

LIBRARY ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA ARCHIVES SECTION

NEWSLETTER no. 8 – FEBRUARY, 1974

1. The Queensland State Archives

It is usual to begin this Section with extracts from minutes of the Standing Committee or the General Council of the Library Association of Australia, but this quarter we make no apology for reporting first of all on the way in which our Queensland colleagues survived the serious floods that affected many parts of Queensland at the end of January. Our Queensland State Archives reporter sent the following despatch:

The disastrous floods which hit Brisbane over the Australia Day weekend fortunately seem to have missed us completely. The Dutton Park building and the repositories in the City were all unaffected by the flood. The State Library however was not so fortunate. The basement of the Country Extension Service in Grey Street was completely flooded and at least 50,000 books plus catalogues, shelf lists, borrowers' records, furniture, etc. were all under water. The fumigation chamber here at the Archives will be used to dry as many valuable books as possible. We are also receiving many requests for assistance from government departments whose records have gone under water. No real assessment of the damage done and the assistance required can be made until the flood waters recede completely and building can be cleared of mud and other debris.

Recent transfers to the Queensland State Archives include:

- Records of the Land Agent, Dalby, 1885-1938;
- Records of the Redland Shire Council, plus those of its predecessors, the Cleveland and Tingalpa Shire Councils and the Cleveland and Tingalpa Divisional Boards;
- Official Electoral Rolls of the State Electoral Office, 1968;
- Inquests (depositions) from the Department of Justice, 1972;
- Meridional Observations, Survey Office, 1877-1959;
- Certain outward letterbooks of the Chief Secretary, from the Premier's Department, 1893-1904.

In the document repair section, sufficient material is being purchased to permit regular hand repair of documents using Japanese tissue.

The Photographic Section now enjoys the benefit of air-conditioning and with recent modifications to the Fuji camera it is hoped that a full program of microfilming can be resumed, after the dislocation (caused by the necessary construction work) has been endured.

The new mobile shelving in the B Level (Basement) has been completed and handed over. The records which were formerly held in the Chest Clinic Repository (next to the former Lady Bowen Hospital, Wickham Terrace, Brisbane) are being fumigated and then shelved in the new space.

A staff change has occurred with the resignation of Lesley Hopkins, B.A., Dip.Ed., who is returning to teaching, and her replacement by David Gibson, B.A. (Hons.).

We understand that the Archivist, Mr. P. D. Wilson, had literally to swim home from work on Friday, January 25. We further understand that his house was not affected by the flood, for he had had the foresight to check records of the levels reached by the Brisbane flood of 1893 before he purchased the land on which his house is now built. We are glad that some people have the sense to use the archives which the State preserves.

2. The Archives Authority of New South Wales

Construction of the new Repository at Kingswood is now well under way: most of the concrete for the cell floors has been laid and the walls of the first three cell floors are nearing completion. However the project has encountered its fair share of problems in the form of adverse weather, shortages of materials, and industrial disputes, and it now seems unlikely that the first three cells will be ready for occupation before late February, 1974. In the meantime, the Archives Office staff is fully occupied in planning and preparing for the transfer of records into the building. This will be the third major records transfer undertaken in three years and when completed will leave a core of about 17,000 to 20,000 feet of the most-used state archives in the Library of New South Wales Building. A further 15,000-20,000 feet will be stored at Kingswood together with about 50,000 feet of the more valuable semi-current records.

3. Australian National University Archives

Two new members of staff commenced work during December, Miss Margaret McGladery and Mr. Colin Smith. Both completed the University of N.S.W. Diploma of Archives Administration course in 1973. One fills the position vacated by the retirement of Mrs. Peta Kinsman mentioned in the November issue, the other occupies a new position.

During 1973 approximately 900 feet of records were received from five business firms, 23 unions and professional associations and three employer organisations. This represents one of the largest annual accessions ever, the result of a year of active collecting and of some large continuation deposits from a number of depositors. The cut-off date of deposits is advancing to the 1960s and the post-war proliferation of records is now being reflected in archival deposits in this as in most other repositories.

4. South Australia's Anonymous Gift of \$50,000.

In *Archives and Manuscripts*, volume 4, no. 3, p. 37 (November 1970) we published a note to the effect that an anonymous donor had presented \$50,000 to the South Australian Archives to facilitate the preservation of public records. Under terms agreed upon by the Libraries Board and the donor, the money has been used, and is still being used, to employ additional staff to enable an assessment to be made of old records still in the possession of government departments but suitable for permanent preservation.

It is with regret that we now announce the death of the anonymous donor. His death, at the age of 38, enables us to announce his name. He was Mr. Kenneth George Stirling, of Mitcham, an Adelaide suburb. His gift to the Libraries Board was only one of several large benefactions, all of which were made anonymously. For instance, he gave \$100,000 to enable the University of Adelaide to establish Radio University, which is used for Adult Education work. He was also a benefactor of the Australian Conservation Foundation.

Mr. Stirling's widow has expressed a willingness that her late husband's gifts should now be made public.

The death took place as a result of a heart attack suffered on November 8, 1973. Mr. Stirling collapsed on the University footbridge during a fitness run.

