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Collections eNews

History.
Not as you
know it.

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

Collections on Tour 2024



Wages Paid to the Irish Orphans, 1849–51

This August, we travel to Bathurst, Yass, Goulburn and the Central Coast to

share stories about some of the 4,100 young Irish women who came to Australia between 1848 and 1850 as part of Earl Grey's Famine Orphan Scheme.

Recruited from workhouses in Ireland, the women became an integral part of the workforce in their adopted country. The register of wages paid to orphans from 1849 to 1851 is a key source in researching the stories of many Irish girls and women who arrived in NSW under the scheme. It contains details of the orphans, their employers and the wages paid.

Join our archivists for an illustrated presentation about these Irish women and take advantage of this rare opportunity to view the original register from the State Archives Collection.

Book now

Across our collections

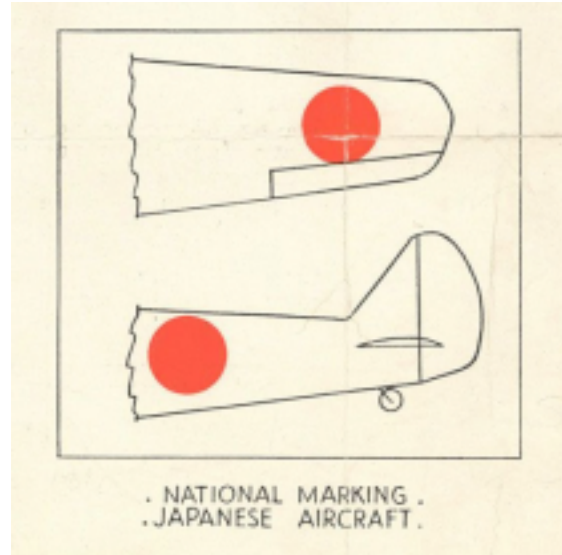


Get ready for Family History Month with our guide

August is celebrated each year as National Family History Month.

The State Archives Collection is particularly useful for people conducting family history research, and our *Family History Guide* provides an overview of the types of resources that may be helpful to researchers.

In the spirit of Family History Month, you can learn more from the guide about the best ways to look into your own family tree.

[Read more](#)

World War II: NSW in 1942

Australia entered World War II on 3 September 1939, in alliance with Great Britain. When Japan attacked the US forces at Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Australia focused troops and resources on the Pacific War. Almost 1 million Australians served in the armed forces and over 27,000 Australians died while in military service, before the war ended on 14 August 1945.

Take a look at NSW's involvement in World War II through records in the State Archives Collection, including the construction of roads, bridges and airfields in the Northern Territory, New Caledonia and Norfolk Island, along with wartime activities on the home front.

[Read more](#)



Federation of Australia

In late July 1839, Henry Parkes, often described as the 'Father of Federation', arrived in Sydney with his wife Clarinda, having departed from Gravesend, England. This began his association with the colony of New South Wales, which would lead to five Premierships and his emergence as a key figure in the Federation movement.

The process to federate the six Australian colonies into the Commonwealth of Australia took more than 50 years from its beginnings in the 1840s.

Learn more about the related records in the State Archives Collection in the first of our three-part overview of the Federation of Australia.

[Read more](#)



Newly digitised trade catalogues

The Caroline Simpson Library Collection includes a significant collection of trade catalogues from around the world, a selection of which are progressively being digitised.

They relate to house and garden design and interior furnishing, as well as building materials, house fittings, and hardware, and can be searched by metadata or text contents.

Browse some of the recently added catalogues, including one that features glazed tiles produced by [George Woolliscroft & Son of London](#).

[Search](#)

What's on



First Nations Speaker Series: Coomaditchie

Museum of Sydney, Wednesday 31 July, 6pm–7pm

The exhibition *Coomaditchie: The Art of Place*, now on at the Museum of Sydney, highlights the work of the Coomaditchie United Aboriginal Corporation. The organisation has provided welfare and advocacy services to the community for over 20 years since its incorporation in 1993, and creates change through its work in bush regeneration, art projects, and cultural heritage and community development programs.

Join Emeritus Professor John Maynard and First Nations Curator Tess Allas as they reflect on their own families' activism in Aboriginal affairs and on human and workers rights in the Illawarra and across NSW that fed into the activism of the times more broadly around the nation.

Free, registration required.



Coomaditchie: The Art of Place

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

Experience community life by the ocean through the works of First Nations artists in *Coomaditchie: The Art of Place* at the Museum of Sydney. These loving and lyrical artworks, which include paintings, ceramics and screen-prints, speak of life in and around the settlement of Coomaditchie in the Illawarra region, its history, ecology and local Dreaming stories.

