



Oral history as modern personal papers – in defence of the long interview

JULIA HORNE was responsible for the Oral History Program in the UNSW Archives from 1994 to 2002, when she left to become University Historian at the University of Sydney.

In her time at UNSW Archives Julia Horne organised and conducted an extensive range of interviews with people who have associa-

tions with this university, including past members of staff and students. Many of these interviews have been transcribed and made accessible for research. In recent years she has also conducted a series of interviews recording the experiences of many 1950s and 1960s Hong Kong, Malaysian, Singaporean and Thai alumni.

Full details, and access conditions, for all interviews conducted under the Oral History Program are available in the University Archives and on its website, which Julia Horne established. Copies of her book *Not an Ivory Tower*, based on her interviews with Michael and Jenny Birt, are available from UNSW Archives.

Will the personal papers of current and future generations still contain the gems that researchers expect?

Personal letters and journals provide a rare view on the past; they give insight into the life and times of an individual. Working papers, including unpublished public addresses, lectures, correspondence and notebooks, can offer perspectives that challenge and extend those revealed by published or official sources. Biographers love personal papers for their intimacy and idiosyncratic take

on people's lives. Historians love them for what they reveal about society at a given moment. And good collections of personal papers are what create reputations for archives and similar collecting institutions.

Even the decline of the aerogramme — which could take upwards of 600 words per sheet — will probably have an enormous impact on the type of personal correspondence offered to archives in the future. What will replace aerogrammes and the long letter, the type of correspondence with space for

(continued on page 2)

Michael and Jenny Birt striding past the cameras, at UNSW, 1981 [CN1127, Box 9]

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reflective observations and comments, perhaps on personal circumstances or broader social and political issues? Cheap international telephone calls have probably replaced many aerogrammes, but they are not easily assembled as a personal collection. There are options for preserving emails, either electronically or on paper. But who can honestly say they regularly take steps to preserve the personal email messages that one day might be historically interesting? Anyway, with the world becoming metaphorically smaller, many emails are simply the means for making arrangements to meet in person, to have a productive talk face-to-face. Where's the need, anymore, for the long, perceptive, information-packed letter?

So, what of the future? I'd like to think that archivists and other relevant collection managers will follow the examples set by some of their colleagues (such as those at the National Library of Australia, the University of New South Wales Archives, the State Library of New South Wales and, recently, the University of Sydney) and strategically use oral history in responding to the difficulties of collecting personal papers. With the right questions, a skilful interviewer, a cooperative interviewee and a lot of time, oral history can provide the sort of material that increasingly eludes modern collections of personal papers.

By 'skilful interviewer', I mean someone who knows when to follow a new line of enquiry even if it's not set down in their prepared questions, and who has a good grasp of the issues surrounding a person's life. To work successfully as a form of personal papers, an oral history interview needs to contain more than a detailed biographical outline of someone's life.

Which brings me back to the importance of asking the 'right questions'. Once an interviewer has asked an interviewee to outline something that happened to them, the next step would be usually to explore this with further questioning, not so much in a challenging way to trip up the person as news reporters try with politicians. Rather — subtly. Have them analyse their contribution to the event in the light of other relevant sources, even contemporary scholarship.

It might go something like this. An interviewer asks a biochemist for an outline of their career, the circumstances leading to their becoming a biochemist, and their major achievements and disappointments, then zooms in on the detail. First, have them outline their research topic: 'At the University of Sheffield you started researching a topic that you became expert in — what was that?'. Then, explore the personal history of this interest: 'Was your interest in the metamorphic changes of a maggot into a blowfly something that had started with your childhood interest in entomology?'. An interjection to establish rapport: 'I was going to ask you if you were the cause of any major blow-fly infestation in Sheffield!'. Next, a reference to the structure of scientific training and research: 'Was this the first time that you actually got to construct your own experiment and think of your own topic rather than follow someone else's experiment?'. And finally, question the biochemist about their work in a way that you and I might understand: 'What can a blow-fly tell us about changes in metabolism and the sorts of things you were trying to demonstrate?'.
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Letters, journals, working papers — and oral history interviews — can reveal the state of mind of the person at the time of setting down their thoughts. But what of accurate recall? No doubt accounts produced close to the time of the event are likely to be more accurate in the detail, but they're unlikely to contain the thoughtful perspective that distance can produce. Is not the gently probing interview years after the event as interesting, as revealing even, as a diary entry or letter written at the time? And where personal papers do exist, the interview can be a productive exploration of the event with reference to contemporary documents. The personal papers become the material link between interviewee and past events, a trigger for reflection; and the interviewer, the inquisitor of the personal papers, critiquing the 'silences' (what isn't written), and asking the interviewee to fill in the gaps and evaluate the event from their present perspective.

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My first mission when I was appointed to look after the UNSW Archives

oral history project in 1994 (which later became the Oral History Program in the UNSW Archives) was to interview Michael Birt, UNSW Emeritus Professor and former Wollongong University Vice-Chancellor, who had then recently retired as UNSW Vice-Chancellor. The Archives held his official papers as UNSW Vice-Chancellor, a useful resource for devising questions about significant events during his time at UNSW.

Beyond this, I read widely: about Melbourne in the 1940s and 1950s, one or two of his early scientific papers (although I admit it was hard-going trying to comprehend the scientific language of the metamorphosis of a maggot into a blowfly — the research that gave him the nickname Blowfly Birt), about Sir Hans Krebs (the Nobel Prize-winner for work in biochemistry), about the ANU and Canberra in the 1960s, about Wollongong in the 1970s and the establishment of the University of Wollongong, and, more generally, about changes in university education from the 1950s to the 1990s. (I included a select bibliography of thirty-two references with the interview.)

I then set about interviewing Michael Birt, asking him questions that not so much repeated what I could read elsewhere, what was already on record, but getting him to record and analyse his experiences at various points in his life. I interviewed him over a number of sessions. When a topic arose that had escaped my research efforts, I asked him to provide an outline — the journalist's who, what, and when — and before the next session, I delved deeper into my sources to devise more questions that went beyond the written sources. With questions bursting forth, I settled down with Michael Birt to a long, long interview.

