

## THE AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF ARCHIVISTS

The following notes are taken from part of the *Bulletin* of the Australian Society of Archivists (Number 3, September 1975). The reasons for taking this material from the *Bulletin* of the organization that will soon take over responsibility for this journal from the Archives Section of the LAA are:

1. No other report is to hand on the recent 18th Biennial Conference of the Association. There were several sessions of interest to archivists during that Conference, and the *ASA Bulletin* is the only source the Editor has found which reports on those sessions.
2. The *Bulletin* gives news of the visit to Australia of Mr Peter Walne, the County Archivist of the Hertfordshire County Record Office. We did not want to go to press without publishing something about this.
3. We wanted to report something about the progress that the Australian Society of Archivists is making. Of particular interest is news of the formation of a Branch in Victoria.

### EXTRACTS FROM ASA BULLETIN

August has been a significant and eventful month for the Society. Melbourne saw most of the action. The LAA's 18th Biennial Conference was held here; so too was the twenty-first meeting of the Australian Advisory Council on Bibliographical Services (AACOBS); there was a meeting of our own Council; and the Victorian Branch of the Society held a marathon but magnificent special meeting with papers and refreshments in two locations. All these activities, and the important results of at least some of them we shall detail below.

### LAA ARCHIVES SECTION VOTES TO DISBAND

At its Biennial General Meeting on Sunday, August 25, the LAA Archives Section voted to disband. The vote took the form of a unanimous recommendation to the LAA's General Council that the Section should be dissolved. No regular committee was elected but Peter Orlovich was elected caretaker Chairman with power to co-opt, with the task of winding up the Section. The decision was made in the light of the formation of the Society as an independent body to represent professional archivists and to accommodate others interested in the field. A Section of the LAA can only be dissolved by the General Council and a final decision on the matter must await the next meeting of that body in October.

It is impossible in a few lines to write adequately of the passing of the Archives Section. Everyone involved in archival work in Australia, whatever he might think the ideal relationship between librarian and archivist should be, must be aware of the debt owed to the library profession in general and to the LAA in particular for fostering the development of archives and providing a forum for those working in the discipline, most notably through the medium of *Archives and Manuscripts* and the biennial conferences.

The Biennial General Meeting also recommended that the ASA assume responsibility for the publication of *Archives and Manuscripts* under the terms of a letter sent by Michael Saclier to the Section, and of the report and recommendation of the retiring editor, Bob Sharman. This recommendation will also be considered by the next meeting of the General Council, after which the future of *Archives and Manuscripts* (and, of course, of the Society's journal) should be quite clear. The November issue of *A & M* will be published by the LAA.

Those closely connected with these endeavours of the LAA will tell us, if we need to be told, of the frustrations and problems they encountered. But their endeavours have not been in vain: the development of an archival consciousness and the formation of the ASA itself is some testimony to that. There are many who are sad to see the break by archivists from the Library Association; but rather than this being a rift between the two professions, the promise is of a more self-assured partnership. The discontinuance of the Archives Section — or more correctly the initiation of that dissolution — has been marked by an attitude of goodwill toward this Society and, while mentioning individuals is invidious, it would be wrong to omit noting the industry and co-operation shown by the Section's retiring President, Miss Patricia Reynolds; the retiring Secretary, John Thompson — to both of whom, incidentally, must go much of the credit for one of the most successful conference programmes ever, of which more below.

#### ASA COUNCIL MEETS

On the same day as the Archives Section meeting, the full Council of the Society met for the first time since the Inaugural General Meeting in Canberra. With a long agenda and necessary interruptions, the meeting had to be concluded the next day.

Michael Saclier reported that he had attended the twenty-first meeting of AACOBS in Melbourne the previous Thursday and had achieved an important objective for the Society. AACOBS had agreed that in future its archivist representative should be nominated by the ASA. AACOBS also invited the new Director-General of the Australian Archives to take up membership.

The President also reported to the Council the receipt of letters from the National Library, the Archives Authority of N.S.W., and the Council of the State Library of N.S.W., and the Tasmanian, Queensland and Western Australian Library Boards. These were replies to letters sent by the Society advising of our formation. All expressed support for the objectives of the Society, some in a tangible way by offering to take out institutional membership. Since the meeting a similar letter has been received from the Libraries Board of South Australia.

The Treasurer revealed that subscriptions had been coming in at a steady rate and that only a relatively few promised subscriptions were still to arrive. With major expenses still in the future, the bank balance looked, if not vast, then at least encouraging. It was decided, however that after this issue the *Bulletin* would no longer be sent to those who had been accepted for membership but who had not responded to the request for subscriptions.

