



## **Historical Society of the Northern Territory**

**Patron:** The Hon Austin Asche AC

### **NEWSLETTER MAY 2013 NO: 65**

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### **President's Report by Dr Brian Reid**

My wife and I, in the company of an Indian friend, journeyed to North India in December/January to look at, among many other things, World Heritage Sites. The responsible national Government authority, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) manages these sites, has an extensive programme of archaeological research and restoration and administers a regionalized network of professionally operated museums. Many of the museums are located at the World Heritage sites.

Most of the many sites we visited such as the Taj Mahal and Great Stupa of Sanchi near Agra and Humayan's Tomb and the Red Fort in Delhi were very well maintained and patrolled. Entry tickets were required and in the case of the Taj Mahal, pockets and bags were screened. Informative signs were very well done as were the notices advising the role and work of the ASI. The museums we were able to see were excellent. Most of the sites were crowded and foreign tourists were very much in the minority.

Despite India's many problems, her heritage record is enviable. The ASI is very professional and well considered (it recently celebrated 150 years of operation), the heritage sites are much respected and visiting them is a popular thing for Indian people to do. It would be wonderful if we could achieve this level of respect and popularity for our heritage sites in Australia. Sadly most of the responsible ministers in this country prefer to not have their heritage responsibilities mentioned in their portfolio titles. It seems we have a long way to go.

### **Forthcoming Events**

#### **Thursday 9 May at 11.30am-1pm – Launch of book on Clyde Fenton and opening of the new extension of the Katherine Museum by June Tapp-Coutts**

Clyde Fenton graduated as a medical doctor in 1925 from Melbourne University. He then had a stint in the Royal Air Force in England in 1928. Fenton returned to Australia and headed outback, first to Wyndham, Western Australia and then on to Darwin.

Fenton earned his pilot's licence with a goal to join the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS), but the founder, Reverend John Flynn, had a policy of not using doctors as pilots. As a result, Fenton privately raised money for an aircraft, and in March 1934 arrived in Katherine as the Government Medical Officer. He started an aerial ambulance rescue service which developed into the Northern Territory Aerial Medical Service.

Calls for medical assistance via telegram came through the two RFDS stations at Cloncurry and Wyndham. Fenton utilised primitive bush strips and runways to pick up the patients and return them to Katherine for medical treatment. With no navigational equipment or radios, landings were made on strips lit by kerosene flares or car lights, and only the railway lines and the Katherine River were available to estimate his position.

To the Civil Aviation Department Fenton was a disaster, but to the people of the Top End, he was a hero. During his career he survived plane crashes, made a flight to China in a small open aircraft, and was once stranded for five days after a forced landing.

On 14 May 1940 he received his call up for the RAAF by telegram. He was eventually based at Manbulloo airstrip near Katherine, from where he made many emergency medical flights. In August 1942 the No 6 Communications Flight was formed with Flight Lieutenant Fenton in command. This unit delivered mail and food supplies to army and RAAF outposts, as far afield as the Wessell Islands. The unit was at various times based at the Ross Smith Aerodrome in Darwin, and at the Batchelor airstrip.

Fenton left the Territory after the war for Melbourne, where he died on 28 February 1982. One of the planes he flew, a Gypsy Moth, is on display at the Fenton Hangar at the Katherine Historical Society Precinct. A World War II airstrip, the Fenton Airfield near Hayes Creek is named after him. He is also remembered by the Clyde Fenton Primary School in Katherine. Information from [wikipedia.org/wiki](http://wikipedia.org/wiki)

### **Monday 13 May - International Nurses' Day at Charles Darwin University – 3-5pm**

Celebrating 30 years of tertiary nursing studies and 25 years of nursing pre-registration studies in the Territory

Guest speaker will be the Lord Mayor of Darwin, Katrina Fong Lim - "Nursing from Darwin Community College to Charles Darwin University" and the Hon. Kon Vatskalis MLA - "Keeping and preserving Territory nursing stories"

Join the Nursing Museum in this annual celebration. Refreshments will be available.

Where: In the *Red 1.3* Room which is above the coffee shop. Near the bookshop, Post Office and library at CDU. RSVP : email - [rsvp@cdu.edu.au](mailto:rsvp@cdu.edu.au) or phone - (08) 8946 6554

### **Saturday 25 May - Music, Old Darwin, Wine & Cheese Evening – 6.30pm onwards**

On Saturday 25 May, the Society and the National Trust Larrakeyah Branch will be holding a "wine and cheese" afternoon in the grounds of Burnett House.

Dr Steve Farram will be providing the background music from his 1930s-1950s records (78s) collection. A feature of the evening will be a powerpoint presentation of photographs of old Darwin and beyond. Come along and reminisce about the old days.

Cost is \$10 per person which covers a variety of cheese & dips and one glass of wine. Bar will be available. All proceeds will go to the upkeep of Burnett House.

Members and guests are invited to attend.

