Fryer Folios

War & Remembrance: Fryer Library turns 80

September 2008
WAR & REMEMBRANCE:
FRYER LIBRARY TURNS 80
A brief introduction to this special issue of Fryer Folios, celebrating the 80th anniversary of the foundation of the Fryer Library.

JOHN DENIS FRYER:
A LIFE REMEMBERED
As Fryer Library turns 80, Laurie McNeice, Senior Librarian, pauses to reflect on the life of the man for whom it is named.

SCAPEGOAT OF THE EMPIRE
Mark Cryle, Fryer Library Manager, examines the role of George Witton in shaping our understanding of the Breaker Morant affair.

THE ALLIED LIBERATION OF LAE – 1943
Dr Peter Cahill, Fryer Library associate, discusses the battle for Lae on Papua New Guinea’s east coast as part of Australia’s struggle for survival during World War II.

FLORENCE JAMES WALLACE:
GALLIPOLI NURSE
Penny Whiteway, Fryer Library librarian, looks at the Gallipoli campaign from the perspective of a nurse caring for its wounded.

VALE KATHLEEN COCHRANE
Fryer Library remembers the life of one of its most generous donors.

WHAT’S NEW IN FRYER
New material available online, additions to the collections, and Fryer Library in the news.

FRIENDS OF FRYER
News from Fryer Library’s active group of supporters, the Friends of Fryer.
As the Fryer Library marks the 80th anniversary of its foundation, we pause to remember the life of John Denis Fryer, the World War I veteran for whom it is named. Fryer Library's collections contain much material bearing on the great conflicts of the twentieth century – accounts of the Boer War; the diaries, letters and photographs of those who fought at Gallipoli and on the Western Front in World War I; and many reflections of Australia's struggle for survival in World War II. The buildings which now form the Great Court of The University of Queensland at St Lucia served as Advanced Headquarters for the Allied Land Forces in the South West Pacific for most of World War II, giving the University a very tangible link to this crucial period in the nation's history. This special anniversary issue of Fryer Folios seemed a good opportunity to explore these riches, and what they might reveal of the nature of Australians and the character of the nation forged by these conflicts.
The Fryer Library at The University of Queensland is named for John Denis (Jack) Fryer, a graduate of the University who served overseas in World War I and died in 1923 as a result of injuries received during his war service. His father, Charles George Fryer, was born in County Wexford, Ireland, in 1854, the son of a country doctor. He emigrated to Australia in 1880, aged 26, and settled near Springsure in Central Queensland, taking a job as a station hand at Orion Downs, a sheep station owned by a Mr Wilson. Mr Wilson had four step-children with the surname Laurie, one of whom was Annie. In 1881, when Annie Laurie was 15, a local girl of 16, Rosina Richards, arrived on the station to help with the children. Rosina and Annie Laurie soon became good friends. Rosina married Charles George Fryer in 1883, at the age of 18, and they had seven children: Elizabeth (the only daughter, born in 1884), William Thomas (1887), Charles George (1889), Henry Hardy (1892), John Denis (1895), Richard Alexander James (1899) and Walter Ponsonby (1906).

Charles George Fryer had been educated to follow his father into the medical profession, but he disliked the idea. His daughter Elizabeth later recalled:

*My father never made use of his excellent education to get a good position, but worked as an ordinary labourer at whatever was offering, station hand, boundary rider, mailman, etc… As our family grew it will be seen that there was very little money to spare, and no chance of a secondary education for the elder ones. In 1895, my father and mother obtained a job as married couple (designated Wardsman and Matron) at the local hospital… It was here that my fourth brother was born, and christened John Denis.¹*

In a town as small as Springsure, Rosina Fryer is likely to have kept in touch with Annie Laurie, who for a time attended Springsure State School, before being sent to finish her education at a Rockhampton convent school. In 1896, Annie Laurie married Henry Gaudioan Wheeler of Cooroorah Station, near Blackwater. They had one daughter, Portia, before his early death in 1903. Annie Laurie then returned to Rockhampton to live before taking Portia to England in March 1913 to complete her education.²

In Springsure, the young Jack Fryer enjoyed a carefree childhood. His sister remembered him making friends with all the patients in the local hospital where his parents worked, a setting that seems to have encouraged a natural trend to sociability. In 1899, he started at Springsure State School and did sufficiently well that by his senior year, his sister Elizabeth, then an assistant teacher, decided to coach him for a District Scholarship, which he won. This took him to the Boys Grammar School in Rockhampton in 1909, and in 1914 he matriculated, gaining the necessary marks for a University scholarship. He entered The University of Queensland at the beginning of the 1915 academic year, aged 19. His sister describes him at that time:

*He was a tall, well-built lad, nearly six*

¹ Elizabeth Stuart Gilmour (née Fryer), “An Account of the Early Life of John Denis Fryer”, (1966), Fryer Library, John D Fryer Collection, UQFL23, Box 1, 2.

feet in height, brown haired, with large grey eyes, good features, sound teeth, and a ready smile. For the most part, he was very even-tempered, but occasionally he could get “hopping mad.”… His self control increased as he grew older, and he displayed a quality of reasonableness and understanding of his fellow men, always striving to see the “other fellow’s” point of view, and making allowances, even if he did not agree with it – a quality which stood him in good stead later on in dealing with men, especially during World War I.3

At the end of his first term, knowing that his elder brother William had enlisted for overseas service, Jack wrote to his sister:

_Do you think that Mum would consent to my volunteering for active service? Really, Liz. I think it is about time we all went, for this war is by no means over, and it is well known that a Conscription Bill is being brought before the Federal Government. … Before that Bill is passed, probably all the men at the University will have gone. They are drizzling out now by twos and threes, and I don’t want to be one of the last._4

In the end, four of the Fryer brothers would serve overseas – William, Charles, Henry and Jack. William and Jack sailed on HMAT Warilda from Brisbane with the 10th Reinforcements of the 9th Battalion on 5 October 1915, landing in Egypt on 8 November. They joined veterans of the Gallipoli landing, training and drilling for the next seven months in the Egyptian desert. In February 1916, the Reinforcements were divided up between the 9th Battalion and the 49th, with the two Fryer brothers joining the 49th. They were mobilised to France, where they were joined by their brother Charles just in time for the launching of the Somme offensive on 1 July. An attempt on the part of the Allied High Command to break the two-year stalemate on the Western Front, the Somme offensive was the greatest military disaster in recorded history. When it ended on 19 November, the Allied line had advanced seven miles at a cost of over 600,000 lives.5 Will Fryer was wounded seriously in the thigh, hand and shoulder in August – for him, the war was over. The casualty rate among officers, in particular, meant that new ones needed to be trained urgently, and Jack Fryer was chosen to go to Oxford with other Australians to study for his commission. He received his commission as 2nd lieutenant on 25 January 1917 and soon after returned to the trenches, joining the 52nd Battalion. His brother Charles was still with the 49th Battalion and his brother Henry had arrived to join the 47th. On 7 April 1917, Charles was killed in action. About 3 June, Jack was injured by poison gas and returned to England, but was back in the trenches again by 18 June. His brother Henry had received a bullet in his arm and a slight head wound while Jack was in England and was sent to an English military hospital.

5 John Keegan, _The First World War_ (London: Hutchinson, 1998), 299. To give an example of the scale of losses, the 1st Newfoundland Regiment consisting of 798 men was ordered into action at Beaumont-Hamel on 1 July and suffered 310 men killed and 374 wounded, a casualty rate of 86 per cent.
and the Australian Army Headquarters, a home away from home for troops from Central Queensland. One soldier drew a picture of a kangaroo with a Digger’s hat on the door and wrote the slogan: “Hop right in, Digger!” underneath. She endeavoured to contact all soldiers from Central Queensland, whether they were wounded, imprisoned, or in the trenches. She kept a detailed card index on them, corresponded with servicemen on the battlefield, forwarded packages and mail, and supervised the care and comfort of those in hospital. She wrote monthly letters to The Capricornian (Rockhampton), giving details of all the men she had seen and spoken to that month. Her daughter Portia remembered the mail arriving by ship at Christmas 1917 and covering the entire floor of the flat three feet deep, with many letters addressed simply to “Mrs. Wheeler, London, England” or “Mrs. Wheeler, ‘Mother of the Anzacs’.7 Jack wrote to his sister Elizabeth:

Went to see Mrs Wheeler this morning. She was jolly glad to see some of us Rockhampton boys. By jove! She is a great little woman. I think the name “Mother of Anzacs” suits her to a T.

