J.D. Somerville

After the Walk-off

Pioneer Recording Technique

Oral History Course at UniSA
The Objectives of the OHAA: To promote the practice and methods of oral history; to educate in the use of oral history methods; to encourage discussion on all aspects of oral history; and to foster the preservation of oral history records in Australia.

Committee: June Edwards (President), Catherine Manning (Secretary/Membership Secretary), Sally Stephenson (Treasurer), Alison McDougall (WOM Editor), Catherine Murphy (Handbook Distribution), Madeleine Regan, Karen George, Tonia Eldridge (Oral History Program Coordinator, State Library of South Australia)

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Please send contributions (if possible) by email via www.ohaa-sa.com.au or on disc to The Editor, Word of Mouth, at the above address.

The views expressed in Word of Mouth are not necessarily those of the Oral History Association of Australia (South Australian Branch) Inc.


Cover photograph:
President’s Report March 2013
by June Edwards

Since our AGM last August the Branch committee has run a workshop at the State Library of South Australia. On 1 November 2012, fifteen people registered and it was held upstairs in the library. People came from universities, local history groups, family history, gay history, the Migration Museum, CraftSouth and the Morris Car Club. It was a diverse and talkative group so the workshop was beneficial for all who came along.

Other than the workshop the main concern has been the conference in Adelaide planned for September 2013:

The Oral History Association of Australia, History SA and the University of South Australia (UniSA) will jointly host this conference, which will bring together professional, academic, community and oral historians. The conference will feature a range of themes relating to contested histories; memory, technology and new developments in oral history; urban history, and Indigenous history. We hope the conference will also consider history and the future.

The conference will be held at the University of South Australia, City West Campus, Adelaide, South Australia.

You have all been sent the Call for Papers which closed on 11 March 2013 so I hope lots of you have put in proposals! We also hope you like the logo.

Rina has a PhD in Romance Languages and Literatures-Spanish, from UC Berkeley. She is Professor of Oral History, Literature and Latina/o Studies at California State University Monterey Bay. Her areas of research include oral history and life story; narrative and identity; and digital storytelling. She is co-author of Migration and Identity (Transaction Books, 2005), Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios (Duke 2001), and Latino Cultural Citizenship (Beacon, 1997), and oral history articles on Puerto Rican women and migration, and first generation Latino college students. Rina’s session will be entitled: Re-imagining Salinas Chinatown: A “Thirdspace” Oral History Walking Tour. She has provided the following abstract for her paper which should inspire a lot of interest:

Re-imagining Salinas Chinatown is an on-site and web-based oral history walking tour project in design. The walking tour is a cultural component of a larger community effort to renew and revitalize the only physically extant Chinatown between San Francisco and Los Angeles. Inhabited from the 1880s to the 1970s by Chinese, Japanese, Filipino and Mexican agricultural workers, merchants, and their families, this marginalized yet historic Chinatown is now home to the homeless, social services, and drug dealers. Drawing on more than 100 oral history interviews and other documentation, this tour is conceived as a self-guided experience that mixes audio, video, archival images and soundscapes.

This project rests on the premise that oral history constructs a memoried ‘thirdspace’ that makes physical transformation imaginable and possible. Drawing on theories of public space/place/sites of memory/ and imagined communities (Lefebvre, Soja, Tuan, Nora, and Field), the project explores the intersections of spatiality, historicity and sociality in representing the remembered past. Soja’s concept of ‘thirdspace’ provides a provocative framework for walking tours as spatial/historical/social representations and claims for spatial justice.

From a technological standpoint, oral narratives pinned to physical places through augmented reality tools enable a multi-
vocal/visual rendering of thirsptce in ways that a master historical narrative, more typical of walking tours, does not. From a creative standpoint, strategies of thoughtful juxtaposition, clustering, overlapping and intersection of narratives and images serve to construct a multivocal, multiethic ‘thirdspace’ experience.

Mandy Paul and Suzanne Redman (Karen Brandwood has moved into a different area of History SA, so thank you Karen for the work you did) are doing a sterling job at History SA organising a draft budget, the catering (most important) and collating the conference proposals. We have a final budget done so that the costs of conference registrations can be finalised shortly. We are hoping to keep them at a reasonable level as the UniSA has provided sponsorship for the venue which is a great help. The conference program will be organised after 11 March so we should be able to have everything up on the History SA website with a connection to it from OHAA within a reasonable timeframe.

The OHAA SA/NT Branch now has to find sponsorship for the conference to supplement the costs of speakers, catering etc. The work is moving along at a reasonable pace and we are still all working well together! Having History SA staff with their conference experience and contacts has certainly made the process, so far, much more streamlined.

Another event which ties in with the conference is the History Council’s annual lecture. This year it will be on Friday 20 September and Alistair Thomson has agreed to be the speaker so that is a coup. Many know Al who came to Monash University as the Professor of History in 2007 (see [http://profiles.arts.monash.edu.au/alistair-thomson/](http://profiles.arts.monash.edu.au/alistair-thomson/)). Since his arrival, Monash University has been a partner in the *Australian Generations: an Oral History of Everyday Life*, a national oral history project in collaboration with the National Library of Australia, ABC Radio National, the Oral History Association of Australia and La Trobe University. A lecture will also be held in Mt Gambier. (see p. 12)

The SA/NT Branch members on the conference committee are: Sue Anderson, June Edwards, Tonia Eldridge, Karen George, Megg Kelham (NT), Alison McDougall, Catherine Manning, Catherine Murphy, Annmarie Reid, Madeleine Regan and Sally Stephenson, so any one of us can be contacted in relation to ideas for, or help with, the event. As conference planning progresses information will be put up on the OHAA website and circulated via the branch email list.

‘How to do oral history’ Workshop

This workshop introduces participants to the practice and methods of doing an oral history interview and provides equipment training on the State Library of South Australia’s Sound Devices 702 digital recorders.

