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Collections eNews

History.
Not as you
know it.

The latest events and information about Museums of History NSW collections, incorporating State Archives, Museums and the Caroline Simpson Library.

Get involved



Archives for Everyone – our community digitisation and indexing partnerships

We are looking to partner with groups and societies with an interest in history and in making the State Archives Collection more accessible.

Our project

We have scoped a pilot project which we would love your help with. This project will involve the digitisation of Small Debts Registers from the Courts of Petty Sessions that will highlight your local area and enhance our digitisation efforts. Not only are the records imaged as part of this process, but they will also be indexed.

About the Small Debts Registers

Small Debts Registers were created by Courts of Petty Sessions throughout NSW. The courts had the authority to recover debts up to 10 pounds. The registers contain information such as the name of the plaintiff, name of the defendant, the cause of the action, amount of the claim, costs, judgment and amount of the judgement.

These records are all about people taking other people to court to recover debts, referring to events in people's lives or in a local community that you may not find in other records.

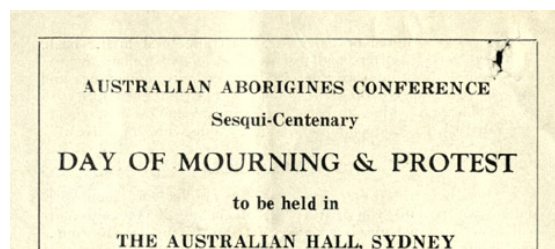
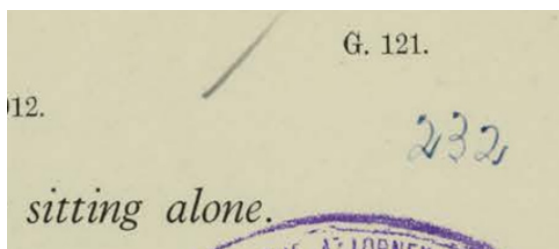
There are over 375 Small Debts Registers in the State Archives Collection from about 70 geographic locations.

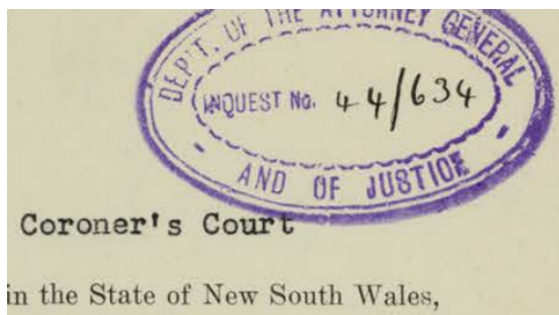
How to find out more information and express interest

If your group or society would like to get involved by digitising registers onsite at our State Archives Reading Room at Kingswood, and/or indexing entries either onsite or remotely, find out more information and express your interest on our website until **31 March 2024**.

[Read more](#)

Across our collections





Inquest index, 1916-1963 - expanded

Over 9,100 new entries have been added by our volunteers to our Inquest Index, and our inquest copy order service.

The index now covers the years 1916-1963, with additions including:

Surviving inquest papers from 1916-1939

Only about 5% of papers from this period have survived, and previously only the file numbers (not names) were listed on our website. Now both file number and names are listed in the index.

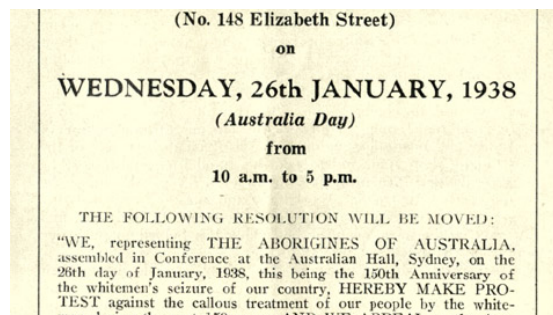
Open verdict, and reward offered files dated 1918-1920

Previously not listed, now included in the index.

Inquests from January 1940 – June 1942, and July – December 1963

Previously not listed, now completing our full index of inquest papers for the years 1940-1963.

