



The modern museum has multiple purposes - to curate and preserve, to research, and to reach out to the public. They challenge us and ask us to question our assumptions about the past or the world around us.

[Professor Kate Williams, British Historian, author and television presenter]

From the Editor -

I was disappointed and somewhat angry that Liz and Don Bretherton felt they had to leave their positions in the Society sooner than they had anticipated. In my opinion they were arguably the two most hard working members, steering the MOSM successfully into the 21st century. I hope any future committee will work better together and bring further inspirational ideas to expand on what Liz and Don have already done. Hopefully someone will take responsibility for applying for grants. All museums from the Powerhouse and National Museums down to small regional museums like ours rely on grants to maintain everything from buildings to collections management, and guidelines these days are strictly specific. Don was particularly successful in this area, so who will take on the task? I am delighted that Angela George has agreed to take on the position of Curator/ Collections Manager. The collection will be in safe hands under her professional guidance.

As the caretaker committee ruled that committee meetings would only take place every three months, Shirley Bazley formed a social group that meets at the RSL at the end of each month. This arrangement is to be reviewed at the May general meeting.

Olwen Morris

Farewell from the President -

I was born and raised in Melbourne, attended RMIT and Melbourne University studying Architecture and worked in the office of Sir Bernard Evans (Lord Mayor of Melbourne), moved to Meldrum and Partners, spent the obligatory year and a half in London in the office of Joseph, F. Milton Cashmore & Partners, returned to Meldrums and finally left there to establish my own practice, Bretherton Architects.

At age 63 (in 2003) I retired to Kynnumboon (near Murwillumbah) where Liz and I built our home on 50 acres of the steepest land you can imagine. At this time our families started to pass on and we found ourselves driving insane distances to attend funerals, visit or provide care and support.

Liz's parents lived at Tura Beach and we decided that enough was enough and moved here (in 2011) to provide terminal care for them both.

We joined the Merimbula-Imlay Historical Society Inc and brought with us our experience in Museums plus the knowledge gleaned from visiting many Museums in Australia and overseas. Liz was asked join the Committee and to take on the role of Curator at Merimbula Old School Museum. She soon became aware of the tenuous state that it was in. So we both recognized that there was a need to intervene to save MOSM. I was invited to join the Committee and soon started getting grants for improvements, organizing work parties and was asked to take on the position of President on the retirement of Garry Moorhead.

It seems that I have become the head of so many organizations without seeking that as my desired outcome.

We have overseen the refit to the Annex as a proper space to store the collection, the acquisition of the container to store other accoutrements, the replacement of the display cabinets, stage 1 works for Accessibility, the relocation of the David Brown Punt, CCTV, installation of Wi-Fi donated by Splash, the switch to eHive Collection Management Software, Smart TV in the Schoolroom etc. etc.

I am proud to leave the Museum in such a good state with a reputation of it being professional and the best it can be.

It is unfortunate that the Committee became unworkable with the end result that I have resigned earlier than planned.

Along the way Liz and I have made good friends and enjoyed the success and consequent satisfaction of laying the foundation for the next era of development.

Thank you to the many people who have made this possible and to the friendships that have left me in a good place.

Don Bretherton
Past President

Diary -

- 10 May - SEHGI meeting Genealogy Society
- 26 May - General Meeting RSL 2.00pm. Speaker Neil Burnham
- 28 July - 2.00 pm RSL MOSM AGM

Committee members - To be confirmed at the AGM. Caretaker mode in operation in the meantime

Enquiries to Merimbula Old School Museum at email merimbulaoasm@gmail.com

Society News -

Nothing to report, apart from the sad news that Liz & Don have resigned.

But the good news is that Angela George is looking after the Collection!

More good news is that restoration on Jack Grey's boat, *Alma Grey*, has been completed and preparations are underway for the launch which will be invitation only for stakeholders. No date set as yet.



Past President Don Bretherton laying the wreath at Anzac Day on behalf of Merimbula Old School Museum

The Old School Report

addendum

Sincere apologies to Nancy Richards and the caretaker committee

I omitted to include the committee report in the current newsletter, but I am including it here

From the Caretaker Committee

Fellow Merimbula Old School Museum members, as you must be aware, we are in a time of major change. At present your committee is in caretaker mode, running day to day business and responding to visitor requests via the website and email. We have also changed the museum mobile contact so an active member of the committee is able to respond.

Angela George has been appointed as Curator and she has already been handling new donations and enquires. With Liz Bretherton's help she has changed the RSL Display cabinet.

Don Bretherton is continuing to attend to the Alma Gray project.

Peter Clancy (SEHGI) and Adrian Pitt (MIHS) are the nominated delegates for the Bega Valley Shire Museum Advisory Group whose mission is to "bring together experts and enthusiasts from various museums to collaborate on initiatives that will enhance the cultural and educational impacts on our institutions".

Thanks to our loyal volunteer duty staff we are still able to open the doors Thursdays and Sundays as usual. We are doing our best to maintain the museum both inside and out despite so few worker bees.

Your committee hopes to act as one and keep this great little museum alive and well into the future. Please come along to the social gatherings at the RSL club on the last Monday of the month at 2:00pm that Shirley has reinstated, and share your thoughts.

Let's do this together.

Nancy Richards

Caretaker President

The Founding of Spectrum -

At the last general meeting of MOSM, Fay Deveril & Elaine Waddell gave a brilliant and interesting talk on the founding of Spectrum. Following an introduction by each of them, which incorporated short histories of their lives in Merimbula and which I shall leave for a future issue of this newsletter, Fay & Elaine proceeded to relate the story of Spectrum and its relationship with Twyford Hall.