**Date:** 16 May 2013  
**Time:** 10am – 3.30pm  
**Venue:** State Library of South Australia, North Terrace, Adelaide.  
**Cost:** $60 per person per day or $30 for concession/pension/student/OH member  
**Bookings essential**

Contact June Edwards OHAA (SA/NT Branch) by clicking the following link: [contact@ohaa-sa.com.au](mailto:contact@ohaa-sa.com.au) or phone the State Library on (08) 8207 7260
The State Library of South Australia has a tradition of benefiting from philanthropy stretching back to the 19th century. The generosity of private donors has sustained the Library through prosperity, world wars and recessions and we are indebted to these benefactors for many of the Library’s significant projects and collection strengths. The most well-known of our patrons is probably the Mortlock Family (John Tennant and Dorothy), after whom the historic eastern wing of the building is named, and with whom the significant South Australiana Collection is closely associated. In common with the Mortlock bequest, the Somerville bequest also commemorates a family and its high regard for the State Library. But at that point, the stories diverge.

The Mortlock Family led very public lives, was successful in business and a pillar of Adelaide’s establishment. The Somervilles, conversely, led modest, private lives and worked in the public service. James Dugald Somerville (1868-1960), was born in Scotland and came to South Australia with his parents at the age of four. He joined the Engineer-in-Chief’s Department in 1882 and worked on South-East drainage plans before joining the Railways Department as an engineering superintendent. He became assistant resident engineer at Peterborough and then resident engineer at Port Lincoln where he supervised the construction of West Coast railway lines.

Mr Somerville became very interested in the early exploration and history of Eyre Peninsula about ten years prior to his retirement from the South Australian Railways in 1933 and, post-retirement, devoted many years of his life to historical research in the South Australian Archives. He became an expert in the history of Australian exploration, and a distinguished contributor to the Australian Encyclopaedia in that field. Until his death at ninety-one, Mr Somerville ‘helped out’ in the Archives, compiling histories, writing to sources in other states and encouraging young writers.

Mr Somerville was survived by his daughter, Mabel, and his wife, Edith, for whom Mabel cared at their Kings Park home until her death at the age of 101. While knowing of his almost daily visits to the Archives, Miss Somerville was unaware of the extent of her father’s research interests and output until after his death. Along with his research, she chose to give the State Library what The Advertiser of February 1977 described as a ‘substantial sum’ to indicate her ‘gratitude for the many years of pleasure’ her father derived from the Archives, and as ‘recognition of the help the… staff had given her father between 1923 and 1960’.

A former primary school teacher, Miss Somerville specified that her bequest, worth around $250,000, should be used for special purchases and projects related to the archives which her father loved, and which would be beyond the normal reach of the Library. Liaising with the Somerville Trustees, income from the bequest funded a wide range of projects the most important of which, to any OHAA-SA member, was the establishment of the J.D. Somerville Oral History Collection.
Thus, pre-empting larger State Libraries by some years, SLSA appointed Beth Robertson as the Oral History Project Officer to be responsible for the establishment and development of an Oral History collection in the Library, in 1987.

The Somerville Collection drew together the existing audio recordings in the newly established Mortlock Library, and more than doubled in size in the first year through material Beth brought with her, including the S.A. Speaks Jubilee 150 project recordings that were designated OH 1. Housed in a dedicated Somerville Room in the Mortlock wing, audio and transcripts were accessible to the public and a range of finding aids available to assist in locating relevant material. The development of the Collection was driven by the same imperative that guides growth today: the gathering of voices and stories that are not, traditionally, well represented in documentary history. Three years after creation, the 1000th interviewee was added to the Collection, and in seven years average growth had reached about 300 hours per annum; a figure maintained ever since.

Beth continued in the role until 2000, when she was appointed as Manager of the Library’s Audio-Visual Project Team. The early 2000s brought a major renewal of Library buildings and an organisational restructure that resulted in the dismantling of oral history as a separate unit and the end of a full-time Oral History Officer position. Formerly the sole responsibility of the Oral History Officer, the functions of cataloguing the J.D. Somerville Collection and managing sound preservation were devolved to the Collection Processing and Preservation sections, and an Archival Field Officer, with responsibility for state leadership of Oral History, was positioned within the Collection Development team. The perceived loss of a separate identity and dedicated physical location in the Library for oral history was, however, countered by positive changes. Oral history is recognised as a crucial part of SLSA’s mainstream collection development activities. Trish Walker had replaced Beth as Oral History Officer on a contract basis. After the restructure, June Edwards was appointed ongoing as Archival Field Officer. When she retired, Collection Development’s Manager Tony Leschen was adamant that the position was critical to the team and needed to continue – leading to my appointment in 2009.

The Library redevelopment also enabled the vexatious issue of digital advances to be resolved. While CDs had made an appearance and digital audio tape (DAT) had been introduced, the J.D. Somerville Collection still largely reflected the standards of its 1987 inception; lending analogue field recording equipment and preserving sound on open reel tape. Concurrently, priceless material in the audio collection, dating back to the early 1900s, was at risk of being lost as storage media deteriorated and formats became obsolete. In 2003 the primary manufacturer of ¼ inch tape (the standard for analogue audio preservation) closed its doors, forcing the Library to act. The following year saw the development of specifications for a digital audio archiving system and funding was made available from the Redevelopment’s IT budget for its installation in one of the two audio studios incorporated in the new Spence wing.

It took a little longer for the future of the Library’s audio engineering staff to be resolved. This position had been maintained by part-time, temporary contracts primarily funded from the Somerville bequest since 1987. Peter Kolomitsev was recruited on the same basis in 2004 to be involved in the installation of the Quadriga digital audio archiving system, as was Silver Moon the following year. Now as Manager of Preservation, Beth has achieved her goal of making both roles ongoing with increased hours.

Eight years later, SLSA has nine digital field recorders for loan, newly sound-proofed and refurbished audio studios and a vibrant digitising programme. From its hard-won beginnings and with the invaluable assistance of the Somerville bequest, the State Library’s Oral History collection has now exceeded 1000 separate projects (we are up to OH 1015), and comprises nearly 8000 hours of recordings.

