

Real to Reel

Newsletter of Oral History Tasmania Inc.



ISSN Digital edition 2208-4479

Print edition 1039-0707

No.93 December 2021

CONTENTS

News from the Executive – Jill Cassidy	1
Gorge Cultural Walk – Jill Cassidy, Karin Lê and Lana Wall	2
Oral History Australia Book & Media Awards	4
Call for Presentations for National conference	5

NEWS FROM THE EXECUTIVE – Jill Cassidy

Oral History in Troubling Times: Opportunities and Challenges

Dates for the postponed national conference have now been decided. It will be held 14–16 October 2022, with workshops on Thursday 13. Because it will be three years since the last conference, extra sessions on the morning of Sunday 16 have been scheduled so post-conference tours will be held only on Sunday afternoon.

Speakers whose presentation was accepted last year are automatically accepted for 2022. For others who would now like to contribute, a new Call for Presentations is available with a deadline of **April 1**. It can be found on page 5. Please consider making a proposal to add to those already accepted from Tasmania.

Her Excellency the Honourable Barbara Baker AC, Governor of Tasmania, readily agreed to the change of date to open the conference, as did Professor Rufus Black who will welcome delegates at the Welcome Reception on Thursday 13. The Tramsheds also rolled over the deposit to 2022 and the Grand Chancellor refunded the dinner deposit, so the postponement did not impact us financially at all.

Now all we have to do is hope that Covid will be totally under control well before October. It is worth noting that had it gone ahead last year the conference would have coincided precisely with the 3-day Hobart lockdown, so half of Tasmania's population would have been unable to attend.

Oral History workshop

The next workshop will be held in Launceston on Saturday 21 May 2022. Further details will be released in coming weeks, but you can put this date in your diary now.

Oral History Tasmania website

In the coming weeks you will notice a change in the OHT website. Recently the Oral History Australia website had a complete re-design which included the production of a new logo. One of the aims was to unify the appearance of the state and national websites to make it clear that although the states are now stand-alone organisations with their own membership lists, they still belong to an Australia-wide body.

The committee is happy to go along with this but still like the Tasmanian map logo and the photo of a sample of our diverse residents, so are currently working on a new design that will blend them with the OHA design.

* * *

GORGE CULTURAL WALK

Jill Cassidy, Karin Lê and Lana Wall



Launceston Cataract Gorge in flood. The First Basin swimming pool is underneath the water in the middle left.

October 17 was a beautiful sunny day, if initially chilly, for eleven participants to enjoy the ‘post-conference’ cultural walk at Launceston’s Cataract Gorge. Even at this stage Covid could not be denied, as Hobart went into a 3-day lockdown stopping an additional four people in the south from coming north. Those who could attend were lucky that recent rain had stopped, leaving us with dramatic scenes of surging water and a flooded swimming pool.

It was a pity that Auntie Patsy Cameron was unable to take the walk as originally planned, but she recommended Geoff McLean of Wallaby Tours who was an excellent replacement. He had clearly taken the walk many times,

mostly with schools, and knew a great deal about not only the Aboriginal culture but also the rocks and plants of the area.

We had walked only a short way along the path leading towards the Zig-zag track when Geoff stepped into the bushes to point out some of the fruit and other food that was available for the Aboriginal people to eat. Later we were able to sample a few of the plants but balked at the grub which Geoff had brought along. These grubs are not strictly speaking the same as the ‘witchetty’ grubs from Central Australia, but the larvae of large moths can be found here under tree bark and are an excellent source of protein. They can be eaten raw but are evidently nicer when lightly cooked – perhaps similar to scrambled eggs.



Geoff McLean informing participants about food items.



Moth larvae

Geoff kept to the southern side of the South Esk and took us to some of the lesser known, or for many the unknown, places in the Gorge. This included a visit to the Hidden Valley which millions of years ago had been the route of the river but in more recent times was a site for ‘secret men’s business’. Geoff told us that men used to use the rocky places, while women’s secret business was held in softer locations such as where there was moss. Surrounded by the rocks of the Hidden Valley he informed us about the Aboriginal peoples in Tasmania and some of their history.

