



# Medical History

## Newsletter

AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND SOCIETY OF THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE INC

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### THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

As we head into our Winter months, hopefully protected by an influenza vaccination, most of us are still awaiting a proper COVID vaccine rollout. I hope that our Society's membership is staying healthy and well, and maintaining your work and community contributions.

Around the scholarly community I have noted more international online events focused on medical humanities, as well as a surge of interest from undergraduate students in medical history themes. The World History Association, based in North America, is presenting 'Health, Globally' as its theme for a July online conference this year. The Australian National University's history program is offering a second-year course called 'Plagues, Pandemics and Public Health in History'. There are many other examples.

As we continue to navigate a financial squeeze in universities, it is heartening to know that health, medicine and wellbeing continue to attract different forms of funding for research, community projects, and for degree education places, including when paired with social science offerings.

Since our last newsletter the Society has responded to changes in our Executive and Council. Former Vice President, Peter Burke, has been busy with conference organising for another professional body, and our Newsletter Editor of long standing, Derek Dow, decided to vacate his position. I am grateful to them both for their service and contributions to the Society. Warm thanks to Louella McCarthy for stepping into the VP role for the remainder of this year (before the Society elections in December).

Our newsletter will continue to be produced in its current form until we find an alternative – about which we will seek your input as members. We currently manage a website, a social media presence, a newsletter, and a scholarly journal (*Health and History*). Like some other organisations we need to think about both the impact of our publications, and efficiency in our communications. Discussions will be ongoing until we can pull together a strategy around our media communications for the future as a Society that wishes to remain sustainable and current.

Our Society's conference Call for Papers with the theme of *Innovation in Health and Medicine* has attracted around 68 abstracts. The conference organising team at the University of Newcastle will be working together on the draft program, liaising with the Council on the ECR and Postgraduate Ben Haneman Memorial Conference Grants, and creating a conference web presence. All of these will be announced in good time with the conference in early December. We appreciate that organising in the past 18 months has been somewhat protracted due to COVID impacts, but we are aiming to make this a success for the Society.

Finally, the mission of our Society – to promote the academic study of the history of the health sciences in the Australia-Pacific region – continues to be vital and to occupy its own place in the vast array of formal associations and societies in Australia. I encourage members to engage with our journal, *Health and History*, which has two editors based in Australia and one in New Zealand. We thank outgoing Editor, Dr Peter Hobbins, for his excellent service and contributions. Peter has taken up the role of Head of the Knowledge team at the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney. To replace Peter, we welcome Dr Effie Karageorgos to her new role as Editor. Effie is based at the University of Newcastle where she teaches the largest Australian history course in Australia and is the Deputy Convener of the Future of Madness Network.

The future of our Society very much depends on our community of interest in the professions of health and medicine, as well as histories of peoples, places, illness and healing. If you have ideas, or would like to share your research and publications, we are always happy to profile your contributions to our membership.



**Catharine Coleborne**

[catharine.coleborne@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:catharine.coleborne@newcastle.edu.au)

## ALL ABOUT OURSELVES

Members of the ANZSHM describe their life, work and interests

At twenty-seven years old, my story is a comparatively short one. I grew up in the Western District of Victoria and I come from a long line of dairy farmers. I recently graduated from a PhD in Classics and Archaeology at The University of Melbourne, and I am the first person in my family to receive a PhD thanks to my parents' encouragement to follow my love of ancient history.

My background in farming led me to pursue the topic of *Birds in Roman Life and Myth* for my PhD thesis. It was in the course of my studies that I began to engage with local history as well. I volunteered with the National Trust and spent several years working at the Old Melbourne Gaol and *Polly Woodside* properties. This time as a volunteer taught me the value of public engagement and I developed a love for guiding tours and curating visitor experiences.

My interest in prison history and early Melbourne history deepened as time went on. While attending conferences relevant to my PhD, I spent some time in Dorset in the UK where I traced the records of a few notorious figures from Melbourne Gaol's history. Though I initially did this out of personal interest, something about this kind of work got under my skin. It was very easy to feel close to the figures I was studying – no doubt, having some convict ancestors of my own helped in this regard! I found myself especially drawn to stories of convicts who became trapped in the penal system for health reasons, as well as medical treatment and maternal health in prisons.

In 2019 I caught wind of the conference *Prison Medicine: Health and Incarceration in History*. I signed up to attend just a few days before it was scheduled to begin and had a wonderful time listening to papers and presentations that deepened my understanding of incarceration in Australia.

It was at this conference that I first heard about the Society and had the pleasure of meeting several prominent members. I was so impressed by the research the Society produced that I resolved to become a member. Since then, I have regularly attended conferences, talks, and some dinners in Melbourne. Just recently, I was fortunate enough to give my own lecture on birds in Roman magic and medicine for the Melbourne chapter.

As a PhD student, and now an early career researcher, being a part of the Society has helped me grow in terms of confidence while allowing me to build relationships with eminent scholars and medical professionals, both practicing and retired. With Australia's borders closed, I am unlikely to pursue classical studies further, but I am glad to pursue my interest in health and carceral history instead, and I am sure this pursuit will be enriched by my membership with the Society.

**Ashleigh Green** [ashgreendr@gmail.com](mailto:ashgreendr@gmail.com)



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## Medical History Australia

Our thanks to Anthea Hyslop for this brief account of Medical History Australia – drawn from her collection of back copies, which goes back to November 1985.