In addition to oral history, Mabel Somerville’s gift to the State Library ultimately funded some $1,376,000 worth of archival related projects and purchases between 1997 and 2008 – a significant show of appreciation, by any measure.
After the Walk-off:
Collecting a History of the
Wave Hill Welfare Settlement
and Wattie Creek, 1966-86
by Charlie Ward

For many years now I have been obsessively researching the history of an area where I lived and worked during 2004–06: Kalkaringi in the Northern Territory, formerly known as the Wave Hill Welfare Settlement. My interest in the history of the Welfare Settlement and its nearby neighbour Wattie Creek (now Daguragu) is focused on the 1960s–80s. During those decades significant changes occurred that affected the local Gurindji people. The most profound of these was a change wrought by the Gurindji themselves when they terminated the feudal relationship to which they had been subject for eight decades through their ‘Wave Hill Walk-off’ protest in 1966. Before their drastic action, the majority of Indigenous people in the area lived and worked on the British Vestey company’s Wave Hill Station. From the time of the Walk-off, it took ten years of hard work before the Gurindji gained government support sufficient to establish the permanent community they desired – Daguragu, at Wattie Creek. It was a further ten years before the local people gained freehold title over their land in 1986. This ended two decades of unprecedented change and saw the circumstances of the Gurindji’s lives changed forever. Loosely speaking, the features of community life currently common were implemented by the mid-80s, at least until the system of governance by a Gurindji community council was dismantled by the Northern Territory Labor Government in 2008 as part of its introduction of large ‘super-shires’.

In 2008 and 2011 I received Northern Territory History Grants from the Northern Territory Government to assist me in my work. Since then, I have interviewed approximately 60 people regarding one aspect or another of recent Gurindji history, from distinguished federal public servants to draft resisters, shop keepers and contract musterers. These individuals are now scattered all over the continent. Although there is radical divergence of opinion among my interviewees (which I shall describe later) on political and personality issues, they are united by their enthusiasm for the country and people of Wave Hill. This is something that anyone who has interviewed old time Territorians would know well – the rawness and excitement of life on the frontier and the endearing qualities of its residents engender lifelong affections. Many are the times I’ve heard comments like ‘they were the best years of my life’, or ‘Ah, dear, I miss those people’.

Earlier in my project, I believed that I was researching Indigenous history, though after a time I came to question how the transcultural encounters that gave rise to the Gurindjis’ communities could be described as an Indigenous history alone. I prefer now to think in terms of ‘local’ history, or ‘political’ history, with the Gurindjis occupying the key role. I also had to accept that the majority of the oral history I could do was with non-Indigenous former residents of the area, due to the tragic discrepancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous life expectancies, compounded by the fact that many of my interviewees were then young adults working with Gurindji elders. After interviewing the last of the Gurindji men associated with the leadership of the Walk-off and contemporary Gurindji leaders, I addressed the task of identifying – and then locating – dozens of the nurses, policemen, teachers, community advisors, adult educators, settlement managers and town clerks who had called Kalkaringi ‘home’ over the years. Archival records were invaluable for the first part of the task and the electoral roll made the latter possible.

An early challenge was locating Bill Jeffrey, the Welfare Officer who assisted Frank Hardy to petition the Governor General for land in 1967. Given that his contribution to the Walk-off was well recognised, I found it remarkable that nobody had any idea about where he had gone subsequently. His was a particularly difficult case to crack. The reason for this became clear when – perhaps through sheer bloody-mindedness – I located his children, and learned that the information he provided about himself to Frank Hardy (repeated
in Hardy’s book *The Unlucky Australians* and in his subsequent public appearances was untrue. In *The Unlucky Australians*, Jeffrey had woven his identity around a childhood spent on the North Queensland with his racist and violent father and uncles. In contrast, I learned that ‘Wild Bill’, as he liked to be known, grew up in a working class Methodist family in suburban Melbourne.

My most recent research foray comprised an 8,000 kilometre drive from the ACT across Queensland in October - November 2012. I found my elderly interviewees on outback cattle stations, in Bundy Rum cane towns, ‘Truman Show’-style retirement villas, country town cafes and tropical fruit orchards. I pulled my HPU (History and Policy Unit – panel van) up for the night by salt-flats, bore-troughs and rubbish tips, and shared my camp with cane toads underfoot and possums on the roof. At one stage I was forced by bushfires to cancel an interview and re-route hundreds of kilometres, only to be stymied the next day by roads made impassable by rain. My most rewarding Queensland interviews were with former public servants active in Indigenous (then Aboriginal) Affairs. These men joined the Welfare Branch of the Northern Territory Administration half a century ago, when both the government’s expressed agenda towards Indigenous Territorians and the situation of the same differed radically to those of today. These young public servants had accrued what was regarded as relevant experience in the then-Australian colony of Papua New Guinea, or in Dutch Ceylon (Sri Lanka). The Aboriginal people they encountered in the Welfare Settlements where they were deployed were in many cases the survivors of lethal early twentieth century settlement conflicts. Despite their relocation to government-run settlements, they lived full ceremonial lives, practising aspects of traditional law that are often understood in theory rather than practice today.

In 1972 the Welfare Branch was demolished by the incoming Labor Government of Gough Whitlam. Afterwards, my interviewees transferred into the new Department of Aboriginal Affairs, with its radically different policy rubric. The remarkable experiences that my interviewees had, the fondness with which they remember the local people – and even, in some cases, their languages – make the short-term contracts of modern staff in relatively staid and cynical communities seem pale in comparison. As such the experiences of my interviewees seem highly relevant to today’s largely ahistorical debates about Indigenous Affairs.

