Newsletter of the UNSW Archives

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Robert James Heffron (1890–1978) was NSW Minister for Education from 1944 to 1946 and NSW Premier from 1959 to 1064. In today’s political climate it is perhaps difficult to conceive that a NSW politician could have made a significant contribution to this university. Yet when in 1978 the university’s then Acting Vice-Chancellor Professor Rex Vowels mourned Heffron’s passing by describing him as one of the “founding fathers of the university”, this was not mere rhetoric, but rather recognition of the true debt that the university owes to Heffron for its establishment and even its name.

In the year of the university’s sixtieth anniversary, it seems appropriate to acknowledge this particular “founding father”.

World War II had demonstrated the increasing importance of technology and science to society; but this had not been matched in the numbers of students graduating in technical disciplines. In the pre-Whitlam era, states held the primary responsibility for tertiary education and so it was their lot to find a solution to this predicament. Fortunately, in 1944 the New South Wales Government had appointed a Minister for Education with the foresight required to address this problem—Robert Heffron. There had been previous discussions on the creation of a new tertiary institution by the Government. It was Heffron, however, who took action. On 9 July 1946 he presented a proposal to the NSW Cabinet outlining the creation of a NSW Institute of Technology. The legislation was passed and the Developmental Council had also been established in the new institution being given the “obviously superior name” of the Technical Education and New South Wales University of Technology Act—and thus this university—came into being from 1 July, 1949.

Opposition to the new university had been expressed in the media. Again, Heffron took up the university’s cause. On 4 May 1949, an article by Heffron was published in the Sydney Morning Herald, entitled “Defence of New University”, in which he answered the university’s critics and noted that “I feel that this argument centred on the notion that it would be better to simply increase the funding of “the existing university”. Heffron remained firm. He stated that the new university would “provide professional courses of a distinctly different type from those…available at the University of Sydney”, including part-time courses, cadetships and “fees at the lowest level possible”. Having himself left school at fifteen before working full-time and conducting his studies at night—first in metallurgy and later in law—Heffron was keenly aware of the need for flexibility in tertiary education. He emphasised that “the Government is fully alive to the need in a democratic country to extend facilities to students who, for financial reasons, cannot attend present full-time university courses”. The legislation was passed and the Technical Education and New South Wales University of Technology Act— and thus this university—came into being from 1 July, 1949.

The university’s recognition of Heffron’s importance in shaping its beginnings began early. At the final meeting of the Developmental Council on 26 May 1949, members of the Council paid tribute to their Chairman by noting that the university “will stand as everlasting evidence of his vision, leadership, energy and sincerity of purpose”. And to commemorate Heffron’s fundamental part in its establishment, he was awarded an honorary doctorate of science at the university’s first graduation ceremony to be held on the Kensington campus on 16 April 1955. The citation noted that Heffron “has played a vital role in the founding and early development of this university and remains a sympathetic and wise counsellor to our cause…” Heffron’s name is written indelibly into the history of the New South Wales University of Technology.

It was felt by the university, however, that an honorary degree was “only a partial discharge” of the debt the university owed to Robert Heffron and in early 1962 Vice-Chancellor Professor Philip Baxter wrote to Heffron requesting permission for the university to give Heffron’s name to its “largest and best equipped” building. And on 16 May 1962 the Robert Heffron Building was opened. At the time the University Council noted “that the name of the Honourable R. J. Heffron, Premier of New South Wales, shall be permanently commemorated within the university” as well as its “gratitude [for the part Heffron played in the institution and the development of this university…where he has always been a source of wise counsel and sincere friendship for the university].”

The Robert Heffron name no longer heads this building—in 2007, following refurbishment, this appellation was removed and replaced by the “the Australian School of Business Building”.

In 1999 one of Robert Heffron’s two daughters, Maylean Cordia, representing “the descendents of the Founder of the University of New South Wales” wrote to congratulate the university on its fiftieth anniversary. She noted that three generations of the family were now alumni of the university, including herself and her son, Robert Cordia, and went on to say “Rob Heffron would be a happy man to have seen his dream come true.”

