> Emily Gallagher	<b>3b Finding Women in the Records of Male-Dominated Industries</b>  <i>Chair:</i> Bobbie Oliver	<b>3c Local and Industrial Histories</b>  <i>Chair:</i> Joshua Black
	Peter Woodley Untangling Rural Labour: Group Biography and the Hidden Archive	Katie Wood Women in the Australian Metal Trades'	Samantha Dagg and Rod Noble  Hunter Workers (Newcastle Trades Hall Council) The Labour History Hubs in the Hunter Region: Problems and Opportunities

	<p>Jeff Sparrow Lesbia Harford and the Experience of Defeat</p>	<p>Diane Kirkby Women in Australian Maritime Industry</p>	<p>Rosemary Webb Defending the Commons in Sydney's Railway Workshops</p>
	<p>David Faber Veneto Subversives Down Under in the Fascist Era: Sources for Multicultural Labour History in Italian &amp; Australian Archives &amp; Libraries</p>	<p>Emma Robertson Women on the Buses and Trams</p>	<p>Scott Burrows Class, Ideology, Localism and Hegemonic Struggle: A Case Study of Two Union Disputes in Captains Flat, New South Wales</p>
<b>17:45-18:30</b>	<p><b>Book Launch: Book Launch: Lindsay Fitzclarenc, <i>The Dirty Life of Mining</i></b></p> <p><i>Venue:</i> Auditorium</p> <p><i>Launched by:</i> Frank Bongiorno</p> <p><i>MC:</i> Lisa Milner</p>		
<b>19:00</b>	<p><b>Conference Dinner at the Golden Drum restaurant, 1/14 Childers Street</b></p>		



## Day Three: Saturday 25 November

<b>8:30 – 9.30</b>	<b>Registration</b>	
<b>9:30–10:45</b>	<b>Parallel Session Four</b>	
	<i>Venue:</i> Lectorial 1	<i>Venue:</i> Lectorial 2
	<b>4a Ethical Questions in the Archives</b>  <i>Chair:</i> Vashti Fox	<b>4b Reassessing Key Moments</b>  <i>Chair:</i> Hannah Forsyth
	Swati Birla A Smoking Gun in the Archive: History and Politics of Self-determination	Sean Scalmer Winning the Eight Hour Day
	George Morgan and Bronwyn Gerry Public Records and Aboriginal People: The Case of the NSW Special Tenancy Files	Murray Perks Lost Debates: Labor Self-censors in the Great War
<b>10-45-11:15</b>	<b>Morning Tea</b>	
<b>11:15-12.45</b>	<b>Conference Keynote</b> <i>Venue:</i> Auditorium <i>Chair:</i> Kathryn Dan  Susan McKemmish, Monash University  Institutional and Collecting Archives: Perpetuating the Knowledge Structures of Colonialism	
<b>12:45-14:00</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	
<b>13:15-14:00</b>	<b>Book Launch: Kate Laing, <i>Sisters in Peace: The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom in Australia, 1915–2015</i></b> <i>Venue:</i> Auditorium <i>Launched by:</i> Sharon Crozier-De Rosa <i>MC:</i> Frank Bongiorno	
<b>14:00-15:30</b>	<b>Parallel Session Five</b>	
	<i>Venue:</i> Lectorial 1	<i>Venue:</i> Lectorial 2
	<b>5a Worlds of Work</b>  <i>Chair:</i> Sarah Gregson	<b>5b Activist-Archivist Journeys</b>  <i>Chair:</i> Chris Monnox
	Noah Riseman and Geraldine Fela Proud to be Union? Queer Work(ers) and the Australian Trade Union Movement, 1970s-80s	Sharon Crozier-De Rosa Looking for Archival Activism in the Activist's Archive: Imagining the Future of Feminist Pasts

	Alexis Vassiley The Relationship between Rank-and-File Unionists and the Union Bureaucracy in the Pilbara Mines: 1965 - 1986	Rowan Cahill The Activist Pulling Together the Archives: Archive Essentials
	Paul Sendziuk Protecting the Hands that Built 'Australia's Own Car': Health and Safety at General Motors Holden	
<b>15:30-16:00</b>	<b>Afternoon Tea</b>	
<b>16:00-17:15</b>	<b>Parallel Session Six</b>	
	<i>Venue:</i> Lectorial 1	<i>Venue:</i> Lectorial 2
	<b>6a Activist Archives</b>	<b>6b Capital and Capitalism</b>
	<i>Chair:</i> Phillip Deery	<i>Chair:</i> Frank Bongiorno
	Elina Abou Sleiman and Oliver Graham History in a Shoebox: Grassroots Archives and their Potential	George Lafferty 'A Story Told of You:' Capital as Labour History
	Vashti Fox Helping the Nazis Move Out: Antifascism in Melbourne in the 1970s	Hannah Forsyth Sources of Virtue: Understanding the Materiality of the Professional Class
		Will Brehm When Everyone Became a Capitalist: Theodore W. Schultz and Human Capital Theory
<b>17:15</b>	<b>Adjourn to P J O'Reilly's for Drinks</b>	

## Presenters and Abstracts

**Rachel Armstrong, Noel Butlin Archives Centre**

*On Display: Exposing Labour History Archives through Exhibitions*

Of all the sources for labour history in archives it is the visual materials, photographs and film, that resonate most strongly with audiences of both physical and online exhibitions. These are the first things archivists look for when planning an exhibition but they are becoming harder to find and use. This paper looks at how Noel Butlin Archives Centre archivists have used some of the wonderful images we hold to tell stories including of the 150th anniversary of maritime unions, the 1967 referendum, various forgotten trades and 1917's great strike. It discusses some of the challenges facing archivists seeking to acquire and use modern images in exhibitions.

*Rachel Armstrong has been an archivist at the Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Australian National University, since 2018. She has worked in many academic and public libraries and archives including the ACT Archives, the Australian Academy of Science and the Australian War Memorial. Rachel is experienced in social media, library and archives management, research, reference services and records management. She earned professional qualifications in librarianship, archives and records management with a Bachelor of Arts in Librarianship and Corporate Information Management from Curtin University.*

**Swati Birla, State University of New York- New Paltz**

*A Smoking Gun in the Archive: History and Politics of Self-determination*

In 1948, the Indian military annexed the sovereign state of Hyderabad and assimilated it into the newly-established nation-state. The violent annexation resulted in the massacre of anywhere between 60,000 and 200,000 Muslims. India as a territorial sovereign state was created through a revolutionary struggle against European empires and violent territorialization, which commenced in 1947. By September 1948, India had acquired approximately 520,000 square miles of land and eighty-nine million subjects. The most recent manifestation of this political trajectory occurred in 2019 with the abrogation of Kashmir's sovereignty. In this presentation, I will present the challenges a historian must face when navigating the complex relationship between the archives of postcolonial sovereignty and the process of imperial territorialization.

Struggles of the subjugated have warned us against the smoking gun fallacy of positivist historiography. But the archives of sovereignty are paradoxical, they carry traces of sovereignty as a historical claim over territory and simultaneously render inchoate the histories of its abrogation. Through a close reading of select artifacts from the archives of the liberation of Hyderabad, I explore a political-ethical question that has become urgent for social movements in the present political terrain: how can we deploy the smoking gun in the archives of sovereignty?