It all began with an idea from Eleanor Beasley and Fay Deveril to stage a Music Hall and an ad in the local paper asking anyone with an interest in performing to apply.

A group of local talented people came up with a show that was held upstairs in Merimbula Square, (which is where McDonalds is now located). The first performance was cabaret style with catering by Kenny Lau's Chinese restaurant, which was down the road near the hotel. This involved pre-school parents dressed in bunny suits running back and forth along Market Street to pick up the food! The performance finished at 1.30am it was so much fun! The funds raised went towards the new Pre-School building on Pambula Beach Road.

The momentum increased when the Lions Club of Pambula asked the group to perform a series of cabarets for them and the seed was sown for the birth of Spectrum Theatre Group.

The name 'Spectrum' arose during a brain-storming session one night in Twyford Hall. Other suggestions were "Wherethehellarewe Tribe" and "Boobs and Tubes" so there was relief when someone suggested "Spectrum", as the aim was to cover the whole spectrum of theatrical entertainment.

In 1974 the first Bubble 'n' Squeak Theatre Restaurant was formed under the Spectrum banner; ticket price of \$5 per head including a meal. This included Gilbert and Sullivan's *Trial by Jury*, directed by Alan Robinson.

During the first ten years many people tried their hands at directing including Bill and Fay Deveril, Elaine Waddell, Nancy Richards, Glenda Guest and John Stewart. Shows included Theatre Restaurants, Musicals, Dramas, Comedies, Melodramas and workshops. In 1981 the group held a Variety Concert for Twyford Hall's 50th Anniversary and in 1984, a Masked Ball to celebrate Spectrum's first 10 years of community theatre.

A reading committee was set up to choose scripts from both Australian and International writers. Eager to learn, in the 1970s some attended professional workshops and summer schools and occasionally benefited from advice by professional directors.

In 1980 Spectrum Little Actors Theatre (SPLAT) was formed, touring to local schools and to Bimbimbie with their first play *The True Story of Good King Wenceslas*. This encouraged the younger members of the community to participate in learning acting and performing skills.

In the first decade, Spectrum Theatre Group notched up an incredible thirty productions!

Twyford Hall became the unofficial home of Spectrum and, in spite of many other commitments, volunteer members worked to improve the facility, extending the stage, removing walls, creating wings, building dressing rooms and painting, to the grateful approval of the ageing Twyford Hall Committee. Spectrum formed a bond with Twyford Hall with Bruce Waddell among the first to join the committee, and was represented on the Hall's committee until recently when the system changed to a Board.

In the 90s members saved the Hall from possible Council disposal when they noticed a small ad in a Sydney paper proposing to change its ranking from 'Community' to 'Operational'. Twyford Hall fought the proposal and won! Spectrum held more fund raisers during the 80s and 90s raising money for many worthy community causes, proving their strong link to community.

In the 90s & 2000s some new, locally written plays were premiered, including *1964* and *The Pirates of Pambula Beach* written by John Fraser. Paul Dion wrote a new Australian musical, *Prix d'Amour*, while Elaine Waddell wrote short comedy scripts.

Musicals were popular but not without mishaps! During the finale of a performance of *Carousel* the lights went out owing to a blackout. The song was *When you walk through a storm, hold your head up high*, and someone saved the night by discovering candles, which provided mood lighting for the final song! In *Co-Respondents' Course* an actor, confused by the number of doors on the set, missed them all and crashed through the wall!

John Moffatt, while executing a flying leap in *Spotlight on Spectrum*, managed to crash through to the floorboards beneath a newly built thrust, recently erected by Bruce Waddell!

Shrieks emanated from the wings when an actor in *Shock of Recognition*, employed some method acting, disrobed and stood naked on the stage! Fortunately it was only a rehearsal.

During *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* an actor farted backstage which sent the character of Roo into silent hysterics. Supposedly resting on a couch with a newspaper over his head his laughter was noticeable by the audience as the newspaper rose up and down.

However much more was done with perfection. Spectrum grew and worked hard with lots of enjoyment. Their reputation was sealed and audiences returned.

In 2004 the production of *Annie* was entered in the Canberra Area Theatre Awards (CAT), receiving seven nominations. It was a winner in one of the categories after which *Annie* was invited to perform onstage at the CAT awards Gala Event in Canberra.

Apart from actors, a host of other players are involved in producing a show of any kind. From the Director, Sound and Lighting engineers, Costumes and Props, Stage Management to the Front of House and others. All play a vital role in putting on a production. Spectrum has just celebrated 50th anniversary last year and continues to be a theatrical force in the community. We look forward to seeing many more productions in the newly refurbished Twyford Hall.

OM (Taken from notes provided by Elaine and Fay with their approval)



Fay Deveril (right) and Elaine Waddell (right) delighting members with their story of the founding of Spectrum Theatre Group

SEHGI

Bega Valley Shire Museums Co-ordinator, Joan Kelly, was present at the first meeting of the year on 8 February. Bombala and District Historical Society hosted the meeting at Delegate Showground and, after lunch, members were shown around the Pioneer's Cottage (photos in last issue) and the Bundian Way Museum.

Joan Kelly alerted museums to the range of grants that are available from Museums & Galleries NSW, with 2 rounds per year in March and September for up to \$2000 to assist with Collections Management. Joan also recommended eHive as a collection management system to which Don Bretherton agreed as he is using the system and demonstrated to all museums so that all could use same system. Joan offered support to all and is willing to organise workshops on any topic if any museum would find this useful.