About twenty hours of recording later, I had completed the interview. The interview was transcribed, tidied up and subsequently edited and published in 1997, with excerpts from an interview with Jenny Birt, as *Not an Ivory Tower*. At 150 pages (including index and select bibliography) it looked a compact and unassuming book (although with a wonderful photograph on the front cover of Michael and Jenny Birt, a good-

looking vice-chancellorial couple, striding past the Library in front of television cameras).

But for years I never openly discussed the fact that I had recorded a twenty-hour interview with only one person, let alone having recorded equally long interviews with other people. Some people shrieked with horror and disbelief at the thought you could spend so much time interviewing a person about their life — surely, they thought, a much shorter interview would do. So I remained silent, biding my time until I felt it was the moment to make the case for the long interview.

The case is not complex and is integral to the successful realisation of oral history as a modern form of personal papers. Time can help develop empathy, a rapport between the interviewer and the person interviewed. Time can aid the interviewee's memory and provide the opportunity for them to reflect upon life's events.

Conducting an interview over a number of sessions also allows the interviewer to revise questions after each session, ready for the next, even to chase new lines of enquiry. But, most importantly, if the interview is to provide a document of historical merit, the interviewer needs to ask a lot of questions, weaving in and out of what's on the public record, what's recorded in official documents and, if personal papers are available, what's in them.

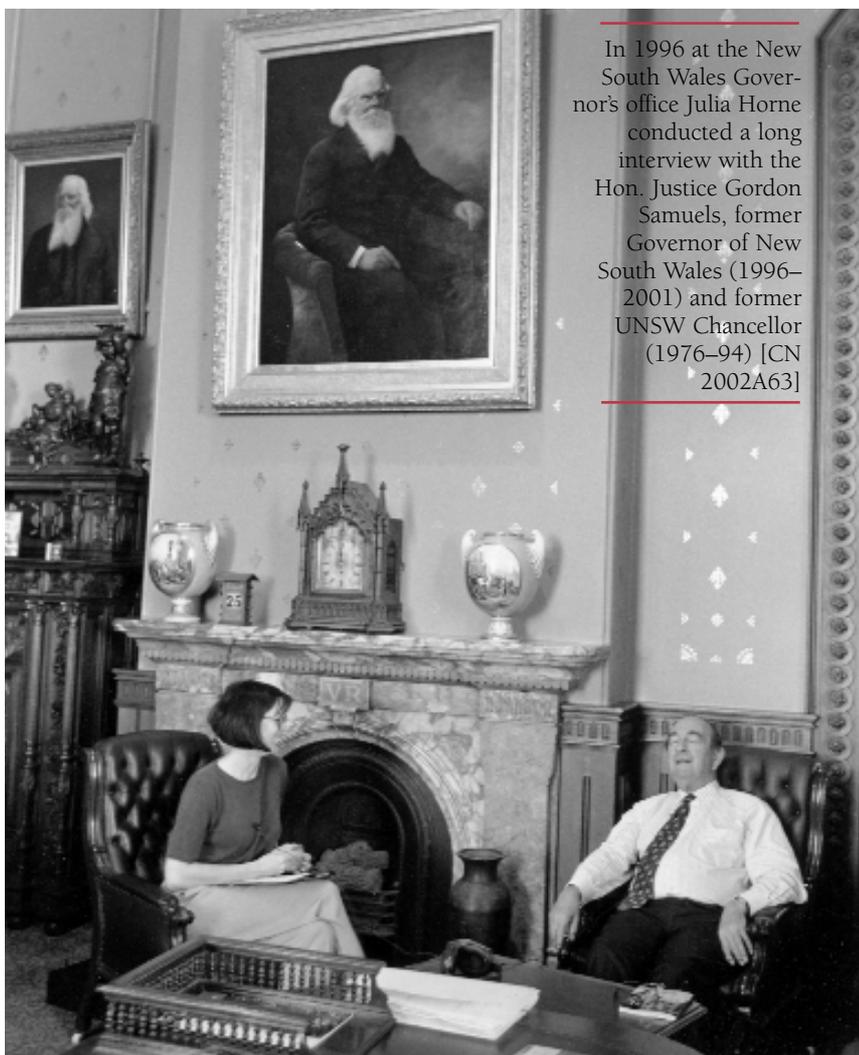
About seven years after this twenty-hour interview, the Birts approached the UNSW Archives to deposit Michael Birt's personal papers — items that ranged over his whole life, and which he had kept as a personal record, for which he had devised a record-keeping system to tame the masses of paper. The papers arrived at the Archives in 2001, and were processed as part of the Archives collection; soon after, I decided to look at them, curious to know how they might have helped me with the interview.

What I'd inadvertently left out was not so striking as how his interview responses were a combination of material divulged from his personal papers with subsequent thoughtful analysis. It came as no surprise to me, for instance, when I found that the content of a series of letters from senior academics congratulating him on his appointment as vice-chancellor contained observations about university administration as a means of creative institutional development, and the position of vice-chancellor as one of inspired builder.

Michael Birt's responses to my questions about the roles and responsibilities of being vice-chancellor had been similar to the observations made by those academics so many years before, but in my interview he had gone beyond that and reflected analytically upon the practicality of these sentiments in the cut-and-thrust of modern senior university administration. It was as if he was responding to these letters — only twenty years later. And perhaps he was. One of his most revealing answers to my questions about university administration was to compare in detail his vice-chancellorial style with that of Sir Rupert Myers, the then immediately preceding UNSW vice-chancellor — an observation, if found in personal correspondence, that a biographer or historian might relish.

I'm not advocating that archives and the like stop collecting personal papers. But these collecting institutions do, I think, have a responsibility to consider the changing nature of personal papers, and to determine whether the sort of material valuable to biographers, historians and other researchers will be able to be obtained from the personal papers of future generations. Personal papers are important cultural resources. The long biographical interview is not only a means to pursue new avenues of enquiry by scrutinising personal papers (and other sources); it also, in the absence of personal papers, ensures that future researchers have something of substance to consult. ■

JULIA HORNE
University of Sydney



In 1996 at the New South Wales Governor's office Julia Horne conducted a long interview with the Hon. Justice Gordon Samuels, former Governor of New South Wales (1996–2001) and former UNSW Chancellor (1976–94) [CN 2002A63]

Andrews Wells, University Librarian

Can you tell us something about your background and why you decided to pursue a career in the information sector?

