
Macleay Museum News

Number 4, September 1994

National Review of University Museums

Since the founding of the Council of Australian University Museums and Collections (CAUMAC) in 1992, university museums are being increasingly recognised for their contribution to the preservation of Australia's cultural heritage. A review is now underway, with funding from the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Training, to assess the state of university museums and collections around the country.

The Review Committee, chaired by Dr Don McMichael (former Director of the National Museum of Australia), comprises Professor Colin Pearson (Director of the National Centre for Cultural Heritage Science Studies, Canberra), Professor Barrie Reynolds (Director of the Material Culture Unit at James Cook University, Townsville), Professor Di Yerbury (Vice-Chancellor of Macquarie University, Sydney), and Dr Peter Stanbury (former Director of the Macleay Museum).

The Review Committee will undertake a survey to list and describe university museums and collections, and to provide basic data on the size and condition of their collections, and provision of staffing and space. The Review will also investigate the importance of museums and collections as part of Australia's heritage, their role in teaching and research, including training for heritage professionals (museum studies programs), their role in community relations, and the possible use of performance indicators in museum management.

The Committee intends to circulate a draft Report for comment by the end of March 1995. The final report is to be submitted through the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee to the Department of Employment, Education and Training by 30 June 1995. Any reader who wishes to make comments or a written submission to the Review should contact Dr Peter Stanbury, c/o the Vice-Chancellor's Unit Macquarie University, NSW 2109; telephone 02 850 7431, facsimile 02 850 7565

Geological History

An international conference on the history of geology was held at Sydney University at the beginning of July. The INHIGEO meeting, 'History of the Geological Sciences in the Pacific Region' was organised by the Earth Sciences History Group of the Geological Society of Australia and hosted by the Department of Geology and Geophysics.

As part of the conference a reception was held in the Macleay Museum on 4 July. The occasion saw the opening of the exhibition, *Aspects of Geological History*, and the launch of two books, the conference proceedings and the history of the Geological Society of Australia.

Aspects of Geological History draws on the diverse and valuable collections of the University to illustrate various historical themes. Emphasis is given to geology at the University with many rarely seen items on display, including Professor A.M. Thomson's lecture notes from the 1860s, the ice axe Griffith Taylor took to Antarctica in 1910, and an album of excursion photographs from 1922.

The University Library's Rare Book department has an extensive range of early geological books, many of them in the Tomkeieff Collection. Professor S.I. Tomkeieff spent much of his career in the Geology Department at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne in England. The University of Sydney was fortunate to acquire this collection in 1970 after Tomkeieff's death. A selection of books from the Tomkeieff Collection is included in the exhibition together with other geological books recently acquired by Rare Books.

Other parts of the exhibition are devoted to the Rev. W.B. Clarke (1798-1878), mining, and geological models. Among the more unusual and appealing objects on display are a series of plaster models of prehistoric animals made in Germany in the late 19th century. Several specimens from the extensive and valuable Dixson Collection of Broken Hill minerals are also displayed.

The Museum acknowledges the loan of exhibits from the University Archives, the Rare Book department of Fisher Library, the Department of Geology and Geophysics, the University Art Collection, and the School of Physics. *Aspects of Geological History* will run until 2 December 1994.

Ladies Did



Women were prominent among geology students at the University from the early years of this century. This is one of the images on display in the current exhibition, *Aspects of Geological History*.

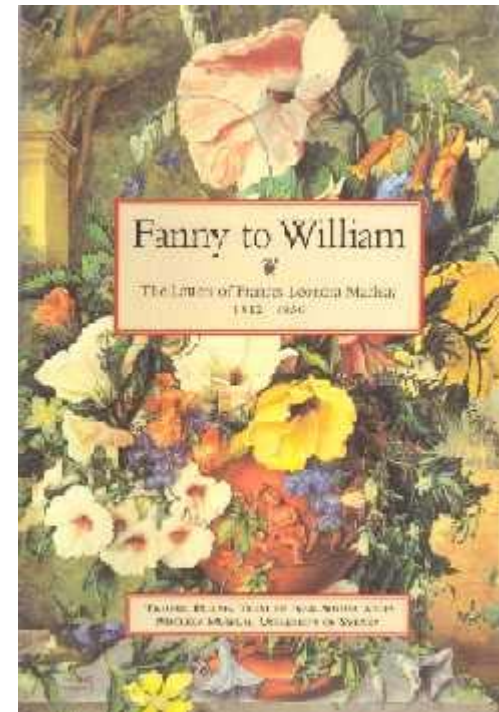
From the 1919 presentation album of geology excursion photographs, Edgeworth David Papers, University of Sydney Archives.