The MHA began in August 1981 as a quarterly newsletter, jointly sponsored by three entities: Medical History Society of Vic.; AMA (Victorian Branch); Medical History Unit, University of Melbourne. Its prime mover and first editor was Dr Frank Forster, a Melbourne obstetrician and a noted medical historian. At some point he was joined by Prof. Harold Attwood, a pathologist at the Univ. of Melbourne and Curator of its Medical History Unit. In February 1986, Forster relinquished the editorship to Attwood, who was then joined by Dr Geoffrey Kenny, senior lecturer in Anatomy at Melbourne and a leading member of the MHSV.

In February 1988, MHA became the official newsletter of the new Australian Society of the History of Medicine, established a year earlier (Feb. '87). Attwood and Kenny carried on as editors until the end of 1991, after which Dr Ian Chapple of Mackay, Queensland, took over. Chapple edited the MHA for just over eleven years, until February 2003, when he handed over to Dr Peter Tyler of Greenwich, Sydney. In 2005, the ASHM became the ANZSHM, and when Tyler retired in late 2009, he was succeeded by Dr Derek Dow of Auckland, NZ, who served eleven and a half years as editor of MHA. Our thanks to Derek and all the past editors.

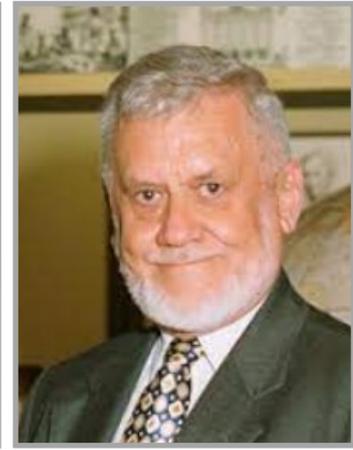
### Our honour roll of past editors is

1981-1986	Dr Frank Forster and Prof Harold Attwood
1986-1991	Prof Harold Attwood and Dr Geoffrey Kenny
1992-2003	Dr Ian Chapple
2003-2009	Dr Peter Tyler
2009-2021	Dr Derek Dow

The newsletter is currently being edited by an editorial team comprising Maggi Boulton, Charmaine Robson, Louella McCarthy & Kath Weston. Expressions of Interest are warmly invited from potential new editorial committee members.



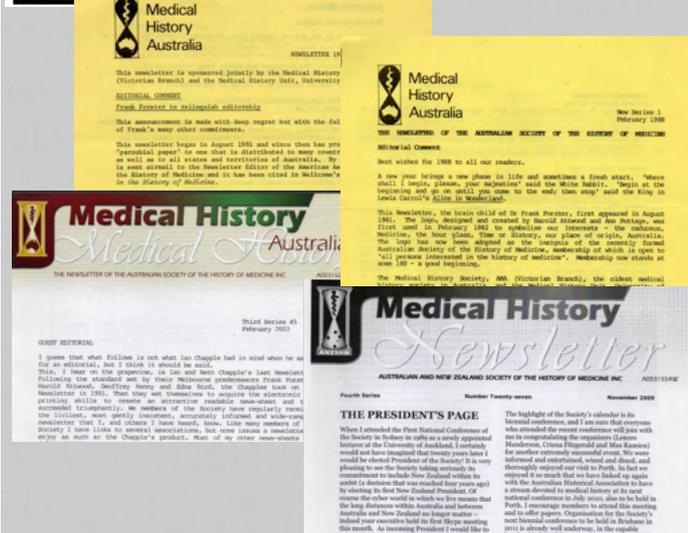
Dr Frank Forster (1981-86)



Dr Peter Tyler (2003-09)



The ANZSHM publishes a quarterly newsletter, [Medical History Newsletter](#), which is available to be read online and sent to all members.



## MEMBERS' NEWS

### Vale

Dr Tony Atkinson, Victoria

Dr Barry Elliott, Victoria

Dr Susan McAlpin, NSW

### New Members

James Isbister (ACT)

Tanya Langtree (QLD)

Lorna Barrow (NSW)

Robert Walker (TAS)

Allison Millward (New York)

Christopher Orrell (VIC)

Elsbeth Wood (QLD)

Jane George (NSW)

Peter and Vonne Greenberg

(VIC)

Campbell Miles (VIC)

*and apologies to new member Janine Cook (NZ) incorrectly named as James Cook in the previous newsletter —welcome!*

### Congratulations

#### Catharine Coleborne

has an invited chapter, 'Disability in Colonial Institutional Records', in the collection: *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History*, edited by MA Rembis, K Nielsen, and C Kudlick (Oxford and New York, 2018) which has won the 2021 [George Rosen prize from the American Association for the History of Medicine](#). This is especially rewarding because the prize focuses on socially engaged scholarship.

#### Michelle Bootcov

has been awarded the Dan David Scholar's Prize 2021 for ongoing thesis work 'The A to E of viral hepatitis: A Window onto the History of Medical Science and Society in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century'.

#### Maggi Boulton

received the judges' commendation for her essay 'Smallpox and the office of the Colonial Surgeon in South Australia 1839-1955' in the Wakefield Press South Australian Essay prize 2021.

### New Scholarship

#### Ashleigh Green

Doctor of Philosophy, School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne

Thesis title: *Birds in Roman Life & Myth*

Abstract: In Ancient Rome, the role of birds in everyday life and myth was one of critical importance. This thesis examines birds in their assigned roles of divine messengers, heralds, hunting quarry, domestic flocks, and companion animals, focusing primarily on the transitional period of 100 BCE to 100 CE within the Italian peninsula. It asserts that Roman relations with birds can only be understood if art and literature are cross-checked against modern ornithological knowledge and faunal assemblages. In this way it is proven that a 'bird's-eye view' of history is an effective method for interpreting and understanding Roman cultural beliefs and social stratification.