*I am a sociologist trained in historical and ethnographic methods. My work explores the connections between political violence, identity and belonging, and ethnic nationalism, with special attention to the post-World War 2 transitions in the South Asian subcontinent. I am*

*particularly interested in how theories of belonging, freedom, self-determination, and sovereignty travel and therefore in exploring spaces of dialogue between decolonial and anti-racist movement thinkers. My work has been supported by several fellowships: W. E. B. Du Bois Fellowship, Interdisciplinary Studies Institute (UMass Amherst) Fellowship, Max Planck Institute-Tata Institute of Social Sciences Fellowship, and University of Massachusetts Amherst Graduate School.*

### **Joshua Black, Australian Historical Association**

*The Recession's on Telly! Television Media and the Making of Australia's Recessionary Culture, 1990–1994*

In the early 1990s, the Australian economy fell into a significant recession, infamously described by the then-treasurer as one that 'Australia had to have.' Accounts of that event have been written chiefly by journalists and policymakers; historians, however, have rarely examined the 1990s recession, partly because it remains recent history, and partly because the requisite archive was inaccessible. Although we now have access to cabinet records, rich statistical data and comprehensive newspaper coverage, these alone are not enough to reconstruct meaningfully a historic crisis of capitalism. Media scholars have suggested that 'economic lives are both shaped by and embedded within popular and representational culture.' Accepting that premise, I examine in this paper part of the rich archive of media and news ephemera generated by the 1990s recession, now housed in the National Film and Sound Archive. I argue that these sources—news and current affairs coverage, as well as creative media output—can illuminate the ideological and emotional contours of the recession long after it was statistically considered to be 'over.' And as well as highlighting the discursive and emotional construction of 'recession' as a communal experience, these sources offer glimpses of the creative ways some Australians chose to cope with it.

*Joshua Black is Executive Officer of the Australian Historical Association, and Treasurer of the Canberra branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History. His PhD thesis was a cultural history of the political memoir genre in Australia. He has published his research on Australian political and social history in various academic journals, taught at four Australian universities, and contributed to public discussion via *The Conversation*, *Inside Story*, *Australian Book Review* and *ABC Radio*. In 2021 he co-edited a special issue of the *Australian Journal of Biography and History* with Dr Stephen Wilks.*

### **Frank Bongiorno, Australian National University**

*How Well is Labour History Served by Trove?*

The National Library of Australia's Trove database—and here I am more particularly concerned with its newspaper holdings—is widely and correctly regarded as an outstanding resource for the nation, as well as a means of making vast amounts of Australian material available globally. It is a boon to academic and professional researchers who would once have had to spend weeks and months in research tasks that might now take hours or minutes. It has greatly enhanced community access to resources, allowing family and community historians in far-flung areas open access to collections that would once have been beyond the grasp of all

but the well-off: that is, those able to make a trip to Canberra. The spirit of democracy is strong with Trove but at the same time, it has been chronically underfunded, it is extremely limited in what it offers for the last seventy years, and some kinds of publications are better represented than others. What are the implications of a data-base that ends for most titles in 1954, for instance, for our understanding of the role of Indigenous people, of women, and of non-British migrants in Australian labour history? So, the question I ask here is: How well is labour history served by Trove? To borrow the theme of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's famous essay, does it allow the subaltern to speak? My purpose is activist as much as expository and analytical. At a time when the new government has restored some much-needed funding to national collecting institutions, including Trove, what should the community of labour historians be asking for? What mechanisms should the NLA establish to allow communities, and especially marginalised and under-represented communities, to have their say about what should be included?

*Frank Bongiorno is Vice-President of the Canberra Region Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Professor of History at the Australian National University, and a Distinguished Fellow of the Whitlam Institute of Western Sydney University. He is most recently the author of Dreamers and Schemers: A Political History of Australia (2022) and is currently working on a second revised edition of A Little History of the Australian Labor Party, with Nick Dyrenfurth. He is President of the Australian Historical Association.*

### **Will Brehm, University of Canberra**

*When Everyone Became a Capitalist: Theodore W. Schultz and Human Capital Theory*

This presentation explores the historical moment when all labourers become capitalist. In the 1950s, a group of economists at the University of Chicago embarked on an ambitious intellectual project that would eventually become known as Human Capital Theory. Milton Friedman famously supported the idea because it side-stepped the common tension between labourers and capitalists: if everyone owned their own human capital, then no one was a labourer. Everyone became a capitalist.

Milton Friedman is not the central figure in this story, however. Instead, the story focuses on Theodore W. Schultz using his unprocessed archives held at the University of Chicago. The presentation outlines the origins of human capital theory and its implications on the field of education. Specifically, it looks at the Technical Assistance in Latin America project that Schultz headed, which initiated a long-standing partnership between the University of Chicago and the Pontifical University of Chile. It then connects Schultz to the rise of human capital theory in World Bank lending. Much of the way in which education is understood today derives from Schultz.

*Will Brehm is an Associate Professor of Education at the University of Canberra. His research interests include the intersection of comparative and international education with international relations and the political economy of development, focused primarily in Southeast Asia. His books include Cambodia for Sale (Routledge, 2021), Memory in the Mekong (TC Press, 2022), and Education and Power in Contemporary Southeast Asia (Routledge, 2023). Will also hosts a weekly podcast focused on new educational research called FreshEd, which has been downloaded over 750,000 times. Follow him on Twitter @wbrehm.*

## **Scott Burrows**

*Class, Ideology, Localism and Hegemonic Struggle: A Case Study of Two Union Disputes in Captains Flat, New South Wales*

There were two major union disputes in the former mining town of Captains Flat, New South Wales in the late 1940 and early 1950s. In late 1948 to early 1949, a dispute arose concerning the payment of bonuses involved in the extraction of lead, while in mid-1954 to early 1955, another dispute arose concerning shaft sinking for the extraction of ore. These disputes both ran for approximately seven months. While these disputes seem disconnected from broader national mining and labour histories and can be framed as unique local disruptions, this article argues they had a more profound impact and can be understood through the ideological and hegemonic struggles within the two major unions involved: the Australian Labor Party (ALP) aligned Australian Workers' Union, and the Communist-led Miners' Federation.

Although earlier research has been undertaken on this topic (see McGowan 2004; 2009), this article seeks to contribute and expand the existing research with newer understandings of hegemony. The existing literature examining localism highlights how rural and regional towns develop notions of class and ideology in their communities. By supplementing this literature using the work of Gramsci's writings on civil society, new and insightful perspectives around the processes of hegemony can better understand these two union disputes. The article, therefore, seeks to understand how these industrial disputes played out in two senses: as inter-union conflict with often ideologically opposed views and the alliances and divisions with the main employer, Lake George Mines, and the broader Captains Flat community's sense of localism, and their sense of place.

*Scott Burrows is a social scientist working on agriculture and labour market research in a public sector research bureau.*

## **Rowan Cahill, University of Wollongong**

*The Activist Pulling Together the Archives: Archive Essentials*

In this presentation, I reflect on how I as an activist have dealt with the personal papers and hoardings of social and labour movement activists who have significantly helped make history from below. The activists I refer to (including Della Elliott and Bob Walshe) have left behind vast quantities of movement records, personal papers, ephemera, and libraries, at times filling garages and multiple rooms of houses. Well known within their respective movements, these figures are not necessarily familiar to those outside. This has implications for the decisions that had to be made about what to do with their belongings. This paper will look at some of the decisions that I and others have been compelled to make as to the future of this material. Factors that have influenced us include the perceived historical worth of the material, and then a whole myriad of complex issues such as time frames, lawyers and legal issues, family pressures and tensions, and, of course, emotional experiences like grief. I will talk about the restricted options available for, and the ever present the problem of, finding an activist-archival home.

