

## The President's page

I write these words from a tiny café in the main strip of Aarhus, Denmark, where I'm attending a conference on the role of affect and emotion in the ecological dimensions of globalisation. Anthropologists, geographers, historians, and gender and cultural studies scholars have been exploring these aspects to the interactions between species that have assembled the present world, and how those ecological interactions have shaped human experience. There are clear intersections with the history of health and medicine: consider the way emotion gathers in all manner of ways around a zoonotic pandemic like covid-19 – or, perhaps, monkey pox. But we might also take something from the underlying questions posed by the conference. How have health and medicine been shaped by affect – by emotion, feeling, interpersonal connections of every kind? How does looking and listening for these affects open us to new narratives? And, given emotions are everywhere in the history of health, how can we gather, filter, clarify and interpret them to make them more than points of human interest? A fascinating paper yesterday on banana scientists working in Uganda and Australia (by a Max Planck Institute anthropologist) showed how the care, and emotional entanglement, of actually propagating banana suckers was typically written out of the scientific narratives. Could it be that we often do the same in our histories?

Next week, a small workshop on the global history of social medicine will be held in Rosendal, Norway, where several of our members will be presenting. Together, we'll ask how the social determinants of health have been understood and addressed in different economic, political, and cultural settings, and to what their fortunes have been tied. Then, a short break before the Australian

Historical Association gathers again in person for its annual conference at Deakin University, in Geelong. The Health and Medical History stream convened by Effie Karageorgos, Elizabeth Roberts-Pedersen and myself as part of the conference looks set to be an excellent display of the breadth and depth of research in and around our fields, and especially the exciting work being done by the junior scholars amongst us. There will also be a keynote session for the stream, where Professor Warwick Anderson, from the University of Sydney, Dr Peter Hobbins, from the National Maritime Museum, and Professor Emma Kowal, an anthropologist at Deakin, will be talking through what remains of covid-19 – how as historians and social scientists we have been making sense of the pandemic and its relics. Registration is now open – do join us if you're able.

Warm regards,

James Dunk

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@JamesHDunk



Letters, photographs and articles for publication in the newsletter are always welcome. We prefer electronic submission via email to [ANZSHM@ANZSHM.ORG.AU](mailto:ANZSHM@ANZSHM.ORG.AU). The deadline for our next issue is 13<sup>th</sup> August 2022.

## All about ourselves

*Members of the ANZSHM describe their life, work and interests*

### **Brian Draper AM MBBS (Hons) MD FRANZCP**

I am Conjoint Professor in the Discipline of Psychiatry and Mental Health, University of New South Wales (UNSW), Sydney. For 35 years I worked as an old age psychiatrist, initially at St George Hospital at Kogarah, and from 1992 at the Prince Henry/Prince of Wales Hospitals. I retired from clinical practice in 2019 but have retained an HMO appointment. I remain active in research, teaching, policy, and advocacy. I am Associate Editor for the journal *Suicide and Life Threatening Behavior*, Scientific Advisor for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, an Honorary Senior Research Fellow of Neurosciences Research Australia, and member of the Medical and Scientific Advisory Panel for Alzheimer's Disease International.

My medical degree was at UNSW (1972-1977) followed by two years (1978-79) of residency at St George Hospital. I commenced psychiatry training in late 1980 at St Augustine's Hospital near Canterbury in Kent, returning to Australia in 1981 to do most of my training at St George Hospital. I decided to specialize in old age psychiatry because I realized that I enjoyed working with older people and that with the ageing population there was going to be a need for such specialists. There were no specific training posts but Sid Williams at Lidcombe Hospital led the only older people's mental health service in NSW based in a general hospital and so I spent my final year of training there in 1985.

My career has coincided with the major changes that have occurred in an ageing Australia since the mid-1980s. I was involved in developing older people's mental health services at St George, Canterbury, and Prince Henry/Prince of Wales Hospitals. I have served on local, state and national committees for mental health services and suicide prevention, provided consultations on older people's mental health services in Australia and overseas, and was Chair of the Australian Government's Psychogeriatric Care Expert Reference Group (2009-11). I was a member of the WHO Consultation Group on the Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders in Older Adults for ICD-11 and lead author of a WHO Health Evidence Network synthesis on mental health service delivery

to older people. I have a long term involvement with vocational training in psychiatry being the foundation Chair of the Committee for Advanced Training in Psychiatry of Old Age, Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) and developed its curriculum and training program. I was also the foundation Psychiatry Clinical Chair for the NSW Institute of Medical Education and Training (now HETI).

I am past Board Member of the International Psychogeriatric Association (IPA) and led the IPA Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia (BPSD) Taskforce overseeing two revisions of the IPA BPSD Guide. I am past Chair of the RANZCP Faculty of Psychiatry of Old Age and have served on numerous RANZCP committees and advisory groups, being awarded the RANZCP College Medal of Honour in 2019.

My research interests have reflected my clinical work and has included the history of old age mental health and dementia care in Australia. So far that project has a book due for publication later this year, three published papers and three others in production. Overall I have published over 400 scientific articles including 274 peer reviewed full articles, 5 books, and 23 book chapters. Published topics include mental health service delivery, suicidal behaviour, depression and substance use in old age, clinical aspects of dementia care, carer stress, epidemiology of mental disorders, ethical issues, professional development, and history of old age mental health.