Stuart Hood introduced Murray Van de Veer, who spoke and showed some short films he had made on several topics based on pioneers of the Monaro district.

The next meeting will be hosted by Bega Valley Genealogical Society (BVGS) at the Old Pambula Courthouse, 42 Toalla Street on 10 May, 9.30am for 10am start.

Joan Kelly will again be present and topics to be discussed will include 'Significance Assessment Criteria - a Guidance for Collections' followed by Q&A from members.

Joan Brown from BVGS will speak about the history of the old Courthouse and Police Station and Liz McIntyre (BVGS) will share some police event stories. This will be followed by a viewing of the Police Display and tour of the facility which includes the gaol.

The next meeting will be on 9 August 2025 possibly hosted by Eden Killer Whale Museum.

From the collection -

The Gus Cole punt:

A working life on the waters of Merimbula Lake

Merimbula - Imlay Historical Society's flat-bottomed timber oyster punt is an important, impressive and rare part of the collection and an outstanding tangible link with the district's commercial oyster farming industry.

Built by Augustus "Gus" Cole around the 1920s for his own use, it was linked to the local oyster farming industry until entering the museum's collection. After Gus, the next known owner was Artie Goodsell, followed by Gus Jackson and then Reg Warn.

In 1981 Chris Boyton purchased Reg's leases in Merimbula's Top Lake and custody of the vessel passed to him. At the time, it was laying under mangroves in mud and tidal waters and although not in usable condition, Chris recognised the punt's historic value. In the wake of development in the area and the likely threat it posed to the boat, Chris retrieved it and presented it to the Historical Society in June 1986.

With its traditional carvel planked construction and generous use of naturally grown wooden knees throughout, it is an excellent illustration of the typical mode of construction, which remained largely unaltered locally for many decades before being superseded by modern aluminium craft in the late 20th century. An aesthetically valuable example of traditional watercraft construction and use in the far south coast oystering industry, it depicts important elements of wooden boat building that have now been largely lost, including naturally grown wooden knees and clenched square copper nails with roves.

An excellent representation of a typical locally constructed wooden oyster punt, it is a rare surviving intact example of vessels once so common on far south coast oyster farms. It is believed to be the earliest extant example of its type in a NSW public collection; and the fact that it appears to be the only remnant example of Gus Cole's local boat building activities adds to this rarity. With its clear line of ownership and use virtually since the time of its original construction through to its donation to the Society, the Gus Cole oyster punt may also be the most completely provenance example of an early traditional timber oyster punt in a NSW public collection. It has a high level of integrity, retaining all of its original features and having undergone little alteration since its construction.

It has been entered on the Australian National Maritime Museum's Australian Register of Historic Vessels.

Born in 1890, Gus Cole built boats as a sideline to his other activities, using local timbers such as spotted gum, box, banksia, and casuarina for the framework; and cypress pine, treated Oregon and spotted gum for the bottom and sides. Pursuing the trade from about 1918 until around the 1940s, he constructed both flat bottomed oyster punts such as this one, as well as traditional fishing dinghies of various types.

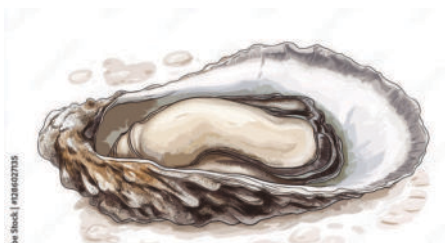
An intergenerational link, Gus's father Samuel "Sam" Cole was an early Merimbula oyster farmer, working leases from the early 1920s. Around 1925 he reputedly became the first to take up areas in Merimbula's Top Lake for culture. Gus and his three brothers, Sam Jnr, Frederick ("Harold") and Eden followed him into the oystering, fishing and maritime industries.

Gus passed away on 27 July 1967 at 77 years of age. The Cole family still farm oysters in Merimbula Lake today.



Photo and text by Angela George

Gus Cole's Oyster Punt



Curator / Collection Manager's Report -

Firstly, thanks to the committee for appointing me Merimbula-Imlay Historical Society's new curator and collection manager. As I'm sure you're all well aware, our museum plays a vital role in reflecting our local community and its history, and is irreplaceable in caring for and passing on our heritage to the next generation. As academic Amy Hawkins said, *"Museums are the guardians of our collective memory, the storytellers of human achievement, and the catalysts for future innovation. Their importance lies not just in preserving the past, but in shaping our understanding of the present and inspiring the possibilities of tomorrow."* We accept a big – and exciting - responsibility when we take on the role of caring for the tangible relics of the past for the benefit of the future, but what a wonderful obligation to accept.

I'd like to kick off by acknowledging the amazing work of Liz and Don Bretherton. Individually and as a couple, they have done an outstanding job organising the museum collection, updating and transferring the records across from Mosaic and written sources to eHive, photographing artefacts, and (vitaly) recording object locations – no mean feat for the more than 4,000 individual pieces, and something that certainly makes my new role so much easier.

eHive:

Just a reminder to our members and the wider community that an increasing number of our collection items are available for public searching and engagement through our online Collection Management System (CMS) eHive. Offering museums, galleries and cultural institutions an efficient and affordable way to catalogue, manage and share our collections, one of its major recognised benefits is accessibility. As a cloud-based system, data can be entered, updated and accessed from anywhere in the world, making it especially valuable to volunteer organisations like ours with limited resources and people power. That means it's easy for me to work on our museum records when I'm at home in Eden, or anywhere else for that matter.