*Rowan Cahill is a graduate of the universities of Sydney, New England, and Wollongong. Prominent in the student, anti-war and New Left movements of the 1960s and 70s, he was a Conscientious Objector during the Vietnam War. He has variously worked as a farmhand, teacher, freelance writer, and for the trade union movement as a publicist, historian, and rank and file activist. Currently an Honorary Fellow at the University of Wollongong, he has published widely in trade union, social movement, and academic publications. With Terry Irving he is co-author of Radical Sydney (2010), and The Barber Who Read History (2021).*

### **Christopher Chevalier**

*Oral History and Pacific Labour History: Past, Present and Future*

This presentation will look at past, present and future uses of oral history in Pacific Islander labour history. Oral history provides perspectives and perceptions of workers' lives. Oral testimonies may be the only evidence available of workers' lived experiences and can also confirm or contest documentary sources. Given the technology available prior to the 1980s and subsequent shift to digital technology, oral history tape recordings may not have been properly archived or have otherwise been lost in the archives or filing cabinets. Recordings may have been taped over, be unplayable, or unsuitable for archival purposes due to the poor quality of the original sound recordings, deterioration of the tapes, or failure to secure proper permission for archives.

Digital technology has greatly enhanced the collection, curation, archiving, and access to oral histories but requires careful attention to interviewing techniques and recording quality for archival purposes. I provide examples and experiences from my own case study of Solomon Islands nursing careers and nursing history. Oral history is also highly relevant to researching the new Pacific labour trade. Oral histories can record workers' experiences not only for archival purposes but also provide documentary evidence needed to improve working conditions for, and treatment of, Pacific Islanders.

*Christopher Chevalier worked as an international aid and health worker from 1980 to 1999, including 10 years in Solomon Islands and a further 10 years as Pacific Project Officer for Union Aid Abroad - APHEDA from 1999 to 2009. His 2021 PhD thesis, Content and Context: Connecting Oral History and Social History in Solomon Islands, explores some of the complexity and range of oral history in three case studies. He used oral history methods to record and present the life histories and oral testimonies of 27 Solomon Islanders and seven expatriates. The thesis connects individual and collective histories, written sources, and other materials, to illuminate the social history of Solomon Islands at multiple levels since the end of the Pacific War.*

### **Carol Corless, President of the Canberra Branch, ASSLH**

*Assembling a Community History: How "A Factory and a Family at Murarrie" Was Compiled*

On 11 February 2014, Graincorp announced they were closing the oil refinery and packing plant at Murarrie in Queensland and moving production to other sites in Victoria. There was a two-year transition period for the site closure with the expected closure being in 2016. This

announcement resulted in 130 jobs being made redundant. The production site had a long history in the area which everyone was reminded of when they walked through reception and past the employee photo from 1935. Site and corporate management approached one of the site employees who they were aware was studying for a history degree to ask that person to write a small history. The book was presented to all employees at a site closure function in 2016. This paper will detail the methodology and resources used in writing the book *A Factory and a Family at Murarrie*. The production of this book used many sources of records, oral histories and photos in the final compilation. Some of the resources are held in public institutions but a significant number were from company held records. Articles were contributed from interviews with employees at the time and from former employees of the business.

*Carol Dian Corless graduated from UNE in 2016 with a Bachelor of Historical Inquiry and Practice. Carol has a long-term interest in labour history through her involvement in the union movement. Carol was a shop floor delegate at a food manufacturer in Brisbane until her role was made redundant after 28 years. Through her involvement in the union movement Carol held roles on the executive of her union, United Voice. Carol was President of United Voice Queensland until 2016 when her work circumstances changed which involved her moving to ACT. Carol is a life member of United Voice, now the United Workers Union.*

### **Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, University of Wollongong**

*Looking for Archival Activism in the Activist's Archive: Imagining the Future of Feminist Pasts*

Historically, women have worked to record and archive the histories of their social movements, but they have been confronted by significant problems which have hindered their success. Throughout the twentieth century, individuals and groups struggled with patriarchal structures and androcentric public narratives which devalued their histories. They also had to grapple with a lack of funding in the attempt to preserve their archives for an era when they could be afforded public visibility. Further into the century, those feminist activists who occupied positions of professional employment were able to subsume some of their histories into official archives, with a small number also depositing their personal papers in public repositories. To be able to record the memory of their political labours, they had to first agitate for the construction of feminist archives. In this paper, I aim to trace the twenty-first century feminist historian's journeying into feminist activists' archives in search of intertwining political and archival activism. From the non-employed prolific activist Ruby Rich (1888-1988) to Librarian and Equal Pay campaigner Jean Arnot (1903-1995) to Women's Advisor to the Prime Minister and Gough Whitlam's 'Supergirl' Elizabeth Reid, I ask how feminist activists envisioned the future of their pasts.

*Sharon Crozier-De Rosa is an Associate Professor in History at the University of Wollongong. Her research focuses on memory cultures, emotions and affect, and histories of activism from anti-colonial to feminist to archival. She currently leads a project on 'Archiving Social Movements & Building Historical Literacy for a Digital Age' (DP230100875) and is Deputy Editor of *Women's History Review*, Board Member of the International Federation for Research in Women's History, Vice President of the Irish Studies Association of Australia and New Zealand, and Co-Convenor of the Centre for Colonial and Settler Studies (UOW).*



## **Kathryn Dan, Australian National University**

### *Collecting Trends: What will Future Research Archives Hold?*

Archival resources for the study of labour history, largely held in universities, state or national libraries, have been built over decades with very active collecting through the twentieth century. Using the Noel Butlin Archives as a reference point, this paper questions whether those large collections of industry and trade union records continue to be produced and transferred to university-based research archives. While collecting policies remain focused on preserving the records of the labour movement and the work environment for research use, the scope and type of collecting has changed. As work and the workplace have transformed, so have the records produced that find their way to the archives.

Analysing the type of accessions over the past half century, this paper examines the change in scope of records, resource context for acquisition, and impact of technology on the archives endeavour and the potential impact of these developments on research. It also explores the nature of use indicating how researchers' engagement with the archives may have changed over time.

*Kathryn Dan is University Archivist at the Australian National University. She has extensive experience in archives, records and libraries having held senior information management roles at the University of Melbourne, National Archives of Australia, National Library of Australia, and Monash University. Professionally active, she has served on committees and in leadership roles of the Australian Society of Archivists, the International Council of Archives, Standards Australia, and Blue Shield (cultural property protection).*

## **Samantha Dagg and Rod Noble, Hunter Workers (Newcastle Trades Hall Council)**

### *The Labour History Hubs in the Hunter Region: Problems and Opportunities*

In this presentation, Rod Noble and Samantha Dagg will look at the problems and opportunities facing local labour historians, archivists, and researchers working in the Hunter region, with specific focus on five labour history repositories. These repositories represent all levels of labour history archives, ranging from the extensive personal collection of Rod Noble, the Jim Comerford Collection held by the volunteer-run Coalfield Local History Association, the institutional archives of Hunter Workers (Newcastle Trades Hall Council), and the more established and widely recognised labour history archives held at the Newcastle Public Library and Special Collections at the University of Newcastle. We will expand on the specific issues that face researchers utilising the hubs and the archivists who care for them, including funding, the necessity for specialty staff and equipment, lack of connectivity between these repositories, and issues relating to promotion and collection building. We will also discuss potential opportunities that could benefit all levels of researchers and archivists from amateur to the GLAMX professional through partnership building, focusing on skill and information-sharing and cross-promotion. The presentation will be informed from our experiences as researchers in the field, one established and one novice, as well as the specific issues involved in rebuilding and developing the Hunter Workers archives.

*Rod Noble is a long-term labour activist and academic based in the Newcastle Region, with over 50 years' experience working within the movement. He has written numerous historical*

works, including *Of Human Right and Human Gain*, a history of the Newcastle Trades Hall Council which began as a Master's thesis, and is a founding member of the Newcastle Branch of the Labour History Society.

