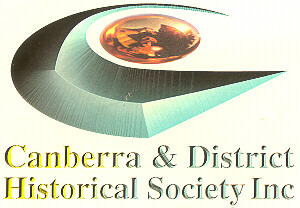
****

**ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25**

A group of people sitting on a couch

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

*Dr Patricia Clarke, the society’s longest serving member, receives the Australian Dictionary of Biography Medal, presented by Dr Malcolm Allbrook (right) and Professor Nicholas Brown (left).*

*24 June 2025.*

Our aims are to:

* Encourage the study of the history of Canberra and district;
* Create, collect and preserve historical records about the area;
* Participate in the preservation of places of historic interest; and to
* Encourage the exchange of information about the history of Canberra and district.

**Postal address:**

PO Box 315, Curtin, ACT, 2605

**Telephone:**

(02) 6281 2929

**Email:** [admin@canberrahistory.org.au](mailto:admin@canberrahistory.org.au)

**Web:** [www.canberrahistory.org.au](http://www.canberrahistory.org.au)

**Facebook:** Canberra & District History

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/829568883839247/>

**ABN**: 27 465 970 277

**Contents**

[OFFICE BEARERS AND OTHER KEY ROLES 2024-2025 3](#_Toc207466586)

[PRESIDENT’S REPORT 3](#_Toc207466587)

[OUR MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS 4](#_Toc207466588)

[Membership 4](#_Toc207466589)

[New members 5](#_Toc207466590)

[Deceased members 5](#_Toc207466591)

[Volunteers 5](#_Toc207466592)

[WHAT WE DID 6](#_Toc207466593)

[1. Resource Centre 6](#_Toc207466594)

[Honorary Curator’s report (Michael Hall) 7](#_Toc207466595)

[2. Canberra Historical Journal 7](#_Toc207466596)

[3. Canberra History News 8](#_Toc207466597)

[4. Monthly General Meetings and talks 8](#_Toc207466598)

[5. Canberra Day Oration 11](#_Toc207466599)

[6. Annual Dinner 11](#_Toc207466600)

[7. Book and photograph sales 11](#_Toc207466601)

[8. The CDHS Website 12](#_Toc207466602)

[9. CDHS computing capacity 12](#_Toc207466603)

[10. Canberra & District History Facebook page 12](#_Toc207466604)

[11. Outreach 12](#_Toc207466605)

[12. ACT Heritage Festival 13](#_Toc207466606)

[13. Grants 13](#_Toc207466607)

[14. Heritage Advocacy 14](#_Toc207466608)

[15. Federation of Australian Historical Societies 14](#_Toc207466609)

[PREMISES 14](#_Toc207466610)

[FINANCES 15](#_Toc207466611)

[Treasurer’s Report 15](#_Toc207466612)

[Financial donations 16](#_Toc207466613)

[Auditor’s Report 17](#_Toc207466614)

[Financial statements 17](#_Toc207466615)

[Membership statistics 22](#_Toc207466616)

# 

# OFFICE BEARERS AND OTHER KEY ROLES 2024-2025

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Office Bearers** | |
| *President* | Richard Reid |
| *Vice-President* | Allen Mawer |
| *Immediate Past President* | Allen Mawer |
| *Hon. Treasurer* | Frances McGee |
| *Hon. Secretary* | Nick Swain |
| *Public Officer* | Tony Corp |
| **Other Council members** | Peter Dowling, Marilyn Truscott, Kay Walsh, Hannah Paddon, Gary Kent. |
| **Key volunteer roles**  *Honorary Executive Officer* | Helen Digan |
| *Honorary Curator*  *Canberra Historical Journal*  *Editors* | Michael Hall  David Wardle and Kay Walsh |
| *Canberra History News*  *Editor* | Marilyn Truscott until September 2024 edition. Gary Kent from the February edition onwards. |
| *ITC support* | John Davies |
| *Events Manager* | Tony Corp |
| *Federation of Australian Historical Societies Delegates* | Esther Davies until December 2024, Gary Kent from January 2025, Nick Swain. |

# PRESIDENT’S REPORT

This year has, sadly, seen the passing of two ex-Presidents of CDHS: Barry Price and Esther Davies. Barry was President from 1995 to 1997 and Esther from 1992-1995 and 2003-04. Barry will be remembered for his dedicated and assiduous work as Treasurer and overseeing the Society’ stewardship of Blundells Cottage. He was made a Life Member of CDHS in 2014. Esther was a personal friend. She had great affection for and devoted a significant amount of her time over decades to the CDHS. I will remember her as someone who was at the heart of all sorts of historical endeavours in the ACT – a dedicated high school history teacher, archivist at Telopea Park School and much, much else. Despite a severe illness Esther turned up bravely to Council meetings until shortly before her death. I gave a eulogy, both for the Society and myself, at her funeral at the Wesley Uniting Church on 15 January 2025. A full obituary outlining Esther’s contribution to the Society will be in the forthcoming CDHS Journal, No 95, September 2025. Esther, and husband John, were made Life Members of CDHS in 2023.

