



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

Upcoming seminar



Great Migration: Irish Immigration Records and Government Schemes in NSW

Western Sydney Records Centre, Friday 17 October, 9.30am–3pm, registration essential

Join us for a seminar on Irish immigration records featuring a series of talks by renowned expert historians and genealogists Dr Richard Reid, Dr Perry McIntyre and Dr Damian John Gleeson.

The talks will focus on different government immigration schemes and the large paper trail of official documents they left behind. This includes not just the ships' lists (the delight of family historians), but also thousands of other records that provide a picture of how the schemes were set up and experienced.

As a bonus, original state archives will be on display and there will also be a behind-the-scenes tour. Check our website for details.

General \$50, members \$40

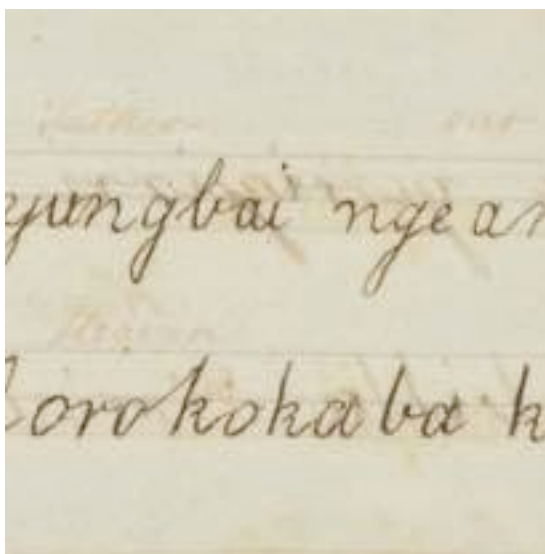
Members get more: Members enjoy a 20% discount on tickets.

Register now

Across our collections



**‘A creature of
incredible taste’:**



**Little footsteps, big
future: honouring**

incredible taste . Winnafreda, Countess of Portarlington

Our current Caroline Simpson Library display features original plates from Robert Thornton's renowned publication *The temple of Flora*, published in batches between 1799 and 1807. The plates were originally part of the collection of Winnafreda, Countess of Portarlington.

Australian by birth, Winnie Portarlington, as she was known to her friends, was one of the most glamorous and well-connected women in British society in the first half of the 20th century.

Find out more about this fascinating woman, her social connections and her collections.

[Read more](#)



utures. honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day

In this article, Beth Thornber, Access Advisor on the First Nations Community Access to Archives project, reflects on the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day through examining the role of young First Nations people in language preservation and revitalisation.

The article highlights the powerful example of two young Aboriginal boys who in 1836 recorded Awabakal language in personal copybooks. These copybooks, now held in the NSW State Archives Collection, serve as strong reminders of the potential of archival material for language reclamation and the importance of championing First Nations children to learn, speak, sing, and dance to the language of their ancestors.

[Read more](#)





Save the date: Open Day – Western Sydney Records Centre

*Western Sydney Records Centre,
Saturday 22 November*

Join us on Dharug Country on 22 November as MHNSW celebrates 50 years onsite at the Western Sydney Records Centre, Kingswood.

Come and see the collections up close, hear from experts on a range of fascinating topics, take a behind-the-scenes tour and relax with good food and coffee in our unique environment.

Check our website for further details and announcements. See you there!



New index: Sentenced to Parramatta Female Factory

During Family History Month, we are delighted to announce the addition of a new index on our website – a list of all the women sentenced by the Sydney courts to serve time at the Parramatta Female Factory.

Entries list each woman's name, ship of arrival, offence and sentence. Other names, such as a married name or an alias, are also recorded. Additional details, including references to documents such as Certificates of Freedom or census entries, are provided in the Remarks section.

This index has been created by Margaret Jones and David Jones, who also generously donate their time as MHNSW collections volunteers. They created this index as a personal project and made it available to all of us. Margaret and David, we cannot thank you enough for everything that you do!

Search the index by given name, family name or ship.

[Search](#)

Webinars



Ships, More Ships, and Still More Ships

Online, Friday 29 August, 10.30am–11.30am, free webinar, registration required

The NSW State Dockyard, Newcastle, opened in 1942 at the height of World War II. Brought under state jurisdiction in 1943, it played a large role in the war effort by meeting the increasing demand for 'ships, more ships, and still more ships'.