There are a number of people who have played a part in ensuring the establishment and growth of this university. But the truly high esteem in which Heffron has been held by the university is shown in the hanging of his portrait in the Council Chamber—a location otherwise reserved only for portraits of those who have held office at the level of chancellor and vice-chancellor. It was, after all, his support and hard work for the university both as chair of the Developmental Council and as advocate in the university’s early, difficult years that ensured that it did not become the victim of politicians and others unsympathetic to the need for educational change and expansion.
THE UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES IN 2007/08

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n the last two years, work in the restructured Archives and Records Office has settled into some new routines. Together staff undertook combined visits to university schools and departments to assure with records disposal, we also worked together on reviewing and extending guidelines for the disposal of school records.

The Archives continues to operate with two professional staff members and with casual assistance for the Oral History Program. Our work remains varied; the collection is used for administrative purposes, the writing of histories and biographies; for preparing exhibitions and reunions and other academic research including student assignments.

Access directions have been made for UNSW’s official archival records and the access regime in regard to records for preparing exhibitions and for administrative purposes, the remains varied; the collection is used with two professional staff members for the disposal of school records. Access directions and Guidelines for Access to Records Held in the UNSW Archives are accessible through our website. The website has also been updated and we now have a combined Records and Archives Office site. Focus of our Archives’ work is on the Series and Agency Description Project which involves the retrospective identification of series and writing of agency descriptions for all records in our custody. Running concurrently with this project is a review of our existing holdings, which has already resulted in a consolidation of parts of the collection. Two exhibitions, on Foundation Day and on the Development of Kensington Campus, were prepared for display in the Library foyer; both exhibitions can now be viewed online on our website.

Some estray material which had been transferred to the Archives was moved to more appropriate institutions; a map of the Newcastle area to the University of Newcastle Archives and records. Concerning the 2nd Tunnelling Division went to the Australian War Memorial. We also have been able to assist the U Committee at their annual book fair which is a welcome opportunity for us to get involved with other members of the university community.

It has been with the generous assistance from the U Committee that we have been able to continue the University’s Oral History Program. Their support has allowed us to capture the reminiscences of some of UNSW’s outstanding staff members through special projects.

These included UNSW Women in Science which has been finalised by the U Committee to conduct a series of extended interviews with UNSW emeriti. The project documents the experiences of professors at UNSW and explores how these academics see their position at UNSW, past and present. All participants have a long association with the institution in varying roles—as undergraduate and postgraduate students, researchers, teachers, committee members and as administrators. They devoted a majority of their career to UNSW and thus their interviews form a key resource on the university’s development as an institution and the experiences of its researchers and teachers. To conduct these interviews was exciting. The academics came from a broad cross section of fields including the faculties of Applied Science, Arts, Commerce and Economics, Law, Medicine, Science, the AGSM, ADFA and the College of Fine Arts. All interviews had a similar format exploring family background, early educational experience (both primary and secondary), how they came to choose their particular specialties as well as the circumstances that guided them to UNSW; their first impressions, their recollections of changes over time and the factors that influenced their research. All participants spoke of the long association with the institution.

Many common themes evolved regarding the interviewees’ experiences and views: the culture of UNSW, their first impressions, their recollections of changes over time and the factors that influenced their research. All conveyed that UNSW was a great place to do research, that teaching and mentoring and the variety of work there were ample opportunities for career advancement, and that UNSW was an equal opportunity for women. Most still actively pursue research and mentor students. Given that the length of their association with UNSW ranged from years to decades, it is likely that they could establish satisfying career paths, and that they have enjoyed maintaining close links with the university since their retirement. They could have expected outside of academia. The Oral History Program. Their work has been reviewed.

The extended interviews made it possible to explore such a range of links and themes in depth. Ann Daniel recalled her involvement in the university’s School of Sociology in the 1970’s, first as a postgraduate student and then as a tutor. A mother of ten children, she was able to speak on the development of childcare services on campus as well as on the opportunities that an academic career could offer women in the seventies. She recalled the challenges of juggling family research, teaching and administrative roles. For the most part the women interviewed felt that UNSW offered many opportunities and flexible workplace arrangements than they could have expected outside of academia. The Oral History Program. Their work has been reviewed.

