NSW Branch event at University of Sydney’s Macleay Museum

Report by Jan Brazier & Barbara Hoffman
21 October 2015

The NSW Branch was delighted to be invited to visit the Macleay Museum for our October Branch event. Our host Jan Brazier, Curator, History Collections welcomed us to the collection and in particular the special exhibition ‘Written in Stone’.

The Macleay Museum holds the oldest natural history collection in Australia, originating in the cabinets of Alexander Macleay, and expanded through the collecting networks of the Macleay family from Darwin to Raffles, from Cuba to Wagga Wagga. It holds a snapshot of early biodiversity through its zoological specimens.

The Museum also cares for the historically rich collections of Aboriginal, Torres Strait and Pacific Islanders’ cultural material; including objects collected on the early scientific expedition, the Chevert, and those collected in the early years of anthropology at The University. The collection continues to hold relevance for peoples across our region.

The work of University scientists is reflected in the collection of scientific instruments and apparatus used in research and teaching, and is part of the story of scientific practice and knowledge in Australia.

The Historic Photograph Collection (HPC) records life in Australia and the Pacific region, from the late 1840s to the 1960s, as captured by both commercial and amateur photographers. It includes a wide range of photographic formats, reflecting the changing technology of photography.

In addition, the Macleay Museum holds a wealth of material reflecting the Museum’s history. This includes a significant library, furniture, historic documents and ephemera relating to the major collectors.

History of the Macleay Museum

EARLY DAYS

In 1884 the Government agreed to grant 10,000 pounds for the erection of a museum of natural history and a zoological library in which to house the Macleay family bequest.

The Museum was designed by G.A. Mansfield and built by Alexander Dean. Building commenced in 1886.

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St James’ Church was constructed between 1819 and 1824. It is the oldest church building in the City of Sydney and has been in continuous use from its consecration on 11 February 1824 to the present. The church contains a rare collection of 19th century marble memorials, its painted Children’s Chapel is unique in Australia and it includes amongst its collections and contents rare items of movable heritage.

Beneath historic St James’ Church is the Crypt, built with sandstone walls, a central corridor, and twelve Gothic-design brick barrel vault converging arches.

It is here in this historic, beautiful and iconic space that the 2015 ASA NSW Branch End-of-Year Party will be held.

Join us to celebrate 2015, renew acquaintances and make new friends.
In its original form, the Museum was 212 x 70 feet (65 x 21 m) and composed of two long sides divided into series of bays. The gallery on the first floor had eleven bays on the long wall. The building is made of brick and iron and designed in a simplified Gothic style.

The structure was completed in 1887. There wasn’t a formal opening, but on 4 October 1888 Premier Parkes visited the University and was shown through the Macleay Museum which was ready to receive the Macleay bequest.

Under terms of the bequest, the Macleay Museum is ‘available for all purposes of study and research’ and to members of the Linnean Society of NSW (which William John Macleay had founded).

The Macleay Collections were transferred to the Museum between 1888 and 1890, with the Museum officially opening to the public in 1890 – the visitor books begin in October 1891.

ALTERATIONS TO THE ORIGINAL STRUCTURE

Major alterations to the Macleay Museum commenced in 1915 with a partial filling-in of the gallery and in 1918 the floors were filled in. In 1925 a new two story building, designed by Wilkinson, was added to the east end and in 1959 the War Memorial arch was completed.

The neglect of the collection in the early 20th century (where the Macleay Museum was relegated to the attic of the building) ceased in the 1960s when active work on the collections commenced.

In the 1970s, new lights and displays were built; school visits were promoted; and a program of temporary exhibits commenced.

SYDNEY UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS

In 2004, the Macleay Museum became part of the Sydney University Museums together with the Nicholson Museum and the University Art Collection.

This change also included the creation of a common collections management team across the University Museums with responsibility for the database, loans, acquisitions, management of stores including environmental conditions.

Database – We use KE EMu for all collections within the Sydney University Museums with one classification scheme across the collections.

EXHIBITION

Written in stone

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today, stone tools are tangible evidence of occupation, ingenuity, resilience and survival.

Venue

Macleay Museum
University of Sydney
Gosper Lane (off Science Road)

Dates

17 August 2015 – June 2016

Times

Monday to Friday
10am to 4.30pm
First Saturday of every month
12pm to 4pm

Photo: Carl Bento ©Macleay Museum, 2015

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Digitising – After migrating data from existing MSAccess databases when EMu was implemented, the focus now is on getting all the Macleay Museum collections into EMu including digital images. A small percentage of the Macleay collections is accessible through the online collection search.