WELLS: Well, I have to confess it was not my first choice. It took me a long time to find the right career. I come from a family of engineers, so studied engineering for three years, not altogether willingly (in fact, I hated it). I started working at the University of Queensland Library in 1975 while I completed a Science degree. I flirted with the idea of being a musician, too, and worked for the Queensland Opera Company as a *répétiteur* for a while. But I kept coming back to libraries. In 1980 I applied for a job at Macquarie University Library, moved to Sydney and never looked back! At that stage of my life, I was drawn to the complexity of these organisations and their liberating and important social purpose.

Looking back on my childhood, I realise I used public libraries all the time. My mother is a great reader — I think she had read everything in Boulder Public Library. It was a great influence and I loved the freedom I found in libraries.

What was your motivation in accepting the position of University Librarian at UNSW?

WELLS: A number of things. I worked here from 1982 to 1986 as a cataloguer. I broke one of my rules — never go back. But I like UNSW Library and there are many things to do here. It was clear that the university was looking for a University Librarian who was willing to implement change and lead the library through these challenging times. The information, technological and economic environments tend to keep me awake at nights! *What exposure to archives did you have in your previous positions?*

WELLS: From 1989 to 2001 I worked at the State Library of New South Wales and the National Library of Australia. At the State Library I managed the Document Delivery Service. This included managing on-site and off-site access to the Mitchell Library collections. I learnt a lot there about archival

materials. At the National Library I was a member of the executive, and I got to understand more about the collecting and use of manuscripts. There was close liaison with the National Archives there, too. I had early involvement in the establishment of the Register of Australian Archives and Manuscripts. Over those ten or so years, I had regular contact with archival matters through holding senior positions in those important collecting institutions.

I confess I am not the 'curatorial' type but understand the need for, and expertise of these professionals.

What do you consider to be the strong points of the Library and the Archives?

WELLS: UNSW Library has consistently been an innovative institution — it was an early leader in library automation. Most recently, its role in developing the Australian Digital Theses Program shows its willingness to experiment with new forms of scholarly communication. It has a dedicated and professional staff, and the Library consistently wins praise for the quality of its services.

The Archives has achieved much — its oral history program, the breadth and depth of its documentation, its services to the UNSW community. The Archives has had strong and committed staff, too.

What do you see as the future for the Archives' oral history program?

WELLS: As an important component of the record of UNSW — to be complemented by textual, visual and digital records.

What major challenges face the Library and the Archives in the foreseeable future?

WELLS: The Library is transforming its services — it is not all about delivering information through locally held collections anymore. The major challenge is embracing the opportunities offered by the digital environment. Physical collections are just one way we will deliver information; other ways will be through access to remote databases, use of unmediated document delivery, increased collaboration with other university libraries and supporting learning through on-line delivery of course

materials. The immediate challenges are dealing with space (we have exceeded our storage capacity and student needs must be addressed), implementing the new library and information system in December 2002 and improving a rather run-down physical environment.

The University Archives is about to embark on a new phase. We have appointed a new University Archivist, Guilaine Buckley. I will be working with Guilaine and her team to develop a plan for the Archives. Among many other matters, the plan will address ways to improve access to the archives, automation of its operations, a vital records plan and ensuring that we meet legislative requirements for State records. It is going to be an exciting time for us.

Can you give some background on the recent administrative changes in the University Archives?

WELLS: Well, we found it rather hard to find a new University Archivist, so I took the opportunity to step back and have the Archives reviewed. Judith Russell, who had been at the University of Sydney, carried out this review in an expert way. Judith recommended that we change the staffing structure to meet the challenges I've just described. The Archives needs a small, highly professional team. I was sorry to see Julia Horne go. Karin Brennan has kept everything together most capably but I am sure Karin is looking forward to the creation of a new team.

We also plan to revise the structure and composition of the University Archives Advisory Committee to ensure we have the best advice and representation. *And your vision for the Archives?*

WELLS: To be visible and valued. For the UNSW community to understand its importance. To embrace the challenges of documenting activities which are increasingly carried out in the digital environment. How many versions of the UNSW website have we kept or lost! There is much to do, and promoting access to the Archives will be a major undertaking for us. ■

PAUL WILSON

Guilaine Buckley, University Archivist

Guilaine Buckley grew up in Paris and completed her secondary education in Versailles, after which she moved to Sydney. She graduated from UNSW with a BA (Hons) and subsequently obtained her professional qualification, also from UNSW, in the field of archives (Graduate Diploma in Information Management – Archives Administration). In 2002 she completed six years' part-time study at the Law School, UNSW, graduating with an LLB.

Guilaine began working in archives in 1990, her first professional appointment being in local government archives. Following that, she took up the position of Assistant Archivist at the Congregational Archives of the Sisters of Charity. This 160-year-old organisation has served the community in Australia and overseas through its schools, its health- and aged-care facilities, orphanages and numerous welfare undertakings and facilities — one of which is Sydney's St Vincent's Hospital, a teaching hospital of the University of New South Wales. The Sisters of Charity has maintained a significant archival and museum collection, the management of which is the Congregational Archivist's responsibility. This rich and diverse collection documents all aspects of the Congregation's affairs as well as its 'mission'. After a few years with the Sisters of Charity Guilaine was promoted to the role of Congregational Archivist, the position she held until her UNSW appointment.

Guilaine writes that she chose to work in the field of archives after giving up her dream of becoming a professional musician. She saw in the world of archives the opportunity to engage in work that offered the ability to combine the present with a mix of the past and the future. Working with information about the past and making decisions about information requirements for the future requires the archivist to maintain a long-term view of the organisation and the larger community. It is this perspective, coupled with the variety of skills

used on a day-to-day basis, which makes archives work so stimulating.

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'My appointment at UNSW is an interesting opportunity to extend myself professionally. I am looking forward to the challenges of managing an archives service for a large, complex and dynamic organisation fostering academic excellence. I am keen to take full advantage of information technologies and address the various challenges they present in the field of archives: preserving the university's electronic records of archival value, enhancing accessibility, and facilitating access to the general collections through electronic media. A significant area of responsibility will be to ensure compliance with all applicable legislation — with the State Records Act 1998 (NSW), especially, which provides a comprehensive regime for the creation, disposal and retention of university records, as well as with law covering other areas such as intellectual property protection (copyright, patents) and privacy protection (personal data).