I should also mention that our longest serving member, also a Past President and

well-known Canberra historian, Patricia Clarke was recognised this year for her immense contribution to Australian history by an award of the ‘Australian Dictionary of Biography Medal’. In part, her citation on the ADB website reads:

*Dr Patricia Clarke OAM FAHA FFAHS has been a dedicated and longstanding contributor to the Australian Dictionary of Biography since the 1980s, and to the National Centre of Biography since its formation in 2008. She has given over thirty-five years of generous service to these two institutions and is a deserving recipient of an ADB Medal.*

CDHS Council speaks, I am sure, for all members in congratulating Pat on this prestigious award.

Our most public, indeed prestigious, event, the annual Canberra Day Oration at the National Library on 12 March 2025, was well attended by both members and the general public. Our Orator, previous ACT Chief Minister and Senator Gary Humphries’ topic was ‘Has self-government been a success?’. His conclusion - it has been and our ‘Rolls Royce electoral system’ has delivered accountability with a minimum of corruption.

If any member wants to get some idea of how much goes on throughout an average year at the Society to safeguard and present Canberra and district’s colourful and complex history, come in and ask to look through the publicly available minutes of your Council’s meetings. It astonishes me to realise how much does goes on.

We continue to produce a high-quality historical journal recognised nationally as such. Monthly newsletters keep members informed of events and much else with short articles. Our website grows apace with new images from our photo archive appearing regularly. Sales of photos keep growing and bringing in much needed revenue.

Monthly members meetings, even on cold winter nights, have been well attended and I have greatly enjoyed listening to a wide range of presenters and stories such as Immediate Past President of Yass and District Historical Society Cheryl Mongan tell the dramatic but eventually successful tale of how the Society’s extensive archives, now classified as ‘of national significance’, were relocated with much local involvement and despite less than helpful attitudes from local officials.

Volunteers Janet Wilson and Sue Tongue have continued their sterling work on sorting one of our most significant collections, the Pat Wardle letters. Sarah Ryan has continued to record and rehouse many large display photographs. And, thank goodness, our Honorary Archivist, Michael Hall, has returned to us after a necessary break for family matters. Those who visit the office in Cutin have almost certainly been helped by our long-term Admin Officer, the hugely knowledgeable Helen Digan. Also noticeable in the minutes are the number of times Council members have been asked to comment on significant local stories and events, for example the interview by our Secretary, Nick Swain, with the ABC on the development of Manuka and Manuka oval. And that is just the tip of the iceberg revealed in those minutes.

I look forward to seeing as many members as possible members during next year’s members’ meetings and, hopefully, at the annual CDHS Christmas party … our amazing raffle an endlessly popular feature. We continue to need new blood on Council so please do consider a stint there is you feel you have something to contribute. But rest assured your Council will continue to work, as it has done since 1953, for the furtherance of Canberra and District’s history.

Dr Richard E Reid

President CDHS, 2024/2025

# OUR MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS

Our members and everyone who selflessly volunteered their time and skills are the backbone of our Society. We are a 100% volunteer society.

## Membership

We had 234 individual financial members at 30 June 2025 which is 2 more than last year. Membership statistics can be found in Appendix 3.

### New members

We welcomed the following new members:

James Horn Penni Pemberton Jeff Hopkins-Weise

Robert & Margaret Quodling David & Lisa Hanzl Julie Priestley

Geoffrey & Helen Marsden David Watson Barbara Roberts

John Hawkins Tara McIntosh Bradley Chugg

Ivo Lovric Jo Callaghan Bethwyn Major

Fiona Langford Stan Piperoglou Oscar Richardson

Gavin Young Fleur Creed Geoff McIntosh

Zlatko Megic Claire Murray Laurine Kelson

John Mitchell Mary Hutchison Michele Rainger

### Deceased members

We mourn the passing of the following members and give thanks for their contributions to the society:

Ann Webber

Adrienne Bradley

Esther Davies

Barry Price

Muriel Temperley

## Volunteers

The Society would not exist without volunteers. During the year the Society kept running smoothly thanks to the efforts of our committed volunteers.

* Helen Digan, Honorary Administrator, managed the office, the accounts, the membership and general enquiries. She kept the office open on Tuesdays and formed part of the team organising the Annual Dinner.
* The office was also staffed by volunteers on Wednesdays and Saturdays. They were: Peter Dowling, Jenny Moore, Kay Walsh, Dawn Richardson, Jan Hutchison, Frances McGee, Nick Swain, Richard Reid, and Michael Hall. Michael Hall also filled in the gaps when rostered volunteers were not available.
* David Wardle and Kay Walsh edited the *Canberra Historical Journal* for September 2024 and March 2025.
* Marilyn Truscott, with assistance from Nick Swain, edited *Canberra History News* until September 2024 when she handed over to Gary Kent.
* Tony Corp organised the events: monthly general meetings and the Annual Birthday dinner (with Helen Digan) in December 2024.
* Allen Mawer organised the second handbook sales for the Society. He sorted the books, often donated from members’ personal collections, researched prices and advertised regularly online to members. Allen also organised the annual Heritage and History Book Fair, held during ACT Heritage Festival celebrations in May 2025.
* Gary Kent and Marilyn Truscott organised the ACT Heritage Symposium held in August 2024.
* John Davies helped to maintain the Society’s computers and provided his usual valuable technological advice. David Edlin of Flat Gecko also provided advice.
* Michael Hall, honorary Curator of the Society’s resource collection, continued his valuable accession and curation throughout the year.
* Janet Wilson, Sue Tongue, Sarah Ryan and Doris Kordes volunteered to organise and document significant collections including the Tillyard-Wardle letters, Nancy Metcalf letters, the photographic collection and our people folders.