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COAT OF ARMS OF THE LATE HON GORDON SAMUEL

The coat of arms of the 36th Governor of New South Wales and the university’s longest serving Chancellor, the late Hon Gordon Samuel AC, CVO QC (1923–2007), was installed in the main hall at Government House in 2008.

The symbolism of the arms is described in the following excerpt from ‘New Coat of Arms at Government House’ by Robert Griffin, originally published in joking Winters 2008 Issue 59 and reproduced courtesy of the Historic Houses Trust of NSW.

In keeping with heraldic tradition, the coat of arms reflects aspects of Samuel’s life and career. The helm is standard for a gentleman of his rank. The crest of the helm is that of New South Wales, but is differenced by the wararatah, which symbolises Samuel’s role as Governor. The supporters represent the maces of both the University of New South Wales and New South Wales Parliament, from which Samuel is a member.

The blazon, or formal description, of the coat of arms was prepared by Mr Richard d’Apice AM, President of Heraldry Australia. Mr Michael Spencer, a specialist in heraldic art and design, undertook the painting.

SUE GEORGEVITS

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

UNSW EMERITI: RESEARCH AND TEACHING EXPERIENCES WITHIN THE AUSTRALIAN TERTIARY EDUCATION SYSTEM

In late 2007 the University Archives project ‘Coins from the U Committee’ was finalised by the U Committee to conduct a series of extended interviews with UNSW emeriti. The project documents the experiences of professors at UNSW and explores how these academics see their position at UNSW, past and present. All participants have a long association with the institution in varying roles—as undergraduate and postgraduate students, researchers, teachers, committee members and as administrators. They devoted a majority of their career to UNSW and thus their interviews form a key resource on the university’s development as an institution and the experiences of its researchers and teachers.

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CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT

In 2007 the University Archives created an exhibition on the development of the UNSW Kensington campus, which was on display in the University Library from November 2007 until February 2008. An on-line version of the exhibition is available on the Archives’ website at http://www.recordkeeping.unsw.edu.au/About/kensington.html. The photographs displayed in this article illustrate an example of those available in the exhibition, as well a brief history of the Kensington site.

Katie Bird

Over time the area now belonging to the university has undergone many changes. The lower campus once held the Kensington Racecourse, which was primarily used for pony racing from 1893 to 1942. During the Boer War and World Wars I and II, it was taken over as a military camp, while a migrant hostel was located there in the late 1940s. The White House, Old Tote and Fig Tree Theatre buildings are remnants of some of the site’s earlier incarnations, while ANZAC Parade is named in memory of the soldiers of the Australian Imperial Force, who marched from the camp down to Sydney harbour from where they were transported to action in World War I. The land of the upper campus was once leased for quarrying. In 1903 it was transferred to Randwick Council for recreational use. The area now occupied by the Wallace Wurth School of Medicine and School of Biological Sciences buildings was used as a golf course—the Randwick Municipal Golf Links. On 1 July 1949 the University of New South Wales, the State’s second university, was incorporated as the then New South Wales University of Technology. The Foundation Stone for the first permanent building to be constructed on campus—now known as the ‘Old Main Building’—was set on 25 February 1950 and the building was officially opened on 26 April 1953. The University held its first classes in 1948 with teaching taking place at the Sydney Technical College buildings in Ultimo. In 1952 most of the university’s administrative functions moved to Kensington and some teaching began here in 1953. It was however not until the late 1960s that university classes finally ceased at Ultimo.

The site of the lower campus was vested in the university in two lots in December 1952 and June 1954, while the upper campus was vested in the university in November 1959. The latter provided an important additional 10.1 hectares of space for the future development of the university and brought the total area of the Kensington campus to close to 60 hectares. A building boom occurred on campus over the 1960s and 1970s. This included the formulation of the first master plan for the campus, which was released by the University Architect in 1970. In contrast, the 1980s were a quiet decade for new construction on campus, but much forward planning occurred behind the scenes. In 1984 the campus master plan was updated and in the same year the Campus Life and Environment Committee produced a report on enhancing the general campus milieu. In February 1987 a Campus Development Advisory Group was set up by the Vice-Chancellor Professor Michael Birt to provide advice “on matters affecting site development and beautification.”