We walked up a pathway to Giant's Grave where there is a great view over the First Basin, with Geoff producing an abalone shell in which he mixed ochre with water and painted Aboriginal symbols on our hands, different symbols for men and for women.



Geoff McLean, Karin Lê and the raging waters of the First Basin behind.



Painting symbols on hands.

He had given us a graphic demonstration of why 'snotty vine' is called 'snotty' by breaking off a section so we could see the discharge. At the end of the walk we wove the vine tendrils into a wreath and threw them into the First Basin to placate the ancestors' spirits and pay homage to their care for the land and an appreciation of Country.

We all felt that it had been a privilege to see many special and 'secret' places and receive so much new information about Tasmanian Aboriginal culture.



Geoff in the Hidden Valley with a map showing where the different Aboriginal Nations lived in Tasmania

ORAL HISTORY AUSTRALIA BOOK & MEDIA AWARDS

In October the winners of the 2021 OHA Book Award and the 2021 OHA Media Award were announced. Here are their citations.

2021 OHA Book Award (joint winners)

Many Maps, Charting Two Cultures, First Nations and Europeans in Western Australia by Bill and Jenny Bunbury (UWA Publishing, 2020) draws on over thirty years of oral history interviews conducted by Bill Bunbury for ABC Radio's Social History Unit, augmented by additional interviews. Juxtaposing historical sources and interpretations by historians, a linguist and descendants of settler Australians with the oral traditions and current concerns of First Nations people, this is an ambitious and sensitive exploration of two ways of knowing the same land. It reveals the different perspectives on both historical events and recent issues but avoids a polarised narrative, showing us instead how the entwined experiences of Indigenous and European Australians enlighten, complicate and enrich our understanding of our shared past. This book's great strength, aside from bringing new attention to a valuable archive, is in how it uses oral history to bridge between oral and written traditions, giving each equal weight. It is a fine example of the attempt to reconcile our history.

In the Eye of the Storm: Volunteers and Australia's response to the HIV/AIDS crisis by Robert Reynolds, Shirleene Robinson and Paul Sendziuk (NewSouth Publishing, 2021) is a collection of first-hand accounts from volunteers who filled an array of positions, from personal care to administrative and educational roles, in Australia at the height of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s. Set largely in Sydney with contributions from other states and territories, this is an intimate portrayal of tumultuous times that extended far beyond the gay community. It is a pleasure to read a book that allows oral history narrators the space not only to speak at length about their motivations and actions but also to reflect on the impact on their lives long after infections began to decline in the 1990s. By focussing each chapter on a different individual, the interviewer-authors present a nuanced portrait of these volunteers and show how the oral history process affects narrators' memory and interpretation of their lives. Sensitively edited and beautifully written, it is an important contribution to both Australia's social history and the craft of oral history.

Two other books also made the short list: *Out of the Madhouse: from Asylums to Caring Community?* by Sandy Jeffs and Margaret Leggatt; and *Upheaval: Disrupted lives in journalism*, edited by Andrew Dodd and Matthew Ricketson.

2021 OHA Media Award

The Anne St Reserve Oral History and Concert Project

Produced by Big MAMA Productions, Gwen Knox, Broome WA

Output: Stories of Strength: Songs and Stories from Anne Street Reserve 2021

Stories of Strength was a concert that was produced by Big MAMA Productions, and performed in Broome in May 2021. The concert featured songs and stories of Aboriginal people who grew up and lived in the former Anne Street Reserve between the 1960s and early 1980s. It stemmed from research at The University of Notre Dame Australia, and from oral history interviews recorded by Dr Elaine Rabbitt with former residents of 'The Reserve'.

The narrators then collaborated with singer songwriters Meryn Mulardi and Lyn Hazelton to create songs and music inspired by their oral history accounts. The production also incorporated audio excerpts, historical photographs, governmental records, and live storytelling, which together situated the songs in the broader history of Anne Street Reserve.