After this brief spell of leave, Jack returned to the trenches and remained there until he was wounded by an exploding German stick bomb (grenade) in August 1918. Mrs. Wheeler’s cable to his parents on 15 August preceded the official army telegram by six days. She wrote: “Jack writes hospital France wounds improving.” Her cable must have spared his parents and family considerable anguish, for the official army telegram said merely: “Now reported Lieut. John Fryer admitted 6 August Second British Red Cross Hospital, England. Multiple gunshot wounds. Severe.” The war was now over for Jack. His brothers Will and Henry had already returned home, and in May 1919, he too sailed for home, arriving just in time for his sister Elizabeth’s wedding on 22 July. In November 1919, Annie Wheeler and eventually back to Australia.

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7 “Devoted Service for Our Soldiers Abroad”, undated and unsourced newspaper clipping, Fryer Library, Biographical information on Annie Margaret Wheeler, F1622.
8 “An Account of the Early Life of John Denis Fryer”, 16.
9 Mrs. Wheeler to Mr. Fryer, cable of 15 August 1918, Fryer Library, John D Fryer collection, UQFL23, Box 1.
10 Army Base Records to Charles Fryer, cable of 21 August 1918, Fryer Library, John D Fryer collection, UQFL23, Box 1.
Wheeler and her daughter Portia also sailed for home, given free passage on a troop ship by the Australian Government. Rockhampton gave her a hero’s welcome and the RSL presented her with a house in Emu Park, where she lived until shortly before her death in 1950. In early 1920, she visited Springsure to dedicate a memorial fountain at Springsure State School, and Jack Fryer led the members of the local RSL in forming a guard of honour for the occasion.

At the start of the 1920 academic year, Jack returned to The University of Queensland to resume his interrupted education. Just under half of the students were returned servicemen while the rest had been at school throughout the war; too young to enlist. Sir Robert Lowe Hall, a contemporary of Jack Fryer’s at St John’s College, recalled “how astonishingly well these two groups, with totally different experiences, merged into one”:

This was so much the case that at the time I was quite unconscious that it was a potentially difficult situation. … Looking back now, I wonder how much charity the soldiers had to exercise towards the brash schoolboys.

He remembered Jack as a man intensely interested in his academic work and seizing every opportunity to participate in university life. His relations with others were characterised by a broad tolerance:

It was not the tolerance of a philosopher who sees all foundations as equally shaky, still less that of indifference and disengagement. The feeling which he managed to convey to so many people was that he liked them and was interested in them, whatever they were and did – the tolerance of a capacious heart.

Near the end of his final year, working hard towards final examinations and occupying responsible positions in many university clubs, Jack Fryer fell ill. Tuberculosis germs picked up in the trenches became active again, and combined with the damage wrought on his lungs by poison gas in 1917, made his situation a very serious one. Alarmed, his parents brought him home to Springsure in early January 1923. Rosina Fryer called in the local doctor whose verdict was blunt: “I’m sorry Mrs Fryer, I’m afraid there is no hope. I give him a month.” His sister Elizabeth recalled:

The townspeople rallied around to see what they could do to help. One woman brought him regularly the tenderest vegetables and the ripest fruit from her garden. … One man sent along his electric fan to see if it would temper the heat. … The people who had known him from babyhood and loved him, grieved with my mother for the young life that was fading away so fast.

Jack Fryer died on 7 February 1923, just five months past his 27th birthday. Members of the University Dramatic Society (of which he had been Vice-President) presented the University with the sum of £10 in his memory and asked that some Australian literary works be purchased with it. Dr Frederick Walter Robinson of the University of Queensland English Department, himself a World War I veteran, made this gift the occasion for founding the Fryer Memorial Library of Australian Literature. For the next thirty years, he oversaw its slow growth. In 1954, it came under the supervision of the main University Library. In 1967, its collections were significantly augmented by the addition of the Hayes collection. Today, its resources are considerable. The AustLit database and its print companion The Bibliography of Australian Literature whose final volume will be published later this year by The University of Queensland Press, both draw extensively on Fryer Library holdings in their attempt to comprehensively map Australian literary history. A more recent initiative of the Queensland Government aims to include the library’s historical resources in an online portal giving ready access to key sources in Queensland history. As the library celebrates its 80th anniversary, it would seem that what one admirer referred to in 1966 as a “small but robust baby” has finally come of age.

LAURIE MCNEICE is the Senior Librarian in the Fryer Library.

12 Ibid, 7.
14 Ibid, 18.
Bruce Beresford’s 1980 feature film Breaker Morant retells an incident that took place during the Anglo-Boer War, in which a number of Australian officers in a unit under British command, the Bushveldt Carbineers, were court martialed for shooting Boer prisoners of war. In the closing sequence of the film, the character George Witton is standing at a train station on his way to prison. He hears the volley of rifle fire as his Australian mates, Harry Morant and Peter Handcock, are executed by a British firing squad. He too had been sentenced to death but learns subsequently that “Lord Kitchener has been pleased to commute your sentence to penal servitude for life.” A caption then appears on the screen: “George Witton was released from Lewes Prison (England) after serving 3 years of his sentence. He returned to Australia and wrote a book – Scapegoats of the Empire. He died in 1943.”

The Witton character in the film epitomises naive imperial idealism. He is a young man who “believed in the British Empire” and yet becomes a repudiated victim of it. It is a powerful trope in the mythology of Australia’s “war of independence” from Britain which surfaces again 13 years later when the sacrifice of thousands of Australian soldiers on the beaches of Gallipoli is so readily attributed to the incompetence of their British commanders. Like that of the Anzacs, Witton’s “innocence” is transformed into cynicism, not just by the general war experience, but specifically by the callous machinery of the British military, in this case, under the command of the arch villain, Lord Horatio Kitchener. Beresford’s film suggested that it was the British and not the Boers who were the “real” enemy, and brought the Morant legend of betrayed colonial enthusiast back into public consciousness. But the story was not always Morant’s; at the time it was George Witton who focused the Australian

1 Breaker Morant (Hendon, S Australia: South Australian Film Corporation, 1980), video. Witton was actually released from Portland prison and died in 1942.

2 Ibid
public’s attention on this brittle moment in Anglo-Australian relations. Who was the “real” George Witton, and what role did he play in shaping our understanding of the “Breaker Morant” affair? The Fryer Library collection provides important insights into Witton’s life and the events surrounding the publication of his book.

George Ramsdale Witton was born on 28 June 1874 at Warrnambool in Victoria. He volunteered for military service in the Boer War and in May 1900 sailed with the Victorian Imperial Bushmen for South Africa. Witton’s initial tour of duty was hampered by a severe knee injury that limited him to barracks duties. He recovered sufficiently to transfer to the newly formed Bushveldt Carbineers, which he joined at the rank of lieutenant on 13 July 1901 at Pietersburg in the Northern Transvaal.

On 24 October 1901 Witton, along with a number of other BVC officers including Harry “Breaker” Morant and Peter Handcock, was arrested. Witton was charged with shooting Boer prisoners of war on two separate occasions. Morant and Handcock were charged with the same crimes and also with the murder of a missionary, the Reverend C A D Heese. Separate hearings were held for each charge. Morant and Handcock were acquitted on the Heese charge but were notified of the guilty verdict on the other charges on 26 February 1902. They were shot the following day.