[Search](#)



Day of Mourning

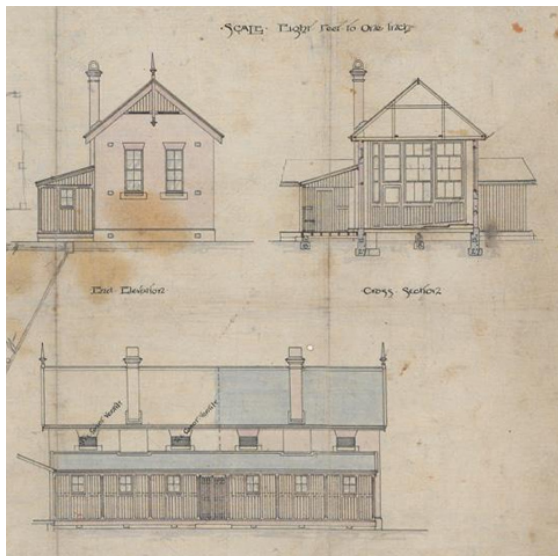
January 26 has long been a day of debate and civic action. Those who celebrate may be surprised at the date's significance in NSW as a protest to the celebrations of the anniversary of the arrival of the First Fleet on what was originally called 'Anniversary Day' in NSW.

Led by Aboriginal rights groups founders Jack Patten, William Ferguson and William Cooper, the Day of Mourning protest was held on 26 January 1938 at the Australian Hall on Gadigal country (Sydney) to mourn the loss of country, freedom and the lives of Aboriginal peoples since British colonisation began in 1788.

Featured within the State Archives Collection are the original letters from William Ferguson to the premier in the lead up to 26 January 1938 inviting him to receive a deputation from the Executive of the Aborigines Progressive Association.

Read a digitised copy of these letters along with the *Aborigines Claim Citizen Rights!* statement the Aborigines Progressive Association published in early 1938.

[Read more](#)



Back to school - updated school records guide

In line with the new school year, we've updated our School Records Guide to make it easier for you to find records associated with schools, students, and teachers, with help from our guides, indexes, and webinars.

We hold records such as:

- **Schools** - administrative files, plans, and land records
- **Students** - admission registers and punishment books
- **Teachers** - career histories and records of leave

Start researching school records today.

[Read more](#)



The coolest room in the house

As our seasons become hotter, we're increasingly reliant on electrical appliances to keep our houses – and food – cool. We can look to the past for practical ways to harness environmental forces to minimise heat and energy consumption in our homes.

Before reliable and affordable refrigeration technologies were developed in the late 1800s, alternative means were used to keep perishable foods fresh and safe to eat, including architectural environments implemented in dairies, larders, and cellars.

Read about useful examples that survive at Vacluse House.

[Read more](#)

What's on



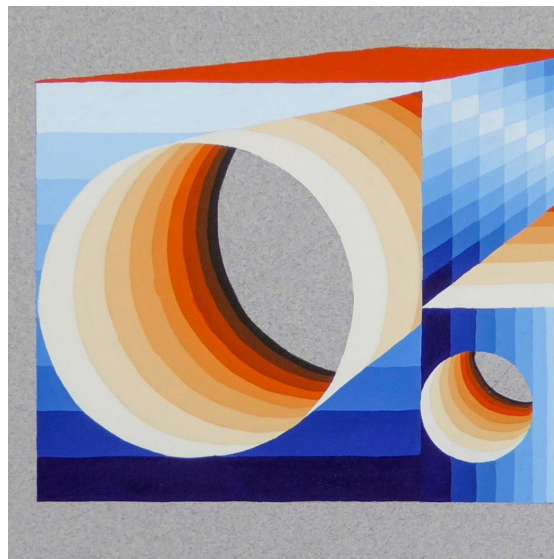
The Extraordinary story of Rose de Freycinet

Caroline Simpson Library, 8 March 2024, 6pm-8pm, \$15, bookings essential

Join us for a conversation with Suzanne Falkiner, author of a biography of Rose de Freycinet, the first woman to write an account of a global circumnavigation.