As a result of the group’s recommendations, in June 1990 the new Campus Development Plan was approved by Council. By May 1994 one hundred separate projects had been officially commenced under the various refurbishment, landscaping, and new building works that were part of the Campus Development Strategy—and there were many more to follow by the end of the decade. From 1992 the work took place under the guidance of Vice-Chancellor Professor John Niland, who was consequently nicknamed “John the Builder.”

In June 2005 the Campus 2020 Master Plan was endorsed by Council. The Plan provides a blueprint for the development of the campus until the year 2020. Sustainable development, improvement in cross-disciplinary interaction and ease of movement around campus are some of the key elements of the plan—thus ensuring that re-development will continue on the Kensington campus well into the future.
THE UNIVERSITY STAFF ASSOCIATION AND ITS EARLY RECORDS

In 2006, when the Community Research Archives (CRA) within the UNSW Library was opened to the public, a generous donation of the records of the Staff Association were transferred to the University Archives. These records were unusually been preserved by students of the university’s Archives Administration course, who had prepared disposal reports for a number of years, and the Archives. Following their work the records were eventually deposited into the Industrial Relations and Labour History Archives of the CRA in 1981. The collection today consists of ca. 3.3 m of records which include copies of minutes and reports of the Association and sub-committees, membership records, correspondence, circulars and newsletters. While fragmented the papers hold a wealth of information and document to some extent, the development of union representation in the tertiary education sector.

Oral history interviews with Staff Association vice-presidents and secretaries conducted for Patrick O’Farrell’s book UNSW - A Portrait, which are also held by the Archives, extend the available archival material.

When the University was first established, professors, associate professors, senior lecturers and lecturers were represented by the Technical Teachers’ Association (TTA) which was affiliated with the NSW Teachers Union. While professional officers, research lecturers, research assistants and demonstrators were represented by the Public Service Association of Professional Officers Association. Changes to TTA rules in 1952 led to the formation of the University of Technology Branch of the Teachers’ Association, which had its first year of operation in 1953. The Branch was very active, with its members’ meetings concentrated mainly on conditions which affected the university staff. The Branch had to accept his own advice. He was invited to become a member of the Branch, and this is the reason that a non-professional observer was named as the first president of the Branch.

In November 1956 the Branch held its inaugural Annual General Meeting on 22 November 1954. Assets and liabilities and any future receipts of the Staff Association were transferred to the UNSW Branch of TTA as from 22 November 1954.

THE MONOMEETH SOCIETY

In July 2008 one of the great supporters of this university, Sir Harold ‘Jack’ Dickinson—former Council of Australian University Teachers’ Branch and University of New South Wales - Annual General Meeting on 22 November 1994.
The Association almost immediately commenced fundraising activities. At the 17 April 1964 general meeting the first project of contributing to the construction of entrance gates on Anzac Parade was proposed. By the time the gates were formally opened on 2 August 1967, the Association had made a donation of $2,000 towards their cost. In the 1990s the gates were removed as part of the re-development of the main walkway, now known as University Mall, but the Association’s next fundraising project, four distinctive campus clocks adorning the Applied Sciences, Biological Sciences and Newnton buildings, still remains. Other contributions made by the Association were the purchase of a Steinway grand piano for the Sir John Clancy Auditorium, the John Coburn “Garden of Knowledge” tapestry for the Science Theatre, “The Bridge” sculpture located on the pool lawn, a Kawai upright piano for the then UNSW Ensemble, the refurbishment of the library facilities, and the purchase of a property sale has continued into the present day, now co-ordinated by the U Committee in August of each year.

Despite its achievements, the Association often found it difficult to attract members. Some found it hard to appreciate the spirit of the Association, with one of the university’s associate professors of the University College noting that “the society sounds like a university P and C and I should have thought that such a body is quite foreign to the spirit of a university”. As more women returned to the workforce, it became harder for the Association to obtain assistance for its projects. And some internal tensions within the Association in the mid-1970s did not help the membership drive.

