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 Library Collection and museum collections.

Settlers' Muster Book, 1800, digitised

The Settlers' Muster Book of 1800, a record of early European settlers in Australia in two handwritten volumes, has been digitised and is now accessible to the public for the first time. Honoured on the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Register in 2021, the Muster Book held by the NSW Parliamentary Library is the most comprehensive surviving record of the early colony.

The significant digitisation project is the result of a collaboration between the NSW Parliamentary Library and MHNSW. The Muster Book is now available on our **website** and also through NSW Parliament's new online database, **Parlimento**.

You can virtually leaf through the pages listing information about early settlers and convicts.

This record offers the opportunity for people to uncover information about their own family members, while historians may discover new details that provide valuable insights into this formative period of the colony.

Given the age and condition of the Muster Book, MHNSW employed specialised equipment to ensure no damage occurred during digitisation. The high-quality images we've produced not only enhance public access but also preserve this artefact for future generations.

Search

Across our collections

Holiday closure dates

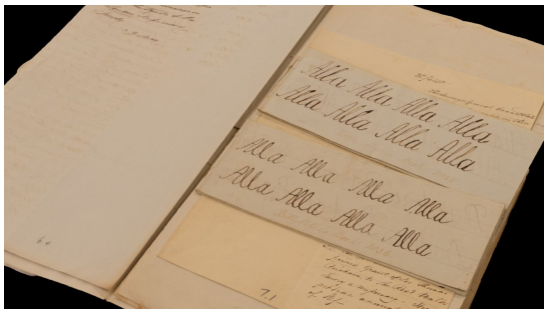
Our closure and reopening dates for the holiday period are:

State Archives Reading Room, Western Sydney Records Centre
Last day of operation for 2024 – Saturday 21 December 2024
Open from – Tuesday 7 January 2025

Caroline Simpson Library, The Mint
Last day of operation for 2024 – Friday 20 December 2024
Open from – Tuesday 14 January 2025

All museums and historic houses are closed on Christmas Day. Check our **website** for opening days across the festive period

We look forward to sharing our collections with you for the remainder of the year, and again in the next.



Languages Alive 2024

In the second annual NSW Aboriginal Languages Week, held on 20–27 October, we celebrated the determination and courage of First Nations peoples to maintain and revitalise languages.

The First Nations Community Access to Archives team at MHNSW are working hard to uncover language and cultural material relating to First Nations communities in NSW, with a focus on improving the discoverability and accessibility of the State Archives Collection.

The team's examination of the collection began with the Colonial Secretary's records from the 19th century, where the practices of forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are documented from as early as 1814. These practices led to significant declines in Aboriginal languages being spoken and used across NSW.

However, the uncovering of a powerful instance of language preservation in the collection has inspired the team.

Read more

As part of NSW Aboriginal Languages Week, we also hosted an engaging panel discussion with NSW Aboriginal Languages Trust, highlighting the importance of access to archives for the revitalisation of Aboriginal languages across NSW. The event recording can be accessed **here**.

Small Debts Registers Index – update

There are now over 17,000 entries in the Small Debts Registers Index due to the efforts of local and community groups who have collaborated with us as part of the **Archives for Everyone project**.

Registers from the following Courts of Petty Sessions are now available via the index:

- Angledool
- Cooma
- East Maitland
- Marsden
- Morangarell
- Muswellbrook
- Penrith
- Picton
- Port Macquarie
- Tallimba
- Taralga
- Wilcannia
- Yass
- Yerranderie

A big thank you to all those groups who have contributed so far! More localities will be added in the coming weeks.

Search

Envisioning the 'Sydney National Opera House': A different 'Red Book'

Jørn Utzon's *Sydney National Opera House* volume featuring an early version of his award-winning design, and known as the 'Red Book' due to the colour of its cover, was printed by Atelier Elektra of Copenhagen, Denmark, in March 1958.

A variant of the 'Red Book' – with additional plans dated May 1958 – has recently been generously donated to MHNSW by Mr Mark Matheson.

The State Archives Collection holds an earlier version of the Red Book dated March 1958 as **NRS-12707-1-[SZ107]**, comprising 58 pages.

The May 1958 Red Book (NRS-12707-2) shows early changes made to elements of the original design and includes additional plans that are not present in the earlier volume.

The annotations and additional plans illustrate that there were proposed changes to the direction of the Sydney Opera House structure before any building work even took place.

Read more

What's on

A Generous Gift: The John and Phyllis Murphy Collection

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

Our current display in the Caroline Simpson Library features an array of colourful and evocative historical wallpapers from the John and Phyllis Murphy Collection.

The collection was compiled by architects Phyllis Murphy (nee Slater, 1924) and her husband, John Murphy (1920–2004), and comprises thousands of rolls and lengths of historical wallpapers as well as sample books, trade literature and related materials dating from around 1850 to 1980.

In late 2022, Phyllis donated the collection to MHNSW, and it is now being shared with the public in our display *A Generous Gift: The John and Phyllis Murphy Collection*.

Plan your visit

First Nations Speaker Series: Partnering with Dignity, with Jason Ardler

Museum of Sydney, Wednesday 27 November, 6pm–7pm

When our value is recognised and our dignity is honoured, we flourish. On the other hand, when our value is denied and our dignity is violated, we suffer. If these indignities aren't named, acknowledged and redressed, they will fester and create obstacles to our ability to connect with one another.