Interviews on these matters formed the highlights of my trip, though the occupational hazards of road-based interviewing also featured heavily. My trusty laptop sustained an irreparable fracture between Queensland’s gemfields and its northern coast. While enjoying a break in ‘secure parking’, the HPU’s security was breached and the ‘perps’ made off with essential tech equipment and my partner’s clothing (she had joined me for the holiday leg of the trip). Worse was yet to come. After a very rewarding interview near Kingaroy with a retired ringer and head stockman from Wave Hill Station, I drove several hundred kilometres, only to be informed that I’d left my digital recorder’s charger on his loungeroom floor. I didn’t take this gracefully, as I had several more interviews to conduct on my way home, and did not fancy the idea of an extra day’s back-tracking to pick it up. As I’ve never had occasion to use the device’s back-up battery pack, I had left it at home.

Take note.

I resolved to see if I could purchase a generic charger to see me through my remaining interviews. In a town west of Brisbane I went into an electronics shop. My hopes were buoyed as the ‘expert’ staff examined different chargers for their suitability – before destroying my trusty recorder before my eyes.

After collecting, the challenges of this work become historiographic. As with every remote place where numerous non-Indigenous people are sequestered for long periods, tensions often arose at the Wave Hill Welfare Settlement, and deep and bitter enmity also grew in some instances. Forty years after these events, it becomes a challenge when the contradictory and even derogatory accounts of two individuals are recorded and an attempt at a single ‘true’ history is made. Oral history is notoriously imprecise – I usually find now that I have a more accurate knowledge of dates and names than my informants – but to me the accounts of
my interviewees, even if inaccurate at times, are invaluable to my attempt to write a detailed and lively history – as the case of Tony Scott illustrates. Tony was a Welfare Officer at Wave Hill in 1969. This year was critical to the development of the Wave Hill Welfare Settlement. The federal coalition government of John Gorton had by then announced that their response to the Gurindji’s Land Rights request was that they would build a large number of fancy and expensive houses at the Wave Hill Welfare Settlement. By implication the Gurindji camp at Wattie Creek – and the bogey of Land Rights – would disappear. This deepened the vitriolic and entrenched conflict over Aboriginal policy issues in Canberra between the radical Council for Aboriginal Affairs (CAA) and the more conservative Northern Territory Administration and the Welfare Branch. Paradoxically, 1969 was a challenge to learn much about. Locating records from the period was fruitless: southern activists did little at Wattie Creek that year, and the records of the Gurindji’s Darwin-based supporters were almost non-existent. This changed when I spoke to Tony, who provided me with a vivid account of the situation on the ground. Before his departure, he had received strict orders from his Welfare Branch superiors in regards to the politically controversial events and personalities at Wattie Creek:

*I’d been instructed in Katherine what I could do – it was very restrictive. I was under no circumstances to go to Wattie Creek, and I was under no circumstances to allow any Welfare Branch vehicle to go to Wattie Creek. I don’t know if [Regional Officer, Alex] Bishaw was embarrassed or not, but he almost had to read the riot act. No persons of the NT union movement, the NSW unions [were allowed]. Any uninvited persons should be reported to the police … [The directive] gave a list of all the people who were not allowed on Welfare property. I read it when I got there and I thought ‘this is bullshit, I’m a prisoner already’.*

More than perhaps anyone else in the country, Tony felt the effects of the hugely polarised, Gurindji-inspired debate on Land Rights. Elsewhere the debate was largely theoretical, about ethics and politics. He experienced the resulting impasse firsthand:

*Every fortnight, I’d get a message saying ‘Canberra [representatives of the CAA] to arrive on x day’… They used to go to Wattie Creek and talk to the people there, then they’d come back and say ‘You’re doing this, you’re doing that, that’s good’ and they’d lay down what we should do for the next month or so because they were happy with the way things were progressing. The following week Katherine or Darwin [Scott’s superiors in the Welfare Branch] would arrive unannounced. They’d say ‘What are you doing this for? Why are you doing that?’ Technically the Canberra people [the CAA] weren’t in a position to make any rules… It was so stressful! That is why I turned white – I had hair darker than you, in six months it was snow white!*

Tony’s tenure with the Welfare Branch was short-lived, but several years later he had an experience that provided pure gold – from a historian’s perspective. By coincidence, he was employed in a meatworks owned by the Vestey company. The Vestey family prided itself on the secrecy with which it conducted its affairs for the last century. Once the biggest pastoral landholder in northern Australia, the records from all their northern cattle stations were destroyed on their departure in the 1980s. Lord Vestey, on a tour of his family’s assets, struck up a dinner conversation with his young employee, and gave an off-the-record account of his company’s dealing with the Australian government regarding the excision of land for the Gurindji – then the nation’s most significant test case for the unresolved problem of Aboriginal Land Rights. Tony Scott’s account of Vestey’s comments complements and confirms – in some cases – the guesswork that characterised the media and the activists’ discussion of the issue at the time. In such cases, oral history clearly adds much of value to the archival record. From my perspective, the value of oral history in understanding the place of the Gurindji’s Land Rights campaign in the history of Aboriginal Affairs cannot be overstated.
Endnotes
1 For convenience sake, the term ‘Gurindji’ is used here to refer to the Indigenous residents of Wave Hill Station, the Wave Hill Welfare Settlement (later Kalkaringi) and Wattie Creek (later Daguragu). In actuality, Gurindji people as well as Nyining, Mudburra, Ngarinyman, Ngaliwurru, Bilinarra, Warlpiri and others reside in the area.

Charlie Ward is currently writing a book about the development of Kalkaringi and Daguragu communities. He is undertaking a PhD on the subject at the University of Western Sydney. See: 1charlieward.wordpress.com

A very special event from the Friends of the State Library of South Australia

*Speaking our lives: selected audio jewels from the Somerville Collection of the State Library*

Citizens’ oral history recordings inform our collective past, respect everyday lives and add sparkle and depth to existing historical information. You will hear engaging extracts selected from rarely heard recordings with background from Tonia Eldridge and Allison Murchie.

- Tonia, in addition to archival and customer service responsibilities, curates the J.D. Somerville Oral History Collection.
- Allison has been doing oral histories as a volunteer for over twenty years, with particular focus on community activists, especially women trade unionists and politicians.
- June Edwards, President of the Oral History Association of Australia (SA/NT Branch), will talk about the Association. A ‘Q & A’ session will follow.

