Memento

NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA | SUMMER 06–07

WORLD WAR I SERVICE RECORDS DIGITISED

THE FALL OF SAIGON

MEMORY OF A NATION OPENS SOON

THE PM AND THE MEDIA MOGUL
Memory of a Nation

The Australian Constitution, Charles Kingsford Smith’s pilot licence application, UFOs and Waltzing Matilda. You’ll find all these – and more – in a major new National Archives exhibition, Memory of a Nation, opening in Canberra in March 2007. Curator Johanna Parker provides a preview.

The National Archives’ collection is a collection like no other. The diverse records we hold illuminate the circumstances that have shaped our past, and show what happened behind the scenes of major events. They document our everyday lives and provide a fresh perspective on familiar people in Australian history. A new exhibition, Memory of a Nation, will help visitors discover the National Archives’ collection for themselves.

Memory of a Nation features the 1897 draft of the Constitution, on display for the first time in the National Archives’ gallery in Canberra. The draft is complete with the red pen edits of Edmund Barton, who became our first Prime Minister. It was hard work creating a constitution for a new nation and this document shows the jottings in the margins of one of its major contributors.
Memory of a Nation will showcase many of the more unusual stories to be found in the Archives. One such unexpected find is a statue of the American actress Mae West, which caused a sensation in her heyday and her provocative image was sure to be a money-spinner. An enterprising manufacturer submitted a figurine of the statuesque Mae for copyright approval in 1935, which is how we ended up with the record by American singer Ruth Wallis, too saucy for Australian ears. This was seized by customs in the early 1960s. 

Other australian cultural icons also feature in the exhibition, such as an early advertisement for Akubra hats dating from 1929. A World War II-era poster warned women of the dangers of alcohol and promiscuity. ‘Venereal disease is a killer!’ it announced. You can expect the unexpected while exploring the National Archives’ collection.

Many of the records and objects featured in Memory of a Nation are connected to dramatic events that have shaped our country – like the National Service ballot balls that changed the lives of young men conscripted for service in the Vietnam War, and the petition presented to Queen Elizabeth II in 1972 by the Larrakia people of the Northern Territory. One of the many stories featured in the exhibition that will strike a contemporary chord is the exposure of the Maralinga atomic weapons trials in the 1950s. Records held by the Archives were used as evidence in the 1984 Royal Commission into British Nuclear Tests in Australia. The witness statements are frightening in their detail as people recalling mushroom clouds and seeing their bodies being illuminated like X-rays.

There are also more personal records that reveal the lives of the famous and infamous. One such story is told through ASIO files documenting the activities of the Aarons family – also known as the ‘royal family of Australian communism’. The Aarons have been ‘persons of interest’ to ASIO for generations, and we have been able to construct a family tree from surveillance photographs of numerous family members, which record the family’s movements over three decades from Sydney to Perth and Wollongong. How many families can lay claim to such a unique achievement?

You don’t have to be famous – or investigated by ASIO – to find records about your family in the National Archives. The exhibition will also feature practical advice for people researching their family history. It will include a multimedia interactive, called ‘Finding Families’, that introduces family history detectives to the types of records the Archives holds. Whether their relatives migrated to Australia over the twentieth century or fought in one of the nation’s major conflicts, researchers are likely to find records in the National Archives. The interactive will highlight some types of records that family history researchers often overlook, which might prove to be a valuable resource.

Memory of a Nation also examines some of the challenges involved in preserving our extensive collection. Visitors will be able to go behind the scenes and witness the work of the Archives’ conservators. A film featured in the exhibition will show the work of our head conservator, Ian Batterham, as he meticulously cares for one of the Archives’ treasures – the architectural drawings of Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin, whose vision gave shape to Australia’s national capital. This is an opportunity for visitors to see how we have preserved these significant, beautiful and fragile records for future generations.

If you want to explore the collection, gain a richer understanding of significant events and personalities in our nation’s history, and maybe meet a few new family members, Memory of a Nation is an ideal starting point for your own journey into the National Archives of Australia.

Johanna Parker is a curator at the National Archives.
A record of service and sacrifice

Thousands of stories are told in the war service records held by the National Archives.

... After receiving word of the death of our second son, who was killed on March 21st last, my wife [is] now very ill, and the news of our third loss, which happened on 16th April, will be a very heavy blow to her.

Thomas Gilvear requested a discharge so that he could work his farm, which, he explained, had ‘suffered severely during the absence of myself and all my sons.’ His request was passed up the chain of command with the note, ‘For consideration, please. This is a very deserving case.’ In approving the discharge for family reasons, the Brigadier-General noted that Thomas Gilvear ‘has certainly suffered more than his fair share for his country.’

This brief letter speaks of the tragedy of war and the suffering of one Queensland family. We can only imagine the feelings of Christina Gilvear as she saw six of her sons – Kenneth, Alexander, James, Thomas, John and Robert – enlist for service over a period of six months. Her husband also signed up in May 1916, at the age of 43. While caring for four children and managing the farm, Mrs Gilvear received telegrams with the news that three of her sons had been killed on the battlefields of France. Alexander, aged 21 at enlistment, was killed in action on 7 May 1917; Robert, who enlisted soon after his 18th birthday, was killed in March 1918; and Kenneth, the eldest son, died less than a month later.

In safekeeping

The story of the Gilvear family’s sacrifice and loss is just one of the many stories told in the defence service records held by the National Archives. The Archives holds the records of the Australian servicemen and servicewomen who served in World War I and World War II. There are over 376,000 service files for members of the First Australian Imperial Force (AIF), which includes those who served in the First AIF, the Royal Flying Corps and the Australian Army Medical Corps. Our World War II holdings comprise some 847,000 Army files, as well as 220,000 Air Force files. The National Archives also has custody of the Navy cards of more than 100,000 officers and sailors covering the period 1911 to 1970.

Since these valuable records came to the Archives from the Department of Defence, we have undertaken significant work to preserve them. The files have been re-housed in acid-free folders and archives boxes, and all service files have been listed by the name of the serviceman or servicewoman on our online database, RecordSearch. The National Archives is now close to completing a huge project to make all World War I service records available in digital form on our website. Soon you will be able to key in the name of any World War I servicemember and view a copy of their service record.

What can you expect to find in a service record? Army service files usually include an attestation paper, which was filled in on enlistment. It contains information such as age at enlistment, place of birth, occupation and details of next of kin. Army records also include a service and casualty form – known as a B103 – which gives details of the person’s service and casualty history, including transfers, promotion and injuries or illness. Files may also contain letters from relatives. World War II files might have a small photograph of the servicemember. RAAF files contain similar information, but may also include records of training and performance assessment. Navy records consist of a card with details of service and postings.

At the National Archives, a team of staff are dedicated to responding to requests for World War I and II service records. The Defence Service Records unit was kept busy last year finding and copying files for the 34,000 requests it received – that’s an average of 93 requests every day of the year.

A letter survives on the World War I service file of Private Thomas Gilvear, a banana farmer from the Glass House Mountains, north of Brisbane. In June 1918, while serving in France, he wrote to the Australian military authorities:

I wish to apply to be returned to Australia. Besides myself six of my sons have served with the A.I.F. in France, and three of them have made the supreme sacrifice. One son is now in Hospital in England, and the other two have been wounded but are back serving with their Unit. I have four more children at home in Australia, the eldest of whom is a girl of 16 years.

[above] Soldiers walking along a road littered with rubble and dead horses, 1917.

[far left] Christina Gilvear sought more information from Australian military authorities about her son Alexander’s death.