## Members' news

### New Members

Lucinda Sainsbury (NSW) Samantha Grey (QLD)  
Anna Efstathiadou (QLD) Sharon Burnell (SA)  
Sarah Ferber (QLD) Lyell Wilson (TAS)

*A very warm welcome to our new members!*

### Vale

Dr Gordon Whyte VIC  
28/2/1943 – 20/4/2022

Mrs Diane Alda Wilkinson QLD  
13/7/1941 - 21/10/2021

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## Congratulations

Australia Day Honours, 2022:

AM **Professor Brian Draper**, Sylvania, NSW for for significant service as a psychiatrist to tertiary education, to medicine, and to the community.

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Short-listed finalist for the 2022 Brian Gandevia Prize for Australian military–medical history:

**Dr Georgia McWhinney**, for her PhD thesis

“I can ... doctor myself up without going to the doctor’: vernacular medicine in the British world during the Great War”,

completed at Macquarie University in 2020.

## Members in the media

Peter Hobbins and Kath Weston contributed to an ABC radio podcast based on diaries written *en route* to Sydney aboard the clipper, Samuel Plimsoll, in the late 18th century, including arrival at the Sydney Quarantine Station.

The program was broadcast on *The History Listen* on ABC Radio National, and can be heard here: <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/the-history-listen/samuel-plimsoll-sails/13835666>

### Save these dates!

2022 BEN HANEMAN MEMORIAL LECTURE.

Professor Warwick Anderson will be speaking on “Virus on the March? Military Metaphor and Model in the Covid-19 Pandemic”.

Thursday 11 August 2022 at 6 pm  
Dixson Room, State Library of NSW

UNSW Laureate Centre of History and Population and ANZSHM NSW public lecture by Associate Prof. Alex Mold. The theme is “Interpreting Health”.

21 September 2022 at 6:30pm  
UNSW Kensington Campus. Room TBC (*see page 11 this newsletter*)

18th Biennial Conference of the ANZSHM will be held in Adelaide, Australia, 12 to 15 July 2023. Further details will be supplied shortly.

*Ian Roberts-Thomson, Conference Convenor.*

## Nursing History news

The Anzac Memorial in Sydney's Hyde Park was a most appropriate venue for the launch of this database on 30 April 2022. The Great War's nurses have prominent places on the Memorial's buttresses. One of the four external corner figures is of an Australian Army Nursing Service Matron and one of the sixteen external seated figures is of an Army Sister rolling a bandage (images C&D).

Image A is of Australia's departing nursing sisters and introduces the search page for the database. David Perkins, a longstanding member of Families and Friends of the First Australian Imperial Force (FFFAIF), has carefully assembled the data from many available sources. Each of David's records contains links to the relevant Australian War Memorial, National Archives, and Department of Veterans Affairs 'Discovering Anzacs' sources. At the launch he demonstrated its functionality and encouraged researchers to provide more information that he will add as appropriate. While the bulk of these nurses served with the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) those that worked with other forces are included as well as some who worked in Volunteer Aid Detachments (VADs).

The database was launched as part of a seminar organised by the Australian Branch of the Western Front Association in conjunction with the FFFAIF. Both organisations are dedicated to remembering the Great War and the FFFAIF is the legacy of John Laffin, a prolific author of military history. His parents, Nellie Pike and Charles Laffin both served with the Number Three Australian General Hospital (3AGH) on Lemnos in 1915. Their descendants, Sue Tongue and Craig Laffin, presented the story of 'Our Nurse Nellie in the war' as the 2022 *John Laffin Memorial Lecture*.

Nellie Alfreda Pike was born in Wellington New South Wales, the second of 12 children. In spite of parental disapproval she trained as a nurse in Bathurst, graduating in 1913. She was 26 when she enlisted with the AANS in July 1915 and posted to 3AGH on Lemnos arriving in September 1915. Although of diminutive

stature at only just over 5ft, Nellie reputedly informed the 3AGH Commanding Officer Colonel Fiaschi that working on Lemnos was 'fun' and he looked surprised. She went with 3AGH to Abbassia in Cairo and the Kitchener Hospital in Brighton, England. Nellie was working at Harefield's Australian Auxiliary Hospital (1AAH) before she was discharged from the AANS when she married Charles Laffin in September 1917. Image B is of their wedding in St Albans and is a well-known image in Canberra's Australian War Memorial Collection.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

F07678.002

Image B: Wedding of Nellie and Charles Laffin, 1917.

Sue Tongue told the poignant story of the loss of Nell's fiancé Will Rose at the battle of Fromelles. Charles Laffin and Will Rose had been to school together in Sydney and the two families have kept in contact over the years. Craig Laffin explained how his grandparents talked about their war experiences and welcomed visiting diggers, in contrast to the many returned servicemen who did not talk about their war. The three Laffin children, John and his two sisters, grew up with the diggers' stories. When Charles was dealing with a degree of what we would call now 'post-traumatic stress disorder' (PTSD), the family increasingly relied on Nellie's energy. Both reenlisted in the Second World War along with their son John. Charles died in 1948 but Nellie continued to work in a nursing role as Matron at the Knox Grammar School. She died in 1980 at the age of 92. Being a nurse was a life-long career for Nellie



Image A: Australia's departing nursing sisters. From Guthrie, S. & J. Clark. *Lighter Shades of Scarlet and Grey*, 1985, p 2.

# Nursing History news

*continued*

Laffin, and the Great War was an opportunity for her to demonstrate her patriotism serving overseas. The ethos of care and support that the Laffin family lived by continues through the FFFAIF.

The seminar's afternoon programme started with Krista Vane-Tempest talking about her great-aunt Edith Blake. Krista has recently published *Edith Blake's War* based on Edith's family correspondence. Edith worked with the British Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS) and was the only Australian nurse killed in action. She was on board HM Hospital Ship *Glenart Castle* when it was torpedoed in the Bristol Channel in February 1918. None of the nurses survived (Vane-Tempest, K. *Edith Blake's War*. 2021).