We are grateful for the pro-bono services provided by Tricia Carson (Critique Bookkeeping & Accounting) and Scott McAlister. Tricia checked the accounts prior to review and Scott McAlister undertook the mandatory review.

In December 2024 Council was pleased to host a celebratory event to thanks volunteers for their contributions at the Curtin Resource centre.

# WHAT WE DID

The Society aims to encourage the collecting, researching, preservation and publishing of the history of Canberra and the district that relates to it. While the primary focus of our services is for our financial supporters, a significant level of activity is directed to the wider community.

Services and activities primarily, but not exclusively, for our financial members included:

* Free access to our comprehensive Resource Centre.
* Publication of the *Canberra Historical Journal* and *Canberra History News.*
* Monthly talks and member meetings.
* The annual birthday dinner.
* Sales of new and second-hand history books.

Services and activities for a wider audience include:

* The annual Canberra Day Oration.
* The CDHS website.
* The Canberra History Facebook page.
* Outreach activities including talks to other groups and articles published in the media.
* ACT Heritage Festival events.
* The annual ACT Region Heritage Symposium in partnership with the National Trust (ACT), ICOMOS and the Canberra Archaeological Society.

Our work is also supported by occasional grants from the ACT and Federal governments. These include ACT Heritage Grants and Commonwealth government Community Heritage Grants. Generally, we apply for these grants to help manage our Resource Centre collections, for example, digitising photographs and conserving significant items. These grants do not provide for our operating costs.

We also advocate for the preservation of local heritage and support other groups such as the Canberra and Region Heritage Researchers. At a national level CDHS provides the ACT delegates to the Federation of Australian Historical Societies.

## Resource Centre

Our Resource Centre is the major service the Society offers its members. It contains a unique and comprehensive collection of books, pamphlets, photographs, maps, sound recordings and ephemera about the history of Canberra and the district that relates to it. We deal with all enquiries as promptly as possible. If we do not have the information required researchers are referred to our extensive network of contacts including our members and our Facebook page.

The Society’s Resource Centre in Curtin is open to members and the public on Tuesdays, most Wednesdays and most Saturday mornings and is totally staffed by volunteers. There were 494 visits to the Resource Centre recorded this year, compared with 610 the previous year. This is an undercount as not all visitors sign in.

The society was pleased to lend its 1924 Eastlake Lease sale poster (complete with sales results) for copying and also with some photographs for inclusion in a display for the Centenary of the Kingston Shops, held in partnership with the Kingston and Barton Residents Group and the National Trust (ACT).

### Honorary Curator’s report (Michael Hall)

About 400 items were added to the Society’s online catalogue during the year, although this number includes uncatalogued photographs already in the collection. Not all photographs are stored in the main collection because they are too large, are part of an album of photos (typically glued to a page) when donated to the Society or are a part of collection of various items (for example, the Wardle collection). So that the individual photos can be catalogued it has been decided to allocate ranges of location numbers for each type. They are:

1 to 7999 – main collection

8000 to 8999 – large photos and display photos

9000 to 9999 – photos in albums donated to the Society

10000+ - photos that are part of a collection.

In the later category, photos from the ‘First Light on the Limestone Plain’ collection, the Bill Hunt collection and the Alfred Chambers collection, in all about 320 photos, have been added to the catalogue. Thanks to Nick Swain for his work in adding them to the catalogue.

Sarah Ryan has completed describing and listing the large photos and display photos kept in the Map Room. These should be added to the online catalogue next year.

The following people generously added to the Society’s collection in 2024-25 by donating books, pamphlets, maps, photographs, newspaper articles and other items:  Narelle O’Rourke, Bob Teasdale, Helen Digan, James McDonald, Nick Swain, Gary Kent, Mark Butz, the estate of Neil Gunson, the estate of John Bellchambers, Trevor Lipscombe, Lola Wenn, Roger Meischke and Annek Myers and the Illawarra Historical Society.

## 2. Canberra Historical Journal

Two issues of the *Canberra Historical Journal* were published by the Society during this year: no. 93 in September 2024 and no. 94 in March 2025.

With the common theme of the history of Canberra and surrounds, the Journal attempts to present articles on diverse topics and time periods, submitted by Society members and others. An article by Brendan O’Keefe describes the foundation in the 1850s and progress of Well Station; another by Michael Hall outlines the unveiling of a monument at Lambrigg commemorating the nineteenth century work of William Farrer in the breeding of wheat. The work of artist Eirene Mort, who had Canberra connections, is covered by Pamela Lane.

A number of articles in these issues deal with the foundation and early years of Canberra as the federal capital, including Nick Swain on the first sale of leases, James McDonald on Jimmy Clements at the 1927 opening of Parliament House, and Paul Griffiths on the work in Canberra of photographer R. C. Strangman from the 1930s. Trevor Lipscombe and Graham McKenzie-Smith deal with aspects of early government planting and forestry in the district. Articles relating to a later period include account of the first years of the National Capital Development Commission by Ted Ling, and the foundation and evolution of the *Canberra Times* by Robert Lehane.

A transcript of Dr Mathew Trinca’s 2024 Canberra Day Oration, ‘Representing Nation in the National Capital. The National Museum of Australia and Canberra’ was published in the September issue.