Fanny to William:

The Letters of Frances Leonora Macleay 1812-1836,
edited by Berveley Earnshaw, Joy Hughes and Lindy Davidson

Frances Leonora Macleay, the eldest daughter of Eliza and Alexander Macleay, accompanied her parents to New South Wales in 1826 when her father became Colonial Secretary. About the same time William Sharp Macleay was appointed by the British government to a position in Cuba. Fanny's forthright and entertaining letters to her brother concerning the voyage to Australia and life in Sydney under Governors Darling and Bourke show her keen eye for character and the situations she observed. She was never to see her brother again. Fanny died at the age of 42, three years before W.S. Macleay came to Sydney.

The flower painting which illustrates the front cover of the book is an indication of Fanny's artistic ability, one of her many talents that have received little recognition. *Fanny to William*, published by the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales and the Macleay Museum, is available at The Macleay Museum Bookshop or by mail order for \$34.95 (plus postage).



Students and the Museum

Students from many parts of the University have been involved in the Museum during the year. Apart from the many students who make casual visits to the Museum, others come as part of courses. Lectures have been presented by Museum staff to undergraduate classes in the history of museums (History) and Industrial Arts (Education). The Museum gallery has been used as a venue for 2nd yr tutorial groups from the Zoology Department throughout the year. A class for Master of Heritage Conservation students (Architecture) was also held.

Links with the Unit for History and Philosophy of Science continued during the year. Museum staff assisted third-year HPS students researching Australian colonial scientists. A group of HPS students is researching an exhibition on phrenology in Australia to be mounted in the Museum in December 1994. The Museum's extensive research files on Alexander Macleay were examined by Derelie Evely. Derelie has recently embarked on a study of Alexander Macleay for a PhD in History.

Two Museum Studies students, Angus Patterson and Heather Bauchop, are working on a new display, *"Spoils of War?", W.W. Froggatt collecting in the Kimberleys, 1887-1888*. W.W. Froggatt spent 12 months in the Kimberley region collecting natural history specimens for W.J. Macleay. He also collected Aboriginal artifacts. The display will focus on how the artifacts were obtained and what implications this

has for museum collections.

Students have also become involved with the Museum as volunteers. Jacky Eisenberg, a Zoology graduate currently studying for her DipEd, is assisting with the development of new displays based on the vertebrate collection. These displays will be relevant to undergraduate studies in Biological Sciences. One of the students from the history of museums course, Sarah Loch, subsequently undertook some historical research relating to William Macleay's 1874 diary which the Museum is preparing for publication.

Undergraduate students from a University of New South Wales General Education course on the history of scientific instruments visited the Museum during first session. One of their assignments requires them to examine instrument displays in several museums. Woody Horning, Acting Director and Curator of Invertebrates, has provided advice to William Miller, an external PhD student at the University of New England, Armidale. Mr Miller has come to Australia from Illinois for several weeks for each of the past three years to attend and give seminars. Woody Horning provides guidance on taxonomy and biogeography for his project on the tardigrades of eastern Antarctica and the Australian and New Zealand subantarctic islands.

Among the more unusual requests for assistance during the year has been one from Alison Mathews. Alison is an honours student in Zoology studying predation of the eggs and nests of Yellow Robins. Moulds were prepared for Alison to make plasticine eggs and advice was given on how to paint these. Alison hopes to determine what percentage of nests have their eggs preyed upon by native and introduced birds as well as cats and rats.

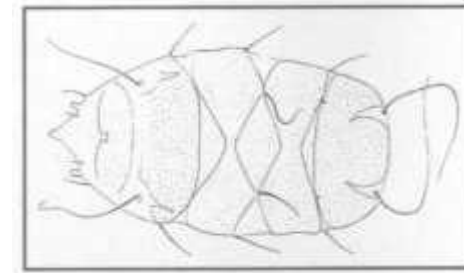
Conferences

Museum staff have participated in several conferences recently.

The annual conference of the Council of Australian University Museums and Collections was held at Macquarie University, Sydney, in July. **Julian Holland** presented a paper on scientific instrument collections in Australian universities (and was re-elected Treasurer of CAUMAC). **Susie Davies**, Curator of Anthropology, also attended the conference, which concluded with a tour of several museums and collections at the University of Sydney including the Macleay Museum.

Dr Woody Horning, Acting Director and Curator of Invertebrates, attended a Workshop on Australian Pseudoscorpions in early August in Perth. Pseudoscorpions are up to 5 mm long and look like scorpions but have no tails. Some habitats in which they are found include leaf litter, under bark, in bird and mammal nests and in caves. The Workshop was held in the Western Australian Museum under the leadership of Dr Mark Harvey. Literature searching, specimen curation and slide-mounting techniques, identifications and planning research projects were highlights of the week.