'Perhaps my most challenging task will be to further develop the

collection so that it successfully documents the diversity of functions and activities undertaken by the university community. I have a particular interest in collecting the personal and professional papers of individuals who have a strong connection with the university, including those persons who have made a significant contribution to the life of the university in their particular role or field.

'I am looking forward to a fruitful professional association with UNSW, where I already have a strong personal connection, having completed all my tertiary studies here, not to mention achieving the highlight of winning the 1986 UNSW 'band comp'! I am certain, though, that even this achievement will be surpassed by the significant and valuable contribution I intend making at the University Archives.

'Away from work, I enjoy attending countless soccer and cricket matches, supporting my thirteen-year-old son in his sporting endeavours. When there is time and energy left over, I take pleasure in the company of family and friends, and in reading, and listening to music.' ■



Guilaine Buckley, who took up her new role as University Archivist on 28 October 2002, seen here at the Engineering oral history project morning tea

Civil Engineering 'Traditions Day' 1961

1961 was a busy enough year at Kensington campus: more buildings already on their way or well-advanced in planning. New institutions, too, were being engendered: the University Union started up and the Roundhouse opened for business. The first Foundation Day procession to parade through the streets of Sydney. It was all, as Patrick O'Farrell put it 'pulling Ultimo activity into Kensington, ending that Ultimo feeling of being outside the mainstream of university life'. At least, it was for most.

By 1961, when the university had already changed its name to the University of New South Wales and the new Arts and Medicine faculties were being established — emblems, some would argue, of emerging changes in the character of the institution — some schools still remained as a touchstone and lingering connection to the old university and its Ultimo days. Three engineering schools were then still operating at the old Sydney Technical College premises. But, of these, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering's inner-city days were numbered: in 1961 new buildings were commenced at Kensington for those schools (and completed in 1963). Mining Engineering and Chemical Engineering had been at Kensington for some time already.

Civil Engineering was the last to move; it remained at Ultimo until 1966, increasingly seeing itself as somewhat beleaguered — an outpost, where resided, so its denizens themselves said, 'the forgotten tribe of Ultimo dwellers'.

It was against this background that in 1961 Civil Engineering IV and Surveying IV students — as an account in the celebratory album has it — 'declared that a day should be set aside each year [so they could] disregard

their overcrowded, underprivileged warehouse building and have ceremonies enacted that would show us that the University does actually exist'.

Evidently, the demise of the Anzac Parade tram service early that same year made it even harder for them to take the 6-kilometre trek out there for a visual check: ceremonies would have to suffice. Obviously, too, though, a need was being expressed in all this for some sense of belonging, which some felt was being denied them. How far the students were actually the main instigators of 'Traditions Day', or whether it was set in train by that intriguing figure Crawford Munro, remains to be seen. That Munro — whom Professor Ron Woodhead recently described as 'the most unlikely professor that I have ever met' — had a considerable hand in proceedings is clear from the surviving pictorial record. Whatever the case, it bespeaks a time when staff-student relations were on a very different footing: it was perhaps symbolic of the last gasp of an altogether older tradition, as things have turned out since, rather than the institution — as was hoped — of a new one.

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The plan was for a special day of ceremonies, including talks by 'eminent men on non-examinable topics'. A day, it was hoped, to be repeated each succeeding year. And, as the album observed, seeing that 'traditions' do not spontaneously occur 'in a young University such as our own ... we would "adopt" some of the better known traditions from the older European universities and, together with some ideas of our own which we hoped would become traditions of this University with time, enact them during this day. And so the name appeared — "Traditions Day".'

So it was that at 9.30 am on Thursday, 15 June 1961, students formally dressed in lounge suits and academic gowns assembled outside the Civil Engineering school building in Ultimo for the first ceremony of the day — the planting of the ivy. Tradition 'only comes with age', it was reasoned, 'and one of the signs of age is a building covered with ivy'. However, on the grounds that he was from a red-brick university, the person chosen to officiate took umbrage, presented the chairman with a red brick and fumbled the planting.

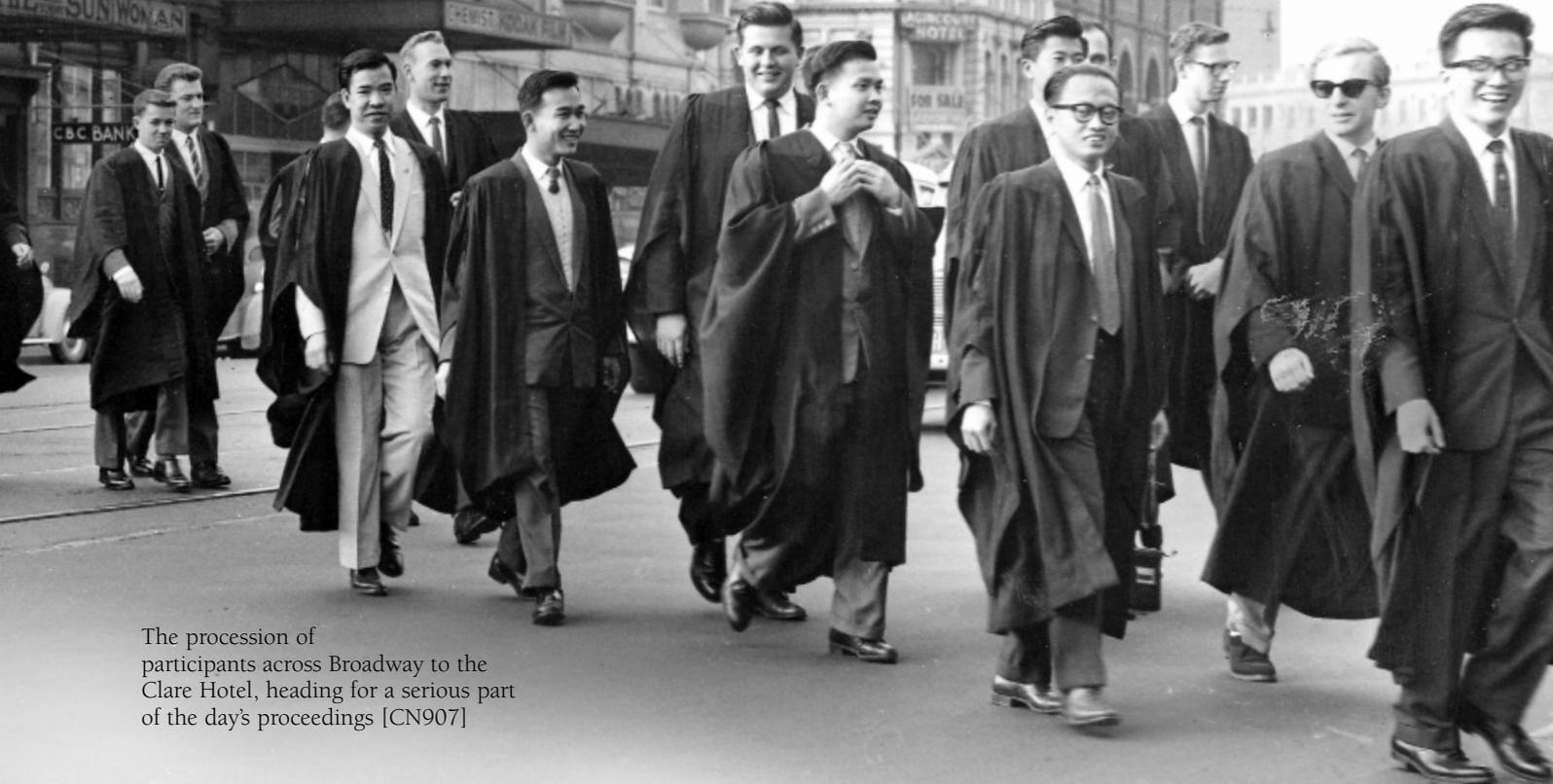
Next, management consultant W.D. Scott gave a talk on problems facing the world, chief among which was, apparently, the problem of human relations. He was followed with an address on 'Human Rights' by E. St John, QC, a distinguished barrister and constitutional law expert, recently returned from observing Mandela's trial in South Africa.