Collection challenges – for the collections Jan is the curator of (HPC and Scientific instruments and apparatus) the challenges include historic chemicals and identification of nitrate in historic photographs.

THE FUTURE
CHAU CHAK WING MUSEUM

The donation of $15 million from Chinese-Australian entrepreneur and chairman of Kingold Group Dr Chau Chak Wing will establish a landmark new museum at the University of Sydney. It will house the collections of the Macleay Museum, Nicholson Museum and University Art Gallery.

The move will see a refurbishment of the Macleay and Edgeworth David buildings which will be joined with a new modern extension.

The Macleay Family

ALEXANDER MACLEAY
1767 – 1848

Alexander Macleay was a collector as well as a bureaucrat of science. For 27 years he was honorary secretary of the Linnean Society of London. His serious minded pursuit of collecting meant that by 1805 his collection was one of the more important in England. By 1825 his insect collection was without parallel in England, not merely because of its size but also for its range and importance of specimens. Over 9,000 of them were specimens from which the first published descriptions were made. These are known as type specimens. In 1825 he was appointed Colonial Secretary of New South Wales under Governor Darling. He brought his wife, six daughters, a large library and his unrivalled collection of insects with him to Sydney. Alexander served as Colonial Secretary from 1826 until 1837.

Soon after his arrival in Sydney, Alexander received an extensive land grant at Elizabeth Bay. He developed the grounds at Elizabeth Bay and later erected the handsome Elizabeth Bay House designed by a fashionable colonial architect, John Verge.

When a Committee of Superintendence was set up to oversee Sydney’s Botanic Gardens and local museum, Alexander was appointed Chairman. This began an association with Sydney’s scientific institutions that continued with other members of the family for the remainder of the century.

WILLIAM SHARP MACLEAY
1792 – 1865

Alexander’s eldest son, William Sharp Macleay, was a philosophical naturalist whose classical education was completed at Cambridge.Posted as a diplomatic official to Paris following the defeat of Napoleon, he mixed with leading scientific figures there. In 1819 and 1821 William published the two parts of Horae Entomologicae, a study that introduced his circular or quinary system of classification.

For a decade commencing 1825, William was attached to the Mixed British and Spanish Court of Commission for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in Havana, Cuba. While in Cuba, William collected crustacea as well as insects and sent bats and other vertebrate specimens to the British Museum.

The elephant skull at the top of the Macleay Museum stairs has been greeting visitors since 1984. The skull is from an Asian bull elephant called Ghandi, born in Thailand circa 1914, and imported to Australia by Sole Bros Circus. For more on the life of Ghandi, see the latest issue of Muse: Magazine of Sydney University Museums. Photo courtesy Macleay Museum (NHM-1596)
William came to Sydney in 1839 and remained in Sydney until his death in 1865. In 1840 he was appointed to the committee superintending the Sydney Botanic Gardens and Australian Museum. He was actively engaged in the management of the museum for more than two decades and was instrumental in drafting the Museum Act of 1853 that brought the Australian Museum under the management of trustees.

William’s collections, including that inherited from his father, were bequeathed to his cousin, William John Macleay on the basis of a signed agreement that these would be maintained in good order and eventually passed either to the University of Cambridge or to the University of Sydney.

SIR WILLIAM JOHN MACLEY
1820 – 1891

Sir William John Macleay (knighted in 1889) took possession of the Macleay Natural History Collections in 1865, soon after the death of his cousin William Sharp Macleay.

In 1873, Macleay determined to donate the collections to the University of Sydney and decided to enlarge the collections considerably to cover most areas of natural history. In 1875 he funded and organised the first Australian funded scientific expedition to the Torres Strait and New Guinea increasing the collections even further.

On this journey he amassed what he described as “a vast and valuable collection” of fish, reptiles, corals, vertebrates, invertebrates and birds as well as ethnographic artefacts. By the 1880s the collections had outgrown the capacity of the Macleay family home, Elizabeth Bay House, to hold them.

The Macleay Museum Collections

NATURAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS

The move to their new University home was timely. Once at the University, the Macleay family collection continued to grow through the work of curators and University biologists, notably W.A. Haswell, Keith Salter and Kathleen English. In 2002, Dorothy Lamberton donated over 1000 lepidoptera collected by her husband, Professor John Lamberton, which have become an invaluable exhibition collection.