[right] Wounded soldiers on the Menin road at Ypres, Belgium, in September 1917.
The folder in the mail

Many people order service records or search for them online to fill in their family history, or to commemorate the lives of their parents or grandparents. Harry Hill of Tumut in New South Wales has written a memoir of his father that draws upon personal memories, his father’s war diaries and his service records held by the National Archives. His father was badly wounded going over the top at Ypres and was lucky to survive. Private Hill’s diary records that while recuperating in Sydney, he ‘met some fine tabs, especially one in a red cape’. The ‘tab’ in the red cape was Staff Nurse Lottie Low, who was later to become his wife. To show her rank as officer she wore a tab, or pip, on the shoulder epaulette of her red cape. As a member of the Australian Army Medical Corps, her service record is also in the National Archives.

Not all service dossiers record heroic deeds and medals won under fire. Some men and women in the service of their nation broke the rules, going AWOL (absent without leave) for a few hours or a few days, or were disciplined for various forms of disorderly conduct. Their records of service, however, can provide families with a small window on an important part of loved ones’ lives, or a connection to a relative they have never met.

Receiving a copy of the defence service record of a father, mother, sister, brother or grandparent can be an emotional experience. One researcher, Val Wallace, was moved to write a poem about her great uncle’s file. It reads in part:

The folder just arrived today – but how was I to know
Its contents and the blunt remarks,
Would influence me so.
No indication could I glean, that papers from the past
Would dredge up such emotions,
My feelings raw and vast.
With trembling hands and aching heart,
I felt Great Grandma’s plight
Exactly 90 years ago, that woeful, fatal night
When suddenly her world stood still,
The message confirmation
‘KILLED IN ACTION’, 6th of May, on World War I’s grim stage.

You can order copies of World War I and World War II service records by filling out an online order form at www.naa.gov.au (under ‘Defence records’). Alternatively, contact the National Reference Service by telephone (1300 886 881) or in writing (PO Box 7425, Canberra Business Centre, ACT 2610).

To help us identify the correct service record, please supply as much of the following information as you can:
• full name of serviceman or servicewoman
• conflict in which they served
• arm of service (Army, Navy, Air Force)
• date of birth
• service number
• place of enlistment.

There is a charge of $25 for each Army or RAAF service record. Single copies of Navy service cards, which usually consist of one or two large index cards for each person, are provided without charge.

Uncovering migrant women’s stories

Historian Dr Nikki Henningham was seeking a holy grail – the records of a migrant women’s organisation that had left few traces in Australia’s archives and libraries. Dr Henningham, winner of the National Archives’ Ian Maclean Award for 2005–06, tells how her search for these records became a reflection upon the challenges of archiving women’s experiences.

My work with the Australian Women’s Archives Project (AWAP), an initiative of the National Foundation for Australian Women that seeks to preserve and promote women’s heritage materials, has provided many examples of Australian women’s quiet historical achievements. Women’s public work has often taken place through professional and private networks that can escape the attention of official archival repositories. Because of this, we need


[far left] Nurse CG Low served in the Australian Army Medical Corps and met Private HC Hill while he was recovering in Sydney.

[left] Private HC Hill. His son, Harry Hill, remembers his father as a proud ex-serviceman who shared little of the horrors of war with his children.
to take a proactive approach to saving their stories for posterity, especially when the women come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Recognising a significant gap in the AWAP register, I applied for an Ian Maclean Award to locate records relating to migrant women’s experiences in Australia, hoping to uncover historical voices that have gone unheard.

At the start of the project I set off on a paper chase, determined to find the hard evidence of these voices through the relevant archival material. I wanted to find organisational papers relating to the experience of migrant women in Australia, particularly those who arrived as part of the great post-war wave of migration, and especially those who rode that wave into the 1970s to become active in feminist and multicultural politics.

My holy grail was the papers of the first organisation established for migrant women, the Australian-Migrant Women’s Association. I’ve seen this organisation referred to in a couple of places and thought that any archival material that remained would provide evidence of an interesting historical problem: the complex relationship between feminist and multicultural politics that emerged in the 1970s. What I hoped to find were records like this across Australia that documented the moments when culturally and linguistically diverse women placed themselves on the national agenda.

However, as more women spoke to me about their involvement in organisations, I was forced to question the importance of that paper chase. The key problem I grappled with was that the women themselves often considered the papers to be relatively unimportant. This is not to say that they think the organisations were unimportant – far from it! It simply means that, in their view, the papers don’t record the things that made the organisations important. They don’t record the memories of sisterhood, the telephone conversations when deals were done, the goodwill that existed between government and non-government organisations and the erosion of that goodwill over time. What these women said, then and now, is very often more important than what they put down on paper.

Because of this attitude, I grew less interested in the paper chase and more interested in the problem of how we record an archive out of personal memories and reflections, how we represent this archive, how we make it accessible, and importantly, how we can make it credible in the eyes of the historical and archival community. Over time, I became more engrossed with the issue of allowing women to represent themselves on their own terms, to speak for themselves.

So, even though I was still interested in the Australian-Migrant Women’s Association, finding the people who could tell me about it became more important than locating its paper records. I did eventually locate the whereabouts of the Association’s records. Along the way, however, and with tape recorder in hand, I’ve begun to document the networks that governed the highly charged and interconnected worlds of feminist and multicultural politics.

Women’s voices are crucial to this story, such as that of Beryl Mulder. Beryl, a Dutch migrant who arrived in Australia in the 1980s, was one of the founding members of the first national migrant women’s organisation, the Association of Non-English Speaking Background Women of Australia. She shared with me her marvelous anecdotes about multicultural affairs in Darwin, like the story about the Darwin woman of Greek descent who was elected to a position of authority in the local Greek community. Apparently, one of the first things she did was commit funds to build a veranda around the church so that women could sit in the shade when they weren’t permitted inside, for whatever cultural reasons, and get respite from the Darwin midday sun. The man of the community fought the decision tooth and nail, but this woman’s will prevailed, courtesy of a trip to the Equal Opportunity Commission. The veranda was built, she was voted out of her position at the next election, and now the men sit under the veranda playing cards! Beryl said they’ve howled with laughter about that one for ages! How do I archive that story? Is it destined to disappear because it doesn’t appear in an official archival repository?

Another woman I’ve had the privilege to speak with is Dorothy Buckland-Fuller, a sociologist and activist of Greek heritage. To some degree Dorothy represents an interested audience at a ‘Women in Migration’ conference in Sydney, 1996.


[far right] Department of Immigration photographers snapshot these migrant women at work in a Sydney factory, 1971.


[far right] Department of Immigration photographers snapshot these migrant women at work in a Sydney factory, 1971.

Naa: a1111, 71/16/17

The AWAP biographical register provides the opportunity to give space to migrant women’s voices and to map the often complex relationships among women’s organisations. The register will continue to grow, as other historians and collecting institutions take up the challenge of providing further details and creating new archives. Women’s quiet historical achievements are becoming harder to ignore.

You can read more about the register at www.womenaustralia.info.

Nikki Henningham received her PhD in history from the University of Melbourne, where she is currently employed as the Executive Officer of the Australian Women’s Archives Project. She is currently working on a project investigating the history of Australian women’s sporting culture.
The fall of Saigon, 1975

The date 30 April 2006 was the 31st anniversary of the fall of Saigon, the defeat of the South Vietnamese government that marked the end of the Vietnam War. Distinguished historian and author Dr Peter Edwards presented the inaugural RG Neale Lecture that looked back on the fall of Saigon and the ramifications it had for Australians. Following is an edited version of his lecture.