## 3. Canberra History News

The Society published three issues of *Canberra History News* during 2024/25. The *News* reports CDH activities during the period it covers, including summaries of talks given to members, notices of forthcoming events, short articles and news about members. During the year Marilyn Truscott retired as the editor of the *News* and we thank her for her sterling efforts in this role.  The new editor is Gary Kent.

## 4. Monthly General Meetings and talks

**July 2024** – ‘**The Brides of WW1 Soldier Settlers in the Woden Valley’ Frances McGee.** A good crowd gathered at the Wesley Centre Forest to hear Frances McGee relate the story of four war brides of WW1 soldiers on their Soldier Settler blocks in the Woden Valley.

Nan Reid married George Campbell (great grandson of Robert Campbell) in 1926 at Bong Bong near Bowral. Nan wasn’t impressed with her new home, ‘Yarra Glen’ near present day Curtin, but managed by planting a new garden and painting the house with 5 layers of paint!

Frances ‘Brownie’ Parramore from Tarcutta married Guy Tanner in 1930 and they lived at ‘Illoura’ (926 acres) near Curtin. Their house consisted the former corrugated iron Sewer Mess building erected by the former owner of ‘Illoura’ Thomas Cargill. ‘Brownie’ Tanner’s *‘Illoura Caramel Pudding’* earned a fine reputation arranged by the four brides. In 1946 Lindsay Prior planted a cork oak plantation on ‘Illoura.’

‘Melrose’, original ‘Oakey Hill’ near present day Weston and Waramanga and south of ‘Illoura’ was the home of Clare Morrison from Tralee and Kack McGuire who were married in 1930. Clare McGuire and the other brides were in regular contact with each other with their children’s activities and shearing and dipping at Yarralumla Shearing Shed and Picnic Race Meetings.

Marion Eddison (nee Mills) was not quite a bride when she returned to Australia in 1919 with four children and her husband Walter who had served in the Light Horse, at Gallipoli and the Somme. Their first home was at Oaks Estate before construction of their new home ‘Yamba’ near the Woden Cemetery. The Eddison’s three sons, Tom, Jack and Keith joined the armed services and all paid the supreme sacrifice.

**August 2024 – ‘The Tuggeranong Homestead and its Rich History’ – Jenny Horsefield.** It was at Tuggeranong Homestead that Charles Bean wrote his war history and nearby was the past years’ site for ceremonial corroborees. Nearby was the first Canberra Racecourse and land leased by the McCormack family for 60 years. The remnants of and old stone wall separated the Tuggeranong and Yarralumla Stations and old Tuggeranong convict built barn is one of the oldest buildings in the ACT. An image of the Cunningham family with their 8 children as well as servants, a governess, cook and maid, indicated the life of a wealthy family with the boys being sent to Geelong Grammar and the girls to Ascham. Jenny reminded her audience of the spirit and daring of Gallipoli veteran, Andy Cunningham who was denied the opportunity to attend the Olympic Games but who went on to pursue a colourful life with his ‘Orroral Dingo’ aeroplane which led to his tragic end.

**September 2024 – Scheduled Annual General Meeting**

As the numbers required to meet a quorum for the 17 September AGM were not achieved, a new meeting was reconvened for the 19 November to precede the Council Meeting.

The talk scheduled for 17 September went ahead. Guest speaker Mark Butz delivered his address, ‘*Tales from Two Cities: Canberra-Queanbeyan across Two Centuries,’* the title of his recently published book. The book is organised as a chronological account from the 1820’s to the 2020’s. Queanbeyan and Canberra are distinct cities that sit side-by-side. They share a lot of history, despite being in different jurisdictions, and despite differences in age, origins and size. Each will be stronger because of the other and because of the efforts of those on whose shoulders we stand.

**October 2024. ‘A Smorgasbord of Fascinating Objects: The CMAG Social History Collection’. Dr Hannah Paddon.** This talk was by new member of Council Dr Hannah Paddon, Senior Curator Social History at CMAG. She presented some of the valuable objects held in the CMAG Social History Collection including those relating to Alberto Dias Soares, Allured Tasker Faunce, Nancy Miller and the recently acquired Canberra Hospital collection. CDHS is indeed grateful for such a welcomed contribution from Dr Paddon.

**November 2024. Members’ presentations.** An array of varied and interesting short talks highlighted some fascinating insights on topics of some of our members’ previous or current research.

* Sarah Ryan enlightened an appreciative audience with snippets from two pro-active archival projects both with their origins in the Canberra community: *‘Women in Science’* and the *‘Social Climbers Walking Group.’*
* Sarah Shelford followed with ‘*Memories of Nan Phillips.’*
* Next was Dawn Richardson with ‘*The Peaceable Kingdom.’*
* Elizabeth Burness followed with an intriguing tale with an article of clothing to remember the *‘Life of George Fane de Salis.’*

**Rescheduled Annual General Meeting, 19 November.** The Annual General Meeting was rescheduled for 19 November to precede the regular Council Meeting and was held at the CDHS Office in Curtin.

The President, Dr Richard Reid welcomed members and announced that he was pleased to announce that there was a quorum present (24 members). He also advised that apologies had been received from 8 members. Copies of the Minutes of the last AGM held on 12/9/2023 were then circulated. He referred to the President’s Report for 2023/24 and the Annual Report for the same period. Copies of both documents had been circulated to members and additional copies were available at the meeting.

