

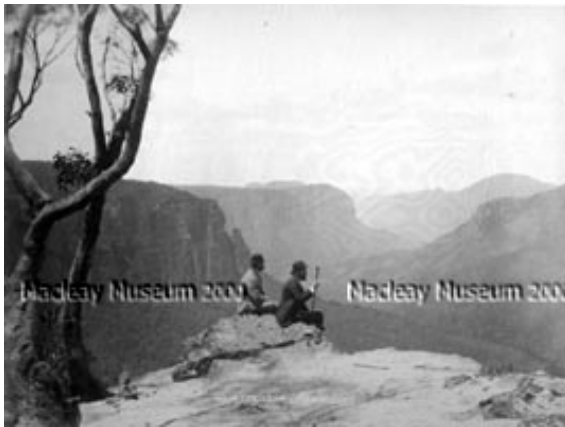
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# Macleay Museum News

Number 12, October 1998

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## *Treasures of Light*



John Paine, in the dark suit, is seated at the head of Govett's Leap in the Blue Mountains. He was a well known commercial photographer in Sydney in the late 19th century. In 1875 he established a photographic studio at 96 Elizabeth Street, Waterloo, and sold views of the city and the Blue Mountains. He also travelled with the Australian Squadron and recorded the establishment of the British Protectorate over South East New Guinea in 1884. Twenty one photographic collections, including the work of John Paine, are featured in a new display, *Treasures of Light*, in the Macleay Gallery.

In 1982 two students in the Archaeology department of the University of Sydney appealed to the public for historic Australian photographs. Inundated with images, the photos required appropriate housing and the Macleay was fortunate enough to acquire many items of national significance of which the series of Paine's albumen prints is one. Until that time, little interest was shown in historic photographs as documentary sources of Australian history, although the first Australian photographic history, Jack Cato's *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, was published in 1955.

The Museum's Historic Photograph Collection holds over 50,000 photographs dating from the 1840s to the 1940s in various media, providing great riches from which to select the images reproduced in *Treasures of Light*. A representative sample was selected to introduce four broad themes: an image of the photographer or a subject associated with the person; built structures; landscapes; and a typical sample from the collection. The 21 photographic collections illustrate the development and evolution of photography in Australia in terms of both the technology and the subjects photographed. Photography was initially centred in Sydney and subsequently radiated outwards with the

exploration of the colonists and scientists of their new environment.

*Treasures of Light* is presented on three light boxes, using the scanned images on durotrans. Early Australian photography on the first light-box is represented by a mix of professional and amateur photographers: William Hetzer, Alexander Brodie, Robert Hunt, John Smith and Ernest Docker. Professional photographers focused on portraits and landscape views. Skilled amateurs like Smith, Docker and Hunt, took pictures of their hobbies, home life and in Smith's case construction work at the newly formed University of Sydney. These images document the lifestyles and interests in Australia during the later 19th century.

As the centenary of Federation nears it is fascinating to look at the work of three well known commercial photographers in Sydney: Charles Kerry, John Park and John Paine. Kerry photographed local Sydney events and personalities as well as country New South Wales. Park focused on his photographic constituency of Leichhardt and Paine extensively photographed the street decorations for Federation in Sydney in 1901.

The second and third light-boxes illuminate teaching, research and physical and intellectual exploration by Australian academics, adventurers and traders in the early twentieth century. Here photography was used as a tool to record, document and teach. The collection includes lantern slides used by the Geology Department, many of which were created by the heroic Sir Edgeworth David, and these are fascinating from both scientific and historical perspectives. A comprehensive archive of the Pacific and its peoples by Ian Hogbin, from the Anthropology Department, and similar material from the Burns Philp collection, are beginning to attract interest. They provide great insight into 20th century academic and cultural pursuits. Recently the world was fascinated by images of Mars, the red planet, whereas, almost a hundred years ago, the first photographs of the red centre of this continent, taken by Baldwin Spencer, represented a similar achievement of exploration. The subjects in the Collection and this display range from the marine biology of William Dakin and Elizabeth Pope, to J.S.P. Ramsay's ornithology. Whilst early Australian social photography has, to some extent, come to the attention of historians, there is a wealth of material in the teaching collections that has yet to be tapped by scholars.

The Pictorialist movement is represented by Lewis Hey-Sharp, in a series of bromoil prints. This group experimented with atmospheric effects in order to evoke more of a sense of mood from the standard photographic image. Thus, they consciously stepped into the role of the photographer as 'artist'.