The refugee question

Perhaps the most obvious resonance is the political lure that developed around people generally described as refugees. In 1975, there was a vigorous public controversy over whether Australia should admit Vietnamese who did not want to live under the victorious communist regime. It is a controversy that has been revisited several times since then.

The Foreign Affairs records show that there were several interlocking issues. Should we admit the small number of Vietnamese people who had worked for the Australian embassy in Saigon? Should we admit South Vietnamese diplomats and other senior officials, located in Canberra or in other regional capitals, where they had represented a government that no longer existed? Should we admit babies and small children from Saigon’s orphanages, for whom there were many Australians willing to become adoptive parents? Or should we admit the substantially greater number of Vietnamese who were fleeing that country in all manner of boats, many far from seaworthy, and arriving in ports like Singapore, from whence they hoped to find safe haven in countries such as Australia?

The Foreign Affairs records provide much of the background story to these public debates. We see the department preparing, and sometimes modifying, its advice to the Government as new developments emerged daily. We see that the real maker of Australian policy was the Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, rather than the Foreign Minister, Senator Don Wilkes, or Immigration Minister, Clyde Cameron. We see Whitlam issuing edicts and instructions from one capital after another because, as so often, he was travelling overseas at the time this crisis arose. And we see the Australian ambassador in Saigon, Geoffrey Price, caught between horrific political and moral pressures, while he and his staff struggled to operate in a capital facing imminent defeat and while he tried to comply with instructions from Canberra that in many cases he thought were shameful, contradictory or impossible to achieve. We see the embassy finally obliged to close down, ironically on Anzac Day, the 60th anniversary of Australia’s most celebrated military campaign.

How do we in 2006 read these documents created more than 30 years ago? We are now conscious of the events of 2001 surrounding the MV Tampa and the ‘certain maritime incident’ better known as the ‘children overboard’ affair. With that in mind, we see the irony of a Labor Prime Minister taking a hard line against asylum-seekers, while a Liberal Opposition Leader proclaims this attitude to be hard-hearted and shameful. It is as if we can hear those familiar words, ‘We will determine who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come’, being uttered in Gough Whitlam’s unmistakable tones.

These points have been made before, but I wonder if we have fully understood the effect that the Vietnam refugee issue had on domestic politics. The ‘loans affair’ and subsequent crisis that led to the dismissal of the Whitlam Government were matters of domestic policy, but the Government’s authority had relied heavily on its record in foreign policy. The Vietnam War in particular had allowed Labor to present itself as the party that best understood world, and especially Asian, affairs. But the refugee issue, and other controversies surrounding the fall of Saigon, removed much of that authority. Now it was the Liberals, led by Malcolm Fraser, a former Minister for the Army and Minister for Defence during the war, who were claiming the moral high ground.

There is a wider sense in which Australians in 2006 look at these events with different eyes from those at the time. We are now aware that Australia did indeed accept many ‘boat people’ and later a more orderly system of immigration from Indochina. We know that today Australia has a substantial population of people of Indochinese origin. This has an undoubted influence on the way in which we look back at the Vietnam War. In 2006, many newspapers devoted extensive coverage to the 50th anniversary of the fall of Saigon. What was strikingly different in this coverage, compared with similar exercises soon after the war, was the impact made by Australians of Vietnamese origin. Individuals and their families told their stories, and in the process wove a new strand into the fabric of the Australian national narrative. We now see veterans of the former South Vietnamese army marching on Anzac Day; we have seen a joint Australian-South Vietnamese memorial opened at the Dandenong RSL in suburban Melbourne. All this has established a new, subordinate but not insignificant, element within Australia’s civil religion: the Anzac legend.

Relationship with Asia

That leads me to mention another sense in which we look back on 1975 with a different perspective. To mark the Centenary of Federation in 2001, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade published a history of Australia’s engagement with Asia during the twentieth century titled Facing North. In this study the mid-1970s, not least the end of the Vietnam War, appears as a turning point, a reorientation of Australia’s approach to its relations with Asia. We can look at one topic in the Foreign Affairs documents of
1975 as a partial record of that reorientation. Then, as so often in the past hundred years, many Australians discussed our relations with Asia. Some asserted that ‘Australia is part of Asia’, but this only prompted further questions. What is ‘Asia’? How well do we understand Asia, and the various political, social and economic forces operating there? During the Vietnam War one aspect of this enduring question was the identity of the enemy. Was it the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) or North Vietnam? Or was Hanoi merely a proxy for either China or the Soviet Union? And what of the National Liberation Front (NLF) of South Vietnam, commonly called the Viet Cong? Was this really an expression of autonomous rebellion in the south, or was it little more than an arm of the DRV in Hanoi?

In the Foreign Affairs documents these issues take the form of debate about the role of the so-called Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam (or PGR), formed by the NLF. There was sharp disagreement even within the Labor Government, with much attention focused on the controversial views of Dr Jim Cairns. Although Cairns was by this time the Deputy Prime Minister, his efforts to give a greater degree of official recognition to the PGR were more in tune with the anti-war movement than with the hard-headed members of his own party.

Cairns was made to appear naive when, a few months after the fall of Saigon, Hanoi brushed aside the PGR, asserting that its claim that the PGR was genuinely independent was just a propaganda tactic, and united the country under the title of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. But while it is easy to point to the readiness of some on the Left to accept the propaganda of the communist side, we should also remember that the conservative coalition had been rightly criticised for its crude oversimplification of the relationship between Hanoi and Beijing. In all, in terms of Australia’s relations with the countries to its north, we should now see the Vietnam War as a sobering and many-faceted lesson in the complexities of engaging with Asia.

Austalian-American alliance

We can draw somewhat similar lessons with respect to the other fundamental plank of Australian foreign and defence policy: the alliance with the United States. Today, we are all too aware that we are once again engaged, as an ally of the US, in a highly controversial military commitment. The comparisons between Iraq and Vietnam have been much discussed since 2003, and the Foreign Affairs documents remind us of both the similarities and the contrasts. Yes, the US is once again involved in a dangerous commitment far from its own shores, running the risk of a humiliating failure to achieve its ends. Such a failure could seriously damage not only its own international standing but also that of its close ally in both views, war. But in Vietnam the US was defending the status quo, and defending a democracy – or at least a regime which, for all its flaws, aspired to democratic respectability and was opposed to the greatest anti-democratic force of the day, militant communism. The US entered the conflict, and remained committed despite the enormous cost in blood and treasure, largely to maintain its reputation as a steadfast ally, a great power that would stand by its commitments to smaller powers that faced major strategic threats. Given the importance of the Australia, New Zealand, United States (ANZUS) Security Treaty commitment to Australian security, that was no small matter for us.

The intervention in Iraq, on the other hand, is an attempt not to defend the status quo but to transform it, an effort not to support an existing alliance commitment or to defend a putative democracy, but to impose democracy and to create a friendly regime by force of arms. The challenge in Iraq is, to put it mildly, rather greater than that in Vietnam.

A shift in strategic policy

This leads me to consider another aspect of Australia’s relations with the world in which the fall of Saigon marked the end of forward defence as a credible doctrine. In the subsequent years Australia developed a new approach, expressed in a series of White Papers on defence from 1976 to 2000. Throughout this quarter-century, behind the White Papers and other official statements, one could often discern the shadows of Saigon in 1975, the images of the helicopters leaving from the roof of the US embassy. The implications were that alliances with great powers carried costs as well as benefits, that we needed to place more emphasis on self-reliance.