**Date:** Wednesday June 19, 2013  
**Time:** 1pm to 3pm  
**Where:** The Anne and Basil Hetzel Theatre, Institute Building, corner of Kintore Ave and North Tce.  
**Admission:** $5.00

OHAA (SA/NT) members are most welcome.


**NEWS FROM THE STATE LIBRARY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

by Tonia Eldridge

Clearly, the most significant milestone of the past few months has been passing the 1000 mark for separately catalogued projects/interviews in the J.D. Somerville Collection – but don’t go looking to see what OH 1000 is about because the number has been reserved for a yet-to-be-undertaken interview with Beth Robertson! As most of you are aware, when interviews are brought to SLSA they are assigned an OH (Oral History) number. If it is a one-off interview, the number will be, for example, OH 1020. If the interview is part of a group, or a project, it will be assigned a sub-number, eg OH 1022/3 (for the third interview in the project numbered 1022). Thus, while we may have (at time of writing) 1016 separate catalogue entries in the J.D. Somerville Collection, the large size of some projects means that this actually represents some 6,725 separate interviewees/recordings.

When reviewing statistics for this edition of *Word of Mouth*, I noticed a trend in SLSA oral history accessions: over the past four years, there has been a significant decrease in the number of multiple-interview projects deposited. I’m not sure why this is, but can speculate that perhaps community groups/libraries with backlogs of (usually older, cassette-type) recordings might have already given them to us. If anyone out there is aware of Oral History projects that have not yet been deposited with the State Library for safekeeping, please send them our way! That aside, two new projects have been lodged with the State Library since November.

**OH 1013 – Craftsouth Traditional Craft Skills Partnerships Oral History Project – Kirsty Darlaston**

Kirsty attended November’s introductory workshop and received an OHAA (SA/NT) grant for the purpose of undertaking this series of interviews for Craftsouth. The Traditional Craft Skills Creative Partnerships project focuses on culturally embedded craft practices which migrants, in particular refugees, have brought with them when they have resettled in South Australia, along with the practices of craft practitioners within South Australia. The interviews focus on the practitioners’ history of craft making and the processes that they undertake, as well as the often intergenerational and communal.
handing down of skills. The practitioners are also asked to discuss the process of exchange that they have undertaken within their creative partnerships with South Australian craft practitioners and how this has assisted their settlement process in South Australia. People interviewed for the project include:

Masuma Akther, Bangladeshi quilt embroiderer
Simone Tippett, photographer and printmaker
Shima Gholami, Iranian wood inlay artist
Lisa Furno, jeweller
Kay Lawrence, textile artist
Lady Narvaez Penaloza, Colombian bark string artist
Jelina Haines, textile artist
Adrian Potter, furniture maker/designer
Milete-Tsega Ogbalidet, Eritrean basket weaver

OH 1006 – Stories from the Zoo – Allison Murchie

In 2006, Catherine Murphy undertook a nearly thirteen hour project of interviews targeting Royal Zoological Society of South Australia Inc volunteers. A long-term volunteer herself, Allison Murchie is complementing Catherine's work with a separate project involving staff and former staff, as well as volunteers of the Zoo. Since October 2012, ten individuals have been interviewed and, as is often the case, these participants have suggested further names for Allison to contact and record. To date, interviewees have included:

John Ryan, zoo guide
John Manfield, former keeper
Carolyn Hoare, Education Officer
Ed McAlister, former Chief Executive Officer
Trevor Klein, zoo guide
Ruth Hall, Education Manager
Emma Yengi, Assistant Curator of Primates
John Gardiner, Education Officer
Mark Craig, former Director
Kate (Barclay) Fielder, bird keeper

Finally, two one-off interviews added to the Collection are:

OH 1011 – George Telfer – Madeleine Regan

George Telfer was born in 1918 and spent his early years on Melbourne Street, North Adelaide, before the family moved to Colonel Light Gardens. His mother passed away when he was young and, despite achieving a scholarship to continue studying, he had to leave school at fourteen to obtain employment. After brief stint as office boy for an electrical fitting business, he commenced working with the Savings Bank of South Australia, where he remained until retirement. In the course of the four hour interview, Mr Telfer reflects on his private life, society and the Colonel Light Gardens area from the 1930s, along with the role of the Savings Bank and the variety of positions he held at various branches, during his career.

OH 1015 – Philip Jones – Susan Marsden

Dr Philip Jones, of the South Australian Museum, is interviewed for the National Library of Australia's Eminent Australians programme. Topics covered include: his Adelaide childhood and the formative influence of his family (including mother, historian Helen Jones), friends, travel and education (Law/Arts, University of Adelaide) on his subsequent professional life; starting at the South Australia Museum as a volunteer (1981), then Research Officer (1982-84), Curator (1994-95), Head of the new Division of Anthropology (1994-95), Principal Curator of the Aboriginal Cultures Gallery (1995-98), and Senior Curator (2000-); other professional activities with the National Museum of Australia, the National Cultural Heritage Committee, and as a Churchill Fellow (2001); discusses his activities at SA Museum, historiography, changes in approach and in relations with Aboriginal communities, colleagues, controversies (including about the Strehlow collection and the Hindmarsh Island affair); his work on exhibitions and publications, including Ochre and Rust (2007), which was awarded the Prime Minister's Literary Award for Non-Fiction, and which draws on and enlarges many of the themes of his historical career.

Lizzie Russell Oral History Grant Scheme 2013-2014

This grant scheme aims to foster small oral history initiatives in South Australia. The Oral History Association of Australia (South Australian/Northern Territory Branch) wishes to support, assist and help develop oral history projects in this State and in the NT. The grant scheme is funded by sales of the Oral History Handbook by Beth M. Robertson.

As the SA/NT Branch is hosting the OHAA national conference in Adelaide in September this year and offering two full scholarships for students to attend the conference, the grant for this year will be $300.

Please go to our website or more information and to download the application form.

Applications close 30 June 2013.