*Samantha Dagg is the volunteer library coordinator for the Hunter Workers Library, a special library being established by Hunter Workers (Newcastle Trades Hall Council). She has been working with Hunter Workers for over five years to develop the library, rebuild their archives, and implement current collection and archival practices as well as researching the historical activism undertaken by the organisation.*

### **Alexandra Delliios, Australian National University**

*Servicing Migrant Industrial Workers: The Papers of the Australian Greek Welfare Society*

This paper explores the many voices of community activist and welfare workers contained in the records of the Australian Greek Welfare Society and the manuscript collection of Dr Spiro Moraitis and Margaret Moraitis. It explores these perspectives—spanning from the early 1970s to the 1990s—as a means to understand shifting ethnic community discourses around: social service delivery, ethnic community relationships with government and industry, and the grassroots politics of multiculturalism as an access and equity issue. In particular, it traces the AGWS's key role in providing services to migrant workers in industry at a time when few targeted services existed. They also made regular conceptual and proactive contributions to discussions about the conditions facing non-English-speaking migrant workers across Australia. The papers, meeting minutes, correspondence, and ephemera contained in these collections are invaluable to telling the history of multicultural welfare and community politics in Australia, and yet they have received little attention. This paper will attempt to place these collections into the context of Australia's labour and migration history.

*Alexandra Delliios is a historian and senior lecturer in the Centre for Heritage and Museum Studies at the Australian National University. Her research considers the public and oral history of migrant and refugee communities, their experiences of settlement, and working and family life. She is the author of *Heritage Making and Migrant Subjects in the Deindustrialising Region of the Latrobe Valley* (Cambridge University Press, 2022) and *Histories of Controversy: Bonegilla Migrant Centre* (Melbourne University Publishing, 2017), editor of *Memory and Family in Australian Refugee Histories* (Routledge, 2019), and co-editor (with Eureka Henrich) of *Migrant, Multicultural and Diasporic Heritage: Beyond and Between Borders* (Routledge, 2020).*

### **David Faber, Flinders University**

*Veneto Subversives Down Under in the Fascist Era: Sources for Multicultural Labour History in Italian & Australian Archives & Libraries*

There is a good oral tradition that Francesco Giovanni Fantin, a Veneto Antifascist Anarcho-syndicalist activist from the dormitory village of San Vito de Leguzzano in the Schio district of Vicenza Province in the North East Italian Region of the Veneto, who subsequently sustained his resistance to the regime in Australia, was at the side of his charismatic fellow

villager Francesco Giuseppe Carmagnola in the leading of the historic Weil's Disease Health and Safety Strikes of 1934 and '35 in the North Queensland cane fields. Fantin was not an accidental activist, but one with a political and industrial pedigree stretching back to his teens. This paper will record the charting in Italy during 1985-8 of these networks of defiance in the homeland and overseas, as verified in Italian archives and libraries, and subsequently likewise in comparable Australian institutions. Italian documents referring to Australian labour history will be examined, e.g., by Fantin's secret police dossier.

*Dr David Faber has 40 years' experience in researching Italian political migration to Australia, a turning point in mass migration to the antipodes. As a freelancer and later an Adjunct, David has explored both documentary and oral sources in Italian and Australian archives, libraries and communities. He argues that a rising generation of bilingual and bicultural students stand to make history important to this country in their ancestral migration homelands.*

### **Hannah Forsyth**

*Sources of Virtue: Understanding the Materiality of the Professional Class*

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, white-collar professionals turned British middle-class morality into the characteristics and standards by which they evaluated professional work. In the English-speaking settler-colonies professions grew rapidly—much faster than in Britain or Europe—as middle-class colonists invested the large quantities of money emanating from the City of London into the 'human capital' that would prop up teaching, nursing, engineering, accountancy, the law, medicine, and journalism. By doing this work, professionals made themselves into a class. This was a class based on virtue, but that does not mean it was purely ideological. Virtue, performed as real, embodied work, became economic stuff. Although many professions had (and others later developed) considerable overlap with the working class on one end and capital on the other, as a class they were 'virtue capitalists.' Collectively, professionals invested a combination of money and real, embodied virtue into society and the economy for the purpose of moral and financial profit. This paper will show that recognising the materiality of this process requires a combination of economic, archival, and cultural sources seen through a similarly promiscuous set of theoretical lenses including Marxist materialism, Max Weber's protestant ethic, Bordieuan 'taste' and the new materialism of Karen Barad.

*Hannah Forsyth is a historian of work, education, and capitalism at the Australian Catholic University where she has taught Global History, Historiography, Australian History, Australian Politics, Indigenous History, and the History of Capitalism. She is author of A History of the Modern Australian University (NewSouth 2014) and Virtue Capitalists: The Rise and Fall of the Professional Class in the Anglophone World c.1870-2008 (due out with CUP October 2022). Hannah is a member of ACU's NTEU branch committee.*

### **Vashti Fox, University of Western Australia**

*Helping the Nazis Move Out: Antifascism in Melbourne in the 1970s*

Between 1971 and 1973 Melbourne became the site of several campaigns against the fledgling Nazi National Socialist Party of Australia (NSPA) by an ad hoc collection of antifascists. This was a period of an ascendant left and a struggling far right. Cold War conservatism was thawing and giving way to a radical spring. The political mainstream edged leftward as more and more sections of society developed antipathy toward the Vietnam War, joined trade unions and were impacted by a vibrant, defiant youth culture. There were several political currents involved in confrontational opposition to the Nazis; the dominant ones were radical students, particularly the Monash University Maoists, and members of Melbourne's Jewish population. By trawling through activist and radical student archives this paper will bring to light this hidden history. It will consider the tactics, strategies, imaginaries and politics of these different currents.

*Vashti Fox is a PhD student at the University of Western Australia. She is writing on the history of antifascism in Australia and has recently co-edited *The History of Fascism and Anti-Fascism in Australia*. She is the secretary of the Perth branch of Labour History.*

### **Emily Gallagher, Australian National University**

*From German Porcelain to the Unbreakable Doll: The History of a Toy Industry in Australia, 1880–1945*

Since the late nineteenth century dolls have reigned supreme in the modern Australian toy box. Together with their furry companion, the teddy bear, they have often been treated as a special class of toys: an 'essential' luxury for the modern family. They were the stars of Sydney's and Melbourne's first toy arcades in the 1880s and the only toys exempt from duty under the federal government's 1908 protectionist tariff bill. Yet, notwithstanding their unique social, cultural and economic status, the history of the doll market and industry in Australia has so far remained the domain of private collectors and museum curators. This paper explores the possibilities and challenges of writing an economic and social history of children's toys. It centres dolls not only as subjects of historical inquiry but also as sources, considering new methods, collaborations and archives to document the history of an industry that has touched the everyday lives and imaginations of generations of Australian children and their families.

*Emily Gallagher is a research editor and historian at the National Centre of Biography in the School of History at the Australian National University. Her PhD thesis was a history of the childhood imagination in Australia in the half century between 1890 and 1940.*

### **John Gannon, La Trobe University**

*Interpreting the Lunatic Attendants Depicted in William Hogarth's Bethlem Print: An Autoethnographic Labour Historiographical Approach*

Autoethnographic labour historiography describes a hybrid methodology where present-day workers' put their own work-based stories into dialogue with relevant historical artifacts. This paper demonstrates this approach by putting my stories, about working as a mental health nurse, into dialogue with an eighteenth-century cartoon (by William Hogarth) depicting a scene taking place in the Bethlem Asylum. I focus on the presence of two lunatic attendants in the cartoon, interpreting the nature of their labour. I argue that this dialogical process enables a re-

understanding of present-day mental health nursing opening up labour-based lines of inquiry into the essential nature of this work that challenges contemporary progressivist, and critical, framings.