In recent years, these strategic doctrines have faced a major challenge, as powerful voices have argued that we must defend not only our territory and our regional interests, but also our liberal democratic values, wherever in the world they may come under attack. I do not wish to enter into that debate here. I just hope that I have said enough about our relations with the US, our relations with our Asian neighbours, and our strategic doctrines to suggest that this is a particularly appropriate time to revisit the events of 1975 and their aftermath, and to reconsider the implications of those events for Australia’s relations with the world in 2006 and beyond.

Dr Peter Edwards AM is currently a Visiting Professor at the University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy. He was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 2001 for his work as official historian of Australia’s involvement in South-East Asian conflicts from 1948 to 1975.

To mark the release of Foreign Affairs documents under the 30-year rule, the National Archives and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade commissioned the annual RG Neale lecture, named in honour of the first Director-General of the Archives, who was also a former Editor of Historical Documents at the Department of Foreign Affairs. You can read Dr Edwards’ speech in full on the National Archives’ website, purchase the booklet for $7.95 online, or hear the podcast downloaded from www.naa.gov.au.
In the interest of national security

During World War II, the Australian Government interned thousands of Australian residents who were considered a security risk. Their stories are featured in a forthcoming book that draws upon the wealth of internment records held in the National Archives’ collection.

Masuko Munakami was one of nine children of Yasuji Munakami, who arrived in Australia in 1897, and Australian-born Shigeno Murata. Alice and Hans Meyer came to Australia in 1938 as refugees from Nazi Germany. After the war, they ran a well-known dance and finishing school in Melbourne and in 1970 offered courses to teach women how to curtsey, in anticipation of the visit of Queen Elizabeth II to Australia. Hungarian news correspondent Emery Barcs also migrated to Australia in 1938. In his long and distinguished career as a journalist, he worked for The Daily Telegraph, the ABC and The Bulletin. Harley Matthews was among the first Australian soldiers to land at Gallipoli on 5 April 1915. He published poems and short stories about his war experiences, and in 1932 established a vineyard at Moorebank near Liverpool in Sydney’s south-west. These five individuals shared one common experience: during World War II, they were deprived of their liberty and interned.

Fifteen thousand interned

During World War II, the Australian Government set up internment camps as a precautionary measure to prevent residents from assisting the enemy, to accommodate people detained overseas by Australia’s allies and to appease public opinion. Government authorities interned about 7000 Australian residents and 8000 people sent to Australia by allied countries.

Civilian internees included ‘enemy aliens’ who had come to Australia from Germany, Italy and Japan, and nations allied with them, naturalised British subjects and Australian-born British nationals suspected of disloyalty. With powers defined by the National Security Act 1939, Commonwealth security services and state police investigated residents who posed a potential security risk. As the war intensified, public pressure to intern all ‘enemy aliens’ grew. Whether an Australian resident was interned depended on a multitude of factors, including their former and current nationality, length of residence in Australia, and their political convictions. Internees themselves rarely knew precisely why they had been interned.

Under suspicion

Alice and Hans Meyer originally settled in Sydney and quickly fell on their feet, establishing a dance school and attracting a clientele drawn from the city’s high society. Friends lent them money, furniture, and even cutlery, to enable them to keep up the pretense of being part of the class whose members frequented the Meyers’ dance and conversation classes. Their lifestyle and the ease with which they were able to attract well-heeled customers led to envy and raised suspicions. On 3 September 1939, the Meyers were interned in separate camps.

Emery Barcs had served as a foreign correspondent in Rome during his pre-war career as a journalist. In Australia he became an enemy alien when Hungary joined the war on the side of Germany, and he was arrested and interned in Liverpool Internment Camp in New South Wales. The security services suspected Barcs of supporting Mussolini during his time in Italy and may have held the fact that he interviewed Hitler in 1934 against him. Harley Matthews was also interned in the camp at Liverpool, suspected of involvement with the Australia First Movement, a nationalist organisation that opposed Australia’s involvement in the war as an ally of the United Kingdom. Matthews’ book of poems, Vintage, was published in 1938 by Percy Stephensen, who became a leader of the Australia First Movement. Matthews
Masako Murakami married her father’s niece, Yoshio Murakami, and they had a son in Darwin in 1938. Like many other Japanese-Australians, the Murakamis were arrested on the day the Japanese invaded Pearl Harbor – 8 December 1941. They were interned at Tatura in Victoria.

Behind barbed wire

Conditions in the internment camps varied according to the personality in charge of the camp, its geographical location and the composition of its population. Some were purpose-built; others established at very short notice. All the purpose-built camps were situated well inland, and internees suffered extremes of heat in summer and bitter cold in winter.

The camps were usually divided into compounds and enclosed by barbed wire fences. Internees lived in tents or barracks, where there was little room for privacy. Life in the camps was structured by meal times and roll calls.

Internees could volunteer for paid work outside the camps, and most took part in a roster system within the camps to perform tasks such as kitchen duties. Notwithstanding work obligations inside and outside the camp, internees usually had an abundance of spare time. Social activities, sports and entertainment such as theatrical performances helped to break the monotony of camp life.

Despite such activities, many internees became depressed. ‘Here we have an agreement with the boys,’ Emery Barcs wrote to his wife, ‘Usually everyone has his “half hour”, several times a day, when one feels rotten. It is the duty of the others to cheer him up. Against his will too.’

The camps were often riddled with factionalism. Anti-fascists and anti-Nazis were interned with followers of Mussolini and Hitler. Refugees from Hitler’s Germany, who considered themselves to be pro-British were accommodated in the same camps as internees loyal to the Nazis.

One internee, Francesco Fantin, was killed because of his anarchist and anti-fascist politics. Fantin was interned at Gaythorne in Queensland in February 1942, but was transferred to Loveday 1AA camp in South Australia, where the majority of internees were Italians loyal to the Mussolini government. In August 1942, Fantin was assaulted when he refused to give the fascist salute. Soon after this incident he wrote to his brother: ‘I must let you know that should I have to suffer violence, or worse, that the blame will be on the fascists.’ He was again assaulted in November and the following day recorded his last will in his diary.

Three days later Fantin was dead. He had been attacked by an Italian fascist from Western Australia, Giovanni Casotti. In March 1943, Casotti was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to two years in prison.

Release

Some internees were released before the war ended and allowed to remain in Australia. A large number of internees, most of them Japanese, were deported after the war.

Alice and Hans Meyer were interned from February 1940, but were not allowed to return to Sydney. In June of that year, Hans was re-interred, first in the Liverpool Internment Camp and then Tatura in Victoria, where he was part of a small group of German and Austrian-born internees who strongly objected to being interned with Nazis. Alice moved to Melbourne so that she could regularly visit her husband. At the end of 1942, Hans was transferred to Loveday in South Australia, making it impossible for Alice to see her husband.

In 1943, Alice Meyer was recognised as a refugee alien. She spent much of her energy trying to effect her husband’s release, corresponding with Arthur Calwell (Minister for Information and later Immigration Minister), Dr Herbert Evatt (Attorney-General) and others. Security services, however, were not easily swayed – not even by the news that Hans’ father had been imprisoned in the infamous Fuhlsbüttel concentration camp in Germany. Hans was finally released on 21 February 1944.

Emery Barcs spent 10 weeks in internment. After his release, he resumed his work as a journalist, writing political commentaries that were broadcast by the ABC. In March 1942 he enlisted in the Australian Army and was assigned to the Third Employment Company. He applied to be naturalised in 1945, and the following year he handed in his Hungarian passport and swore allegiance to His Majesty King George VI. In his memoirs he describes how he had ‘struck roots in an alien soil’, even though he remained a Hungarian at heart.