**Shayne Brown** MA, MAppSc, BA, DOBA, FOA.

Treasurer, ANZSHM-NSW

Master of Arts, University of Sydney, 2020

Thesis Title: *Hindsight: The Development of Orthoptics in Australia 1931-60*

Abstract: This thesis explored the development of orthoptic education, orthoptic clinical practice and its professional association in the early period of the profession from 1931-60 and aimed to add to the historiography of allied health care in Australia. The objective was to answer the basic questions of how and why changes and developments in orthoptic practice, orthoptic education and in the professional association came to be made and how these developments were influenced by the profession being all-female. By 1960, education was run by orthoptists and the practice and science of orthoptics had advanced. The professional association had been operating for 16 years and it had fulfilled its objectives to further the science of orthoptics and for the continuing education of its workforce.

#### Edward Teggin

Doctor of Philosophy, Department of History, University of Dublin

Thesis title: *The East India Company Career of Sir Robert Cowan in Bombay and the Western Indian Ocean, c. 1719-35*

Abstract: My thesis has undertaken the first in-depth examination of the East India Company career of Sir Robert Cowan (Governor of Bombay, 1729-34). Through the use of Cowan's large private letter collection contained in the Public Record office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), it has been possible to open up discussions of Company trade, patronage and policy in the western Indian Ocean during the years 1719-34. This is supplemented by the investigation into the personal experience of Cowan during his time in Bombay, Surat, Goa and Mocha. In terms of both the private and public aspects of Cowan's career in Asia, this study has opened many possibilities for re-examining the Company world in the western Indian Ocean during the early eighteenth century.

#### David Roth

Doctor of Philosophy, School of History, Australian National University

Thesis title: *Life, death and deliverance at Callan Park Hospital for the Insane, 1877 to 1923*

Abstract: By disaggregating mortality rates by the major causes of death, this study broke new ground towards the understanding of the high mortality rates at NSW asylums, their multiple roles, and the broader definitions of insanity at the time. David has had articles published on chemical restraints at Callan Park and the microhistory and biographies of mental patients, and his manuscripts on General Paralysis of the Insane and William Chidley, the sex reformer, are being considered for publication. David was appointed Campus Visitor in July 2020. His current project concerns the effects of the 1918-1919 influenza pandemic on mental patients in NSW.

## NSW BRANCH NEWS

At the 2020 AGM, held in March this year in-person, office bearers were elected as follows: President: Charmaine Robson; Vice-President: Georgia McWhinney; Secretary: Diana Jefferies; Treasurer: Shayne Brown.

Committee members are Richard White, Elizabeth George, John Sinclair, Ben Skerman, and Lorna Barrow, who we welcome as new to the position. Vanessa Witton remains as Immediate (Acting) Past President.

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## MEDICAL HISTORY SOCIETY OF VICTORIA NEWS

The Medical History Society of Victoria has resumed post-Covid activity with enthusiasm! Over 40 members and friends attended each of our first two meetings following the long period of lockdown.

Our first meeting, including the AGM, was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> March. We were addressed by our President, Madonna Grehan. She told the story of the Marrison family chemists, a five generation history of pharmacy from 1780 to 1990.

Margaret Leighton Barker (b.1927), who was the last in a direct line of Marrison family chemists, retired in 1990. Her family's history reflects the transition of chemistry as an industrial practice to pharmacy, a recognised profession. In 1800, George Hoyle Marrison was a druggist and dyer in the textile trade at Norwich. His son, George Marrison, became apprenticed to a chemist in London and afterwards was admitted to membership of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. Founded in 1841, the Society promoted self-regulation to lift standards after proposed statutory regulation failed. George Marrison then worked as a chemist in rural England and in 1857 emigrated to Australia. Two of his sons, then a grand-daughter, and lastly great-grand-daughter Margaret, practised pharmacy here. Madonna's presentation

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## SOUTH AUSTRALIA MEDICAL HERITAGE SOCIETY NEWS

SAMHS holds medical heritage talks on the last Thursday of the month at the Royal Society Rooms on Kintore Avenue. Recent events have included:

- Dr Roy Scragg AM OBE *Sailors, Christianity, Florey. The Pandemics: Gonococcal, Human, Coronavirus* 25 February 2021
- Assoc Prof Ross Haslam AO, *Neonatology – Lessons Learned from Conception to Adult life* 25 March 2021
- Assoc Prof Robert Bauze, *Bonesetting, Barossa Valley & Early South Australian Orthopaedics* 22 April 2021
- Dr Jim Tulloch AM, *45 years of International Public Health* 27 May 2021.

On 25<sup>th</sup> May, the branch held a webinar by historian Dr Johanna Perheentupa with the title, 'Aboriginal self-determination and health in Redfern in the 1970s', based on her new book.

The Ben Haneman Memorial Lecture will be held as in-person event at the State Library of New South Wales on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021. The speaker will be historian Professor Warwick Anderson from the University of Sydney. Further details and bookings information will be available as they come to hand.

**Charmaine Robson**  
**President, NSW Branch**

acknowledged the 140 year history of Victoria's College of Pharmacy.

At our second meeting, on 19<sup>th</sup> May, we were entertained by recent PhD graduate Ashleigh Green, who described the role of birds in Roman healing, magic and medicine.