Following lunch, in what was probably one of the day's highlights, the students chose 'Miss Civil Engineering 1961'. The winner, Miss Stephanie Glyn, was one of six finalists selected, no, not from Engineering, but from 'ladies attending the Secretarial course at the technical college'.

What the duties of office were is unreported, but she was duly invested by Munro 'decorating her with a royal blue sash ... [and] presenting her with a box of chocolates', and a big hug — yet another indication of changed *moeurs*.

Then came the first address of the afternoon, an illuminated talk (as they used to say) by Stan Shaw, Professor of Civil Engineering, on 'cable structures, their design, development and construction', which contained 'an appropriately placed





The procession of participants across Broadway to the Clare Hotel, heading for a serious part of the day's proceedings [CN907]

slide of a shape dearer to the students' hearts than cable structures' — and presumably more uplifting.

Following a vote of thanks to Munro and Shaw for all their efforts, the students felt their appreciation was best shown by permitting their professors to shout them drinks at the Clare Hotel, across Broadway. This hotel figured significantly in the social life of staff and students from various schools in the university's earliest days. And it has been observed of Munro by one of his colleagues that, 'here, he was in his element'.

Accordingly, with Munro at their head, 'in all their gowned glory the students and staff proceeded in twos across Broadway, banking the traffic up

in the process'. At the Clare it was a case of 'an entertaining hour of refreshments and social discourse' before returning for the final talk, which was Munro regaling his audience with tales of his just completed European tour.

The day's final event was the 'challenge' — to third-year students to organise the next 'Traditions Day' twelve months hence.

From this vantage of time, we may well look askance at some aspects of the day but at its heart it has elements that suggest a warmth and cordiality, that evince attempts to cultivate broader interests, and that seem designed to engender among the participants that desired sense of belonging — with each other, as well

as with the university. Of course it was another world; more importantly, it was a far smaller university.

And so much of this event seems to have had on it the imprint of that larger-than-life character, Crawford Munro (foundation Professor of Civil Engineering from 1954 until retirement in 1969, though he had first joined staff in 1951). Munro, in Woodhead's estimation, 'was a good man'; it was, Woodhead continues, 'the genius of the beginnings of the university that they chose a most unlikely person to be a professor'. Could that be a tradition, too? ■

RODERIC CAMPBELL

Crawford Munro, with the box of chocolates, shares a word with Miss Civil Engineering 1961 [CN907]

The 'forgotten tribe of Ultimo dwellers' at rest — Civil Engineering IV and Surveying IV students and staff members, with Crawford Munro, holding the staff of ceremony, at their centre [2002 A100/1]

The upholding of traditions always demands a degree of self-sacrifice in the common good: no record remains of the beer consumed [2002 A100/11]





Books published by the Press changed in content and appearance: from the early days (left) to its more recent productions

Exquisite lunacy: the founding of a university press

UNSW Press celebrated its inception with an event in the Scientia to launch a bibliography of its publications and an exhibition in the Library lobby of specially designed posters reflecting forty years of publishing activity.

This year UNSW Press celebrated its fortieth anniversary — not perhaps as old as some university presses but, as Patrick O’Farrell observed at the commemoration launch, ‘just right for celebration’.

The institution of a university press is a venerable concept with a tradition stretching back to the origins in Europe of the moveable-type press and the great mediaeval centres of learning.

The printer’s art and the growth of a new centre of learning are key elements, too, in the story of the University of New South Wales Press (UNSWP). The Press came into being in a way that was unusual for modern university presses; yet, at the same time, its story mirrors this university’s own origins and development. UNSWP was born out of pragmatism and practicalities, and curious liaisons — created, as Doug Howie once said (*Alumni Papers*, Summer 1986), ‘in a moment of exquisite lunacy’.

UNSWP never quite fitted into the orthodox mould of a university press. Or so the legend goes. A university press that began its life as a printing shop — a little *infra dignitatem*, you might have thought? And to find, too, that at its start it was being run by students jointly with the university was to wonder even more at the nature of this curious creation.

Humble beginnings it certainly had — but not so atypical, after all, perhaps. Just as the university emerged from Sydney Technical College and gradually transformed itself into something mightier and more expansive, so too did the press.

The original primary focus for this venture was the printery room, distinctive in its sounds and smells, tactile. Ink and paper, slugs of lead type; an old Heidelberg, its platen slapping the page

down on the type — the meeting of hard and soft. The melancholy whisk of the page kissing the forme. And administering the venture, an unusual partnership in what seems to have been an edgy relationship: the Students’ Union and the university itself.