Woody Horning also attended the Sixth International Symposium on Tardigrada held at Cambridge University in late August. Preliminary results from four projects were presented: a history of tardigrade research in Antarctica; the tardigrade fauna of Lord Howe and Norfolk Islands; the terrestrial tardigrades of Australia. I. South Australia. II. Tasmania. Tardigrades, commonly called water bears, are microscopic (about 500 micrometers long) eight-legged animals found in many environments including lichens, mosses, algae, leaf litter, slow-moving fresh-water streams and ponds and are even found on sediments of the abyssal zone up to 6000 meters below sea level.



Dorsal view of tardigrade *Echiniscus quadrispinosus*, in life a mere 300 micrometers long.

Visitors

The Museum has been visited by several scholars in recent months.

Dr Frank Bonaccorso, University of Florida, Gainesville visited the Museum in August. He is a world leader in bat research and had just returned from several months study at the Christensen Research Institute, Madan, Papua New Guinea. His primary interest was to search the Macleay Museum vertebrate catalogue for historic specimens of bats. He found several species of particular interest and information from them will be incorporated into his forthcoming book, *Bats of Papua New Guinea*.

Schuyler Jones, Director of the Pitt Rivers Museum, with Curator of Anthropology Susie Davies. The Pitt Rivers Museum, one of several museums at the University of Oxford, is renowned for the richness and diversity of its ethnographic collections. Dr Jones gave the keynote address at the CAUMAC Conference held in Sydney in July.

Ms Patricia Hewitt, Librarian, Sainsbury Research Unit for the Arts of Africa, Oceania & the Americas, University of East Anglia, Norwich, visited Australia in July as part of a project to document archival sources relating to Pacific ethnology.

Ms Jenny Wetton, Curator of Science at the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester, visited the Museum in August to examine the scientific instrument collections. While in Australia Ms Wetton is based at Scienceworks, Melbourne, as an exchange curator involved in developing an exhibition on computing and communications.

Dr Woody Horning, Acting Director since August 1992, retires on 7 October. Dr Horning joined the Museum as Curator of Invertebrates in June 1982. The position of Director was advertised on 10 September.

New Telephone Numbers

The University of Sydney is changing its telephone numbers. The University's phone prefix will change from 692 to 351. Existing extension numbers will be retained. From 16 October 1994 the Museum's general number will be 351 2274.

Australian Balance

The balance is possibly the most ancient precision measuring instrument. Well developed balances were used by the ancient Egyptians. Joseph Black's use of the balance in the mid eighteenth century to undertake careful quantitative analyses of chemical reactions marks the beginning of modern chemistry.

Typically a balance consisted of two arms supporting two pans, one for the sample to be weighed and the other for weights with precisely established values. The Museum has several balances in its Scientific Instrument Collection. The most unusual is the single-pan balance designed by Russell Grimwade and manufactured by Felton Grimwade & Co. in Melbourne.

Felton Grimwade & Co. was founded as a wholesale druggist in Melbourne in 1867. Sir Wilfred Russell Grimwade (1879-1955), a son of one of the founding partners, had a lifelong interest in designing and making things. He maintained a private workshop which at the outbreak of the Second World War began manufacturing crutches to his own improved design.

The Grimwade family maintained diverse business interests. These were joined in 1920 by the Felton Grimwade Scientific Instrument Co. Little is known of the activities of this company - how much it manufactured, how much it imported and retailed, what range of instruments were supplied. The venture was not a success and the company was wound up in 1922.

The Grimwade balance in the Museum bears a plaque on the frame of its front window:



The plaque does not refer to the Felton Grimwade Scientific Instrument Co. and it is possible that the balance was made before 1920. Russell Grimwade had designed a milligram balance for the Australian Institute of Tropical Medicine in Townsville, Queensland. This must have been made no later than 1918 as it was used and favourably commented on by W.A. Osborn, professor of physiology at the University of Melbourne early the following year.

No other examples of the Grimwade balance have been discovered and it is possible the one in the Macleay Museum is unique. If it is the balance supplied to Townsville, it could subsequently have come to the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine at Sydney University and then to the Museum.

The design of the balance has a number of disadvantages. Even without these it is unlikely that it would have displaced the two-arm balance unless there were considerable attractions for the user. When changes did come, such as the Mettler single-pan balance, these came from within the industry and not from a marginal firm like Felton Grimwade.

The Grimwade balance in the Macleay Museum is an intriguing relic of Australian scientific ingenuity from the early years of this century. The First World War stimulated a national sense of identity in Australia in several ways. Australia was partially isolated from major centres of manufacturing by the war. The design of the balance and the establishment of the Felton Grimwade Scientific Instrument Co. can be seen as part of a move to reduce Australia's dependence on foreign manufactures.

Further Reading

H.C. Bolton *et al.*, 'The Grimwade Milligram Chemical Balance', *Historical Records of Australian Science*, 9(2) (December 1992), pp. 107-17



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334,016 Visitors
since January 12, 2000