In Ancient Rome, birds were held in high esteem as vehicles through which the gods could communicate their directives, intent, and displeasure. Birds were also an important part of the Roman economy and food networks, with Romans developing the practice of intensive poultry farming and fattening for profit. Diverse species were caught, bred, and raised in enormous numbers to satisfy urban and elite demand. In this context, it is no surprise that birds also played an important role in the procurement and maintenance of health for people of all social strata. This talk examines the place of birds in Roman healing magic, medicine, diet, and sacrifice, focusing on the years 0 – 200 CE. By contextualising the medicinal uses of birds, Ashleigh suggested that we can make sense of the more outlandish beliefs and practices recorded in the sources, and gain valuable insight into how Romans conceived of health and healing.

On a sad note, we record the recent death of long-standing member and raconteur, Dr Tony Atkinson. As a former footman at Buckingham Palace, Tony had countless stories to tell, many included in his book "A Prescribed Life".

**Rod Westhorpe**  
**Hon. Secretary, MHSV**

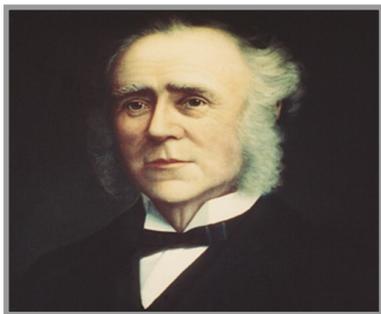
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- Tour & afternoon tea at Hampstead Heritage Museum's CALHN History Festival exhibition 'Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes' exploring the cardiovascular, respiratory, skeletal, nervous, integumentary & digestive systems! 4 June 2021: 2 - 4pm.

Video recordings of talks are available on request. Talks planned for later in 2021 include:

Professor Caroline McMillen AO, Chief Scientist of South Australia, ( 24 June 2021), Professor Sarah Robertson (22 July 2021), Dr James Muecke, 2020 Australian of the Year (24 August). More information about their talks will be provided closer to the date on the SAMHS website <https://www.samhs.org.au/about-the-society/activities-and-people/comingmeet.html>. Queries can be directed to Joy Copland, [jgcopl@bigpond.net.au](mailto:jgcopl@bigpond.net.au)

**Maggi Boulton**  
**Committee member, SAMHS**

## Restoration of the grave of Dr James Edward Neild



**Dr James Edward Neild** (1824-1906), the founder of St John Ambulance in Australia, was a remarkable man. Indeed, he was one of the most influential medical men of the nineteenth century.

After medical studies at University College in London he migrated to Australia, where he took the higher degree of Doctor of Medicine at the University of Melbourne. Highlights of his career include:

- *As a forensic pathologist he sometimes deputized as Coroner, including the famed Deeming case,*
- *As a lecturer at the University of Melbourne for forty years,*
- *As editor of the Australian Medical Journal for eighteen years,*
- *Founder of the Medical Benevolent Association,*
- *President of the Medical Society of Victoria,*
- *A founder of the Victorian Branch of the British Medical Association, of which he was twice President and the most influential member until his death,*

- *Honorary secretary of the Royal Society of Victoria, and*
- *A drama critic who was inducted into the Performing Arts Hall of Fame.*

Sadly, Dr Neild's grave is just a patch of nameless dirt in the Melbourne General Cemetery. It is well beyond time that this is remedied.



The St John Ambulance Historical Society is determined to restore the grave and will be the major funder of a fitting memorial. However, they would really appreciate the support of the general medical profession and all organisations that owe their existence to this giant of our early days.

Contributions by Direct Funds Transfer to:

### St John Ambulance Historical Society

BSB 062 922 A/C 1012 3348  
with Neild+Your surname in the Reference Box

or by cheque to the Society, c/o National St John HQ,  
PO Box 292, Deakin West, ACT 2600.

Please include an email to the Treasurer Rob Devere to identify your gift. Rob's email is:  
[devon52@optusnet.com.au](mailto:devon52@optusnet.com.au)

*Your support for this worthy historical memorial would be greatly appreciated.*

## BOOK REVIEW

**Shayne Brown and Jill Gordon**

***Rear Vision: Celebrating Australia's Early Orthoptists, Shayne Brown, Sydney 2019. 147pp.***

*Rear Vision* is a result of Shayne Brown's research into the history of orthoptics in Australia. With her co-author and the support of Orthoptics Australia, she has combined her historical and clinical expertise to document and explain changes in orthoptic clinical practice, training and research. Although primarily targeted at orthoptists, all interested in healthcare history will benefit from understanding more about this much-overlooked allied health profession.

The book begins with a concise history of orthoptics in Australia until the 1950s. After that comes illustrated profiles of the first 76 orthoptists to work in Australia - all of them women. The first one trained in 1931; the last graduated in 1954. The profiles give fascinatingly varied

insights into a talented group of women. All had to combine people skills with scientific intellect, and many also ran their own professional clinics. Some had long successful careers, others short ones terminated by marriage or children. The book's sub-title refers to 'celebrating' Australia's early orthoptists and the profiles show there was much to celebrate.



*Rear Vision: Celebrating Australia's Early Orthoptists* can be purchased from Orthoptics Australia via via the OA Online Shop: <https://www.orthoptics.org.au/resources/oa-online-shop/>. The price is \$36.36 which includes postage and handling. The price excludes GST which will be added at the point of purchase. Alternatively contact Orthoptics Australia on 03 9586 6080 or Orthoptics Australia Inc, PO Box 7345, Beaumaris VIC 3193.