Dr Nicole Blay and archivist Janette Pelosi spoke of their research into the Australian nurses who worked at 1 AAH Harefield. They explained the importance of verifying nurses' identities. Names might have been spelled incorrectly, many had similar names and they warned that these mistakes were often replicated.

James Oglethorpe started out with one photo of his great-aunt Sister May Oglethorpe to research her life. He found Trove useful and learned that the sisters were all keen to go to the war to support their men. May Oglethorpe continued to nurse 'all her life'. Chris Bryett spoke of Matron Kellett's service during the war; she was on the Hospital Ship *Gascon* at Gallipoli. Post-war she was Matron of Sydney Hospital. Sarah and Ruth Miller brought their great-aunt Caroline Ellen Wilson's medals to display. Caroline had survived the sinking of the SS *Barunga* in the Bay of Biscay ...'after being torpedoed.'

The seminar finished with press photographs of some of the returned nurses who attended the opening of the Anzac Memorial on 24th November 1934. The Sunday *Sun* of 25 April 1934 reported that several hundred ex-army nurses were amongst the thousands who attended the opening by Prince Henry, the Duke of Gloucester ('Women of Anzac.' *Sun*. 25/11/1934, p 27).

Prince Henry was feted in Sydney and The Coast Hospital for Infectious Diseases was renamed 'The Prince Henry Hospital' in his honour. The seminar was chaired by Paul Simadas, RFD Lieutenant Colonel, Chairman Australian branch Western Front Association.

## ***The Anzac Memorial and the Great War's Nurses***

As well as the matron and nursing sister figures on the outside buttresses of the building (Images C and D), the Eastern bronze bas relief features a nurse at the side of a collapsed man on a stretcher. Inside, below the dome,



Images C&D: Images of the Hyde Park Anzac Memorial from <https://www.anzacmemorial.nsw.gov.au>

one quarter of the marble bas relief shows a seated nursing sister supporting two ailing patients. The Memorial's sculptor, Raynor Hoff, was very conscious of the impact of the war on women.

The centenary extensions to the Memorial, located under the building, now provide an auditorium and more display spaces. Some of the Memorial's collection of nursing artefacts fill one display case in their current exhibition.



Image E: Photograph of part of Hyde Park Anzac Memorial from <https://www.anzacmemorial.nsw.gov.au>

A portrait of an unknown AANS sister is on display there. The well-known portrait painter Harold Abbott was the artist and it was painted c1936.



Image - C. Ashton

***If anyone can identify this AANS Sister please get in touch with the collection manager at Sydney's Hyde Park Anzac Memorial.***

**The database can be accessed through the page  
Anzac Nurses of the Great War at**

**<http://fffaif.org.au>**

### FORGOTTEN GEMS – archival resources unearthed

Catherine Storey OAM

MB BS MSc FRACP

Hon Archivist, Royal North Shore Hospital, Sydney

I am the archivist at the Royal North Shore Hospital of Sydney (RNSH). RNSH began as a small cottage hospital on Willoughby Road, Crows Nest, in 1888. However, the needs of the expanding North Shore Community outstripped this facility, and in 1903 a more significant, grander hospital opened on the present site at Gore Hill. The hospital became a clinical school for the University of Sydney in 1948.

For over one hundred years, the hospital has continued to expand to deliver medical care demanded by an increasingly complex health care system. Throughout this period, the hospital has accumulated a vast resource of historical material, which records these changes.

But sadly, these records have not been readily available to students of medical history. How did the hospital handle the pandemic of 1919; how has nursing changed over this time; how did surgical services develop; what was the impact of tuberculosis on the resources of the hospital; what was Sister Kenny's role at RNSH; and what were the discussions around the first IVF birth?

There is now a small team of dedicated honorary archivists working with this collection to sort, catalogue and preserve this extraordinary treasure chest of material for the future. We hope to develop a comprehensive record of the collection available online.



Royal North Shore Hospital of Sydney – c 1919 – Courtesy of the Archive and Heritage Collection – RNSH

But this begs the question – how many other collections are out there in other institutions and of which medical historians are not aware?

If you would like to know more about the archive collection at North Shore or view the archives, contact [cestorey@bigpond.com](mailto:cestorey@bigpond.com).

A recent resource to be 'unearthed' is the Library and Heritage collection of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, which is now online; the catalogue is available at <https://racp.intersearch.com.au>

#### *Editorial note*

*The editorial team would welcome contributions from members who may be aware of similar collections. A paragraph and a photograph or two would help build awareness of the many small collections that provide a wonderful look-back at how things were, but also preserve our medical legacy.*

*If you know of an 'unearthed' collection and would like to add it to the list, please email Maggi Boulton at [anzshm@anzshm.org.au](mailto:anzshm@anzshm.org.au)*



In their latest newsletter, COMA (Collection of Medical Artefacts Tasmania) announced that the Hobart City Council have agreed to lease Semaphore Cottage (pictured) to COMA for five years, ending a period of great uncertainty regarding the housing of their historic collection. They have also received a grant of \$3000 from Cultural Heritage and Arts Regional Tourism Program (CHART) to help with visitor signage and interpretation panels for new displays. The move to Battery Point will make the collection more accessible to the public than has been the case at Jane Franklin Hall, a



Signal Station, Princes Park, Hobart

residential hall at the University of Tasmania. A date for re-opening has not been announced as much needed work on the new premises is continuing.