*John Gannon completed a PhD in Sociology in 2021. He conducted an auto-ethnographic study into how mental health nursing changed in the period that followed deinstitutionalisation specifically examining how the rise of managerialism, and an associated risk culture, changed the work lives of the nurses. He described his method as 'labour autoethnography' of which labour historiographic autoethnography is a component. He has worked as mental health nurse for three decades and these experiences inform his scholarship.*

### **Fiona Gatt, Deakin University**

*The Rate Books are Key: Class, Community and Place in Colonial-era Melbourne*

This paper will explore the insights that can be gleaned concerning the formation of class, from a local history of colonial-era urbanisation, in the Melbourne area known alternately as North Melbourne or Hotham. In investigating the material construction of the urban area and the social processes of building a community, this paper argues that understanding the relationship between these two processes is critical. Quantitative analysis of the local rate books reconstructs the physical nature of the town, the occupational groups of residents, the rates of home ownership and the profile of landlords. Qualitative research in records such as newspapers, local government and charity organisation archives (amongst others) provides insight into the felt connections and aspirations for the local area that developed over time. Here, urbanisation functioned to produce a community that complicates notions of what constitutes a working-class or middle-class area in late nineteenth-century Melbourne. Class and community were made in the tensions between the aspirations, processes and outcomes of urbanisation connected to this local place, complicated by hierarchies of occupations, religion and ethnicity. Hotham/North Melbourne was a place characterised by shifting tensions which, by the turn of the century, finally settled into its identity as a working-class area.

*Fiona Gatt's areas of interest include class, housing, urbanisation and global migration. Her PhD thesis, completed at Deakin University in early 2023, recovers the lived experience of nineteenth-century urbanisation on Melbourne's colonial urban frontier. Fiona works as a casual academic, teaching at various universities, as a research assistant and on public history projects. She is co-editor of the Journal of Australian Studies and of Pharos, the newsletter of the Professional Historians Association (Vic & Tas). She has a leadership role in the New Housing Histories Network. She lives (and mainly works) on unceded Dja Dja Wurrung Country.*

### **Catherine Gay, University of Melbourne**

*Samplers and 'Settlement:' Girls' Labour and its Material Traces in Nineteenth-century Australia*

Creating a needlework sampler was a common, almost ubiquitous, activity for girls in nineteenth-century Australia. Intricately stitched coloured threads on fabric would form letters,

patterns and images. Tangible and pictorial, both text and textile, a needlework sampler is an archive of girls' work, a material remnant of their physical, cultural, moral, and emotional labour. This paper argues that girls' work, as evidenced and symbolised through the sampler, reveals the integral role migrant girls and non-Indigenous girls born in the colony played in colonial 'settlement.' Daughters were essential members of the coloniser household and their labour helped their families transition to life in a new land. Yet samplers also unsettle neat narratives of arrival and homemaking and prompt us to think about the household as a site of invasion. Hundreds of samplers survive but they have been little considered in the Australian context. Taking girls' needlework samplers as an archive, this paper moves back and forth between this underexamined object and the world in which it was created to explore the material as historical evidence. It shows that girls' histories prompt historians to expand their understanding of the archive and offers some provocations as to the possibilities of girl-produced sources for exploring the Australian past.

*Catherine Gay is a Hansen Trust PhD Scholar in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne. Her doctoral research examines the lives and material culture of First Nations and settler girls in nineteenth-century Australia. Catherine is the Lead Research Assistant for the Heritage Project at Cancer Council Victoria and a Research Associate at Museums Victoria.*

## **Madonna Grehan, University of Melbourne**

### *Bedside Care-workers in Australia 1790 to 1860*

Most versions of Australian healthcare history credit English woman Florence Nightingale with transforming colonial health care from woeful to wonderful standards via her nursing emissaries sent to Sydney in 1868. So the story goes, before this momentous intervention, bedside attendance was performed by uneducated, ignorant and slovenly women. The saga of Nightingale's influence endures, with some recent histories even reporting that little evidence exists of early Australian colonial-era healthcare provision, while others simply assert that women at bedsides would have done this or that activity.

In this paper, with particular reference to the Colony of Victoria, I discuss primary sources which provide a counter view of early care-givers and their work, one based on evidence rather than speculation. I draw on material in archives, libraries and other repositories, as well as family history collections. In doing so, I throw the 'sources' net widely, rather than predictably. This strategy delivers valuable evidence, making it possible to illuminate and evaluate women's contribution as care-workers in colonial society, particularly that at maternity bedsides. This approach confirms that a range of women, educated and professional, uneducated and accidental, paid and unpaid, provided invaluable service, often in trying circumstances.

*Originally trained as a nurse and midwife, Madonna Grehan is an independent historian and Honorary Fellow at the University of Melbourne's School of Health Sciences. Her research interests include nursing, midwifery and the care of women in Australia since 1790, oral history, social history, biography and material culture. Madonna is an interviewer for the National Library's Oral History and Folklore Collection and in her 17th year as a volunteer social-history tour guide at the Abbotsford Convent in Melbourne.*

## **Nicholas Hoare, Australian National University**

### *The Queensland Labour Trade, Pacific History, and a Return to the Archives*

Historian Dario Di Rosa has recently commented upon the paucity of labour historiography in Pacific history. Referring specifically to a 1983 article by Jacqueline Leckie in which she criticises the tendency of Pacific historians to privilege culture over class, Di Rosa suggests that microhistorical approaches have the potential to reinvigorate social history as it is only at the 'micro' scale of analysis that the kinds of personal and social relations central to upholding, and challenging, colonialism are most productively identified and illuminated. Given that sources and the concept of the 'exceptional normal' are of equal importance as mere scale in the microstoria tradition, I suggest that instead of taking up Di Rosa's practical solution of turning to fieldwork—a fix that risks further alienating Pacific historians from the wider discipline—we might instead revisit sources and archives that were once mined for empirical insights and can now be read with microscopic intent. In this paper, I return to recently digitized records of the Queensland labour trade, a favourite of early Australian historians of the Pacific, focusing on the radical potential for new, 'exceptionally normal' social histories of the period free from the preoccupations of an earlier scholarly generation.

*Nicholas Hoare obtained his PhD from the Australian National University in 2021 where he currently lectures undergraduate courses in Pacific history within the Department of Pacific Affairs. Prior to this he studied at Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand. His primary research interests are the French colonial Pacific, the Pacific's phosphate islands, and biography.*

## **Stephen Holt**

### *A Good Combination: Susan Ryan and Jonathan Swift*

Digitisation, by making access to archival source material easier, enables researchers to produce subtler accounts of the lives or events that they write about. Susan Ryan (1942-2020), hailed as a trailblazer for Labor women in Federal Parliament and for gender equality generally, is a case in point. Published synopses of Ryan's life and achievements often mention that she had a master's degree but provide no indication of the content of her postgraduate thesis and its relevance or otherwise to her career. It is now possible to judge if such oversight is justified given that Ryan's has recently been digitised.

Ryan's thesis turns out not to be a lifeless exercise. It is energised by a concern with issues and problems that were current when Ryan wrote it. Ryan's thesis was written in a university English Department. Its topic was the satirical verse of Jonathan Swift. Ryan studied Swift because he epitomised misogyny. Analysing Swift's poetic depiction of women was one way in which Ryan prepared herself for entry into public and political life in the Whitlam era. Susan Ryan's MA thesis needs to be seen and read as a living document. Digitisation has made this possible.

*Stephen Holt is a Canberra-based researcher and writer.*

## **Kari James, Australian National University**

### *Labour Records in the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau Collection*

The Pacific Manuscripts Bureau was established at the Australian National University in 1968, supported by an international consortium of libraries with a special interest in the Pacific. The Bureau's goal is to make preservation copies of records held in, or about, the Pacific region, and to make the copies more accessible to researchers through its network of sponsoring libraries. It prioritises materials at risk or difficult to access. This collection of surrogate records covers topics as broad as seismology and vernacular word lists, but also diaries of blackbirding voyages, missionaries who observed blackbirding raids and advocated for the end of the practice, and registers of workers sent from Melanesia to Samoa to work on German plantations. The collection also contains twentieth century records of labour unions across Melanesia and beyond. This paper will introduce these collections that tell stories of labour in the Pacific.