After his release on 12 September 1942, Harley Matthews began a protracted struggle to clear his name and obtain compensation. He told Prime Minister John Curtin: ‘No amount of money can repay me for the agony arising from the knowledge that the continued imprisonment following the Minister’s allegations was the cause of my mother’s death on 28 August, 1942; nor for the humiliation at being told I might go to her funeral under an armed escort, and I am an original Anzac.’

A royal commission was held to inquire into the internment of people connected with the Australia First Movement. On 5 September 1945, Commissioner Thomas Cyne submitted his report, which exonerated Matthews without reservations. The former soldier was paid £700 in compensation.

In the interest of National Security

In the interest of National Security provides a guide to the records the National Archives holds about civilians interned in Australia during World War II. We also hold records relating to Australian civilians who were interned overseas. Christina Twomey, the 2004 winner of the Margaret George Award, researched the experiences of Australian civilians interned by the Japanese during World War II. You can read about her research on our website: www.naa.gov.au/about_us/christinatwomey.html.
The politician and the media mogul: JOSEPH LYONS, KEITH MURDOCH AND THE ‘LEAKED CABLES’ AFFAIR

In 1931, Canberra was rocked by a news story involving leaked cables, a political rift and allegations of treachery. Dr Nick Richardson, a 2005–06 Margaret George Award winner, researched the relationship between Prime Minister Joseph Lyons and media proprietor Keith Murdoch. He uncovered tantalising evidence that provides insights into the political scandal involving the politician and the media mogul.

Scullin, was stuck between Caucus demands for a radical economic solution to the nation’s woes, and a more cautious recipe for refinancing Australian debt. Towards the end of 1930, Scullin travelled to London to attempt to renegotiate Australian loans. He left Joseph (Joe) Lyons, the former Tasmanian Premier, as Treasurer and James Fenton as acting Prime Minister. Scullin knew he was leaving a divided Labor Caucus. The divisions were clear to see, on display in Parliament and the daily press. But it took Joe Alexander to expose how bitter the divisions were.

Lyons' defence that some of the cables had been obtained, it appears obvious that their disclosure was made in a clandestine manner and then passing the text of the cables on to the Herald representative.

Lyons' defence that some of the cables had been obtained in March of that year, Alexander found himself in Canberra at the time. But today, if he is casting around for someone his party could be that man.

He was the pre-eminent journalist of his era and the daily press. But it took Joe Alexander to expose how bitter the divisions were.

By early 1931, Alexander's boss, Keith Murdoch, was starting to share his interest in the career of Joe Lyons. Murdoch had lost faith in Scullin as Australia's leader and he was casting around for someone his newspapers could support to lead Australia out of the Depression. Lyons, it seemed to Murdoch, could be that man.

In March of that year, Alexander found himself with a story that was emblematic of Labor's problems. It was, in newspaper terminology, a great story and a big scoop. More than 60 years later, a team of academics and journalists at Melbourne's RMIT University voted it one of Australian journalism's best stories of the twentieth century. Its consequences were far-reaching for everyone involved. The story came about because of a leak, but the impact was not so much in what was leaked, but in the very act itself.

Alexander came into possession of some decoded cables that Scullin had sent from England to Lyons and Fenton several months before. The cables displayed, in withering detail, the divisions within Caucus, and Scullin's own difficulty in reconciling the opposing forces within his party. They were damning documents. Scullin was appointed – and more than a little embarrassed – at the leak and told Parliament the day after the cables story was published that it was 'information procured by vile treachery.' It was no surprise then, that the search for the person responsible for leaking the cables became a criminal matter. The Attorney-General, Frank Brennan, directed the police to investigate. The final police report is held in the Archives and paints an intriguing picture of the events. Most interesting of all, the report leaves some tantalising questions about Lyons' involvement unanswered.

The investigation was inconclusive about the source of the leak, but the investigating officer had no doubt from where the cables originated. He concluded:

In the post-election euphoria, Alexander catered to his diary: Everyone is saying in Canberra that I have put Lyons in as Prime Minister. It is more than half true.' Perhaps the saddest element of such sentiments is that, three generations later, no one remembers Alexander or his scoop as being a momentous political event. But the archives show that, for several weeks at least, there was no other story in Canberra. Dr Nick Richardson is a senior associate in the Journalism Program at RMIT University and is a journalist for News Ltd in Melbourne.

Alexander initially suffered for his scoop. The House of Representatives barred him from the chamber for four months and he narrowly avoided a similar fate in the Senate. His reward came later, when Lyons led the new-born United Australia Party to victory in the 1931 federal election, riding a wave of positive support from the Herald. In the post-election euphoria, Alexander confided to his diary: Everyone is saying in Canberra that I have put Lyons in as Prime Minister. It is more than half true.' Perhaps the saddest element of such sentiments is that, three generations later, no one remembers Alexander or his scoop as being a momentous political event. But the archives show that, for several weeks at least, there was no other story in Canberra. Dr Nick Richardson is a senior associate in the Journalism Program at RMIT University and is a journalist for News Ltd in Melbourne.

In 1931, Canberra was rocked by a news story involving leaked cables, a political rift and allegations of treachery. Dr Nick Richardson, a 2005–06 Margaret George Award winner, researched the relationship between Prime Minister Joseph Lyons and media proprietor Keith Murdoch. He uncovered tantalising evidence that provides insights into the political scandal involving the politician and the media mogul.

The best mysteries are never solved. We can go on wondering for generations about the motives and actions of the main players. Seventy-five years ago, Canberra was transfixed by one such mystery, a series of events that ushered in one of the most turbulent periods in Australian politics. Deep in the National Archives' collection are some of the documents that shed light on the turbulent periods in Australian politics. Deep in the National Archives' collection are some of the documents that shed light on the motives and actions of the main players.

But today, if he is casting around for someone his party could be that man.

Lyons' defence that some of the cables had been obtained, it appears obvious that their disclosure was made in a clandestine manner and then passing the text of the cables on to the Herald representative.

Lyons' defence that some of the cables had been obtained, it appears obvious that their disclosure was made in a clandestine manner and then passing the text of the cables on to the Herald representative.

By early 1931, Alexander's boss, Keith Murdoch, was starting to share his interest in the career of Joe Lyons. Murdoch had lost faith in Scullin as Australia's leader and he was casting around for someone his newspapers could support to lead Australia out of the Depression. Lyons, it seemed to Murdoch, could be that man.

In March of that year, Alexander found himself with a story that was emblematic of Labor's problems. It was, in newspaper terminology, a great story and a big scoop. More than 60 years later, a team of academics and journalists at Melbourne's RMIT University voted it one of Australian journalism's best stories of the twentieth century. Its consequences were far-reaching for everyone involved. The story came about because of a leak, but the impact was not so much in what was leaked, but in the very act itself.

Alexander came into possession of some decoded cables that Scullin had sent from England to Lyons and Fenton several months before. The cables displayed, in withering detail, the divisions within Caucus, and Scullin's own difficulty in reconciling the opposing forces within his party. They were damning documents. Scullin was appointed – and more than a little embarrassed – at the leak and told Parliament the day after the cables story was published that it was 'information procured by vile treachery.' It was no surprise then, that the search for the person responsible for leaking the cables became a criminal matter. The Attorney-General, Frank Brennan, directed the police to investigate. The final police report is held in the Archives and paints an intriguing picture of the events. Most interesting of all, the report leaves some tantalising questions about Lyons' involvement unanswered.

