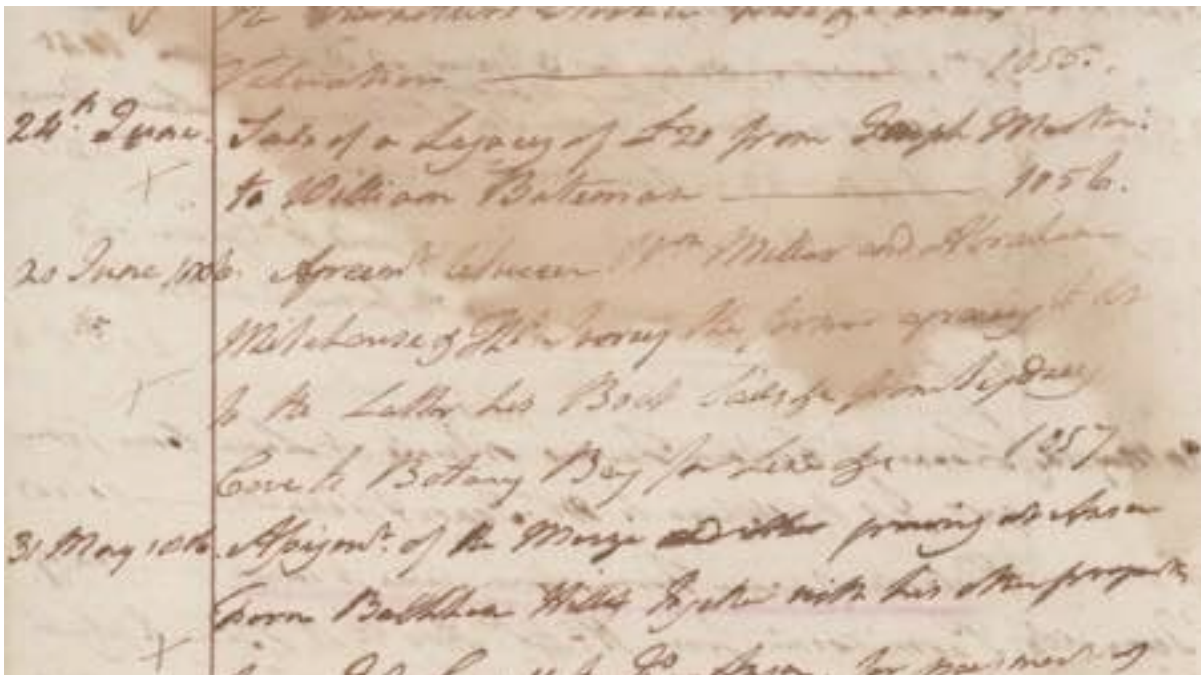


The latest events and information about Museums of History NSW collections, incorporating the State Archives Collection, the Caroline Simpson Library Collection and museum collections

Iconic treasure published online



‘Old Register’ volumes 1 to 9

We are thrilled to announce the online publication of this iconic treasure from the State Archives Collection.

The Registers of Assignments and Other Legal Instruments from 1794 to 1824, known colloquially as the 'Old Register', were inscribed on the [UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Register](#) in 2009. Representing some of the earliest colonial records in NSW, the Old Register is a nine-volume series of registers dating from 1802 to 1824 (backdated to 1794) that record private legal transactions and dealings between individuals and businesses. They deal with a wide range of matters, including land transactions, marriages and separations, convict–master relationships, deeds, and sealing and shipping agreements.

These records offer fascinating insights into early colonial times, providing information about the details of social relationships as well as the demographics and values of the colony. This index was compiled by Lois Sabine, Indexer, and is published in collaboration with the Office of the Registrar General.

Search the index by name, subject or place.

[Search now](#)

Across our collections



Seminar: Searching Early Colonial Records 1788–1856

Western Sydney Records Centre, Friday 29 May, 9am–4pm

Join us at the Western Sydney Records Centre for an information-packed full-day seminar on searching early colonial records for the period 1788–1856.

The day will feature talks and case studies from renowned expert historians Adjunct Associate Professor Carol Liston AO, Gary Sturgess AM, Dr Terry Kass, Bonnie Wildie and Michael Flynn, covering topics including female convicts, land records, shipping and the records of the Colonial Secretary.

There will also be the opportunity for a behind-the-scenes tour of the Western Sydney Records Centre.

[Book tickets](#)



State Archives Collection Customer Satisfaction Service Survey 2026

Every year we undertake a customer satisfaction survey to gather customer feedback on the State Archives Collection services we provide in our Reading Room, on our website and through our inquiry and copying services.