Another stand out feature is the ability to publish collection records online, making them visible and accessible to a global audience. This encourages research, promotes transparency and increases public engagement by enabling users to explore objects, stories and images remotely – even on the other side of the world. Added benefits include customising our online presence, highlighting special items and collaborating across networks to share regional or thematic collections. It helps preserve institutional knowledge while modernising how our collections are managed, presented and shared. And by making them publicly available, it invites broader community involvement and can support educational initiatives. The system also integrates with Trove and other cultural aggregators, further extending the reach and impact our collections can have. Overall, eHive empowers institutions like ours to care for and share our moveable cultural heritage more effectively while connecting with the public in meaningful and accessible ways. Check out the Society's listing at <https://ehive.com/collections/202676/merimbula-old-school-museum>

Oyster exhibition

The MOSM's oyster exhibition is currently front and centre of my mind. Once again, Liz and Don have laid a very solid foundation for the project and I'm currently pulling all those pieces together to move forward with production of an all-panel interpretive display board, the first of a number of outdoor explanatory signs I hope to see installed to tell visitors about the history of local oyster farming and farmers, the two punts and the ongoing importance of the industry through to the present day. As many of you would be aware, oysters and oyster harvesting have been a significant narrative for the Merimbula-Pambula district across thousands of years. Middens throughout the area show us that the local Djiringanj and Thaua people have been feasting on the salty delights for at least 3,000 years and probably much, much longer. Shortly after European settlement, the new arrivals also focused on the local beds, with Pambula and Merimbula oysters noted as early as the 1850s and Merimbula Lake and Pambula River and Lake opened to oyster farming by the 1880s.

From these beginnings, one of the district's most valuable economic and social stories has developed, with these local waterways now among the largest producers of Sydney Rock Oysters in the country. As an industry, it has formed a cornerstone of the region's economy, shaping local culture and identity, and supporting employment, tourism and small business growth. And beyond its economic impact, the industry reflects a deep connection to the environment, with farmers working to maintain the health of our waterways. Merimbula and Pambula are renowned today for their oysters, with the industry symbolising both traditional and sustainable development on the Sapphire Coast.

This is a story that offers exciting opportunities for the Society to focus on, specialize in and extensively expand, allowing us to offer an exceptional and significant point of difference to our neighbouring local history museums.

Other outdoor signage

With the growing number of outdoor displays, I also hope to develop and install additional interpretive signage around the museum grounds to share the stories of the Pambula Co-operative Creamery and Dairy Co.'s ammonia compressor; Baddeley's Tannery bark crushing machinery; and, once she arrives on site, the Alma Gray.

Alma Gray:

Due to staff reorganisation at the Australian National Maritime Museum, there have been some delays with the Vessel Management Plan for the Alma Gray as well as the Maureen at the Eden Killer Whale Museum. I've spoken with staff, and the project will be going ahead despite delays. Once again, a big shout out to Don for steering this forward and determining to see it through to fruition.

New donations:

We have received some great additions to the museum's collections recently. These include a fantastic grouping of items gifted by local resident Et Munn. This comprises a number of newspapers (including issues of the Magnet Voice and Bega District News); a selection of local history publications; an unopened commemorative bottle of Merimbula Oyster Festival 1979 spumante; a Merimbula Chamber of Commerce minute book, 1937 – 1945 (and including that organisation's foundation meeting); a ledger featuring shipping cargo; nine copies of The School Magazine dating between 1939 and 1952; a school book; and an exercise book containing minutes of a 1940 soldiers' comforts fundraising ball. Another fabulous grouping associated with the Pambula and Pambula Beach Cricket Clubs was gifted by Raymond Radford, now of Tasmania, but formerly of Pambula. It includes two premiership jackets (1984/84, 1993/94), a
(continued overpage)

Curator's Report (continued) -

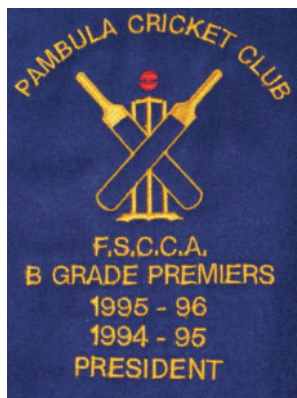
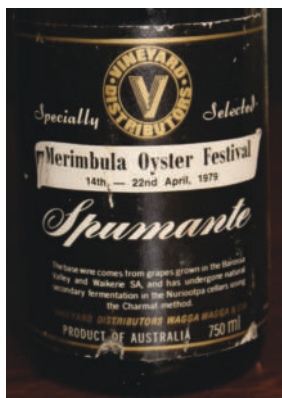
premiership blazer (1981/82), a club president's premiership jacket (1994/95 and 1995/96), a Pambula Beach Cricket Club Royal Willows Hotel Motel jacket, a Top Pub Pambula Cricket Club jacket, two different Top Pub Pambula Cricket Club polo shirts and a Pambula Beach Cricket Club cap (1978/79).

As I'm sure everyone recognises, sport has been central to the social fabric of rural and regional Australian towns like Merimbula, Pambula and Pambula Beach. Games like cricket provided more than just entertainment—they built community spirit, offered a way to break the isolation imposed by distance, and created a sense of identity and pride. Sporting groups were and remain vital social hubs, connecting people across farms, towns, and districts, and fostering friendships, rivalries, and traditions that have often lasted generations. Sport helped shape the character of rural Australia, promoting resilience, camaraderie, and a strong sense of belonging, and in many small towns, the local cricket pitch or footy field was, and still is, the heart of community life. Unfortunately though, its value has often been overlooked by collecting organisations, so this amazing lot is an important addition to the MIHS's growing sports and recreation theme.

