

Roger Joyce

Some of my best friends are archivists and have been since I first worked in the Mitchell in 1947 ... or since I first searched for Queensland archives in 1953 when archives users had to avoid the queue for the downstairs V. D. clinic in South Brisbane and creep upstairs to a dusty room ... The History Department held the original correspondence between Governors and Secretaries of State for the Colonies — and like Cobb I could take those records home! No historian opposed their eventual transfer to the Archives. Or since 1953 when I first worked with Jim Gibbney on listing New Guinea archives in the then Commonwealth Archives ...

I hoped to be refreshed at this conference by the assurance that archivists at least were sharing my aims — the search for knowledge through retained records of the past.

This was Roger Joyce at the 1981 Conference of the Australian Society of Archivists in Melbourne. It was an impatient plea, indeed an impassioned one, for archivists and historians to sink their differences and work together — a theme which he himself had always practised.

We, the members of the Australian Society of Archivists and the archival profession generally, are amongst many who have lost a friend and ally with the death of Roger Joyce, Professor of History at La Trobe University in Victoria. Roger died suddenly on 30 October 1984, aged sixty. In a long career, Roger earned numerous academic distinctions. He taught at the University of Queensland for twenty years before taking up his post at La Trobe in 1975. His published work was thorough, scholarly and wise. Greatest amongst it was his biography of Samuel Griffith, published by the University of Queensland Press just days before his death. 'Sam', as Roger felt justified in calling him, had occupied years of research. We watched with admiration as Roger, having completed this major work, set about reducing it by two-thirds to 250,000 words, the length acceptable to his publisher.

The milestones in his life — his schooling, war-time army service, university accomplishments, family — were all well covered in a moving eulogy delivered by his colleague Professor Jack Gregory at Roger's funeral. This address was published in the *Australian Historical Association Bulletin* of December 1984. Necessarily that eulogy did not do justice to the very special relationship between Roger and the archival profession.

Roger joined the Australian Society of Archivists in 1975, and was an

active member of the Melbourne Branch until the time of his death. During those years he attended most of the Branch meetings, official visits to institutions and both informal and formal gatherings of archivists. He extended hospitality to the Branch on a number of occasions, and attended all of the A.S.A.'s Biennial Conferences. During 1980-81 he was a member of the Conference Committee which met regularly to plan in great detail the Conference held in Melbourne in May 1981. Significantly it was a Conference which aimed to bring archivists and users, particularly historians, together.

As he indicated, his association with archives predated by many years the formation of an Australian Society of Archivists. In the 1950s, as lecturer in Australian History, he had toured Queensland with co-lecturer Alan Morrison in an effort to locate public records lying neglected in country and urban centres. They found them in the basements of Council chambers, courthouses and police stations. During the 1960s a succession of northern and western trips by Queensland State Archives staff brought these records to safe custody. Roger Joyce remained a supporter of the State Archives through all his years in Queensland. He visited the Archives regularly, and encouraged his students to make full use of its resources.

Roger's own historical writing shows clearly those qualities which most endear an historian to archivists: he had the utmost respect for documentary evidence; patience and determination in researching all available sources and actively searching for other possible ones. He communicated with archivists about records he had found or used, and with owners of private records about archival institutions which might more suitably house their collections. He was meticulous in identifying in text and footnotes the records he had used.

In 1981 the Council of the Australian Society of Archivists proposed to the Biennial General Meeting that Professor Joyce be made an Honorary Member of the Society — one of the few such members, and the first from Victoria.

Roger's great strength was a personality that was free, generous and quite devoid of professorial pomposity. Penny Fisher writes that

his friendly and relaxed manner put people at their ease, and that he was entertaining and stimulating company. Can't really say much about his love of footy and the congenial afternoons spent in the outer watching the Cats and the Tigers play at being footballers — those philistines north of the border wouldn't understand!

Ironically, of course, Roger had been a north-of-the-border philistine himself, which shows how readily he was prepared to be assimilated. He was always ready to participate, to contribute.

This ease of manner which was such a support to his students and his associates, did not allow him to compromise on standards or principles. He

spelt out his attitude unequivocally at the 1981 Conference in a comment as timely now as it was then.

In this Australia of 1981 where cultural values are under such severe threat — when the question constantly asked is what is the financial profit, even for universities and archives, or why should either escape the dread razor? — surely archivists can realise who their allies are. Join with historians, and all other users, scientists, yes with genealogists too, and writers ... in shared efforts to convince others that the values we believe in must be retained and not destroyed.'

Andrew Lemon and Doreen Wheeler.