History. Not as you know it.

Museums eNews

September 2024

Sydney Open Series

White Bay Power Station Behind-the-Scenes Tours

White Bay Power Station, 20–22 September, various times

Decommissioned in 1984, Sydney's longest serving power station, at White Bay, will once again energise the city as part of the 2024 Power Up Festival. MHNSW, in partnership with Placemaking NSW, has developed exclusive tours of the former power station as part of our ***Sydney Open Series***.

The tour will take you through newly remediated areas of White Bay Power Station, including the vast and cathedral-like Boiler House and Turbine Hall, as well as some hidden spaces not open to the public.

These tours have been made free thanks to our partnership with Placemaking NSW. Spaces are strictly limited, registrations required.

Members get more: Members enjoy pre-sale access.

Book now

Lahznimmo Architects Tour

Powerhouse Castle Hill, Saturday 14 September, various times

Powerhouse Castle Hill is a storehouse for the Powerhouse Collection that supports research, conservation and public programs.

In 2018, Lahznimmo Architects designed a new 9,000-square-metre building for the site. The building provides extensive storage for the collection and archives, and includes flexible spaces for education, public programs, workshops, talks, exhibitions and events.

Join us for a behind-the-scenes tour of the facility as part of our ***Sydney Open Series***.

Members get more: Members enjoy presale access and a 20% discount on tickets.

Book now

History Week 2024: Marking Time

Making History from a House: The Story of Vaucluse House as a Museum

Sunday 8 September, 11am–12pm

To celebrate History Week 2024, join MHNSW Research Curator Dr Paige Gleeson on this tour that explores how Vaucluse House was for much of the 20th century conceptualised and operated as a museum of Australian history and as a site to pay tribute to the memory of influential politician William Charles Wentworth.

Dr Gleeson will discuss how Vaucluse House's role as a museum evolved over time, reflecting events and developments that shaped history, heritage and Australian society in the 20th century.

Members get more: Members enjoy a 20% discount on tickets. Plus 10% off dining at Estate Vaucluse House.

Book now

Marking Moments: Commemorating NSW Across Time

Friday 13 September, 10am–12.15pm

Join us for another History Week 2024 event, *Marking Moments: Commemorating NSW Across Time*. This special event will explore celebratory practices from the colonial era to the present day, drawing on the rich material held in the State Archives Collection.

Marking Moments includes a talk, an optional tour of the Western Sydney Records Centre and a special viewing of state archives, including the Third Charter of Justice, the 200th anniversary of which is being celebrated this year.

As this event is a walking tour, a reasonable level of fitness is required.

Bookings essential

Book now

What's on at Vaucluse House

An Evening Visit to Vaucluse House

Thursday 3 October, 6pm–8pm

Join us for an exclusive and intimate tour of Vaucluse House and experience the Wentworths' picturesque estate and harbourside retreat in a whole new light.

As evening falls, explore the impressive and lavishly decorated drawing room, hear stories about the residents of this Gothic Revival mansion, and visit the private quarters of William Charles and Sarah Wentworth and their ten children.

Members get more: Members enjoy a 20% discount on tickets.

Book now

What's on at Elizabeth Bay House

Elizabeth Bay House from Dusk to Darkness

Friday 6 September, 6pm–8pm

Experience Elizabeth Bay House as the sun sets and see the ‘finest house in the colony’ after dark.

Marvel at the architectural grandeur of the magnificent domed saloon enhanced by candlelight, visit the servants’ quarters, and explore the wine cellars underneath the house. Complete your visit with a glass of wine and some light refreshments in the elegant dining room.

Members get more: Members enjoy a 20% discount on tickets.

Book now

Sources of the Past

Monday 14 October, various times

Drawing from historical sources held in the Caroline Simpson Library, our Soft Furnishings volunteers create, re-create and maintain furnishings for our historic houses.

See the Soft Furnishings volunteers at work in the wonderful surrounds of Elizabeth Bay House and hear spot talks by the group’s coordinator, MHNSW’s Joanna Nicholas.

This program is presented as part of Sydney Craft Week.

Members get more: Members enjoy a 20% discount on tickets.