Merimbula RSL display case:

With Liz and Don's assistance, I finally managed (after a considerable hiatus) to install a new exhibition in the RSL Club's display case. *Beyond the Battlefield - Remembering the ANZAC Legacy* was installed to commemorate Anzac Day and will be changed over during May to feature an exhibition focused on the MIHS / MOSM. This will include our organisation's history, work, and desperate need for volunteers. A random mixed selection of artefacts will also be installed to accompany the text and images and hopefully attract the attention of passing visitors. And even if we only manage to secure one or two new faces, it will be worth the effort.

Angela George



*Selection of items donated to MOSM as mentioned by Angela in her report above.
All photos by Angela George*



Beyond the Battlefield - Remembering the ANZAC Legacy

The Wreck of the *S.S. Monumental City* -

Another story of shipwreck and mystery from the indefatigable, indomitable duo, Colette and Garry Moorhead!

The fifteenth of May is the anniversary of a significant tragedy which occurred off our coast with the loss of thirty-seven lives. In the early hours of the morning, in calm weather, the *SS Monumental City*, an American passenger ship, steaming at seven knots ran ashore on Tullaberga Island off Mallacoota.

Because of the calm conditions and nearby shore, Captain Adams decided, even though he had launched lifeboats, to wait for daybreak to bring the passengers and crew ashore. This was despite the objection of the owner of the ship, Peter Strobed, who was a passenger.

Unfortunately, a sudden storm blew in from the south which led to the breaking up of the ship and the tragic loss of life.

The *Monumental City* was steamer driven by propeller with sails to assist, one of the first of its kind as most steam driven ships were paddle driven. She was a wooden vessel 180 feet long, 30-foot beam and 737 tons displacement. She was built by Murray & Hazlehurst in Baltimore, USA in 1850 and intended for the Hawaiian trade. After launching, she sailed round Cape Horn to San Francisco and was chartered by Empire City Line. She was then used on passenger trade from Central America to the Californian goldfields.

In January 1853 she was bought by Peter Strobed to carry passengers to Australia for the Gold Rush here. She was the first or possibly the second steam ship to cross the Pacific, taking sixty five days and carrying one hundred and sixty six passengers. She then sailed from Sydney to Melbourne.

Next, still under the command of Cpt. Adams, she left Melbourne for Sydney on May 13th 1853 on her last voyage with a crew of forty five and forty passengers. She was in sight of Cape Howe when disaster struck.

At the request of Cpt. Adams an enquiry was set up by the NSW Steam Navigation Board although it had no jurisdiction as an American ship was involved. A summary of the evidence was published in the Sydney Morning Herald of the 13th June 1853. The evidence did not establish why the ship was so close to shore. Also neither the captain or the first officer Van Sice, who was on watch at the time of the disaster, were blamed.

When the storm struck the lifeboats which had been ready were smashed and the ship started to break up. The bosun, one Plummer, volunteered to swim ashore with a line to attach to a rock. This was eventually successful and was the means of saving most of the survivors. Of the passengers, only eight, all men, survived. The owner was drowned. Plummer was later awarded a gold watch for his heroism.

There were subsequent rumors about a bag of gold sovereigns and another of gold dust and much of the ladies jewelry being buried on the island and never recovered.

A question arises as to the identity of bosun, Plummer. He is variously called Cyrus, Christopher, and Charlie. Later in 1857 a C. Plummer was the ringleader of the mutiny on the *Junior*. Both had similar jobs on American ships and the Mutineers on the *Junior* could have been looking for the treasure buried on the island. Later research would indicate he is not the same person, but the mystery remains.

There is a monument erected to those lost on Gabo Island. Furthermore, the loss of the *Monumental City* was the incentive to build the light house on Gabo Island. **Garry & Colette Moorhead**



The surviving engine parts and propeller are significant as they represent a transition phase from wooden hulled steamships to iron screw steamships, and a phase of rapid development in marine steam engine technology.

The last photo shows the monument on Gabo Island.

Acknowledgements:

<https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/shipwrecks/473>

http://vhd.heritage.vic.gov.au/shipwrecks/result_detail/473?print=true

<https://www.environment.gov.au/shipwreck/public/wreck/wreck.do?ey=6441>

Visit of Munn Descendent

After receiving an email from a Jacquie Hollingsworth saying she, her husband Damien (who was a great grandson of Matthew Munn) and their family were in the area for a couple of days and could they visit the museum on the morning of Thursday 10th April, the committee sent out a request to volunteers to see if any were available to look after them on that morning – not a normal opening time for the museum. Pam and George offered to do that duty. A strange and fortuitous coincidence then happened. After calling in at the museum to do a bit of research on the Munn family, Pam and George decided to call in to the RSL for a coffee, and who should be in there but Ethel Munn and her son Guy, also a great grandson of Matthew Munn. He was visiting from Brisbane.

Ethel and Guy had never met Damien before and weren't even aware of his existence. They were very interested and immediately said they would like to come to the museum that morning also and meet them.

Pam and George found it an extremely interesting and warming morning and the two families spent an hour or so getting to know each other. Jacquie and Damien had their 18 year old daughter Reagan with them. They also have a 14 year old daughter Sophie, but she had chosen to remain in the car as she was not feeling well. The family live in Sale, Gippsland. George gave them a tour of the museum also and supplied some information.

Jacquie and Guy intend to return to Merimbula as soon as they can and spend a bit more time with Ethel. A wonderful conclusion to the visit.

The two cousins bore a strong resemblance to each other. **Pam & George Pitt** (who also took the photos).



