

BOOK REVIEWS

Archives in Australia

ALAN IVES, comp., *Archives in Australia*. Canberra, Pearce Processed Publications, 1978. 7 vols.

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Bibliographic details:

Bibliography No. 1; Bibliography No. 1, Part 2; Volume 3, Supplements 1 and 2:
Archives in Australia: A Bibliographical Guide to Writings on Australian Archives and Manuscripts.

Volume 4: *CURABA: Current Archives Bibliography Australia*.

Volume 5: *Australian Archivists: Prolific Contributions from "Modest Practitioners"*.

Volume 6: *Archives and Manuscript Collections in Australia: History and Finding Aids: One*.

Volume 7: *Archives and Manuscript Collections in Australia: Finding Aids: Two*.

If the existence of a well-defined and substantial body of literature may be taken to reflect, in some measure, the level of professional sophistication and scholarly endeavour within a particular discipline, one might reasonably take the publication of a bibliography of that literature as a significant milestone in the evolution of the profession itself.

When, therefore, a work is published that purports to be the first substantial bibliography of writings on Australian archives and manuscripts, (albeit, a "preliminary edition", and containing "some minor inconsistencies in the form of compilation"), its appearance naturally excites the interest as much as it deserves the approbation of historians and other members of the scholarly public in general, and the archives profession in particular, for whose benefit it is compiled.

The Bibliographical Guide to Writings on Australian Archives and Manuscripts, which, with its supplements, forms the first three of seven volumes presented under the general series title of *Archives in Australia*,

lays claim in its foreword, to being “the first bibliography of this field of study dealing with Australia and Australian Archives and Manuscript Collections and Institutions”, a claim which, by and large, must be admitted for a work which attempts a comprehensive gathering of all materials in printed, typescript and duplicated format relating to archives and manuscripts in Australia.

Earlier bibliographical gatherings relating to Australian archives and manuscripts might at best have been sought in the comprehensive bibliography of Frank Evans, first published in 1970 by the United States National Archives, and lately by the Society of American Archivists; in the recently published *International Bibliography* issued by the I.C.A. as a volume of *Archivum*; in a brief but useful bibliography of articles contained in the journals *Historical Studies* and *Public Administration*, compiled by Gerald Fischer and published in *Archives and Manuscripts*, v. 3, no. 5, Nov. 1967; and the “Bibliography of G. H. Pitt”, published in *South Australiana*, v. 11, no. 2, Sept. 1972. The compiler of the present work appears not to have acknowledged these earlier listings.

It is a pity when such an opportunity as is presented by the publication of the present volumes arises, that the format and general presentation of the work are unworthy of the recognition which such a claim deserves. It is the greater pity when its deficiencies assume such proportions as to stand in the way of the convenient use and ease of reference to the volumes. In the brief space of this review, it is possible to refer only to the most serious of its deficiencies, in the matters of bibliographic convention, organisation, layout and production.

It is difficult to perceive much consistency in the adoption of a title and the numbering of the series. The whole seven volumes appear to go under the general series title of *Archives in Australia*, although volumes 1 and 2 (which are not identified as such on their title pages, but only within their contents lists) are distinguished as *Bibliography Number One* and *Bibliography Number One Part Two* respectively, the former consisting of a chronological, while the latter consists of a subject arrangement.

Volume 3 (which, together with the succeeding volumes, adopt a consecutive volume numbering sequence) is published as *Supplements One and Two* to the first two volumes, adopting the title of those volumes on its cover, but the variant *Archives in Australia: A Bibliography* on its title page.

Volume 4 purports, in its introduction, to be supplementary to “the original work” (which one presumes to be the first two volumes), with promises of further material in a “later edition”, but, as its compiler asserts since the material included within it is recent, he has decided “to give it a separate entity and title”. It is, in fact, like most of the other bibliographies contained in this series of publications, a *pot-pourri*, consisting of three successive parts of a “Current Archives Bibliography Australia”, a list of press and Hansard references to the Australian Archives between 1974 and 1977; a list of mainly processed issuances of

the Steering Committee established to investigate and promote the formation of the Australian Society of Archivists, and of that body itself; and an analytical "listing" of the contents of the first 13 *Bulletins* of the A.S.A.

