

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

Come and explore our collection



Open Day: Western Sydney Records Centre

Western Sydney Records Centre, Saturday 22 November, 10am–4pm, free, registration essential

Come and explore some of the treasures of MHNSW on Dharug Country as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Western Sydney Records Centre, home of the vast State Archives Collection.

See the Collection up close, hear from experts on a range of fascinating topics, take a behind-the-scenes tour, and enjoy family friendly workshops and activities with delicious food available to purchase on the day.

Our open day is a rare opportunity to step inside the heart of the State Archives and discover the largest collection of records relating to the history of NSW and the lives of its people.

A wide range of stallholders will be set up on the day, including Ancestry, City of Sydney Archives, National Archives of Australia, local historical and genealogical societies and museums, and our own MHNSW First Nations Community Access to Archives team.

Registration for the day, as well as separate registrations for each expert talk, are essential.

Register

Across our collections



Not so black and white

We recently acquired a polarising lens, which has been used to digitise photographs from the Rouse Hill Estate Collection.

Black and white photographs can deteriorate and undergo chemical changes over time. One common issue they face is the development of 'silver mirroring' or 'silvering'. This is a form of degradation where metallic silver on the surface reflects light, creating a glare or shine that obscures image details.

The most effective technique to eliminate the appearance of silvering on black and white photographs is 'cross-polarisation'.

Read and see more about the process.

[Read more](#)



Research topic survey

What's your topic of research? We'd love to know!

We are currently developing a Research Framework that will guide us in defining our research topics and activity over the next five years. Research undertaken by our staff informs many of our activities, from exhibitions to talks, learning programs, catalogue records, web stories and more.

So that we can learn more about the research topics of our collection users, we invite you to participate in a short survey, which you can access [here](#).

This survey is confidential and responses are for internal use only. We look forward to hearing from you.

[Take survey](#)



Closed 22 November – State Archives Reading Room

Due to the [Western Sydney Records Centre Open Day](#) being held on Saturday 22 November, our State Archives Reading Room will be closed for the day.

Our usual weekday and Saturday opening hours will resume on Tuesday 25 November.

We thank you for your understanding, and apologise for any inconvenience caused.



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 2025 –
Wednesday 24 December 2025
Open from – Tuesday 13 January 2026

Caroline Simpson Library, The Mint

Last day of operation for 2025 –
Wednesday 24 December 2025
Open from – Tuesday 13 January 2026

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.



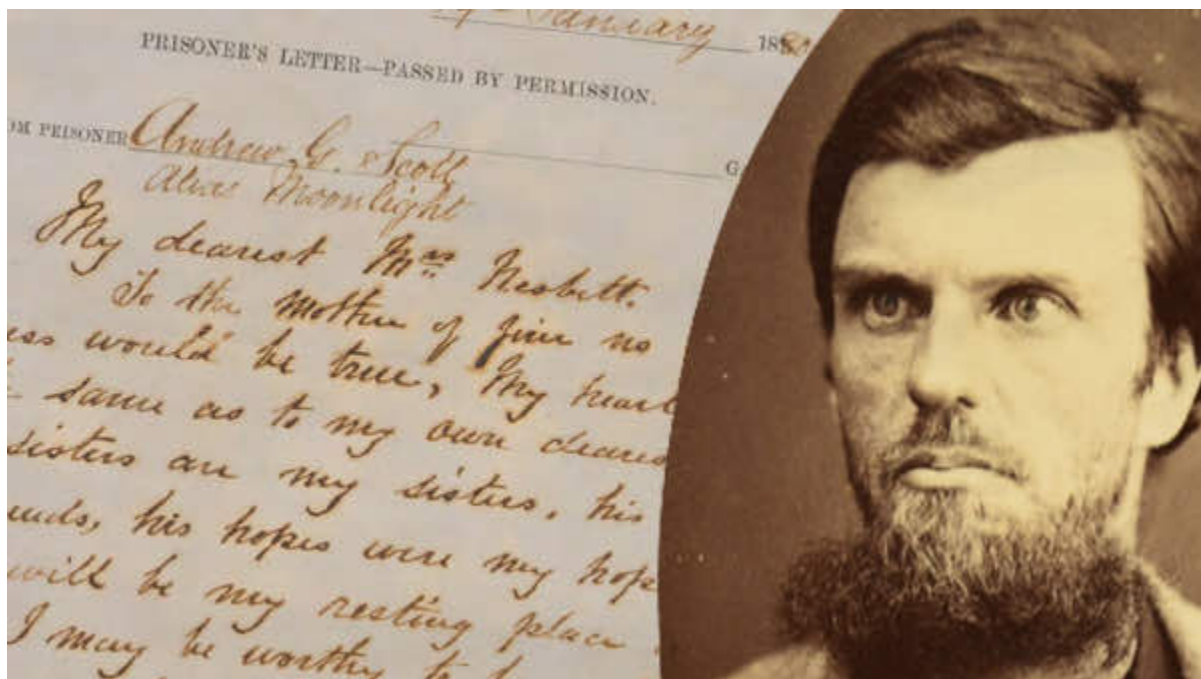
State Archives Reading Room 2026 – we're going cashless

In 2026 the [State Archives Reading Room](#) will be going cashless!

This means when we re-open in the new year on Tuesday 13 January, all transactions will be electronic via credit or debit card only.

MHNSW does not apply surcharges to these payments. Please note we do not accept cheques.

Digitised Discoveries



Captain Moonlite letters digitised

Cultured, charming and dangerous, Andrew George Scott (c.1842–1880), known as ‘Captain Moonlite’, was an Irish-born bushranger. Awaiting execution at Darlinghurst Gaol in 1880, he wrote many letters which were never sent by authorities and are now preserved in the State Archives Collection.