*Kari James is the Executive Officer for the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau (aka Pambu) at the Australian National University. Before joining the Bureau, she worked in the research archive of a Native Title Representative Body, as a volunteer at the National Archives of Solomon Islands and as an archival researcher for ABC TV News. She has an academic background in media studies, information, and records management and archives. She serves on the Board of the ANU Pacific Institute and the Pacific and Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (PARBICA) Bureau. Kari is of British heritage, but is dedicated to learning and sharing what she can about Australia's Pacific neighbours and our long and shared history.*

## **Diane Kirkby, La Trobe University**

### *Women in Australian Maritime Industry*

*Diane Kirkby is Professor of Law and Humanities at University of Technology Sydney and Professor Emeritus at La Trobe University. She has published extensively on Australian and US women's and men's labour history. Her most recent book, *Maritime Men of the Asia-Pacific: True-Blue Internationals Navigating Labour Rights 1906-2006* is published by Liverpool University Press, 2022. The research for this paper is funded by the ARC.*

## **George Lafferty, Western Sydney University**

### *'A Story Told of You:' Capital as Labour History*

Numerous commentators have observed that the historical narrative in Chapter 10 of *Capital*, 'The Working Day,' strikes a discordant note in relation to the highly technical, preceding chapters. For example, it constitutes the first time the pivotal Marxist concept, class struggle, is explored in its empirical dimensions. In the chapter, Marx focuses on campaigns in the United Kingdom for the 'normal' working day, during the first half of the 19th century. These campaigns led to historically crucial labour legislation, most notably the series of Factory Acts from 1833 to 1850, placing some formal limits on working hours, particularly for children and women workers. Marx draws predominantly on the reports produced by factory inspectors, legal inquiries, and medical authorities; these enable him to extend his discussion of working



conditions in the first half of the 19th century Britain in pluralist directions, beyond strictly political-economic ('Marxist') parameters. By the time *Capital* was published (1867), though, even the most ardent 'Free Marketeers' had long since abandoned the cherished liberal goal of an entirely free labour market, now regulated by the Factory Acts. This paper, therefore, interprets 'The Working Day' less as a critique of contemporary capitalist production in the UK than as a cautionary tale of labour history ('a story told of you'). Liberalised labour markets loom as a permanent dystopia, threatening future generations of workers.

*George Lafferty is Professor of Employment Relations at Western Sydney University (since 2009). Previously (2003-2009) he was Professor and Director of the Industrial Relations Centre, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. Before that, he worked at Griffith University and the University of Queensland. His main areas of teaching and research include employment relations, service sector employment, industrial relations and the political economy of work.*

### **Ron Lambert**

*The Timber Workers Archives: Local Photo Collections and Meanings*

While attempting my PhD project I had access to the Timber Workers, Victorian branch records. These records formed a vivid picture of the city-based union executive in dealing with wildcat actions of pulpwood cutters in Gippsland between 1968 through to 1975. This paper will deal with the process of accessing these records, the impact of the material on oral history informants I interviewed and the eventual commissioning by a logging contractor of a company history based on this research. I will also discuss briefly the notion of the rich and largely untapped lode of labour history in the Gippsland region and archival sources related to this history

*Ron is a resident of Gippsland. He has had a range of occupations notably in the power industry as a rigger. Ron is now semi-retired and travels frequently. He holds a BA from Monash and Masters of Education in workplace learning from Victoria University. He is a failed PhD candidate, but that's another story*

### **Beth Marsden, Australian National University**

*'Six Miles by Road:' School Application Maps, Travel to School and Histories of Childhood and Education*

The Victorian Education Department received hundreds of applications for new schools in the first half of the twentieth century. For families living and working in remote areas, the barrier of geographic distance to school could only be addressed by the Education Department's decision to build and staff a state school. These applications, usually submitted by a group of families, were prompted by fluctuating settlement patterns resulting from new industries, infrastructure projects, and settlement schemes. Families applied for the provision of new schools closer to their homes, within a distance that children could travel to school independently. Applications submitted to the Education Department included maps that were sometimes hand-drawn, or were annotated surveyor's maps, submitted as evidence to support

the application. The maps also identified the proposed site for the new school, and the distance and location of children's homes. This paper uses a series of maps submitted to the Department from the 1910s to 1940s to raise several methodological possibilities. It argues that the maps can be used as snapshots of the social, environmental, and economic histories of small towns in Victoria during this period. This paper also argues that attending to the role of children's travel to school allows for more complex readings of universal school access, and the function of the compulsory clause. This paper also argues that, as adult-authored sources, the maps show how adult family members imagined or understood children's worlds, and the paths and routes they might take to travel to school. By interrogating the limits of these maps, this paper aims to explore new historical understandings about childhood, and experiences of schooling and education.

*Beth Marsden is a settler historian specialising in the fields of Aboriginal education, Australian history, settler colonialism, and histories of childhood.*

### **Bobbie Oliver, University of Western Australia**

#### *Peace History as Labour History*

There are many connections between peace history and labour history. The defeat of the World War I conscription referenda, often regarded as the biggest victory of the Australian peace movement, was fought by unionists and Labor parliamentarians as well as other peace activists. John Curtin, Jim Cairns and others paid a personal price for their stand against war. One of Whitlam's first acts as Prime Minister was to free prisoners of conscience, jailed for refusing to be conscripted to fight in Vietnam.

Recently, I donated a collection of Vivienne Abraham's papers to the National Library. The collection contains court records, correspondence and other documents concerning conscientious objectors and draft resisters during the Vietnam War. My paper discusses the collection's contents and its significance to the study of labour history in 20th century Australia. It raises issues of privacy in the use of private letters and notes in research, as well as value of visual and oral sources such as photographs, posters, and interviews.

*Associate Professor Bobbie Oliver is an Honorary Research Fellow in Humanities at The University of Western Australia, and a board member of the Australian Living Peace Museum. She has published works on labour and peace history. Her most recent book is Hell No! We won't go! Resistance to Conscription in Postwar Australia (Interventions Publications, 2022).*

### **Murray Perks**

#### *Lost Debates: Labor Self-censors in the Great War*

Research can be more difficult if authorities have made determined efforts to suppress public debate. In the Centenary History of Australia and the Great War Peter Stanley remarks that the implications for scholarship of the restrictions of the wartime censorship 'have barely been explored' (Vol 4, p. 170). Undoubtedly censorship of all printed matter and policing of speech suppressed anti-war arguments. But a further effect of the censorship and its enforcement against dissidents was self-censorship. In two key examples in mid-1918 the Australian Labor

Party censored its own conference debates over defence, recruitment, and the party's conditions for support of continued Australian involvement in the war. Reconstructing these debates requires a wider variety of sources than the press and official party records. But while the print censorship gutted contemporary public sources, the censor's surviving files of intercepted private mail provide the researcher with a valuable and sometimes intimate window onto the dissidents and their activities. The paper discusses the restrictions on sources for the examples mentioned.

*Murray Perks is a retired public servant with research interests concerning the Australian labour movement and dissent during the Great War. He has published articles on aspects of this subject.*

### **Noah Riseman and Geraldine Fela, Australian Catholic University and Macquarie University**

*Proud to be Union? Queer Work(ers) and the Australian Trade Union Movement, 1970s-80s*

Especially visible since the second half of the 20th Century, the presence of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ+) workers in certain industries has troubled gendered jurisdictions of work. Gay men have often been more visible in traditionally feminine professions (eg: nursing, teaching, flight attendants) and lesbians and trans women in masculine professions (eg: truck driving, the manufacturing sector). American historian Allan Bérubé calls this transgression of the gendered division of labour 'queer work.'