The investigation was inconclusive about the source of the leak, but the investigating officer had no doubt from where the cables originated. He concluded:

In the post-election euphoria, Alexander catered to his diary: Everyone is saying in Canberra that I have put Lyons in as Prime Minister. It is more than half true.' Perhaps the saddest element of such sentiments is that, three generations later, no one remembers Alexander or his scoop as being a momentous political event. But the archives show that, for several weeks at least, there was no other story in Canberra. Dr Nick Richardson is a senior associate in the Journalism Program at RMIT University and is a journalist for News Ltd in Melbourne.
For centuries, the world’s great writers and artists have used iron gall ink to produce their masterpieces, and some very significant legal and political documents have been written with it. However, the ink itself has the potential to cause deterioration of these precious works, as National Archives conservators Caroline Whitley and Alana Lee explain.

In 1900 at Windsor Castle, Queen Victoria put her signature to the Royal Commission of Assent, Australia’s ‘birth certificate’. The monarch signed her name with iron gall ink, the same ink with which the document was written. Like many other historic artworks, illuminated manuscripts, maps, musical scores and official documents, the Royal Commission of Assent is endangered because of deterioration of its ink.

Conservators at the National Archives are carrying out research to better understand the damage that iron gall ink can cause, as part of a study co-funded by the Australian Research Council, Canberra’s universities and Australian cultural institutions.

From the late Middle Ages until the early twentieth century, iron gall ink was the favoured writing and drawing ink in the western world. Most often used on paper or parchment (a writing material made from animal skin), it was indelible compared to earlier inks such as carbon, bistre and sepia. Its use ranged from everyday letter writing to the works of Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Bach, Hugo and van Gogh.

There were hundreds of recipes and various methods of preparation for iron gall ink. Originally, the ink was simply made in the home, artist’s studio or monastery. The basic ingredients were crushed oak galls (small spherical growths containing tannins), iron sulfate (naturally occurring in rust, run-off from iron mines or extracted from rusty iron nails), gum arabic (resin from the Acacia tree) and a liquid (some that were used included water, beer, wine and urine). These ingredients were used in varying proportions. For added gloss or variation of colour and tone, other compounds or dyes were sometimes added, such as Brazilwood or pomegranate skins. Depending on local tradition, the ink solution was simply mixed and boiled, and sometimes left to ferment. The resulting ink was acidic because the chemical process that formed the black colour also produced sulfuric acid. By the nineteenth century, iron gall inks were also being scientifically formulated and sold commercially by ink manufacturers in an effort to standardise their quality.

The ink’s perceived permanence was one of the reasons why it was used to write legal documents and official government records. Despite this attribute, the ink has inherent problems that affect paper and parchment differently because paper is cellulose based and parchment protein based. Some iron gall inks have a corrosive nature over time, creating a brown halo around the ink lines and at worst effectively eating their way through the support, creating a lace-like effect. On parchment, flaking of the ink may also occur. Additionally, many of the inks have a tendency to change colour from black to brown over time, and often fade quite significantly.

Worldwide, many documents, manuscripts and artworks are in danger of severe deterioration due to iron gall ink, while others are in excellent condition. This suggests that the particular ink compositions, the type of support used and the conditions in which the documents have been stored may contribute to their deterioration.

Conservators at the National Archives are focusing their research on the deterioration of the ink on parchment, the material used almost exclusively for the valuable Federation documents held in the National Archives’ collection, including the Royal Commission of Assent.

Queen Victoria presented the Commission of Assent to Prime Minister Barton, along with the table, pen and inkwell she had used in the official signing. These were brought out to Australia soon after the signing in 1900. For decades, the Assent was on public display at Parliament House under varying, unregulated environmental conditions that included natural and artificial lighting. The National Archives became custodian of the Assent in 1988. When conservators thoroughly examined the document, they discovered it had suffered several forms of deterioration.

Queen Victoria’s signature in the top left corner had faded to a pale brown colour. The body of the text had also faded and suffered some flaking of the ink. Some of the text had been overwritten, and conservators detected the presence of several different inks.

Since 2001, the document has been on public display in the Federation Gallery under strict preservation conditions, which include regulated temperature and humidity and low lighting levels from non-ultraviolet light sources. Our research will help prevent any future light induced fading of the Federation documents on display. We have constructed devices based on the lighting used in the Federation Gallery, which accelerate any effects of this lighting on samples of iron gall ink on parchment. The results will help us determine whether this current lighting could induce fading of various iron gall ink documents and if so, in what timeframe. We are also looking at ways to identify the inks, and are studying the damaging hydrolysis and oxidation processes they are believed to cause to their parchment supports.

The National Archives is playing an important role in the worldwide investigation of this emblematic ink. Our conservators are in close contact with European researchers studying the deterioration of iron gall ink on paper supports, so we can learn from each other’s research. An understanding of the damage iron gall ink has the potential to cause is essential to help us preserve the Royal Commission of Assent and other precious documents.
Charles Lane Poole was a well-connected English academic family. He was educated in a secondary school in Dublin, but lost his left hand in a shooting accident when he was 19. Instead of continuing with engineering, he secured a place at the prestigious French National Forestry School, L’École Nationale des Éaux et Forêts. His interest in forestry was piqued by travel to Western Australia with his family in 1887.

To Africa

Charles Lane Poole was born in 1865 into a well-connected English academic family. He started studying engineering in Dublin, but lost his left hand in a shooting accident when he was 19. Instead of continuing with engineering, he secured a place at the prestigious French National Forestry School, L’École Nationale des Éaux et Forêts. He graduated in 1906 and was sent to South Africa, where he was made a district forester in the Transvaal Province at only 22 years of age. He worked hard there to restore its depleted forests, but disagreed with the government’s policies and resigned. It was not the last time he would disagree with his government employers.

The Colonial Office then sent him to Sierra Leone on Africa’s ‘Fever Coast’. His small field notebooks, now held in the National Library of Australia, give a picture of his work there. With little help and in spite of bouts of malaria, he drafted forest legislation, set up the Forestry Department, laid out the first forest reserves, established nurseries, plantations and an arboretum, and collected herbarium specimens, some of which were new to science.

While on leave in 1911, Charles married Irish-born Ruth Polketon (who in later years designed the interiors of the Lodge and the Governor-General’s residence in Canberra). She did not return with him to Sierra Leone. Charles did not believe that the tropics were ‘places for white women’. The couple spent many of the early years of their marriage on opposite sides of the world.

Early career in Western Australia

Following his stint in Africa, Charles Lane Poole came to Australia in 1916 to take up a role as Western Australia’s Conservator of Forests, in which he was charged with putting forestry on a proper footing. It was a step up in his career, and it enabled him to set up home with his wife and daughter for the first time. State archives, parliamentary papers and debates, and published reports tell of five years of intense activity. He drafted a new Forests Act and saw it passed in the face of strong opposition from the timber industry and unions. He reorganised the Forestry Department, started long-term planning for sustained timber yields, established arboretums and arranged for herbarium specimens to be collected across the state. Nationally, he argued that Australia should set up its own school to train forest officers – he never imagined that he would be called to run it – and internationally he took a prominent part in the First British Empire Forestry Conference held in London in 1920.

In 1921, Charles abruptly ended his flourishing and energetic career in Western Australia. The State Government would neither heed his advice against renewing forest concessions to a timber company, nor would it declare the state forests he wanted. He resigned in protest. Ruth returned to her home country of Ireland while Charles was in Papua. The Western Australian Senator, George Pearce, put a case to Prime Minister Stanley Bruce that the Commonwealth needed its own forester, and recommended Charles Lane Poole as the best man for the job.