Book now

What’s on at the Caroline Simpson Library

A Passion for Postcards: The Postcard Collection of Miss Vera Bell

The Mint, open Tuesday to Friday, 10am–4pm

The first decade of the 20th century was the golden age of the postcard. Mass-produced and widely available, postcards became the ‘text message’ of their time.

Postcards featured an almost infinite array of subjects, including celebrities, holiday destinations and significant events. Today, they present us with a snapshot of an era and the personal lives of those whose correspondence they capture.

Our new Caroline Simpson Library display draws from the more than 1,000 postcards collected by young Sydney woman Miss Vera Bell.

Members get more: Members enjoy a 10% discount off shopping and dining at the Bullion Store.

Learn more

What’s on at the Museum of Sydney

Madjeri now on display

Open daily, 10am–5pm

New to the foyer of the Museum of Sydney are two madjeri (bark canoes) made by the Gujaga Foundation under the guidance of Gweagal clan leader Uncle Rod Mason and with the support of the Gamay Rangers.

Madjeri (pronounced mud-jer-ee) is the Dharawal word for the type of canoes on display, which have been made on Country. Accompanying the display is a short film documenting the process of making the madjeri and highlighting the challenges and significance of sharing and learning cultural knowledge and skills.

Members get more: Members enjoy a 10% discount at the museum shop and at This Way Canteen.

Learn more

Coomaditchie: The Art of Place extended

Open daily, 10am–5pm

We're delighted to announce that the exhibition *Coomaditchie: The Art of Place* at the Museum of Sydney will be extended until Sunday 2 February 2025.

Experience community life by the ocean through the works of First Nations artists. The loving and lyrical artworks featured in this exhibition, which include paintings, ceramics and screen-prints, speak of life in and around the settlement of Coomaditchie in the Illawarra region of NSW.

Members get more: Members enjoy a 10% discount at the museum shop and at This Way Canteen.

Plan your visit

What's on at Elizabeth Farm

Candelabra aloes are

The Art of Blending

in season

Fridays and Saturdays, 10am–4pm

The candelabra aloes are putting on a stunning show at Elizabeth Farm. Named for the distinctive arrangement of their flowers, these spectacular plants shoot up bright orange spikes from a single stem up to 60 centimetres tall.

Our candelabra aloes have a special history. They originate from the grand estate of Camden Park, granted to John Macarthur in 1805, where they were part of Sir William Macarthur's extensive botanic collection and commercial nursery.

Visit Elizabeth Farm to enjoy this vibrant display.

Plan your visit

Tea with T Totaler

Saturday 26 October, various times

Join MHNSW Curator Dr Scott Hill and tea experts Paul and Amber Sunderland from T Totaler for a unique experience at Vaucluse House and discover the fascinating history of tea in colonial NSW. Delve into the significance of tea in early Australian society in a guided tour before participating in a hands-on workshop where you'll learn the art of tea blending and create your own personalised blend to take home. Gain insights into mindful tea-drinking and the cultural importance of tea ceremonies around the world.

Members get more: Members enjoy a 20% discount on tickets.

Book now

What's on at Rouse Hill Estate

Visitor centre upgrades complete

Sundays, 10am–4pm

Start your next visit to Rouse Hill Estate at the newly refurbished visitor centre. Discover the richly layered history of the site, on Dharug Country, and learn about the six generations of one family who called this place home over 180 years.

Before you visit, take a sneak peek with an interactive virtual walkthrough of the house and explore intriguing items from the extraordinary collection of possessions accumulated by the family.

Plan your visit

Out and about

Convict Sydney Walking Tour

Wednesday 16 October, 10.30am–12.30pm

Join one of our knowledgeable and expert guides for a tour of convict Sydney.

Walk from the site of the first Government House, a place of important early contact between Aboriginal people and the British colonists, to the Rum Hospital (now The Mint) and the Hyde Park Barracks, which housed male convicts and was the epicentre of the colony's convict system.

Members get more: Members enjoy a 20% discount on tickets.

Book now

Online talks

Equity Court Records in the State Archives Collection

Webinar, Friday 30 August, 10.30am–11.30am

Since 1823 the Equity Jurisdiction 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. This webinar explores the records of the Equity Jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, how to find them, and what they can tell you.