Volume 5 consists of four *Biobibliographies* (numbered 1 to 4) listing the writings of Maclean, Neale, Gibbney and Fitzhardinge, and four *Bibliographies* (numbered 9 to 12) of the writings of Sharman, Fischer, Macmillan and Birch.

Volume 6 consists of a disjointed "paper" entitled "Australian Archival History: A First Foray: The Commonwealth Situation, 1927-1977", with three appendices comprising a (Draft) Bill for the proposed Archives Act of 1927; the draft of a Bill for a Public Records Act of 1950; and the Report by the War Archives Committee on Measures for the Collection and Preservation of War Archives. These are followed by a "Supplement" entitled "Fifty Years of Inertia: 1927-1977", being a series of "documentary sources" consisting mainly of reports by Binns, Wood and Scott, interspersed with sketchy comments in the form of a connecting narrative by the compiler, on the proposed resumption of publication of the *Historical Records of Australia*.

The second part of volume 6 comprises a "listing" of "Guides to Australian Archival and Manuscript Collections, To December 1973", although the entries included are by no means all "guides" in the strict technical sense, and even include journal articles, and, in one case, a "Bibliography of journal articles on Australian History".

The title of volume 7 creates the erroneous impression that it continues the "listing" of "Finding Aids" in the latter part of volume 6, whereas, in fact, it consists of a series of miscellaneous "Bibliographies" (numbered 14 to 24) and an Index (numbered 1), contrary to the claim of its compiler, without much overall coherence.

In fact, the bibliographic apparatus of this series exhibits many technical deficiencies; the work, as a whole, as well as in its individual volumes, particularly the arrangement of their contents, is confusing to use; except in volumes 1 and 2, there is no continuous pagination throughout each volume, making reference and citation awkward and cumbersome, even well nigh impossible; the page references contained in the index to Supplement 1 in volume 3 are out of sequence with the actual entries; typographical errors, presumably a result of poor proof reading, are conspicuous throughout; the compiler's use of the publications to espouse his own personal views (vol. 4, "Newspaper and Parliamentary Comment: Introduction, p. 1); and his fatuous allusions to the history of the Australian Archives (vol. 6, "Fifty Years of Inertia: 1927-1977", p. 3) are all unworthy of a serious and scholarly work which these volumes, regrettably, can have no pretensions to be.

Archivists, on the whole, however, will be indebted to Mr. Ives for providing them with a means of obtaining an overview of the literature on archives and manuscripts in Australia and in a consolidated form that will in some measure at least, obviate the more laborious process of a retrospective literature search.

Archives Document Kits

Archives Authority of New South Wales. *The Changing Face of the Rocks: Glimpses of a Part of an Earlier Sydney and its Inhabitants from Material in the Archives Office of N.S.W.* Sydney, 1979. Compiled by Jennifer Kerr and Lionel Gilbert.

Archives Authority of New South Wales. *From Cato Street to Botany Bay: Convict Case Studies from Material in the Archives Office of N.S.W.* Sydney, 1979. Compiled by Dawn Troy, Baiba Irving and Lionel Gilbert.

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In the last few years there has been an increasing interest in schools and amongst curriculum planners towards fostering a student-enquiry approach to the study of history. In this manner, teachers attempt to develop within their students various skills, rather than simply to impart a body of knowledge. This development, along with the increasing emphasis given to the study of local history, has created the need for suitable sources of documentary material that might be used for analysis in the classroom. A number of primary source books have been compiled to meet this demand. However, they have been restricted, in the main, to material from printed sources.

Lionel Gilbert has been to the forefront in the encouragement of the student-enquiry approach in the study of history in schools. The above resource folders, with which he is associated, represent a significant extension of available classroom resources with the inclusion of manuscript material from the Archives Office of N.S.W.

The folder of material on The Rocks contains some valuable sources for a study of the changes that this area has undergone since its colonial origins. The sources are varied and comprehensive. The folder contains 48 separate items, and includes photographs, posters, correspondence, street plans, reports and returns of the government and public institutions. Considerable emphasis has been given to visual sources.

Among the photographs presented (in a useful 10" x 8" size) are an excellent series (19) of the Rocks area at the turn of the nineteenth century. A glimpse into the backyards of houses at the Rocks or the photograph of "Rat Catchers at Work" provides a view of life at that time that words can never fully convey.