By the end of the war, 21 new vessels had been built at the dockyard and more than 600 vessels, many of which had been heavily damaged by enemy action, had docked there to be repaired. The dockyard remained a significant manufacturing asset for NSW until its closure in 1987.

Featuring files, plans and our recently digitised series of photographs, negatives, slides and microfilm (NRS-21054), this webinar will explore the records of the State Dockyard, Newcastle, held in the



Crown Plans – Revisited

Online, Friday 26 September, 10.30am–11.30am, free webinar, registration required

Crown plans are some of the most valuable sources of information about land in NSW.

More than just recording land boundaries, these plans can provide information about the use, purchase and resumption of Crown land by and from the government. They can also be a starting point for further research, unlocking other parts of the State Archives Collection. Crown plans are a valuable (and often underutilised) resource for researchers of both local and family history.

Join us for an introduction to the world of NSW Crown plans. Learn how you can start searching for, accessing, and understanding Crown plans and related records in the State Archives Collection.

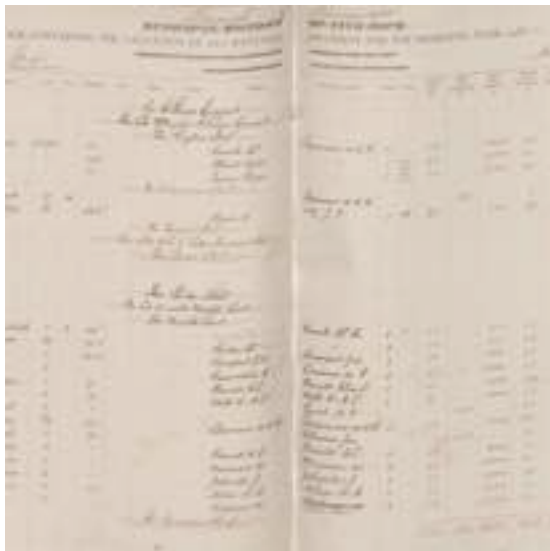


State Archives Collection. Learn about the important work and discover the untold stories of the dockyard found within the collection.

[Register now](#)

[Register now](#)

Super series



Local council records

The records created by local councils are a great source of historical information about the people, places and progress of towns in your area.

Although many of these records are still held in council archives, many more from councils all over NSW are now part of the State Archives Collection. Minutes of council meetings, rate books and correspondence records are among the most common items in the collection, but there are a number of series relating to town building and development the provision of



Photograph albums of Mr L G Watt

The series [NRS-549 Photograph albums of Mr L. G. Watt](#) consists of two leather-bound photograph albums collated between 1928 and 1935 by Lionel George Morris Watt, Administrating Officer to the Board of Fire Commissioners of New South Wales.

The photographs within provide a visual account of the commissioners' trips around NSW, as well as parts of Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. They document the route the

development, the provision of utilities, council supplies and financial management.

The easiest way to find out what we hold is to search the State Archives Collection catalogue for your local council, using its original name, or more recent name(s) following amalgamation with other councils.

Some of our council records have even been digitised.

Why not check out our other [local history resources](#), or search our catalogue today?

Search

commissioners took on their travels, including where they stopped for lunch, where they stayed overnight and the events they attended.

Each photograph has been captioned and, in most cases, dated, with the images generally arranged in chronological order. Several relevant newspaper clippings are also included in the albums.

These photographs provide an excellent snapshot of regional NSW during the late 1920s to the mid-1930s.

Search

What's on



Dark Waters: Crime, Smuggling and Shipwrecks in NSW

State Archives Reading Room, Western Sydney Records Centre,

Friday 12 September, 10am–12pm, free, registration essential

To celebrate NSW History Week 2025, join us for a gripping talk about the darker side of NSW's rivers and harbours.

This talk will dive into little-known stories of crime and disaster on the water, uncovering tales of daring smuggling operations, dramatic shipwrecks and dastardly acts of piracy. Drawing on the rich holdings of the State Archives Collection, we will explore how NSW waterways have featured in tales of both scandal and survival.

The event includes a viewing of original archival material and will be followed by a guided tour of the Western Sydney Records Centre, home of the State Archives Collection.