*Treasures of Light* is there to entice those with photographic and historical wanderlust, to stimulate further research of visual primary sources. The display was developed by Louise Davies and Geoff Barker. For more information, Geoff Barker, curator of the Historic Photograph Collection, can be contacted on (02) 9351 4200.

| [Current Exhibitions](#) | [Newletters](#) | [Historic Photograph Collection](#) |

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## *Director's Notes & Jottings*

### ***Wanderlust***

Most of our efforts for the last few months have been directed towards the exhibition ***Wanderlust, Journeys through the Macleay Museum*** on at the Museum of Sydney until 8 November. Please make an effort to see it, as over 1000 of our objects and 300 images are now on show and look wonderful. It is most unusual for one museum to present an exhibition on the collections of another, and we do urge you to attend. I am not sure we have yet recovered as the logistics of readying all these objects for moving was exhausting to say the least. Present this Newsletter for half-price entrance to the Museum of Sydney. Additionally, the Macleay Museum itself will open on Saturday and Sunday 24 and 25 October from 1 to 4 pm, so if it is difficult to visit us during the week, please take advantage of this weekend opportunity. At the weekends, parking is available on campus.

### **Staff Notes**

As the year ends, it is important to acknowledge again the invaluable contribution of our regular volunteers – Val Havyatt in Scientific Instruments, Audrey Green and Sarah Walters who have been cataloguing our library, and Geoff Barker, who while working mainly with the historic photograph collection has also given wonderful assistance with many other things, including our computing. Both Geoff and Anna Edmundson were contracted by the Historic Houses Trust to work extra time on the ***Wanderlust*** exhibition, and Anna Gray, our Museum Studies placement student has also been most valuably employed on this. Additionally, this year we have had volunteers working with Margaret Humphrey in the Entomology Collection – Steve Shippard, Bridget Coleman and Dr Don Herbison Evans. We would find it difficult to cope without such generous assistance.

We are also pleased to welcome Susie Davies back to the Museum one day a week until the end of the year, working on the Indigenous Heritage Project. Julian Holland recently attended the XVII International Scientific Instrument Symposium at Sorø, Denmark, where he presented a paper on 'Captain Henry Kater (1777-1835) and his foreign correspondents with particular reference to Scandinavia'. He also made professional visits to a number of museums in England, Germany and the Netherlands.

I have been asked to Chair an advisory committee of the Heritage Office, the Movable Heritage Reference Group. This group which has met only once so far will consider what role the Heritage Office should play in relation to the enormous number of significant items of movable heritage which reside in private or government or local government hands. A first pilot project will report on shops and contents, and items of importance in rural NSW.

### **Conservation Appeal**

We thank all those who have contributed to our appeal for funds for conservation of the collection. We have had several items conserved, and several more will be done this year, notably the Samoan dress currently on exhibition which will be cleaned before returning to store. Additionally, the Museum of Sydney paid for several items to be conserved as a condition of loan for ***Wanderlust***. Conservation is very time consuming and therefore expensive. Further contributions are always welcome.

### **Loan**

The Macleay has agreed to lend to Elizabeth Bay House two more of the original Macleay insect cabinets for a period of five years, subject to their being conserved. Three cabinets are already at Elizabeth Bay House. Cabinet No 10, known to us as one of the Chippendales, is undergoing conservation at International Conservation Services, prior to moving to Elizabeth Bay House. As these wonderful pieces of furniture have not been on display at the University for many years, it is an opportunity to see them, in Alexander Macleay's library as they originally were. Elizabeth Bay House is open Tuesday to Sunday 10 am to 4.30 pm.

Before the cabinet was moved, all the drawers with insects were checked, re pinned if necessary, and photographed, but it was decided to leave the insects in situ, as in many cases, they represent the original pinnings.

### **Entomology**

There have been several mentions of the Entomology collection. This is because we have been truly fortunate to have obtained the services of an entomologist Margaret Humphrey one day per week, to begin developing finding guides and listings of the collections. We have also begun the process of transferring some modern additions to the collection to other museums. Margaret is a long standing part time member of staff in the Agriculture faculty and is also currently working half time as collection manager at the Australian Museum.