How times have changed - or have they??

Issued during World War II by the newly-established Department of Defence, this was an official notice directed to the Supervisors of Female Employees in the Australian Military and Civilian Workforce

Employ young married women. They usually have more sense of responsibility than their unmarried sisters and they're less likely to be flirtatious. They need the work, or they wouldn't be applying for it. They still have the pep and interest to work hard and deal efficiently with the public.

When you have to employ older women, try to get ones who have worked outside the home. Older women who have never contacted the public have a hard time adapting themselves and are inclined to be cantankerous and fussy. Impress upon older women the importance of friendliness and courtesy.

Older women who have never contacted the public have a hard time adapting themselves and are inclined to be cantankerous and fussy. Impress upon older women the importance of friendliness and courtesy.

Retain a physician to give each woman a special physical examination covering female conditions. This protects against the possibilities of lawsuit and reveals any female weaknesses, which would make her mentally or physically unfit for the job. Stress the importance of time, the fact that a minute or two lost here and there makes serious inroads on schedules. Until this point is gotten across, service is likely to be slowed up.

Give the female employee a schedule of duties so she'll keep busy without bothering the management for instructions.

Women make excellent workers with their jobs cut out for them, but they lack initiative.

Whenever possible, let employees change from one job to another during the day. Women are inclined to be less nervous and happier with change.

Give every girl an adequate number of rest periods during the day. You have to make some allowances for feminine psychology. A girl has more confidence and is more efficient if she can keep her hair tidied, apply fresh lipstick and wash her hands several times a day.

Be tactful when issuing instructions or in making criticisms. Women are often sensitive; they can't shrug off harsh words the way men do. Never ridicule a woman - it breaks her spirit and cuts off her efficiency.

Be reasonably considerate using strong language around women. Even though a girl's husband or father may swear vociferously, she'll grow to dislike a place of business where she hears too much of this.

Get enough size variety in uniforms so that each girl can have a proper fit. This point can't be stressed too much in keeping women happy.

July 1943

As indicated in the opening paragraph this document was distributed during WWII by the very newly established (Australian) Department of Defence to military and civilian employers of women. The distribution list included my Aunt-by-marriage, Elwyn Challon, a nursing sister who served as Matron in various fields including RAN hospital ships. Not surprisingly, as a life-long feminist, our much loved albeit somewhat fierce Aunt Elwyn didn't take kindly to the Department's advice! Nevertheless she kept the original memo and passed it on to me. It was falling apart so I retyped it, many years ago.

Helen Swinbourne

Farewell from Liz Bretherton -

History would always play a large part in my life. I was born in Avoca, Victoria and spent my first ten years in Lexton in the Victorian Goldfields. Being the only grandchild nearby and living only a few doors from my grandmother, an ardent historian and storyteller, many hours were spent listening to tales of the diggings and the people who came to the area and made it their home. They were a diverse group of people from all over the world, many of them my forebears. Afghan and Indian hawkers, Chinese market gardeners and herbalists all came to life in my grandmother's stories. In country Victoria in the late 1940's and early 1950's there were still hawkers, albeit in vans. I don't remember if some were descendants of the originals, but I do remember the haberdashery van and the beautiful coloured ribbons displayed - a delight for a little girl.

Time moved on and so did my family to a very different part of Victoria but there were still many memorable summers spent back with my grandmother and the stories to keep my interest fresh. Some summers my much loved older cousin would come to stay too and after passing his driving licence, a car would be provided and he and I would spend many hours exploring the old mine areas and deserted buildings. To find an old bottle or broken crockery, our very own relics, what joy!

Fast forward. Education, work, marriage and some time later two baby boys and not a lot of time had been spent on my passion for history. But now living in Melbourne, I had access to the State Library and Museums. Family history became another passion. Then, much excitement when Don Dunstan, in his wisdom, initiated the opening of the Museum of Chinese History in an old warehouse in, ironically, Cohen Place off Little Bourke Street in Melbourne's Chinatown. I was in heaven!! I volunteered and was first given a job cataloguing and, yes, that was in the day of writing the lists in a large journal! I helped with exhibitions, the most memorable one was a very large moveable mural in 1988, such an auspicious year in the Chinese calendar. The mural depicted a large horse, it was the Year of the Horse in Chinese astrology, and was made entirely of fruit and vegetables generously donated by the Chinese traders at Queen Victoria Market. I was then invited to sit on the governing Trust, which was a fascinating learning experience.

In 2003 we left Melbourne, me with much sadness, to live in the Tweed Valley at Murwillumbah in Northern NSW. I soon found my tribe at the local Museum housed in the old heritage buildings which had been the former Council Chambers. It was a beautiful building but very run down and too small to house the considerable collection. As part of a small Committee formed for the purpose, we set about fund raising to extend and restore the property. We were very successful with both fund raising and grants and the work began. One of the most enjoyable tasks for me during my time at the Museum was, along with four other people, compiling a history of the people who came in the 1970's for the Aquarius Festival in Nimbin and stayed. Hippy Heaven!! I interviewed some amazing people who have contributed much to the area. We then edited our own stories which were then published in a book funded by Powerhouse titled 'Caravans and Communes'. Quite a proud moment.

However, I was not able to be there to watch the building progress as fate intervened and I moved to Tura Beach in 2010 to care for my terminally ill father and keep a check on my mother who was in care. They both passed in 2011 and as we had family in the area, Don joined me and we stayed on to 'watch the grandchildren grow'. I was able to go back later and see the finished result of the new Tweed Valley Regional Museum. It is very well done and successful. A huge asset, along with the Tweed Regional Gallery, to the area.