The President then asked for members to raise any matters of general business arising from these documents. There being none he then asked David Wardle to announce the nominations received for positions on the new Council. David Wardle then advised the meeting that the Public Officer, Tony Corp had provided him with the names of the persons nominated, together with the completed forms with the nominations proposed and seconded as required. David then announced those names:

* President: Dr Richard Reid
* Vice Presidents: Allen Mawer & Esther Davies
* Hon. Secretary: Nick Swain
* Hon. Treasurer: Frances McGee
* Councillors: Dr Marilyn Truscott, Tony Corp, Esther Davies, Kay Walsh, Gary Kent, Dr Peter Dowling, Dr Hannah Paddon

David then announced that these people be duly elected to Council. He then asked for any further nominations, given that there was a vacancy of one person on the Council. There being no further nominations received at the meeting, David then confirmed that those persons be appointed to Council.

There being no further business to be conducted, the President then closed the AGM and the invited meeting attendees to remain for the CDHS Council meeting to follow immediately, if they so desired.

**February 2025 - ‘Keeping Our Stories Alive – Against the Odds’. Cheryl Mongan.**   
The Yass & District Historical Society faced a serious challenge in 2023 when the Yass Council gave just 19 days’ notice for it to vacate premises which it had occupied for more than 40 years! The top floor of the Soldiers’ Memorial Hall was far from ideal with steep stairs, a leaking roof and asbestos in the ceiling. Perhaps it could simply cover everything in tarpaulins and wait for corrective maintenance or move to the ground floor but this had already been rented to a commercial gallery. What to do with 260 shelf metres of records – over 500 boxes and containers! A short-term solution was found in a State Government Grant of $60,000 and a temporary relocation in the former ambulance station, but it clearly was not enough. The community rallied, with Yass Historical Society members, Yass Antique Farm Machinery Club, Clifton Hills Recycling Centre, Yass Men’s Shed, the Soldiers and Rotary Clubs and Leader Removals & Storage, Mitchell providing huge support. Having to move twice in 16 months was difficult but they did it! The new location, Yass Valley History Centre, now provides space for meetings of 50 people, storage and research and exhibition areas and a kitchen. The centre is open on Tuesday, Thursday & Sunday from 10am to 4pm.

**April 2025 – ‘A 660km walk along the Australian Alps Walking Track’.** **Michelle Jenkins.** Michelle is an experienced ACT Parks and Conservation Officer, renowned for her dedication to managing the Park Care volunteers at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. Passionate about the intersection of conservation and mental health, she undertook an extraordinary journey in 2016, walking 660 kilometres from Walhalla in Victoria to Canberra along the Australian Alps Walking Track. This five-week trek spanning from 1 February to 8 March was not only a personal challenge, but a purposeful mission to raise awareness about the impact of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Michelle’s trek was a tribute to emergency workers, volunteers and first responders. Michelle’s talk was highlighted by a range of images of huts of the high country, many of which provided overnight accommodation, even if this included other visitors (rats etc). Wouldn’t we all like to visit, the Schlink Hilton, Grey Mare Hut, Happy’s Hut and Tin Mines! At Vallejo Gantner Hut in Victoria a sign above the door advised, ‘Dig here to locate door’ in case of snowy weather! Details of the daily kms travelled and the associated elevation showed that this was not simply a walk in the park! **May 2025 – ‘Majura House - Cinderella Finally gets to the Ball’. Mark Butz.** Mark Butz recognised that prior to European settlement in the Majura Valley there had already been 1,000 generations of aboriginal occupants in the area. Maps disclose that the first white occupation of the Valley began in 1832 with John McIntosh, a worker from Robert Campbell’s Duntroon Estate.

By 1860 Alfred Mayo was recorded as a resident on the site and generations of the Mayo family continued to occupy the Majura site until 1980-81. Of great interest was the number of Mayo family members who attended this meeting to hear Mark’s talk, with many of the Mayo descendants making contact for future get-togethers.

A 1911 survey recorded a small village at Majura with a Hall, School and Post Office. No doubt the early residents soon discovered there were some surprising intrusions into their quiet life in the form of mortar practice carried out by Cadets from the nearby Duntroon Military College. It’s not surprising that the results of this activity are still being discovered to this day.

With an agricultural use of around 200 years, the Majura property with its stone homestead, sandstock Hunt & Kaye bricks (the same as in the Elmsall Inn, Queanbeyan) and timber shingles under sheets of iron, may be one of the oldest dwellings continuously occupied in the ACT. The outside water well is lined with 1840’s bricks. The property was finally listed by the National Trust in 1983 and for the next 36 years there was much sabre rattling prior to proper recognition.   
  
Much of the associated out-buildings Mark described as ‘Heath Robinson’ style with half tanks for turkeys, cow bails and a sheep dip and Shearing Shed still in use today. With the Duntroon Shed closing in 1912, many of the smaller holdings of local farmers found the Majura Shed was well suited their needs.

Nowadays the property has continued in a different style with sustainable agriculture and has won awards for free range eggs, with their trundling chook houses, sunflower maze and Gate shop sale point.