The exhibition celebrates the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Coomaditchie United Aboriginal Corporation in 1993.

Free entry.

[Learn more](#)

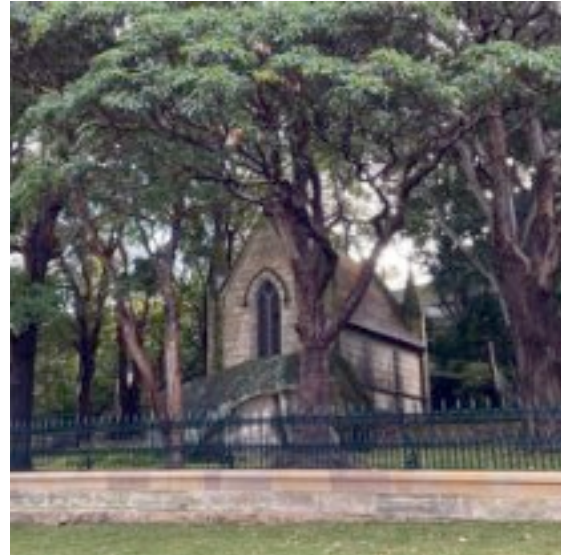
[Book now](#)

Making a House a Home with Vita Cochran

Elizabeth Farm, Saturday 17 August, 10.30am–12.30pm, and 1pm–3pm

Join us for a creative rag rug making workshop that explores how the Macarthurs of Elizabeth Farm turned their house into a home.

Beginning with a tour of the property led by Museums of History NSW Curator Dr Scott Hill, participants will explore how soft furnishings contribute to the appearance of an interior, signalling seasonal changes, room function, taste and status and how we go about replicating authentic soft furnishings today. This will be followed by a workshop introducing the craft of making rag rugs, led by textile artist Vita Cochran.



Wentworth Mausoleum at Vaucluse House

Vaucluse House, Friday 9 August, 2pm–3.30pm

Join us for an expert ledd walking tour to the rarely opened Wentworth Mausoleum and learn about William Charles Wentworth's extravagant 1873 state funeral.

Your tour will start in the grand drawing room at Vaucluse House and journey to the rarely opened Wentworth Mausoleum – Wentworth's final resting place. Hear stories and listen to commentary from the colonial newspapers about the details of this great event.

General: adult \$30 / concession \$25; members: adult \$24 / members concession \$20.

All materials provided. No experience necessary.

General \$65, members \$52.

[Book now](#)[Book now](#)

Digging Up the Neighbourhood walking tour

Susannah Place, Wednesday 14 August, 10.30am–12.30pm

Starting at Susannah Place, this expert led walking tour explores some of the fascinating archaeological sites in The Rocks and Millers Point, including a rare opportunity to view the Parbury Ruins.

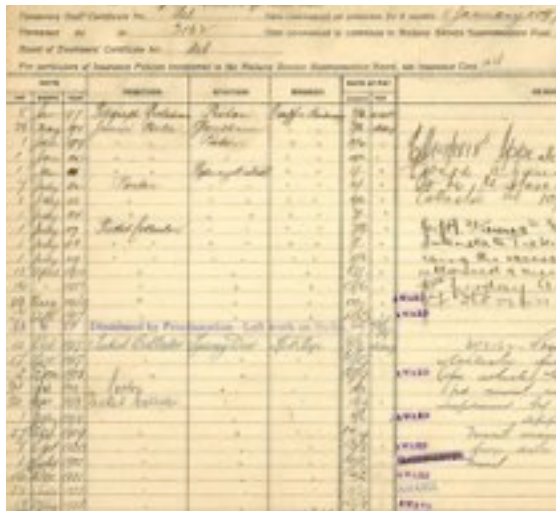
Unearthed during the construction of an apartment block and now preserved below ground, the Parbury Ruins feature the extensive remains of an 1820s cottage once owned by ex-convicts.

General \$45, members \$36, bookings essential.

[Book now](#)

Super series





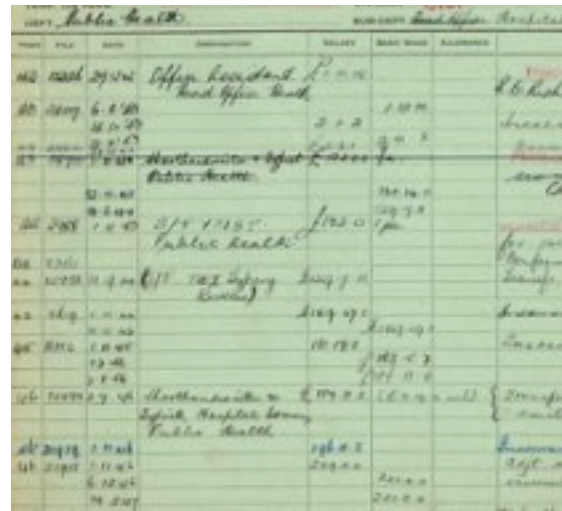
Railway personal history cards - employees born before 1900

The cards in this fully digitised series (**NRS-12922**) detail the service history of railway employees born prior to 1900, and were kept by the Finance Branch to record rates of pay, leave, and superannuation entitlements. Most cards relate to permanent employees, but some cards for construction and casual employees are also included.