The sources provide information on a wide range of activity associated with the Rocks — buildings, trade, living conditions, poverty, plague, hotels, health and hospital facilities, crime, police surveillance — as well as personalities such as Robert Campbell and John Cadman, and significant events such as the building and opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Of particular note is the excellent sociological material provided by items such as *The Report of the Select Committee on the Condition of the Working Classes of Sydney* (1859-60).

The source material has been supplemented by prepared notes which list the material in the folder, as well as providing valuable background information on each item. This will be most useful to teachers.

One of the major difficulties associated with the study of manuscript sources is the deciphering of handwriting. On the other hand, the document loses much of its historical flavour if presented simply in typescript. The compilers of the folder have partly solved the problem by including a typed text of the correspondence items used. This is a useful and necessary aid for using documents of this type in the classroom. Unfortunately, not all of the material has been presented in this fashion. Some of the returns and extracts present difficulties in reading and it would have been better if typed texts had been included for these items as well.

In addition, the significance of some of the sources would have been made clearer to students with the inclusion of further evidence. This is particularly so with the returns from the General Hospital and Sydney Gaol. If cause of death of the hospital patients could have been included, as well as reasons for the committal of prisoners to Sydney Gaol, the information would have proved more useful. Even as they are, some of the returns and extracts would benefit by the inclusion of additional information to assist in their interpretation. Also, in some cases, further information relating to the consequences of action indicated in the documents would have been valuable. For example, was John Cadman's petition (Item 5) successful? If so, how much land did he receive and where? Was the request of Robert Campbell for trading privileges (Item 3) acceded to by Governor Paterson?

Finally, whilst aware of the difficulties of reproduction presented by material of this nature, and sympathetic of the "teething problems" of such a venture, one might have hoped for a better result. In some cases, classroom use is marginal because of poor reproduction. This, in future, might require a more careful scrutiny of which material to use.

The second folder, *From Cato Street to Botany Bay*, is based on a different approach to the archival sources. While the Rocks kit uses a chronological-survey approach, covering a time span of two centuries,

the sources in the other folder focus in depth on the consequences of a particular incident, the “Cato Street” Conspiracy in London in 1820. The documents trace the personal history of five members of the band of conspirators, lucky enough to escape the hangman’s noose, who were transported for life to Botany Bay.

Some excellent background information sets the scene in both England and the colony of New South Wales in the decade prior to the conspiracy. Additional information is given on the conspirators themselves, their apprehension and its consequences.

The collection of documents is smaller in number than the Rocks material, containing 33 separate items. It also lacks the variety of sources of its companion folder; in particular, there are none of the visual sources of the other. Yet, in some ways, it is a more sophisticated and thoughtfully presented compilation. More manageable in scope, the material could be readily adapted to a research approach in the classroom, whereby students might piece together, from the available evidence, the lives of each of the conspirators in the colony of New South Wales. The best students will be able to draw hypotheses from their research — e.g. that the lives of most of these political prisoners were free of the rigours and hardships often popularly associated with all convicts — which will enable them to view the position of the life of the convict from a different, and more balanced, perspective.

As well as offering valuable resources for the study of the convict era in New South Wales, the case study approach affords some interesting possibilities for linking with family history research. In particular, the value of this kit for teachers will be the possibility of developing historical skills in their students.

Once again, the main criticism of teachers will be that the quality of reproduction of some of the material is questionable. However, typed texts are included for any correspondence which might present difficulties in comprehension through handwriting or legibility.

The Archives Office of N.S.W. is to be commended for its publication of these resource folders of archival material. The material is long overdue and fills an important need in the use of primary source documents in the classroom. This approach, however, will only be of use to the more able Year 9 and Year 10 (N.S.W.) students, although the visual sources will have application right across ability levels. The content of the material restricts its use in the Senior Years, although some of the information in the Rocks folder could be applied to the section on Charity and Welfare in the new Australian History option. The level of vocabulary and the stilted style of writing of many of the documents will prove difficult for many students.

However, these considerations apart, it is hoped that further material in this form is made available for use in the classroom. Both approaches have their place. One would hope that more of the excellent photographic sources in the State Archives might be reproduced and that some thought will be given to designing material for use in the Senior Australian History Syllabus.