**Judith Godden**

## A Tale of Two Husbands:

### *Two Colonial Medical Writers*

The distinguished Irish historian of the British Empire, Robert Montgomery Martin was born in about 1803. He studied medicine in Dublin, intending to support himself as a doctor while traveling. After completing his studies, but without graduating, he went to Ceylon and then South Africa, where he joined a naval survey expedition as surgeon in 1823. The following year he went to New South Wales, and there married Frances Keith, daughter of Rev. Daniel Keith D.D. of Hammersmith. From 1826 the couple lived at Parramatta, where he was known as 'Surgeon Martin'.

His later career was notable for his extensive publications on British colonial history, which would earn him a place in the British *Dictionary of National Biography* (very few of the thousands of doctors connected with colonial Australia were so honoured). But his marriage in New South Wales would prove to be a false step in his personal life, leading to a tragic saga of heartbreak and scandal.

In 1828 he left Sydney for Calcutta, where he became editor of the *Bengal Herald* – the beginning of his literary career. Frances, herself a gifted writer, contributed an article calling for an end to suttee. Martin returned to England in 1830, and there published his *History of the British Colonies* (1835-1836), *British Colonial Library* (1836-1839) and the *Colonial Magazine* (1840-1845). By then famous as an historian, statistician, and traveller, he had left medicine (and Parramatta) far behind.

But Martin's return to London in 1830 had set the scene for a domestic drama that was to become headline news throughout the Empire. Its instigator was another literary doctor, John Sheridan M.D., editor of a magazine called *The Irishman*, and a regular visitor at Martin's home in the Strand. In 1831 Mrs. Martin eloped with Sheridan, and in due course they set up house together in Pimlico.

Sheridan began writing for a London newspaper, the *Morning Advertiser*. In 1836 he joined the editorial

staff, and in 1841 was appointed editor. However, he was starting to show signs of mental illness. His work suffered. The paper's circulation declined, and in 1845 he was sacked, causing financial problems, which he blamed, somewhat perversely, on his partner's expenditure.

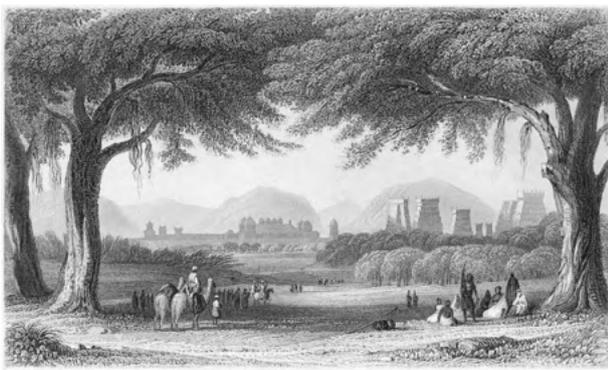
Sheridan spent most of 1846 in lunatic asylums. Mrs. Sheridan (as she described herself, although she was still legally married to Montgomery Martin) wrote an eloquent article describing the process of Sheridan's admission to an asylum, his unhappy experiences there, and the difficulties of getting him released. Her dramatic narrative, exposing gross deficiencies in the mental health system, was promptly published in the *British Medical Journal*, where it occupied three full pages.

Mrs. Sheridan was finally divorced by Montgomery Martin in 1847, at which time Dr. Sheridan was again in a mental asylum. In 1849 she returned to Australia, bringing Sheridan and their children out to Adelaide. It is not known whether she had married him, but she certainly remained loyal to him, notwithstanding his unstable mental health.

On arriving in Adelaide, she wrote a piece for the *South Australian Register* describing her first impressions of the city. At the same time the paper published a strange, rambling letter of protest from Dr. Sheridan, to which the editor appended a note, appealing to the benevolent on behalf of the doctor's unfortunate wife and family: they had arrived in Adelaide practically destitute.

Although legally qualified, John Sheridan was never registered as a medical practitioner in South Australia. At different times, both he and Frances found work as teachers there. He died at North Adelaide in 1858 aged 53. Montgomery Martin died in England in 1868. Frances Keith Sheridan died at Adelaide in 1882 at about the age of 80, having long outlived both her husbands. She left a bequest to the University of Adelaide "to be used for the advancement of medical science, in memory of the late John Sheridan, M.D. of Edinburgh and his wife, Frances Keith Sheridan".

## Stephen Due



Temples and palace at Madura, from *The Indian Empire* by R. Montgomery Martin c1860

## MEDICAL ICONOGRAPHY

1955 Australian postage stamp commemorating the centenary of Florence Nightingale's work in the Crimea and the founding of modern nursing.



## COVID-19: What needs to be documented?

### *Insights from the pneumonic influenza of 1918-1919*

This paper was presented to a seminar organised by the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Program and hosted by the National Archives of Australia, Canberra, on 10 December 2020.

I think I always assumed that the next great pandemic after that of pneumonic influenza would reflect its predecessor in several ways: chiefly in how a society handles the practical problem of very large numbers of people falling sick at once, from a highly infectious and often lethal disease. We would see governments in conference, emergency hospitals established, social activities curbed, local relief measures organised, and of course a vaccine, as soon as one could be devised and deployed. But also, and notwithstanding the emergence some years back of SARS and one or two other new diseases, I thought that some sinister variant of the well-known influenza virus was still the likeliest candidate for a pandemic role. And I took it for granted that Australia would not be able to protect itself as it had done in 1918, by strict maritime quarantine, since travel by air, so much swifter than by sea, could bring a disease here even before its symptoms had appeared, and in any case could hardly be controlled as shipping could. I don't recall even wondering if our states would close their borders against each other this time around! That belonged to another era.