## Over a century ago...

30 March 1842

Dr Crawford Williamson Long, a general practitioner in Georgia, USA, anaesthetised a young man with ether and then removed a tumour from his neck. Arguably this was the first successful use of ether anaesthesia for surgery. Dr Long subsequently successfully anaesthetised other patients, including children.

Long did not publish his successes until 1849, as ether (and nitrous oxide) were used as recreational drugs and in dentistry when teeth were extracted. They were not considered useful medicinal drugs. So, no-one other than those in his rural surroundings in the southern states of the US were aware of ether being able to achieve true anaesthesia. Moreover surgeons and others regarded pain as a normal accompaniment to surgery which, in the 18th and early 19th centuries had advanced considerably in the absence of anaesthesia.

In 1846 in Boston a dentist, William Morton, had experimented with ether on himself, animals and with dental patients and on 16th October he successfully

anaesthetised a young patient for removal of a tumour in his neck. The procedure received much publicity in and beyond the USA, and that day has become known internationally as Ether Day.

The operating theatre at the Massachusetts General Hospital remains as it was on that day and is known as the Ether Dome. Within a year, ether anaesthesia was being used throughout the world.

John Crowhurst



The Ether Dome atop the Bulfinch Building at Massachusetts General Hospital in downtown Boston as photographed on 29 January 2007. Photograph: Adam Lenhardt



Portrait of Crawford Williamson Long. Wellcome Collection



### Royal Australasian College of Physicians

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians at 145 Macquarie Sydney has a most fantastic History of Medicine Library, housing one of the best collections of Australian and New Zealand History of Medicine material (there are books, pamphlets, archives and artefacts). Some of you may already be familiar with the collection from past research.

The College is now planning a new initiative - Friends of the History of Medicine Library of the RACP. We are inviting our own Fellows and trainees to be part of this new group, but in order to ensure that we maintain the highest possible standards of interest and research we are specifically inviting others who share a passion for the History of Medicine in Australia and New Zealand to become Friends.

Through an annual program of exhibitions, functions, seminars and lectures we hope that the fine collection of the College will find a greater audience who appreciate its value and preserve the collection for future generations.

'Friends' from all states, territories and 'across the ditch' can join together, now that we are all so familiar with on-line meeting platforms.

If you would like to register your interest in the Friends of the History of Medicine Library of the RACP, please email [library@racp.edu.au](mailto:library@racp.edu.au)



A virtual tour (and history) of the historic building at 145 Macquarie Street can be found at

<https://www.racp.edu.au/about/our-heritage>

It is hoped that live tours of this beautiful building will be available soon!

Catherine Storey, Honorary Associate Professor,  
School of Medicine, Faculty of Health and Medicine,  
University of Sydney, and Chair of the RACP Library,  
Heritage and Cultural Collections Committee

Karen Myers, Librarian, Curator History of Medicine  
Library at the RACP

# Conference feedback

## ANZSHM Conference feedback

### Marie Cook



I'd like to thank the ANZSHM for your support as a **recipient of a Ben Haneman grant**, and I appreciated the opportunity to present about my historical fiction novel with both its literary and medical history thesis.

I'm going to be honest and say that I was feeling like a fish out of water, as I'm based in an English department, and there were no other presenters who shared my similar focus of medical history, but then again I can also feel similarly out of water in the English department with my medical history interests.

But my fears suddenly dissipated and I became glued to the zoom from the keynote by Professor Jeremy Greene about telemedicine to as many sessions as I could attend. Every presentation offered something inspiring, whereby references in unlikely places trickled down in to my own knowledge and research.

As a fiction writer, and academic, other than documenting valuable concepts and references, I'm often just left with resonating fleeting images and phrases, so I hope I do justice interpreting my experience of the conference.

The session on 'Hospital History', by Joe Eisenberg and Janis Wilton, 'A Conspicuous Object' described their historicising of the old Maitland Hospital through remarkable art and installation; one image was of the art installation of past matrons immortalised as expertly made paper-maché busts, one namely, Elizabeth Morrow. What also resonated for me was the rocking horse that spent its early days in the children's ward of the old hospital, and now basks in the shop window of the local bakery, further prompting community memories demonstrating how medical history can still have a community resonance.

The past of Matron Elizabeth Morrow was explored in more depth in the paper by Judith Godden and Janice Wilton, 'From Servant to Matron: The career of Elizabeth Morrow 1869-86', and her struggle to maintain her professional standing as an exemplary nurse, and who for me had only been a small reference on my own novel timeline as being taught by Florence Nightingale before arriving in Australia.

Tanya Langtree's paper 'Fear Causes Many diseases', situated in an older medical history prior to Nightingale's infection prevention measures, related similar control measures to a much older medical system. It was very inspiring as it addressed other important paradigms of past medical systems, emanating from miasma theory, and perhaps contributed as a continuum of medical history to medical science.

There was also an important current continuum from Margaret Boulton's paper on 'Iron Lungs and Nursing Practices during the 1937-38 Polio Epidemic in Australia' and the more recent

knowledge gleaned from Diane Jefferies' paper about the history of Tongji Hospital in Wuhan, China, whereby the debilitating effects of a past epidemic still resonate within the context of the complexities of the current epidemic experience.

I was fortunate to chair the Colonial Health session, with Ash Green's research into the use of silence and separation in prisoner's health in the Colony of Victoria, shedding light on assumptions about what was considered a healthy approach to reform prisoners, and in some ways has a current resonance.