NEW ORAL HISTORY COURSE AT UNISA

by Sue Anderson

In July 2012 a new degree was introduced through the David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research at the University, the Bachelor of Arts (Indigenous Cultures and Australian Society). As part of its history major, I was asked to write two completely new courses.

The first is ‘Things that Matter: The Material Culture of Australia’s Past’. While my background in archaeology served me well in writing this course, which I did in conjunction with Dr Cameron Raynes and Dr Stephen Atkinson, the end result we felt was a cutting-edge course not only about material culture and its interpretation, but also about consumerism and the emotional value placed upon it. Topics in the course range from modern material culture (technology), to historical archaeology, to houses, buildings, cemeteries, landscapes and even our own backyards. We also looked at retrieving information on objects from digital archives, as well as curation of artefacts. I have just finished teaching this course completely online for Open Universities Australia and it proved a great success, evidenced by this comment from one student: ‘Dear Sue, thank you for introducing me to a colourful, interesting and most stimulating topic – a topic I have not even given much thought before joining this [course]. I will carry “material culture” with me as I walk through the years to come and feel truly feel enriched by this discovery. Thank you!’

Course writers could not have more rewarding feedback and Cam, Stephen and I are pretty chuffed about this and other comments.

The second course is ‘History Workshop: People and Place’ (HUMS 3044). As an oral historian, here was my opportunity to introduce the teaching of oral history into South Australian tertiary education for the first time, so I was very excited about this. Needless to say, my first action was to seek the advice of Janis Wilton, who as most of you will know, was the first to teach oral history at a tertiary level in Australia and who has over twenty years’ experience with it. Janis selflessly sent me her entire course content to work on and adapt for my own. The work that Janis has put into her course over time has not only assisted me greatly in terms of content, but also with structure and online ease of access. I can’t thank her enough for her generosity, which saved me an enormous amount of time when I was under the pump (as I was writing another two courses at the same time). Cameron also contributed some content to this course in the form of a virtual walk-through of Trove and other digital sources of information, another first for an oral history course, and kindly agreed that I could send this to Janis in return.

The final assignment for this topic is an essay on an historical topic centring on an oral history interview. The assignments submitted covered a very interesting range of topics including a history of a local company (interviewee = mother-in-law), a history of the effects of malaria on World War Two servicemen in New Guinea (interviewee = great-aunt) and a history of a natural forest in the Adelaide Hills (interviewee = father) to name a few. You might think the latter would be a difficult research topic, but a combination of the presence of Aboriginal scarred trees, an old Scout hut and the historical evidence told a terrific story. Although the numbers were low because this was a brand new course and there had been a communication problem in terms of its marketing, the performance of the students was well above average. This sets the benchmark high and I am hoping we will have increased numbers for 2013.

If you are interested in more information about this course please contact Sue Anderson at Sue.Anderson@unisa.edu.au or phone 8302 7150 or 0404 812 228.

Student Scholarships: OHAA Biennial National Conference and State History Conference

The OHAA (SA/NT Branch) will be offering two student scholarships worth $310 each (covering the three conference days and two workshops) for this combined conference being held at UniSA, City West Campus, Adelaide from 21-24 September 2013. Full details and application forms will be circulated in due course.
As part of a history major for the new degree of Bachelor of Arts (Indigenous Cultures and Australian Society), the David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research at the University of South Australia is offering the following course externally in Study Period 5, 2013 (13 weeks from 29 July to 11 November):

**History Workshop: People and Place (HUMS 3044)**

This course is a third year practical that will teach students how to research archival materials and the theory and methodology of oral history recording.

This is a first for the teaching of oral history at a tertiary level in South Australia and as far as we are aware a first nationally for combining the teaching of both topics!

The 4.5 unit course will be available both in person and externally on-line and can be undertaken on a non-award basis at $417/per unit, or $1,876.50 for the 13 weeks. (There is a significantly reduced rate for UniSA staff).

If you are interested in undertaking this course, please contact:

Dr Sue Anderson  
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08/8302 7150
Northern Territory Archives Service Report

by Matthew Stephen

The Northern Territory Archives Service (NTAS) Oral History Advisory Committee held its second meeting in November. The committee has focused its attention on the continuing development of its collections development policy. In particular the Advisory Committee is interested in how the collection can be developed across the Northern Territory to ensure that all regions are represented.

In November 2012 I attended a Digital Stories workshop conducted by the Australian Centre for the Moving Image in Melbourne. The workshop highlighted the enormous potential for digital stories in showcasing the NTAS oral history and image collections. It is an area that NTAS hopes to develop in the future.

After a short hiatus the NTAS oral history interview program has recommenced. Interviews currently underway include an Anglican missionary who worked at the Roper Mission in the 1950s and later became very involved in Indigenous Education and an Italian migrant couple whose family business grew into one of the Northern Territory’s best known property developers. A volunteer interview program continues in Alice Springs focused on the history of Central Australia.

Phyllis Williams, formerly Director, Adelaide and Darwin offices of the National Archives of Australia has recently been appointed as the Director of the joint National Archives of Australia/Northern Territory Archives Service. Work is well advanced for the Northern Territory Archives Service to relocate the National Archives of Australia site bringing both agencies under one roof later this year.

History Council of South Australia annual lectures

In 2013 the History Council of South Australia’s annual lectures will be held in Adelaide and Mount Gambier. The title of both city and country lectures is ‘Australian Generations: an oral history of our living memory’, a national project which includes many South Australian interviews.

In Mt Gambier, this lecture will be given on 14 September at the Mt Gambier Library by Nicole Curby (member of Australian Generations project team, interviewer, and PhD candidate at La Trobe University).

In Adelaide, this public lecture will be given on 20 September at the University of South Australia, City West campus, 55 North Terrace Adelaide, by Alistair Thomson (Project Leader, Australian Generations; Professor of History and Head of School of Philosophical, Historical and International Studies, Monash University) - 5.45pm for 6pm, the lecture (and discussion) will be followed by drinks and nibbles. This event is being supported by the Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre.