Charles was appointed the Commonwealth’s Forestry Adviser in 1925. He led the Commonwealth Government’s involvement in forestry through the Depression of the 1930s and World War II, but never had adequate funds or staff. He also found it extremely difficult to build cooperative relationships with the states at a sensitive time in Commonwealth-state relations. Charles’ insistence on university-level training for forest officers in the Australian Forestry School, his intolerance of state counterparts without such qualifications and, at times, his abrasive manner, polarised opinions about him. He even referred to one of his state counterparts as ‘Australian forestry’s enemy No. 1’. In 1938 he submitted a case to the Royal Commission on the Constitution that Australia’s forests should be a national, rather than a state, responsibility. Needless to say, this did nothing to endear him to his state counterparts.

Despite these difficulties, Charles energetically pursued his vision for a national approach to forest management. He was far-sighted and realised that uncontrolled grazing in the mountain catchments of the Murray River was causing erosion that might silt up the new Hume Reservoir on the river near Albury. A reconnaissance survey was needed, but it was not until 1931 that Charles could get a research officer, Ballard Byles, to do the work on a shoestring budget, and then only on the New South Wales side, as Victoria would not agree.

Charles Lane Poole retired in 1945 and died in 1970. The picture that emerges from archives in Australia, Ireland and France, and from discussions with those who knew him, is that of an energetic, committed and sometimes controversial man. His interest in forestry took him around the world and his zealous principles at times brought him into conflict with employers and colleagues. His commitment to the cause of scientific forestry and the conservation of forest resources has ensured his place in the history of Australian forestry.

You can read more about Charles and Ruth Lane Poole on the National Archives’ Uncommon Lives website: uncommonlives.naa.gov.au.
The National Archives’ Digital Preservation team provides an update on their innovative approach to preserving valuable digital archives.

More than 30 years ago the then Australian Archives accepted the transfer of about 600,000 computer tapes from the Bureau of Mineral Resources, substantially boosting its fledgling digital collection. The tapes recorded underwater explosions that occurred during petroleum exploration surveys in Australian coastal territory. By transferring these tapes to the Archives, the Australian Government intended to secure the long-term preservation and future use of a rich store of geophysical data. What a rarity these computer tapes were in the sea of Australian Government paper records. Digital records are no longer a rarity.

Recently, the National Archives has taken in digital records in a wide array of formats: desktops formats such as Microsoft Word and Excel, image formats such as JPEGs, web files like HTML, and audio and video formats. The challenge for creators and users of digital records around the world has been how to maintain unlimited and perpetual access to these digital records. The technical challenges, combined with an environment where hardware and software are rapidly changing and often proprietary, have required the Archives to explore new ways to preserve and maintain access to digital material.

Introducing Xena 3.0 Lite

The Archives has developed an innovative approach to meet this challenge. A prototype digital archive is now successfully preserving digital records. A key part of digital preservation is software created by the National Archives, called Xena (XML Electronic Normalising of Archives).

Launched in June 2006, Xena 3.0 Lite is an easy-to-use and practical software tool that can convert digital data, such as office documents, into open file formats suited to long-term preservation. The open formats have full specifications that are publicly documented.

Using openly documented file formats means that records don’t have to be migrated to new formats in the future because new software can be created to view the records. In contrast, if closed formats become obsolete the records will become inaccessible because the hardware and software required to access them will no longer be available. The approach that the Archives has adopted means that a digital record only needs to be migrated (saved) once, and can then be deposited for long-term storage in the digital archive.

The digital preservation process is supported by a state-of-the-art facility comprising a digital archive and a separate research laboratory for staff. These facilities ensure a secure and stable environment for the long-term preservation of digital records.

Testing the prototype

The field of digital preservation is still in its infancy. Archival institutions across the world are taking a range of approaches, and have the opportunity to learn from each other as they develop and test a variety of solutions. In the meantime, the National Archives is confident that it has developed one of the best prototypes in the world, building real software and real computer systems, and processing real records.

While the Archives has a working digital preservation process and a live digital archive, there are still testing times ahead. Following the successful processing and storage of digital records from several Australian Government agencies, the Archives’ digital archive is about to undergo a more rigorous and formal testing process. This will be done using an audit checklist developed by the Research Libraries Group and the National Archives and Records Administration in the United States. After the certification process, the digital archive will be considered open for business, and transfers of government digital records will be part of the day-to-day work of the Archives.

New training course

The National Archives recently revamped its training course for new records managers in the Commonwealth public service, and launched a new one-day workshop, Introduction to Recordkeeping in the APS. This course replaces Training for Commonwealth Recordkeepers, the popular course that the Archives provided to both agency and contractor staff across Australia since 2000. The course content has been updated to reflect new National Archives’ procedures and the current recordkeeping environment in the Australian Public Service.

The workshop provides a mix of the how and why of good recordkeeping, with an emphasis on the practical skills records managers need. It covers sentencing and transferring records, retrieving inactive records for reference purposes, and the basics of preserving and caring for records. Much of the day is dedicated to giving participants practical experience, with exercises on sentencing, creating good metadata, and handling records.

Recent attendees have praised the course, with one person commenting that the ‘exercises were really good and challenging – overall the course is informative and practical.’ Another attendee reported that it was ‘a great start for a new person in this field.’

Introduction to Recordkeeping in the APS will be offered in Canberra on the following dates in 2007: 7 February, 15 March, 24 May and 25 July.

Training will be held in other capital cities subject to demand. You can find details of all National Archives’ training courses on the training calendar (see www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping).

Driving safely at Defence

National Archives Director-General Ross Gibbs recently co-launched a new e-learning training program with Department of Defence Secretary Ric Smith to help Defence staff keep good records. Road to Record Management Success was developed by the Defence Records Management Policy unit and is aimed at improving the recordkeeping of all staff in the department. The program is partly based on the Archives’ training package, Keep the Knowledge, which outlines what every Australian Government employee should know about recordkeeping.

At the launch, Ric Smith spoke about his personal passion for records management and recalled his early days working in the public sector when Sir Paul Hasluck, then Minister for External Affairs, encouraged all new graduates to spend at least three months in the registry, or recordkeeping area. Mr Smith told the audience that Sir Paul used to argue that the quality of the records it kept was one of the things that distinguished the public service from private business and other organisations.

Ross Gibbs spoke of the importance of senior executives leading the way in emphasising how important good records management is to their organisations. He also said that it was up to all personnel to take responsibility for creating and managing records. This is where Road to Record Management Success plays an important role.

The Director-General commended the efforts of the Department of Defence in customising the training, saying that it was more likely that departmental staff would take the messages on board and embed good recordkeeping in daily business practice.
News in brief

VRROOM WINS AWARD

Photo: courtesy Australian Publishers Association

For the first time, a podcasting service is being provided by the National Archives, through a funds grant from the Australian Government and the Australian Publishers Association. The award, presented to the Archives by the ABA’s Director-General Ross Gibbs, was for the Vrroom, Vrroom, Vrroom website, which was recognised at the Vrroom, Vrroom awards for education and websites. Ross is pictured above with the website team. Ross is pictured above with the Mc at the awards.