Suzanne will discuss her research into the incredible story of the young Frenchwoman who was smuggled aboard her husband's ship, the *Uranie*, in 1817, becoming the only woman on the three-year scientific voyage around the world.

Rose's presence on the voyage was deliberately omitted from official narratives of the journey, and little was known about her life until recently. This talk will focus on a series of original images that demonstrate the process of removing Rose from the final publications.



Phyllis Shillito and her colour curriculum 1945–79

The MInt, Wednesday 20 March, 5.30pm–8pm, \$15, bookings essential

This hybrid in-person and online event will focus on the colour curriculum of pioneering Sydney-based colour designer and educator Phyllis Shillito (1895–1980) of the 1940s to the 1970s.

In-person attendees will examine the impressive collection of student exercises and notes created by designer Eva Fay when she was a student at the Shillito Design School in Sydney in the late 1970s, which were recently donated to the Caroline Simpson Library (CSL), as well as other Shillito portfolios held in the CSL and private collections.

In addition, presentations from Jocelyn Maughan, Dr Catriona Quinn and Dr David Brigg will establish the context of Shillito's teaching of colour.

publications.

[Book now](#)

teaching of colour.

This event is presented jointly by Museums of History NSW and the Colour Society of Australia.

[Book now](#)



Last chance - The People's House: Sydney Opera House at 50

Museum of Sydney, open daily, 10am–5pm, free entry

Last chance to explore our exhibition *The People's House: Sydney Opera House at 50* celebrating five decades of extraordinary performances and unforgettable moments at the Sydney Opera House.

Open until 3 March at the Museum of Sydney.

[Learn more](#)



The People's House: Sunday Sessions

Museum of Sydney, 3 March 2024, 10am–5pm, free, all ages, bookings recommended

Join us at the Museum of Sydney for a fun, creative and captivating activation for the whole family.

Coinciding with the exhibition *The People's House: Sydney Opera House at 50*, this event will bring together artists, musicians, performers and other creatives connected to or inspired by the World Heritage-listed architectural masterpiece.

- 10.30am – Soulfood – a cappella choir performance
- 12pm – DJ La Foxy Fuzz
- 2.30pm – Talk and tour with Curator Dr Jacqui Newling

[Book now](#)



The centenary of The Astor

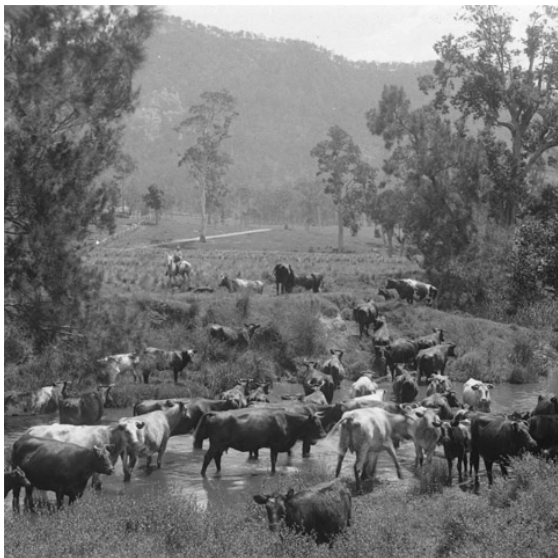
Caroline Simpson Library, The Mint, Tuesday–Friday, 10am–4pm, free entry

Upon its completion in 1923, The Astor in Sydney's Macquarie Street was the largest reinforced concrete building in Australia, the tallest residential block, and this country's first company title residences.

To celebrate the centenary of The Astor, a display in the Caroline Simpson Library brings together a range of objects from the archives of The Astor with material from the library's collection to explore the concept, design and construction of the building, and look at the apartments of several early residents.

[Find out more](#)

Interesting indexes



Squatters and graziers index, 1837-1849

This is an index of holders of depasturing licences and others who were occupying Crown land beyond the Nineteen Counties, and who were visited by the Commissioners of Crown Lands.

Governor Bourke sought to legalise and regulate squatting in 1836 by issuing licences to settlers to depasture (graze) their stock on vacant Crown lands beyond the Nineteen County limits, on application to the Colonial Secretary. The Commissioners were required to report on the inspections they carried out in their land district.