Witton never knew how close he himself came to the firing squad. Kitchener had judged Witton’s role in the killings subordinate and so commuted his death sentence, but others saw no need for leniency. The British Under Secretary for War, St John Broderick, wrote privately to Kitchener:

It is a most deplorable performance and, if it gets out, as I fear it will, even the strong measures we are taking will not undo the disgrace it inflicts on our Colonial Forces. I should myself have been inclined to shoot all these officers. ³

The news did, of course, “get out” reaching Australia in March 1902. Both The Age and the Argus gave accounts of the affair. At this stage, however, the story did not generate great public indignation. Quick to capitalise on the topicality of the issue, Sydney Bulletin journalist, Frank Fox, under the pen name, “Frank Renar”, published “the true facts” of the Bushveldt Carbineers affair. Bushman and Buccaneer⁴ was published just six weeks after the news had broken. It was based in part on manuscripts and letters received from Major Robert Lenehan, the BVC’s Australian commanding officer who had also been court-martialled, but it also invented dialogue to colour the executions with fearless heroism:

Morant scornfully refused a bandage for his eyes and looked down the muzzles of the guns without fear. “Shoot straight” he said “don’t make a mess of it.” ⁵

Fox had no access to accounts from eyewitnesses of Morant’s and Handcock’s executions. Lenehan, Fox’s principal source, certainly had not been there, and so the mythologising of the incident had begun.

From South Africa Witton was taken to Britain to serve his prison term. He immediately began petitioning the authorities for his release. Meanwhile, a Witton Defence Committee had been organised back in Australia. It was coordinated by his brother, Ernest, who had obtained legal opinion in Witton’s favour from Isaac Isaacs, the prominent Melbourne lawyer later to become Australia’s Attorney-General. Isaacs’ opinion accompanied a petition for Witton’s release signed by 100,000⁶ Australians and forwarded to King Edward VII in October 1902. It was a significant demonstration of support from a population of only four million but did not sway the War Office.

Witton also had sympathisers in South Africa with its large resident population of ex-Australians and New Zealanders who

⁴ Frank Renar, Bushman and Buccaneer: Harry Morant, his Ventures and Verses (Sydney: Dunn, 1902).
⁵ Ibid, 38.
⁶ Witton claimed 100,000 signatories (George R. Witton, Scaregoats of the Empire: the story of the Bushveldt Carbineers (Melbourne: D W Paterson, 1907), 207). A contemporary newspaper account says 80,000 (Taranaki Herald, 6 December 1902, 5).
had migrated there earlier or stayed at the conclusion of the Boer War. Witton’s cause was promoted by the Cape Town satirical weekly, *The Owl*, which compared the hapless Victorian’s treatment to that of Alfred Dreyfus, the French cavalry officer wrongfully imprisoned for spying in 1894. The campaign for Witton’s release continued to gain momentum accruing wide support across the Empire.

In July 1904, James Logan, an influential member of the Cape Legislative Council, travelled to London and began privately lobbying members of the British House of Commons at The Carlton Club. During July and August 1904, the Conservative member for Oldham, Winston Churchill, himself a former prisoner of the Boers during the war, put a number of parliamentary questions to the Colonial Secretary about Witton’s ongoing incarceration. This two-pronged campaign was successful and Witton was freed on 10 August. In a bizarre gesture of repudiation of the original conviction, Logan personally attended Witton’s release from Portland Prison and took him to his Scottish estate for some grouse shooting.

On his return to Australia in late 1904, Witton campaigned to redeem his reputation. He told *The Age* he demanded “justice” and wanted his “character cleared”. He retired to his brother’s property at Lancefield in Victoria to write the defence that became *Scapegoats of the Empire*. Witton had the benefit of the trial notes made by James F Thomas who had acted as counsel for the accused and who had since returned to his law practice in Tenterfield, N S W, but his account could not escape the mythologising tendencies already shown by Fox. In fact, Fox seems to have been one of his sources, as the close likeness of several passages suggests. Perhaps the most famous line in the trial (one that is quoted in most accounts of the

affair including Kit Denton’s 1973 novel, *The Breaker*, Kenneth Ross’s 1979 play, *Breaker Morant*, and Bruce Beresford’s film) is Harry Morant’s implicit declaration that whatever the rule book says, war (especially guerrilla war) does not allow for punctilios and niceties. Witton writes:

“Was your court of the trial of Visser constituted like this,” asked the president, “and did you observe paragraph [blank space] of section [blank space] of the King’s Regulations?” “Was it the same as this?” fiercely answered Morant. “No it was not half so handsome. As to rules and sections, we had no Red Book; and knew nothing about them. But remember this. We were out fighting the Boers, not sitting comfortably behind barb-wire entanglements; we got them and shot them under rule 303.”

Witton, of course, had been in the courtroom as had his lawyer, James F Thomas, so either could have accurately remembered this striking assertion. However, the whole passage is so close to Frank Fox’s account which went to press in June 1902 well before either Witton or Thomas returned to Australia as to suggest that Fox’s book, rather than Witton’s memory or Thomas’ trial transcripts, was the real source of this defiant assertion. It is very possible that the famous “Rule 303” line was never spoken by Harry Morant at all, but was a product of Frank Fox’s rhetorical imagination.

By 15 June 1905 Witton had completed a first draft of the manuscript and was seeking a publisher. T J Symons of the Melbourne publisher, George Robertson & Co, had suggested to Witton that he approach A G Stephens, the noted critic and former literary editor of *The Bulletin*. Witton’s correspondence, held in the A G Stephens collections in Fryer Library and the Mitchell Library, give us new insights into the writing and publication of the self-justificatory book. Stephens declined

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9 Witton claims that there were petitioners from 14 countries, *Scapegoats*, 211.
11 Davey, *Breaker Morant*, 165. It is also claimed that Mrs Alice Kappel, a mistress of Edward VII interceded on Witton’s behalf. Margaret Carnegie and Frank Shields, *In Search of Breaker Morant*: *Balladist and Bushveldt Carbineer* (Armadale, Vic: [Carnegie & Shields], 1979), 168.
12 *The Age*, 12 November 1904, 11.
15 *Scapegoats*, 83-84. “Rule 303” is a reference to the calibre of rifle that was issued to the Bushveldt Carbineers.
16 Witton to A G Stephens, 15 June 1905, Fryer Library, UQFL 2, 2/2695c.
to publish it in its current form but (for a fee of 10 guineas) was prepared to edit it and endeavour to find a publisher. Witton apparently accepted this offer, for Stephens forwarded the manuscript to London. Almost a full year later Stephens received his agent’s advice that:

there is not Buckley’s chance for such a book. South Africa is as dead as a door nail – the only thing that people know about it here is that the war was not worth the fighting and a book about an individual’s troubles in it is not worth the writing at this stage. Certainly Witton could get it published – if he pays for it.

The attempt through Stephens having failed, Witton requested the return of his manuscript “to have it brought out here in Melbourne by private enterprise”. In June 1907 the book was published by the Melbourne printing firm of D. W. Paterson, almost certainly at Witton’s expense.

A strand of the mythology of Witton, Morant, and Handcock as imperial victims is the persistent story that Witton’s book was suppressed and burned by the authorities. As recently as 2003, Nick Bleszynski claimed that the book’s release:

proved as controversial as its contents … only a handful of first edition copies ever saw the light of day, as the publisher’s warehouse mysteriously caught fire. It was rumoured those that survived were bought up and destroyed by the British Government to avoid the truth coming out.

Another writer also focuses on the rarity of surviving copies:

It is thought that Witton’s seven advances [i.e. advance copies sent to the author] held today in major public libraries or in the hands of the author’s relatives, are the only ones that survive.

Such stories are the stuff of conspiracy theorists. Aside from the fact that Witton’s version of the story was hardly “controversial”, it is clear that support for his campaign for release had been widespread even among influential Australians. He counted amongst his supporters Alfred Deakin, who was at the time Prime Minister of Australia and Sir Isaac Isaacs who had, the year before, been Deakin’s Attorney-General and was now appointed to the High Court. They would hardly give vocal public support to Witton on one hand and yet condone the suppression of his book. Moreover, Witton’s own correspondence gives no indication of a fire or any malevolent suppression. On the contrary, he writes to Stephens, “My book is going off very well. D W Paterson informs me that the first 1,000 is now all gone and he has orders for more which is very satisfactory.”