Insects or Entomology

Over 600,000 specimens dating from 1756. Alexander purchased many collections including the collections of Dru Drury and Edward Donovan’s foreign insects. He also received gifts of insects, for example specimens from Sumatra by Sir Alexander Raffles.

Many of the species held in the Macleay collection are type specimens (from which the first published descriptions were made). Those relating to Australia, collected by all three Macleays, are partially housed in the Australian National Insect Collection at the Australian Museum.

The entomology collection is maintained for its scientific and historic value and some is housed in original cabinets with pinning reflecting 19th Century taxonomies. Others, such as weevils, have been moved to modern conservation and taxonomic standards.

Some of the butterflies within the John Lamberton Collection, Macleay Museum.
Fish or Ichthyology – over 2,200 lots (individuals or jars of individuals) – either in ethanol, mounted or skeletal specimens. William John Macleay published his Catalogue of Fishes in 1881.

Mammals – over 1,500 mammal specimens, the majority collected Australia between 1870 and 1890; includes rare thylacine specimens.

Birds or Ornithology – over 9,000 bird specimens, which are mostly study skins.

Reptiles or Herpetology – amphibians, snakes, lizard, turtles – most stored in ethanol.

Conchology – over 6,000 lots of large land and sea snails or about 46,000 shells.

Crustaceans – over 3,500 specimens mostly collected 19th Century.

Marine Invertebrates – sponges, echinoderms, corals.

**ETHNOGRAPHY**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artefacts – over 2,000 objects held. The Macleay Museum is also engaged in an active program of repatriation.

Pacific Islander artefacts – approximately 2,300 items in the collection, mostly mid to late 19th century. A listing is available on the Macleay Museum website.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander & Pacific Islander collections includes material collected on the Chevert expedition. The material acquired since the Macleay bequest includes objects from the University’s Anthropology department.

**SCIENTIFIC INSTRUMENTS & APPARATUS**

An exhibition in the Macleay Museum in 1972 titled ‘Historic and interesting scientific instruments’ displayed items on loan from various University departments. Subsequently many instruments from within the University were transferred to the Macleay Museum. This was the beginning of the Museum’s collection of scientific instruments and apparatus.

The collection has a focus on scientific research work carried out at the University of Sydney. Collections cover, in particular, microscopy, engineering, chemistry, physics, calculating and computing instruments (with a large collection of slide rules), classroom aids such as models, laboratory equipment, and objects used by the Sydney Teachers College. Also included is a small collection of historic photographic equipment – cameras and projectors and associated accessories.

**HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION (HPC)**

The HPC began around 1980 at a time when historic photographs were starting to be seen as sources for social history.

The collection dates from the mid-19th to the mid-20th Century, with a strength in Australia and the Pacific, and includes work by commercial and private photographers in a wide range of formats (such as, glass negatives, daguerreotypes and ambrotypes, stereographs, postcards, albums and photographic prints. The photographic prints are mainly black and white and include cartes-de-visites, cabinet cards and 20th century prints.

Macleay Museum Website
http://sydney.edu.au/museums/

Collection search
http://sydney.edu.au/museums/collections_search/
2016 ASA Conference

Speakers confirmed

Plans are well underway, and we are pleased to announce three wonderful speakers have confirmed their attendance: Mark Matienzo (Digital Public Library of America), Associate Professor Tim Sherratt (Manager, Trove amongst many other roles) and Dr Laura Millar (Consultant Archivist). Our guest speaker profile this month, featured in the November edition of Archive Matters, is Dr Laura Millar.

Conference dates updated

The Conference dates have been changed to include Monday 17 October 2016. Some of our Special Interest Groups are planning day events for the Monday so we have extended the conference dates to facilitate their planning. For more information view our 2016 Conference Information pages.

Conference program proposals

The 2016 Conference Program Committee is keen to receive proposals for traditional papers, innovative sessions, panel discussions or workshops.

To contribute a proposal, please complete the online proposal form before the 31 December 2015. You are welcome contact the Conference Committee to discuss your ideas.
Recent news

Report by David Roberts on
A User’s Guide to Arranging & Describing Archives Workshop

On 23 October, seventeen archivists and related professionals gathered to undertake the full-day workshop, A User’s Guide to Arranging & Describing Archives, at the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts.

Developed for the ASA in 2013 by Barbara Reed, Principal of Recordkeeping Innovation Pty Ltd, and presented by David Roberts, the workshop was geared to medium to advanced practitioners and focused on A&D in the digital world.