We welcome your input into this year's survey to help evaluate our State Archives Collection services. [Click here](#) to take our brief survey. It should only take about three minutes.

Your feedback is important and we appreciate your views about how we can improve our services and continue to meet your needs.

[Take survey](#)



From Water Police Office to museum

The complex that now houses the Justice & Police Museum was once one of the colony's busiest legal hubs, with a daily parade of offenders – and the odd goat. Additions and improvements mark the evolution of the site's function as courts and police station.

After the demolition of the first Government House in 1845–46, a large portion of its grounds was carved off into new streets and allotments. But one block was reserved for public buildings, and a core part remains in public ownership today – the former Water Police Office, Water Police Station and Police Court.

[Read more](#) about the history of this important site.

[Read more](#)



Artists selected for inaugural Caroline Simpson Library Creative Residency

In February, MHNSW welcomed Jane Burton Taylor and Vita Cochran as the first creatives to be selected for the Caroline Simpson Library Creative Residency program.

The residency provides the artists with dedicated time, space and special access to the Caroline Simpson Library Collection – a unique resource that holds a vast array of objects and stories related to the history of houses, interiors, gardens and domestic life. The aim of the residency is to inspire the creation of new work, collaboration and creative exchange.

[Read more](#) about the artists.

[Read more](#)

Upcoming webinars



The 'Old Register': Illuminating Early Colonial NSW

Friday 27 March, 10.30am–11.30am

The Registers of Assignments and Other Legal Instruments, otherwise known as the 'Old Register', are an invaluable resource.

In the very early years of the colony there was no authorised place to register land transfers and transactions after an initial grant of land. This quickly led to a large number of land disputes. In response, Governor King ordered in 1802 that no assignment would be legal unless it was drawn up and registered at the Judge Advocate's Office, and the first volume of the 'Old Register' was created.

Join us for this webinar led by Dr Carol Liston AO, Adjunct Associate Professor in History at Western Sydney University, to explore the 'Old Register' and what it can tell us about early colonial NSW.

Free; registration essential

[Register now](#)



The Reinterment of Devonshire Street Cemetery

Friday 24 April, 10.30am–11.30am

Established in 1820, Devonshire Street Cemetery was the main burial ground in Sydney until the passing of the Sydney Burial Grounds Act in 1866. Under the Act, interments in Sydney burial grounds were discontinued in an attempt to protect public health.

Only those who had existing family vaults or previously purchased plots could apply to the NSW Government for a licence to bury their family members in Sydney. A few decades later, in 1901, the cemetery was resumed by the state to make way for Sydney's Central Railway Station, and the government began the process of liaising with relatives of the deceased over the exhumation and reinterment of their loved ones.

Join us for this webinar exploring records from the State Archives Collection that reveal the history of one of Sydney's oldest burial grounds and the mammoth job of reintering those buried there to allow for the construction of Central Railway Station.

[Register now](#)

Collections on Tour

We're on the road again with [Collections on Tour](#), sharing our stories with the people of regional NSW – next stop is Bathurst.



Making Home: A Short History of Houses, Interiors and Gardens in NSW

Chifley Home and Education Centre, Bathurst, Thursday 7 May, 10.30am–12pm

Learn about the history of houses, interiors and gardens in NSW and explore material relevant to your locality. Drawing on MHNSW's rich collections, our experts will deliver illustrated presentations followed by a Q&A. There will also be an opportunity for you to view original collection material such as wallpaper, trade catalogues, tiles, architectural pattern books and historical garden sources.

Presented in collaboration with Museums Bathurst.

[Book now](#)

What's on



Firestick talk series

The Mint, various dates, free, booking required

Launching on 16 April, *Firestick* is a new six-part talk series featuring First Nations visionaries who are blazing a trail and lighting the way for future generations in diverse industries from video game design to global fashion.

Drawing on the long history of firestick farming, an Indigenous land management practice that uses controlled back-burning to promote new growth, this First Nations-led conversation series is designed to ignite dialogue and broaden perspectives. Held in the Gold Melting Room at The Mint, it provides a welcoming and timely platform that encourages meaningful discussion and a deeper understanding of Indigenous innovation and agency.

Following the talk, carry on the conversation with an opportunity to gather for an informal yarn with the speakers. Food and beverage options will be available on the night.

Members get more with a 10% discount on food and drinks.

[Book now](#)



A Century of Paint Colour Charts: 1880–1980

Caroline Simpson Library, The Mint, Tuesday to Friday, until 26 June

Discover 100 years of paint charts in a colourful display at the Caroline Simpson Library.