And so to my last involvement in Museums. After a visit to The Old School Museum with U3A, both Don and I joined as members. When I was asked to do the Curatorial work I was hesitant at first as I felt out of my depth. However with the aid of a grant to 'learn all about it' at Powerhouse in Sydney I felt I could make a contribution. Along the way I have met many people who have helped me with learning about the way of Museums. M&G NSW and Powerhouse MAAS have been of great assistance. Some have become friends. The learning curve early on was steep and I thank the people at OSM for their help with expanding my knowledge of local history which, although I had been visiting family in the area for many years, was somewhat lacking. A great deal of exhibition, collection and history knowledge has been gained from Angela George who filled in many gaps. As you will all know, Angela will be taking on my role so all is in very safe hands. With Don on Committee and 'quite the successful grant writer' we both feel proud of the OSM as it stands today. I know some decisions have not always been popular but I hope in time the progress made will be accepted for what it is and the fact the Museum is now Accessible to all will be appreciated.

My love of, and fascination for history, will go on. I hope I can tell stories as my grandmother told me, to engender interest in future generations.

REMEMBER WITHOUT HISTORY THERE IS NO FUTURE!

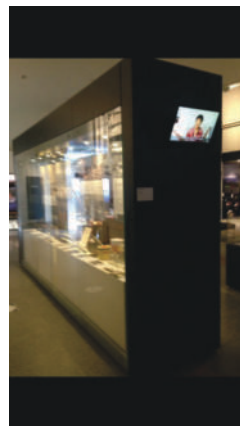
Photos and text by Liz Bretherton



Classroom Merimbula Old School Museum



Oyster plates display Merimbula Old School Museum



Tweed Regional Gallery Murwillumbah



Tweed Regional Gallery Murwillumbah

Farewell from Liz Bretherton continued -



Assembling the Horse Mural in fruit for the Year of the Horse at the Chinese Museum Melbourne



Completed Horse Mural Chinese Museum Melbourne

News from Bega Valley Shire Council -

Council is establishing the Bega Valley Shire Museum Advisory Group, and we would be delighted to have a representative from your Museum participate.

The purpose of the Museum Advisory Group is to bring together experts and enthusiasts from various museums to collaborate on initiatives that will enhance the cultural and educational impact of our institutions.

We kindly request that you nominate a delegate from your museum to join the advisory group.

The advisory group will meet six monthly to discuss ongoing projects, share insights, and develop new strategies for our museums.

Please send the name and contact information of your nominated delegate to me by 28 April 2025. The first meeting will be held on Monday 26 May 2025 at 2pm in Bega.

Kelly McDowall (Community and Cultural Services Administration Officer, Community, Environment & Planning)

This is a great opportunity and it is vital someone attends from the MOSM.

Volunteering! Just Do It!

There is one super easy way to be happier, more fulfilled, connect with community, and to get off socials – volunteer. Volunteering is this incredible two-way street. You give back to your community, and in return you feel good about yourself. It's better than 100 likes on a Facebook post! Actual real likes from people with actual faces!

On the weekend I went down to New Brighton and helped a few very committed, community-minded locals remove fencing posts and wire from the beach. My role was very minor, I just carried stuff. Sometimes that's all you need to do. In chatting to one of the locals I discovered that he'd lived there for 50 years – he'd moved here back in the day when you still could. Because it was cheap. For 30 years he'd been a member of Dune Care, until the organiser left and there wasn't anyone to perform that admin role so the group disbanded. But they still cared for their beach. He laughed and said, 'there's just old blokes in it now, like me.' All around the country, organisations are struggling to find



volunteers. They are on the decline.

I had a bit of a lightbulb moment. Without long-term, genuinely affordable and secure housing, we don't have volunteers. If people don't know how long they are going to be somewhere they are less likely to volunteer. If they're on holidays in an Airbnb they're definitely not, you're lucky if they put the bin out. So in a very community-minded way, secure housing helps us all. Even the superaffluent who've never dug a hole in their entire lives. Except maybe to hide some cash.

Volunteers are the heartbeat of our villages. In the recent flood crisis they made food for evacuation centres, they turned up to help people in danger make their way to safety. Volunteers run our kids' sporting clubs, they cut up the oranges, they organise washing the shirts, they plant trees, they care for wildlife, they fight fires, they visit the

elderly, they raise money for the less fortunate, they bake cakes for fundraisers, they rescue people caught in a rip. Volunteers feed the homeless. They sit with people in distress. Volunteers welcome you to the theatre and show you to your seat.

Our volunteers are ageing. I've been doing a few shifts in homeless kitchens and in various other frontline organisations and I am often the youngest there. I'm 57. It's clear for the health of our community we need younger people to step up. At one homelessness outreach in Tweed I was working alongside a woman who was nearly 80. While I celebrate the awesome community spirit of our older community, I'd invite younger people to get involved too. Find an organisation that you feel resonates with your core values and your skillset and even if you feel like you don't have the time, maybe just get involved and you'll find a way to be useful. You'll never regret it. And you meet some awesome older people.

A few years back I joined the CWA. With its 100-plus year history of supporting the welfare of women and children, it felt like the right place for me to go. I remember my first meeting. I felt nervous. I am an average cook and my handicraft expertise is nil. Would I be kicked out? The president noted how good it was to see younger members. I looked behind me. 'No that's you Mandy'. I blushed. I love the CWA. I am blown-away by their sense of service, and the incredible work they do. It's inspirational. Maybe one day I'll even learn how to knit.