As to the book’s “rarity”, there are at least 20 copies of the 1907 edition

19 W H Chater to A G Stephens, 26 July 1906, Fryer Library, UQFL 2, 2/585.
20 Witton to Stephens, 1 September 1906, Fryer Library, UQFL 2, 2/3695k.
21 Nick Bleszynski, Shoot Straight You Bastards: the truth behind the Killing of ‘Breaker’ Morant (Miltons Point, NSW: Random House, 2003), 413.
available in repositories across the country. The Hayes collection of the Fryer Library alone holds three copies. Doubtless there are further copies in private collections. Any “rarity” the book may have today seems more consistent with a comparatively small print run than it does with any Machiavellian intervention by government book burners.

Witon’s book may have achieved “satisfactory” if modest sales, but it had few literary supporters. Dismissed by one contemporary as “mostly a garbled and untrue version of the facts,” 24 Stephens’ agent in London had been sadly pessimistic: “I honestly do not think the outlay of your money is justified in so hopeless a book.” 25 James F Thomas, who had loaned his trial notes to the author, described the book as only a “surface transcription” of them. 26

Witon focussed Scapegoats of the Empire on his own exoneration, relying on the Nuremberg defence – “I was just following orders”. It is equivocal at best about Morant’s and Handcock’s roles in the killings, and was so preoccupied with the “injustice” of Witton’s own case that it eclipsed early attempts to rehabilitate the reputations of Morant and Handcock. 27 However, if the book did not itself champion their reputations, it greatly assisted those that did. In 1962 the seemingly dormant Morant story was revitalised by journalist Frank Cutlack. Breaker Morant: A Horseman Who Made History, 28 drew so heavily on Scapegoats that Cutlack is said to have suggested giving half of his royalties to Witton’s copyright-holders. 29 Scapegoats also lent a good deal to the screenplay of Bruce Beresford’s film, the most culturally influential of all the recent retellings of the story.

With the book finally published, Witton moved from Victoria to the Burnett district of Queensland in 1908 and settled into pineapple and dairy farming. In 1913 he married Mary Louisa Humphrey, his neighbour’s sister, at a ceremony in Maryborough. 30 Unlike James F Thomas whose life fell into disarray in the wake of the Morant affair, 31 Witton was not a recluse but was, it seems, popular and well integrated into this small community. He is remembered there with fondness as an engaging story-teller and a keen card player. 32 Other residents remember him as “of military bearing, very erect, softly spoken and a gentleman at all times.” 33 Witton Road in the district is named after him.

George and Mary had no children, and in March 1931 Mary died from stomach cancer. In 1940 Witton sold up and returned to Victoria. Two years later he suffered a heart attack while cranking his car. 34 He was taken to Guildford Private Hospital but died on 14 August 1942 at the age of 68. Members of the Gayndah, Biggenden and Coalstoun Lakes communities organised the erection of a memorial plaque to Witton and other Boer war veterans from the district. The plaque is located at the Coalstoun Lakes and District Soldiers Memorial Hall. Its unveiling in February 2002 marked the 100th anniversary of Morant’s and Handcock’s executions. 35 Morant’s and Handcock’s shared grave is in Pretoria cemetery and was tended there for many years by Witton’s sister. The cross over the pair’s remains has been replaced recently by the Department of Veteran’s Affairs who have taken responsibility for the grave’s upkeep. 36 The plaque at Coalstoun Lakes remains the only monument to Witton whose ashes are interred in the grave of his wife, Mary, at Lutwyche Cemetery in Brisbane although his name does not appear on the headstone. Ironically, the street adjoining the cemetery is “Kitchener Road”, doubtless named after the man who signed the death warrant for Morant and Handcock and who sentenced Witton to life in prison.

24 De Bertodano cited in Davey, Breaker Morant, 53.
25 Chater to Stephens, 26 July 1906.
27 Davey, Breaker Morant, 166.
32 Information provided by Don and Mary Randall, Biggenden, October 2007.
33 Wein, George R Witton, 27.
34 Embleton, “Afterword”, 244.

MARK CRYLE is the Manager of the Fryer Library.
Following the eruption of Vulcan volcano in New Britain in May 1937 the Australian government decided to transfer the administrative headquarters of the Trust Territory of New Guinea from Rabaul to Lae on the New Guinea mainland. The Administrator, W R McNicol, officially moved there on 17 November 1941, when the more important Administration buildings, including Government House, were almost completed. Work had also commenced on a Salamaua-Lae-Wau-Bulolo telephone link.1 Within a fortnight of McNicol’s arrival at Lae, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, then launched an airstrike on Rabaul on 4 January 1942.

1 These are towns in the Morobe District of the New Guinea mainland.
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of the Australian 2/22nd Battalion from
Rabaul joined a few Lae NG VR members
near Carl Jacobsen’s poultry farm on
the Markham road to prepare a futile
counter-attack. At 0445 on 8 March,
3,000 Japanese troops landed at Lae to
capture it and the Bulolo Valley further
inland. Opposing them were Captain H
M Lyons, four NGVR men and some local
helpers, who were quickly overcome. The
entire area from Rabaul south-west to
Port Moresby was now wide open to the
Japanese.

General Douglas MacArthur realised an
Allied counter-attack on Lae and Salamaua
needed an airfield north of Milne Bay in
Papua to allow aircraft to raid them and
Nadzab, a vast plain in the Markham
Valley about forty-five kilometres west
of Lae. His choice was the small airstrip
at Buna Government Station in north-
eastern Papua which was taken over and
expanded. Buna, and Sanananda to its
north, were only 400 air miles from Cape
York in northern Australia while Port
Moresby in Papua was even closer, so their
capture by the Japanese would constitute
a massive threat to Australia’s security.
Moreover, Buna and Sanananda would be
potential Allied staging points from which
to reinvade Cape Gloucester in west
New Britain, and Rabaul itself, to halt the
Japanese advance.

Throughout April and May 1942, the
Australians maintained steady pressure on
Salamaua with ground forces advancing from
Dododura. Between July and December
18,000 Japanese soldiers were landed on the
Buna coast but met with fierce resistance.
8,000 rapidly became casualties while
most of those who escaped were savaged
by Allied fire or died of disease. General
Hatazo Adachi, commander of the Japanese
18th Army, inspected the remnants in Lae,
declared them unfit for duty, and returned
them to Japan.

Meanwhile, on 16 June 1942 the 5th
US Army Air Force, protected by the
Australian 57/60th Battalion, commenced
carving out a great air base between
Marilinan and Tsile Tsile in the valley of
the Watut River (roughly between Lae
and Bulolo). Airstrips, including one for
modern fighter aircraft, were swiftly built
to handle 150 Dakota transport planes a
day. The Japanese appeared unaware of,
or unable to counter, this activity which

invading it with little resistance a few
weeks later.

The Australian government was ill-
prepared to defend New Guinea. After
the debacle of the “defence” of Rabaul,
Japanese occupation of mainland New
Guinea seemed inevitable. Members of
the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles (NGVR)
formed observation posts in Lae and
Salamaua (a port for the goldfield mountain
towns of Wau and Bulolo) in a desperate
attempt to monitor the anticipated
Japanese invasion. On 21 January 1942
a coast-watcher near Finschhafen, on
the western end of the Huon Peninsula,
warned that sixty Japanese aircraft were
approaching Lae. Guinea Airways had time
to fly some of its planes to safety before
Lae, Salamaua and Bulolo were bombed
and machine-gunned.