**June 2025 – ‘Chile to Lanyon.’ Fernando Pino.** In the 1860’s two Chilean men started working for the Cunningham family at Lanyon. Canberra architect and researcher, Fernando Pino unearthed the story of Eusebio Ponce and Rupelto Rodrigues, two Chilean men who were employed at Lanyon in the 1860’s. After travelling 15000 km from Chile they first went to the copper mines as muleteers hauling copper at Burra South Australia, in 1855 joining with other Chileans, Peruvians, German and Cornish workers. Port Wakefield was the disembarkation point and the workers were distinguished by their ponchos, sombreros and Spanish language.

After the copper mines were exhausted our intrepid Chilean workers soon found other work and by the 1860’s we find them using the pise de terre (wattle & daub or earthenware) building method at Lanyon and other nearby locations including Tuggeranong Station, Freshford and Gigerline. This method of construction with thatch roofs was commonly used in Chile at the time. How the two men travelled from South Australia to Lanyon has been a matter of Fernando’s continuing research, as also for their movements after the 1890’s when they left this area.

## 5. Canberra Day Oration

Gary Humphries AO delivered the Canberra Day Oration at the National Library on 12 March.A large crowd gathered at the National Library to hear the 2025 Canberra Day Oration. The title for this year’s address was the somewhat provocative: *‘Has ACT Self Government been a Success?’* When self-determination for the Australian Capital Territory arrived, unceremoniously and unwanted in 1989, it met widespread community dissatisfaction. One historian bemoaned the ‘avaricious free-loading pack of no-hopers’ self-government was about to unleash.

Gary Humphries AO served as an Australian politician for almost 25 years. He was a member of the Legislative Assembly for the ACT from 1989 to 2003, during which time he served in many ministerial roles including Minister for Health, Education and the Arts. He was Chief Minister and Senator for the ACT.

## 6. Annual Dinner

The venue for the Annual Dinner held on 7 December was the Orion Room at the Southern Cross Club Woden. The Guest speaker for the evening was under instructions to be entertaining and that he was – even involving the President in the process!

Dr Geoff Brownrigg in his words is ‘some sort of social or perhaps a wandering national historian’ and the members and guests certainly saw him that and more. His work for more than sixty years has been to recover and make accessible the lives and careers of many ‘lost’ Australian people and deserve to be better known. Much of his work has been undertaken at the National Film & Sound Archive and he has worked face to face with hundreds of communities helping them to recover and record their own stories. His books have included *‘The New Melba’* and ‘*The Tragedy of Amy Castles’* and many more. At the conclusion of Geoff’s address the popular annual raffle followed and it seemed almost everyone was a winner.

## 7. Book and photograph sales

Book and photograph sales this financial year amounted to $7,692. This comprised $2,838 from new book sales ($1,345 the previous year), $2,069 from ‘pre-loved’ book sales ($2,194 the previous year) and $2,785 from photographs.

We sell a range of local history books, both new and second hand. New books are either donated or placed on consignment by authors. The more recently published books are listed on the CDHS website (See [www.canberrahistory.org.au/books-for-sale.html](http://www.canberrahistory.org.au/books-for-sale.html) ). We hold large stocks of some not so new books, creating a storage problem. Many second hand books have been generously donated to the society. Allen Mawer provides our members with eagerly awaited regular lists of books for sale.

Our Heritage Festival Book Fair was again a success, with the 42 attendees spending $1,569, an average of $37 each. This amounted to more than half of the year’s income from the sale of second hand books.

Altogether, second hand sales generated approximately 8.5% of total trading income and because the books were generously donated by members and others this was pure profit. We encourage members to consider giving the Society any unwanted books relevant to Canberra and district history.

Although income from sales of new books was higher than that of second hand ones, it was substantially offset by the cost of purchase. In net terms second hand books were approximately 50% more profitable. New and old together generated approximately 14% of the Society’s gross profit for the year.

Photograph sales have increased significantly this year, bringing in $2,785 this year compared with $1,190 last year. This may be due to the increased exposure of our photographic collection through the NLA’s Trove service, their posting on some Facebook pages and the addition of many more photographs to our online catalogue.

## 8. The CDHS Website

The current CDHS website was launched in December 2021. It aims to:

* Make our significant collection of Canberra history very much more accessible and engaging.
* Provide an easy-to-use platform for making as much of the collection as possible, especially photographs, accessible in digital form to the community.
* More actively engage a wider audience.
* Take advantage of very significant technological advances that allow websites to be much more accessible, relevant, flexible and easier to manage.

As a result, the CDHS catalogue is now accessible through the National Library of Australia’s Trove service and internet search engines are identifying CDHS catalogue entries. The number of active visits to the website during 2024/25 was well over half a million. The most searched item by far was the Time Line in the Canberra History section.

Some Facebook pages, such as The Canberra Page, are posting CDHS photographs from the website, thus increasing the society’s profile in the community.

## 9. CDHS computing capacity

Increasingly, historical records are either being created in digital form (i.e. as computer files) or are being converted into digital form. Therefore, last year we upgraded the office PC so we could store and access many more digital records such as photographs, journals, reports and audio recordings. Some material is now being donated in digital form.

## 10. Canberra & District History Facebook page

The CDHS Facebook group page, Canberra & District History, was launched in April 2016. We had 5,005 followers at 30 June 2025 compared with 4,843 followers at 30 June 2024 - an increase of 3.3% after a period of rapid growth.

Facebook has proven to be a useful in several ways. The main aim of the Facebook page is to increase the Society’s exposure by reaching out to a wider audience. Other benefits have included helping to identify photographs which have little or no information provided. It has also been a useful way to seek information to answer enquiries. We can also see what other people are interested in and, hopefully, some will become active financial members of CDHS.