The workshop challenged us to re-think the concepts and purposes of A&D in the contexts both of digital and digitised records and of digital delivery of archival materials and metadata. We explored the fundamental features, concepts and issues associated with international descriptive standards, Australian descriptive practice, the records continuum and recordkeeping metadata standards and systems, and their impact on A&D practice now and into the future. A stimulating finish to the workshop involved a review of the evolution from traditional finding aids, through online search portals, to a glimpse of what is possible through APIs and visualisation techniques.

We were blessed with a lively group of participants from a wide variety of working archival environments. The participants were worked hard through a series of group exercises. In these and in full group discussions, the range of knowledge and experience brought and shared by all was one of the great features of the day.

My special thanks are due to Guy Tranter, Barbara Hoffman, Anke Brandt and Danielle Yan for their work in making this stimulating day possible.

Photo taken during the Workshop courtesy of Peter Bisley (State Records).
This photo was posted on the AusArchivist’s Twitter feed during the Workshop. (David responded that it was his Nosferatu impression.)
Recent news

NLA New 2016 Fellowship
Congratulations to Michael Piggott

Congratulations to ASA Professional Member Michael Piggott, who has been awarded a 2016 Fellowship by the National Library of Australia: ‘Sir John Ferguson’s Manuscripts – A study of their provenance’.

The National Library of Australia Fellowships are funded by generous philanthropic support. The Fellowships support researchers to make intensive use of the NLA’s rich and varied collections.

Michael Piggott is a consultant archivist and researcher and Adjunct Lecturer, Charles Sturt University. He first gained his love of archives from Archives and Manuscripts, an elective unit in the Graduate Diploma of Librarianship at the CCAE in 1971. Michael arrived at the CCAE as a National Library trainee having graduated with a Bachelor of Economics (Honours) from Monash. Later he also gained a Masters degree in archives administration (UNSW) and a graduate Bachelor of Letters (with merit) from the ANU.

Michael's career has spanned the National Library (1972–1978), the War Memorial (1978–1988), the National Archives (1988–1998), and the University of Melbourne (1998–2008). When Michael retired, he was university archivist and manager, cultural collections group at the University of Melbourne.

Michael has been closely involved with the archives literature profession and sector, having published widely and refereed archival science journals, textbooks and anthologies. Michael is a Laureate of the Australian Society of Archivists, a three time recipient of its Mander Jones Award, a former editor of the journal Archives and Manuscripts and continues to serve on its Editorial Board.

On retirement, Michael was awarded an Australian Prime Minister’s Centre Fellowship to locate relevant documents on prime ministers in the ANU archives and Noel Butlin Archives Centre. His writing based on Bob Hawke was a finalist in the 2010 ABR Calibre Prize for an Outstanding Essay.
Recent news

I was very pleased and proud to be representing the ASA at the International Council on Archives annual conference for 2015 in Reykjavik, Iceland, from 28-29 September 2015. I was one of thirteen Australian delegates (not counting a few expat Australians now working overseas who were there) – not bad for such a far flung venue!

On the Sunday I attended a lively workshop hosted by the Records Management Expert Group in which using the NAA Digital information and records management capability matrix as a basis for developing an ICA-endorsed statement of knowledge and capabilities was discussed. No formal recommendations were made, but this idea will be explored further by the RMEG.

I also attended the annual meeting of the Section on Professional Associations (SPA) and reported on the ASA’s recent activities to those present. Amongst other activities, SPA plans to host an ‘archival film festival’ in 2016 to showcase videos made to advocate for archives and recordkeeping.

During the conference proper, I attended the ‘New Professionals’ lunch. Hosted by ICA President David Fricker, this was an opportunity to chat with the new archivists and other recordkeepers who had been given financial assistance to attend the conference (travel and accommodation). These young people had come from the UK, Poland, Hungary, Nigeria, Costa Rica, Chile and France, and work in a wide range of settings from government archives or Municipal Council records teams to organisations like the Open Society Archives in Budapest. More information on the ICA’s New Professionals Programme is available here.

The final keynote of the conference was by John Hocking, UN Assistant Secretary General and International War Crimes Tribunal Registrar, who paid tribute in his closing plenary to the late Australian archivist Tony Newton and his work with the UN in modernising records management across its divisions. You can read or listen to a recording of his speech here.
CONTACT DETAILS FOR THE 2015-2016 NSW BRANCH COMMITTEE

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PREVIOUS MINUTES & NEWSLETTERS OF THE NSW BRANCH

At the NSW Branch webpage, you will find

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