The Lae attack lasted forty-five minutes
and flattened or damaged most buildings.
Europeans sheltered in slit trenches, then
emerged to destroy fuel stocks, vehicles
and documents before evacuating on 24
January. Salamaua was abandoned the
same day. Local natives, with most of the
mixed-race residents, melted into the
jungle. European and Chinese residents
marched eight days through heavy rain to
Wau to join others from Madang (further
north) and Rabaul, hoping for evacuation
to Port Moresby on the Papuan coast,2 but
scant provision had been, or could then
be, made to evacuate anyone. Survivors

2 Edward O’Brien, “Diary of a Journey from Alexishafen
to the Southern Highlands, 11th May 1942”, Fryer Library,
Papers of the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia,
UQFL387, Acc.#070112, Box 5.
was only 224 kilometres inland from Lae. Their situation was increasingly desperate. The reinforcements specially redeployed from China were largely lost in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea commencing on 11 March 1943. Only 850 were landed at Lae to join the occupation force. It became impossible to obtain substantial supplies or reinforcements as the Japanese were forced to rely on barges from Madang which sailed at night and hid by day, or on submarines from Rabaul which surfaced in darkness and unloaded at a wrecked ship offshore. With such limited and precarious methods of resupply, hunger and sickness took a daily toll. Realising that holding Lae would become untenable, the Japanese commander reconnoitred tracks for withdrawal across the towering Saruwaged mountains to the north coast and Madang.4

On 30 June 1943 the 162nd US Regiment landed at Nassau Bay, south of Salamaua, and together with two Australian brigades fought the Japanese back to their last line of defence around Salamaua. Blasted to the ground by bombs and shells, the town fell to the Australians on 11 September.

On 4 September the Australian 9th Division landed on the coast between Lae and Finschhafen. A further 6,200 Australian artillerymen, together with American paratroopers, arrived the next day. The Americans seized Nadzab, and as part of Operation Postern to occupy Lae, the Australian 7th Division was flown from Port Moresby on 7 September. It was to advance along the Markham Valley from the west to prevent a Japanese counter-attack and link up with the 8,000 men of the 9th Division. Instead of foot-slogging through the burning heat of the Markham Valley – described by a coastwatcher as “the hottest walking in New Guinea … you walk in Kunai [grass] all day, there’s no shade, no trees …” – the 2/6th Independent company was airlifted almost to the Japanese stronghold at Kaiapit on the fringe of the Eastern Highlands. Fighting heavy odds they cleared it and secured the Markham Valley and Lae against any landward attack.

3 "Diary of a Japanese Soldier", November 1943, Fryer Library, Papers of the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia, UQFL387, Acc.#070112, Box 5.
4 Ansett-ANA booklet, “Japanese Occupation of Lae” (untranslated), Fryer Library, Papers of the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia, UQFL387, Acc.#061221, Box 4.

Within a few days of landing at Nadzab, units of the 7th Division swept down the Markham Valley towards Lae opposed by only scattered bands of Japanese. Troops of the 9th Division met stronger resistance and had difficulty crossing swollen coastal streams. Operation Postern proved an extraordinary logistical achievement with planes taking off from many different localities and arriving precisely on time in a coordinated attack.

Leading the raid on Lae, B25 aircraft came in strafing at a low level, followed by A20s putting down a smoke screen. After a forced march to Nadzab other Australian troops joined the paratroops and Australian gunners. They experienced fierce fighting on their way towards Lae. At Bertie Heath’s plantation, a well-fortified Japanese stronghold on the Markham road, the Australians won their first Victoria Cross when Private Richard Kelliher of the 2/25th Battalion single-handedly stormed a Japanese machine-gun post, then brought out his wounded section leader. With a division of troops pressing towards Salamaua, and the 7th and 9th Divisions converging on Lae, the classic pincer movement of Operation Postern was “an historic and audacious operation”. 6

On 11 September forward elements of the “Australian Black Watch”, the 42nd Battalion (3rd Australian Division) swam the flooded Francisco River and entered Salamaua to find it virtually abandoned. The 2/24th Battalion of the 9th Division then hurried fifteen kilometres inland to block the track at the Busui River crossing. The NGVR company at Nadzab used secret tracks to get patrols very close to Lae before the Japanese discovered them. Patrols needed to be extremely careful as the Butibum natives were working with the Japanese. 7 The 5th Independent Company of highly trained commandoes arrived eager for action, convinced they could easily shift the Japanese from Lae. Wiser heads prevailed.

The 7th and 9th Divisions fought their way into what remained of the town of Lae against determined Japanese rearguard opposition on 15 September while American bombers were still attacking it. By then the Japanese had given up all hope of retaining the town and withdrew 6,000 men. One officer wrote in his diary “… the sight of men being blown to bits was horrible”. 8 The Australians found the stench of their rotting bodies just as horrible. Dozens of Japanese planes were strewn about the airstrip and wrecked motor trucks lay everywhere. In their haste to evacuate, the Japanese abandoned large quantities of equipment including artillery, anti-aircraft guns, mortars and machine guns. The Australians harassed the starving and diseased Japanese who fled, leaving their wounded in tunnels modelled on their great tunnel complex in Rabaul. When the Australian order to come out and surrender was ignored, the entrances to the tunnels were simply bulldozed shut. Many Japanese

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7  Emery, op.cit.
8  “Diary of a Japanese Soldier”, 14 October 1943, Fryer Library, Papers of the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia, UQFL387, Acc.#070112, Box 5.
soldiers who escaped from Lae died from starvation as villagers would not give them food. Some were butchered and eaten by their starving comrades.

A brigade of the Australian 9th Division entered Finschhafen on 2 October and with it in his possession and another brigade moving up to repel the expected counter-attack, General MacArthur now had a secure base from which to attack New Britain. In his record of the New Guinea campaign Yoshiwara Kane9 detailed his gradual realisation that the war was lost, and that the Japanese soldiers had experienced needless suffering and death. The Japanese were to sum up their New Guinea campaign as a “magnificent tragedy”.10 The battle for Lae lasted from March to October 1942 and was a pivotal part of the campaign to reverse the quick successes the Japanese had had in a virtually undefended Papua New Guinea.

9 Translation of “Southern Cross” by Miss Doris Heath, 22 April 1976, Fryer Library, Papers of the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia, UQFL387, Acc.#061221, Box 4. (Original held in the Australian War Museum, Canberra)


DR PETER CAHILL is an active member of the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia. He was formerly a member of the staff of The University of Queensland Library and completed a PhD at UQ in 1988 on Papua New Guinea history. He also presents “Drivetime Classics” on Brisbane’s 4MBS radio station on alternate Tuesdays.

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Photographic collections of Hedley Clarke Schmidt, Don Herborn and Don Barnes, in Fryer Library, Papers of the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia, UQFL387.

Top: Sign on Scarlet Beach near Finschhafen commemorating the Allied landing there in 1942 (photograph circa 1945). The sign below points satirically to swimmers at the nearby beach. Photographic collection of Hedley Clarke Schmidt, Fryer Library, UQFL387.

Below: Sign at Scarlet Beach detailing the achievements of engineering units in the capture of Finschhafen (photograph circa 1945). Photographic collection of Hedley Clarke Schmidt, Fryer Library, UQFL387.
THE ORIGINS OF ANZAC DAY ARE WELL KNOWN – AT DAWN ON 25 APRIL 1915, THE FIRST ANZAC TROOPS LANDED AT GALLIPOLI, BEGINNING A CAMPAIGN THAT WAS TO LAST 34 WEEKS AND COST OVER 8,700 AUSTRALIAN LIVES. IT WAS NOT UNTIL APRIL 30 THAT THE HOBART MERCURY REPORTED THAT AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER ANDREW FISHER HAD ANNOUNCED: “SOME DAYS AGO THE AUSTRALIAN WAR EXPEDITIONARY FORCES WERE TRANSFERRED FROM EGYPT TO THE DARDANELLES. THEY HAVE SINCE LANDED.”

Above: This photo appeared in The British Australasian on 1 July 1915, and shows most of the nursing staff of No 3 Australian General Hospital. Anne Donnell, one of the nurses photographed, noted in a letter dated 30 June “…we had our photos taken at 10am in indoor uniform on the steps of the British Museum…” Florence James-Wallace appears second from right in the back row.