5. Research on the Gallipoli Campaign

Mr. P. H. Liddle, Senior Lecturer in History, Sunderland Polytechnic, in the County of Durham, England, is carrying out research into the history of the Gallipoli Campaign of 1915. However, his interest is in the recollections of the private soldier, the non-commissioned officer and, at the top of the scale, the more junior officer. What he seeks from veterans is what the observer "saw, felt, experienced" as a member of the unsuccessful invading force. He is, however, anxious to get information on Gallipoli from both sides of the line. He explains that in Istanbul he tape-recorded the recollections of about 15 Turkish veterans. He goes on to describe other steps he has taken to pursue his research interest:

I have also made three visits to France to tape-record approximately 50 French veterans, collect personal documents and work in the French 1914-18 Army and Naval Archives. Research in Britain has enabled me not only to work at the Imperial War Museum, the Public Record Office and the Centre for Military Archives in King's College Library, London, but also to contact personally over 500 men who served in Gallipoli and in this way I have been able to assemble a more comprehensive documentation of personal experience of the campaign than exists anywhere else.

To further his research Mr. Liddle hopes to make a grant-aided visit to Australia and New Zealand in May and June 1974. In the course of this visit, he wants to make contact with as many veterans of Gallipoli as he possibly can. His aim is to tape-record their recollections. He emphasises that a tape-recording is not a burden on the person being recorded. It is his responsibility to draw from the interviewee by means of well-prepared questions the facts and the impressions that will help him in his work. If, however, veterans do not want him to call and see them, he would welcome their recording on paper their recollections.

Archivists in Australia may know of the already-recorded recollections, in the form of either diaries or later-recorded reminiscences, of Gallipoli men. These, preserved, probably, in archives or historical manuscript collections, would be of interest to Mr. Liddle. The enquirer will (if permission is granted) make copies of such recollections. Other avenues of assistance may also be known to archivists who read this. If so, you are asked to inform the Editor of this journal, Mr. R. C. Sharman, Snows Road, Stirling, South Australia 5152, who will communicate by airmail with Mr. Liddle.

6. Archival Qualifications.

Early in the year that the first Diplomates in Archives Administration issued forth into the employment market, the *Adelaide Advertiser*, and presumably other metropolitan dailies in Australia, carried advertisements for two positions in the Public Record Office, Chief Secretary's Department, Victoria. One of these positions was that of Deputy Keeper of Public Records. The duties specified were quite onerous:

To assist the Keeper of Public Records and deputise in his absence. Under the general direction of the Keeper of Public Records to develop procedures for the selection of public records worthy of preservation: to advise and assist public officers in the adoption of records management procedures facilitating selection procedures; to develop and administer procedures facilitating the use of public records under the control of the Public Record Office and to co-ordinate the activities of archival staff.

The qualifications required, however, were not nearly so demanding. It was required that the successful applicant should have an "approved" university degree with a major in History, and a "knowledge of Victorian Government administration". For the rest, experience was all that was asked of applicants. No reference was made whatever to professional archival qualifications.

A second advertisement appears in the same edition of the *Adelaide Advertiser*. This also relates to the Victorian Public Record Office. It is an advertisement calling for applicants for the position of Senior Archivist (Publications). The duties are stated as follows:

Under the direction of the Keeper of Public Records to prepare and arrange for the publication of articles and guides concerning the activities and facilities of the Public Record Office and to prepare and arrange for the publication of public records or of any articles prepared therefrom.

It may be that the Senior Archivist is to set to work to prepare Inventories or some other form of Guide to the series, sub-groups or groups in the Public Record Office, but this does not clearly appear from the terms used to describe the duties.

In the case of this position, neither a university degree nor a professional qualification is mentioned. The advertisement specifies that the successful

applicant shall be "A competent journalist with extensive experience in journal and book production"; furthermore that he or she shall have "ability to liaise with the graphic arts and publicity media; proven capacity to research, write, edit and technically produce articles and journals; interest and knowledge in and of the history of Victoria and capacity for historical research".

It does not appear at all clear from the advertisement whether what is wanted is a journalist (as the advertisement states) or the manager of a printing business. Surely "journal and book production" goes beyond the ordinary duties of a journalist, especially when linked with a phrase such as "technically produced articles and journals".

7. South Australian Archives.

Attention has been concentrated on State Government departments, from which a considerable quantity of records has been transferred. Some of these date from the nineteenth century, and should have been dealt with many years ago. The original intention was to begin with departments believed to have large accumulations of records more than 30 years old, listing them and recommending transfer or destruction. However, priorities had to be adapted to meet the immediate demands of departments moving to new premises. We also found that it is not possible to ignore recent records when making a survey, and, complicating matters further, some records, such as maps and field books, are still in current use after more than a century. It therefore became necessary to use a third recommendation to transfer when no longer current.

Because of the pressures mentioned above, much of the material received in the past three years would have been transferred irrespective of Mr. Stirling's gift, but the transfers would have been more hap-hazard, and virtually no arrangement or description would have been done. Without an addition to the professional staff, it would not have been possible to produce new finding aids and cope with the extraordinary increase in public demands which has occurred during this period.