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# Macleay Museum News

Number 3, March 1994

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## *Third Research Fellow*

The third Macleay Miklouho-Maclay Fellow, Dr Clemency Fisher, took up her three-month fellowship in December 1993. Dr Fisher is Curator of Birds and Mammals at the National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside in Liverpool, England. While in Sydney she is working primarily on an annotated transcript of the diary which explorer and naturalist John Gilbert kept on the first Leichhardt Expedition in 1844-1845. The diary is held in the Mitchell Library. This will be produced as an illustrated book, with maps of Leichhardt's route and the interesting route Gilbert took overland (following stockmen's trails) between Newcastle and south Queensland before joining the expedition.



Dr Fisher is also looking in detail at the Macleay Museum's collections of birds and mammals, amounting to nearly 9000 specimens. The collections are particularly rich in species from Australasia and the Pacific, with many examples of forms now extinct or extremely endangered. The collection was mainly developed in the time of William John Macleay - the 1870s and 1880s. With the help of his able assistant, George Masters, and with specimens sent by friends and dealers all over the world, William Macleay immeasurably improved the value of the vertebrate collections of the Macleayan Museum, as it was known before its transfer to Sydney University in the late 1880s.

The best known collecting trip Macleay and Masters made together was the voyage of the Chevert to Cape York, the Torres Strait Islands and the coast of New Guinea in 1875. The Museum holds many important specimens collected on this expedition, as well as from other expeditions the two made to southern New South Wales. A particularly important site that Masters visited was the 'Salt' (now Pallinup) River in Western Australia. One area of special interest to Dr Fisher is the collection of birds made on several Pacific islands by the Layards, father and son (see back page). Her research on this collection will result in a paper to be published in one of the international bird journals. This will add important knowledge to the understanding of bird distribution in the Melanesian area of the Pacific, a region still in need of much research.



Guests at the opening of *Lukluk Bek Long Taim Bipo - Community Archaeology in Papua New Guinea*.

The exhibition was opened by Emeritus Professor Jack Golson of the Research School of Pacific Studies at the ANU on 3 November 1993. It will run until mid June.

### *Historic Camperdown Cemetery*

Nicholas Bochsa was harpist to Napoleon and Louis XVIII successively, and did much to make the harp fashionable. He arrived in Sydney

in December 1855 and died here barely a month later. He was buried in Camperdown Cemetery to the sounds of his own requiem.

Camperdown Cemetery, established in 1848, contains the graves of many of the pioneering figures of the colony including Sir Thomas Mitchell (Surveyor General of NSW, 1828-1855), and the composer Isaac Nathan (1790-1864) who pioneered the transcription of Aboriginal music. The bodies recovered from the wreck of the Dunbar were buried in a mass grave at Camperdown, where Eliza Donnithorne, thought by some to be the model for Dickens' Miss Havisham, is also buried.

Among the more imposing graves is that of Alexander Macleay and members of his family. Alexander was Colonial Secretary of NSW from 1826 to 1837 during the governorships of Darling and Bourke. He died in July 1848 and so was among the first to be buried in the cemetery.

St Stephen's Church, perhaps the finest of Edmund Blacket's parish churches, was built within the precinct of Camperdown Cemetery in the 1870s. Decay and vandalism have taken their toll of the church and the cemetery over the years. Restoration work has been undertaken since 1979 but much remains to be done. The St Stephen's Restoration Committee operates with the guidance of an expert advisory panel.

People wishing to know more about Camperdown Cemetery, or to join the Friends of St Stephen's should contact Karen Fong on 516 2941.

## *Notes*

Changes in the administrative structure of the University have brought the Museum under the umbrella of a new division of **External Relations**, headed by Lorraine Phelan.

**Lindy Davidson** (Administrative Assistant) and **Julian Holland** (Curator of Scientific Instruments) have been given full-time appointments after working for the Museum in part-time positions for several years.

**Julian Holland** has been appointed Treasurer of the Council of Australian University Collections (CAUMAC) for 1994.

The **Committee of Review** inquiring into the Museum (see *Macleay Museum News* No. 2) submitted its report to the Vice Chancellor in January.