It was only after the edginess in this partnership came to a head over disagreements about present prospects and future directions for the press, in 1973, that events were set in train, producing a change in direction for the enterprise — one having more to do with the creation and nurturing of books than just printing them. It was a shift that by all accounts took some of the participants by surprise, and its success was largely attributable to the vision and energy of one man who saw the opportunity and grasped it: Douglas Howie.

Nothing marks the scope of this change more than the contrast between the press’s earliest publications in the 1960s and its present ones: from dryasdust, unadorned, unedited texts in typewriter fonts, roneoed and ringbound in stiff card wraps, to the elegant, challenging, discursive and learned works of today wrapped in striking covers, perfect bound and created with high design, editorial and production values.

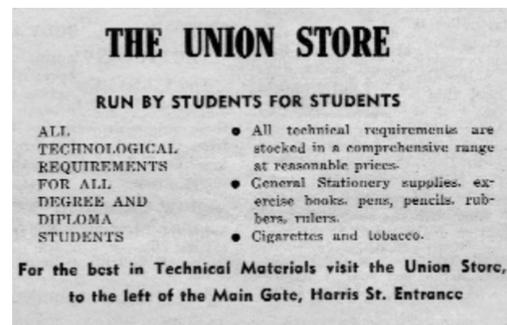
The operation of a Students’ Union printery was an activity that predated the university, and goes back to Sydney Technical College (STC) days at Ultimo in the early 1940s. However, much of the early history remains obscure without a great deal of surviving documen-

tary record or oral history to rely on.

John Gannon, who retired in 1987 as University Registrar and was an inaugural director of the Press, was a lab assistant attached to the STC Chemistry department in the 1940s. His recollection is that it was this department that had established a small printing operation, using roneo duplicating machines to begin with, principally to print lecture notes for



Alan MacDonald, the first manager of the Press, pictured when he was Secretary of the Students’ Union, 1952 [V234]. The Union Store advertises its wares in *Unity News*, the Students’ Union paper, March 1953. This was when the store was still in its original location and run by the union. [V234]



technical college students. While some of the Chemistry teachers appear to have instigated the enterprise, and obtained the equipment, early on it was all handed over to the STC Students’ Union, apparently to help the union fund its provision of student services.

When the new University of Technology started in 1949 a new students’ union was formed (initially called the Society of Students), which began to assume the membership and functions of the old union as diploma courses at the technical college were gradually transferred over to the nascent university. In the early 1950s the STC Students’ Union was wound up and its considerable assets were trans-

ferred to the recently formed New South Wales University of Technology Students' Union.

The new students' union continued the operation of the printing enterprise through the 1950s, and the new union's name became the imprint name. By this stage its publications had expanded in scope so far as subject material went; some were now appearing ring-bound, with stiff card covers, the front simply bearing title, author and imprint name in modest bold sans-serif capitals — a style that was to continue for early productions of the Press proper in the 1960s. Nevertheless, rather than focusing on the needs of students of the new university, union publications continued to cater mainly for STC students, their principal audience — which remained the case for some time even after the Press came into being.

Another legacy of the STC Students' Union was the Union Store, a retail outlet at the union's premises in Ultimo, which principally sold stationery and student needs, as well as the union's publications. Indeed, part of the transferred assets had included its stock and the use of its retail premises.

The Union Store subsequently continued life as a core part of the Press's business activities (later as The College Shop) until it was sold in 1999, by a suitable stroke of irony, to the Students' Union of the University of Technology. For most of that period it occupied a shopfront on George St, facing Railway Square, in the old Marcus Clarke building, whose 1924 design is attributed to J. Nangle, the former Superintendent of Technical Education and Government Astronomer.

Ultimo thus remained a major focus for the enterprise's activities — just as it did for the new university itself — with the union split between there and the newly developing campus at Kensington until ca 1960, when most of the union's functions finally shifted over. In the meantime the business and the turnover had increased significantly, Heidelbergs having by now replaced the original roneos. And it was about this time that discussions began on establishing a joint venture between the Students' Union and the university, which led in 1961 to the formation of New South Wales University Press Limited (known as

Unipress) — that exquisite moment. The business was incorporated on 22 December 1961, and the first formal meeting of the new Press took place on 9 March 1962.

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The structure and genesis of the new Press was unusual. Agreement had been reached on the basis that the union contributed its property and assets 'connected with its printing and duplicating activities'. This consisted mainly of its printing equipment and paper stock, materials and publications, all of which moved to a building in Randwick, the supply of which constituted the university's contribution. Unipress was also to take over all staff employed by the union in these activities and the running of the shop.

Among these staff members was Alan MacDonald, who became the Press's first general manager. He had also been originally employed in the STC Chemistry department, as a technician, before becoming full-time secretary of the STC Students' Union and in that role had already had some involvement in managing the Union Store and the printery.

This unusual combination of forces was reflected in the structure of the Board, which was composed of an equal number of nominees from each side, with an appointed chair who was acceptable to both. It may be that this composition created a structural weakness, affecting the operations of the company over time. Or perhaps each side had differing aims or perspectives. Or was it just, as some have suggested, a true marriage of irreconcilables? Whatever the case, there emerged on the Students' Union side a growing dissatisfaction with the role of the general manager and of the university. The initial expectation had been that the Press's printing facilities 'would provide a substantial part of the printing needs of the University' — something expressed in the original Memorandum of Association — but this did not happen and the printery's

profitability began to decline.

By 1972–73 the situation was serious enough for the printery to be closed down. This decision, apparently made by the Board on financial grounds and on other 'practical' considerations, was one that the Students' Union was distinctly unhappy over. So, the union took advice from people in the printing industry and decided to fight the shut-down. They sought, and obtained a meeting with the Chancellor, Sir Robert Webster, at his home, in early December 1973 to argue that the closure was premature and urge that the Press should be continued as, in their view, it could still be a viable proposition.

Following this meeting, the union wrote a report strongly dissenting from the decision that the Board had taken. In their report the union attributed the Press's problems to 'poor management' and 'uninformative accounting procedures'. They questioned the university's role, too, pointing out that at the same time as the amount of work for the Press's printery was declining, 'the University expanded its own on-campus printery'. Their follow-up report was written, and sent to Webster by 2 January 1974; as an appendix, it listed 'Some Areas of Investigation for Management Consultants'.