### **Merchandise**

We are pleased to announce that we now have three blank greeting cards for sale: the Samoan tapa dress, a blue butterfly against a yellow background and the gallery interior. The quality is excellent and we strongly recommend them for notes or for your Christmas card this year. They are for sale through the Chancellor's Committee shop and through the Union shop or at the Museum of Sydney Shop at \$3.25 each, and through the University *Gazette* or direct from the Museum at a special price: 10 cards with envelopes for \$25.00. We also have four bookmarks, at \$1.75 through the formal outlets, and \$1.00 each direct through the *Gazette* or the Museum. These feature two Chief's forks from Fiji, three butterflies, a Culpeper-type microscope of c.1820, and a Kulap ancestor figure from New Ireland, PNG. Again, the quality is excellent, and they make a lovely small gift.

### **Publicity**

The Gallery has been used as the background for two films this year. One, recently screened on ABC on the poet Les Murray unfortunately did not use the sequence filmed in the museum; the other, by Osford films, is a documentary to be released later in the year. Additionally, Channel 10 shot an episode of *Totally Wild* in the Insect Lab, and *Sydney Weekly* did a photoshoot, which I hope some of you saw.

*Wanderlust* has generated some publicity: I gave interviews on Radio Australia, 2NSB FM and 2WS FM. There were a couple of articles in the *Herald* and the *Australian* on the exhibition. Additionally, Louise Davies has two articles on *Treasures of Light* in *Antiques in New South Wales* and *Australiana*, and Anna Edmundson in *Antiques in New South Wales* on *Wanderlust*. An article by David Said appeared in the *Australian Art Collector* on the museum and the Oceanic jewellery exhibition. The *University News* has run several stories this year.

### **Strategic Planning**

Over a period of months earlier this year all staff met regularly with a planner to develop a Mission, Vision and Strategic Plan to guide the

direction of the Museum for the next few years. The process was slow but extremely valuable in giving us all time and a methodology to think about the museum within the University and how we can continue to give it focus with shrinking resources.

**Vanessa Mack**

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## *Adorned*

***Adorned: objects of adornment from Australia and the Pacific*** is a forthcoming exhibition to be held at the Macleay Museum in conjunction with the Oceanic Arts Society of Australia (OAS). It will focus upon the most outstanding examples of 19th and 20th century Oceanic jewellery drawn from the private collections of OAS members and the permanent collections of the Macleay Museum.

The exhibition will illustrate the diversity of body adornment, both traditional and contemporary, within the Oceanic region. We have chosen jewellery and body ornament as a theme because of the spectacular range and magnificent craftsmanship found in jewellery right across Oceania.



***Adorned*** will portray the energy and significance of Oceanic jewellery as fundamental expressions of artistic creativity while highlighting the continuing cultural value of these items in complex systems of trade, social relations, ethnic identity and aesthetics.

Jewellery and adornment in Oceania has many functions: it is used as decoration; as markers of wealth or status; as important trade and exchange items; as sacred heirlooms and objects of supernatural power. Because it is both highly portable and valuable, jewellery has always played an important role in the traditional trade networks of Oceania and features highly in political, economic and ceremonial exchange.

The exhibition will bring together a wide range of material from some of Australia's most prominent collections. Many of these pieces have never been publicly displayed before. By drawing on the personal collections of some of the world's leading authorities on Oceanic art, combined with the rarest treasures of the Macleay Museum, this exhibition represents an extremely significant body of art works and expertise. These resources have been harnessed to provide a fresh and critical approach to the study of Oceanic jewellery.

*Adorned*, curated by Anna Edmundson, will be on view at the Macleay Museum from 3 March 1999 until 14 February 2000.

## *Indigenous Heritage Project*

The 1994 Senate-approved policy regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ancestral Remains and Culturally Significant Items established an Advisory Committee to oversee the project and appointed an Indigenous Heritage Officer to consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or organisations regarding the return to appropriate communities and the future management of this important material.

Developing effective consultation and the provision of quality information has been important in the process, as is an understanding of communities and the pressures placed on them. Returning cultural heritage does not happen in a day.

We are therefore pleased to announce the return of Ancestral Remains to the Warragamaygam people of the Herbert River District of Queensland. Mr Richard Clark and Ms Leigh-Ann Richards, representatives of the Giringun Elders and Reference Group, received the remains from Professor Derek Anderson, chairperson of the Advisory Committee. Present were members of the Advisory Committee, project officers, Mrs Fay Nelson, a Warragamaygam community person and Director of the Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council, and Mr George Thompson, a relative of Mr Clark and ALP state member for Rockdale.