The index was compiled by Mrs Kaye Vernon and Mrs Billie Jacobson.

Search



Schools and related records, 1876-1979

The records indexed include Administrative School Files and records from individual schools such as admission registers and punishment books.

The administrative files were created by bringing together all of the correspondence held by the Department of Education about each school, including letters from teachers, parents, the Department and district offices, other government departments, local members and Department ministers. Some school files are up to 15 boxes of papers, some are only a few centimetres thick.

Only a limited number of admission registers and punishment books survive in the Collection.

Search

Webinars



Webinar: Married women teachers declarations

Friday 23 February, 10.30am–11.30pm, free, registrations required

In the 1930's all married women teachers working for the Department of Public Instruction faced dismissal. To be considered for retention, married women teachers had to complete a statutory declaration every year explaining their circumstances.

This webinar will explore the declarations and how to find them.

[Register now](#)



Webinar: Inquest index, 1919-1963

Friday 22 March, 10.30am–11.30pm, free, registrations required

Recently updated with surviving inquest papers from 1916-1939 and April-December 1963 (Glebe Coroners Court), the inquest index is a valuable source for family historians.

This webinar will show you how to use the Inquest Index and explore the new additions.

[Register now](#)

Watch from home



Webinar: Public Works photographs - an unsung treasure

The amazing quality and variety of the photographs taken by the Public Works Department is a testament to the photographers - Joseph Bischoff, John Degotadi Junior and Robert Bowden among them.

Primarily taken to record the work of the Department in building, repairing and resuming properties, many of the images also record the humanity of these places. This webinar explores these images in depth.

[Watch now](#)

1. Photo © Joshua Morris for MHNSW; **2.** Robert Henry Fletcher inquest file 19 May 1944, State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-345-5-[19/3715]-634; **3.** Premier's Department Special Bundles, State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-12061-52-[12/8749]-62/1515 Pt. I; **4.** Plan of Dubbo Public School, State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-4335-4-[Plan1038]-SB49128 **5.** Vacluse House, MHNSW. Photo © Jamie North; **6.** Coupang: île de Timor, visite chez Mr. J.M. Tieleman Secrétaire du Gouvernement Hollandais a Coupang, J. Alphonse Pellion, watercolour ink and pencil on paper, 1818. Caroline Simpson Collection, MHNSW; **7.** Student exercise painted in gouache at the Shillito Design School by Eva Fay in 1976–77, Copyright © Eva Fay 2021; **8.** Curtain of the sun, artist John Coburn, 1969–70. © The Coburn Estate; Jørn Utzon Sydney Opera House photograph. Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW: PXA 590 (v13), npA25J41; Photo by Max Dupain, c1965–72. Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW: FL601561 **9.** Visitors enjoying Maestro, an interactive space where light and sound respond to body movement, part of The People's House: Sydney Opera House at 50 exhibition, Photos © James Horan for MHNSW; **10.** Views of Sydney, Macquarie Street, 10 August 1936. Alan Spearman Evans. Caroline Simpson Collection, MHNSW; **11.** Government Printing Office 1 - 32623 - Cattle station near Gloucester [no date], NRS-4481-3-[7/15888]-M3186 State Archives Collection, MHNSW; **12.** Adaminaby Public

School, 1905, State Archives Collection MHNSW: NRS15051-1-1-[3]-2 **13**. Kinilabah Public School – [students and teacher in front of school house, State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-15051-19-[1040]-1; **14**. Robert Henry Fletcher inquest file 19 May 1944, State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-345-5-[19/3715]-634; **15**. Mr Bradfield's Houses [Department of Public Works], State Archives Collection MHNSW, NRS-4481-4-442-[AF00223815]

Museums of History NSW

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Museums of History NSW cares for, and provides access to, significant historic places, collections and archives in NSW and is responsible for promoting knowledge and appreciation of history. It is a statutory body, principally funded by the NSW Government.

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Our address:

Museums of History NSW
The Mint
10 Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000 Australia

Western Sydney Records Centre
161 O'Connell Street
Kingswood NSW 2747 Australia

Our website: mhnsw.au