The choice of colour in the decoration of home interiors has long reflected a household's wealth and status, as well as changing fashions. The industrial revolution of the 19th century saw rapid progress made in paint manufacturing. The invention of ready-mix paint revolutionised the paint industry, resulting in greater consistency and stability of colours. With the advent of ready-mix paints came the colour chart – a way of standardising and advertising each manufacturer's range of paint colours.

This display demonstrates both the changing popularity of certain colours and the evolution in colour chart design over time.

[Plan your visit](#)



Unearthed

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

Even the most ordinary object has many stories to tell, depending on how you look at it.

Between 1983 and 1991, archaeologists excavated one of the most contested blocks of land in Sydney – the site of Australia’s first Government House. They unearthed around 140,000 objects that had lain hidden beneath the city’s streets for almost 140 years.

Unearthed displays a fascinating selection of objects excavated from the site. The exhibition sheds light on the people who lived and worked at the house, and those whose lives were impacted by decisions made within its walls. It also presents the people and stories behind the archaeological digs.

[Plan your visit](#)



Contested Ground: Archaeology and Urban Development

Museum of Sydney, Wednesday 20 May, 6pm–7pm, free, registration required

What do we do with uncovered artefacts? And who is responsible for their preservation? Leading figures in archaeology, heritage and urban development engage in a lively discussion that tackles this key challenge faced by the field of Australian archaeology.

As cities grow, the past does not disappear, it resurfaces. Excavations conducted in the context of urban development continue to unearth traces of our past, but what happens to the artefacts once they come out of the ground? Caring for our archaeological heritage in a rapidly evolving urban landscape calls for shared stewardship. Our panel explores the pressing question of how to care for the tangible traces of our history and heritage.

[Register now](#)

Watch anytime



Vernon and Sobraon: Nautical Training Ships for Boys

On 13 May 1867, the newly converted vessel the *Vernon* was inaugurated as the first nautical industrial school ship in NSW.

Under the *Act for the Relief of Destitute Children 1866*, young boys could be apprehended in the streets and charged with having no visible means of support. Once sentenced, they were removed from their families, sent to the industrial training school and placed under the legal guardianship of the captain of the vessel. There the boys learned skills in trade and could be apprenticed out until they reached the age of 18.

This webinar explores the stories of the inmates of the nautical training ships the *Vernon* and the *Sobraon*. Learn about what happened to these young men and the records detailing their experience held in the State Archives Collection.

[Watch now](#)

1. Old Register No 1, showing sale and mortgage of Spanish vessel St Paulo and St Francisco Alix Amiente, 1806. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-5604-2-1-[NSF08/05566]; 2. Plan of the grounds in the City of Sydney proposed to be appropriated for Railway Station and Works. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-905-1-[Map6408]; 3. Photo © Joshua Morris for MHNSW; 4. Water Police Court, Phillip Street, Sydney, 1870. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-4481-3-[7/16182]-Sh565; 5. Left to right: Textile length, 'Kaivo' design, Marimekko, 1965. Caroline Simpson Library Collection. Gift of Chee Soon & Fitzgerald; Lampshade. Photo © MHNSW; Kone chair, design by Roger McLay, c1940s. Caroline Simpson Library Collection, MHNSW. Gift of Chee Soon & Fitzgerald. Photo © Jamie North; A room for Mr Peter Sculthorpe by designers Marion Hall Best and Deirdre Broughton, 1971. Photo Michael Andrews. © Estate of Marion Hall Best; 6. Lease of house no 18 Cambridge Street, from David Lloyd to William Foster, in 'Old Register', 1811; Plan of Cambridge Street, Sydney. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-5604-5-1-[NSF08/05570]; 7. Devonshire Street Cemetery, pre-1903.

State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-17420-2-25-842/050; **8.** Illustration from Haberfield: the garden suburb (detail), Stanton & Son Limited (author and publisher), Sydney, c1913. Caroline Simpson Library Collection, MHNSW; **9.** Grass tree illustration © Liam Keenan; **10.** Ripolin world famous paints: used by master painters over 60 years ago in Australia, Ripolin Paints Pty Ltd, Granville, NSW, 1960s. Caroline Simpson Library Collection, MHNSW; **11.** Collage of candid photographs from the 1983–84 and 1990–91 excavations at the first Government House site, by Anne Bickford, Shanda Kelly, Robyn Stocks. MHNSW; **12.** Documentation of the first Government House archaeological dig site, 1990. MHNSW; **13.** Record for Stephen Carroll in the Vernon Industrial School Entrance Book, 1897. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-3906 [8/1746] p492

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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