This paper will draw on the notion of 'queer work' to examine interactions between the Australian trade union movement, LGBTIQ+ workers, and struggles for LGBTIQ+ rights in the 1970s and 1980s. Whilst some sections of the trade union movement that represented queer work(ers), such as teachers and nurses, were relatively quick to take up the interests of their LGBTIQ+ members, others lagged behind. Conversely, some trade unions outside of queer professions, notably the blue-collar NSW Builders Laborer's Federation, took an interest in questions of LGBTIQ+ discrimination. In other words, whilst the presence of queer work(ers) within particular industries has, at times, led to the relevant union taking up LGBTIQ+ issues this has not always been the case and, conversely, unions not traditionally associated with queer work(ers) have at time taken up LGBTIQ+ issues. We argue that whilst it is not possible entirely to de-couple trade union attitudes to LGBTIQ+ rights from the relative queerness of the industries they represent, there are other significant factors at play; notably, the broader political orientation and history of the union, and the presence of an active and organised rank-and-file.

*Noah Riseman is a Professor of History at Australian Catholic University, where he researches Australian histories of race, gender and sexuality. His new book *Transgender Australia: A History since 1910* was published by Melbourne University Press in September 2023. His other recent co-authored monographs are: *Pride in Defence: The Australian Military and LGBTI Service since 1945* (Melbourne University Press, 2020); *Indigenous Peoples and the Second World War: The Politics, Experiences and Legacies of War in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand* (Cambridge University Press, 2019); and *Serving in Silence? Australian LGBT Servicemen and Women* (NewSouth Publishing, 2018).*

*Dr Geraldine Fela is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Macquarie University in the Department of History and Archaeology, where she is undertaking a project examining the 1998 waterfront dispute between the Maritime Union of Australia and Patrick Stevedores. Her doctoral research, which she is currently working towards publishing as a monograph, explored the role of Australian nurses and nursing unions in responding to the HIV and AIDS crisis. Fela's research sits at the intersection of labour history, queer history and social movement studies, she has published in Sexualities, Labour History and Australian Historical Studies.*

### **Emma Robertson, La Trobe University**

#### *Women on the Buses and Trams*

*Emma Robertson is Associate Professor in History at the Bendigo campus of La Trobe University. She is the author of *Chocolate, Women and Empire: A Social and Cultural History* (Manchester, 2009). Emma's most recent research has concentrated on histories of women workers in the public transport industries in the UK and Australia (funded by the Australian Research Council DP160102764).*

### **Sean Scalmer, University of Melbourne**

#### *Winning the Eight Hour Day*

The winning of the eight-hour day is a foundational event in Australian labour history. Historians and activists have often retold this story, focusing especially on the pioneering contribution of stonemasons in Melbourne and Sydney. But attention to the first breakthroughs of the 1850s has sometimes obscured the slow and complicated process by which other workers in other places and other occupations managed to win the standard. In this paper, I reconstruct the process by which the eight-hour day was generalised across the economy. This reconstruction is based upon union archival records as well as newly-digitised nineteenth-century newspapers. I aim to demonstrate how these records allow for a deeper understanding of this major industrial victory, and to draw out implications for both historical practice and contemporary industrial campaigns.

*Sean Scalmer teaches at the University of Melbourne. He researches the history of social movements, labour, and democracy, and has written and edited many books on these topics. He is also a member of the Editorial Working Party for Labour History. He is currently researching the history of the eight-hour day, as Coral Thomas Fellow at the State Library of NSW, as well as a history of 'direct action,' funded by the Gerda Henkel Stiftung.*

### **Elina Abou Sleiman and Oliver Graham, University of Melbourne**

#### *History in a Shoebox: Grassroots Archives and their Potential*

The ephemera of radical history is a testament to the productive power of grassroots political movements and follows the trajectory of such conflicts over the collective control of the past

and present. In Brisbane, with the relative weakness of the radical left today, its material heritage is largely dispersed across private collections, or held by institutions beholden to capital and the state. At Common House in Fortitude Valley, one grassroots radical library and archive survives. This collectively-managed material traces the history of Brisbane's Marxist and Anarchist traditions from the 1930s into the present, holding literature from the Communist Party of Australia and Socialist Alliance, to the organisations of the New Left and the Institute of Social Ecology.

This paper will present the history of the Common House collection and the various conflicts over ownership and accessibility that have shaped its trajectory. It will also explore the challenges faced by grassroots archives in competing for limited organisational resources and energy, alongside the current attempts to reopen the library to the public and categorise the archive. Finally, practical proposals will be made for the future of academic and archivist alliances with grassroots activists. Ultimately, this discussion will pose the question: how can radical historical material continue to generate collective power?

*Elina Abou Sleiman is an activist, writer and historian, currently undertaking research for a Master's thesis on Brisbane's radical history. Having engaged with the Common House library through her research, she was recently involved in direct action to save its contents from private appropriation.*

*Oliver Graham is a grassroots activist involved in various unions, political organisations and social movements. From 2019 he has been involved in the running of Common House and its library.*

## **Evan Smith, Flinders University**

### *Consigned to the Dustbin of History? The Historian as the Accidental Activists' Archivist*

Plenary Panel Left-wing activists, to perpetuate a stereotype, often become accidental hoarders, collecting material from various campaigns, political parties and trade unions, to name a few. Left-wing political groups produce a variety of newspapers, journals and pamphlets, while flyers are distributed at most public events. After any significant time involved in activist politics, people have regularly amassed a wealth of left-wing ephemera, which can occupy significant storage space. When attempting to deposit these collections of ephemera, activists can find that there are limited options for this kind of material. In Australia, there are only a number of institutions that will accept donations of left-wing material and this can be restricted to personal and unpublished papers. Pamphlets, journals, newspapers and internal party bulletins – the bulk of what is generated by activist groups and movements – are often not wanted by repositories for different reasons, including space, replication of existing material and scope of existing collections. In the absence of institutional alternatives, these collections may end up in private hands, sometimes in the hands of book dealers, sometimes in the hands of other activists, and sometimes in the hands of historians.

This paper is an account of the 'accidental' accumulation of collection of left-wing ephemera by the author, after several activists in Australia and Britain could not find suitable repositories for their collections of pamphlets, journals and newspapers. The paper outlines how word of mouth has led the author to become an unofficial collector of material from various left-wing

political parties and campaigns and the creation of the facetiously titled 'Evan Smith Radical Archive' in his university office. The paper explores what role the collector/historian can play in 'archiving' the history of the Australian left and how the material in this collection can be made available to other researchers, both in Australia and overseas. It is hoped that the paper will foster a discussion about what do activists do with all the stuff they have gathered when they no longer need it and how we can preserve the ephemeral memory of the left.

*Evan Smith is a Lecturer in History in the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences at Flinders University. He is also a Visiting Research Fellow with the School of Humanities at the University of Adelaide. He has published widely on political extremism, social movements, national security and borders in Australia, Britain and Southern Africa.*

### **Jeff Sparrow, University of Melbourne**

#### *Lesbia Harford and the Experience of Defeat*

The final years of the poet Lesbia Harford were marked by artistic frustration, poverty and marital discord. In this paper, I argue that Harford's personal tragedy should be seen in the context of political demoralisation particularly associated with the destruction of the Industrial Workers of the World. To that end, I trace Harford's late career and her relationship with the socialist and artist Pat Harford to explore how the defeat of the wartime radical upsurge affected them.