Book now



Seeing Sydney, Knowing Country

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

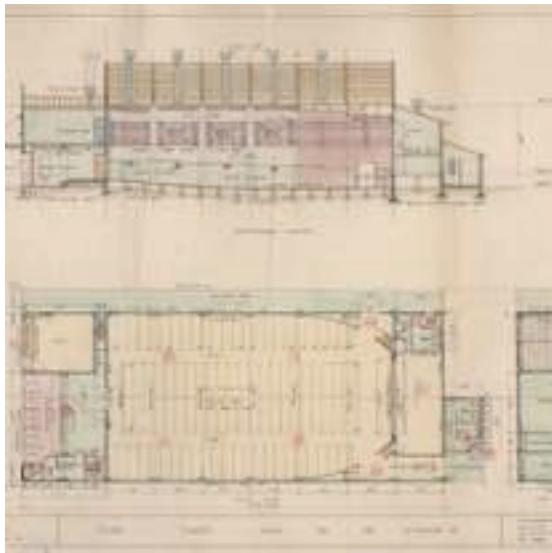
Today, Sydney is known for its iconic harbour, scenic foreshores, bushland reserves, and ever-growing urban and suburban areas. But how were its landscapes experienced and understood in the past?

This exhibition depicts the development of the NSW colony through a selection of historical maps, plans, sketches, artworks and objects. Inscribed over this colonial perspective is an innovative artistic intervention, led by Dharawal and Yuin artist and designer Alison Page with input from

led by Elizabeth and Pam and designed in 1997, with input from the Sydney Coastal Aboriginal Women's Group, that layers First Nations understandings of Country. Traditional owners' knowledge of Country, developed over 60,000 years, offers a way to gain a deep appreciation of the landscapes we encounter in Sydney today.

[Plan your visit](#)

Watch anytime



Webinar: Theatres and Public Hall Files

Theatres and public halls are an integral part of local communities. Owned and run by private individuals, businesses, religious organisations, community groups and councils, these places have long provided dedicated spaces for community members to meet for a variety of purposes, from dances and social gatherings to movies and live entertainment.

The State Archives Collection's series of theatre and public hall files (NRS-15318) documents the licensing of these premises, including plans and specifications, building inspections, and correspondence. These files tell the stories not only of local businesses, but also of the recreational lives of the town.

This webinar explores the files and related records, and what they can tell you about the history of your local community. Learn how to search for and view these records yourself.

Watch now

1. Letters regarding immigration, 1831. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-905-1-[4/2115]; 2. 'The narrow-leaved Kalmia', from *Thornton's Temple of Flora: with plates faithfully reproduced from the original engravings* ..., Geoffrey Grigson (author), Collins, London, 1951. Caroline Simpson Library Collection, MHNSW; 3. Specimen of Billy Blue's language copybook found within the Colonial Secretary's special bundles. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-906-1-[SZ1000]; 4. Western Sydney Records Centre Open Day, 15 April 2023. Photo © James Horan for MHNSW; 5. Lunatic asylum, Parramatta: main entrance. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-4481-3-[7/16222]-Sh1716; 6. SS *William MacArthur* in dock – surveyors test holes, undated. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-21054-4-1-D398; 7. *Map of the Colony of NSW exhibiting the situation & extent of the appropriated lands, including the counties, towns, village reserves, etc., compiled from authentic surveys, etc*, 1837. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-13859-814-[Map4617]; 8. 130–148 Wolseley Street Drummoyne North Ward, 1903. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-20275-1-1-[1]-[10]; 9. 'Dorrigo – Town (one third)', undated. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-549-1-[14/1745]-[2]-147; 10. Sailing ship *Hereward* on Maroubra Beach, 1900. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-4481-3-[7/16031]-St16315; 11. *Panoramic views of Port Jackson* (detail), Major James Taylor, artist; R Havell & Sons, engraver, c1821. Reprinted by Tim McCormick from original copperplate held in the State Library of New South Wales; Image overlaid with *Tracks of the Ancestors* songline, Alison Page, 2024. Songline artwork commissioned by MHNSW © Alison Page; 12. Melody Theatre, Riverwood, undated. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-15318-1-[10/53112]-T1890

Museums of History NSW



Museums of History NSW cares for, and provides access to, significant historic places, collections and archives in

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