In Toby Raeburn's paper entitled 'When Innovation becomes an instrument of Colonisation: A micro history of nineteenth century phrenology in Australia', the context of Raeburn's narration of a current geography, Raeburn described a long Sydney street where at one end stood a bronze statue of colonial white history and at the other end a community health care practice fraternised by the local Indigenous people including the homeless. Raeburn's paper connected those two images through his research of Indigenous massacres and what he called 'the accompanying historical trauma' and thus making very poignant suggestions of future directions for healthcare policy, but for me Raeburn makes very important connections. Neville Yeomans' paper viewed the prevalence, and high rate of death, of tuberculosis within the nineteenth century medical profession, which for me eclipsed the medical men I'd been researching, some of whom had arrived in Australia to convalesce with tuberculosis.

I was very fortunate to share a session with Georgia McWhinney presenting on the dissemination of vernacular medicine in the First World War. Unfortunately, I did not get to hear her talk, but am very intrigued by her title 'Looking for Aeroplane Eggs' and would like to read it. The paper by Effie Karageorgos relating to the 'Social Vocabulary of Madness in Federation Era Australia' was an incredible study of the power of language to misinform or formalise maligned collective notions of madness; a more literary exploration of medical history. I was also pleased that the question I was asked after I presented was a very important question about how then my knowledge of nineteenth century writing of a medical history topic related to how I would write my novel, which has brought closer my two worlds of study.

I hope I have represented the presenters' papers respectfully and correctly acknowledged their academic scholarship. It was a privilege to be a participant. I leave you with another phrase I passed by and that continues to resonate, that spiritualism should be considered in relation to medical history.

As suggestions have been requested, though there were no real faults, I wonder how titles of sessions can suggest more of the complexity of the papers presented, perhaps in a lateral sense, and I also wonder how we can generate more discussion within the sessions, whether there can be any further assistance to the chair to offer possible prompts as the papers are so interesting, or an extra five minutes at the end for overall questions across the papers if the need arises.

**Marie Cook**

PhD candidate, English Program  
Department, Creative Arts and English  
La Trobe University  
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## Journal watch and members' publications

We are pleased to announce that members of the ANZSHM have recently published the following works:

Adams, Caroline, "The influenza pandemic in South Australia in 1919", in *South Australia 1919-1939, Essays from the Professional Historians Association (SA)*, edited by Caroline Adams and Brian Dickey (Adelaide, South Australia: Professional Historians Association (SA) Inc, 2022) 38-41.

Boult, Margaret, " 'Get the prisoners, Sister': The care of polio victims during the 1937-1938 epidemic", in *South Australia 1919-1939, Essays from the Professional Historians Association (SA)*, edited by Caroline Adams and Brian Dickey (Adelaide, South Australia: Professional Historians Association (SA) Inc, 2022) 353-70.

Le Get, R. 2021. "Therapeutic labour and the sanatorium farm at Greenvale (1912-1918)". *Provenance*, (19): 9–19. <https://prov.vic.gov.au/explore-collection/provenance-journal/provenance2021/therapeutic-labour-and-sanatorium-farm>

Sioda, T. & Thorley, V. " 'Unfortunate creatures': The hazards of syphilis in wet-nursing", *Medycyna Nowozytna (Modern Medicine: Studying the Culture of Medicine)*, 2020 (Nov.), 26, 21-56.

Thorley, V. "Embodied mothering: Valuing breastfeeding in a neoliberal age", *Breastfeeding Review* 2021; 29(1), 7–13.

Thorley, V. "Conditions of Boarded Out Babies of Wet-Nurses, Colonial Australia", *Journal of Human Lactation* 2021; 37(2) 348–356.

The following articles appeared in Volume 19 of *History Australia*, which featured a mental health history theme:

Coleborne, Catharine and Dunk, James, 'From the Margins: Madness and History in Australia', *History Australia* vol 19, no. 1, 2022, 3-12.

Dunk, James, 'Wrongful Confinement and the Spectre of Colonial Despotism: a political history of madness in New South Wales 1843', *History Australia* vol 19, no. 1, 2022, 34-53.

Karageorgos, Effie, ' "Jingo Dingo Insanity" and the Mafeking Day: articulating madness in Federation-era Australia' *History Australia* vol 19, no. 1, 2022, 73-91.

Dunlop, Robyn and Pols, Hans, 'Deinstitutionalisation and Mental Health Activism in Australia: emerging voices of individuals with lived experience of severe mental distress, 1975-1985', *History Australia* vol 19, no. 1, 2022, 92-114.

Dunlop, Robyn, 'Disaster Responses and Commonwealth Involvement in Community Mental Health 1973-1975', *History Australia* vol 19, no. 1, 2022, 115-132.

Ellis, Rob and Coleborne, Catharine, 'Co-producing madness: international perspectives on the public histories of mental illness,' *History Australia* vol 19, no. 1, 2022, 133-150.

Roberts-Pedersen, Elizabeth 'Towards a (bio)cultural history of the brain?' *History Australia* vol 19, no. 1, 2022, 151-160.

A reminder to please send us details of your recent research publications so we can share your work in the newsletter.

Send details to  
**[anzshm@anzshm.org.au](mailto:anzshm@anzshm.org.au)**

## ISHM

### Notes from the International Society for the History of Medicine

The 48th Congress of ISHM was to be held in the city of Iasi, the university town and old capital of the Principality of Moldavia, one of the three principalities that came together to form the modern Romania. Moldavia has a long border with Ukraine and Iasi is close to that border. Refugees are now a major concern there and the Australian National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre, based in Darwin NT, has a team in Moldavia assisting.

The conference organisers have decided the Congress will go ahead but it will be online only. The Congress

will be held 15-18 September 2022. The full programme is still being put together and this can be accessed from the Congress website <[ishm2022.ro](http://ishm2022.ro)>. Registration details are also available there.