Stories of Strength is a wonderful example of how oral history interviews can inspire and inform other forms of creative expression. The concert illuminates an otherwise largely unknown history. The (multilingual) songs and stories are beautifully grounded in place, and they show how former residents now remember their experiences of living on 'The Reserve'. The concert is a celebration of strength and resistance, and it offers a valuable and historically illuminating new local history of Broome. Excerpts of the oral history interviews can now be heard in the Western Australian New Museum.

Many thanks are due to the OHA Book Award Judging Panel members Peg Fraser, Beth Robertson and Maria Savvidis, and to OHA Media Award Judging Panel members Elisabeth Gondwe, Anisa Puri and Hamish Sewell.

* * *

Oral History in Troubling Times: Opportunities and Challenges 14–16 October 2022

Call for Presentations

The 2021 conference for Oral History Australia (OHA) was postponed because of COVID restrictions. We now look forward to welcoming oral historians from across Australia and around the world at our Tasmanian conference in October 2022.

If your presentation was accepted for the 2021 conference then it is also accepted for the 2022 conference – but you must confirm your place on the program by emailing Oral History Tasmania host Jill Cassidy (president@oralhistorytas.org.au) no later than 1 April 2022. If you wish to make minor changes to your presentation title or abstract, you must also email the edited version to Jill no later than 1 April 2022. If you want to offer a different presentation, then you must submit a new proposal using the conference EasyChair submission portal (see below).

All other proposals to present at the conference must be submitted using the conference EasyChair submission portal (see below) no later than **1 April 2022**.

Our conference theme invites you to reflect on the challenges and issues of undertaking oral history in troubling times, and to consider how oral history can illuminate the lived experience of troubling times both in the past and in our contemporary world. Through oral history recordings, we hear the intimate stories of everyday lives, and we create histories that challenge orthodoxy and speak truth to power. Oral history drills beneath the big histories of state, society, and politics. It illuminates ordinary people's extraordinary lives and the ways in which people deal with the troubles of their lives and of our world.

Oral History Tasmania and Oral History Australia, in partnership with the College of Arts, Law and Education at the University of Tasmania and the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, welcome proposals for our 2022 biennial conference in the island jewel of Tasmania. Oral historians, in a variety of guises and combining age-old listening skills with dazzling new technologies, record intimate stories and create challenging histories. Our conference welcomes participants who use oral history in their work across the many fields and disciplines that contribute to community, professional and academic histories. We welcome presenters from across Australia and around the world. We invite proposals for individual presentations, workshops, performances, and thematic panels.

The main conference at the Tramsheds Function Centre, Launceston, will be on 14–16 October 2022 (Friday to Sunday morning), with plenary panels focusing on Oral History in Troubling Times and on Aboriginal Oral History in Tasmania. Oral history training workshops will be scheduled on Thursday 13 October. On the afternoon of Sunday 17 October we will host a selection of post-conference tours.

Our introductory keynote speaker is Mark Cave, Past President of the International Oral History Association, Senior Curator at The Historic New Orleans Collection, and co-editor of *Listening on the Edge: Oral History in the Aftermath of Crisis* (2014). Mark's keynote is titled 'Why Did This Happen? Making Meaningful Answers in the Aftermath of Crisis'. Mark will explore the limitations of the media in the aftermath of crisis and argue that oral history has an important role to play alongside journalism in creating explanations that not only help communities move beyond crisis but help them move beyond crisis in ways that make them stronger.

Conference sub-themes

Conference sub-themes may include, but are not limited to:

- Recording Oral Histories during the Pandemic
- Doing Oral History in Troubling Times
- New Approaches to Recording Lives
- New Technologies for Documenting and Archiving Oral Histories
- Interpreting Memories
- Making Histories in Old and New Media
- Performing Oral History
- Using Oral History in Creative Writing
- Ethical Issues in Oral History
- Training the Oral Historians of the Future
- Indigenous Oral Histories and Oral Traditions
- Migrants, Refugees and Ethnic Community Histories
- Gender, Women's History, Men's History
- Family History and Memory
- Histories of Sex and Sexuality
- Leisure and Pleasure
- Histories of Protest and Activism
- Memory Work for Human Rights
- Contested Memories and Histories
- Working Lives and Social Class
- Sensory Memory and History
- Place, Community, Memory
- War Stories and War Histories
- Memory, Violence and Catastrophe