Whatever Webster, a distinguished businessman and the chairman of Bradmill Industries, might have felt about the viability of the organisation, the commissioning of management consultants W.D. Scott Ltd presumably resulted from this meeting.

The choice of Scott's as the university's consultant for such thorny management issues was probably an obvious one. Sir Walter Scott (who retired as its governing director in 1974) had connections with Sir Robert Webster — they had both served on the boards of Felt and Textiles Ltd, Berlei, and Burlington Mills, in the 1960s — and seems to have had at least some familiarity with UNSW. He had been a guest-speaker at the inaugural Civil Engineering 'Traditions Day' in 1961.

(continued on page 10)



Doug Howie receiving the manuscript for *Flora of New South Wales*, from Gwen Harden, 1989 [V548]

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When the consultants' report was delivered, two months later (March 1974), it unsurprisingly endorsed the decision to close the printery, and essentially recommended the winding down of the whole operation: 'From our analysis of the situation it appears doubtful that NSW University Press Limited can operate profitably in the future'.

Not long after this Alan MacDonald resigned and Douglas Howie, then Assistant Registrar and head of UNSW's Publication Department, was seconded to the Press 'with instructions to close down the printing operation and to dispose of its equipment'. He found a Board 'split on the issue of the future of the Press' and sought a compromise solution.

After the sale of the printing equipment, which gave the Press some cash and some respite, Doug Howie came up with a 'business plan ... to

make the operation profitable provided he was able to spend one day a week on the project'. This was agreed to by the parties and, so, the Press rose from its own ashes — renewed and with a new focus 'to continue purely as a publishing outlet'. His plan essentially was to publish more, improve the quality of the books being published, and also to place the Press on a securer financial footing so that its more scholarly publications could be subsidised from the press's own resources. In this the Union Store played its role by contributing to the financial reserves that made it possible for the Press to grow.

Naturally, the job grew too: at the end of 1974 Doug Howie was appointed as part-time general manager, but still on the university payroll. He was also on the Board as a director and, in 1979, he became full-time

general manager, the first to be employed directly by the Press. He was subsequently appointed managing director, remaining in this role until his retirement in 1995. After a brief period with Peter Sharpe as managing director (1995–96), Robin Derricourt, the present managing director, joined the Press in early 1997.

And the Students' Union? Their direct role in the Press ended in 1978, when the Press purchased their half-share; but their influence didn't, as union approval continued to be required for the replacement of two of the original student positions on the Board. The union deserves its credit, too, for having grasped what the Press could become and pushing their case. From moments of exquisite lunacy great projects of saneness and civility do come. ■

RODERIC CAMPBELL

Engineering OH project morning tea

Late in 2000 the Engineering faculty commissioned the Archives to document its development and undertake an oral history. The project commenced under the direction of Dr Julia Horne, at that time heading the Oral History Program. Leading the charge from the faculty were Professor Mark Wainwright, then dean, and the faculty's executive manager, Robyn Horwood. The U Committee provided additional funding for the project, as did the Archives unit.

A lot of information has been collected for the project in that time. This includes over 130 hours of oral history interviews, close to 400 brief surveys and about 100 in-depth questionnaires, in addition to all the photos and other pieces of memorabilia sent in by alumni and staff. This material is now held as part of the Archives' collection, available for future researchers (subject to access conditions).

With this stage completed, it was time to celebrate the project's success and its significant contribution to the history of the faculty and to the university's own collection. So, alumni and staff were honoured at a function on 31 October 2002 to mark the com-

pletion of the project's major work and to thank all those who have given so generously to the project. The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Wyatt R. Hume, spoke warmly of the faculty and Professor Mark Wainwright, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and Mr Andrew Wells, University Librarian, both expressed their sincere admiration for those who have given such lasting contributions to the university by sharing their lives with the Archives and the faculty.

Amongst those present was Associate Professor Colin Stapleton, a long-time staff member of the school of Electrical Engineering. Shirley Phillips, the wife of Hal Phillips (recently deceased), came with her son and obviously knew many of the people at the morning tea. Hal Phillips was a general staff member from Ultimo days until his retirement in the 1980s.

Jack Jenkins told how he came to work for the school of Civil Engineering in 1948 for six months and ended up staying for thirty years. Pat Rodgers, a 1965 Chemical Engineering graduate was keen to compare notes with Jack as they had both completed their study part-time while working full-time.

Professor Jim Galvin, currently head of the school of Mining met up with two BE (Mining) graduates from very different times: Michael Lindsay (1983) and Colyn Harrison (1954). Peter Lowndes, a 1999 Mechanical Engineering graduate, was among the few recent graduates at the morning tea.

The new head of Archives, Guilaine Buckley, had an opportunity to talk about the project with interviewees and faculty staff, including Robyn Horwood, and the author of the forthcoming faculty history, Blanche Hampton.

This project has involved many of those who work in Archives not only because of its scope but also because of interest in the people and the stories that they have brought with them as they completed surveys or were interviewed. Thanks are due to them, to all at Archives and to faculty members for their valuable contributions to the project's success. Sue Georgevits, one of the principal interviewers for the project, who was also present, will be continuing to conduct interviews with academic staff over the next few months. ■

VIRGINIA PACINO

Accessions

This is a selection of records received by the University Archives from November 2001 to October 2002. The Archives extends its special thanks to all depositors. Access enquiries to the collection are invited. In some instances access is restricted or special conditions apply.