Brian Reid



# Animalia

## Japan's dancing cats – an unwilling sentinel in Minamata

It is well-recognised that some animals seem able to recognise warning signals that foretell catastrophic environmental events. Goats, for instance, on Mt Etna, have been observed to become agitated just before an eruption. Toads apparently ceased spawning five days before an earthquake in Italy; and a green sea turtle being monitored as it travelled across the Pacific Ocean earlier this year abruptly turned around, just 24 hours before the volcanic eruption near Tonga.

Quarantine and biosecurity scientists monitor sentinel animals for signs of infectious diseases that might impact industry and affect human health. In Australia, sentinel chicken flocks are tested regularly as an early warning of increased activity of Murray Valley Encephalitis (MVE) and Kunjin viruses. In northern parts of Australia and on islands in the Torres Strait, sentinel pig populations are maintained specifically to detect Japanese Encephalitis virus heading our way. Trapping and testing mosquitoes in various locations can be used to warn of increased Ross River virus and Barmah Forest virus activity.

Build-up of toxins in domestic and wild animals can warn of environmental health hazards that may also affect humans. The curious behaviour of domestic cats in Minamata in the 1950s heralded an environmental and human catastrophe. Effects of a build-up of mercury in the food chain were first noticed in cats, whose neurological symptoms resulted in odd behaviour causing them to be described as having 'dancing cat

fever'. Soon after, children and adults also showed serious neurological symptoms.

The cause of the catastrophe was toxic industrial waste dumped into Minamata Bay from a chemical plant. Originally thought to be due to methylmercury, the actual toxin was identified just two years ago as a different mercury compound,  $\alpha$ -mercuri-acetaldehyde, present in the dumped waste. Once again, it was the cats which helped solve the puzzle. Samples of affected cat brains from the 1950s were tested using modern laboratory methods and computer modelling.



But why did the cats show the symptoms first? The toxic mercury compound accumulated over time in seafood, the main diet of Minamata's cat

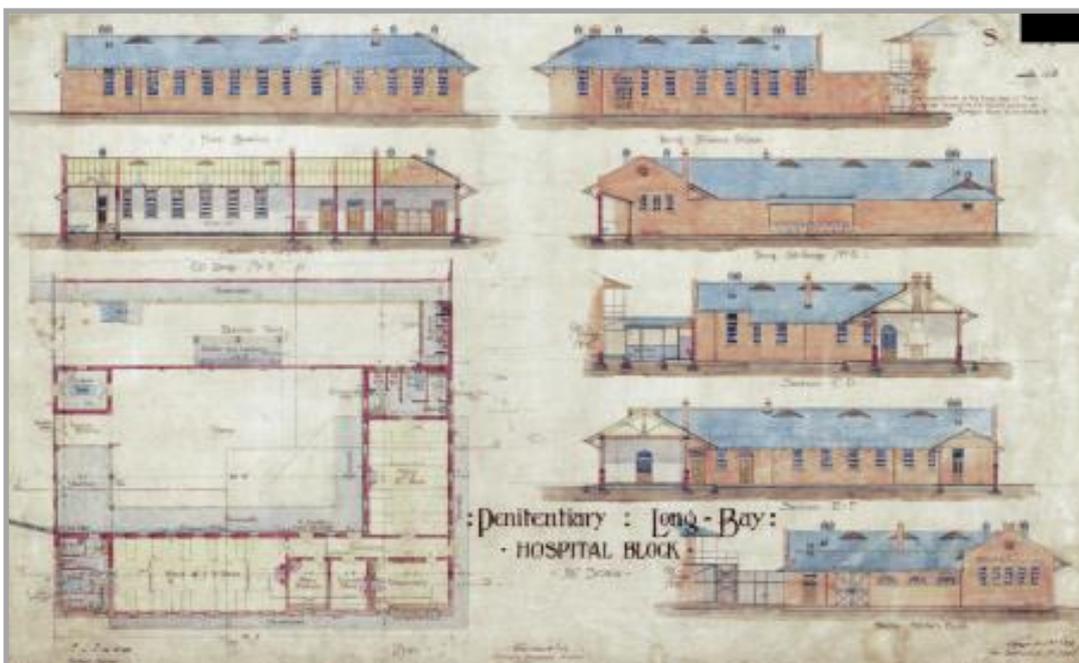
population. The local people, whose diet was also fish-based, showed similar symptoms soon after their feline companions. Unfortunately, the toxic waste continued to be dumped for years after the signs of poisoning were first noticed. This event was catastrophic in the true sense of the word. Thousands of people were affected; over 900 people died and many infants were born with birth defects. The neurological syndrome arising from the mercury poisoning is now known as Minamata disease.

Kath Weston

## Medical iconography

1851 Hospital Plan, Long Bay Penitentiary

Source: NSW State Records and Archives



## NSW Branch news

Last March the NSW Branch held its Annual General Meeting for 2021. Once again, we met at the Toxteth Hotel in Glebe for the meeting, dinner and a lecture. The speaker, Michelle Bootcov, is a doctoral candidate at the University of New South Wales under the supervision of Professor Alison Bashford. Her talk, on "First Nations' Blood, 'First World' Science: An Australian twist in 20th Century Infectious Disease History," was an intriguing journey through the history of blood-collecting, its racial undercurrents, the fervour of medical researchers and the serendipitous discoveries leading to greater knowledge about hepatitis. We thank Michelle for an enlightening lecture and wish her well for the completion of her PhD.