I was near enough right about the practicalities of the community crisis, although the initial rejection of facemasks for public use surprised me somewhat. But I was wrong about the rest. All a country has to do these days is to declare that no plane from this or that foreign clime will be allowed to land here. And then, when it is allowed, the passengers must undergo compulsory quarantine. I was also wrong about the kind of disease that would be involved: *not* an influenza of any kind, but instead a mysterious coronavirus, for which there was no known cure, let alone a vaccine. In these respects, then, the pandemic of 2020 was reflecting that of 1918-19 far more closely than I'd expected. Their main differences appeared to be: firstly, those people worst affected – this time the elderly and the vulnerable, not the young and fit; next, the much greater capacity of today's medical science to respond to a new virus – progress that owes much to the challenge of pneumonic influenza; and lastly, the mortality of each pandemic – far greater everywhere from 'Spanish flu' than from COVID-19: albeit, for Australians, mercifully less heavy in both cases.

For historians, then, I think the questions raised by COVID-19 in Australia will be similar to those posed by the pneumonic influenza pandemic. Where did it come from? How did it enter the community? How was it spread and how controlled? How did governments respond, and with what measures? What happened, and why, if their schemes went awry? How did medical science approach the problem of a new and dangerous disease? How did the community react to the pandemic threat, and to the

constraints that its management imposed?

With COVID-19 as with pneumonic influenza, the dealings between federal and state governments are a central theme. In November 1918, the health ministers and senior health officials from around the country gathered in Melbourne to formulate a national plan for meeting the pandemic's onslaught. That conference was a single event, and the agreement that emerged soon fell apart over border closures, halted trains and other quarantine issues; but a century later, it furnished an example of sorts for 2020's National Cabinet. The November Agreement and its gradual unravelling were well reported in the daily press, and the official record may be found at the National Archives: a veritable goldmine of formal reports, letters, and innumerable telegrams between federal and state governments. I'm hoping that 'cabinet confidentiality' will not have prevented 2020's 'remote' National Cabinet meetings from being recorded, both in video and in transcript, and that the related traffic of emails will survive as well as all those long-ago telegrams did. Both then and now, such records reveal much about the dynamics of federal-state relations under conditions of stress, and the extent of their respective emergency powers.

In 1918-19, maritime quarantine was in the hands of the federal director of quarantine, Dr JHL (Howard) Cumpston, and careful records were kept of activities at the several quarantine stations around the country. Yet in January 1919, after several months' impressive achievement, pneumonic influenza escaped into the community at Melbourne, and how it had done so could not be explained. That puzzle helped to delay the authorities in recognising it as the dread disease: a delay that allowed it not only to spread in Melbourne but to travel by train to Sydney before any borders were closed. Today, the puzzle would have been swiftly solved by genomic analysis of viral samples, which might also have traced the symptomless carrier now surmised to have brought the 'flu' out of quarantine and into Melbourne. But in 1919 any knowledge of viruses was in its infancy, and influenza was regarded as a bacterial disease. I trust that the full story of 2020's quarantine failures, whether Sydney's *Ruby Princess* saga or Melbourne's hotel quarantine breakdown, will be preserved for posterity in the records of the formal enquiries that followed.

On the other hand, I have no doubt that the role of medical science in this pandemic will be exhaustively recorded. It has been fascinating to observe modern medicine reacting again, as it did in 1918, to an unknown and highly infectious pandemic disease. Back then, with bacteriology the new field of achievement, medical scientists worked frantically to produce a bacterial vaccine. Here in Australia, the young Commonwealth Serum Laboratories quickly made its own, as did state pathology labs, and supplied several million doses in the space of six months to a remarkably receptive public. That vaccine could not waylay the virus, but it did appear to reduce the impact of secondary infections. Today's medical science response has been able to deploy the enormous benefits of a century's progress in virology. Likewise, with COVID-19, the medical and nursing professions have been able to draw on highly sophisticated technology and

pharmaceutical research; whereas their counterparts in 1918-19 could do little beyond treating influenza's symptoms and providing careful nursing, though both these things went far toward helping patients survive. Doctors tried hard to find effective cures, as can be seen in the pages of the *Medical Journal of Australia*; but amid the crisis most would have had scant time to spare for experiment.

The broader community's experience of a pandemic may emerge in various ways. That of 1918-19 may be found in part in municipal records of relief distributed to families whose breadwinners had lost their employment or, worse, had died. It appears also in letters to newspapers of the time, or in private diaries and letters fortuitously preserved. Half a century would pass before scholars began soliciting survivors' recollections of pneumonic influenza. One of the first was Richard Collier, a British author and journalist, who sought responses from around the world to incorporate in a book entitled *The Plague of the Spanish Lady* (1974). Among his correspondents were some 150 Australians, who recorded their own memories or those of their families. Some fifteen years later, New South Wales scholars conducting interviews with octogenarians for Australia's bicentenary unearthed further memories of the pandemic that followed the Great War. In both sources, these private recollections may have been faded a little by time, but they are unaffected – unexaggerated? – by any sense of their significance as part of a great world drama. With today's pandemic, personal experiences gathered now will have greater

immediacy and will probably reflect their global context more strongly – if only because modern news media convey that global context so clearly.