So on April 26, when Florence Elizabeth James-Wallace joined the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) in Brisbane, she would not have known about the Gallipoli campaign, nor about the role she was to play in it. Aged 29, her enlistment papers describe her as being 5’ 1¼” tall, with a dark complexion, brown hair and hazel eyes. Florence was posted to the No. 3 Australian General Hospital (3AGH).

Three days after Florence enlisted, Albert William Savage joined the AIF. Born in England, but living in Sydney, Albert gave his occupation as photographer. His enlistment papers show that he was 25 years old, 5’ 7” tall, with a dark complexion, brown hair and blue eyes. Deemed unfit for active duty due to poor eyesight, he was appointed to 3AGH as a private.

Both Florence and Albert sailed from Sydney on the Mooltan on 15 May 1915 with other members of the hospital staff. They arrived in England on 27 June, expecting to be posted to France. However, on 1 July, the commanding officer of the hospital, Colonel T H Fiaschi, was informed that they would instead be deployed to Mudros, on the Greek island of Lemnos, where they would nurse the sick and injured troops fighting in the Gallipoli campaign. Lemnos was only 50 miles from the fighting, whereas the hospitals in Egypt were over 650 miles away, a journey of 1 ½ days.

Florence compiled two albums of photographs with images of Egypt, Lemnos and Gallipoli, which are now part of the Fryer Library collection. We can be fairly certain that some of the photos were taken by Savage; he was a photographer by trade, and the Mitchell Library in Sydney holds a photograph album of his titled “Photographs of the Third Australian
General Hospital at Lemnos, Egypt and Brighton (Eng.), 1915-1917 (PXE 698). These photographs illustrate the various aspects of life on Lemnos, both for the hospital staff and the men they treated, as well as the life of the villagers who called the island home.

The male hospital staff arrived at Mudros on 29 July, only to find the ship Ascot, carrying all the hospital supplies, including their tents, had not arrived. The nurses’ ship arrived on 5 August, to find that the Ascot had still not arrived, and that the male personnel were sleeping on the ground in the open. Some marquees that had been found in an ordnance store were erected and the nurses disembarked in two groups on 7 and 8 August. 200 patients, wounded and sick from the Peninsula, had been admitted by breakfast on 9 August. Four days later, there were over 800 patients. The following extracts from the diary of Grace Wilson, Matron of 3AGH, illustrate the difficulties of the first few weeks:

(9 August) Found 150 patients lying on the ground – no equipment whatever – did best we could-have tents ourselves but no beds or mattresses. Had no water to drink or wash.

(10 August) Still no water, had some tea, could not wash or brush teeth – had a bath but water is very dirty. Convoy arrived at night & used up all our private things, soap etc, tore up clothes etc.

(11 August) Convoy arrived, about 400 – no equipment whatever – just laid the men on the ground, and gave them a drink. Very many badly shattered, nearly all stretcher cases. …Tents were erected over them as quickly as possible… All we can do is feed them and dress their wounds… A good many died… It is just too awful – one could never describe the scenes – could only wish all I know to be killed outright.¹

The Ascot eventually arrived on 22 August.

So what exactly do the images illustrate about life on Lemnos? James-Wallace’s album has a picture captioned “Australians from Anzac”, showing a line of troops wading through water on their way to a line of tents in the distance. This matches with a contemporary account from Lance Corporal Archibald Barwick who was serving at Gallipoli:

We were landed about 11 o’clock [c. 11 September 1915] that morning… As we passed the hospital… I heard one nurse say “poor fellows they look more fit for the hospital than anything else” and she was right. Half of them knocked up before they got round to the camp. On the way over we had to cross a long arm of the sea a sort of backwater. It was a short cut so you can bet we went across it though it was up to our thighs in places.²

The Sarpi Rest Camp had only just been established as a place for the tired Anzacs to rest and recover before being sent back to the trenches.

¹ Quoted in Jan Bassett, Guns and Brooches: Australian Army Nursing from the Boer War to the Gulf War (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992), 46.

Top:
This photo dates from after the arrival of the ship carrying the hospital’s supplies on 22 August.
The tents shown here were the accommodation for the nurses, but the whole hospital, including the operating theatre and wards, was housed in similar tents. It was intended that the hospital be housed in huts, but these were completed only just before the end of the Gallipoli campaign when the hospitals were being transferred off the island.

Bottom:
The Sarpi rest camp was established on Lemnos in early September 1915. As Lance Corporal Archibald Barwick wrote in his diary: “On the way over we had to cross a long arm of the sea a sort of backwater. It was a short cut so you can bet we went across it though it was up to our thighs in places.”

Other photos in the albums show the layout of the hospital and some of the facilities. The hospital was supposed to be housed in huts, but in reality they were finished only just before the abandonment of the Gallipoli campaign, so for most of their time on the island, the staff and patients were housed in tents. These were not suitable for conditions on the island, where winds were harsh and constant, especially coming into the winter months, and heavy dews would cause the tents to tear. On several occasions, tents blew down, as described by Sister Louise Young:

… hardly a night or day did not pass that a tent did not collapse somewhere… I don’t think that I shall ever get over my dread of wind again, night after night, every bit of canvas creaking, shaking & straining & your mind always wondering which would collapse next.³

When 3AGH first started admitting patients, the majority were wounded men from the August offensive, and it was these patients the hospital had been set up for, with operating theatres and surgeons on the staff. In later months, nearly all the patients were ill with either dysentery or paratyphoid. The staff of the hospital also fell ill, though the nurses suffered less, probably by practising better hygiene. In late November and December, the casualties changed again – troops were caught in freezing weather on the Peninsula without adequate clothing, and many were admitted to the hospitals on Lemnos suffering from severe frostbite.

The last Australians were evacuated from Gallipoli on the night of 19/20 December, and many spent Christmas on Lemnos while waiting for further orders. The whole evacuation of allied troops took three weeks. In spite of earlier predictions that up to half the remaining forces could be killed, the evacuations were so well planned that there were minimal casualties, which was a relief to the hospital staff who had been prepared for casualties. With the end of the Gallipoli campaign, the hospitals on Lemnos were disbanded. Florence James-Wallace and her fellow nurses boarded the hospital ship Oxfordshire on 14 January, and sailed out of the harbour at Mudros on 17 January, bound for Egypt.

In spite of the hardships and difficulties, the nurses were aware they had experienced something quite new and different, and that there were aspects of life on the island which they would miss:

We have just seen the last of Lemnos. Of course we are glad, yet there are many things we will miss; the unconventional freedom and the unique experiences we had there… Goodbye Lemnos. We take away many happy memories of you. I would not have liked to miss you, yet I have no desire to see you again.⁴

³ Quoted in Bassett, Guns and Brooches, 48.

⁴ Anne Donnell, Letters of an Australian Army Sister (Sydney: Angus & Robertson Ltd, 1920), 76-77.

³AGH was re-established at Abbassia in Egypt in early 1916 in an old harem, where it operated for approximately eight months. The staff then operated the Kitchener War Hospital at Brighton, England from October 1916 before moving to Abbeville, France, from May 1917.

Florence James Wallace went on to serve in Egypt, England and France with 3AGH, at times also serving with other
medical units including the 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital, the 2nd Australian General Hospital, and the No 61 British Casualty Clearing Station. She was awarded the 1914-15 Star, The British War Medal and the Victory Medal. Albert William Savage remained with the hospital until 1917 when he transferred to the Australian Flying Corps. Both returned to Australia at the end of the war; Savage with his English bride, Mary Phyllis Tompsett, whom he married on 30 October 1918.