The new committee was elected with the following results. Office bearers for 2022 are - President: Georgia McWhinney; Vice-President and Immediate Past President; Charmaine Robson; Secretary: Chi Chi Huang; Treasurer: Shayne Brown. Other Committee

members are Richard White, Ben Skerman, John Sinclair, Lorna Barrow and Diana Jefferies.



Professor Warwick Anderson

We are pleased to announce that Professor Warwick Anderson, the Janet Dora Hine Professor of Politics, Governance and Ethics at the Charles Perkins Centre, University of Sydney, and honorary professor in the School

of Population and Global Health, University of Melbourne will be giving the 2022 BEN HANEMAN MEMORIAL LECTURE. He will be speaking on "Virus on the March? Military Metaphor and Model in the Covid-19 Pandemic". The lecture will be held on Thursday 11 August at 6 pm in the Dixson Room, State Library of NSW. Further details and booking information will be available soon.

Charmaine Robson, Vice President, ANZSHM-NSW

## Medical History Society of Victoria (MHSV) news

The Society met for the first time in seven months, on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> May, to hold a delayed AGM, followed by a guest lecture and dinner.

Forty-three members and guests were present for the AGM and lecture, when Assoc. Prof. Gabrielle Wolf of Deakin University's Law School related the story of how the Commonwealth Alien Doctors Board controlled the entry of medical migrants into Australian practice in the years 1942 – 1946.

At the AGM, outgoing President, Madonna Grehan

summarised events over the last two years, noting that membership had remained stable despite the sad deaths of James Keipert, Don Cameron and Past President Gordon Whyte.

At the elections, Prof. Neville Yeomans was elected President for 2022/2023, together with Martine Dodd, Treasurer, Rod Westhorpe, Secretary, continuing committee members, Marie Rogers, Walter Heale, Tony Buzzard, Pam Craig, Madonna Grehan, and new member Meredith Temple-Smith. Mike Heny retired from the committee and was thanked for his time and contribution to the Society.

Following the AGM and lecture, 41 members and guests enjoyed dinner at the Kooyong Lawn Tennis Club.

The next meeting of the Society is scheduled for 17<sup>th</sup> August.

Rod Westhorpe, Hon Secretary

## Public lecture: Interpreting health

The Laureate Centre of History and Population at UNSW, Sydney and ANZSHM NSW will be co-hosting a public lecture delivered by Associate Prof. Alex Mold. Alex is the Director of the Centre for History in Public Health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM).

This centre brings people together who are interested in the history of public health, health systems and global health. This lecture will speak to the theme of "Interpreting Health", to close off a 2-day workshop on the histories of health communication and messaging at UNSW, Sydney.

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> September 2022

Time: 6:30pm

Venue: UNSW Kensington Campus. Room TBC

Booking details to come.

For inquiries, contact Chi Chi Huang

[chichi.huang@unsw.edu.au](mailto:chichi.huang@unsw.edu.au)

## Chloroform anaesthesia

In the mid-1840s successful surgical (general) anaesthesia was first achieved with diethyl ether (DEE) in the USA. (see also page 7 of this issue - *Over a century ago...*). In 1847, in Edinburgh, Scotland, obstetrician James Young Simpson and two other colleagues had used chloroform as a 'social drug', experiencing rapid and very satisfactory 'sleep'. Soon after, Simpson was the first to use chloroform to provide satisfactory analgesia and anaesthesia for labour and delivery in several of his patients. He published a paper that year in *The Lancet*<sup>1</sup> which resulted in a rapid uptake of the use of chloroform for surgical and other anaesthesia.

Unlike DEE, chloroform is not very volatile; it works very rapidly, is not flammable or explosive and is much more pleasant to inhale. In Britain, within two months of Simpson's publication, chloroform had replaced ether as the choice drug for general anaesthesia. However, shortly afterwards, the first chloroform death was reported in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. In contrast, in London, Dr John Snow had administered some 4,000 chloroform anaesthetics by 1858, including two administrations to Queen Victoria for labour and delivery of her last two children: Prince Leopold in 1853, and Princess Beatrice in 1857.

Snow's death in 1858 brought a long career as anaesthetist and epidemiologist to its end. However, Dr Joseph Clover became the next doctor in England to take up anaesthesia as his dominant career. This followed Clover witnessing the first successful ether anaesthetic given in England at University College Hospital in December 1847.

Clover invented a safe inhaler for chloroform enabling accurate and safe concentrations of chloroform to be delivered, and used it with other drugs such as DEE and nitrous oxide. He administered more than 7,000 chloroform anaesthetics before his untimely death in 1882.

In 2021, Dr Christine Ball, a senior consultant anaesthetist at the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne published *The Chloroformist*, a book about Clover, his career and his many significant contributions to the development of safe anaesthesia. Dr Ball is one of the leading scholars of the history of anaesthesia in the world. The book was published by Melbourne University Press and is widely available in leading bookshops.

Dr Ball's book was reviewed by Dr Michael Cooper in *Anaesthesia & Intensive Care: History Supplement* September 2021<sup>2</sup>. Thanks to Dr Cooper and the editor of *Anaesthesia & Intensive Care*, Dr John Loadman, a copy of the review is available on request to ANZSHM.

Dr John Crowhurst

1. Simpson JY: 'Discovery of a New Anaesthetic Agent, More Efficient than Sulfuric Ether. *The Lancet*, 1847, pp. 549-550.

2. Cooper M. Book Review: *The Chloroformist*, Christine Ball. *Anaesthesia & Intensive Care: History Supplement*, 49(15); 56-57. (September 2021).