Personal donations

- Birt, Mrs Jenny. Program for University of Wollongong Ceremony paying tribute to the late Emeritus Professor Michael Birt, November 2001 [01A88].
- Burns, Mr R.A. Student notebooks (Food Technology), staff notes (School of Applied Chemistry), microbiology notes and program with related papers pertaining to STC presentation of diplomas at UNSW Science hall, 1962 [02A4].
- Danta, Dorothy. Copy of *Food Australia*, vol. 53 (6), obituary of Dr Fritz Reuter. June 2001 [02A39].
- Dillon, Laurence. Photographs of the mast of VL2UV, UNSW Radio University, in its 1999 location, 1999 [02A71].
- Findlay, Ken. Copies of photographs of 1952 Graduation and Mining Engineering Students, 1948–52 [02A38].
- Gerdes, Peter. Theatre and Film Studies. Film: *Creative Science*, 9 videos, student work, film studies (still to be appraised). 1978–88. 5 b&w photographic building studies [02A30, 02A31].
- Gilmour, Margaret. Photo of Ron and Margaret Gilmour at their home in Forster and letter to UNSW Library staff, 2001 [02A57].
- Harris, Mr Bruce. *A History Of The Coast and The Prince Henry Hospital: A Tour of the Hospital with Dr Ralph L. Hockin*, Little Bay 2002. CD ROM set [02A19].
- Haynes, Mrs Janice. Copy of L.M. Haynes's thesis, Socioeconomic Status

What have you got that might interest us?

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 in any way associated with the university may also like to contact the Archives about depositing any personal papers, photographs and other memorabilia they have inherited.

- And Role Conflict As Factors In Academic Achievement At The Secondary School Level, 1961 [01A87].
- Horne, Dr Julia. Correspondence and Film Australia transcript of interview with Donald Horne for the Australian Biography series, 1992–94 [02A47].
- Kollar, Peter. Personal papers relating to his work, teaching and research, 1980–99 [02A22, 02A87].
- Maloney, Major R.R. Reminiscences regarding UNSW Regiment, 1962–64 [02A86].
- Marton, Geza. *Course Notes for Sheep and Wool Stage 2*, University of Technology Students Union, ca 1954 [02A113].
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- Niland, Professor John (via SSH Library). Copies of submissions for the Green Paper On Industrial Relations written for the Greiner Government, 1988 [01A77].
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- Read, Mr A.P. *Reflux* 1969, Yearbook of the Chemical Engineering Undergraduate Society, vol. 1 [01A80].
- Samuels, The Hon. Justice Gordon. Copies of speeches, 1997–2002 [02A34].
- Sharpe, Gordon B. Electrical Engineering course material, late 1950s [02A70].
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- Committee for Information Technology and Infrastructure. New South Solutions. Office files, 1997–2001 [02A26, 02A73].
- Customer Services. Division of Information Services. Files relating to CSD/CSU Library, 1972–74, and the reviews of CSU and Academic and Administrative Computing, 1984, 1993–94 [02A68, 02A72].
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and International), Professor Fell. UNSW Calendars [02A3]; office and personal files [02A17].
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and International), Professor Mark Wainwright. Photograph album showing damage inflicted to Kuwait University during the Gulf war and reconstruction after liberation, presented to UNSW by the Rector of Kuwait University, 1991 [02A1].
- Examinations Section. UNSW Examination Papers. 2000 [02A27].
- Facilities Department. News clippings relating to Facilities' services around campus, 1975–80; aerial photographs, 1998 [02A23, 02A79].
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- Protocol Office. Ceremonial booklet of the 50th Anniversary Re-enactment Ceremony of the 1952 Conferring of Degrees Ceremony; UNSW Conferring of Awards videos, 2000 [02A35, 02A42].
- Public Affairs and Development. Video promoting UNSW campus for its 50th Anniversary, ca 1997; Professor John Niland retirement video; photographs of speakers at UNSW 2000 Symposium [02A40, 02A54, 02A60]. PAD / Alumni Association. Unidentified b&w photograph of award presentation [01A81].
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- Vice-Chancellor's office, Professor John Niland. Copy of UNSW condolence book presented to the Consul-General of the United States following the events of September 11, 2001; publications relating to UNSW Campus and the Scientia Building; 50th Anniversary and UNSW Peace Oration (Bertie Ahern) videos; *UNSW Annual Report 2001*; colour photograph of Professor J. Niland at the investiture of his AC, 2001; ADFA promotional video, nd [02A13, 02A45, 02A29, 02A61, 02A82].

'Gangleshanks', the bed which made the Civil Engineering world-record 'bed push' of 1961, having been pushed continuously for 460 miles in 76 hours. Here, with Miss Civil Engineering aboard, it is bound for the first Foundation Day parade, 1961 [02A100/6].



Vice-Chancellor's office, Professor Wyatt R. Hume. AV recordings of public interviews and Vice-Chancellor's Forum, 2002 [02A80, 02A81, 02A85, 02A88, 02A89, 02A94].

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Medicine, faculty of. R. Winton's papers and oral history interviews used for writing the faculty history, 1958–90s [02A43].

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A. GENERAL

Horne, Dr Julia. Prints and negatives taken during oral history interviews — 1960s Hong Kong alumni; Dr J. Geake, former SU president; The Hon. Gordon Samuels; launch of *Not An Ivory Tower* [02A59, 02A62, 02A63, 02A64].

Students in the 1970s. Survey forms. 1971–81 [02A55].

B. ENGINEERING PROJECT

Baker, John. Student photographs — Mining Engineering, 1949–51 [02A102].

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Harrison, Colin. Photographs — student days in Mining Engineering; Engineering Yearbooks, 1951–59 [02A103].

Herrman, Jonathan. *Tharunka* cuttings re engineering team pranks, 1991 [02A109].

Hind, E.C. Papers and photographs documenting career and student time, 1957–99 [02A101].

Irvine, K.R. Photographic record of the Conferring of Degrees held at Newcastle City Hall in May 1953 [02A106].

Karbowiak, Antoni E. Copies of papers relating to his career, 1973–87 [02A98].

O'Neill, Peter John. Photographs — Engineering students, 1954–57 [02A105].

Phillips, Hal. Photographs and correspondence documenting his association with UNSW, 1963–82 [02A110].

Pout, Denis. Photographs — Engineering students, 1964–65 [02A99].

Robinson, Anthony. Photographs and biographical data, 1959–2002 [02A97].

Sheaves, David James. Photographs — Surveying students, 1959–61 [02A108].

Sim, Ian Marshall. Graduation photo, 1964 [02A104].

Smith, Joseph Michael. Copy of 'WHO'S WHO' crossword he created for surveying students, and related correspondence, 1972, 2002 [02A112].

Stapleton, Colin. Papers relating to *A History of Control Education in Australia*. 1999–2001 [02A96].

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Baxter, J.P. *The ABC of the Atom*. Sydney: Commonwealth Office of Education, 1951 [02A67].

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