Written to a number of recipients, most of the letters describe Scott’s friendship and deep affection for fellow gang member James ‘Jim’ Nesbitt. Nesbitt, who had died in a gun battle with police the year before, is believed by many to have been Scott’s lover. One of the most poignant letters is the one Scott penned to Jim’s mother.

“As to my dearest Jim I have felt that the love and friendship, true, pure, real friendship that blessed our union demands that I should defend his name to the last.”

The complete file of letters has been digitised, and can be read online in the [State Archives catalogue](#).

[Read more](#)

Webinars



More Than a Name: NSW Naturalisation Records

Online, Friday 31 October, 10.30am–11.30am, free webinar, registration required

The system of naturalisation in NSW was established in 1849 with the passing of the Act to Amend the Laws relating to Aliens. Naturalisation allowed 'aliens' (that is, non-British subjects) to gain the same privileges and rights of citizenship as those held by British subjects or people born in NSW, such as the right to vote and the right to own land.

The State Archives Collection holds records relating to naturalisation up to 1903. This webinar will showcase the various naturalisation records held, including original applications for naturalisation, and advise what you may be able to discover about your immigrant ancestors in the collection.

[Register](#)



Faculty files: uncovering teacher records in the State Archives Collection

Online, Friday 28 November, 10.30am–11.30am, free webinar, registration required

The Board of National Education was established in 1848, solidifying the government's role in the provision of education in the colony. Among the responsibilities of the Board (and subsequent agencies) was the training, examination and inspection of teachers.

This webinar will explore 19th-century teacher records held in the State Archives Collection, making it possible to trace teachers' careers from young trainees through to the established teachers they became. Whether you're a family historian with a teacher ancestor or a local school history enthusiast, learn how you can uncover more information about teachers of the past.

[Register](#)

What's on



Convict Sydney Walking Tour

Museum of Sydney, Wednesday 5 November, 10.30am–12.30pm

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

From the site of the first Government House, a place of important early contact between Aboriginal people and the 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.

Follow in the footsteps of the thousands of convicts who were marched from Sydney Cove up to the Hyde Park Barracks through the Governor's Domain for processing. Hear stories of convicts' successes and failures, punishments and rewards, as you immerse yourself in the landscape of early Sydney.

The tour includes access to sites we manage: the [Museum of Sydney](#), [The Mint](#) and the [Hyde Park Barracks](#).

General \$45; member \$36

[Members get more](#): Members enjoy a 20% discount on tickets.

Book now



Archives for Everyone: No Debt Too Small or Petty

Newcastle City Library, Wednesday 5 November, 11am–12.30pm, free, registration essential

From missing wages to disputes between neighbours, the Courts of Petty Sessions (now known as the Local Court) were long a place where communities sought justice. From 1846, the courts settled claims for debts of up to £10, and their Small Debts Registers document countless cases.

Digitised Small Debts Registers from NSW Courts of Petty Sessions are now touring regionally with *Collections on Tour*. Join us at the Newcastle City Library to explore these valuable records and the stories they reveal.

[Register](#)



Collections in Focus: Rose Seidler House

Rose Seidler House, Saturday 22 November, various times

Enjoy a curator-led tour with a special focus on the unique collection at Rose Seidler House.

When completed in 1950, Rose Seidler House included the latest modernist furniture from the USA, locally made built-ins by Paul Kafka, and the most up-to-date labour-saving appliances for the kitchen. The carefully planned interiors created by Harry Seidler for his parents, Rose and Max, were ahead of their time and remain a revelation.

Join MHNSW's own Michael Lech and Joanna Nicholas for this behind-the-scenes look at the Rose Seidler House Collection.

General \$30; member \$24

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

Book now



Seeing Sydney, Knowing Country

Museum of Sydney, open daily, 10am–5pm, free entry, closes Sunday 2 November

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 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: Crown Plans – Revisited

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.

In this introduction to the world of NSW Crown plans you will learn how to start searching for, accessing, and understanding Crown plans and related records in the State Archives Collection.

[Watch now](#)

1. Western Sydney Records Centre Open Day. Photo © James Horan for MHNSW; 2. Mounted photograph of George Terry (1871–1957), digitised without cross-polarisation. Rouse Hill Estate Collection, MHNSW; 3. Centrespread Library, 17-01-1967. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-20347-1-20-6902; 4. Road sign 'Road Closed', 1938. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-4481-3-[7/16056]-St21421; 5. Cover of *Attractive holidays in New South Wales* (detail), 1941. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-16410-1-1-[1A]-194; 6. Photo © Joshua Morris for MHNSW; 7. Letter from Andrew George Scott, alias 'Captain Moonlite', to Mrs Nesbitt (mother of James Nesbitt), 19/01/1880, written while awaiting execution in Darlinghurst Gaol [detail]; gaol photograph of A G Scott, alias 'Captain Moonlite', 26/11/1879 [detail]. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-906-1-[4/825]-4/825.2; NRS-2138, [3/6043] No. 2170 p.132; 8. Certificate of naturalisation for Hans Olsen per *Cutty Sark*, 09/04/1902. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-905 [5/6614] 01/12389; 9. Blackfriars Infants School: teacher telling story to children, 1923. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-4481-3-[7/15982]-St8621; 10. Photo © Joshua Morris for MHNSW; 11. Images: State Archives Collection, MHNSW. Left to right: NRS-20455-1-13-14-13; NRS-4346-1-[9/5879B]-1-30; NRS-3247-[34/2010]; 12. Part of 103 piece dinner set, designed by Russel

Wright in 1937. Gift, through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, Harry Seidler AC OBE, 1991. Rose Seidler House Collection, MHNSW. Photo © Joshua Morris; **13.** *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; **14.** 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].

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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