NEW SOUNDS AND NEW SIGHTS ON OUR WEBSITE

The National Archives is set to launch an audio podcasting service. The pilot podcast – available now – is the inaugural RO Neal Lecture, in which Dr Peter Edwards discusses the fall of Saigon in 1975. On 1 January 2007, records of the 1976 Cabinet will be released to the public for the first time. By subscribing to our podcast service, you can hear archives director Jim Stokes talking about the key decisions of Malcolm Fraser’s 1976 Cabinet. As the program reaps up, the Archives will be podcasting audio gems from the collection and interviews with people about their favourite records. To subscribe to the podcast service, or to find out more about podcasting, see www.naa.gov.au/podcast.html.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AWARD WINNERS

The National Archives is pleased to announce this year’s grants and fellowships winners. The 2006-07 Frederick Watson Fellowship was awarded to Pip Devinson, from the Australian National University’s Centre for Cross-Cultural Research. She will be researching the Yorkula film project, which commenced in 1969 when the Commonwealth Film Unit asked ethnographic film-maker Ian Dunlop to document the impact of bauxite mining on a remote Aboriginal community at Yorkula on the Gove Peninsula. Ms Devinson worked with Ian Dunlop on these films as a research assistant, sound recordist and production assistant. Dr Melanie Oppenheimer, a Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Western Sydney, was awarded the Margaret George Award for 2006-07. She will use the award to research the National Archives’ holdings on volunteering since 1945. Meanwhile, the winners of the 2006 Ian Maclean Award, Steven Miller and Eileen Chanin (pictured above), have commenced their project to recover the neglected archival records of Australia’s art schools. The Ian Maclean Award is given annually to provide individuals with paid opportunities to conduct research that will benefit the archival profession.

SEARCH PASSENGER LISTS ONLINE

Did you travel to Australia by ship between 1924 and 1947? If you did, you may well be in the National Archives’ collection! The National Archives holds the passenger lists for ships arriving at all ports of Australia from Britain, Europe, Asia, New Zealand and the Pacific, between 1924 and 1964. The lists were required by the Department of Customs and recorded the ship name, the names and ages of passengers, where they embarked, their nationality and occupation, and the date and port of arrival. Once Customs no longer needed them, the lists were passed on to the Bureau of Census and Statistics to be used for census information. They were then transferred to the National Archives. The passenger lists for most voyages are now registered in RecordSearch, the Archives’ collection database. It was a big job – one staff member working on the lists said the task at first ‘felt like the Titanic, the largest of its class!’ To search for a record of your arrival, or that of a family member or friend, you will need some information about the voyage – such as the name of the ship and the month and year of arrival. You can then enter this information in the keyword search field of RecordSearch. Also enter ‘0007’ in the reference number field, to identify the passenger list for this voyage. You can find RecordSearch on our home page (www.naa.gov.au). Click the RecordSearch button on the left. Passenger lists in this collection can be viewed in the National Archives’ Canberra Reading Room. You can also request that a digital image of the list be placed online through RecordSearch. Alternatively, you can purchase photocopies of passenger lists for both ship and aircraft arrivals before 1975. Contact our National Reference Service by telephone (1300 886 881), in writing (PO Box 7425, Canberra Business Centre, ACT 2610) or by email: ref@nla.gov.au.

BOMBERS IN THE ARCHIVES!

Now on display in Canberra is a colourful collection of World War II propaganda posters by commercial artist James Northfield. During the war, Northfield was commissioned by the Beaufort Division of the Department of Aircraft Production to help motivate workers in their factories. In 1939, the Australian Government embarked on an ambitious program to mass-produce Beaufort aircraft for the Royal Australian Air Force. Seven hundred Beauforts were produced to help counter the Japanese threat in the Pacific, and the entire project is recognised as Australia’s largest and most complex wartime industrial venture. Eighty per cent of those employed had no previous factory experience, and more than one-third were women. The Beaufort posters urged workers to do their best for the war effort. ‘There is no absenteeism in the firing line. Let there be none in our production line’, reads one poster. Another poster shows Australian soldiers trapped behind barbed wire, closely guarded by Japanese troops. It reads, ‘I am convinced that Beauforts can pave the way to freedom for our Australian sons.’
Faces at the Archives

Sophie Stokes, former indexer with the Archives’ Bringing Them Home indexing project, and Jim Anderson, guest at the launch of Tracking Family. This guide to Aboriginal records relating to the Northern Territory will assist people who were separated from their families and communities to re-establish contact with them.

Businessman, aviator and adventurer, Dick Smith AO, launched the visiting photo: Jonathan Jones photo: donal raethel

indexing project, and Sophie Stokes, honorary antarctic ambassador and former governor of Tasmania, introduced the seminar, and is pictured with the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

As part of the Antarctic Tasmania Midwinter Festival, the National Archives’ Tasmanian office held a seminar on the Antarctic Treaty at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. Sir Guy Green, Tasmania’s honorary Antarctic Ambassador and former Governor of Tasmania, introduced the seminar, and is pictured with Bill Bleathman, Director of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (left), and Natasha Slicer of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources.

Mandy Gilder, the Deputy Chief-Archivist from the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa, speaking with National Archives Deputy Director-General, James Barr. Delegates from several South African archives recently visited the National Archives in Canberra and Sydney to learn more about our buildings, facilities and operations, as they begin to construct new archives buildings in South Africa.

National Archives Director-General Ross Gibbs (left) and Murray Green, Acting Managing Director of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, signed the ABC’s Records Disposal Authority (RDA) in Sydney on 6 June 2006. The RDA will help determine which records from the ABC will be kept as national archives. Many iconic programs will be retained under these guidelines, such as Live at the Wireless, Foreign Correspondent and Kath and Kim.

EXHIBITIONS

Memory of a Nation: Discover the National Archives of Australia (see article on page 3)
National Archives, Canberra Opete March 2007

Antarctic Views by Hurley and Ponting
National Archives, Canberra 7 March to 17 June 2007

It’s a Dog’s Life: Animals in the Public Service
Lady Denman Heritage Complex, Huskisson, NSW 4 May to 1 July 2007

Just Add Water: Schemes and Dreams for a Sunburnt Country
Melbourne Museum 13 October 2006 to 28 January 2007
National Wool Museum, Geelong, VIC 9 February to 8 April 2007 Gladstone Regional Art Gallery and Museum, QLD 21 April to 1 July 2007

EXHIBITIONS

EVENTS

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Memory of a Nation. A series of events – talks, seminars and tours – will accompany the opening of our new exhibition in March 2007. See and hear about the many unique and irreplaceable objects from the Archives’ collection on display. Check our website www.naa.gov.au and the Saturday Canberra newspaper for details.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Archives reading room. Open the third Saturday of every month, 9am–1pm. Seminars at National Archives in Sydney, 9–10am. Bookings essential (07) 3249 4226.

QUEENSLAND

Archives reading room. Open the third Saturday of every month, 9am–1pm. Seminars at National Archives in Brisbane, 9–10am. Bookings essential (08) 9470 7500.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA


TASMANIA

At our Hobart Office Maritime Seminar on Ship Records in the National Archives Collection, in association with the Biennial Australian Wooden Boats Festival, 3 February, 12:30–1:30pm. Seminar on Tasmanian Built Heritage at Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston, 22 April 2007, 1–4.30pm, held jointly by the National Archives, the Museum and other cultural institutions. Contact (03) 6230 6111.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Introduction to the National Archives (seminar includes tour of building), at our Perth office, 21 February, 10:30am. Records from the Postmaster General’s Department (seminar includes tour of building), at our Perth office, 16 May, 10:30am. Bookings essential (08) 9470 7500.

WHAT’S ON AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

From March 2007, all National Archives events and exhibitions Australia wide will be listed on our webpage (www.naa.gov.au).

Just click on ‘What’s on’ for the latest information.
Members of the last party of the 2nd Light Horse Brigade to leave the trenches at Gallipoli, December 1915. A photographer’s signature in the lower right corner identifies the setting as Cairo, 1916.

The regiments of the 2nd Light Horse Brigade served across the Middle East and returned to Australia in 1919.