## 11. Outreach

Many CDHS members contribute to the Society’s aims through Outreach, a broad term which includes members’ publications, presentations and interviews. These activities increase broader community awareness of local history and of the Society itself. The Society wishes to acknowledge the Outreach activities of members and encourages all members to participate in Outreach opportunities.

We encourage members who write an article or give a presentation or interview during the coming year and who wish to be acknowledged in next year’s Annual Report to provide details of their Outreach activities to the Society.

**Publications, presentations and interviews**

Mark Butz published *Tales from Two Cities: Canberra-Queanbeyan across two centuries*, as well as writing self-guided Heritage Brochures. Richard Reid contributed an article to *Recollections* (South Coast History Society). Nick Swain contributed regular updates on CDHS activities and articles to the FAHS Newsletter.

Nick Swain, Richard Reid, Peter Dowling and Frances McGee gave presentations on varying topics to a wide range of different groups.

CDHS photos were published by Tim the Yowie Man in several of his Saturday articles in *The Canberra Times*.

Nick Swain and Frances McGee were interviewed by ABC Radio.

**Events**

Nick Swain and Gary Kent assisted with the display of posters and CDHS photos for the centenary of first land auction in Canberra at Kingston. Both gave short speeches. The posters and photos are now on display at the Kingston Post Office.

**Awards**

Esther Davies was invested with her Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) by the Governor-General. The OAM was awarded in the King’s Birthday Honours 2024.

Patricia Clarke OAM was awarded the Australian Dictionary of Biography Medal in recognition of her many and varied contributions to the ADB since the 1980s.

## 12. ACT Heritage Festival

The Society contributed to the 20255 ACT Heritage Festival through a highly successful Book Fair at the CDHS rooms at Curtin on 10 May organised by Allen Mawer**.**

The society also mounted a display of photographs of Queanbeyan taken in 1870 by Henry Beaufoy Merlin and in 1890 by Charles Kerry.

The society had an information table and display at the National Trust’s Heritage Festival opening event at the Tuggeranong Homestead on 20 April 2023. Doris Kordes and Nick Swain staffed the display which included several photographs of the Tuggeranong property and surrounding area taken in 1890 by travelling photographer Charles Kerry.

## 13. Grants

Government grants have been essential to help better manage our unique collection and make it more accessible.

The society was awarded a 2024/25 ACT Heritage Grant for $780 to digitise 95 photographs of the district taken by Henry Beaufoy Merlin in 1870 and Charles Kerry in 1890. These photographs were uploaded to the website and were also the subject of an exhibition for the ACT Heritage Festival.

## 14. Heritage Advocacy

As the urban expansion and redevelopment of Canberra continues, actual and potential threats to heritage places occur from time to time. The society has advocated in relation to several matters by submissions, representation on community panels and appearances before inquiries.

*Kingston Arts Precinct*. This area includes the highly significant heritage buildings of the Kingston Power House precinct and the Former Transport Depot. CDHS is represented on the Community Panel by Nick Swain. There is now good understanding of the cultural heritage of the area thanks to the work of the previous ACT Heritage Council. There was not much Community Panel involvement during the year and it is hoped that the coming year will see an Estate Development Plan submitted.

*East Lake Urban Redevelopment*. A final Place Plan for this area has been developed. which roughly includes the Causeway, west Fyshwick and the railway yards. It is situated between the Kingston Foreshore and the Jerrabomberra Wetlands. One of the nine design principles is to celebrate the area’s history. The society is represented on the Community Panel. The first area slated for redevelopment is The Causeway. This includes the heritage listed Causeway Hall, Cargill’s Cottage and the Causeway Rail axis.

*Old Kingston Shops.* The Heritage Registration of the Old Kingston shops was finalized in August 2025 after the preliminary registration was subject to an unusually long consultation period.

## 15. Federation of Australian Historical Societies

As the peak ACT historical society and a founding member of the Federation of Australian Historical Societies, the CDHS continues to represent ACT historical societies and groups on the Federation’s committee.

TheFAHS is the peak body representing the interests of approximately 1,000 historical and heritage societies in Australia. Under its constitution, the Federation has eight members, each of which is the major historical society or organisation in an Australian state or territory, and most of which in turn have affiliated historical societies within their state. These members are Canberra and District Historical Society (CDHS), Royal Australian Historical Society (RAHS), History Trust of South Australia (HTSA), Royal Historical Society of Victoria (RHSV), Royal Historical Society of Queensland (RHSQ), Royal Western Australian Historical Society (RWAHS) and the Historical Society of the Northern Territory (HSNT).

The ACT was represented by Esther Davies until December 2024 when she passed away. Her contribution was invaluable and kept the profile of CDHS high. She was replaced by Gary Kent. Nick Swain continued as the second delegate and took on the role of FAHS Public Officer. Delegates normally meet four times a year and as part of the meetings report on the activities of their State or Territory history groups.

President Dr Rosalie Triolo visited Canberra in February 2025 and met with CDHS Council members over dinner.

FAHS continues to face significant financial challenges due to the cessation of Federal government funding. Despite continuing financial constraints, the Federation continues to produce a regular E-Bulletin and twice yearly newsletter. FAHS also continues its program of advocacy, focusing on national issues.