Indeed, some of our daily newspapers are already gathering experiences of lockdown, hardship and sickness, alongside family reminiscences of beloved older members lost to COVID-19. Press, radio, television and websites are together gathering formidable amounts of information, analysis and detailed description of this pandemic. By contrast, in 1918-19 newspapers were almost the only public medium, and photographic images from that pandemic were chiefly confined to illustrated weeklies like the *Sydney Mail*. Media records from today's pandemic, provided they continue to be accessible, will present to historians a research resource of almost overwhelming proportions.

Amid the public dramas and private tragedies of a pandemic crisis, society also reveals much about how it functions in more normal times, throwing light on themes that might not seem to bear on the crisis but are nevertheless significant elements of ordinary life. I feel confident that our current ordeal will reveal to historians at least as much – about how, in all manner of ways, we were living our lives before it turned them upside down.

**Anthea Hyslop**

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## INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

The **European Association for the History of Medicine and Health** Biennial Conference will be held online 7-10 September 2021 organized in cooperation with the Research Group *Cultural History since 1750 at KU Leuven* with the theme:

**'Faith, Medicine and Religion' in a historical perspective**

For more information, visit: <https://kuleuvencongres.be/eahmh2021/home>



**BSHM**  
British Society for the  
History of Medicine



### BIENNIAL CONGRESS

Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> - Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2021  
Sheffield, The University of Sheffield

Key themes are

***The History of Medicine in the  
Workplace, Pandemics, Nursing and  
Innovation in Medical Engineering***

For Congress information and booklet,  
registration, abstract submission and  
accommodation please go to

<https://bshm.org.uk/congress-2021/>

## JOURNAL WATCH

We are pleased to announce that members of the ANZSHM have recently published the following works. We warmly welcome additional information from members about recent publications. This can be submitted directly to Maggi Boulton, ANZSHM Secretary at [secretary@anzshm.com.au](mailto:secretary@anzshm.com.au)

**Warwick Anderson** The model crisis, or how to have critical promiscuity in the time of Covid-19. *Social Studies of Science*. 2021;51(2):167-188. doi:10.1177/0306312721996053

**Warwick Anderson** The Whiteness of Bioethics. *Bioethical Inquiry* 18, 93–97 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11673-020-10075-y>

**Warwick Anderson**, Sankaran N. (2021) Historiography and Immunology. In: Dietrich M.R., Borrello M.E., Harman O. (eds) Handbook of the Historiography of Biology. *Historiographies of Science*. Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-90119-0\\_20](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-90119-0_20)

**Warwick Anderson** “Decolonizing the Foundation of Tropical Architecture”, *ABE Journal* [En ligne], 18|2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/abe/9215>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/abe.9215>

Maddock P., **Warwick Anderson** Standing Up Straighter Against Covid-19? *Arena Quarterly* 2020; 4: 5-8.

**Warwick Anderson** The Philippine Covidscape: colonial public health redux? *Philippine Studies* 2020; 68: 323-35.

**Warwick Anderson** Think Like a Virus. Public Books (7 Jan. 2021): [www.publicbooks.org/think-like-a-virus/](http://www.publicbooks.org/think-like-a-virus/) Reprinted in: The 2020 Reader. Ed. Thomas J. Sugrue and Caitlin Zaloom. New York: Columbia University Press, 2021.

**Warwick Anderson** The Way We Live Now? *Isis* 2020; 111: 834-37

**Michael Bennett** *War Against Smallpox: Edward Jenner and the Global Spread of Vaccination*, Cambridge UP 2020

**Catharine Coleborne** (2021) Coda: Speaking Madness: Word, Image, Action. In: Ellis R., Kendall S., Taylor S.J. (eds) *Voices in the History of Madness. Mental Health in Historical Perspective*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-69559-0\\_19](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-69559-0_19)

**Catharine Coleborne** (2021) Goodna Girls: A History of Children in a Queensland Mental Asylum, *Australian Historical Studies*, 52:2, 309-310, DOI: 10.1080/1031461X.2021.1907875

Stephen Hampton, **Kathryn Weston**, **Louella McCarthy**, Tobias Mackinnon, “Pandemics in New South Wales prisons: the more things change...”, *Communicable Diseases Intelligence* (2021) 45 [www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/8FA6078276359430CA257BF0001A4C42/\\$Filepandemics\\_in\\_new\\_south\\_wales\\_prisons\\_the\\_more\\_things\\_change.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/8FA6078276359430CA257BF0001A4C42/$Filepandemics_in_new_south_wales_prisons_the_more_things_change.pdf)

**Peter Hobbins** & James Waghorne (2021) The goal of our ambition: the transformation of medical education and research at Australian Universities, 1914–20, *History Australia*, 18:1, 53–69, DOI: 10.1080/14490854.2021.1878913

**Hans Pols**, Suci E.S.T. (2021) The Contentious Social Positions of People of Chinese Descent in Indonesia. In: Minas H. (eds) *Mental Health in China and the Chinese Diaspora: Historical and Cultural Perspectives*. International and Cultural Psychology. Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-65161-9\\_13](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-65161-9_13)

Mark S. Micale and **Hans Pols** (Eds) *Traumatic Past in Asia. History, Psychiatry, and Trauma from the 1930s to the Present*, Berghahn, 2021

## ISHM NEWS

**Brian Reid**  
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The 2021 ISHM Congress in Latvia in August will definitely proceed and I quote from the ISHM web page (<[ishm2020.rsu.lv](http://ishm2020.rsu.lv)>);

*Now we are ready to confirm that our anniversary congress will take place in Riga in August 2011. It is not yet clear in what format – a real or hybrid meeting, but most likely it will be a hybrid one. ... some will come to Riga and some will be with us in the window of Zoom.*

It is now likely that international travel from Australia for such purposes in August 2021 will not be possible. For those in Australia and New Zealand who have registered, the registration remains valid but it will be necessary to keep an eye on the web page for the arrangements for a virtual attendance.