Perhaps the last word on the Australian nurses of Lemnos should be left to Lance Corporal Archibald Barwick, whose diary has also been quoted in this article:

What a relief and pleasure it was to see the girls of our land after six months of roughing it at Anzac. They made the place look quite bright with their pretty uniforms. They were bricks to stick at Mudros like they did for I can tell you they had some rough times there… Their first thought was for the sick and wounded men and they looked after them splendidly. One cannot praise our nurses too highly. They were bonzer girls.5

Selected photos from the James-Wallace albums can be viewed online at http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/list.php?collection_pid=UQ:657

PENNY WHITEWAY is a librarian at the Fryer Library.

Above: The tents housing the hospital staff and patients were inadequate for the job. The hospital’s location was windy, especially coming into the winter months, and tents would collapse regularly. The tents would also tear under the weight of the heavy dews experienced on Lemnos. This photo shows two nurses standing amid the wreckage of their tent, and two men helping to clean up.

Kath Walker, as she was then known, with the hope of persuading her to become a member. Kath Walker did join this organisation, later becoming its secretary, and a long friendship between Kathie Cochrane and Oodgeroo Noonuccal was born. Kathie wrote in her book, “Oodgeroo and I grew old together”.

As well as being a friend of Oodgeroo, Kathie was the wife of Bob, a mother, and a teacher. She was the first president of the Remedial and Support Teachers Association of Queensland. She also became a Senior Tutor at the Fred and Eleanor Schonell Special Education Research Centre, The University of Queensland, working there from 1974 until her retirement in 1988. A number of her books on educational issues are held by The University of Queensland Library.

IN MEMORIAM

Fryer Library staff were saddened to hear of the death in February this year of Kathleen (Kathie) Cochrane. Kathie was the biographer of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, and library staff remember her and her husband Bob spending many hours in Fryer Library working through the Oodgeroo Noonuccal papers. The book Oodgeroo was published in 1994. In 1996 Kathie Cochrane deposited in Fryer Library papers associated with the writing of the book, including the correspondence between her and Judith Wright. This further enhanced the library’s rich and unique archive of Oodgeroo Noonuccal material.

Kathie was born in 1923. In 1958, she and her husband Bob were among the original members of the Queensland Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. They visited

Left: Oodgeroo Noonuccal and Kathleen Cochrane in conversation
Fryer’s latest online exhibition examines Brisbane’s built environment between the wars and how it reflected the city’s economic, political and social history. Written and curated by Dr Jeff Rickett and designed by Marg Powell, the exhibition draws on the riches of the Queensland Architectural Archive held in Fryer Library to explore the connections between architecture and history.

Over twenty architectural drawings and plans from the Lange, Powell, Dods & Thorpe; Trewern; Conrad and Gargett; and Wilson collections are on display, as well as numerous photographs and maps from the period. Did you know that Brisbane’s first set of traffic lights was installed in Queen Street in 1937?

**International Women’s Day**
[www.library.uq.edu.au/fryer/iwd](http://www.library.uq.edu.au/fryer/iwd)
This small exhibit was prepared for the 2008 International Women’s Day and gives a brief history of the event. It also highlights some of Fryer’s rich resources in women’s studies.

**Henry William Mobsby Collection**
Henry William Mobsby was born on 17 August 1859 at Hove, Sussex, England, and came to Queensland in 1883 with the landscape artist Isaac Walter Jenner, whose daughter he later married. Mobsby had studied art and design at the South Kensington School of Arts and at the School of Art, Brighton. He had diplomas and certificates from the London Chamber of Commerce, the
City and Guilds Institute, the Cripplegate Institute and the South Kensington School of Arts. Mobsby was an instructor in Decoration and Photography at the Brisbane Technical College before being appointed artist and photographer with the Department of Agriculture and Stock in 1897. In 1899, he was also appointed to the Chief Secretary’s Department and the Intelligence and Tourist Bureau. Mobsby's photography gained international distinction and he officially represented Queensland at the Franco-British Exhibition in London in 1908, the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco in 1915 (where he took a motion picture certificate course), the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924-25, and the New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition in Dunedin in 1925-26. Mobsby gave many lectures on Queensland, its history, products, scenery, buildings, etc., illustrated by lantern slides. He also made a number of radio broadcasts in the 1920s. He retired in 1930, and died on 9 April 1933 at his home at 100 Station Road, Indooroopilly. He is buried in Toowong Cemetery. Fryer Library has digitised some of the many photographic images in his collection of papers and made them available online through UQ eSpace.

**STAFF**

At the beginning of July, Fryer Library welcomed back Cathy Leutenegger from a two-and-a-half year secondment to the AustLit database project. A Fryer librarian since 1989, Cathy has been working with the team of experienced bibliographic researchers compiling the AustLit database.


and the related *Bibliography of Australian Literature*. AustLit (www.austlit.edu.au) is the web-based research and information resource comprehensively mapping Australian literary history. A non-profit collaboration between twelve Australian universities and the National Library of Australia, AustLit aims to provide authoritative information on hundreds of thousands of creative and critical Australian literature works relating to more than 100,000 Australian authors and literary organisations. Its coverage spans 1780 to the present day. AustLit’s mission is to enhance and support research and learning in Australian literature. AustLit is at the forefront of the eResearch movement in literary and print culture studies in Australia, employing and developing new technologies to take advantage of, and build upon, the rich biographical, bibliographical and full text data compiled over the past 20 years. *The Bibliography of Australian Literature* is currently being completed by AustLit researchers at The University of Queensland, Monash University and the University of New South Wales, under the general editorship of John Hay and John Arnold and Associate Editorship of Kerry Kilner and Terry O’Neill. The final volume of the *Bibliography* will be published by UQP later this year.

**2008 FRYER LIBRARY AWARD**

Dr Katherine Barnes from the University of New South Wales, ADFA is the recipient of the Fryer Library Award for 2008. The Award aims to provide successful applicants with institutional support and affiliation to the Faculty of Arts at The University of Queensland to undertake research in Australian literature, history and culture utilising the collections of the Fryer Library. The amount of the award is $10,000. Dr. Barnes has commenced her project on “David Malouf: The Poet’s Fiction.” Fryer Library’s collection of David Malouf’s papers (UQFL163) begins with the drafts of his first book of poetry, “Bicycle and Other Poems” (1970), and includes the manuscripts of all his major novels. The next award will be made in 2009. For more information, see: www.library.uq.edu.au/fryer/awards.html.

**COLLECTIONS**

**Manuscripts**

Fryer Library has recently received a valuable addition to the Papers of Sadie and Xavier Herbert (UQFL83), in the form of 30 logbooks or diaries kept by Xavier Herbert from March 1976 until eight days before his death on 10 November 1984. Other valuable literary material received includes a large donation of Australian playscripts from the Melbourne Theatre Company, to add to the Eunice Hanger Collection of Australian Playscripts.

Australian science fiction writer, Kim Wilkins, has donated the manuscripts of her recent books, *The Autumn Castle* (2003), *Giants of the Frost* (2004), and *Rosa and the Veil of Gold* (2005) to add to her existing manuscript collection (UQFL396). Fryer has also recently acquired the manuscript of Veny Armanno’s *The Dirty Beat* (2007) to add to the existing Venero Armanno collection (UQFL375).

Manuscript material with a historical focus recently acquired includes research materials, recorded interviews and transcripts used by Andrew Stafford in the writing of his book, *Pig City: From the Saints to Savage Garden* (2004), a history of rock music in Brisbane. The Susanna De Vries collection (UQFL421) has been enhanced by the addition of the manuscripts of Blue Ribbons, *Bitter Bread* (2000) and *To Hell and Back* (2007). *To Hell and Back* tells the story of Sydney Loch who published an account of Gallipoli in 1916 entitled *The Straits Impregnable* under the pseudonym of Sydney de Loghe, passing it off as fiction. When his publisher included the statement “This book is true” in the second edition of 1917, the book was promptly banned by the military censor. Susanna de Vries’s book reprints it, together with a biography of its author. Both the first and second editions of *The Straits Impregnable* are rare – Fryer holds three copies of the first edition in the Hayes collection and one copy of the second edition. Material continues to be donated for the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia collection in Fryer (UQFL387). Dr Peter Cahill’s article on the Allied liberation of Lae elsewhere in this issue of *Fryer Folios* illustrates the value of this material for future historical research. In addition, the Refugee Narratives Seminar recently hosted by Fryer Library and inspired by its Burnside/Durham collection (UQFL430), which contains correspondence between Australian activists and refugees detained on Nauru, has led to Fryer being offered more manuscript material related to this...
issue, emphasising this area as one of Fryer’s emerging collection strengths.