Those who did join the Association, however, reported benefits that were greater than simply providing assistance to their child’s university. In 1966 in a letter to the then Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Rupert Myers the Association’s secretary Mrs Duly wrote “as the majority of our members did not have the opportunity to attend any university, they are always most grateful for the privilege of meeting the staff and learning about education as it is presented at this level to the very fortunate young people of today”. And in 1975 Vice-Chancellor Myers was to comment that “the Association has been instrumental in bringing parents and their friends into the orbit of the university and it has, I think, played a very important role in breaking down the barriers which can exist between parents and their student children”. Although the Association ceased work in 1994, the final dispersal of its funds was not until 5 June 1996. Monomeeth President Mr Carl Elliott wrote to Vice-Chancellor John Niland enclosing a cheque for $3,830.17.

The money was put towards the celebration of UNSW’s fifteenth anniversary in 1990—an appropriate event for the remaining earnings of an association that had contributed much to the university over thirty years of its history.

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ACCESSIONS

This is a selection of records and private papers received by the University Archives in 2007 and 2008. Regular additions to the annual reports, newsletters, and booklets/leaflet collections for UNSW’s administrative units, faculties, schools, centres, organisations and associations have not been included in this list. Access enquiries to the collection are invited. In some instances access is restricted or special conditions apply.

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ORIGINS No. 12

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KATIE BIRD

Monomeeth Association members Mrs P. Greenhill and Mr B. Dickinson with Vice-Chancellor Sir Philip Baxter at the opening of the Anzac Parade entrance gates, 1967. [CH848/1/18] Photograph: University Photographer

Monomeeth Association members in the Sir John Clancy Auditorium during the course of the campus. 1973 [CH848/1/14B]Photographer: University Photographer

Personal donations

Angyal, Stephen J. Correspondence of Professor S. Angyal, 1944–57.
Barker, Sandra. Photographs of the University Library in 1993–95.
Barker, Sandra. Type-written paper written about selling books to the University Library in 1993–95.
Cheong, Simplicius. DVD & CD of the Salta & Samba Live @ Roundhouse performance, 12 May 2009, CDs: Chamber & Orchestral Pieces by S. Cheong, 2007 and The Baroque Jazz Ensemble which also features Theo Henderson, Terry Ingram, Brian Bursey and Guy Barr; two musical scores by S. Cheong, 2007.
Copeland, Russell. Photograph of speakers at the 30 Years After Kappa Alpha Psi Picnic, 1993 [07/204/201]. Photographer: Brad Hall.

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Monomeeth Association members Mrs P. Greenhill and Mr B. Dickinson with Vice-Chancellor Sir Philip Baxter at the opening of the Anzac Parade entrance gates, 1967. [CH848/1/18] Photograph: University Photographer

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Monomeeth Association members in the Sir John Clancy Auditorium during the course of the campus. 1973 [CH848/1/14B]Photographer: University Photographer

Research @UNSW

Cranswick, Guy. 24 audio recordings of interviews conducted by M. Cranswick, 1984–97.
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Dinners, theatre parties, Christmas functions and pool parties.

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We would like to hear from you if you are leaving UNSW and have personal papers or other records relating to your time here or can help us document any part of the story of the university and its people.

Family members of those who have been associated with the university in any way may also like to contact the Archives about depositing personal papers, photographs or memorabilia they have inherited.

WHAT HAVE YOU GOT THAT MIGHT INTEREST US?

KARIN BRENNAN

The Archives is open by appointment Monday to Friday, 9 am – 1 pm, 2 pm – 5 pm
Closed on public holidays and 25 December to 1 January

Location
Level 1, University Library

Postal Address
University Archives
The University of New South Wales
SYDNEY NSW 2052
AUSTRALIA

Telephone
University Archivist
Mrs Karin Brennan
(02) 9385 2906

Assistant University Archivist
Ms Katie Bird
(02) 9385 2908

Facsimile
(02) 9385 1228

Email
archives@unsw.edu.au

Website
http://www.recordkeeping.unsw.edu.au

Origins is prepared by the staff of the University Archives

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