Both lectures will be recorded to provide an audio podcast on the HCSA website

www.historycouncilsa.org.au

These lectures will also draw attention to the joint national oral history and state history conference that will follow them at UniSA in September (21-24).
While the National Library’s Trove website is a marvelous source of information, not all regional newspapers have been digitised yet and the State Library’s microfilm is still a very useful tool for researchers. A few months ago I was ‘scan reading’ early editions of the Port Augusta Dispatch for information about William Creek railway siding. After about an hour of scrolling through the 1880s, my eyes were beginning to roll and I stopped the film at page 4, Tuesday 2 September 1888 and found this fascinating piece of history which I have transcribed:

The First Interview Recorded on the Phonograph.
The interview recorded below is the first of its kind ever published. “Interviewing made Easy” would have been as appropriate a title as the above, for here is an interview wherein the interviewer had no work to do, beyond the propounding of his questions. The interviewer at an end – and when interviewer and interviewed had quitted the room in which the phonograph was – the phonograph itself dictated to the typewriter all that had been spoken; and a few hours later a faithful report of the conversation, in M.S. form, was placed in the interviewer’s hands. These few lines of introduction apart, the interviewer himself was not called upon to use pen or pencil throughout. How, then, was this achieved?

“I will tell you what,” said Colonel Gouraud, when I asked him for half an hour’s talk on the subject of the first perfected phonograph, received by him from Mr. Edison, the inventor, a couple of weeks ago: “We will, if you like, do an interview. I will show you what the phonograph can do, and what it is going to do for journalists in the future. Here it is before us: speak your questions into it, as I will my answers. When we have finished talking, I will hand the instrument over to my assistant. The phonograph, speaking in our own voices, shall dictate our conversation to him when we are no longer present, and the typewriter shall assist him to furnish you with the necessary notes.”

Well, we did our interview in this way. “I think we may say, Colonel, without boasting, that the interview we are just commencing is unique of its kind. It is, I believe, the first time in the history of journalism that a conversation of this sort has taken

Thomas Edison and his early phonograph, 1878.
Courtesy of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington
place through the instrumentality of the phonograph?"

“Yes; and yours is the distinction of being the first journalist to perform the 'great act'.

“I am fully sensible of the honor. This, however, suggests uses of the phonograph which I fancy have not hitherto been thought of. Pray tell me to what extent you think the phonograph will serve the needs of journalism in the immediate future. I mean, as to the saving of time and of manual labour to the journalist.”

“You are not quite right in saying that these uses have not before been thought of, as the field of usefulness to which you refer has always been prominently in mind. What you are doing now, is nevertheless, the first realization in that direction. You are doing your professional work, I may say, without working at all. You see you have but to think your thoughts and utter them at your own will.”

“Well, yes; this is, I am bound to say, the most comfortable interview I have ever assisted at. At this rate, interviewing bids fair to become the most luxurious branch of the journalist's profession. But it is not every journalist who will possess his own phonograph for some time to come, I fear.”

“It will be every journalist's own fault if he doesn't, because it is intended to place the phonograph within the reach of everybody who can appreciate and utilize its powers.”

“Will not the phonograph be a luxury too, as the stenographer and the typewriter now are, unless it can be put upon the market at a very reasonable cost. Has Mr. Edison settled that point yet?”

“That point has been carefully considered, and due means to the all-desired end provided. There is a way of doing it, and, I may say, only one way.”

“What is that?”

“By providing for their manufacture upon proper principals – namely, through the erection of a suitable works, and upon a scale commensurate with the demand. Anticipating that this will be world-wide in its largest sense, Mr. Edison has been engaged for some time past in the preparation, and I may say invention, as well as manufacture of special tools and machinery, with which to make the different parts of the apparatus by what may be called automatic machinery, and so that all parts will be interchangeable. Each separate piece may thus be made by the thousands, so that skilled labor will be required to but a small extent. Although Mr. Edison has secured this invention by numerous patents in all parts of the world, and I may say more widely than for any of his other inventions, he has expressed his intention of relying more upon the method he will pursue in its manufacture and distribution, to secure him against all competition, should any appear, than upon the patents themselves.”

“Is it a fact that you here, on Beulah Hill, are now in daily conversation with Mr. Edison in New York by means of this identical instrument we are using?”

“Yes. I have not written him a line since this machine arrived. Every mail carries to him a phonogram which contains a record of what I think may interest him. There, lying before you, is the one destined for the next steamer. Here is a copy of its contents. The phonogram you see has a surface of only seven eighths of an inch wide, six inches long and is scarcely thicker than a sheet of good English notepaper. It contains what would cover about four pages of notepaper, or to be precise, 172 words exactly. You must understand that with regard to the 'mailing phonograms' we are keeping a careful record of materials, and the route, that is, the geographical route, taken by each in reaching Mr. Edison. I am sending them to him by various routes round the world, so that they shall pass through all climates and conditions of handling. Tomorrow's mail carries out those phonograms addressed, as you see, to New Zealand, to Australia, India, China, Japan, and South America. Those passing through the Red Sea and cross the Equator will be so marked. They are addressed to my friends at different points, who will forward them to Mr. Edison. He will then see whether the record is perfectly intelligible, thus demonstrating whether the material of which the phonogram is made stands the various vicissitudes of travel and climate. He will then return them to me for my information.”

“To go back for a moment, there is a general impression that a phonographic record once made can be only once repeated. I mean that the phonograph could only speak off a particular record a single time; but I understand that the capabilities of this perfected instrument are much greater. What am I to understand is the extent of its powers of repetition, and are the records to any extent permanent?”

“That is rather a question of the phonogram, than of the phonograph. We do not know what the endurance of the phonogram is; we have not lived long enough with them yet to find that out; but many of the musical records you have heard have been reproduced
The article, written almost 125 years ago, and picked up by the Port Augusta Dispatch, raised issues regarding recorded oral history and associated equipment which are as pertinent today as they were back in 1888.