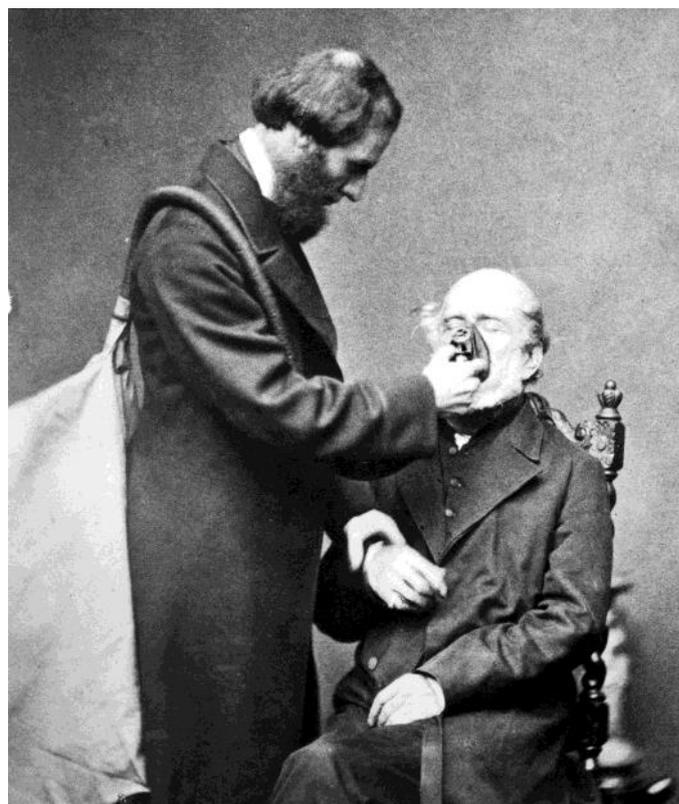


Image: J. T. Clover, Wellcome Collection

## Midwifery website

### Australian Midwifery History Website

The members of the Australian Midwifery History Project would like to present their new website, which outlines the history of midwifery in Australia as well as that of the Australian College of Midwives.

[www.australianmidwiferyhistory.org.au](http://www.australianmidwiferyhistory.org.au)

Australian Midwifery History  Home About Histories Resources Contact Us

### Australian Midwives in History

Pregnancy, childbirth, motherhood, and midwifery have been happening in our country since time immemorial. The last 200 years have seen significant societal change in Australia, and the knowledge, tools and technology available to midwives has also brought about significant change to the profession.

But at its heart, midwifery is the same.

Midwives have always gone to extraordinary lengths to work with women and achieve the best possible outcome for her and her baby, and they still do today.

# Obituary

## Lady Jean Duncan Foley

MA, DLitt, 1925–2022

It is with genuine sadness that I report the passing of Lady Jean Duncan Foley (*née* Laing) on 17 May 2022. Jean was a historian of quarantine and much, much more.

Born in New Zealand on 21 December 1925, Jean's family travelled to Sydney early in the Great Depression. Sadly the tensions of that era saw her father return alone; he featured no more in Jean's long and fruitful life.

After undergraduate study at the University of Sydney, Jean took a role in its student records department. During the late 1950s she spent several years with IBM, at that time engaged in transforming paper-based business information into computerised files. As a leader in this novel technology, Jean returned to the University of Sydney to drive the transformation of their student records system. In 1972 she married the love of her life, business leader Sir Noel Foley CBE. Two years later Lady Jean was appointed Registrar of the university, but departed soon after to care for her ailing mother.

Jean's relationship with the University of Sydney remained productive, nevertheless. She earned a Master of Arts and was later bestowed with a Doctor of Letters, recognising her contribution to the university's growth and efficiency during a time of enormous social change.

Having studied postgraduate history, Jean found herself drawn to Sydney's North Head Quarantine Station. By 1984 this site was due to be closed as a Commonwealth facility. After discussions with Dr Robert Bull, Commonwealth Director of Health for NSW, Jean was granted access to the records of the station. She subsequently superintended their care, ensuring that many historic files were transferred to the National Archives of Australia and to State Archives & Records NSW (to use their current monikers).

Jean was irresistibly drawn to the landscape, facilities, staff, stories and tragedies of North Head Quarantine

Station. Over the following decade she carefully pieced together an account that was released in 1995 as *In Quarantine: a History of Sydney's Quarantine Station, 1828–1984* (Kangaroo Press). After publishing several additional papers addressing health administration in Sydney, Jean's second book was issued in 2019: *Healings and Burials at Sydney's North Head: Aboriginal People c.1788, Quarantined People 1835–1924* (self published). Both are now standard reference works, resulting from Jean's painstaking research, fastidious cross-referencing and deep insight into the frailties of human relationships in the midst of health crises. Indeed, copies of both titles featured prominently at her memorial service on 26 May 2022.

I was blessed to have met and consulted regularly with Jean during my own time working on the history of North Head Quarantine Station. She was sharp, bright, witty, rather cheeky and fiercely devoted to the accurate documentation and interpretation of this extraordinary site. Jean shared resources, recollections and advice, through to the point where her vision sadly failed her.

Having lost Noel in 2005, Jean is survived by her nieces and nephews. We also thank her for an enduring contribution to Australia's medical history. Vale, Jean – you were a true lady.

Dr Peter Hobbins

Australian National Maritime Museum



Lady Jean Foley at the site of the recently restored 1898 RMS Australia inscription at North Head Quarantine Station, 2003

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LETTERS, PHOTOGRAPHS AND ARTICLES ARE WELCOME, PREFERABLY IN ELECTRONIC FORMAT.

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS 13 AUGUST 2022