RSVP is essential by Monday 20 May. Please don't just turn up on the night.

If you wish to attend, please contact Bev Phelts on 0487 413 709 or 89818236 (leave message) or email: [historicalsocietynt@yahoo.com.au](mailto:historicalsocietynt@yahoo.com.au)

**Friday 31 May – Talk by Dr Ella Stack at 12:10pm at NT Library, Parliament House Darwin**



Dr Ella Stack, Darwin's first female Mayor in 1975, will share personal recollections of the days following Cyclone Tracy; stories of survival, ingenuity and the extraordinary decisions people made under extreme pressure.

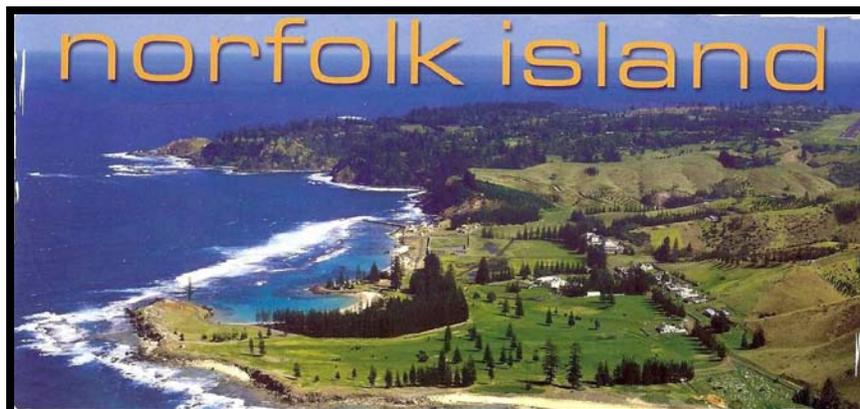
At the time, Dr Stack begged and borrowed Health Department recording equipment to gather an extensive collection of personal stories and anecdotes about the cyclone and its effects. To safeguard the recordings, Dr Stack sent them to the National Library in Canberra, who faithfully transcribed the interviews. The fascinating accounts revealed now, thirty nine years later, provide the content for Dr Stack's new book.

Dr Stack came to Darwin in 1961, and by 1962, was one of only two private practitioners in Darwin. She was awarded a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) 1979.

Bookings preferred, phone 1800 019 155 or email [libraryevents@nt.gov.au](mailto:libraryevents@nt.gov.au).

**Friday 31 May – National Trust & Historical Society Talk at Burnett House – 5.30 for a 6pm start  
Earl James on Norfolk Island – “Prison Camp to Tourist Mecca”**

In 2007 Earl James visited the Island during which time he became so fascinated with the place and its history that when he returned home he did a little research. Once called a Hell hole on Earth it is now a haven for tourists and tax evaders.



\$2 sausage sizzle after the lecture at 7pm. Bar will be open at 5.30pm.

Entry \$2 for members and \$5 for non members

Members and guests are reminded that food and drink cannot be taken inside Burnett House

## **HSNT Field Trip 26-28 July (Darwin Show Day Weekend)**

Wendy Carter, committee member of the Kununurra Historical Society, will be leading our field trip this year. It is planned to camp on Nicholson Station and do a number of day trips to the surrounding area. Some suggestions from Wendy are a visit to the old Ord River Station and cemetery, Nelson Springs and Inverway Station. Itinerary and details will be available around mid June.

## **Interstate Events –**

### **17th National Engineering Heritage Conference, Canberra, November 2013**

The 17th National Engineering Heritage Conference will be held 17–20 November 2013, at the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra. It is hosted and organised by the Canberra Division of Engineers Australia and Engineering Heritage Australia and is being held in Canberra as part of the Centenary celebrations of the naming of the city. The theme, “Canberra 100 – Building the Capital, Building the Nation”, has been selected to highlight the contribution all states and territories of the Commonwealth have played in creating and sustaining the nation and its capital. A pre-conference tour is also planned covering, among other things, some of the sites that were considered for the National Capital.

More information is available at  
[www.engineersaustralia.org.au/17th-engineering-heritage-conference](http://www.engineersaustralia.org.au/17th-engineering-heritage-conference)

### **Australian Studies Research Network Presentations - Sydney**

Join the Australian Studies Research Network from 5-7pm, Friday 10 May at History House (133 Macquarie Street, Sydney) to hear Multispecies Belonging in the Time of Extinctions – Professor Deborah Bird Rose, MQ & UNSW

Questions of belonging are never far from the discourses of identity in settler societies. Nonhumans, both animals and plants, have been part of the discourse right from the beginning. Only recently, though, have animals (in particular) been seen as \*participants\* in questions of belonging. The complications animals bring to belonging become even more knotty in this time of anthropogenic extinctions. Professor Bird Rose will address these issues through a case study drawn from the multispecies ethnography that is her current research project. For more information email: [I.ford@unsw.edu.au](mailto:I.ford@unsw.edu.au)

### **NT Government Impact on the NT Library and the Museum & Art Gallery**

You may have heard that the government is currently undergoing a media and communications review.