Free; registration required.

Book now

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

Webinar, Friday 27 September, 10.30am–11.30am

Are you researching an ancestor who may have passed through the NSW prison system? Gaol records can provide so much detail – where the inmate 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 people through the NSW prison system, uncovering their crimes and incarcerations.

Book now

Raising the Farmer: Glass negatives taken for the Agricultural Gazette of NSW, 1890–1914

Webinar, Friday 25 October, 10.30am–11.30am

On 1 July 1890 the first issue of the Agricultural Gazette of NSW was printed by the NSW Department of Mines and Agriculture. It aimed to spread information about agriculture and aboriculture, give advice to farmers, and educate the young seeking to be farmers, orchardists and vignerons.

Join us as we explore some of the 6,000 glass negatives taken to illustrate these articles – now digitally available on our website as a unique slice of rural life.

Book now

Dine & Shop

This Way Canteen

Corner of Phillip and Bridge streets, Sydney

This Way Canteen welcomes Museum of Sydney visitors until 4pm every day with a selection of fresh sandwiches, salads and bespoke pastries, coffee, nutritious juices and smoothies, and wine and beer for those wanting a tipple in the afternoon.

Members get more: Enjoy a 10% discount at This Way Canteen.

Plan your visit

Shop online

Made with the perfect 50/50 blend of linen and cotton, this tea towel features a reproduction of the original Robinson's aeroplane map of Sydney.

Purchase online now or shop in store at the Bullion Store (in The Mint), Museum of Sydney, Hyde Park Barracks, Susannah Place or the Justice & Police Museum. Shipping additional.

Members get more: Save a further 10% off the marked price.

Shop our online sale

From our friends

An evening with Terri Janke

Chau Chak Wing Museum, Thursday 12 September, 5.30pm

Join Dr Terri Janke at the University of Sydney in the Chau Chak Wing Museum to get a deeper understanding of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP). During the evening, Dr. Terri Janke will explain what ICIP entails, detail the True Tracks® principles, and discuss her work establishing best practices in this area.

Learn more

Sydney Contemporary

Sydney Contemporary, in partnership with MA Financial Group, will return to Carriageworks from 5 to 8 September for four days of curated exhibitions, large-scale installations, experimental live performances, engaging panel discussions, artist talks, tours, and delicious dining options!

Save on your entry with our special offer – 20% off Friday night and day tickets.

Offer period: Until Tuesday 3 September 11.55pm

Learn more

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1. Interior of the control room at White Bay Power Station. Image courtesy of Placemaking NSW; 2. Wentworth descendants posing as their ancestors in historical costume at Vaucluse House. Caroline Simpson Library Collection, MHNSW; 3. Photos © James Horan for MHNSW; 4. Clock mechanism, tower clock construction at Sydney Railway Terminal (Central Station), c1920. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-17420-2-26-843/051; 5. Photos © James Horan for MHNSW; 6. Soft Furnishings volunteers in the dining room, Elizabeth Bay House. Photo © Haley Richardson and Stuart Miller for MHNSW; 7. Postcard, Dean St, Albury, publisher unknown. Bell family papers, Caroline Simpson Library Collection, MHNSW; 8. Madjeri at the Museum of Sydney, Gujaga Foundation, 2024. Commissioned by MHNSW. Photo © MHNSW; 9. Visitor in the Coomaditchie: The Art of Place exhibition; 10. Photo © MHNSW; 11. Photo courtesy of T Totaler; 12. Photo © MHNSW 13. Photo © Joshua Morris for MHNSW; 14. Supreme Court, King and Elizabeth streets, Sydney, NSW Government Printing Office, undated. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-4481-3-[7/15883]-M2439; 15. Parramatta [Gaol], Government Printing Office, undated. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-4481-4-208-[AF00194101]; 16. Agricultural College Boys, Government Printing Office, undated. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-4481-4-161-[AF00198139]; 17. Photo courtesy of This Way Canteen; 18. Photo © James Horan for MHNSW; 19. PENDING 20. Image courtesy of Sydney Contemporary.

Museums of History NSW

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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