Requirements

We welcome proposals for presentations in a variety of formats and media, including standard paper presentations (typically 20 minutes); short 'lightning' accounts of work in progress (typically 5 minutes); participatory workshops; performances; thematic panels comprising several presenters; and poster presentations. Presentations should involve oral history. Contact the Chair of the Conference Program Committee, Professor Alistair Thomson (alistair.thomson@monash.edu), if you would like to discuss the format or focus of your presentation before you submit it.

Proposals for presentations / papers / panels / posters should be no more than 200 words (single space, 12 point font in Times New Roman) and must include at the top of the page, your name, institutional affiliation (if applicable), postal address, phone number and email address, the title for your presentation/panel, the sub-theme/s your work best connects to, and the presentation format (standard 20 minute paper; 5 minute 'lightning' account of work in progress; thematic panel; performance; participatory workshop; or poster presentation).

Presenters will be encouraged to submit papers to the refereed, online *Oral History Australia* journal, *Studies in Oral History*.

Submission

New proposals should be uploaded to EasyChair via <https://easychair.org/cfp/OHA2022>.

To use this online conference management system, you will need to create an author account (a simple process) and then submit your proposal by uploading it as a PDF document (with full details as listed above). Please follow the instructions provided on the OHA website if you are unfamiliar with EasyChair.

If you are unable to use this system, please email your proposal as a PDF attachment to Dr Annmarie Reid: ohaataassie2022@gmail.com

Further information

For conference information or to join the conference mailing list, email our Oral History Tasmania host Jill Cassidy (president@oralhistorytas.org.au) or go to the conference website via the OHA website at <http://www.oralhistoryaustralia.org.au/>

* * *

Do you have a project to tell us about?

We are always looking for items for the newsletter, anything from a few sentences to a lengthy article. All members are interested in knowing what is going on in the state, and you may make some good contacts through responses to the article. See contact details at the end of the newsletter.

WEBSITES

Oral History Tasmania: www.oralhistorytas.org.au

Oral History Australia: www.oralhistoryaustralia.org.au

IOHA (International Oral History Association): www.ioha.fgv.br

EQUIPMENT HIRE

A **Fostex digital recorder** is available for hire to members. It comes with its own lapel microphones and *User Guidelines*.

Cost of hire: \$20 a week, plus transport costs if necessary. You will also be required to sign a form agreeing to pay to replace any part that is damaged or lost while you have the recorder, up to a maximum of \$250 for individuals or \$500 for groups or institutions.

To make a booking, contact Jill Cassidy on 0418 178 098 or email president@oralhistorytas.org.au

THE OBJECTIVES OF ORAL HISTORY TASMANIA

promote the practice and methods of oral history
educate in the use of oral history methods
encourage discussion of all problems in oral history
foster the preservation of oral history records
pursue common objectives and maintain links with other Australian oral history
associations through membership of Oral History Australia Inc.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Individuals	\$40.00	Households	\$55.00
Student/unemployed/pensioner	\$30.00	Institution	\$65.00

ORAL HISTORY TASMANIA EXECUTIVE

President, and delegate to Oral History Australia:

Jill Cassidy 0418 178 098 Email: president@oralhistorytas.org.au

Secretary:

Alison Johnston

Treasurer: Lana Wall

Committee members: Jon Addison, Virginia Greenhill, Karin Lê, Leonie Prevost, Cindy Thomas.

All correspondence should be emailed to president@oralhistorytas.org.au or directed to Jill Cassidy, Oral History Tasmania, Queen Victoria Museum, PO Box 403, Launceston Tas 7250.

Real to Reel is edited by Jill Cassidy. The next edition is due in April 2022. Contributions are welcome and should reach the editor no later than 31 March. They can be emailed to president@oralhistorytas.org.au