Yuin man Jason Ardler will explore this subject in the context of First Nations policy and the implications for Australia's future relationship with its First Nations peoples.

Free: registration required

Book now

Meroogal Women's Art Prize 2024

Meroogal, Nowra, open Saturdays only, 10am–4pm

The biennial *Meroogal Women's Art Prize*, now in its 20th year, is a regional, non-acquisitive competition and exhibition. It is open to a work in any medium made by a woman aged 18 years or over who is a resident of NSW.

Women artists from across NSW were invited to submit works that respond to the historic house of Meroogal, its former occupants, and its meaning within broader historical and contemporary contexts.

Artworks selected for the exhibition are on display to the public until Saturday 24 May 2025.

Free entry: booking essential

Book now

Super series

Photographic collection, Department of Urban Affairs and Planning

This series (NRS-15721) consists of photographic material held by the former Department of Urban Affairs and Planning Photographic Unit and subsequently the Heritage Branch of the Department of Planning.

The photographs, in both colour and black-and-white formats, were taken between 1945 and 1999 and show Sydney and its surrounding localities, as well as regional NSW. They were used for planning research, publications, presentations, and recording official ministerial functions and events for NSW planning strategy purposes.

Each item contains multiple images of a subject. More than half of the series has been digitised and is available to search in the State Archives catalogue.

Search

Standard survey plans, Maritime Services

This series consists of survey plans that depict boundaries and occupation of Roads and Maritime Services land. Roads and Maritime Services held title over the bed of the harbour in the same way that an ordinary citizen would have title covering a residence they owned. Structures such as berths, boatsheds, slipways and jetties project on to Roads and Maritime Services land.

The survey plans supported Roads and Maritime Services' administration of more than 2,000 wetland leases covering foreshore structures in Sydney Harbour, Botany Bay, Newcastle Harbour and Port Kembla Harbour. Sydney Harbour included North Harbour, Middle Harbour, Parramatta River, Lane Cove River and Duck River.

There are over 2,000 plans in this series available to view in the State Archives catalogue.

Search

Webinars

Webinar: The Records

Webinar: Assisted

of Liverpool Asylum

Friday 22 November, 10.30am–11.30am

In 1862 the NSW Government took control of Liverpool Asylum for the Infirm and Destitute, originally a branch of the Sydney Benevolent Society. Throughout its almost 100 year long existence the asylum provided refuge for infirm and destitute men.

This webinar will explore the records of the Liverpool Asylum (1862–1933), which was later known as the Liverpool State Hospital and Home (1933–1961).

Free: registration required

Register now

Immigrants Records

Friday 6 December, 10.30am–11.30am

Assisted immigrant records can add so much to family history.

This webinar will provide an overview of our assisted immigrant indexes and digitised passenger lists. Learn new ways to search for records, and how to interpret their secrets.

Free: registration required

Register now

Watch anytime

Webinar: Raising the Farmer – Glass Negatives Taken for the Agricultural Gazette, 1890–1914

On 1 July 1890, the first issue of the *Agricultural Gazette of New South Wales* was published by the NSW Department of Mines and Agriculture. It aimed to spread information about agriculture and arboriculture, give advice to farmers, and educate young people seeking to become farmers, orchardists or vignerons.

Explore with us some of the 6,000 glass negatives that were created to illustrate these articles – now digitally available on our website and offering a unique slice of rural life.

Watch

1. Martyn Killion, Director of Collections, MHNSW; Deborah Bennett, Parliamentary Librarian; and Adjunct Associate Professor Carol Liston AO with the 1800 Settlers' Muster Book. Photo © Parliament of NSW; **2.** Cover of *Attractive holidays in New South Wales* (detail), 1941. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-16410-1-1-[1A]-194; **3.** Billy Blue's and Little M'Gill's language copy books from Ebenezer Mission, 1836, found in the Colonial Secretary's correspondence, held in the State Archives Collection, MHNSW. Photo © MHNSW; **4**. Cover, Small Debts Register, Molong Court of Petty Sessions. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-3148, [1/3376]; **5**. Cover of the 'Red Book', March 1958. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-12707-1-[SZ107]-SZ107; **6**. Wallpaper frieze, Wallpaper Manufacturers Limited, Walker Carver Branch, England, 1909. John and Phyllis Murphy Collection, Caroline Simpson Library, MHNSW; **7.** Image courtesy GML Heritage; **8**. Verandah at Meroogal. Photo © Katherine Lu for MHNSW; **9**. Extractive Industry – Penrith Lakes Scheme, 1993. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-15721-2-10-616; **10**. Standard Survey Plan – County Cumberland – Parish Saint Philip – Local Government Authority City of Sydney – Locality Sydney Cove – Circular Quay – PH68, after 1939. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-20783-4-78-St. P. 68; **11**. General dining room, Liverpool Asylum, from NSW Government Printer series: Department of Public Health, 1911. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-4481-3-[7/15880]-M1925; **12**. Painting of three-masted cutter, no date. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-9856-2-58-4954; **13**. Agricultural College Boys, Department of Agriculture, date unknown. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-4481-4-161-[AF00198139]

Museums of History NSW

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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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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