*Riga, the capital, is home to around one-third of Latvia's residents.*

## ARTEFACTUAL NEWS

*Unmasked: celebrating nursing and midwifery, Victoria and beyond*

# UNMASKED

Celebrating Nursing and Midwifery, Victoria and Beyond

*Unmasked* is a nod to the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife in 2020. Ambitiously, *Unmasked* highlights 230 years of nursing and midwifery history in Australia, starting with seven women who joined their convict husbands in 1790, on the condition they work as midwives in the colony.

The exhibition is cleverly divided into six intersecting themes: pioneering nurses; education and professionalisation; innovation; First Nation's nurses and midwives; volunteers and military service; advocacy and leadership. The themes are interspersed with the personal accounts of twelve practitioners, past and present, from diverse settings.

In video footage, six nurses and midwives explain their work, providing a perfect counterbalance to the broad scope of nursing history covered within the core themes. Exhibition furniture incorporates video screens and display compartments, the latter housing meaningful or quirky personal items of the contemporary practitioners.

Michelle Spence, for example, works at the Royal Melbourne Hospital as a Nurse Unit Manager in the Intensive Care Unit. One of her items is a 3D-printed Lego nurse, made by a brother of one of Spence's nursing colleagues at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, a modern signal of support. Ruby Tribe is a 24 year old Gamilaraay woman whose display includes an Indigenous stole, part of a graduation kit that's available to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students graduating from Monash University.

Larger display cases focus on some past practitioners such as Marianne Rawson RRC. As a nurse working in the Infirmary Department of The Women's Hospital in Melbourne in the 1890s, Rawson was given a portable writing desk by the grateful widower of a patient. Not ten years later, as Lady Superintendent of Victoria's inaugural nursing contingent to the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), Rawson used this bureau to write letters from the front.

*Unmasked* features a wonderful and whimsical selection of material culture, a surprise given that public collections were closed during the design period. A vibrant blue riband is one such item from Rawson's collection. Painted in white and gold lettering, it reads: "To The Victorian Nurses From the Womans[sic] Hospital Committee. March 10<sup>th</sup> 1900". A rare example of floristry history in itself, the riband adorned a basket of flowers sent to the ten nurses, on their departure from Melbourne.

Hospitals in Australia and overseas are represented as locations of practice and training centres through photographs, lithographs, and certificates. A lecture book from 1913 and Nurse Margaret Nuttall's student-nurse uniform, cap and red woollen cape recollect hospital-based education. Education's transfer to the tertiary sector beginning in the 1970s is illustrated via ephemera of institutions such as Lincoln Institute of Health Sciences, a college which merged with La Trobe University in the 1990s. A poignant item is a 1914 register of the Royal Victorian Trained Nurses Association, listing the membership as war was declared.

The contents of Midwifery Nurse Florence Green's case show the equipment necessary for home births in the 1920s and the statutory and subordinate legislation that applied to midwifery practice. In 1883, nurse Miss Selina Alexander left England to take a position at Hobart Hospital in Tasmania. A letter to her penned by Florence Nightingale highlights personal connection. Snapshots and posters such as "Time is Running Out Support the R.A.N.F.", remind viewers of the lengthy nurses' strike in the mid-1980s.

*Unmasked* is an engaging excursion through the history of nursing and midwifery in Australia. That the exhibition includes indigenous practitioners makes an interesting contrast to the traditional male-orientated and British-centric perspective of the history of medicine in Australia. *Unmasked* is curated by Madonna Grehan, Penelope Lee and Odette Best. It is showing at Her Place Women's Museum Australia in East Melbourne until 28 June 2021. See <https://herplacemuseum.com/> for details.

Lisl Bladin BA,  
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## SPASM re-opens

The *Museum of the Society for Preservation of the Artefacts of Surgery & Medicine* is once again open to visitors after a period of closure due to COVID-19.

Location: Building 6, Gladesville Hospital, Victoria Road, Gladesville.

Open Feb to Nov on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday and 4<sup>th</sup> Monday, 11am-3pm (excl. public holidays) or by appointment.

Website: <http://www.spasmmuseum.org.au/>

Email: [info@spasmmuseum.org.au](mailto:info@spasmmuseum.org.au)



**Australia and New Zealand Society of the  
History of Medicine  
17<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference  
1-4 December 2021  
Innovation in Health and Medicine**



The 17th Biennial Conference of the Australia and New Zealand Society of the History of Medicine will be held at the City campus of the University of Newcastle and local venues with traditional in-person sessions and some dedicated online streams for presenters and audiences who cannot travel. These sessions will attract a different and more modest conference registration fee. Registration costs and processes will be posted before the middle of 2021 on the ANZSHM website.

We thank you for your patience as we navigate the planning for this special conference in 2021!

The conference will feature three invited international keynote speakers and two plenary speakers/panels.

ANZSHM offers competitive travel grants to postgraduate students and early career researchers to attend the conference. Information about the grants and application forms is available on the ANZSHM website <https://www.anzshm.org.au/>

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For the latest information, visit the ANZSHM Internet Website: [www.anzshm.org.au](http://www.anzshm.org.au)  
LETTERS, PHOTOGRAPHS AND ARTICLES ARE WELCOME, PREFERABLY IN ELECTRONIC FORMAT.  
**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS 13 AUGUST 2021**