Complying with a resolution at the IGM in Canberra, the Council established three sub-committees: one to investigate problems of archival conservation; a second to prepare a submission to the proposed Task Force on the National Archives; and a third to examine training for archivists. Lee McGregor was appointed convenor of the Conservation Sub-committee and Peter Orlovich convenor of the Training Sub-committee. Michael Saclier and Ian Maclean were appointed to the Training Sub-committee and, with Max Franklin, to the Task Force Sub-committee. The Training Sub-committee will also look at some wider issues, and the effect these might have in shaping appropriate archives courses. There is, for instance, an apparent tendency to divorce records management and information functions from the care of archives. Michael Saclier pointed out that numerous vacancies advertised in the *Australian Government Gazette* required archival-type skills but were not for archivists; nor were they apparently connected in any way with the Australian Archives. This seems, in the President's words, "to indicate a curious ambivalence in respect of a government with a national archives which it is ostensibly trying to upgrade".

Members are particularly asked to get in touch with the appropriate sub-committee if they have a point of view in any of these areas. It may seem like government by committee, or bureaucracy gone wild, but it is one way in which the Council, with representatives from five cities, can function effectively.

Council resolved to invite Ms Patenall and Mr Orlovich to edit a *Directory of Archives Institutions*. A possible directory of members was also discussed.

In view of the recent application by the Australian Historical Association for institutional membership Council resolved to apply for reciprocal membership of that association as a gesture of the importance it attaches to maintaining a good relationship with the major organization of archives users.

## THE LAA CONFERENCE

Perhaps as a parting gesture, archival interests were abundantly catered for at the LAA's 18th Biennial Conference held from August 24 to 29 at the University of Melbourne. Of most significance was the presence of Mr Peter Walne, County Archivist of the Hertfordshire Record Office and the paper delivered by him entitled "Archives and Research: Some British Experiences".

Mr Walne outlined the development of local archival institutions in the United Kingdom and explained the often complex relationship between them and the Public Record Office. He spoke also of the increasing role and sophistication of the regional archives authorities in research and records management. Parallel with the increasing demands on archival institutions was the growth of the National Register of Archives of the Historical Manuscripts Commission which lists repositories, records their accessions and prints their lists and inventories. Mr Walne's paper was not only informative in an area which to many of us is obscure, but was also challenging by showing

constructive results gained by co-operation on a national scale. The paper deserves wider attention, and we shall advise when the Proceedings of the Conference become available.

Professor A. G. L. Shaw's paper entitled "Archival Legislation in Australia" concentrated on his desiderata for the legislation promised by the Australian Government. He spoke of the problems of defining public records, methods of collection, questions of access, and of the debate about the degree of autonomy an archival institution ought to have. He referred mainly to Victorian, British and American legislation. The Victorian *Public Record Act* was also discussed by Mr Harry Nunn in his address "The Role and Objectives of the Victorian Public Record Office". Mr Nunn concentrated on needs in the records management area.

Of the many other papers delivered at the Conference, plenty had relevance to archives. Most pertinent, perhaps, was Bill Russell's paper (prepared jointly with his wife Carol) on the problems of improving the status and standards of conservation work. This paper, too, you should look out for when the Conference Proceedings are published.

A two-day workshop at the end of the Conference, also on Conservation, was booked out. Speakers included Peter Walne, Michael Saclier, Jim Bruce (Conservator, Queensland State Archives), Mr A. Watson of CSIRO, Miss Anne Bermingham of the Victorian Ministry for the Arts, Mrs Pat Alonso (formerly Map Librarian, State Library of Victoria), and Mrs Rosemary Tomoroy, a Melbourne book restorer. A visit to La Trobe University Library bindery was also arranged.

Also abundantly catered for was the valedictory (though speechless) dinner of the Archives Section at the splendid Society Restaurant. It was delightful to see so many ASA members from interstate at the Conference, including Gerald Fischer from Sydney, Margaret Medcalf from Perth, and others who get a mention in a moment.

## REGIONAL MEETINGS

At the time of writing only Brisbane and Melbourne have held meetings, though Canberra and Sydney were thinking about it. The Brisbane meeting was attended by about a dozen members who discussed possible organization and activities. It also gave rise to the first proposal for matters to be included in the submission to the Task Force on the Australian Archives.

A meeting in Melbourne on July 28 formed itself as the Victorian Branch of the Society and elected Anne Green (Victoria Institute of Colleges) as President, Judy Cordingley (PRO Victoria) as Secretary and Doug Bishop (Monash University) as Treasurer. Draft rules were discussed at a subsequent meeting, as were matters to be included in any submission to the proposed Task Force. A third ordinary meeting to consider these matters further should have been held by the time this *Bulletin* appears.

The first major activity of the Victorian Branch took advantage of the presence of Peter Walne and Bill Russell in Melbourne for the Library Conference. Frank Strahan (University of Melbourne Archives) kindly made available the front room of the University Archives'

terrace-house repository for Bill Russell's paper "Archival Ethics" which was no less excellent because of the limited time he had available. Bill had to return promptly to Canberra and so the remainder went pilgrim-like to Canterbury where Ian Maclean in the role of chef-extraordinaire fed the masses spaghetti and entertained liberally. Peter Walne then talked about the revision of the Constitution of the Society of Archivists, and what is known as a spirited discussion ensued.

## CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

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