**Dr Nicolai N. Shtsherbak**, Head of the Department of Vertebrate Systematics at the State Zoological Museum of the Ukraine visited the Museum in January following attendance at the International Herpetological Conference in Adelaide.

The 19th International **INHIGEO Symposium** will be held at Sydney University in early July, focusing on 'History of the Geological Sciences in the Pacific Region'. A display will be mounted in the museum on *Aspects of Geological History* to be launched at the Symposium reception on 4 July. The display will draw on the museum's collections and possibly other university collections and will run until November.

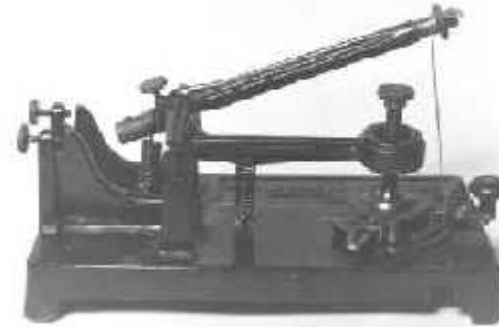
## *Microscope Catalogue*

The Macleay Museum has an extensive collection of scientific instruments. Microscopes and accessories used in microscopy form a significant component of the collection. A catalogue of these instruments was produced in 1989 in conjunction with the exhibition *Microscopy: Miniature Worlds Discovered*.



### **Gould-pattern pocket microscope**

made about 1830, part of the extensive collection of historic microscopes and microscopy apparatus in the Museum.



### **Cambridge Rocking Microtome**

This is an early example of the Cambridge (Scientific) Instrument Company's rocking microtome, designed to cut a series of sections of biological specimens for examination under the microscope. Originally designed by Horace Darwin (Charles's son), this example was made about 1900. So successful was the design that it continued to be made with minor modifications until the 1960s.

*Microscopes and Microscopy, Instruments and Related Items in The Macleay Museum* is an illustrated catalogue of nearly 50 microscopes, several microtomes and other accessories and a wide selection of commercially prepared microscope slides from the 19th century. The catalogue also contains a brief history of microscopy in Australia and an index. *Microscopes and Microscopy* retails for A\$12.00 plus postage.

## *Publications*

(Co-authors not associated with the Museum are marked with an asterisk.)

Holland, J., 'Historic Instruments in Australian Universities', *History of Australian Science Newsletter*, No. 31, 1993, p. 3 (reprinted in *CAUMAC News*, vol. 3, January 1994, pp. 5-6)

Holland, J., 'Relations between Instrument Manufacturers', *Bulletin of the Scientific Instrument Society*, No. 38, September 1993, pp. 15-16

Holland, J., [book review] 'Lab Reports (review of Andrew Cunningham and Perry Williams (eds), *The Laboratory Revolution in Medicine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)', *Metascience*, New Series Issue Three, 1993, pp. 137-42

Holland, J., [book review] 'Mr Troughton and Mr Simms (review of Anita McConnell, *Instrument Makers to the World. A History of Cooke, Troughton & Simms*. York: William Sessions, 1992; and Eleanor Mennim, *Transit Circle. The Story of William Simms*. York: William Sessions, n.d.)', *Metascience*, New Series Issue Four 1993, pp. 116-18

Holland, J., [book review] 'Northern Exposure (review of Debra Lindsay, *Science in the Subarctic. Trappers, Traders, and the Smithsonian Institution*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993)', *Metascience*, New Series Issue Four 1993, pp. 127-28

\*Pilato, G., \*Claxton, S. and Horning, D.S., 'Tardigrades from Australia. IV. *Diphascon (Adropion) gordonense*, a new species from New South Wales (Tardigrada: Eutardigrada: Hypsibiidae)', *Animalia* 18 (1992), pp. 157-61

Horning, D.S., 'Tardigrada and their presence in New Zealand', *Proceedings of the 42nd Annual Conference, Entomological Society of New Zealand*, Christchurch, (1993) pp. 34-39

Horning, D.S., [book review] 'D. Young, *The Discovery of Evolution* (1992)', *Australian Zoologist* 29(1-2) (1993), p. 62

Horning, D.S. [book review, 1993 Whitley Medal] 'H. Gray, *The Western Rock Lobster Panulirus cygnus*. Book 1: A Natural History (1992)', *Australian Zoologist* 29(1-2) (1993), pp. 127-8