During 2024/25 your delegates have contributed to FAHS through its quarterly meetings and contributions to the FAHS e-bulletin and its newsletter *History Society Matters*.

# PREMISES

Our cosy office at Curtin is serving us well but there are challenges. Space continues to be at a premium so we have to be very selective about the material we keep in our collection and arrange it efficiently. We lack space to mount all but the smallest exhibitions to showcase the many significant items in our collection or to celebrate important events. This means our collection is not as accessible to the community as it should to be. The cramped conditions are challenging for people with restricted mobility.

As indicated in the Treasurer’s report below the total cost of our premises is high and not fully covered by membership subscriptions.

# FINANCES

## Treasurer’s Report

The Profit and Loss statement for the 2024-25 financial year shows a net profit of $4,469.73.

Membership subscriptions are our biggest source of income and have increased from the previous year. Total subscriptions received (including subscriptions in advance for the 2025-26 year) covered most of the premises expenses for the year (rent and electricity).

The second largest source of income is from donations. The Society is deeply grateful for the generous donations received from members and from the Southern Cross Club’s Community Rewards scheme (organised by Tony Corp).

CDHS members who are also members of the Southern Cross Club are encouraged to nominate the CDHS as their preferred charity and to present their membership card when purchasing meals or drinks at the club’s venues. The club donates 7.5 % of purchases to the nominated charity.

Two donations deserve a special mention. The late Julia Ryan, former president and treasurer, left a large bequest of $10,000 to the Society. The late Esther Davies OAM, also former president, requested donations to the CDHS instead of flowers at her funeral earlier this year. Donations in Esther’s memory totalled $820.

Book sales continue to be the Society’s major fundraising activity and increased from last year. Members who are looking for books on Canberra history are encouraged to check our new books for sale and the lists of second-hand books that are regularly circulated to members.

Income from the sale of photographs continues to increase.

On the expense side of the ledger, rent continues to be the Society’s biggest single expense. It will not surprise anyone to learn that major expenses such as rent, electricity, insurance and telephone and internet expenses have all increased in the past year.

This year, total income exceeded total expenditure, due largely to Julia’s bequest and the donations in Esther’s memory, giving us a net profit of $4,469.73.

The Balance Sheet for the 2024-25 financial year shows the Society’s net assets have increased by almost $15,000, again due largely to Julia’s bequest, as well as this year’s profit.

The Society remains debt-free; our liabilities consist solely of pre-paid membership subscriptions.

Overall, it has been a reasonable year for the Society’s finances. However, the need for the Society to increase and diversify its sources of income and reduce its reliance on donations remains.

The reviewer provided an unqualified opinion and is satisfied the financial statements give a true and fair view of the Society’s financial position as at 30 June 2025 and its performance for the year ended on that date.

The Society, and the Treasurer, is indebted to the volunteer work of administrator Helen Digan, bookkeeping and accounting software advice from Trish Carson, and pro bono oversight by the reviewer, Scott McAlister.

## 

## Financial donations

The Society thanks the following members for their generous donations in 2024/25:

Ann Tundern-Smith x 2 D & M Stanton Margaret Aston

S & S Rowell Nick Swain x 2 Dawn Richardson

H. Wilson Stephen Brown x 2 Genevieve Hopkins

Linda Roberts Sandra Whichelo Jenny Carlin

David McDonald Anthony Fane de Salis Peter Bradley

Andrew Sergeant Frances McGee Ian Cochrane

Peter Forster Ross Power Ken Heffernan

Ken Charlton Kay Walsh James McDonald

Robert Lehane Margaret Hendriksen David Wardle

Jenny Tyrrell Gary Humphries Patricia Clarke

Christine Maher Robert Kennelly Jenny Moore

ESTHER DAVIES MEMORIAL FUND

Viola Kalokerinos Jill & Dawn Waterhouse Elizabeth Burness

Dawn Richardson Shirley Campbell Kerrie Blain

Heather Nash J. Steel Eril Tan

Lawrence Barthelemy Paul Bradley

**APPENDICES**

1. Auditor’s Report
2. Financial statements
3. Membership statistics

## Auditor’s Report

A close-up of a letter

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

## Financial statements

The Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Statements are on the next pages.

A black and white text on a white background

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

A black and white page with text

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

A close-up of a document

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

A close-up of a receipt

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

## Membership statistics

| **MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY** | **MEMBERS** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***2021*** | ***2022*** | ***2023*** | ***2024*** | ***2025*** |
| Single ordinary | **78** | **70** | **74** | **69** | **72** |
| Single Senior | **67** | **73** | **76** | **69** | **75** |
| Single Pensioner | **27** | **19** | **19** | **22** | **20** |
| Joint ordinary | **32** | **34** | **26** | **20** | **12** |
| Joint Senior | **12** | **18** | **20** | **22** | **24** |
| Corporate | **7** | **6** | **5** | **5** | **4** |
| Education | **2** | **2** | **2** | **2** | **5** |
| Hon Life Members | **4** | **4** | **4** | **6** | **4** |
| Journal Subscribers | **5** | **2** | **2** | **2** | **3** |
| Reciprocal/Free | **15** | **15** | **15** | **10** | **5** |
| Student | **1** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** |
| Facebook special offer | **na** | **2** | **na** | **na** | **na** |
| ***TOTAL*** | ***250*** | ***245*** | ***243*** | ***232*** | ***234*** |