*Jeff Sparrow is a lecturer at the Centre for Advancing Journalism at the University of Melbourne. He is a writer, editor, broadcaster and Walkley award-winning journalist. He is a columnist for Guardian Australia, a former Breakfast at radio station 3RRR, and a past editor of Overland literary journal. He is the author of Provocations: New and Selected Writing; Crimes Against Nature: Capitalism and Global Heating; Fascists Among Us: Online Hate and the Christchurch Massacre; Trigger Warnings: Political Correctness and the Rise of the Right; No Way But This: In Search of Paul Robeson; Killing: Misadventures in Violence and Communism: A Love Story; the co-author, with Jill Sparrow, of Radical Melbourne: A Secret History and Radical Melbourne 2: The Enemy Within; and the co-editor, with Anthony Loewenstein, of Left Turn: Essays for the New Left.*

### **Janey Stone and Lisa Milner**

#### *The Lowdown on High Resolution: (Re)Sourcing images for a Radical Publication*

Inclusion of images in published books significantly enhances the impact and attractiveness of the final products. This is particularly important for history, as photos and other images can bring the period to life in a way that words alone cannot do. However, for a small, not-for-profit publisher like Interventions, commercially available images can be very expensive, and the efforts involved in seeking permission to publish items under copyright very onerous.

In Interventions, we therefore often seek images from less well-known archives and image collections. Much of this material is poorly curated and documented, and requires an enlarged set of research skills.

In this presentation we will discuss and illustrate the difficulties and challenges involved in our work to publish labour histories with images. Access to, and choices, of images work better when publishers work to understand the circumstances of their origins and their intended audiences: understanding the historical context of an image source will, of course, enlarge the meaning of the text it illustrates. Sources include:

- Images from labour history newspapers and archives
- Private collections including ephemera and non-photographic images
- In-house collections of organisations

Our aim: to give the designer inspiration and to engage the reader.

*Janey Stone has behind her an official career in cancer research and an unofficial one as a left-wing activist and writer on many topics including women and labour history. Her most recent book is on Jewish radicalism (Bookmarks. forthcoming). In retirement she has reinvented herself as the Chair of Interventions, Australia's only independent radical publisher.*

*Lisa Milner is a recovering academic, has written extensively on left-wing and workers' culture, and is Vice-President of Interventions Publishing. Her current research includes an international comparative study of workers' theatre, screen representations of workers and unions, and labour history.*

### **Alexis Vassiley, Edith Cowan University**

*The Relationship between Rank-and-File Unionists and the Union Bureaucracy in the Pilbara Mines: 1965 – 1986*

Industrial relations in the Pilbara iron ore industry in the north of Western Australia from 1965 to 1986 were turbulent. Throughout this entire period, there was significant conflict between union officials – the union bureaucracy – and rank-and-file unionists. Workers' high level of industrial militancy, as well as the remoteness of the Pilbara region, make it an extreme case suited to unveiling insights on the nature of the trade union bureaucracy and its relationship with the rank and file. This paper contends that the union bureaucracy ultimately acts as a moderating force in the class struggle. This case study enriches our analysis of the trade union bureaucracy by viewing its role in the class struggle over a number of decades, in varying contexts of union development, union power and union decline, and broadens a largely British debate. The trade union bureaucracy theory illuminates our understanding of this period in Pilbara labour history. This paper also offers a greater consideration of the role of full-time shop stewards' convenors than has occurred previously. The recently renewed trade union bureaucracy debate has significant implications for both analysis and union strategy.

*Alexis is an early career academic whose research centres around the notion of decent work and comprises two main research tracks: 1) Union strategy historically and today., and union renewal. 2. Work, health and safety, in particular workplace psychosocial hazards. He has been published in Labour History, Labor History (US), Labour and Industry, and elsewhere, and co-edited the second edition of Radical Perth, Militant Fremantle. Alexis is an Associate Editor of Labour History.*

**Rosemary Webb, President of the Sydney Branch, ASSLH**

*Defending the Commons in Sydney's Railway Workshops*

This presentation for Labour History Sydney addresses our defence of the commons in Sydney's Inner West. We focus on sites targeted for adaptive re-use in the South and North Eveleigh railway workshops precincts, where re-use compromises their built and social history and heritage. We have joined with local community group REDWatch and with the RTBU (Retired Officers) in defending Eveleigh sites.

Carriageworks, the former carriage workshops in the Newtown precinct now labeled North Eveleigh, is a familiar example of change for purpose: since re-opening in 2007 it has offered cultural spaces, including a Saturday produce market, galleries and exhibition space. The adapted Locomotive Workshops at South Eveleigh hosts a large supermarket, pub, restaurants, and private tertiary college. Intermittent placements of heritage machines echo past workplaces in both.

Currently the heritage-registered Large Erecting Shop in Alexandria is threatened by re-zoning for commercialisation. The LES possesses a huge interior scale derived from its railway building function. Through re-zoning, the developer will add retail floors, privatising and inevitably jeopardising the grand scale and architectural significance. Rejecting this, campaigners argue for the LES as a last-ditch local opportunity for world class creative and community spaces - acknowledging history, heritage, neighbourhood, and location on Gadigal land.

*Rosemary Webb is a labour historian, former academic, and President of the Sydney Branch of the ASSLH. She is obsessed by historical, political and social dynamics in urban geography, justice and mobilisation.*

**Katie Wood, La Trobe University**

*Women in the Australian Metal Trades*

*Katie Wood is a PhD candidate in the Department of Archaeology and History at La Trobe University, researching the history of women working in the Australian metal trades, 1890–1980. She is the recipient of the 2023 Eric Fry Labour History Research Grant.*

**Peter Woodley, Australian National University**

*Untangling Rural Labour: Group Biography and the Hidden Archive*

In the Australian rural economy before World War II, labour, land and capital were thrown together in many varied ways, such that individuals rarely drew their entire income from, or hitched their identity solely to, the act of selling their labour. Production, politics and culture were messily entangled. This paper explores the challenges, but more particularly the opportunities, that this presents in terms of method and the archive. Firstly, soldier settlers' files emerge as a rich source of insights into the lives of people (typically men) who might have



aspired to be self-employed farmers and land-owners, but who nonetheless were obliged to move back and forth across what was a grey and porous divide between capital and labour—sometimes selling their labour, sometimes employing others'. Secondly, these records open opportunities to use group biography as a method for combining the often disparate and scarce evidence from any one individual's record, with those of others in their district, to allow the researcher to examine labouring people's lives in place.

*Peter Woodley is a former career public servant, with a PhD in Australian rural history from the Australian National University (2021). He has teaching experience with the ANU and the University of New England. His interests include biography, public history, and he is currently a research editor with the Australian Dictionary of Biography.*

### **Ben Woods, Australian Mutuals History**

#### *A Co-operative Business?*

Australian Mutuals History is possibly the most unique archive in Australia. Its uniqueness is not in its collection but rather its structure. This paper looks at the history of Australian Mutuals History, which archives the story of the Australian customer owned banking sector, and the challenge to keep it operating.

The archive was established in 1985 by credit union stalwarts, some of whom were crucial to the development of the credit union movement in Australia. It began as the Australian Credit Union Historical Co-operative and was mainly focused on recording oral histories of retiring credit union directors and staff (It hired labour and oral historian Richard Raxworthy to undertake over 600 oral history interviews). In 1996, the Australian Credit Union Archives Trust was established. The Trustees were responsible for the control and management, collection, storage and access to the archives. The Trustees employed an archivist to carry out the various collections' management tasks.

Since 2017 the organisation has operated as Australian Mutuals History and today seeks funding from Australia's credit unions and mutual banks in order to tell their individual and collective stories. Credit unions, mutual banks, and the Customer Owned Banking Association continue to use our services to publish historical monographs, and to assist with everyday marketing and general business. Academics and professional historians research with us and members of the public ask us to help them find lost accounts and mortgage documentation.

*Ben Woods has backgrounds in journalism and information management, and holds a Masters degree in Human Rights. He is the Archives Officer at SDN Children's Services and the Senior Archivist at Australian Mutuals History. Ben is also writing a history of Traditional Credit Union, which will celebrate thirty years of operation in 2024.*