Culturally Significant Items were also returned to the Yuendumu community of Central Australia. In the near future items will be received by the Bardji Jawi and Karijarri peoples of the Kimberleys. Project officers and officers of the Kimberley and Central Land Councils are working together to bring about these returns.

### *Rosemary Stack*

## *AUMOL*

Since reporting in the last Newsletter that we did not receive further DEETYA funding, the participating universities have shown their faith in the Australian University Museums On-Line project by contributing a total of \$55,000, enough to keep going and add several more collections. Keep an eye on the site to see the additions and improvements ([www.aumol.usyd.edu.au](http://www.aumol.usyd.edu.au)). It is a pleasing demonstration of the worth of the project in these cash strapped times.

AUMOL was also part of a consortium with NeTTL (New Technologies in Teaching and Learning) at this University and three other universities, which was successful in obtaining a grant of \$190,000 from DEETYA, to build a data base of resources for the creation of

on-line courses. The National Teaching and Learning Database will begin by using the holdings of medical museums, notably the anatomy museums at the universities of Sydney, New South Wales, Queensland and Flinders. This data base will be used to assist in course development for the graduate medical programs, much of which relies on computer learning. An index to the data base will be created using AUMOL records.

## *Parrots in Paradise*

This unassuming skeleton is unique. It belonged to the Paradise Parrot (*Psephotus pulcherrimus*). As the scientific name indicates, this parrot was very beautiful and was known variously as the Scarlet-shouldered, Beautiful or Elegant Parrot. It lived in river valleys from central Queensland to northern New South Wales. The last confirmed sightings were in the 1920s. It is believed to be extinct.



John Gilbert discovered the Paradise Parrot on the Darling Downs in 1844. He was collecting for the entrepreneur of natural history publications, John Gould. Informing Gould of the discovery Gilbert remarked that it far surpassed in beauty every other species of the genus. In publishing a note of the discovery the following year Gould proposed the specific name *pulcherrimus*.

Feeding on a diet of native grasses, the Paradise Parrot was vulnerable to the spread of pastoral activities. Numbers were in rapid decline by the beginning of this century, probably as a result of overgrazing and drought. In 1922 C.J. Jerrard photographed a pair nesting in a termite mound in the upper Burnett River district in southern Queensland. Jerrard's black and white images are the only photographs taken of the species. It was Jerrard who made the last confirmed sighting of the Paradise Parrot five years later.

In addition to the skeleton, the Macleay Museum holds four skins of the Paradise Parrot, two males and two females. One female is from New South Wales, the other three specimens from Queensland. Unfortunately the specimen labels give no indication of the origin of the specimens but it is likely they came into the Macleay collection in the 1870s or 1880s.

From 1874, William John Macleay began collecting vertebrate specimens, greatly expanding the scope of the family collections which had previously concentrated on insects. Along with mammals, reptiles and fishes, Macleay amassed an extensive collection of Australian and foreign birds. He employed collectors in several parts of Australia. He bought specimens from planters like J.A. Boyd in Fiji and natural history dealers like A. Boucard in London. Fellow naturalists donated specimens, often in exchange for other specimens. This was a common way for museums to build their collections. Macleay's private scientific expedition on the *Chevert* to Torres Strait and the Gulf of Papua in 1875 gave a great boost to his collections generally.

The Museum today holds an extensive collection of Australian and exotic birds, both mounted specimens and study skins, most of them collected in the later decades of the 19th century. Nearly ten percent of the specimens represent species listed internationally as extinct or threatened. From bones of the famously extinct Dodo (*Raphus cucullatus*) to mounted specimens of the New Zealand Kakapo (*Strigops habroptilus*), the sexually dimorphic Huia (*Heteralocha acutirostris*) or the Night Parrot (*Pezoporus occidentalis*), the Macleay preserves and displays numerous irreplaceable specimens.

Some of these specimens can be seen in displays in the Museum gallery. Others may be brought out for school visits and special programs. Every year a series of hummingbirds is used in a course in the English Department.

The development of the AUMOL web site is making the Museum's holdings much more widely accessible. Basic data on the bird collection is already available and some photographs are included. More images will be added as the site is developed. This wider knowledge of the Museum's holdings should increase the use of the collection and generate a greater understanding of its breadth and significance.

### ***Graham Fulton***

### **Fellowship**

Graham Fulton was the fifth Macleay Miklouho-Maclay Fellow. The 1999 Fellowship will be advertised shortly. Anyone interested in applying should contact the Museum for further particulars.

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