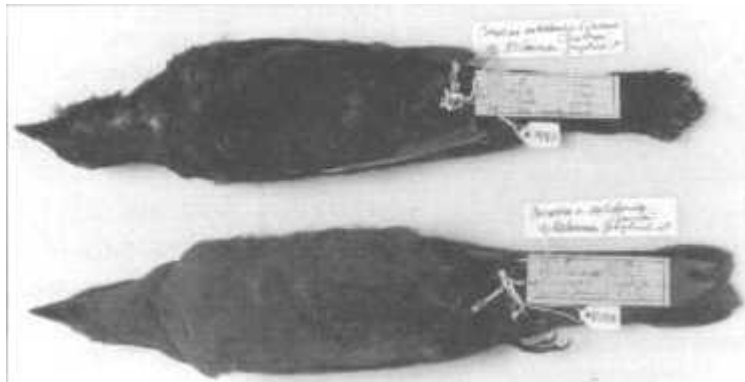
Horning, D.S. [book review] 'H. Tyndale-Biscoe (ed.), *Australia's Biota and the National Interest. The Role of Biological Collections. A Symposium Held on 11-12 November 1991* (1992)', *Australian Zoologist* 29(1-2), (1993), p. 137

Horning, D.S. 1993. (book review). R.S.K. Barnes, P. Calow and P.J.W. Olive. 'The Invertebrates : A New Synthesis (1993)'. *Australian Zoologist* 29(1-2): 137-8

Horning, D.S. 1993. 'Published material received for the 1993 Whitley Awards of the Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales', *Australian Zoologist* 29(1-2): 124-7

## *Honorary Consul*

Edgar Layard, Honorary British Consul at Noumea, New Caledonia, and his son, Leopold, were active collectors of bird specimens. Between them they visited Fiji, Vanuatu, Samoa, Tonga, the Solomons, New Britain and Norfolk Island between 1870 and 1881. The collections they made from their 'home base' of New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands, though, are perhaps the most scientifically important. The Layards had many ornithological friends around the world to whom they sent material - including William Macleay in Sydney - and their specimens have become very scattered. Many went to the British Museum in London. Others went to H.B. Tristram, Canon of Durham Cathedral, whose collections are now in the National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside in Liverpool, England.



The Layards' specimens in many cases were the first of that species ever collected, and as such are the 'types' or standards for that species, being the basis of the published descriptions. The type series have become split, mainly between the London, Liverpool and Sydney museums.

The Layards' labels are very distinctive, having been printed specially for them, and have spaces for recording the colour of soft parts (which fades rapidly after death) and stomach contents (which must be discarded during skin preparation), as well as the sex and location where the bird was collected. For the time this was a very advanced approach, devised by Edgar Layard.



Most of the labels on the specimens bear Edgar's handwriting (neater than Leopold's), but the Loyalty Island and Vanuatu material was mainly collected by Leopold. The photograph shows labels from two subspecies of the Melanesian Graybird. One, *Coracina caledonica caledonica*, was collected by Edgar Layard in New Caledonia in 1880. Typically of Layard Senior it is a well prepared specimen, with uncrossed legs (an unusual technique which sometimes helps to identify Edgar Layard specimens that have lost their labels). The second, collected in January 1878, is a type specimen of the Loyalty Island subspecies *Coracina caledonica lifuensis*, described by Canon Tristram in 1879. The label is written in Leopold's hand. He was not so good a taxidermist as his father and the specimen is showing signs of deterioration.

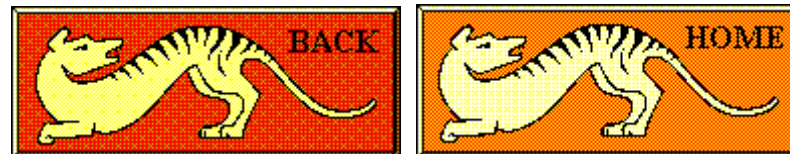
There are at least 250 Layard specimens in the Macleay Museum. Some are from type series and there are several specimens of birds which are very rare or even extinct. A full report on the Layard specimens is being prepared for publication.

### **Clemency Fisher**

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