The cards do not provide details of people whose employment had ceased prior to the introduction of the Railway Service Superannuation Act, effective from 1 October 1910.

To search this series, type 'NRS-12922' and a name into the State Archives Collection catalogue search box.

Search



Employees' history cards, NSW public service

This fully digitised series (**NRS-12295**) contains employee history cards from 1911 to 1968 and covers workers from all parts of the NSW public service during this time.

The cards were produced by the Public Service Board and recorded staff from the departments of the Chief Secretary, Treasury, Attorney-General, Lands, Public Works, Justice, Public Instruction, Mines and Agriculture, and the Office of the Public Service Board.

The information includes the employee's name, department, date of birth, employment date, department, whether they were permanent or temporary, their salary, allowance and basic wage, and remarks.

To search this series, type 'NRS-12295' and a name into the State Archives Collection catalogue search box.

Search

Webinars



Webinar: Equity Court Records in the State Archives Collection

Friday 30 August, 10.30am–11.30am

Since 1823, the Equity Court has dealt with matters of fairness and the enforcing of rights not recognised under common law. It included the guardianship of children and their property. It covers a wide range of subject matter, such as administration of estates, dissolution of partnerships, foreclosure of mortgages, execution of private or charitable trusts, and commercial and protective matters.

But how do you know when to search for an equity case? This webinar will explore records of the Equity Jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, how to find them, and what they can tell you.

Free, registration required.

[Register now](#)



Webinar: Tracing NSW Gaol Inmates – Researching Criminal Offenders in the State Archives Collection

Friday 27 September, 10.30am–11.30am

Gaol records can provide so much detail about your ancestors – where they came from, what they looked like and some of the things they did.

In this webinar we will show you how to use the State Archives Collection to trace your ancestors through the NSW prison system, uncovering their crimes and incarcerations.

Free, registration required.

[Register now](#)

Watch anytime



Webinar: First Nations Community Access to Archives

We acknowledge the incredible work that local communities are doing to reclaim and revitalise First Nations languages across NSW. In support of this work, MHNSW, in partnership with the Aboriginal Languages Trust, has begun an exciting initiative to unearth First Nations language, culture and heritage materials in the State Archives Collection, and prepare these for community access.

Join the team in deep listening to learn more about the project's journey of storytelling, truth-telling and revitalisation.

[Watch](#)

1. Page from register of wages paid to orphans, 1849–51. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-5274; 2. Oak tree on old Government Stock Farm, 1918. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-4481-3-[7/15971]-St6628; 3. Aircraft identification chart, c1942. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-10623-[10/2538]-File 42-1E-7; 4. Sir Henry Parkes, c1900. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-4481-3-[7/16025]-St15310; 5. Glazed tiles for dados, hearths, etc, encaustic floor tiles, mosaic faience, George Woolliscroft & Son, 1898. Caroline Simpson Library Collection, MHNSW: FTE 738.6 WOO; 6. Museum of Sydney exhibition views, Museums of History NSW. Photo © Hamish McIntosh; 7. *The first three decades (decade three)* (detail), Coomaditchie artists and community

members, 2022. Coomaditchie United Aboriginal Corporation. Photo © Bernie Fischer. Artwork © the artists; **8.** Rag rug, Vita Cochran. Courtesy of Vita Cochran; **9.** Wentworth Mausoleum. Photo © MHNSW; **10.** Visitors exploring Parbury Ruins. Photo © James Horan for MHNSW; **11.** Burgess, Alfred, date of birth 12/10/1880. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-12922-1-[11/16573]-[299]; **12.** Aikins, Eleanor. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-12395-1-[8/2599]-[575]; **13.** Supreme Court, corner King and Elizabeth streets, Sydney, 1911. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-4481-3-[7/15883]-M2439; **14.** Parramatta [Gao], Department of Public Works, undated. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-4481-4-208-[AF00194101]; **15.** Jasmyrn Irwin (left) and Alinta Trindall from the First Nations Community Access to Archives team viewing records in the State Archives Collection. Photo © Joshua Morris for MHNSW

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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