The ‘Colonel Gourard’ referred to was George Edward Gouraud (1842 - 1912) an American Civil War recipient veteran who later became famous for introducing the new Edison Phonograph cylinder audio recording technology to England in 1888. The phonograph was the recording machine and the phonogram the ‘record’ of the recording.

Thomas Edison had conceived of voice-mail in 1880, the idea of recording epistles and messages on cylinders which, hopefully, could be sent through the mail at the parcel rate, which was cheaper than that for ordinary letters. The recording was done through electrical impulses activated by sound and directed onto a cylinder whose principal constituent was silver paper, a far from robust substance. Not only were the cylinders highly frangible and the voice transmissions smothered by acoustic disturbance, but the postal authorities refused to allow them to be sent at the parcel rate. So Edison decided to concentrate on more profitable and practical inventions, such as developing the light bulb and publicising his telegraph which was increasingly useful in warfare.

John Mannion
Pekina via Orroroo
The very first recording in the State Library of South Australia’s J.D. Somerville Oral History Collection is a Jubilee 150 project undertaken by Beth Robertson called ‘S.A. Speaks’. It includes interviews with 45 men and women who were broadly representative of the population of South Australia as it was in the first three decades of the twentieth century. OH 1/9 is an interview with Mrs Florence M. Steel, who was born in Wright Street, Adelaide. Florence married in 1912 and had had seven children before her increasingly invalided husband died in 1928. This extract of interview describes how she came to be receiving rations from the Destitute Asylum before her husband’s death.

How did you come to get on to the rations?
In Sturt Street there was a grocer’s store that I dealt with from the time I was married. Mrs Arthur wrote a letter and told me to take it – where to go and she said that would help me, and it did.

So the grocer’s wife suggested it, did she?
She was his widow then. Yes, she suggested it. She wrote a letter saying that, you know, I’d been a customer for a considerable time and that she knew me – my character and that, you know. She was very good.

Did you ask her to do that?
No. I didn’t. I went in the shop to get a pound of sugar – all the money I had – and she said ‘Is that all you want?’ and I said ‘Yes,’ and she said ‘What’s the matter,’ she said ‘you’re not even giving me an order now.’ And I told her. She said ’You can’t manage like that. You’ve got to have some help.’ And that’s what she done. Of course it was a big help too. To be able to go and get meat, to be able to go and get bread. You had to go to certain places, you know, to get them. Meat we had to go to Light Square for and the bread we had to go to a shop in Wright Street for.

Did you know other people on rations?
Yes. A street called Lowe Street. There was about three women that lived in cottages and they were on it and I used to go and walk down to North Terrace, you know, Kintore Avenue, to get the supplies and we used to go together. They said ‘Why didn’t you have it before? You should’ve had it ---’. But they were lovely women really. They used to go out and do a day’s washing whenever they could get it.

Had you thought about going on rations before Mrs Arthur?
No, I really didn’t know about it. I didn’t know about it. I’d never talked to these women about anything – how they lived or anything. I never really thought about it.

What did you husband think?
Oh, he was very degraded. That’s how he felt. I hated to tell him the day that I was to go to get the … ……. … He used to get very downhearted, you know, depressed. And in those days there was nothing to give you to help with that – nothing. And when I went for the rations I also applied for a doctor to come and see him and there was an old Scotch doctor. He used to ride a bike. There weren’t many cars to ride around then or any other conveyance – he had a bike. But he was very good. He gave me everything he could give me. There wasn’t very much you could get. It was all bottles of medicine too. There wasn’t tablets and those things. All a mixture of some sort. And a bottle of stuff he gave me. My husband ---. I took the cork off the bottle and if ever there was a stink of onions. Whatever was in that medicine I don’t know and how he could take it, I don’t know. I said this to the doctor, I said, ‘But it smells so dreadful.’ ‘Oh,’ he said, ‘you have to put your hand under your nose when you drink it.’

After Mrs Arthur wrote that letter, what happened then to get on to the rations?
Before I got the doctor?
Yes.
Well what as all that whooping cough and that sort of thing, I ran out of money.

After Mrs Arthur wrote the letter, did you get visited by somebody? How did they arrange for you to go on the rations?
They didn’t – see they read the letter. Took me into an office and had a talk to me and they just gave me the order to go round to the storeroom and get the things. It wasn’t very difficult. And they were never ---. I never had any bother with them in any way. There was never any problem or rough – only that storeman – he was horrible.
Oral History Association of Australia

South Australian / Northern Territory Branch

The Oral History Association is a non-profit body whose members practice and promote oral history. The aims of the Oral History Association of Australia [OHAA] are:

- to promote the practice and methods of oral history
- to educate in the use of oral history methods
- to encourage discussions on all aspects of oral history
- to foster the preservation of oral history records

The South Australian branch of the OHAA came to life just seven months after the national body was founded in Perth in July 1978.

Services provided by the volunteer committee of the Oral History Association of Australia to members of the SA/NT Branch include:

- *Word of Mouth* Branch newsletter which is published twice a year and includes articles about work being done in South Australia
- Annual Journal of the Oral History Association of Australia which contains papers given at the biennial conference or other papers considered of particular topical interest
- Hire of Fostex digital recording equipment at a membership discount
- Various publications including the Oral History Handbook by Beth Robertson which have a membership discount
- Biennial conference of the OHAA which has a membership discount
- Regular oral history training workshops. These full day workshops introduce participants to the practice and methods of oral history and provide equipment training on the Fostex digital recorders
- Advanced oral history workshops covering a range of issues including ethics, memory and technological advances in the use of oral histories
- Access to the annual OHAA SA/NT Branch grant scheme of $500 to help foster small oral history initiatives in South Australia and a free workshop
- Participation in events which often coincide with the AGM and Christmas eg tours of the Migration Museum and the State Library of South Australia focusing on the audio visual aspects of these organisations; a New Year get together over afternoon tea; talk by Peter Kolomitsev at the State Library on digital technology and equipment; seminars during the Family History Fair and History Week; and exhibitions during History Week