Fryer’s capacity to support linguistics research has also recently been enhanced by the addition of the Bruce Sommer collection to its holdings. This consists of 31 boxes of research material on Cape York aboriginal languages, collected between 1964 and 2003 by Dr Bruce Sommer. An assistant professor of linguistics from the University of Leuven, Belgium, has already visited Fryer to consult this collection.

**Rare Books**

Fryer has been fortunate to acquire a copy of Mrs Campbell Praed’s *My Australian Girlhood: Sketches and Impressions of Bush Life* (1902), inscribed by the author and with the bookplate of Belle Kermit Roosevelt (US President Theodore Roosevelt’s daughter-in-law). Mrs. Campbell Praed was perhaps the most significant writer of pre-Federation Queensland. In her inscription in this book she writes “whatever I may have written worth preserving, I owe to those early years in the Bush which taught me to love nature, and to find in the old nurse, ever my best friend.”

Fryer’s current interest in genre fiction, which began with the acquisition of over 400 volumes by the Australian pulp fiction writer Carter Brown, continues with the acquisition of a large collection of Australian romance fiction. Dr Juliet Flesch of the University of Melbourne’s School of Historical Studies built up a collection of over 1,500 romance novels written by Australians, featuring Australian characters or set in Australia, in the course of her research for her two books *Love brought to book: a bio-bibliography of 20th-century Australian romance novels* (1995) and *From Australia with love: a history of modern Australian popular romance novels* (2004). Fryer has acquired the collection from her to form the basis for further research into this genre. For a full list of titles in this collection, search the UQ Library catalogue under the title “Australian Romance Fiction Collection”.

A University of Queensland symposium on “Milton in Intellectual and Cultural History”, held to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Milton’s birth in 1608, brought attention to Fryer’s holdings of more traditional classic English literature.

Several visiting scholars came to Fryer to view its copy of *Paradise Lost of Milton, with illustrations, designed and engraved by John Martin* (London: Septimus Prowett, 1827). John Martin was a well-known British Romantic artist but the 1827 edition was a very small one and Fryer’s copy is the only copy held by any institution in Australia, and one of a very few to survive around the world.

**Fryer Library in the News**

The August 2008 issue of *inCite*, the magazine of the Australian Library and Information Association, was a “Rare and Antiquarian” special issue. It features an article called “From humble beginnings: The Fryer Library at The University of Queensland” written by Mark Cryle, Fryer Library Manager. The article talks about the origins of the Fryer Library, expanding the collection (with particular mention of the Hayes collection), and Fryer Library today. When it was established in 1927 the collection consisted of books on Australian literature contained in one cedar bookcase housed in the English Department of The University of Queensland at its site in Old Government House in George Street. The collection had its genesis in a gift of £10 donated by the Students Dramatic Society to commemorate the memory of fellow student and former Vice-President of the Society, John Denis (Jack) Fryer who died in February 1923 from wounds received in battle on the European front during World War I, as described elsewhere in this issue of *Fryer Folios*.

“The Fryer Memorial Library of Australian Literature” grew under the stewardship of Dr Frederick Walter Robinson (“Doc Robbie”) and in 1954 the collection came under the management of The University of Queensland Librarian. Mark Cryle’s article was written in part to mark the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the Fryer Library’s foundation and will soon be available in full on the Fryer Library homepage.
Two significant events have already been held in 2008. The first of these, in April, was a lecture by Dr Toni Johnson-Woods, with the provocative title of “Australia doesn’t have to rhyme with failure: Carter Brown as cultural export”. Dr Johnson-Woods, a lecturer in the Bachelor of Arts program at The University of Queensland Ipswich, was Fryer Fellow in 2007. Much of the content of her lecture derived from the work she did on the Carter Brown collection in Fryer Library during her Fellowship. The library’s Carter Brown collection comprises nearly 400 books by this best-selling detective fiction writer, whose Mystery Series is described by Dr Johnson-Woods as “more than a literary curiosity, [for] it became a global marketing phenomenon”. The books were produced between the 1950s and 1980s, in a period when the home-grown popular fiction industry blossomed under an Australian government tariff system that effectively banned US imports. They were widely translated and more than 80 million copies sold world-wide. Dr Johnson-Woods’ talk included a slide show presentation with some of the distinctive covers of the Carter Brown books. These can be seen on the Friends of Fryer website, which includes a podcast of the lecture, at http://www.library.uq.edu.au/fryer/podcasts/podcasts.html

During Refugee Week, 15-21 June, a seminar entitled “Refugee Narratives: documenting the lived experience” was held. The seminar was inspired by Fryer Library’s Burnside/Durham collection, which contains correspondence between Australian activists and refugees detained on Nauru. Academics and community members came together in a discussion which began with presentations by Professor Gillian Whitlock of the School of English, Media Studies and Art History at The University of Queensland; Dr Jeff Rickertt, Librarian at the Fryer Library; Dr Karen Dooley of the School of Cultural and Language Studies in Education at the Queensland University of Technology; and Bruce Henry, an immigration lawyer who was formerly a member of the Immigration Review Tribunal. The presentations were followed by a panel discussion chaired by Adele Rice, and made up of four leaders from communities many of whose members came to Australia originally as refugees. The panellists were Mr Trung Nguyen, Ms Magdalena Kuyang, Mr Rafael Pacheco, and Mr Ali Karimi. Each had a story to tell about their experience as a refugee. The seminar was very well-attended and generated wide interest.

Upcoming Events

On Saturday, 20 September, Fryer Library will be sponsoring a session at the Brisbane Writer’s Festival featuring Julian Burnside, author of Watching Brief: Reflections on Human Rights, Law and Justice (2007), in conversation with Steven Keim. The session will be chaired by Keith Webster, The University of Queensland Librarian and Director of

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Alternatively, please contact:

The Secretary, Friends of Fryer
Fryer Library
The University of Queensland Q 4072
Telephone (07) 3346 9427
Fax (07) 3365 6776
Email fryerfriends@library.uq.edu.au

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Learning Services. Julian Burnside QC is a Melbourne barrister and author. In 2001 he helped bring legal action against the Australian government over its decision to prevent asylum seekers rescued by the ship MV Tampa from having their claims for asylum heard in Australia. He subsequently became a leading public critic of the government’s refugee and anti-terrorism laws. He is the author of two previous books: *From Nothing to Zero* (2003), a compilation of letters written by asylum-seekers held in Australia’s detention camps, and *Wordwatching* (2004), a collection of essays on the uses and abuses of the English language. *Watching Brief* presents a sensitive and intelligent defence of the rights of asylum-seekers and refugees, and argues for the importance of protecting human rights and maintaining the rule of law. Fryer Library holds the papers of Julian Burnside and his wife, Kate Durham, a collection which inspired the “Refugee Narratives” seminar described above.

For further information about this event and how to purchase tickets, see the Brisbane Writer’s Festival website at www.brisbanewritersfestival.com.au

Dr Veny Armanno will be the speaker at a Friends of Fryer event on the evening of Wednesday, 3 December. Dr Armanno is a Senior Lecturer in the School of English, Media Studies and Art History, and is the author of a number of novels, the most recent being *The Dirty Beat*. His books have won numerous awards, including the prestigious 2002 Queensland Premier’s Literary Award for Best Fiction, for *The Volcano*. As well as being an acclaimed author, Dr Armanno is known as an engaging and charismatic speaker. The Friends of Fryer are delighted that he will be the guest speaker at the December event.

Members of the public are welcome to visit Fryer Library and use its collections.

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