Volunteering reminds you, that in a world that sometimes feels narcissistic and self-centred, that people are good. That together we make a difference. So please, our forests, our beaches, our vulnerable, our kids, our elderly and our broader community need you. Sometimes when you save others you actually save yourself.

Mandy Nolan (Soapbox, The Echo)

The world's first museum was curated by a princess -

Around 2,500 years ago, a princess living in what is now modern-day Iraq collected a number of artefacts, including a statue, a boundary stone and a mace head. The items, which show signs of preservation, date from around 2100 BCE to 600 BCE. This collection, it is generally thought, was the world's first known "museum".

Between Two Rivers, by Oxford scholar **Moudhy Al-Rashid**, tells the story of ancient Mesopotamia, a period in world history sometimes known as a "forgotten age".

While Mesopotamian history is innately fascinating, Al-Rashid also notes its many historical "world firsts": the first known writing system, the potter's wheel, the first record of beer production and advances in agriculture.

The first museum

The world's first known museum, and its curator, Ennigaldi-Nanna, are among these many firsts.

The daughter of the Neo-Babylonian king Nabonidus, Ennigaldi-Nanna was a priestess at the temple of the moon deity, as well as a princess.

Both Ennigaldi-Nanna and Nabonidus were keenly interested in history. Indeed, Nabonidus' interest in excavating old temples and describing his findings once saw him described as the "first archaeologist". This makes these figures well suited as the book's central focus.

At its heart, *Between Two Rivers* is an ode to the power of history. It builds a persuasive case for history writing as a particularly human impulse, and for how lives of people living thousands of years ago can reflect and shape our modern lives in unexpected ways.

10 museum objects

The book is organised around the ten items from Ennigaldi-Nanna's collection. This structural conceit creates a sense of unity, despite the diversity of topics the book covers. Each chapter is focused on one item. For example, an ancient granite mace head introduces a chapter on warfare, violence and death.

In chapter one, we are introduced to ancient Mesopotamian history. We're also introduced to the author herself. Al-Rashid punctuates her prose with personal recollections and humour, as well as touching reflections on her experience of motherhood. She is our companion, tour guide and teacher as we navigate this journey into the past, helping the reader feel a personal stake in the scholarly adventure ahead.

Other chapters explore cuneiform script (the world's first known writing), cities, leadership, education (including some of the earliest doodles by bored students), early scientific developments and the gods. The final three chapters look at economics, warfare and curator Ennigaldi-Nanna herself.

The book offers a useful timeline, though pictures of the ten ancient items and a map would have been useful additions.

Fun historical facts



Five Amarna letters on display at British Museum

The broad range of subjects, periods and people explored in this book results in the inclusion of many dazzling features of Mesopotamian history, rarely considered together. Indeed, there is a plethora of fun historical facts.

In the chapter on science, Al-Rashid notes the development of the zodiac and a mathematical precursor to modern calculus.

We get a brief overview of the fascinating diplomatic correspondence between New Kingdom Pharaohs and their West Asian vassals, known as the **Amarna Letters**. There is also the cuneiform tablet referencing the death of Alexander the Great, and an overview of the practice of divination (including an attempted palace coup).

These highlights from ancient evidence are balanced against frequent commentary from the author.

She notes the less glamorous nature of much of it, such as economic texts and legal agreements.

Indeed, Al-Rashid is careful to note the limits of the evidence used to build this vivid picture of ancient Mesopotamia. She notes the difficulties of learning Sumerian, the world's first known language, written in the intricate cuneiform script. In her chapter on leadership, she notes that further evidence for powerful women leaders may yet be discovered, while discussing what is currently known of these figures.

The author's transparency and expert handling of evidence puts the reader at ease, while subtly championing the importance of continued studies in this field. This is timely, as the academic field of Mesopotamian history has seen significant cuts in the last decade.

Rediscovering cultural riches

Despite the rich cultural legacy of this region, Mesopotamian history is largely unknown in the modern day. While 21st-century audiences are often familiar with the works of Plato, Homer and Virgil, they may struggle to identify **Enheduanna** – a princess, priestess, and poetess who lived over 4,000 years ago – as the world's first known author, or Sin-leqe-uninni as the editor of the Epic of Gilgamesh.

This is likely due to the circumstances around the recovery of the Mesopotamian writing script, cuneiform. This style of writing faded from use around the 1st century CE, and was only re-deciphered in 1857 CE. This meant that for almost two millennia, awareness of the Mesopotamian cultural legacy almost entirely disappeared.

This modern lack of awareness of Mesopotamian history is slowly changing. *Between Two Rivers* is part of an emerging trend in the field of Assyriology — the study of the languages, literature, history, laws and sciences of Mesopotamia — for producing accessible works, for non-specialist audiences.

Between Two Rivers further demonstrates the usefulness of this approach in bringing the riches of the ancient Near East to modern audiences.

Changing times

In recent years, we have seen new translations of the famous Mesopotamian epic Gilgamesh, and the first volume dedicated to the works of the world's first known author, Enheduanna.

There are new books on Mesopotamian religion and the cuneiform script by Irving Finkel, who has been an ambassador for the discipline for many years. Indeed, Al-Rashid notes his influence.

To write a book like this one, the author needs to have both mastery over the subject material and an engaging style of communication. Al-Rashid excels in both areas. For general audiences, *Between Two Rivers* is a fascinating, balanced introduction to this complex – and at times elusive – ancient world.

Louise Pryke (*Honorary Research Associate, Dept of Classics & Ancient History, University of Sydney. Published in The Conversation, 28/04/2025*)