It is proposed to out-source all media and communications from government departments such as the NT Library and the Museum and Art Gallery. It is expected that the government will abolish upto 60 positions and only a few staff will be left to handle all the media communications of every government department. The NT Library hosts about one event per week which always attracts a large number of people. Currently one person attached to the library is responsible for organising these events. With the cuts to media staff, this position will be abolished. This in turn, will mean that the library will not have the capacity to hold regular events. Just consider for a moment some of the recent events that the library has held – Literacy Week, the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing of Darwin, numerous book launches and the Chief Minister's Awards,

How can you help? – write to Matt Colan MLA, Minister for Arts and Museums, expressing your disappointment in the reduction of media services to the NT Library and the Museum.

Contact details are: GPO Box 3146, Darwin NT 0801 telephone: 08 8928 6622 fax: 08 8928 6509  
email: minister.conlan@nt.gov.au

### **Alan Powell our very own star on *Coast Australia***

Foxtel has commissioned *Coast Australia*, an Australian version of the award-winning British series *Coast*, to be produced by Great Southern Television.

The 8 part, one hour series will be hosted by renowned British historian and television presenter Neil Oliver and will include Australian experts who will focus exclusively on Australia's stunning coastline.

Each episode will target a different strip of coast, as Neil and his co-hosts collect stories about the history, the people, the archaeology, the geography and the marine life. Neil and his team will visit all corners of Australia, from the Kimberly to the Gold Coast and from Darwin and Tasmania.

Society Committee member, Emeritus Professor Alan Powell gladly accepted an invitation to be part of the series and have the opportunity to showcase our Territory coast line. Over the weekend of 20 & 21 April, Alan and Professor Tim Flannery along with the camera crew spent endless hours filming the British colonial settlement of Port Essington. Alan was filmed guiding Professor Flannery around the site explaining its history and the archeology. *Coast Australia* is expected to be shown later in 2013 on Foxtel.

*Information from Alan Powell & Great Southern Film & TV*

### **Farewell to Diana and John Richards - NT Library**

A large number of people gathered to bid farewell to two of the NTL's most fabulous staff. Their "can do" attitude and energy are just tops. It has been wonderful working with them on HSNT events held in the Library. After six years in Darwin, they are leaving paradise to "sunny" Canberra. They are relocating just in time for winter and to renew one of their passions – skiing. John will be working at the Australian War Memorial while Diana will be working with the Library Association.

The Society wishes them all the best in their new adventure.



John & Diana Richards



Jo McGill, Margaret Clinch & John Richards



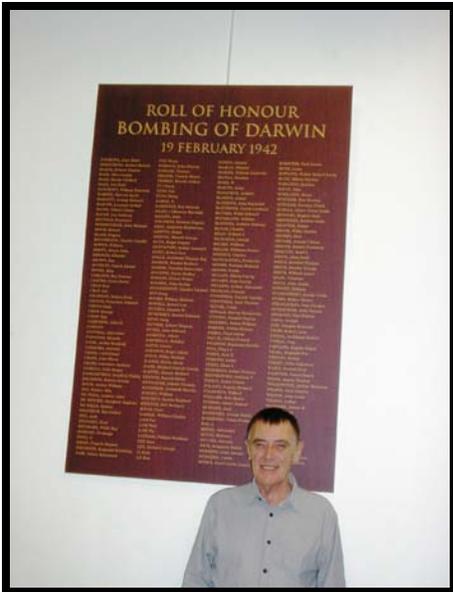
Di Symonds, Kathy Flint & Françoise Barr



Judy Boland, Melissa Royle & Yvonne Forrest



Kaye & Pearl Ogden



John with the WW2 Roll of Honour that he produced for the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin



John with a WW2 aerial photograph of Darwin

## Some highlights from Heritage week 13 - 21 April 2013



Penny Baird & Chris Millowick at Burnett House



The wonderful Larrakeyah National Trust volunteer ladies serving High Tea. From left: Dee Preston, Helen Bate, Anna Harris, Katherine Chandler (front), Nicole Stevenson & Bec Jarrott



*From the red centre to the top end: Northern Territory moving memories, 1920s - 1970s* showing at the NT Library. The film afternoon was extremely popular with 80 people turning up.



Bev Phelts introducing the film



Trevor Horman setting up the film night at Burnett House. We watched amazing clips from the 1920s & 1930s of vehicles travelling up the Oodnadatta and Darwin Track. This was followed by a silent movie from the 1920s – *The General*, Buster Keaton



Music by the Burnett House Revellers



"Tour guide", Trevor Horman showing a group around the old pump house near the wharf



Heritage tour of the old Town Hall ruins



"Nurses Walk" tour



Tour of Myilly Point National Trust houses

*Photographs courtesy Judy Richardson & Bev Phelts*